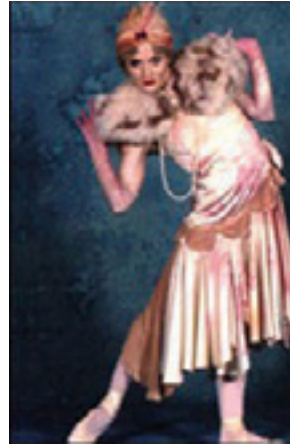


# Dance Studies

## New Content Resource Pack: Dance Theory and History

June 2006

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# Teacher's Book



**WESTERN CAPE  
Education Department**

Provincial Government of the Western Cape



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3 Station Road, Mowbray, 7705

Tel.: 021 689 9536

Fax: 021 685 7421

e-mail: [edumedia@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:edumedia@westerncape.gov.za)

web: [wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/edumedia](http://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/edumedia)

# Dance Studies

New Content Resource Pack: Dance Theory and History

## Teacher's Book

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R. V. de Muynk  
Head: Edumedia (WCED)  
1 December 2009



Stasieweg 3 Posbus 13266, Mowbray, 7705  
3 Station Road PO Box 13266, Mowbray, 7705



Tel.: 021 689-9536  
Faks/Fax: 0860 694 0953



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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The subject Dance has never had a schools' text book. Teachers have always had to find their own material from primary sources such as people, programmes and reviews and secondary sources such as books, journals and web pages. This meant that not all teachers worked from the same source.

In order to assist with the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in FET (Grades 10 – 12), a **Dance Studies New Content Resource Pack** has been compiled by a consortium of writers, to provide curriculum advisers and teachers with a background, framework and deeper understanding of the new 'content'. While this Resource Pack does not take the place of a text book, it gives a brief overview of dance history, both local and international and draws attention to where you can find references for your interest and for extending your knowledge of the material offered.

It is essential to understand that this resource pack is for use by curriculum advisers and teachers **only**. No part of the material should be distributed to learners. New teaching methodology and Critical Outcome 4 (collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information) require that learners should be encouraged to search for and use information rather than learn and reproduce information.

This Resource Pack covers two components of Dance only

- Learning Outcome 3: Dance History
- Learning Outcome 4: Indigenous/ Traditional Dance

The history of dance across dance forms is extremely wide and it is not possible in this Resource Pack to do justice to the subject or to cover the many choreographers and dance companies. Selections were made partially based on what information was available or obtainable and dance works were selected because a good quality video is accessible to schools. Schools are not limited to the use of these choreographers or works.

The history of dance should be taught both in the selected dance form and across dance forms. Learners can develop their dance literacy by watching dances in any dance form.

The layout of the Resource Pack does not divide the work or content into specific grades. It is the prerogative of the teacher to select and identify the material appropriate to the Grade.

### Acknowledgements

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# THE FUNCTION AND VALUE OF DANCE IN VARIOUS CULTURES AND DIVERSE SOCIETIES OVER TIME

## Introduction

Any attempt to examine the function and value of dance in various cultures and diverse societies, also from an historical perspective, brings to the fore several difficulties involved when embarking on such analysis. There are numerous possible pitfalls and challenges faced by the researcher or dance scholar who wishes correctly to identify the value and functions of such dancing activities within a particular society. The teacher, too, needs to be informed about these so as to sensitively guide the learner in his or her own quest to better understand dance in all its multi-functionality.

## Challenges and problems

Firstly, most of the dance genres and styles which have been written about by dance scholars and historians tend to treat all dance forms primarily from a *Western* perspective. In addition, they focus strongly on Western dance forms, be they in a social or a theatrical context. The extensive volume of documented records, articles and literature available on dance is further enhanced by the availability of etchings, paintings, photography and film, all of which provide a kind of visual and intellectual record of dancing activities over time. It becomes clear that the Western perspective, which places enormous value on the importance of both the written and the spoken word, has actively fostered the development of a comprehensive documented body of dance history. In several instances, this has relegated to Western dance forms a certain hierarchical status, subtly promoting the notion that Western dance is “more important,” and “more meaningful” than lesser documented non-Western dance forms.

Secondly, historically, much non-Western dance has been analysed from primarily a Western point of view, thereby creating a somewhat eschewed and biased response to and definition of the function and values of dance in a non-Western context. This may be clearly seen from the earliest contact between indigenous tribes and colonialists and missionaries, who were generally confused by the dances they saw being performed and either misinterpreted them or perceived them as a threat. This has resulted in the suppression of and, in some cases, even the disappearance of several indigenous dances over time.

Thirdly, in the twentieth century, several anthropologists who did field work in which they studied the cultural activities of indigenous groups and had an opportunity to observe their dancing activities, found themselves at a loss as to how to interpret them. They could clearly observe how central dancing activities were to the cultural expression of the indigenous group, yet they were unable to interpret the dances because they lacked the necessary tools with which so to do. Anthropologists themselves often knew very little about any kind of dance, (probably not having had any or very little personal dance experience or training) and so had no means to access the dance. Because they themselves were observers and not integrated members of the society they were examining, it was, (and still remains), very difficult for the anthropologist or outside observer to understand and interpret the *real effects* on the participants of the dances performed. The fact that dancing activities form a central component of most indigenous cultural life, has only added to the confusion for the outside observer. There exists much superficial and sometimes patronising text on the function of dancing activities in a non-Western society. The teacher and the learner thus need to be critical of the texts they access in their research and always attempt to recognise the bias or particular viewpoint from which the writer is dealing with his or her subject matter.

## Changing perceptions

From about the latter half of the twentieth century a gradual shift began to take place with regard to the way in which people started to perceive the ways in which cultures other than their own express themselves through song, dance, music, drama and various other cultural means. As globalisation has increased, there has emerged the notion that cultural diversity is something to celebrate and explore, especially creatively. This is evident in the way that “world music” and various disparate dance forms from across the world have become increasingly popular. This is further supported by the fact that several established international rock and pop stars raise awareness of the plight of many indigenous societies in



their concerts or by travelling to the respective area accompanied by a television crew – this is generally accompanied with a strong environmental or political message.

Dance historians, many anthropologists, choreographers and professional dancers alike have begun to approach any examination of the function of dance in various cultures from a more objective perspective, recognising that all dances are relevant and meaningful in their socio-cultural contexts. They acknowledge that the dances that a society or culture performs, inform us about that particular society, what their values and beliefs are and how they express their cultural identity through dance. In other words, the context in which a dance occurs defines its meaning. This approach has contributed to the emergence of an exciting cross-cultural exchange of various dances from all over the world and helped to break down the notion of Western dance as the pinnacle of some perceived hierarchy. As the world changes and conditions in society adapt to these changes, so do the dances and the contexts change dynamically in which they are performed. The world is increasingly becoming more of a global society; few societies and cultures are fully isolated from interaction with other humans, so that we are today witnessing new dance forms emerging which are hybrids of various dances, sometimes synthesising traditional dances with popular dances in a completely new context, say as theatre dance or a new urban social dance.

Whenever one examines the function and value of dance it is important to bear in mind that dance is a *symbolic* language and that, like all language, it has its own structures and meanings, most of which are multi-faceted and multi-layered. When we look at a dance form we are unfamiliar with, we may at first find it to be “strange” and that we cannot understand its particular aesthetics. This is an important first step towards examining the dance as objectively as possible, namely to be aware of your own bias and perhaps accompanying confusion. This approach prevents one from forcing an external interpretation on the dance and emphasises the need to understand the dance in its broader social context. In other words, as you understand the unique qualities and expressions of identity of the society better, so you may also understand its dances and come to respect and understand these in their social and cultural context. It is always advisable to look beyond the parameters of the actual dance to see what activities and conditions are present in the society before, during and after the dance is performed. These provide valuable clues as to the function of the dance in a particular context.

The human body is a powerful tool of communication. In dance, it can become both a symbol of protest or a symbol of celebration, within either a social or a theatrical context. Consider the visual effect of seeing a unified body of people partaking in a protest action or a strike. In South Africa, the dance of protest seen most often is the *toyi-toyi*. It is danced by both men and women and serves as a powerful unifying element amongst the participants.

### **Suggested guidelines**

The following are some suggested guidelines to follow and questions to ask whenever embarking on a study and examination of dancing activities in a particular society:

1. You need to ask yourself what is the context in which the dance is performed? Is it performed at weddings, funerals, at times of war, as a preparation for war, as a means of initiating younger members into the group, as a means of teaching members about various tasks they need to perform within the group, as a way to reinforce gender roles and the accompanying responsibilities, as a way to reinforce the dominant political system, (say that of the chief or political leader), or as a way to celebrate or simply “let go” of any pent-up tension?

Consider the reasons why either you yourself dance or people you know in your social circle like to dance. If you were to ask them, they may say that they dance for recreation, that dancing has a relaxing effect, that it is an enjoyable way in which to increase strength, suppleness and to get fit, whilst sharing the experience with like-minded friends or acquaintances. In the context of people who attend, say, ballroom dancing classes, the dancing activity may fulfil a strong social desire amongst the participants, either as a means to meet other people (possibly with the view to

a potential courtship) or as a pleasant way to share an activity with someone you know whilst being part of a larger group.

Some people may respond by saying that they like to dance because it makes them feel good about themselves and how they look by sculpting their muscles into a certain shape they find to be attractive.

Some people may say that they like to dance because of the music that is used in a particular dance style.

2. Is a particular dance performed only on special occasions, such as during times when certain rituals are performed, or is it integrated into the fabric of the daily life of the society? In other words, is a particular dance marginal or central to the daily lives of the members of the society?
3. What is the physical and geographical setting for the dance? Remember that all dance occurs in a particular time and place and that this has a direct influence on the dance. It is thus useful to ascertain where the dance is being performed and under what conditions.
4. How many people perform the dance and which members of the society are they – only men or only women or both? Does this alter in the course of the dance? Are there any observers and are they interactive or are they passive? Is there a dialogue between the observers and the performers – is there a sense of energy flowing between them?
5. How long does it take to complete the dance? This could range from a few minutes to several hours, to dancing activities which take place over several days.
6. What are the primary effort qualities in the dance? Can you identify where it builds to a climax and how this is achieved? Look closely at the actual dance movements and effort qualities as well as the accompanying music, vocal sounds and the contribution of the non-dancing bodies as a means to achieve this.
7. What type of music accompanies the dance and how closely is it integrated into the dance? In many cultures, particularly in Africa, there is no distinction between music and dance as these are so finely integrated. For instance, in Nigeria, the *Ubakala* tribe always use drumming in their dances and the word for dance also means the same as that for a drum as well as a play.
8. What are the spatial patterns in the dance? Is it performed in a circle or does it follow a weaving, snake-like pattern, is it performed facing outwards to the spectators or does it have a strict linear spatial design? These are only some of the aspects regarding the way in which the dance utilises space which need to be considered.
9. Is the dance accompanied by any ritualistic behaviour? If so, what kind? How does this contribute to the overall purpose of the dance activity?
10. Are you aware of any kind of preparation the dancers need to do before they perform the dance? This may involve a period of fasting, meditating, the order and manner in which the clothing is put on and any accessories and adornments worn for the dance is applied.
11. What kind of clothing, accessories or any other kind of adornment or make up is worn by the dancers and how does this support the purpose of the dance?

By now it has become clear that all dance is *culturally patterned* and that it is this which determines who dances, with whom and how, why, how often and for how long. Although dance is a universal activity, it fulfils different functions and purposes in different societies. It is not necessarily readily accessible and understandable to the outside observer who will need to find the tools to decode the dance in its socio-cultural context in order to better understand it and the society in which it is performed.

### **Dance as a means to educate**

Historically, dance has been used as a tool to educate the members of a particular society, teaching them about the ways in which they are expected to behave responsibly within their society. Through the dance, the performer learns about various aspects that are vital to the survival and continuity of both themselves and their particular society. For instance, the dance may symbolically teach young men how to be warriors or it may teach young women about childbirth and motherhood.

The dances always require a certain *technical* skill from the performers and these sometimes take several years to perfect and are taught from an early age. The young boy learning a warrior dance is simultaneously developing his own strength and agility. The successful performance of this dancing activity usually serves to initiate the performer as an adult member into his or her society. The Venda

girls' initiation dance, called the *domba*, is taught over four years. After the performances, which are widely attended and take place over several days, the young women are accepted as adults into the society, ready to take on adult responsibilities. In Britain in the 18th century, young girls from the elite society had to learn to dance the minuet, which was then performed at a ball which may too be regarded as a kind of initiation into that society.

### **Dance as competition**

Dancing activities which take the form of competitions most often occur in areas where certain problems and tensions exist between various groups of people. This may be on a boundary, especially if it has been externally imposed, thereby dividing what was formerly a unified society – or it may occur in an area where people from various disparate societies are grouped together, such as on mines. The dances that emerge here often reflect the tensions that exist under such conditions and, so doing, help to defuse potentially explosive situations. The gumboot dance in South Africa which was danced on the mines of the Witwatersrand had a very strong competitive element with the best team winning a prize. In this way, some of the existing tensions were channelled into the gumboot competition instead of into direct confrontation. The mining bosses were quick to recognise the benefits to themselves in this and actively promoted gumboot dancing competitions.

When you look historically at the contexts in which certain dances have occurred over time, it becomes apparent that the ability to perform a particular dance well may have served as an imaginary and highly competitive boundary between various classes in society. The minuet in Georgian England fulfilled such a function by separating the elite from the rising middle classes who wished to aspire to the status and lifestyle of the elite.

### **Dance and political propaganda**

The human body in dance may be used to make extremely strong political statements. The dancing activity itself may serve to reinforce and maintain the power structures or it may pose a challenge to the power structures and attempt to usurp them. The performing of a dance, especially under certain conditions of high emotion (such as at times when there is an atmosphere of dissatisfaction with the leadership or a desire to reinforce identification and solidarity with a particular leader), may, at times, *directly* influence feelings and ideas amongst the participants and, so doing, lead to some sort of direct action.

The warrior dances, especially those which are today performed in post-colonial African countries, are actively promoted and encouraged by the political leaders as they have come to represent cultural identity and independence from colonial forces. When warrior dances are performed at political rallies they serve to reinforce the power and strength of the existing leadership.

Dance may also be used to promote social and political control. In this way, Cuba has used classical ballet and the accompanying discipline and commitment required of anyone practicing it, to promote a similar attitude amongst its people in all areas of work, thereby encouraging a communist work ethic. The Cuban state subsidises and promotes ballet training; the national company tours all the regions regularly – even postage stamps have included ballet poses!

Dancing activities regularly constitute a large component of the activities surrounding presidential inaugurations. This is especially pertinent in Africa, with various ethnic groups from all over the country travelling to the capital to take part in the celebrations. When one considers the theme of South Africa's 1994 presidential inauguration, *Many cultures, One Nation*, it becomes clear how the music and dancing activities surrounding this historic moment, served to reinforce a spirit of unity and celebration amongst the diverse cultural groups within the broader South African community. The performing artists, singers, musicians and dancers who performed on the day, represented the cultural diversity that exists in South Africa.

As part of the presidential inauguration celebrations in the United States of America, the new president and his spouse traditionally open the ball with a waltz. They are then joined by the other invited guests on the dance floor. The elegance and control of dance movements accompanying such an event, serve to

project the desired values of refinement and self-control with which the president would like to be associated.

### **Dance as transformation, therapy and catharsis**

Dance is always included in the broader field of ritual, often occupying a central position. Rituals in society usually take place on special occasions and under very specific conditions – they do not constitute part of the daily lives of the society. The dance performed in ritual usually fulfils a spiritual purpose, but it can also serve to strengthen the bonds in a society especially during times of socio-political change. In this way it can serve a political function too.

The performance of the dances in a ritual context often have a cathartic effect as they release tension and built-up emotions for the performers, thereby creating a safe outlet for these emotions. They have a transformative effect on the performer although there is the danger of the dance actually having the opposite effect and generating more anxiety instead. It is very difficult for the observer to measure the cathartic or transformative effect of the dance as it is almost impossible to determine what the dancer is *really* feeling.

Traditionally the Christian Church has frowned upon the body, regarding it as “a garment for the soul” and alternatively, as the “seat of sin.” However, as Christianity spread across most of the world through colonisation, gradually more and more movement and dance became integrated into the religious services. For instance, amongst the *Murabi* in Nigeria, dancing and drumming activities form an integral component of the church service as they invite the Holy Spirit to ascend on them.

This tendency to integrate strongly the body with a spiritual pursuit may also be seen when one examines the gospel music, song and church services of the African American congregations of the South of the United States of America. The modern choreographer Alvin Ailey drew on his personal experiences and childhood recollections to create his seminal theatre dance work, *Revelations*. The work embraces a joyous physicality within the context of spiritual worship, thereby capturing the essence of the singing and dancing which can be seen in actual church services in the South.

In India, the body is regarded as the path through which to achieve mental and spiritual discipline and enlightenment. Many of the traditions which involve ritual behaviour, have a heritage which goes back for thousands of years. The *Kathakali* is such a dance drama, consisting of all-male performers. It has gradually evolved to become a theatre art. The Indian society regard the act of worship itself as an art form and so they do not experience any conflict between a dance which exists simultaneously as entertainment, has artistic value and which embraces spiritual values.

Dance has the potential to transform the performer to altered states of consciousness, inducing feelings of intoxication and even possession. The San Bushmen believe that they can shake their body until they can feel their blood beginning to boil at which point they collapse under its intoxication.

In India, the *serpentine dance* is performed over a period ranging from 7-21 days (depending on how much the host can afford to pay) in peoples homes. The aim of the dance is to ward off evil spirits. It is preceded by a period of fasting. A mandala is meticulously painted on the floor with various spices. The dance is then performed on this surface by young female virgins. The belief is that once the dancers become possessed by the snake god, they become either deaf or blind. They seem not to get tired which is regarded as of proof that the snake god is satisfied.

### **Conclusion**

By now it has become clear that it is through modes of communication that the individual learns about the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of his or her own culture. This communication takes the form of spoken and written language, as well as on a non-verbal level, of which dance is a vital component.

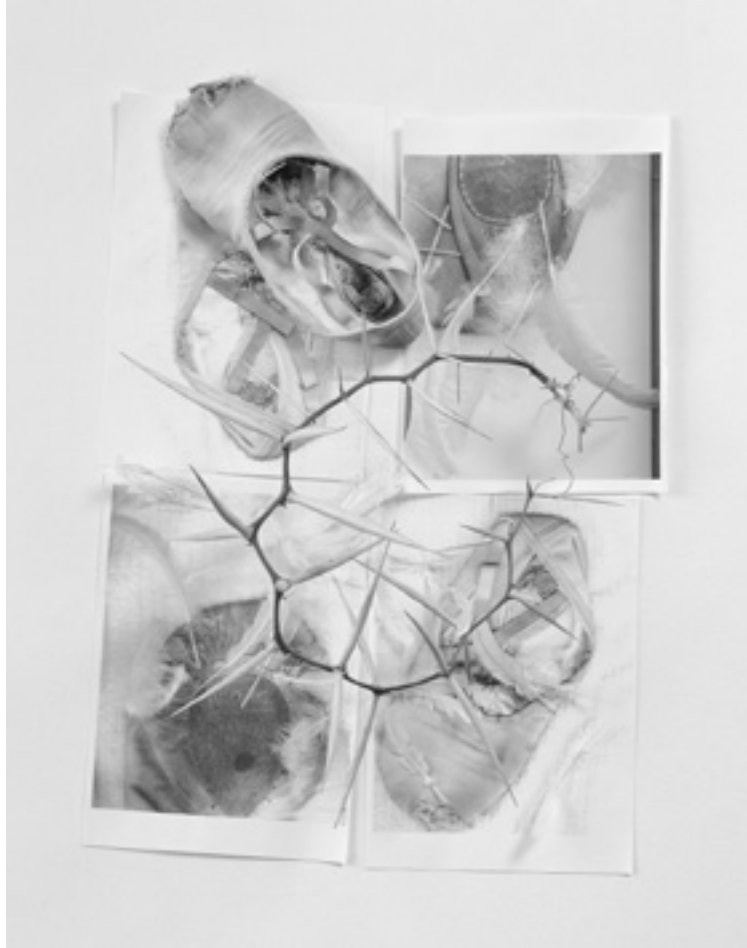
We accept that all forms of dance have a purpose and are meaningful within their socio-cultural contexts. In other words, dance exists neither in a cultural nor a societal vacuum. It is a symbolic language which we need to attempt to decode with sensitivity and caution in order to correctly identify its functions and come to appreciate its social and artistic value.

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Picture by Philip Briel

## INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

It is important always to emphasise that culture has a major impact on what is represented in the arts. In dance, culture, context and history forge **what** is danced and **by whom** it is danced, **how** it is danced and **why** it is danced, **when** it is danced and **where** it is danced, **with whom** and **for whom** it is danced.

Globally, we can differentiate two distinct forms of dance, the cultural dance forms and the concert dance forms, on the basis of how they involve the people that participate in them. The **cultural dance forms** generally involve all members of the communities that they represent. These dance forms can define the various rituals that mark the passage of life and also serve as a medium of social cohesion. The **concert dance forms** rely on an art of performance by dancers who have had long and careful training and who dance for audiences of all ages who are spectators rather than active participants.

**Cultural dance forms** are tied to particular ways of being and reflect the lives of those who dance them. They have no specific author and, as they pass from generation to generation or location to location, they undergo subtle changes that portray the outlook of the people who dance them and the times in which those people live. These dances are interlaced with the histories and mythologies of the cultures that they represent and have various purposes. Some dances have important cultural functions and join people together as they celebrate rituals and rites of passage, such as birth, initiation, marriage or death. Other dances simply have a social function or are done for pleasure. Still other dances may have a spiritual function and are often forbidden to outsiders.

We can further differentiate cultural dance forms into **traditional dances** and **indigenous dances**.

**Traditional dances** are those that are **handed down** within a particular culture and that are danced wherever people belonging to that culture might find themselves. Traditional dances offer a sense of belonging as everyone generally knows the steps and thus everyone can join in. Traditional dance depends on the existence of a stable culture for its survival.

**Indigenous dances** are those that **originated where** they are **found**. If you belong to the Zulu culture and live in New York, London or Sydney, the dances that you might do at family celebrations will still be the traditional dances of your culture but, because of where you now live, they will not be indigenous. If you belong to the Zulu culture and have remained on the lands where the generations of your ancestors lived, then these same celebration dances will be both traditional and indigenous. Still other dances may be indigenous but not traditional - *pantsula* and *kwaito* are examples of dance forms that are indigenous to South Africa but that are not traditional dances.

Some people will have lost touch with the traditional dances of their cultures as their predecessors moved around the globe and they will have no traditional dances to call their own. Other people might have adopted the recreational dances of the countries and the cultures in which they find themselves and only the older generations of their families will remember or perform the traditional dances.

**Recreational and social dance forms** also have roots in folk heritage and are linked to various cultures at various times. Recreational and social forms tend to reflect the popular taste and the social trends of a given time, such as the Charleston of the 1920s, rock and roll of the 1950s and 1960s, disco of the 1970s, hip-hop, the dances of the B-boys and B-girls, the break-boys and girls, of the same period, and the freeform dance styles allied to the techno, house and trance genres of 1990s electronic dance music.

Other social dance forms, gathered under the general heading of ballroom dancing, such as the waltz, both classical and Viennese, the slow fox-trot, the quick-step and the classical tango as well as Latin forms such as the cha-cha, the rumba, the samba and jive, have broken free of their origins and are



danced globally. Ballroom dancing has evolved into a competitive sport, DanceSport, recently recognised by the International Olympic Committee, and also has a Paralympic counterpart, Wheelchair DanceSport.

The **concert dance forms** are also interlaced with the histories, the mythologies and the social and cultural trends that have marked their geneses and their subsequent development. The concert dance forms are most often publicly performed by professional dancers who have undergone an intensive vocational training, although amateur dancers, those who have chosen occupations other than dance but who are devoted to the art form, maintain their training and perform whenever they can.

**Classical dance** is one of many concert dance forms. It is important, though, first to define what is meant when we refer to classical dance. The adjective "classical" relates to or is characteristic of a form or system felt to be of first significance before modern times. We speak of classical antiquity when we refer to the civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome. We refer to the period extending from approximately the fifth century [400] to the fifteenth century [1400] as the Middle Ages; artefacts from this period are described as mediaeval. Modern times can be considered to be the period of European history from the close of the Middle Ages to the present day, a period precipitated by the Renaissance.

The **Renaissance** began in Italy and was a time of **enormous cultural rebirth** that spanned a period from the 14th century [1300] through to the middle of the 17th century [1650]. It is during the Renaissance that we see the emergence of court dances and dancing masters as part of a training in the etiquette, the rules of social behaviour, of the nobility. These court dances were presented in lavishly staged courtly spectacles, processions and pageants. Catherine de Medici of Italy brought the court ballets, as they were called [derived from the Italian word **ballare**, meaning **to dance**], to the French court when she married Henry, Duke of Orleans, son of the French King, in 1533.

It was in France that court ballet flourished as deliberately designed medley of art, politics and entertainment whose major purpose was the glorification of the State. The French academicians of the time also wished to see the arts return to the **harmony of form** of ancient Greek theatre, the seamless integration of poetry, dance and music of **classical** times; the court ballets' amalgamation of spoken and sung verse, dance, music and design suited this purpose admirably.

Even though classical ballet as we know it today has evolved far beyond the court ballets of the Renaissance, it still retains the harmonious integration of visual art, music, drama and dance that marked its origins. Its vocabulary of steps and poses, and thus its training, are still based on the outward rotation of the legs from the hip joints that was first described in 1588 and the five positions of the feet and arms first recorded in 1650.

Another variant of classical dance is **Indian classical dance**. During three consecutive periods of Indian history, the Buddhist, the Gupta [the Golden Age of India, extending from 320 to 480 AD] and the medieval periods, dancing was considered to be the highest form of worship. This can be seen from the representations of dance in existing temple sculptures, paintings and icons. Music and dance performance thus functioned as part of religious and devotional ritual, playing a significant role in the spiritual identification and spiritual inspiration of the people of the time. Later, with the Muslim invasion of India, dance found its way into the courts of kings as a form of entertainment, since the Muslim tradition considered it scandalous to use music and dance for divine worship.

Classical Indian dance experienced a renaissance in the mid-20th Century when dedicated professional artists strove to revive the ancient art of the **Devadasi** tradition and to restore the lost dignity and spiritual sanctity of the temple dances. The **Devadasi** were the original temple dancers who performed in the different dance traditions of **Bharatnatyam**, **Kuchipudi**, **Odissi** and **Mohiniyattam**. Today, Indian classical dance has moved from the temple to the auditorium and proscenium stage; nonetheless, the dedication of its performers remains as fierce as ever.

Other classical Indian dance forms such as **Kathak** and **Kathakali** focus upon the dramatic and narrative aspects of dance. The Kathaks were the nomadic poets and story-tellers of ancient northern India who employed stylised mime and gesture alongside vocal and instrumental music to animate their verses and stories. The **Kathak** dances are characterised by very fast and rhythmically complex footwork; this art of theatre was most popular during the time of the Mughal Dynasty, the line of Muslim emperors who reigned in India from 1526 to 1858.

The highly stylised pageants and dance-dramas of **Kathakali** are traditionally based on Hindu mythological themes. What is most striking about **Kathakali** is its emphasis upon costumes, ornaments and coded facial make-up which serve to distinguish the personalities and the various traits of the characters depicted. We see similarly lavish and spectacular costuming and make-up conventions in **Kabuki Theatre**, the classical dance and music dramas of **Japan** that flowered in the Edo Period [1600 - 1868].

**Kathakali** is extremely strenuous and requires strict accuracy and precision in the use of the entire body, right down to the smallest facial muscles, in order to portray emotion. In a manner similar to the demands of a classical ballet training, the **Kathakali** dancer undergoes a rigorous apprenticeship in order to attain the high levels of flexibility and muscle control required by this form.

Classical Indian dance shares the convention of the outward rotation of the legs from the hip joints with classical ballet and both forms rely on **codified conventions of movement**, established and organised systems and formulas for moving that are often notated, or written down. The numerous movements contained within these conventions are to be performed with unerring accuracy and absolute precision and take many, many hours of practice to perfect.

Let us return to classical ballet, briefly track its development and explore the reactionary dance forms that it bred, so that we may find out how creative dance, the dance form utilised in the NCS Arts and Culture methodology, came into being.

We left off in France. Here, in 1661, King Louis XIV [the Sun-King] founded the Royal Academy of Dance in Paris to establish standards for the perfection of the art of dance. Teachers of dance and professional dancers were trained and the steps and movements of the court and character dances were codified. During the course of the 18th century [1700 - 1800], ballet moved from the courts into the theatre. In the first part of the century, ballets centred on mythological themes and characters; in the second part, ballets focussed on more human themes and characters, using both dancing and pantomime to tell the various stories. The use of spoken or sung verse fell away and the basic components of what we now call dramatic ballet were laid down.

By the 19th century [1800 - 1900], ballet had become an established theatrical form that had spread across Europe. The Romantic era, with its urge toward things imaginative and supernatural, saw female dancers rise onto the tips of their toes, a convention that is retained by female ballet dancers to this day. In the second half of the century, ballet's popularity had declined in Europe but had forged ahead in Tsarist Russia, where, by the end of the century, full-length story ballets in the Tsarist classical style were being produced. These ballets, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, are the ones that, today, we immediately associate with classical ballet.

With the new century came the first rumblings of the Russian Revolution. The aftermath of Bloody Sunday, the day on which Tsarist troops opened fire on a peaceful demonstration of workers in January 1905, and the General Strike in October of the same year, led the foremost Russian ballet practitioners and choreographers to look toward Europe to practice their art. Shortly thereafter, the Diaghilev **Ballets Russes** [Russian Ballet] was born. It was this group that transformed ballet into a vital modern art that utilised the work of the leading composers, designers and visual artists of the time. Even Picasso provided designs for one of the company's ballets.



The *Ballets Russes* was instrumental in the development of classical ballet as the global dance form we know today. The company toured extensively during the twenty years of its existence and, upon its demise in 1929, ballet practitioners and choreographers scattered to the four corners of the globe and continued to practice their art in new contexts. The influence of the *Ballets Russes* on the British dance scene was echoed in the countries of the British Commonwealth, amongst which, of course, was South Africa.

The *Ballets Russes* gave us the one-act ballet, the abstract ballet, the psychological ballet and ballets on contemporary themes. Since then, we have vastly extended the limits of balletic technique and style, pushing the body ever further, extending its lines, magnifying its defiance of gravity with breathtaking jumps and turns in the air and highlighting the apparent effortless nature of balletic movement that so disguises the supreme control necessary to achieve it. Today, ballet can be as unique as each choreographer's individual point of view.

At the beginning of the 20th century, an alternative dance form emerged in response to the structured formulae of classical ballet. It was one that attempted to free the body and to highlight individual creativity and the expression of subjective feelings. The American, **Isadora Duncan**, bare-legged in her flowing Greek robes, offered personal interpretations of the music of the great classical composers as one of its first practitioners. She toured extensively, mainly in Europe and Russia and later in America, so this emerging form gained wide exposure.

During roughly the same period, the work of the Hungarian, **Rudolf von Laban**, centred around the ideal of a dance form which was **natural for all people** and the deployment of dance both as a means of education and as a therapeutic treatment. Laban practised and experimented across Europe, opening numerous schools that were directed by his former pupils. Among these former pupils were Kurt Jooss and Mary Wigman, German dance pioneers who were instrumental in establishing the form named Central European Dance, which later would become known as **Modern Dance**. Modern Dance would also be used to describe the work of the early American dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn.

Laban's work in Germany ended in 1936 when the increasingly powerful Nazi Party declared his work to be "against the State" as it was thought to be too "universal" and not "nationalistic" enough. He moved to Britain in 1938 where his ongoing research led to the establishment of **Modern Educational Dance**. It is a contemporary adaptation of this form, known as **creative dance**, that is the dance methodology of the NCS GET Band.

**Modern dance**, also referred to as **Contemporary Dance**, could best be described as the constant and ongoing search for new means of dance expression. It incorporates a wide range of styles that are as varied and ever-changing as its choreographers and practitioners. There are specific techniques associated with individual dance artists, drawn from their movement research and their choreographic works and then codified. There are personal techniques that have evolved from baseline study with established artists and teachers and that have developed according to movement preferences and particular choreographic requirements.

Modern Dance has three well-defined eras of development. The first was one of pioneering and experimentation, which laid down the philosophies and aesthetics of modern dance. Dance artists used natural and everyday movements to create their own dance vocabularies, techniques and choreographic forms for use in works in which they took the dual roles of both creator and performer. The leading lights of this period were **Martha Graham**, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, all of whom had studied with St. Denis and Shawn. Important contributors were Lester Horton and Katherine Dunham, who researched cultural and ethnic dance forms and incorporated them into their choreographies, as did Pearl Primus. Dunham and Primus were both anthropologists by training.

The second era saw the establishment of modern dance companies and schools and the codification of various techniques. Out of this came the second wave of cutting-edge innovators, José Limón, Alvin Nikolais and Merce Cunningham, followed closely by Paul Taylor and Alvin Ailey.

The third era, reflecting the cultural turbulence of the late 1960s and early 1970s, broke with established modern dance conventions. In New York, the Judson Dance Theatre led the way; the expression of political and social ideas became important; mixed-media collaborations, performance art "happenings" and different environments for dance performance changed the established modern dance aesthetic. Innovators from this period include Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Meredith Monk, Lucinda Childs, Trisha Brown and Twyla Tharp. In Wuppertal, Germany, Pina Bausch explored similar ideas.

This era, often termed **Post-Modern Dance**, gave birth to a new technique, **contact improvisation**. The technique consists of the exploration of how bodies may move in relation to one another using everyday movement, the counterbalancing of weight and force, trust and instinctive anticipation. This is a technique that is also the basis for a dance/drama form known as Physical Theatre. South Africa has its own physical theatre company, the *First Physical Theatre Company*, based at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Contact improvisation is also an extremely useful technique when working with differently-abled or disabled dancers; it is a technique used by South Africa's *Remix Theatre Company* in many of its choreographies.

**Tap and jazz dance** developed from African-American vernacular music forms. **Tap dance** shows the early influence of Irish folk dance [particularly the Irish jig], English clog dances and the dances of Native-Americans and African-Americans. The rhythms tap dancers' feet make against the floor as they manipulate the small metal plates that are attached to tap shoes have an interesting history. The slaves and indentured workers brought to the United States from Africa were prohibited from using drums to accompany their dances, so they used other percussive sounds, stamps and claps and rhythms played on rasps or with bones or spoons, instead.

Tap dance became enormously popular in the early 20th century with the birth of ragtime and jazz music. In Harlem and San Francisco, the speakeasies, night-clubs and barrooms that were illegal because the drinking of alcohol was prohibited in the US at the time, were where the famous dancers performed. During the era of movie musicals of the 1940s and 50s, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers and Gene Kelly created their own famous tap styles. Tap dancing and musical theatre have always formed a winning combination, as the popularity of musicals such as "A Chorus Line" and "42nd Street" of the 1980s proves. In the 1990s, tap shows such as "Tap Dogs" and "Stomp" toured internationally to wild acclaim. In South Africa, a new form that combines tap dance and *pantsula* is developing, we call it *Tapsula*.

The origins of **Jazz dance** are found in the African-American, Afro-Cuban, Hindu and Haitian dance cultures. The rhythms and movements that are part of African-American musical culture, gospel music, spirituals, brass bands and the blues, were great influences on the development of jazz music and dance. The key elements of jazz music and dance are **syncopation, individual style and improvisation**.

Syncopation, a rhythm that accents a weak beat, and polyrhythm, the simultaneous combination of different rhythms, give jazz music and dance its excitement. The emphasis on improvisation and the expression of individual style provides us with many styles of jazz music and dance.

Jazz dance and musical theatre have always gone hand in hand. As jazz dance grew in popularity in Broadway shows and musicals, jazz technique was born and these more formalised techniques soon found their way into concert companies where they became blended with ballet and modern dance techniques. We often call this form **Modern Jazz Dance**. There are various well-known styles of Modern Jazz Dance named after their originators, Jack Cole, Luigi, Gus Giordiano, Matt Mattox and Bob Fosse.

Much of the dance that we see our favourite music stars and their backing casts perform on MTV is based on jazz dance. Indigenous South African musicals such as "Sarafina", based on the 1976 student uprising, and "African Footprint" combine traditional African dance with jazz and modern dance, whereas "Umoja" strives for a more authentically African experience.

As you can see, the boundaries between dance forms are becoming more and more fluid in our time. Practitioners of one form borrow from other forms to enrich and extend their own form and to make their choreographies more innovative. For example, in Spain, practitioners are incorporating moves derived from hip-hop into Flamenco dance, the exciting stamping and clapping dances of the Andalusian gypsies. In India, elements of modern and jazz dance are being combined with those of classical Indian dance in the lavish Bollywood movie musicals. The folk dances of Ireland have gained world-wide popularity over the last decade as a result of productions such as "Riverdance" and "Lord of the Dance" offering fresh, new theatrical life to traditional Irish dance forms.

In South Africa, traditional African dance is fused with modern and contemporary dance and called **Fusion Dance** or **Afrofusion**. *Moving Into Dance Mophatong* and *Jazzart Dance Theatre* are national leaders in the teaching and practice of this form. We also find an African Fusion genre where the different styles that the nations of Africa use to perform similar traditional dance movements are explored. We are very fortunate that audiences in the West, in Europe and the United States of America, are fascinated by African and Fusion dance. This provides us with exciting international performing opportunities. Many of those Americans whose ancestors were brought to the US as indentured workers and as slaves hundreds of years ago view the dances of Africa as an important part of their heritage and something that can bring them closer to their roots, severed all those years ago.

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# CLASSICAL BALLET

## How ballet evolved

### **Ballet History** (Refer to Introductory Overview)

The Italians brought ballet to France where the technique developed during the 1600's. Today French words are used in all parts of the world for the various steps and positions of classical ballet. Different ballet styles have developed in various countries over time. For example, the style that developed in the United States tends to be energetic and fast. Ballet in Russia is often forceful and showy and French ballet is generally pretty and decorative. Ballet dancers travel throughout the world and adopt different features of foreign styles. As a result of these international influences, all ballet is continually being broadened and enriched.

### **Principles of Classical Ballet**

- stance
- turn-out
- placing
- laws of balance
- basic rules of the head, legs, arms and body
- transference of weight
- co-ordination

Ballet creatively expresses the full range of human emotions through physical movements and gestures. The ballet dancers' technique requires certain skills that are perfected after many years of hard training. Ballet dancers perform many movements that are unnatural. When these movements are well executed, they tend to look natural and pleasing to the eye. Classical ballet is a strictly codified style of dance. It has many set movements which have names. This makes it different from most of the other styles where teachers have to rely on their kinaesthetic memory or the ability to remember movements.

Although most 20<sup>th</sup> century works are also based on stories from literature, many rely on emotions that arise when appropriate movements are set to music. These include the so-called abstract ballets 'Symphonic Variations' by the English choreographer Frederick Ashton and 'Serenade' and 'Agon', both of which are by the Russian-born American **George Balanchine**.

# GEORGE BALANCHINE

*"Movement must be self explanatory. If it isn't, it has failed"*

George Balanchine

## Biography

George Balanchine's real name was Georgi Melitonovitch Balanchivadze. He was born on 22 January 1904 in St. Petersburg, Russia. He was principally associated with the New York City Ballet where he was artistic director from 1934 until his death in 1983. During his life he married several women, some of which were initially dancers. None of his marriages produced any children.

Joan Cass in her book *Dancing Through History* (1993) describes the period between 1940 to 1970 as "The Golden Age of Modern Ballet". The period centered around a few dancer/ choreographers, one of which was George Balanchine.

## Dance Training

The son of a composer, Balanchine studied piano from the age of five. In 1914 he was accepted by the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg. There his principal teachers were P. Gerdt and Samuel Andreyanov. Balanchine graduated with honours from the Imperial Ballet School in 1921.

## Dance Career

After Balanchine finished school, he joined the "corps de ballet" of the ballet company attached to the Maryinski Theatre. At the same time he entered the Conservatory of Music where for three years he studied piano and theory. In 1924 Balanchine managed to leave the Soviet Union with a small touring company. The impresario, Serge Diaghilev (1872 – 1920 ) saw the group perform in Paris. He hired the dancers and appointed Balanchine as principal choreographer of the Ballet Russes in succession to Nijinska.

Since the name Balanchivadze was difficult to pronounce, Diaghilev shortened it to Balanchine.

## Career as choreographer

Balanchine choreographed ten ballets for Diaghilev. Two of his most important works were: "Apollo" and "Prodigal son", in which he first revealed his creed for classicism.

After Diaghilev's death the company (Diaghilev's Ballet Russes) was disbanded and Balanchine joined Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. For this company he created "La Concurrence" and "Cotillon". In "Cotillon" Balanchine revealed his sensitivity to the feelings of an adolescent girl. He often said, "Ballet is a woman." The female body inspired Balanchine. He had an ability to bring out special qualities of specific dancers.

In 1933, Balanchine choreographed *Mozartiana*. This work was one of Balanchine's first experiments in a plotless ballet and could be seen as a visualization of the music

In 1934 Balanchine was invited to America by Lincoln Kirstein.

Kirstein's idea was to develop a ballet company in America, fed with American dancers with a uniquely American repertory that was independent from those in Europe. Balanchine and Kirstein co founded The School of American Ballet and shortly thereafter, a professional company called the American Ballet. The studio space they used once belonged to Isadora Duncan. With the advent of World War 11 and due to lack of work the company moved to Hollywood, but soon collapsed.

Balanchine with the help of Kirstein, ran various small, unstable companies and choreographed works for more commercial organizations (He even got Stravinsky to compose a musical score for a Polka he choreographed for fifty elephants ) Balanchine also thrilled audiences with his choreography in various musical comedies on Broadway- *On Your Toes* - and films in Hollywood – *The Goldwyn Follies*.

In 1941, sponsored by the US State Department, Kirstein organized an eight-month tour of South America with dancers from the American Ballet and Ballet Caravan under the name American Ballet Caravan. Balanchine created for them two of his lasting masterpieces, "Concerto Barocco" and "Ballet Imperial".

With the end of the war, Balanchine and Kirsten founded the Ballet Society in 1946. So impressed by the performance of Balanchine's works and in particular his premiere of *Orpheus* ( 1945 ), the Management of The New York City Center, invited Kirsten and Balanchine to become the official ballet company of the center. The Ballet Society name changed to The New York City Ballet (1948). As the resident Choreographer, Balanchine was responsible for the distinctive style of the company.

The most outstanding feature of Balanchine's work is that he took classical technique as his base and subjected it to various inversions, "distortions", recantations and unexpected sequences of steps. His rigorous pure-dance approach caused his ballets to be criticized as mechanical, gymnastic and soulless by some people.

### Personal or artistic influences

Balanchine was the most influential ballet choreographer of the twentieth century. An outstanding feature of his choreography is its musicality. He was also often far in advance of his time in his selection of scores. Balanchine said that while still in Russia his major influences were **M. Petipa Fokine** and **Goleizovsky**: Fokine, particularly in "Chopiniana", and Goleizovsky who had the rare distinction at the time of using concert music and discarding plot – two later hallmarks of Balanchine's work.

### Artistic collaborations

- Igor Stravinsky (Russian Composer):  
The 35 ballets which Balanchine choreographed to music by Stravinsky were the product of a unique collaboration that spanned two continents and five decades.  
Balanchine was Diaghilev's last major choreographer, and his 2 most important ballets for Diaghilev, were to music by Stravinsky: *Apollo* and *Prodigal Son*.  
Balanchine collaborated closely with Stravinsky from the time of *Apollo* until the composer's death.
- Lincoln Kirstein (American Writer):  
It was due to Kirstein's drive and enthusiasm that Balanchine settled in the USA; for over 40 years Kirstein dedicated himself to the creation of an American classic style through the ballets created by Balanchine.

**Significant achievements** (what was regarded as new and innovative in the choreography):

- Primacy of dance (usually plotless but not necessarily themeless or without emotion)
- Use of distinguished music - he would suit the dance style to the music at hand. The musicality became the script for his works
- Use of a large ensemble
- Dislike of stars (particularly of the visiting guest artist variety).
- Little if anything of costumes and décor.

Balanchine's ballets may be divided into the following five categories:

- Balanchine classical: *Apollo; Agon; Ballet Imperial*
- Traditional : *Swan Lake* (Act II)
- Romantic : *Serenade*
- Avant-Garde: *Four Temperaments*.
- Dramatic : *Prodigal Son*

In 1975 Balanchine was inducted as a member of the entertainment Hall of Fame in Hollywood, the first ever choreographer to have received this honour.

He went on to achieve many awards culminating in the being granted the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983, the highest honour that can be bestowed on a civilian in the United States of America.

### Contribution towards the development of Classical Dance in America

Emphasis should be placed on the fact that Balanchine became one of the dominant forces supporting Neoclassicism and his subsequent influence on and contribution made to Classical Dance world-wide.

In 1954 Balanchine staged a full-evening "Nutcracker", his most ambitious project to date, in the manner of the Russian classical spectacles.

In 1963 the Ford Foundation granted \$7 million to the New York City Ballet and its affiliate academy, School of American Ballet, to be spread over 10 years. This was tacit recognition that Balanchine was the most vital force in United States ballet. With his new resources Balanchine began to mount more costly, larger works.

The presence of Balanchine, both as creative artist and inspiring leader, has always given the company (NYCB) its distinctive profile and forward momentum. In his classes (he taught frequently) and in his ballets he required a mastery of classical technique, which he then heightened, quickened, streamlined and gave new accents to. He was known for his supreme musicality.

Balanchine's place in the history of choreographic development in America is of great importance. His streamlining of academic technique and theories on stage pattern, design and the relationship between music and dance, taught young American dancers to re-examine this basic material for themselves.

### **Selected Works: APOLLO; AGON**

#### **1. APOLLO (*Apollon Musagète*)**

##### **Theme/ Plot/ Scenario/ Brief synopsis**

A Ballet in four scenes. First presented in the United States by the American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 27 April 1937.

##### **Synopsis:**

###### **Scene I**

On a high rock in Delos, an Aegean island, on a starry night, Leto gives birth to Apollo. The boy god, at the foot of the rock (represented in later versions by steps leading up to a platform), frees himself from his swaddling clothes and begins to live and communicate with the world. A lute is presented to him by two handmaidens. This is a sign of his future greatness in music.

###### **Scene 2:**

Apollo, at the center of the stage with this lute, in a regal variation. The three Muses, Calliope, Polyhymnia, and Terpsichore, approach and do him homage. Apollo assumes their leadership, asking each one of them to name the symbol of her art. To Calliope, muse of poetry, he gives a tablet, to Polyhymnia, muse of acting, he gives a mask, and to Terpsichore, muse of singing and dancing, a lyre. The three Muses dance with their gifts, and then Apollo performs another "ideal" variation. He is joined by Terpsichore and later by the other two, and leads them towards Mount Parnassus, ascending the rock at Zeus's summons and severing the last tie with his mother Leto.

##### **Movement Vocabulary**

The choreography is based on the classical tradition, but introducing all kinds of different steps, variations, and attitudes in the dance composition for one male dancer and three ballerinas, with completely new lifts, syncopations, elevations, and athletic movements.

##### **Set and Costume Design**

Stewart Chaney designed the scenery and costumes. The dancers wear typically Grecian styled outfits

##### **The Music: By Igor Stravinsky**

The score of *Apollon Musagète* is written for strings only and is consistently classical in style: dry harmonies, an abundance of perfect chords, rare polytonal superimposition. Those are borrowed from the past (from Lully and Delibes), but divested of all historical reference to achieve an abstract purity.

### **Typical Period Features**

Greek culture is indirectly redefined in terms of absolute vitalism, with little stress on character. Everything is contrived with great simplicity and immediacy.

### **Innovative characteristics**

*Apollon Musagète* combines traditional balletic style with the geometrical austerity of modernism, an illustrious example of the art that was to be known as neoclassical

*Apollon Musagète* is still staged throughout the world.

## **2. AGON**

### **Theme/ Plot/ Scenario/ Brief synopsis**

This is a one-act ballet. First presented in New York, New York City Center, November 27, 1957.

AGON is a Greek word meaning contest. The ballet has no story (plotless, abstract), but it presents a series of games of dancing skill in which the dancers use their physical strength, daring, wit and humor.

The ballet begins in silence with four men on stage. Gradually all 12 players are introduced, as if in a chase, before each group's dance display. The contest continues with trios and duets until the players gradually disperse, finishing, as it began, with a quartet of men.

### **Movement Vocabulary**

The dancing changes many of the shapes usually seen in ballet. Instead of long, straight lines and gentle curves of the limbs, the wrists and ankles flex to make angular shapes, knees turn in and limbs stab the air. The movements are unpredictable and full of surprising changes of direction.

### **Set and Costume design**

Décor (lighting): Nananne Porcher.

The costumes are black and white practice clothes and the action takes place on a bare stage

### **The Music: Igor Stravinsky**

In 1957 Stravinsky presented *Agon*, a score on which he had been working since 1953. This work was the first official link between ballet and serial technique. A slender thread connects this production with his more popular neoclassical works. The alternation of tonal and modal passages with others that are strictly dodecaphonic presents a coherent portrait of Stravinsky's many-sided personality.

### **Typical period features**

The original idea for *Agon* came from Stravinsky, who, in his own serial technique composed a dance suite inspired by some dances described in a French manual of the seventeenth century: single and double *sarabandes*, *gaillardes*, and *branles* in a succession of rhythms called *combat* (literally *Agon*),

### **Innovative characteristics**

The drama of the ballet is in the relationship between the dancers and the music. Tension and drama is created through the performance of the steps, extreme physical movement and difficult balances. Contrast is shown through smooth, stretched movements and quick, snapped movements and symmetrical or asymmetrical shapes and patterns.



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*Apollo* [www.voiceofdance.com](http://www.voiceofdance.com)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE

When looking at the development of Contemporary dance there are two things that need to be understood. The first is the meaning of the word 'contemporary' and other is an understanding of what was happening in the world of dance at the time. Contemporary means "*of the times, belonging to the same times, modern or ultra-modern in style or design*" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary; 1979). Therefore we find the term contemporary relating to art, music and writing and encompassing works created across many decades. The works created by contemporary artists reflect the times in which their creators lived and are an expression of the world the artists lived in. Contemporary dance developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with most of the early Pioneers having been born in the late 1800.

What was happening in the dance world at that time? The dominant dance form of the time was Ballet which had a long and interesting history of its own. Show dancing (vaudeville) and musicals were also very popular and these dance forms attracted the audiences in the early 1900.

Ballet has a history of companies and traditions which are passed down from one generation to another. The subject matter Ballet dealt with was centred around unrealistic stories, romantic fairy tales and the different dances that were repeated in almost the exact same way each time they were performed all over the world. Elaborate sets and costumes were used and the audience expected to be transported out of their ordinary lives to a place of romance and beauty.

Contemporary dance, however, is a study of individuals and their ideas and influences and how these made an impression on the generations that followed. It is the history of strong minded and independent individuals who created works according to their times and their personalities. These individuals found they needed new movement to express their ideas. Most of the pioneers of Contemporary dance wanted to express real emotion and address real life issues with movement and found the existing dance forms limiting. As each individual established a style or technique their students would break away and create something new, and so it would continue. The following people are some of the most influential in the development of Contemporary dance.

**Isadora Duncan** and **Ruth St. Denis** were born at a similar time (1877/1878) on opposite sides of the United States of America. Both were born to strong, dominant and liberated mothers who influenced their interest in the arts in general. Both worked briefly in show business before travelling to Europe and both were influenced by another American dancer who was very popular in Paris at the time, **Loie Fuller**. All the pioneers in Contemporary dance have their origins in the work of Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis as the rebelliousness and individuality of these women influenced all who followed. These women expressed themselves freely and lived a liberated life style few other women in their time could. At the time women lived under the strict conventions of the Victorian times where they were corseted, disenfranchised, and had little access to education and jobs.

**Loie Fuller** (1862-1928) was born in America. She had very little formal dance training and her interests lay more in the area of stage craft, most particularly stage lighting. She arrived in Paris in 1892 and she was a great success from her first performance at the Folies-Bergere. Her success was due to her spectacular use of coloured lighting playing on and through the folds of the silky fabrics she used for her costumes. At the time, scientists were just beginning to study the refraction of light and the Impressionist painters were experimenting with light refraction in their work. Fuller invented many new pieces of lighting equipment and experimented with directing light onto the stage from the sides and from above. Her innovations were a closely guarded secret and their value still receives recognition today.

Fuller manipulated large pieces of light-weight fabric often forming extensions of her body with the attachments of sticks. With these she depicted natural phenomenon such as water, wind, fire, flowers and insects. She used very few dance steps and did not tell stories. One of her most famous dances was *Serpentine*. She toured widely and returned to her native America more than once. Although she began

to create group choreography and opened a school in 1908 neither of these lasted. However, her inventions in stage craft had a lasting effect and were not matched until the 1960s.

**Isadora Duncan's** (1877-1927) influence on the changes happening in dance in her times has had a far reaching impact. She was born in America and her early training included lessons in Irish dancing, character dance and a few ballet lessons. She began her career as a vaudeville performer doing 'something with skirts and frills and kicks' (Duncan 1955). She worked in New York with Augustin Daly's company but found this work very unsatisfying. When she had saved enough money she set sail for Europe on a cattle boat.

Duncan believed that dance should come from and be an extension of the spirit and she rejected anything she felt was artificial. She felt that her ideas on dance were best captured in the ancient Greek civilisation and she performed in a basic Greek tunic. This costume shocked audiences at the time as much of her body was revealed – she was barefoot, barelegged, bare-armed, with her hair flowing. She used everyday movements rather than high kicks and leaps and her strength lay in her ability to visualise the music in movement. Her work was usually performed to the music of the great composers such as Wagner and Beethoven. Her choreography was simple, usually improvised and seldom repeated. It is said that she had a strong stage presence that 'hypnotised' audiences.

Duncan opened schools in Berlin and Moscow but neither met with long term success. This was partly due to a lack of funding and the fact that she was seldom at the schools.

Despite huge success abroad, from France to Russia, Duncan was never very popular in her native America. This was attributed less to her style of dance and more to her lifestyle and beliefs. Duncan used dance to make political and social statements and it was her views on communism that most alienated her American audiences. On her last visit to America in 1922, dressed in a red tunic, she performed *La Marche Slav*, a celebration of the Russian revolution in an attempt to break down the growing opposition in the US to the new political power in Russia. The newspapers branded her as 'an agent of Moscow' (Rosemont 1981) and many of her performances were cancelled. She vowed never to return and due to her untimely death she never did. Duncan's bizarre death – she died accidentally, strangled by her scarf which got caught in the wheel of her open topped car – in 1928 was almost as famous and dramatic as her life.

**Ruth St. Denis** (1879-1968) was born and brought up on a farm in New Jersey in America where she had a very free childhood full of outdoor pursuits. As a child she took ballet lessons and like Duncan and Fuller she began her career in vaudeville and conventional theatre. She moved to Europe where she established herself as a dancer. St. Denis believed that dance was very much a spiritual experience. She was a very beautiful, supple and sensual performer. Her arms were so flexible that, while in Germany a group of doctors examined her to ascertain if she indeed had bones like everyone else!

St. Denis was interested in Oriental dance forms and her inspiration came from this part of the world. Her famous dance *Radha* was based on a Hindu legend. She wore a gauze skirt with a bare midriff and a jewelled top and she stained her skin brown. Although she attempted to costume the piece in the correct way the movements were not in the least authentic. However St. Dennis was the first American to use oriental themes in a profound manner. Her dancing was sensual, her back bends and slow high kicks were remarkable and sensational but she was never regarded as vulgar.

St Denis's real fame came on her return to America and her connection with her partner **Ted Shawn** (1891-1972). Ted Shawn was a Theological student when he contracted diphtheria, the treatment of which left his legs paralysed. He took dance lessons to strengthen his legs and it is said that he recovered full movement due to his tremendous will power and determination. During this period he saw Ruth St. Denis perform and was greatly inspired by her. Over time he became her pupil, partner and eventually her husband. Together they opened the Denishawn School in California. The school was a way for them to generate funds for their performance work and it provided them with a constant flow of trained dancers. The school was like no other dance school before it; students lived on the premises, there was a swimming pool and tennis courts and there was a very holistic approach to teaching. Many

different styles of dance were taught from ballet to Japanese sword dances. In time, the Denishawn schools were franchised all over the country. The Denishawn dance troupe was the largest and most successful touring dance company in America due to the brilliant combination of the two main role players. Ted Shawn's strong organisational skills and clean cut, robust style of dance and choreography was excellently complimented by Ruth St. Denis's beauty, sensuality and spirituality.

In the early 1930s the two split and pursued solo careers. St. Denis created an all female dance group and focused more and more on religious themes. Shawn opened a school on a farm called Jacobs Pillow where he worked on dispelling the common notion that dance was effeminate. He worked with an all male group and ran courses at the farm. Shawn wrote many books on dance and won many awards during his lifetime for the development of dance, particularly in the USA. He was responsible for organizing many tours of visiting dance companies to America and had a big hand in popularising dance in that country.

**Martha Graham** (1894-1991) an American dancer began her career as a student and performer at Denishawn where she worked mainly with Ted Shawn. She began her training at the late age of 22 and after 7 years at Denishawn she left to pursue her own ideas. She moved to New York and her first pieces of choreography were inspired by strong, dynamic women of history and literature.

The Martha Graham School of Modern Dance opened in 1927. The technique Graham established and is still taught at the school, grew out of movements she created for her choreography. As her technique was taught and re-taught by many others, a code developed and it became systemised. Graham's technique included pelvic contractions and 'rugged' floor work. She emphasised the relationship of movement with the ground and used gravity as a tool to produce beautiful falls and recoveries. Movement came from the centre of the body and dancers worked bare foot. Graham believed that movement should express the inner feelings of the dancer, that dance must speak for itself and it must have something to say.

Martha Graham continued to work well into her seventies and she has left a tremendous body of work behind. Her more famous works are *Lamentation* (1933) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944). Her methods are taught in schools all over the world today and her style and ideas have been most influential in the world of contemporary dance.

**Alvin Ailey** (1931-1989) As perhaps the best known American choreographer in many parts of the world, Ailey's artistic influence came from his striving to bridge the gap between modern dance and the general public in the United States and abroad.

Ailey had deep rooted memories of black American culture and segregation, especially from his childhood. While moving around often as a child, his one stable point was the Baptist Church. *Revelations* (1960) considered to be his most famous piece of choreography, is certainly embedded in the Black Church.

*Revelations* is seen to be a tribute to the triumph of courage and determination over adversity.

Ailey began to take dancing lessons with Katherine Dunham, but his most important influence and training came from Lester Horton, who taught in Los Angeles. 1958 marked the formation of his own company: The American Dance Theatre. The company toured as far afield as the Soviet Union with great success. The image of the company changed in 1964 when Ailey realized that a kind of inverted racism was being practised and aimed at presenting the company as a multiracial company which would truly reflect American art. In 1972 the company name changed to The Alvin Ailey Dance Company.

Ailey's biggest contribution to dance was the way he merged popular dance styles and the experiences and beliefs of Black people with great theatrical skills.

**Merce Cunningham** (1919- ) is an American dancer and choreographer. He began his dance career with tap lessons but once he moved to New York he trained at the Graham school and at the School of American Ballet. He was influenced by the avant-garde composer John Cage early in his life and this has had a profound impact on him and his work and involved many collaborations between the two

men. Cunningham joined the Martha Graham Company in 1940 and performed for her for five years. In 1953 he began his company the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

Cunningham is constantly exploring. His work has had a far-reaching impact on contemporary dance. He believes that dance exists for itself rather than for expressive content. He eliminated the dependence of dance on music by letting the dance coexist with the sound. He developed the idea of "chance" choreography which breaks away from movement sequences which are expected. His works have been created for spaces other than the theatre, such as museums, gymnasiums and in the open air. He has been instrumental in the development of computer programs for dance and has created many video and film dances.

**Twyla Tharp** (1941- ) grew up in Southern California where she studied ballet, contemporary and jazz. She was trained by both Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham and was profoundly influenced by both of them. She spent a great deal of time reading about the earlier women pioneers of contemporary dance as she "tried to absorb their power and authority". (Tharp 1992). She first danced professionally with the Paul Taylor Company in 1963 and in 1965 she founded her own company which has existed in one form or another since then. She has developed a style which is known for its blend of traditional technique and quirky gesture, its clear structure and consistent entertainment. Her work goes back to the basics of running, walking and skipping that belong to everyone not just dancers. She combines ballet technique with contemporary technique and her choreography is intensely personal. She is famous for the wit and humour present in most of her work.

Tharp had created over 70 works for her company and she has choreographed for other contemporary and ballet companies. She has also choreographed for film and for Broadway shows.

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# MARTHA GRAHAM

## Historical Context

It has frequently been said that historical context shapes all artists to some degree and by experiencing the events of the relevant era one can identify links between the climate in which artists find themselves and their work.

Martha Graham was born into an actively and rapidly advancing world and lived during an age of fresh theories regarding politics, the human mind, sexuality, science and art to mention but a few.

The Industrial Revolution which began in Britain in the 1700s and thrived during the early 1800s changed life for all in the increasingly industrialised countries. While the revolution began in Great Britain spreading to Europe and North America during the 1800s, it placed increased emphasis on industry and production bringing wealth to many and spreading the desire for learning and knowledge. In the United States of America, its development had been delayed by the Civil War (1861 – 1865) where the issue was the liberation of slaves. Peace, however, brought prosperity and a stream of immigrants from Europe who brought with them the dances of their respective countries. From Spain came the Pavana, Fandango, Bolero and others; from France came an elaborated gavotte, minuet, quadrille and a remodeled ballet. All these mingled with the dances of the liberated black slaves and the folk dances of the western country. Great artists like George Gershwin who wrote the folk opera “Porgy and Bess”, emphasised the local scene and even the Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini, wrote the opera “Girl of the Golden West”, first performed in 1911. A ground swell of patriotism was developing with a glorification of American history, dispelling the bitterness of the civil war. The patriotism involved all American citizens culminating in the United States of America joining the Allies in the First World War against Germany (1914 – 1918) and popular marching songs reflected this patriotism eg. “The Yanks are Coming” and “Overthere”.

In 1900 Sigmund Freud startled the world with his “Interpretation of Dreams” followed by his “Theory of Sexuality”. For the first time, the complexities of the human mind were being approached analytically. In 1881, Pablo Reiz Picasso was born and while still young, revolutionised painting by introducing a style showing influences from then primitive Africa. He also designed décor and costumes for the ballet with dramatic effect.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Charles Darwin formulated and elaborated the theory of evolution and man’s descent from the ape.

On the world scene, interest was suddenly aroused in the East when in 1904, Japan defeated the Russian Navy and the Far East was opened to the West. The bright colours of the cloth which came from Asia and Japan found its way on to the stage in the United States while again Puccini aroused compassion in his audiences with his opera “Madam Butterfly”, first performed in 1904.

The 20th Century saw the development of a concept of self which went against the then present standards of beauty. Such a rebirth required a return to nature and all that is primitive.

Within dramatic circles, emphasis transferred to expression of a personal kind.

The concept of self-expression emerged in the dance world, as well. Isadora Duncan, who maintained a keen interest in the writings of Nietzsche, believed that every creature moves according to its nature and encouraged her pupils to initiate their own individual movements in order to express themselves sincerely.

The late 19th and early 20th Century was a time in which physical culture was strongly in vogue. Physical activity, such as bicycling, athletics and gymnastics grew popular among both sexes. With the invention of nylon stockings and various cosmetics (both effective and ineffective) came a crusade-like interest in one’s physical appearance.

During this period the writings of both Delsarte and Dalcroze received great attention. Both men were musicians who unintentionally affected the dance scene hugely. Delsarte was a posture and pantomime philosopher who believed that all artists have a Trinitarian basis. According to his writings, the three divisions of the human; intellectual, emotional and physical could be channeled through the three natural laws; time, motion and space.

Delsarte created various exercises intended to develop freedom and relaxation in each part of the body. The system aims to reeducate parts of the body to intelligibly express emotions and ideas. After Delsarte's death in 1871 his system lost popularity in Europe. It did, however, gain a strong foothold in Graham's motherland, America.

All the above certainly had a major influence on the American choreographer and dance icon, Martha Graham. She choreographed dances which were inspired by myths, legends, history politics and aspects of life including the mind.

## **Biography**

"My childhood years were a mixture of light and dark"

Martha Graham

Martha Graham was born in Allegheny, a small town outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on 11 May 1894. Like Isadora Duncan, Graham struggled with the conflicting pulls of Puritanism and paganism. Her father was a puritanical Scottish doctor who was fascinated by how people used their bodies. He treated medical cases and based his diagnoses on the way in which his patients moved. When Graham became a teacher, she adopted her father's dictum: "the body never lies".

Athletic as a young girl, Graham did not find her calling until she was in her teens.

It was three years after moving to California that Graham's passion for dancing was ignited. She persuaded her theatre-wary father to take her to see a performance by Ruth St Denis at the Mason Opera House in Los Angeles. Graham remembers:

"I went to the theatre... with a dark dress and a hat my father had bought for me. He pinned a corsage of violets to my grey dress and that night my fate was sealed. The curtain parted. The audience was still. Miss Ruth was doing a program that included her famous solos – The Cobras, Radha and Nautch. Also on the program was her famous Egypta."

Ruth St Denis' performance had a profound impact upon Graham. It inspired her to become a dancer. Graham's father did not approve of theatre as a career and she could not commence her training until after his death. Consequently, Graham only began her formal dance training in her early 20s, fatefully old for someone intending to pursue a career in professional dance.

From 1913 to 1916 Graham studied theatre at the University of Cumnock. In the summer of 1916 and with no formal dance training to mention, 22-year-old Graham enrolled at the Denishawn school. The school had been founded a year earlier by Ruth St Denis and her partner Ted Shawn. In 1923 Graham left the Denishawn school and began to work in experimental dance technique that would revolutionize theories of movement in all of the performing arts. In 1948 she married Eric Hawkins who was one of the dancers in her company, but the marriage was short lived.

Despite her age, Graham went on to dance well into the 60's. Even after her retirement in 1969, she continued to choreograph and tour until her death in 1991.

## **Dance Career**

It was at the Denishawn School that she received her basic training. Although she was a late beginner by dance standards, her determination, intelligence and her taut lean body caught the attention of Ted Shawn

He chose Graham for the role of the 'Toltec' maiden in Xochtil (1920). The story is based on a Mexican legend in which the maiden protects her honour against a drunk and angry Aztec emperor. Graham and Shawn danced opposite each other in the leading roles and the piece granted Graham widespread exposure.

Xochtil was said to be “the first Native American ballet” but the elaborate sets and Oriental-inspired costumes gave away its identity as a Denishawn work. It was described as “a series of barbarically gorgeous pieces” and all too soon Graham tired of Denishawn’s “weakling exoticism of a transplanted Orientalism”. She rejected the decorative style, traditionalism and romanticism characteristic of Denishawn’s works. Graham felt that “... the old forms could not give voice to the more fully awakened man”.

Graham left Denishawn and moved to New York. She led an exodus from Denishawn and soon various Denishawn dancers as well as their musical director and accompanist, Louis Horst, left to join her.

After moving to New York in 1923, Graham acquired a job with a Broadway revue: the Greenwich Village Follies. She danced in the revue for two years and later referred to the dances she performed as “sexy little things”. There she gained a reputation for her ballet ballads.

In 1926, after 10 years of dancing for others, Graham performed her first solo concert.

“The first concert was held at the 48th Street Theatre on April 18th, 1926. I danced solos to the music of Schuman, Debussy, Ravel and others. Louis Horst was my accompanist... I did many dances, and everything I did was influenced by Denishawn. There was an audience. They came because I was such a curiosity - a woman who could do her own work.”

Martha Graham

While establishing her own company and developing her individual technique Graham supported herself by teaching at two music schools in New York: the Eastman School of Music in Rochester and the John Murray Anderson School of Music. By 1927, her own company required her full attention and she retired that year from the faculties of both those schools.

The founding of the Martha Graham School of Modern Dance on April 26, 1926, did not mark the end of Graham’s dancing career. Throughout her life, her dance and choreographic careers remained intertwined. Graham continued to dance persistently with her company until the age of 76, by which time her onstage appearances had degenerated into grisly caricature. Graham sought consolation in alcohol as she became aware of her diminishing creative energy and the fact that her body could no longer cope with the demands of dance.

### **Choreographic Career**

“Thematically, all (Graham’s) works stem from too [sic.] great, interrelated preoccupations: that of mystery, religion, myth, man’s rootedness in the earth and supernatural, and that of the psyche, the inner conflicts that set man apart from nature and God.”

Marcia Siegel

Martha Graham choreographed over 170 works during her lifetime, most of which were created specifically for her own company. Her choreographic career affirmed that dance could be a medium of personal expression for the choreographer as well as the dancer. For much of her life, Graham was both.

Graham’s choreographic career had a lasting impact on modern dance, both in America and abroad. Although Graham did not invent modern dance, she came to embody it. Graham changed the way performers around the world moved.

“Life today is nervous, sharp, and zigzag. This is what I aim for in my dances.”

Martha Graham

When Graham first left Denishawn she turned away not only from classical ballet (a form she found too rigid) but the styles of Duncan and St Denis, as well. Graham longed to “make visible the interior landscape” of the heart and could not do so with existing styles.



The style of Graham's dances was modern and mostly socially conscious. Initially, there were no sets or fancy costumes, nothing soft and pretty. Graham's works were everything that Denishawn's works were not.

Graham was concerned with the tensions and sufferings of the human mind. Her mission was to explore emotion through movement. Initially, her choreography returned to actions such as running, walking and skipping. Later, highly theatrical themes emerged. Graham's pieces grew more and more ambitious. She took risks creating new steps and creating works to modern music. Graham used angular stances, explosive and stylized gestures. She used abstract stage settings, often designed by Isamu Noguchi.

Graham sought to integrate motifs and innovations in modern art and psychology in dance. Drawing on the work by Freud and Jung, she attempted to blend abstract movements with emotional states. The themes of Graham's pieces range from Native American rituals to mythologized American history and to her personal response to newspaper headlines and current machine technology. She took a strong political stance during the 1930's when she created pieces reflecting her support for the Spanish Government fighting against Fascism.

The creation of Appalachian Spring in 1944 marks the beginning of a different period. It is considered one of her most popular works because it captures the essence of America. After 1944, Graham used subjects from Greek mythology as the basis for new pieces.

Many believe that Graham's insistence to remain a dancer and choreographer for as long as at all possible, was detrimental to her company. This prevented younger soloists from performing her roles in signature pieces.

The last complete work created by Graham was Maple Leaf Rag (1990) to music by Scott Joplin. She was working on The Eye of the Goddess for the Olympics in Barcelona when she passed away.

### **Personal and Artistic Influences**

Ruth St Denis lies at the very root of Graham's fascination with dance. St Denis' Oriental studies influenced some of her early works.

Her father's belief that "the body never lies" or "movement never lies" was something Graham firmly believed in and this notion was manifested in some of her works.

Another influential male in Graham's life was the American pianist, composer, writer and teacher, Louis Horst. Over their many years working together, Horst and Graham became good friends. Horst maintained a keen interest in the music of Satie and Kodály and introduced Graham to challenging scores.

### **Martha Graham Technique**

By 1930, Graham had begun to identify a system of movement and discovered new principles of choreography. Based on her interpretation of the Delsartean principle of tension and relaxation, Graham identified a method of breathing and impulse control she dubbed "contraction and release". "Contraction and release" became the slogan words of the Graham technique.

Graham compiled a system of exercises that provided the equivalent of a daily ballet class in a traditional ballet company, for her modern dancers. Students began on the floor with breathing, contractions, leg extensions and general stretches. This was followed by bends, lifts, hip swings and turns performed standing upright. Traveling movements, such as walking running and skipping were then rehearsed, followed by what Graham described as "a series of falls forward, side and back. In no fall does the body remain on the floor, but assumes an upright position as part of the exercise." My dancers fall so they may rise."

The floor serves the same purpose as the ballet dancer's barre; it eliminates the problem of balance. Graham's technique is based on the principles that the back is the source of movement with particular emphasis on the lower back and the pelvis. From the impulse begun in the back, come the movement of the arms and legs. The "contraction and release" and the "spiral" involve the back as the source of movement.

At the centre of Graham's technique lies the control of posture as obtained through control of the breath. Graham's fundamental principles of contraction and release are simply illustrated in a full breath:

"If you breathe out through your teeth as hard as you can and then notice what's happened to your shoulders and your pelvis and your back, that's what contraction is. Then if you breathe in and see how the back straightens and centers itself that is release."

Graham's technique gave rise to her creative vocabulary and the international vocabulary of modern dance. To this day, the Martha Graham technique is practiced throughout the world.

### **Artistic Collaborations**

Graham's close friend, Louis Horst, regularly collaborated with her. Horst taught Graham about musical form and encouraged her to use the work of contemporary composers. He created several scores for Graham, including *Primitive Mysteries* (1931), *Frontier* (1935) and *El Penitente* (1940). Horst left the Martha Graham Company in 1948.

In addition to working with Horst, Graham worked with many famous composers and talented artists, including Isamu Noguchi, Aaron Copland and Alexander Calder. Isamu Noguchi, a Japanese-American sculptor and set designer, designed sets which Graham incorporated into the choreography of her works. Noguchi is arguably the leading designer of the 20th century.

### **Significant Achievements**

Graham's revolutionary dance technique is arguably her greatest achievement. It had a forceful impact on all branches of the contemporary theatre and established Graham as the person whose life made the single greatest contribution to modern dance.

She encouraged awareness of the human body and the inherent mystery that it possesses. Graham codified an effective language for modern dance, accessible to following generations.

In 1976, Martha Graham became the first dance personality to receive the Presidential Medal for Freedom. The award, presented to Graham by President Gerald R Ford, is the highest possible honour for an American civilian.

Graham also received the French Legion of Honour in 1979 and the Kennedy Centre Honours Award in recognition of her significant contributions to American Culture through the performing arts.

Graham trained many successful artists: Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Michal Baryshnikov, Rudolph Nureyev and Madona.

### **Selected Works: APPALACHIAN SPRING and LAMENTATION**

#### **1. APPALACHIAN SPRING**

##### **Synopsis**

*Appalachian Spring* (1944) is a dance of approximately 20 minutes. It was choreographed by Martha Graham during her "American Period". The dance is intended for the stage but has subsequently been filmed for retail purposes.

The plot of *Appalachian Spring* is simple and touches on the primal issues of marriage, survival and eternal regeneration as suggested by spring. *Appalachian Spring* is set in the early nineteenth century in the hills of Pennsylvania and tells the story of a young pioneer and his soon-to-be wife taking possession of their new home.

The young bride-to-be and her groom experience joy and apprehension at the brink of their life together. An older neighbour, the Pioneer Woman, shares her insights on life. A Revivalist and his barnyard-hen-like Followers warn the couple of the fearful aspects of human fate. The piece concludes with the couple quietly but well established in their new home.

### **Costume and Set Design**

The costumes for *Appalachian Spring* are all of a period and depict the frontier at the change of the century.

Traditionally, *Appalachian Spring* is danced barefoot, save the Revivalist who wears a broad hat, a long jacket, dark trousers and dark shoes. The revivalist's black costume hints at his austere nature. His four female Followers wear costumes identical both in colour and design. They wear long dresses that extend to mid-calf, blouses and bonnets. Their uniform clothing reflects their collective identity.

The Bride wears a slightly different dress to the Followers. Her costume is made in neutral colours and the dress is long-sleeved. She wears no blouse, nor a bonnet. Her Groom wears trousers, a waistcoat and a tie. His clothing is made up of earthy tones, which reflect his tenderness and humility. The Pioneer Woman's costume is the most commanding of all the costumes in *Appalachian Spring*. It reflects her status as a wise and revered older woman. The garment is a dominant red.

The set of *Appalachian Spring* was designed by Isamu Nogochi. He suggested the set be of a simple homestead. With a few basic pieces, Nogochi creates a stark set that surprisingly befits the theme of *Appalachian Spring* and allows the dancers to move easily through the set.

### **Lighting and Music**

Lighting plays a very minor role in *Appalachian Spring*. The lighting is used only to create a naturalistic impression of being in a homestead in Pennsylvania. Neither special effects nor techniques are implemented.

The process of acquiring music for *Appalachian Spring* was a laborious and fruitful exercise. Martha Graham asked composer Aaron Copland to create music for her. She presented him with a scenario for which he then composed the music. He scored the music for 13 instruments, as that was the number of instruments that could be accommodated at the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress, where the premiere was to take place.

It was Graham who suggested a title for the work, which Copland had simply entitled "Ballet for Martha". As it so often happened, Graham's idea stemmed from poetry. This time it was the work of Hart Crane. The poem had nothing to do with the dance but the name stuck all the same.

The three ballet scores Copland composed all make use of old folk melodies. Copland adopted a Shaker hymn, *Simple Gifts*, which is the basis for a series of variations towards the end of the composition. The background tune generates a sense of a new world, an open frontier and hardy settlers.

Copland's composition is most fitting and Graham has choreographed a piece which beautifully expresses the plot. Both the music and the choreography arouse a sense of courage, vigor, hope and faith – characteristics which Americans are fond of associating themselves with. So, the final work could be said to address the average American and express common aspirations.

### **How is *Appalachian Spring* innovative?**

*Appalachian Spring* is the first and most popular dance from Graham's "American Period". It is a successful work that succinctly summarizes many of Graham's general innovations.

The styles and movements are typical of the Martha Graham technique. The movements take place on many levels – there are leaps and jumps, gliding steps and movements that take place on the floor. There are balances and counterbalances during the duet between the Bride and Groom.

The Pioneer Woman is an independent and commanding figure. Originally played by Graham, this role is a typical Graham innovation. Unlike the heroines of traditional ballets – Willis, sleepy princesses and

schizophrenic swans – Graham’s heroines are powerful, wise and dominant creatures. Graham was the Pioneer Woman of Modern Dance. She, having traveled the path of modern dance, made it ready for following generations and ever since has lead us with wisdom and guidance through her methods, innovations and technique.

## **2. LAMENTATION**

### **Synopsis**

Graham’s works from this period were focused on emotional themes. The primary theme of *Lamentation* is grief and how grief can affect one’s mind, body and soul. Through *Lamentation* she wishes to express that grief is universal and that one should not be ashamed to grieve. We all experience grief at some point of our life.

This solo piece was originally performed by Martha Graham in 1927.

The structure of the dance is divided into three stages of emotional states.

the dancer goes through a period of disbelief

this is followed by the climax in which she is faced with reality and she battles with emotions of anger and sadness

finally she turns to those around her to console her, but realises that in this comfortless world, she can only find piece within herself. She must endure this period of anguish and grieving on her own.

### **Costume**

The dancer is costumed in a tube of purple stretch jersey fabric, symbolic of her own body. Only her face, hands and feet are visible.

Every sharp angular movement that the dancer makes is a manifestation of the terrible war being waged within her. Rocking stiffly from side to side, she tugs, pulls and pushes at the confining fabric with her hands, elbows, knees and shoulders to express her emotions.

### **Set Design and lighting**

The set consists of only a wooden bench on an otherwise empty stage.

The lighting is simple but effective in creating the sense that the grieving woman is alone and suffering.

The stage is darkly lit except for a spot-light on the dancer.

### **Music**

The score, an anguished piano piece by Zoltan Kodaly, plays a vital role in setting the intensely agonizing atmosphere. As she begins with the emotions surging within her the chords that were originally gentle, become more dissonant. Building up to the climax in which she faces reality are a number of strong dramatic dischords and a series of menacing scales. The cacophony grows into a frenzy of atonal scales. The music eventually subsides as she realises she is to deal with her grief on her own.

### **How *Lamentation* was innovative**

The movements in this work were a far cry from the traditional graceful, flowing movements of the classical ballet or the eclectic dances of Denishawn. Graham at this period was experimenting with her new dance technique based on the fundamental movements of contraction and release. Within this piece she indeed succeeds in producing a new vocabulary of movement that “makes visible the interior landscape”. This original technique as well as the philosophy behind her work is what make this piece innovative.

### **Conclusion**

Graham is to be admired for the risks she took in breaking with tradition and how she gave dance a new and different direction. Her work was truly personalized, which is often so hard to achieve in any of the arts.



*Lamentation*  
[www.temple.edu](http://www.temple.edu)

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# CHRISTOPHER BRUCE

## Biography

Christopher Bruce was born in Britain on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1945. He has established himself as a dancer, choreographer and Artistic Director in various companies, becoming one of the UK's foremost artists.

## Dance Training

As a young boy he contracted polio which damaged his legs. His father encouraged him to dance believing it would help improve his legs and it could provide a good career. He began taking classes at the Benson Stage Academy in Scarborough where he was taught ballet, tap and acrobatic dance. Elements of all these early styles are evident in his choreography. At the age of thirteen Bruce joined the Ballet Rambert School and was accepted into the Company in 1963. At this stage it was primarily a ballet company. In 1966 the Artistic Director Norman Morrice reformed Rambert to include contemporary work into the repertoire.

## Dance Career

Bruce emerged as one of the company's leading dancers and was recognised as an intense and dramatic performer. Some of the roles he is most famous for are the faun in Nijinsky's *L'après-midi d'un faune* and Pierrot in Tetley's *Pierrot lunaire*. He performed largely for the Rambert Dance Company with some guest appearances for other companies. His last major role was in 1988 for the London Festival Ballet.

## Choreographic Career

Bruce's choreographical talents were both inspired and encouraged by the Rambert Company. The company had a reputation for nurturing young choreographers and the variety and experimentation of the work of the company stimulated Bruce's natural talent. He is recognised as the last choreographer to be nurtured by the company's founder Marie Rambert. Bruce created his first work, *George Frideric* in 1969. He choreographed a further twenty works for the company, and was Associate Director and then Associate Choreographer. Bruce was increasingly in demand as a choreographer all over the world. He has built a relationship with the Nederlands Dans theatre, Royal Danish Ballet and the Houston Ballet and has choreographed for musicals, operas, film and television.

From 1994 to 2002 Bruce was the director of the Rambert Dance Company and in this role he commissioned many new works by famous international choreographers such as Merce Cunningham (USA) and Jiri Kilian (Netherlands).

## Awards

In June 1998 Christopher Bruce's role as one of Britain's leading choreographers in both ballet and contemporary companies was acknowledged as he was awarded a CBE for a lifetime of service to dance.

## Characteristics of his choreography

Bruce avoids writing program notes or making specific statements about the ideas behind his work as he prefers the audiences to interpret them in their own way. His works usually have a clear theme and there is a strong sense of character but room is left for individual interpretation. "In a sense, my ballets have a narrative quality or some kind of subject matter. However, it's often not a specific one-line narrative, but a layer of images which form a kind of collage and leave room for the audience's imagination to work." (C.B. *Houston Press* 22 May 1988)

Bruce has often dealt with political and social themes in his choreography and his work generally develops from a particular stimulus such as music, art or writing. In re-working his chosen theme into movement he abstracts the idea rather than interpreting it in a literal way.

Bruce has used a wide range of music from classical to folk to popular tunes. In *Rooster* (1991) he used the music from the Rolling Stones. Costume, lighting and design contribute to the development of his ideas but it is important to Bruce that these elements allow freedom of movement and do not detract from the choreography. Bruce's movement vocabulary is drawn from classical ballet and contemporary dance, most notably the Graham technique which formed a large part of his training. His choreography will draw on other dance styles namely folk and social dance and tap sequences depending on the ideas behind the work. 'Everyday' movements are incorporated and gesture is often used.

### **Selected Work: GHOST DANCES (1981)**

Choreography and set design: Christopher Bruce

Costumes: Belinda Scarlett

Lighting: Nick Chelton

The initial inspiration for this work was two fold. Bruce was given the music – South American folk songs – by some friends and he was fascinated by their simplicity and pathos and, at about the same time, he had become interested in the political unrest so prevalent in many South American countries and most particularly the military coup in Chile. He found parallels in other countries, such as Northern Ireland, and ultimately the dance became an expression of the human spirit, about human rights, cruelty, and suffering.

### **Synopsis**

Bruce uses clear characterisation to bring his ideas across in *Ghost Dances*. Death is symbolised by three male dancers who wear masks and whose bodies are painted in such a way as to suggest a skeleton. Their movement is strong and animalistic and they appear to be always waiting like birds of prey. The group of dancers known as the Dead represent the villagers whose lives are under a constant threat of death. These characters are brought together in this meeting place said to represent a 'stopping off place' or some kind of underworld. The Dead take us through scenes from their lives, the sad, happy and frightening moments, and these tales are brutality interrupted by death, represented by the three Ghosts.

*Ghost Dances* is divided into seven sections. The opening scene sets up the atmosphere of the dance and introduces the audience to the Ghosts. The movement is strong and forceful as the creatures wrestle with one another. They appear to be on constant guard, on the look out for their prey. This scene ends with the arrival of the Dead, and the story unfolds. The final section gives the audience a sense of the power of the people. They are defiant and will rise up in the face of the hardships they are subjected to. Their sense of community and the strength of their traditions cannot be crushed. "It is like their last remembrances, their last statements, before they go on proudly at the end, to Death." (C.B. 'Kaleidoscope' 1981).

### **Set and Lighting**

The set remains the same throughout the dance. It represents a stark and rocky area which could be both a plain and a cave. On stage there are seven structures like rocks on which the Ghosts lie and wait for their victims. The lighting enhances the atmosphere, giving the stage and set a shadowy appearance. While the Ghosts dance, a deep green light is used and their bodies are enhanced by the use of side lighting giving them a sculptural look. Certain moments are emphasised with particular lighting effects such as a powerful down light on the characters at the moment of their death.

### **Costumes**

The skeletal image of the Ghosts is produced using body paint to emphasise bone and muscle structure and they wear rags around their waists, wrists and below their knees which gives them an animalistic look. Bruce was inspired by the death masks worn by South American Indians when they celebrated death rites and the skeleton masks worn by the Ghosts were the product of this. The Dead wear everyday clothing – dresses, scarves and suits, but these are ragged and dishevelled. All the costumes enhance the characterisation but do not hinder or over shadow the movement.

## **Music**

The music for the piece was by the Chilean group Inti-Illimani and it includes two songs and four folk tunes. The music is often performed live. The instruments used include classical and bass guitar, side drum, and various percussion instruments. The wind sounds in the opening scenes are recorded.

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## HOW BALLET EVOLVED IN SOUTH AFRICA

The first ballet pantomime to be performed in South Africa was in 1802 in Cape Town. This was presented by Jan Ludwig Petersen and his pupils entitled *The Cunning Wife or Lover in the Sack*.

However it was only in the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century that ballet began to flourish. Helen Webb (1882-1968) arrived in Cape Town from London and in 1912 opened a ballet studio. She took her pupils on a tour to as far afield as Johannesburg as well as to "Zululand" where she studied traditional dancing. Among her many pupils were Dulcie Howes, Cecily Robinson and Frank Staff, all of whom contributed enormously to dance in South Africa.

In 1925 the Russian Ballerina, Anna Pavlova, visited South Africa and two years later Howes joined Pavlova's company on a European tour. By this time many South African dancers had been abroad and had been accepted in overseas dance companies. Some of them returned to impart their knowledge on future dancers.

When Howes returned in 1928, she opened a studio in Cape Town and in 1934 joined her studio to the College of Music at the University of Cape Town. In the same year the EOAN group was founded by Mrs. H. Southern Holt, who was encouraged by the talent she saw in the 'Coloured' community of Hout Bay. One of their students, Johaar Mosaval, became a principal with the Royal Ballet in London.

Visits by foreign dancers to South Africa led to a bustle of activity in the dance world. Dancers and teachers were inspired by the Blum Russian Ballet Company in 1936, Markova and Dolin in 1949 and in 1954 the Saddlers Wells Theatre Ballet Company, to name but a few. A major driving force in the establishment of Spanish Dancing in South Africa came from a visit by Luisillo in 1957.

Some of the great classics like *Les Sylphides* (1938) and *Swan Lake* (1940) were presented by the Cape Town Ballet Club which was founded by Cecily Robinson on her return from abroad. In 1946 the name of the Club was changed to The South African National Ballet, then headed by Frank Staff, This was the first company to tour outside of South Africa when they visited the then Rhodesia.

Based on the success of the Ballet Club, the first professional dance company was founded in Johannesburg in 1948 under the direction of Faith de Villiers and Joyce van Geems.

In 1963 to promote the arts, the then Government gave a grant to various dance companies in South Africa: CAPAB founded by Howes, with David Poole as Ballet Master and Frank Staff as resident choreographer. PACT ballet was founded in Johannesburg, NAPAC in Durban and PACOFS in Bloemfontein.

Howes retired from CAPAB in 1973 and Poole became Artistic Advisor.

As principal of the UCT Ballet School in 1972, Howes was responsible for taking a multi-racial group of dancers overseas to the International Youth Music Festival in Switzerland.

In 1974 Veronica Paeper was made resident choreographer for CAPAB and reproduced Staff's *Romeo and Juliet* with designs by Peter Cazlet.

# VERONICA PAEPER

## Biography

Veronica Paeper was born in Port Shepstone, Kwa Zulu, Natal on the 9 April 1944. She was born with flat feet and was advised by the local doctor to start ballet in order to strengthen her arches. She became a professional dancer and choreographer. In 1987 she was appointed Assistant director of CAPAB. When David Poole retired Paeper became Director of CAPAB on January 1, 1991. Although she has retired as Director she is still actively involved in assisting not only the Cape Town City Ballet, but also the SABT Company in Tshwane (Pretoria), South Africa.

## Dance Career

“I wanted to dance ever since I put on my first pair of satin shoes”

Veronica Paeper

At the age of five, Paeper started learning ballet with Yvonne Adkins. In 1960 she joined the University of Cape Town Ballet School and obtained a Ballet Teacher’s Diploma with Distinction. At UCT she received her training under the tutelage of Dulcie Howes, David Poole, Pamela Chrimes and Frank Staff, whom she married in 1966. During her performing career, she became a principal dancer with three South African Companies: CAPAB, PAct and PACOFS. Although she danced many roles her highlights were the Blue Bird Pas de Deux from Sleeping Beauty and the Swan Queen in Swan Lake (In a personal interview she chuckled as she related how John Simons had dropped her in a performance of Swan Lake.)

## Career as a Choreographer

In 1972 Paeper created her first piece of choreography for a charity program called TEACH. John the Baptist was a dramatic one act ballet with music composed by Ernest Bloch. Scenery and costumes were designed by Peter Cazalet who remained Paeper’s most frequent artistic collaborator through the years. This ballet is about the thoughts that might have passed through the mind of John the Baptist after his execution.

In 1973 Paeper was commissioned to choreograph a ballet to commemorate the centenary of the South African writer C. J. Langehoven. Herrie-Hulle was first performed in Langehoven’s hometown, Oudshorn. She received favourable publicity for this work.

She officially became the resident choreographer for CAPAB ballet in 1974. Notable amongst the over 40 ballets she added to the company’s repertoire are Fantastique (1975) and Concert for Charlie (1979). Both were one act Ballets set to music of Dimitri Shostakovich: Ohm (1976), a pas de deux and the one act Drie Diere (1980) were both set to the music of South African Composer Peter Klatzow. Her first full length ballets for the company were Romeo and Juliet (1974), Cinderella (1975 ) and Don Quixote (1979)

The 1980’s were most productive for Paeper. Her most successful ballets were choreographed at this time: *The Return of the Soldier*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *A Christmas Tale* all in 1982, and in 1984 her award winning ballet *Spartacus*

The Cape Town City Ballet was launched on 18 April 1997 with Paeper’s three act work *The Story of Manon Lescaut* set to the music of Massenet and arranged by Michael Tuffin

Paeper tended to use the personalities of her dancers as inspiration for her choreography: Phyllis Spira, Prima Ballerina for CAPAB, had a remarkable sense of comedy and Paeper created comical roles for her. Paeper was always open to suggestions and to other people’s movements. She would set the choreography with as much input from the dancers and would encourage them to use their own personal interpretation of the roles.

Her works are mostly narrative and her objective is “never to bore an audience” Her choreography reflects diverse themes inspired by African folklore (The Rain Queen), antiquity (Cleopatra), the Bible

(John the Baptist), literature (Romeo And Juliet), history (Spartacus), mythology (Undine), opera and operetta (Carmen and Orpheus) and the old classics (Cinderella).

### **Personal and Artistic Influences**

#### **Her Family**

Paeper was born into a theatrical home. She attributes her musicality to her mother who was a pianist and encouraged her to attend the theatre.

#### **Frank Staff**

He had a strong influence on her approach to choreography, an influence which has remained with her throughout her career. In his works, Staff certainly displayed a rare theatrical flair and delighted his audiences with his sharp wit and feel for satire

#### **David Poole**

Poole initiated almost all Paeper's works. He was her teacher and her inspiration. Most of her works were created under the nurturing eye of David Poole

### **Artistic Collaborations**

#### **Peter Klatzow**

Klatzow, a contemporary South African composer, and Paeper have created many works together: for example, Drie Diere and Hamlet.

#### **Peter Cazlet**

Cazlet has been the designer on almost all of Paeper's Ballets. Their collaboration has spanned over 26 years.

Other artistic collaborations were with composers Michael Tuffin, David Tidboald and Allen Stephensen, as well as designer, Dicky Longhurst

### **Achievements and Awards**

In 1980 and 1982 she won the Nederburg award for Ballet in the Cape and in 1993 she shared the Artes Award for Best contribution to Serious Music and Dance with Peter Klatzow for their production of Hamlet

In 1994 she gained International recognition for her company when it became the first South African ballet company to tour abroad. The works of this two week season at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in London consisted entirely of works by South African choreographers.

### **Contribution to dance**

Paeper has certainly contributed to the world of South African choreographers. She has developed a vast repertoire of works which companies are able to use today.

Paeper is considered one of the forerunners of Modern Classical Ballet in South Africa. Her ballet Drie Diere was considered totally unique in that there was a collaborative fusion of all the art forms - incorporating poetry, music and dance. She used a quartet of sonnets by N.P. van Wyk Louw which was written in 1942. In these sonnets he writes about the destructive qualities of man. Klatzow was deeply moved by this poem which led him to compose a score reflecting the theme of Destruction. From these sonnets, Paeper created a powerful Dance Drama, which to this day, is considered a milestone in South African Ballet.

### **Selected Work: ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD**

*Orpheus* is a three Act ballet based on the operetta by Jacques Offenbach. It was first performed by CAPAB ballet at the then Nico Malan Opera House, Cape Town in January 28th 1982.

## **Synopsis**

*Orpheus in the Underworld* is a highly comical ballet based on the Greek legend of Pluto, god of the Underworld, who falls in love with Eurydice, wife of Orpheus, and lures her to his kingdom. Paepers' narrative has abandoned the traditional story of Orpheus and has based her ballet on Jacques Offenbach's operetta

The action is set in the late 1920's, early 1930's within a decided Franco-Italian background with Pluto as the head of a Mafia-type underworld, Calliope, Orpheus' somewhat neurotic and later inebriated mother and Offenbach himself keeping an eye on the proceedings.

**The Story** (quoted from the Cape Town City Ballet website at [www.capetowncityballet.org.za](http://www.capetowncityballet.org.za))

### **Act 1: Hotel le Grand**

Orpheus and Eurydice's marriage is not happy, so that when Pluto seduces and abducts Eurydice both she and Orpheus are delighted. However, when Calliope, Orpheus's mother, arrives and discovers what has happened, she is very shocked and demands, in the interest of mythology, that Orpheus goes to Olympus to seek assistance in claiming back Eurydice from the Underworld. Naturally, his mother insists on accompanying him.

### **Act 2: Olympus**

On Olympus life is a little boring and when Pluto reveals his latest conquest, Eurydice, it offers a welcome though somewhat unsettling diversion. Orpheus and Calliope arrive and Jupiter assents to her request for aid, whereupon all the gods and goddesses decide to accompany them to Hades, the Underworld.

### **Act 3: Hades**

Eurydice is now the star of the Underworld's night club. Just when all are enjoying themselves, Calliope spoils their fun by reminding Jupiter of their purpose. He commands Orpheus to leave, followed by Eurydice. But Offenbach intervenes and everything is thrown into confusion

## **Movement vocabulary**

Orpheus has a classical tradition but steps are combined with everyday movements and the style of the steps suit the era of the work.

## **Music**

Composed by Jacques Offenbach and arranged for the ballet by Michael Tuffin.

Offenbach was a French composer. He was born in Cologne, Germany in 1819 and moved to Paris in 1833 to study the cello. His operettas are humorous, witty and satirical. He composed over ninety works for the stage. His first success was *Orpheus in the Underworld* which opened at the Bouffes-Parisiens Theatre in 1958.

In 1977, he began his most famous work, the opera, *The Tales of Hoffman*, which was unfinished at his death in 1880.

In keeping with the concept that Orpheus is a violin teacher, the famous violin solo from Offenbach's operetta has been retained for the ballet.

Another identifiable piece is the Can can. Many of the melodies are a fusion of two or more tunes from the different Operettas Offenbach composed.

## **Costumes and set design**

Peter Cazlet designed both the costumes and the scenery. The evening coats worn by the "goddesses" were designed by Dicky Longhurst

The styles of costumes throughout the ballet are typical of the late '20s and early '30s

The sets are spectacular. The opening scene has a lavish staircase,

Olympus is set like a luxury cruise liner decked out with a pool and chairs, and Hades is set as a sultry nightclub with the predominant colours being reds, deep pink and black.

### **Innovative features**

The key ingredient that makes this ballet innovative is its wonderful humour. It is pure entertainment and audiences are drawn to the ballet for that very reason.

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[www.paeper.co.za](http://www.paeper.co.za)

[www.capetowncityballet.co.za](http://www.capetowncityballet.co.za)

Personal interview conducted with Veronica Paeper in May 2006.



Veronica Paeper & Peter Cazlet  
[www.paeper.co.za](http://www.paeper.co.za)

# ALFRED HINKEL

## Biography

Born in Nababeep, a small copper mining town outside Springbok, Hinkel's desire to dance was one which defied the traditional boundaries that were held in highest regard by his somewhat dogmatic father. An avid amateur boxer, his father would not tolerate his son's participation in an activity that was perceived to be one for women.

*"My entire life I wanted to dance but wasn't allowed to."*

*Alfred Hinkel*

Hinkel's aspirations were further hindered by inadequate dance outlets in the area. His best friend, however, attended ballet classes with a woman in the town and Alfred's youthful curiosity would not allow him to renounce an opportunity to participate in one of these 'ballet' classes that he had heard so much about. Thus, at the age of 10, young Alfred was exposed to dancing lessons for the first time.

Hinkel moved to Cape Town where he attended Sacs High School and participated in the schools productions.

Hinkel commenced his studies as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) student, studying Drama, Languages and History. At his first drama class, he was exposed to formal dance lessons for the first time in a decade. It was during the course of this movement lesson that Hinkel's mind "exploded," and he came to realise that more than anything, he wanted to dance.

On a crusade in search of dance, Hinkel, "*rushed around (campus) asking questions,*" and was directed to the University of Cape Town Ballet School on lower Campus where he spoke to Dr. Dulcie Howes, the then director of the ballet school. Howes recommended that he continue his BA studies and attend ballet classes at the Ballet School extra-murally. Howes offered him the option of dancing at the back of the ballet classes unobserved. But Hinkel was not content with being, "*completely ignored.*" Instead, he ignore discarded his drama course, paying back his bursary with 'danger pay' earned on the Angolan front. With this brash and daring action, Hinkel ended all hopes his parents had of their son becoming a teacher.

By working at a restaurant and clothing shop in Cape Town, Hinkel was able to earn sufficient money for his day to day living expenses. At the end of 1972, Hinkel was offered a bursary and in 1973 commenced his first year of formal training as a registered student at the Ballet School.

## Dance Career

In his second year at the Ballet School, Hinkel became, "*terribly disillusioned,*" and chose to move to Namibia and teach for Diane Sparks at the Dancing Academy "*The only skills I had were those from the few years of dance training that I had received.*" Unfortunately he lost this job as he had to attend an army camp. Hinkel then returned to Nababeep. "*The white community already had a teacher,*" so Hinkel taught the coloured communities in various towns. He, "*taught at all the local community schools,*" and had approximately 200 pupils. "*The daily experience of teaching in a rural area, and without proper dance facilities, laid the foundation for a truly original and resourceful approach to dance teaching and choreography.*"<sup>2</sup>

His teaching made formal dance accessible to these communities. Prior to Hinkel's intervention, dance had been solely a social activity that was practiced in an informal context. The idea of concert as opposed to cultural dance forms was one that was foreign to many of the communities in which Hinkel taught. It was in such areas that Hinkel pioneered the notion of choreographed dances as a form of entertainment, performed by some and viewed by others.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: the people; management; Alfred Hinkel; detailed biography)

In 1976, Hinkel met John Linden and Dawn Landown in Okiep, Namaqualand and together they formed the Namaqualand Dans Geselskap. It was with the dancers from this company that Hinkel created his first version of *Bolero* – an ardent response to the Morality Act.

In 1978, the company went on tour performing various pieces by Hinkel. Diane Sparks, saw a performance of his works in Khomasdal and invited him to join a company which she was keen to start in Windhoek. Taking an immediate interest, Hinkel and his company of seven (including John Linden and Dawn Landown) joined Sparks soon after the abolition of the Group Areas Act in Namibia. The multi-racial group took residence in an area formerly reserved for whites only. The Di-al Dance Company (1978), named after Diane Sparks and Alfred Hinkel, was the first racially mixed company in Namibia. All members were coerced into part-time jobs,( Hinkel as an insurance broker) due to insufficient funds.

Hinkel read about a company being run by Sue Parker in Cape Town. Excited by what he read, he decided to audition for the company, called Jazzart, as he was especially eager to train under Sue Parker. Hinkel returned to Cape Town in 1981 to audition for Jazzart. Among the candidates who auditioned were John Linden (current director and teacher with the Jazzart Dance Joint), Gary Gordon (current Executive Director of the First Physical theatre Company in Grahamstown) and Edmund Thwaites (founder/director Jikeleza dance project). The audition was taken by Jennifer van Papendorp (current deputy chair of Jazzart Dance Theatre). Because his contract with the company only commenced in 1982, Hinkel needed to find work to support himself financially until such time that he was receiving an income from Jazzart. It was during this period between 1979 and 1981 that Hinkel performed in musicals directed by Audrey Turner.

1982 marked the beginning of Hinkel's dancing career with Jazzart. But, as he openly admits, Hinkel was a recalcitrant young man that spoke his mind regardless of the consequences and it was not long before he was criticising Parker about the way that she ran the company. He was consequently fired before he had even fulfilled his six month contract. Hinkel's temporary trade was as a freelance dancer and subsequently, he traveled up to Durban to perform with NAPAC where he had a contract with Geoffrey Sutherland.

A miraculous turn of events would draw Hinkel back to the Mother City within months of his dismissal. Sue Parker's husband, a British actor called Henry Goodman, decided in 1983 that he would like to return to his homeland with his wife. Parker asked Val Steyn to take the reins in her absence. Steyn agreed to run Jazzart on the condition that Hinkel assisted her. *"To this day, I have no idea why Val did this because I was absolutely impossible and very difficult to work with,"* comments Hinkel.

After returning to Cape Town to assist Val Steyn at Jazzart in 1985, Hinkel felt that he had still not found what he was looking for. He came to the realization that what he had been searching for did not exist and that he was going to have to create it. Hinkel's dissatisfaction initiated his second departure from Jazzart. This time, he went to perform at Sun City. Work at the famous holiday resort was the most lucrative for performance artists and Hinkel sought work there as a means to raise funds to purchase Jazzart and create what he believed to be missing from the South African dance scene.

In 1986, after an unsuccessful stint at Sun City that was intended to raise the capital to purchase Jazzart, Hinkel landed a Coca-Cola advertisement. Handsomely paid, he was able to start paying installments into buying Jazzart's dance studio in Jameson Street in the Bo-Kaap district of Cape Town – the first step toward a complete takeover of Jazzart. He made a legal deal with Val Steyn under the supervision of a lawyer which allowed him to procure the company over a period of months. The contract stipulated that Hinkel deposit R800 and pay installments on a monthly basis until the gross sum of R35 000 – *"a very large sum of money in those days"* – had been covered.

Jazzart had evolved into a huge contemporary jazz school and a renowned (albeit) part-time company that performed sporadically due to irregular funding. The entire studio consisted of one Jazz and two slightly smaller studios. *"The studios were always packed – everybody wanted to come and it was indeed a very lucrative business."* To Hinkel, Jazzart appeared a promising venture, both financially and artistically.

He finally had the artists and facilities he needed at his disposal to create what he had been 'looking for'.

Hinkel and his newly founded company boycotted the Grahamstown Festival in 1987 in protest of its racist attitude. Instead they traveled up to the University of Durban Westville – an Indian institution. Here, Hinkel was asked to choreograph the second version of *Bolero* and gumboots were introduced in the dance for the first time.

### Choreographic Career

*"You could say my choreographic style and career have been created by junctions. Way back, I found myself in Namaqualand, disillusioned with the ballet training I'd begun. So, I crossed the line to the "coloured" area, started teaching dance classes and set up my first company. Since then?*

*I've never stopped crossing the lines, seeking new ways of connecting and creating the moves we call dance. For ten years Jazzart has been the station. Along the way I've taken two detours to Natal. First to help set up and train the Phenduka Dance Theatre Company and also to establish the Siwela Sonke company for the Playhouse."*<sup>3</sup>

Alfred Hinkel

Alfred Hinkel's choreographic career is closely associated with Jazzart, but began long before he became artistic director of the company. The time spent in the Northern Cape and Namibia played a fundamental role in shaping Hinkel's choreographic path. It has been said that the teaching experience he gained in Namaqualand laid the foundation for his, *"truly original and resourceful approach to dance teaching and choreography."*<sup>4</sup>

Deeply impacted by his exposure to social African dance, Hinkel rapidly began to develop choreographically. Through the Abamanyani workshops, run by Jennifer van Papendorp and Balu Searl, a production entitled *Abamanyani* was created. *"The highly acclaimed 'Abamanyani' (literally meaning "coming together to create something new") Project (1986), with its multi-racial cast, its mix of dance, song and live music, and its theme of struggle and celebration, stands as the precursor for the artistic, philosophical and ideological achievements that have characterised Jazzart's more recent history."*<sup>5</sup> The production of *Abamanyani* defied stereotypes as it was among the first productions in which African dance was staged alongside other theatrical dance and recognised as serious artistic work.

While the foundations of Hinkel's solid choreographic reputation can be traced back to his initial work in Namaqualand and Namibia, his reputation has been solidified through his continually evolving work as Artistic Director of the Jazzart Dance Theatre.

### Personal and Artistic Influences

The element of Alfred Hinkel's personality that possibly has the greatest impact on his choreography, is his socio-political awareness. His direction of the Jazzart Dance Theatre is synonymous with an all inclusive philosophy regarding dance training and performance. *"The company operates according to non-racial, non-sexist and democratic principles. It is politically non-aligned and seeks to serve disadvantaged communities in particular."*<sup>6</sup>

Both Hinkel's choreography and artistic direction consistently correlate with the political, cultural and economical contexts of both his dancers and audiences. During what was perhaps the most turbulent period in South African history, Hinkel's artistic approach opposed the exclusivity of professional theatre and dance as dictated by the Apartheid government.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: the people; management; Alfred Hinkel)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: the people; management; Alfred Hinkel; detailed biography)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: home; full history)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: home; full history)



Throughout an era in which the performing arts were reserved exclusively for the white elite (in terms of both audiences and performers) Hinkel applied himself to his teaching and choreographing in a way that reflected the populist thinking of the South African political struggle. Simply put, Hinkel defied the Apartheid government's dictum regarding professional dance theatre by employing teachers and teaching dancers of various races. In doing so, Hinkel contributed to the struggle. His vision, commitment and contribution to dance in South Africa was acknowledged when he was awarded the Standard Bank Special Award in 1996.

Hinkel refers to the Abamanyani workshops as his, "*prime artistic influence.*" His exposure to African dance revolutionised the way he perceived choreography. Suddenly, he found himself in a dance class, surrounded by formally trained, classical, Westernised dancers who were predominantly white and coloured, juxtaposed with people trained in African dance who were predominantly black. Both those trained in classical dance and those trained in African dance considered themselves dancers and regarded their counterparts as their opposite, but most definitely not their equals.

*"I had to find a way to train them all properly,"* and acknowledged that he had to, "*shift the goalposts.*" Thus Hinkel began developing a method that he would use to train Jazzart artists over the next 30 years. The method is still used today and provides the stylistic foundation for all of Hinkel's pieces.

### Artistic Collaborations

Hinkel's longest collaborations have been with John Linden, who is currently a prominent member of Jazzart management, along with Hinkel, and Dawn Landown who has established South Africa's first rural based Contemporary Dance Company, *Namjive*, based on the Jazzart teaching program

*"The Best Rugby Player in Namaqualand and the Hantam area - that was my claim to fame in my early years. Now I'm a teacher and choreographer. I started as a dancer all because Alfred needed a last minute replacement "to catch and lift" the female dancer in a pas de deux."*<sup>7</sup>

John Linden

*"Going to pay my sister's dance fees while I was on holiday in Namaqualand - that is how I arrived at this junction. That's when I met Alfred and dance joined my life."*<sup>8</sup>

Dawn Landown

As artistic director of Jazzart, Hinkel has had the opportunity to collaborate with various other prominent individuals. Among those who have contributed to Jazzart's legend are:

- **Jay Panther** (dancer, choreographer, lecturer, writer and Artistic Director of Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre, Durban and lecturer at the University of Cape Town)
- **Vusabantu Ngema** (African traditional dance exponent)
- **Jennifer van Papendorp** (Head of the Western Cape Education Department Dance Programme)
- **Susan Abrahams** (dancer, choreographer and previously Artistic Director of the North-West Dance Company)
- **Sharon Friedman** (Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Dance, Teaching Methods and Dance History at the University of Cape Town School of Dance)
- **Christopher Kindo** (nationally prominent South African dancer and choreographer)

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: the people; management; John Linden)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.jazzart.co.za/> (Links: the people; management; Dawn Landown)

- **Sifiso Kweyama, Sbonakaliso Ndaba and Ondine Bello** who, after six years with the company and ten years of association with Alfred Hinkel, left Jazzart at the beginning of 2001 to establish the Phenduka Dance Company in Durban.
- **Mark Fleishman** ( Head of the department of Drama, University of Cape Town )
- **Musicians Sibongile Khumalo and Neo Mucyanga**

### Significant Achievements

Hinkel has numerous accolades to his name for his choreographic and directorial achievements. Hinkel's most significant achievement is not related to any specific award but the successful transition that Jazzart Dance Theatre has achieved in the ten years since enfranchisement. Jazzart had always been affiliated with the 'struggle' and, had the company not adapted to the altered political and artistic climate of the 'New South Africa,' it could easily have become irrelevant.

Hinkel's modification of the definition, intention and orientation of Jazzart is an ongoing process. Alfred Hinkel directs a company that is effectively adapting to the changes of its political context, while setting standards of contemporary dance in South Africa.

### Selected Work: LAST DANCE (BOLERO)

#### Synopsis

Hinkel first created *Bolero* when he returned to Okiep, Namaqualand in 1976 with the intention of establishing his first company. It was with the dancers from this company, which he ran with John Linden and Dawn Landown, that Hinkel created what would become Hinkel's testimony to South African dance.

A work that has traced a fairly political path, *Bolero* has continually transformed through the process of being reworked on each of the several occasions that it has been staged. The original version was about, "overcoming prejudice," and focused specifically on the Immorality Act – arguably the most controversial of the legislative acts of the South African Apartheid government which attempted to forbid intermixing of couples of different races. The costumes for this version were tie-dyed T-shirts - gum boots had not yet been introduced to the piece.

Then, in the 1980s, various artists boycotted the Grahamstown Festival and held an alternative, non-segregated festival at the *Durban University of Westville*. This was an era of imminent violence during which the South African government declared a national 'State of Emergency.' The volatile, turbulent tone of the era reflected in Hinkel's 1987 version of *Bolero* is augmented by the addition of gum boots.

*"The dance with the gum boots came from a working class people, mostly miners and dock workers. The boots represented oppression. They were the shackles that bound not only those being oppressed directly, but also those bound by ignorance."*

*Alfred Hinkel*

At the beginning of *Bolero*, the use of gum boots is sparse. As the piece approaches its climax, the boots are used increasingly and approximately half way through the dance, they are used to create a thunderous, angry surge of sound in combination with the ever-intensifying music. Then, amidst the cacophony, the dancers flung their boots off, reaching a climax of ecstasy.

*"The piece, which was untitled but was referred to as Bolero after the music, confronted the audience with unfamiliarity as soon as it began."*<sup>9</sup> Western classical music, a racially mixed cast, and the juxtaposition of contemporary, classical, African traditional, gumboot, Indian and Mpantsula steps ensured that the piece not only created a political but also an artistic furor. The contrasts in dance and music provided a means of exploring local dance rhythms and contemporary dance forms. In *Bolero*, Hinkel disregarded

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<sup>9</sup> Notes from lecture given by Alfred Hinkel on *Bolero*

preconceptions about dance and theatre. The 'unfamiliarity' that was a feature of the dance created the sense of apprehension in the audience that was characteristic of that time.

The third version of *Bolero* was performed in 1990 at the Dance Umbrella, where Hinkel took home another choreographic award, despite the fact that the dance had no formal ending (each performance, the dancers would improvise a different ending). Refusing to take credit as sole choreographer, Hinkel argued that the dancers played an integral role in the creation of the piece. It was in this version that drums were introduced for the first time.

A distinct cycle served as the motif behind Hinkel's third version of *Bolero*: the dance commenced on a temperate note with a drum being passed around. "There was a sense of what things could be like in South Africa – a kind of hope...wanting to make a connection."

This was immediately followed by a period of aggression. The violent, emotive images created were an accurate reflection of the then present 'struggle' in South Africa. Finally, *Bolero* climaxed in a culmination of energetic dance and music that led to a sense of freedom.

The version of *Bolero* that had been staged at the Dance Umbrella was taken to the Grahamstown Festival in 1992 where the dancers performed in tie-dyed costumes that had been made by Landown and Hinkel. This was the last time that *Bolero* was performed as a piece representing the struggle. The dance was then reworked so that it became a celebration of the newly established democracy in South Africa after the 1994 general elections. *Bolero* was even performed at former President Nelson Mandela's inauguration.

In 1995, Veronica Paeper approached Hinkel and invited Jazzart to, "share a platform," with the Cape Town City Ballet. Hinkel consented to the collaboration between the two companies and *Bolero* was performed to live orchestration for the first time. Jazzart dancers past and present wanted to be a part of this revival and many traveled from all around the country to participate.

This version included Indian, Zulu and contemporary dance, opening with the story of the Indian God Shiva, the creator and destructor of the world and shadow imaging of Koi San rock art.

Hinkel describes his fourth version, with costumes by Craig Leo, as "sensual and contemporary." The production featured the political awareness of the transition period in South Africa doubling up with strong sexual undercurrents. While there was a strong sense of liberation from the past, critics contended that *Bolero* had made very little transition since its creation and that the piece still focused on ugly imagery. Although there was a degree of skepticism about the new South Africa, the nation was generally in high spirits and many did not care to reflect upon the problems within South Africa and the continent, such as the increasingly prominent issue of Aids. Hinkel was however, not about to ignore these issues and chose to use his work as a vehicle for expression as per usual.

In 1997, the same version of *Bolero* that had been performed with CAPAB was taken to Durban.

In 2000, the 5<sup>th</sup> version of the piece was created as a farewell to three of the foremost members of the company, Sbonakaliso Ndaba, Sifiso Kweyama and Ondine Bello who were leaving to continue work at Phenduka Dance Company in Durban. In honour of them, *Bolero*, was performed for audiences of Cape Town for the last time, featuring these dancers who were an integral part in the shaping of this piece. After going by the title of the music for a decade, the dance finally received the title: *Last Dance*.

This all-female version was very much about sensuality. The image of the women in gum boots and leather tops made a strong statement about female sexuality – that women are strong. To contrast the rest of the costume, chiffon skirts were worn.

Commencing with women chatting and laughing, *Last Dance* was not nearly as emotive as *Bolero* had been. This version was about celebrating and reminiscing rather than confronting issues at the heart of a nation.

Since then, *Last Dance* has been performed at the Spier Arts Festival in Stellenbosch in 2002. This version was a celebration of life and possibly of youth as this was the first time that younger dancers were used.

The 2003 Danscape performance of *Last Dance*, 40 dancers from many backgrounds (including Dance For All, CAFDA, Namjive) were used. This was the largest cast ever assembled to perform this work. The fusion of dancers of different races, backgrounds and training was a culmination of everything that has been achieved since South Africa's democratisation in 1994. This version signifies, "*hope for the future.*"  
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The performance began with a solitary female dancer stamping and hitting her gumboots. As the music begins, one lone male dancer commences by telling the story of the God Shiva using exaggerated sign language. As in the other versions, the dance builds up until the end when the whole cast is on stage, echoing the music through their bodies.

Hinkel explained that in each version, the structure had been laid down but the movement content was workshopped by each cast so that it became their own.<sup>11</sup> He places great emphasis on learning through improvisation to improve technique as well as to assist the development of creativity and creative choreography. "*You learn to experiment with dance rather than execute it.*" By insisting on his dancers' regular improvisation to advance their development as artists, Hinkel is able to draw his choreography out of them. "*That way, they own it.*"

*Bolero* has been staged in diverse forms to fulfill numerous purposes. It has served as a vehicle to facilitate comment on politics, for celebration (the inauguration of Nelson Mandela), as an incentive for collaboration between classical and contemporary dance companies and as the purveyor of hope. In essence, *Bolero* was intended to say, "*we (South Africans) have come this far,*" and it can be said that the assemblage of different versions of *Bolero* spanning 3 decades states 'this is how far Alfred Hinkel has come.'

### Lighting and Costume Design

As all versions of *Bolero* have been produced by Alfred Hinkel, one can easily identify elements of production that he has tried and tested over time. Lighting is an element of the production that has retained its consistency, while the contrast in costume design over the years is clearly visible.

In general, the lighting consists of blue, red and white light. The lighting techniques applied to the various versions that were performed in theatres equipped with adequate facilities follow roughly the same pattern: the work begins with minimal lighting and silhouettes followed by combinations of colours occurring throughout the piece and towards the end, the lighting gradually subdues until finally, the dance ends with a blackout.

The lighting techniques are subtle although the colours can be stark. The use of the cold blue and glacial white lighting is especially startling. The boldest moment of lighting comes at the end of *Bolero* when the dancers *chassé* and end in a position on the floor (this occurs only in the final two versions on the video). The moment the dancers strike their pose, there is a blackout.

Most other transitions between coloured light or between dark and bright lighting occur gradually. The range of the lighting never changes too dramatically, with most versions occurring in partial darkness.

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<sup>10</sup> Notes from lecture given by Alfred Hinkel on *Bolero*

<sup>11</sup> Notes from lecture given by Alfred Hinkel on *Bolero*

This does not, as one might expect, detract from the choreography as the dancer in the dark is elevated to an almost mythical status.

“Costume design,” is perhaps a deceptive term when referring to the first version of *Bolero* on the tape. In this version the dancers seem to be donning studio wear, in varying colours and styles.

In the following version of *Bolero*, costume design has clearly been considered. All of the dancers, save one, are wearing outfits of a similar style and the same colour: black. In the following versions, black is the colour of choice. The costumes that Hinkel refers to as the, “S & M Version,” consist of imitation leather skirts, black fishnet tights, suspenders, black bras and metal chains. The leather look makes a bold statement in the all-female version of *Bolero*, suggesting that women are strong beings. In other versions, both men and women wear leather skirts which could be interpreted as an indication of gender equality.

In Jazzart’s collaboration with CAPAB, costume design and lighting compliment each other in that the reflective characteristic of the materials used on the costumes enable the audience to see the essential movement taking place when lighting is dim or has a dark filter.

The costume design of the performance of *Last Dance* is arguably a perfect marriage of individuality and consistency. As in the first version on the tape, each dancer is wearing a unique costume but in this case individual costumes seem to have been considered more carefully as there is a degree of cohesion in the appearance of the cast as a whole.

*Bolero*, as it was staged at the Spier Amphitheatre makes the most effective use of costume and lighting design. The costumes are not entirely uniform and yet the individuality does not compartmentalise dancers. The lighting makes a feature initially, proceeds to subtly accentuate the work and finally, ensures a dramatic and effective ending.

## Music

The Composer, Maurice Ravel was commissioned to write *Bolero* by Ida Rubenstein – a dancer and impresario who danced with the Ballet Russes. Her brief was simple: she wanted a ballet score with a Spanish character.

His original intent was to orchestrate excerpts from Isaac Alb  iz’s set of piano pieces, entitled *Iberia*. Unfortunately, Alb  iz had already given the rights to one of his pupils. Ravel decided to write an entirely new piece.



Figure 1 Maurice Ravel, composer of *Bolero*, in his youth

The structure of *Bolero* is remarkably simple. It consists principally of a single melody repeated with different orchestrations for each repetition. The melody played in C-major by the flutes begins the piece *piano*. A snare drum simultaneously pounds an *ostinato* rhythm which is sustained throughout the piece. Toward the end of the piece, two drums are played in unison.

*Bolero* makes good use of counterpoint. The melody is passed between different instruments: clarinet, bassoon, E-flat clarinet, oboe d'amore, trumpet, saxophone, horn and others. The accompaniment broadens until the full orchestra is playing *forte* at the end.

There is a sudden change to E-major moments before the end of the piece and after eight bars in this key, Ravel reverts back to C-major. Six bars before the piece concludes, the bass drums, cymbals and tam-tam sound for the first time in *Bolero*. The trombones trumpet climactic glissandi and the whole orchestra joins the snare drum playing the same beat which continues throughout *Bolero*. The orchestra builds up to a final crescendo and *Bolero* ends dramatically on a C-major chord.

*Bolero* has been popular ever since it premiered at the Paris Opera on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1929. It was adapted for piano solo and piano duet, with Ravel publishing a version for piano duet in 1930.

An estimated £40 million have been earned in royalties from what is reputed to be the world's most frequently played pieces of classical music: Maurice Ravel's *Bolero*.

The piece is a popular choice as a dance score. It was initially composed to be danced to and the fusion of traditional, classical structure and gypsy-like Basque inspired colour and rhythm make it suitable to a variety of dance styles including flamenco, tango, ballet and fusion.

The music is a good deal slower than a 'Bolero' (a style of Spanish dance) usually would be. It is sensual, hypnotic and its undulating nuance is mesmerising. *Bolero* works magnificently as a score for all of Hinkel's versions of the dance of the same name (and later the name *Last Dance*). While his themes and artistic interests may vary from one version of the dance to the next, the stamping rhythm has remained constant throughout all of the versions. Furthermore, the cycle that forms a backdrop to Hinkel's work is one moving from a place of calm, gradually building up to a passionate climax. Ravel's *Bolero* has been said to be the longest crescendo in music and so it seems appropriate that Hinkel should use this profuse piece as the score to articulate South Africa's struggle.

### **How is *Bolero* innovative?**

Alfred Hinkel's *Bolero* juxtaposes a classical, European element of dance with contemporary and African concepts of dance. Ravel is well known for his ballet score for *Bolero* –in respect to Ida Rubinstein's commission for a ballet to be called *Fandango*. Thus, Hinkel's choice of music provides the European and classical basis for his work and makes reference to the antiquity. From this base, Hinkel choreographed a piece featuring distinctly African dances and contemporary flavour. The combination of old and new, local and international as combined by Hinkel was previously unheard of.

While it may not be innovative by today's standards, *Bolero* was a novelty in its time. Hinkel's work featured elements seldom (or never) seen on stage before:

#### **African dance was staged as performance art**

Previously, African dance had been viewed as a quaint tourist attraction. The staging of the earlier versions of *Bolero* was vital in asserting a recognised place for African contemporary dance in the world of South African performance art.

#### **African dance was set to classical music**

#### **Gumboots were worn by women and in particular, white women**

One needs to appreciate that gum boot dancing arose from, "a working class people, mostly miners and dock workers," and that it was not a practice performed by women, let alone white women. Thus, when the female cast of *Bolero*, marched proudly onto stage, they crossed a cultural and societal threshold.

#### **Gumboots were used in an 'avant-garde' way**

Traditionally performed with a bent back, Hinkel demonstrated how an established technique could be manipulated for creative purposes when his dancers were seen performing their own, upright version of gum boot dancing.

### **The contact work featured in *Bolero* was very innovative for its time**

One verse featuring the contact work was a definite exploration of homosexuality – a controversial issue given the dance's historical context. *Bolero* arose from a time where the conventions of society were not openly defied.

### **The traditional roles of men and women were disregarded**

In *Bolero*, men lift men, women lift women, women lift men and so on. The traditional roles of the male and female were turned upside down when Hinkel's piece subversively suggested that women were entitled and able to initiate action and assume leadership and that men could feel weak and vulnerable.

### ***Bolero* made bold political assertions**

In the earlier versions of *Bolero*, Hinkel intended to say things that were not meant to be said (this almost became one of Jazzart's policies) about politics, abuse, sexuality etc.

### **Hinkel regarded himself as a director rather than a choreography**

Hinkel refused to accept sole recognition as choreographer due to his emphasis on the dancers' input in the piece. To this day, Hinkel sees the traditional image of a choreographer as a dictator that demands his or her inferiors adopt a movement language foreign to them. In such a situation, the dancer becomes an insignificant variable.

Hinkel insisted that his pieces were choreographed by the Jazzart dancers who would create the dances through improvisation in class. His role was that of a facilitator, not a choreographer.

*Bolero* is also innovative simply because Hinkel was continually innovating and developing his ideas. He has returned to the work in the past 30 years to improve the choreography or try something new. The themes Hinkel has applied to *Bolero* have been innovative and varied along with his intentions in each version.

As a pioneer of contemporary African dance and an esteemed South African choreographer, Hinkel's breakthrough piece is sure to be an important work in terms of innovation. The strength of his work in *Bolero* is reflected in its outstanding endurance. Longevity itself is only possible when something can adapt and develop with changing times. In the hands of innovative choreographer, Alfred Hinkel, *Bolero* has done just that.

This truly South African *mélange* of image and music is one of the most powerful to grace this country's dance stages and, over time, the work has been elevated to almost mythical status.

### **Conclusion**

The attitude of *Bolero* choreographer, Alfred Hinkel as reflected in his works is one that is conducive to the current context of the performing arts in South Africa. His progressive attitude is clear in his ability to take an old piece, rework it and plant it firmly in its current setting. Hinkel is a man of pragmatic genius.

Choreographically, Hinkel has worked to relate his piece to the present and future. He is not only a complacent choreographer; he is a man of incredible persistence. One can rest assured that whatever plans Hinkel has for the future of one of South Africa's foremost contemporary dance companies, will be fulfilled.

### **THE COMPANY**

#### **A brief history of Jazzart Dance Theatre**

Jazzart was established in the 70's when it was situated in Longmarket Street, Cape Town. It was a privately owned studio run by Sonje Majo, specializing in "modern jazz dance". A few years later the studio moved to Jameson Street in Bo-Kaap

Sue Parker took over the ownership of Jazzart in 1978-The Sue Parker Contemporary Dance Company and in 1982 it was called the Jazzart Contemporary Dance Company under the direction of Val Steyn. When Hinkel became director in the mid 80's the name changed to its present title-Jazzart Dance

Theatre. In the early days Jazzart audiences were mainly white but as Jazzart evolved, so did it's audiences

### **Bibliography**

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3. Notes from lecture given by Alfred Hinkel in June 2005



## SYLVIA 'MAGOGO' GLASSER

### Early years, education and training

South African choreographer and educationalist, Sylvia Glasser was born in Polokwane (Pietersburg), South Africa in 1940. Her academic achievements include a Diploma from the London College of Dance and Drama in 1963, B.A. degree from the University of the Witwatersrand in 1973 and an M.A. from the University of Houston in 1977.

Sylvia Glasser is currently the Founding Artistic Director of Moving into Dance Mophatong Trust, a South African N.G.O. The year 2003 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the organisation which Glasser has led through its development into a nationally and internationally recognized contemporary African dance company. The Community Dance Teachers Training Course which celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2001 has empowered and transformed dozens of talented youth from marginalized, impoverished backgrounds, who are now highly skilled and creative dance teachers, performers and choreographers and are making a positive contribution to the cultural, social, educational and economic growth of the country .

Glasser's early training in South Africa was in British-based ballet and American tap dancing. Later she spent several years learning European National Dance and American Modern Dance as well as Creative Movement in England and North America. She had been fascinated by or attracted to the usual exotic elements of African dance.

### Career as a choreographer

Sylvia Glasser first started teaching ballet and modern dance in 1963. She founded The Experimental Dance Theater in 1967 which was an annual platform for choreographers to present original new choreography. She developed and taught her own specific movement style.

As she began to search for a specific South African artistic identity, Glasser began to explore an African influence in the content of her choreography. In 1977 she pioneered 'Afrofusion' with her work *Primal Pulse* performed by an American cast in Houston. This work was performed again in the Box Theater at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa in 1978

The philosophy at the basis of Afrofusion was the integration of African dance, music and ritual with Western contemporary dance forms. This was an aesthetic and political response to the separatist policy of apartheid, as well as reflection of the diverse cultures of South Africa. Her respect for the values and culture of indigenous South African rituals and beliefs was reflected in her choreography.

In 1978 Glasser started her Moving into Dance Performance Company as a non-racial (1) or integrated dance group. The classes and rehearsals took place in the garage of her house. In 1980 she presented the first public performance of Moving into Dance with black and white dancers performing together. 1987 saw the move of the Moving into Dance school and company to the more accessible Braamfontein Recreation Center.

The work of Moving into Dance as a non- racial company needed to be seen within the socio-political framework. She hoped to demonstrate that dance is not just an esoteric art form isolated from reality and everyday living, but rather an integral part of the socio-economic, political and belief systems of the people.

"Dance is a form of cultural expression which reflects the values of individuals or groups of people, and as such it can be an expression of resistance to a particular political system. Furthermore, dance events or dance rituals can change the attitudes or perceptions of the participants or viewers."

Between 1963 and 2004 Glasser choreographed over 50 original dances. A landmark in her development was a work called *Tranceformations* (1991) based on San trance dancing and rock art.

Several of the dances Glasser choreographed were explicit political statements against the apartheid system.

### **Personal and Artistic Influences and Collaborators**

Early influences in her dance career include Graham, Hawkins, Cunningham, Nikolais, Creative Dance and classical ballet. A turning point in her life came with a growing interest in African music and dance through her contact with the ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey in the early '70s.

*'I had been teaching ballet and modern dance for over ten years when I began to collect a series of records made by Hugh Tracey an ethnomusicologist. The music was recorded in the field throughout Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. I attended some of his lectures and was keen to use some of his collection for a new dance.*

Glasser's interest in understanding African culture grew with her studies in Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1987. She completed three years of study and was awarded the David Webster Memorial Award for academic excellence. She believes that her choreography and writing was largely influenced by insights gained in this period.

### **Mentoring the New Generation**

Moving into Dance Mophatong (the name given to the company when they moved to their new premises in Newtown in 1997). The name means a sanctuary or a place of learning) through its training programmes and skills development has influenced many new community dance groups, contemporary dance companies and individual artists in South Africa.. These companies have performed overseas as well as throughout South Africa. The impact of the training at Moving into Dance is further evidenced by the fact that since 1992 an increasing number of the Dance Umbrella awards in South Africa have been won by choreographers and dancers taught by Glasser

Glasser's policy has also been to train and nurture young people from within the organisation for leadership positions.

The specific Moving into Dance Afrofusion dance technique and choreographic style is an original and specific trademark of South Africa dance heritage, especially for the years 1978 to 2005. The unique teaching methodology of Edudance has also had a far-reaching impact on the lives of school teachers and school children in making learning dynamic and active. Sylvia Glasser has been the chief initiator and collaborator who has nurtured and grown these innovative dance and education experiences.

### **Recognition and Awards**

The work of Sylvia Glasser as an educator and choreographer has been experienced and recognized in many countries in Europe, Australia and Africa and she has won many awards.

In 1997 she received a FNB Vita Dance Umbrella special award with Moving into Dance for "developing a uniquely South African voice in contemporary choreography and dance, acknowledged both here and abroad.

In 2000 she received a FNB Vita Dance Umbrella Special Awards as "one of South Africa's national cultural treasures, a remarkable social activist whose exceptional work, in specifically African dance, has changed lives, perceptions and the face of South African dance".As a dance educator, academic and author, Glasser has addressed many international conferences. Her published papers have been presented all over the world.

### **How the Company evolved**

In 1979 Glasser was invited to teach modern dance at the newly established Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA). This was the first centre to provide training in different art forms for Black students. She invited some of these students to work with her company. Subsequently, four students joined her company

In 1981, this integrated Company was invited to perform in the University of the Witwatersrand's Great Hall. This was the beginning of Moving into Dance as a non-racial company. The company was beset with difficulties of space accessibility for the dancers, and funding, and the availability of suitable and convenient venues.

Application to the then Government for funding was turned down, the reason given that it was not the policy of the Government to fund racially mixed groups. The Company therefore remained a part-time one with dancers having to support themselves by means, other than by dancing for the Company.

Moving into Dance became a registered fund-raising organisation in 1984. As such, it could canvass the public for financial support. Many business corporations have social responsibility programmes and as the virtues and benefits of Moving into Dance became perceived, the sponsorship from such businesses grew.

In 1987, the Company obtained space at the non-racial Braamfontein Recreation Centre at a nominal rental. The premises were suitable save that dancers had to work on concrete floors. In 1990, thU.S.Aid financed the construction of a sprung dance floor.

The move to this venue led to a rapid transformation in the nature of the Company and the whole Moving into Dance organisation and at auditions there were as many black as white applicants. Many of the dancers lacked training. For those who could attend regular classes, an intensive fund-raising campaign was launched and by 1988 full scholarships were granted to assist several black students, most of who joined the Company.

The dancers were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds as well as from a variety of occupations: professionals, those involved in education and some from economic backgrounds. Since 1987 there has been an average of 16 full time dancers in the Company.

The Company aims at an annual season of at least five performances of mainly new works performed in a theatrical venue. In addition, there are performances at various Arts festivals, art galleries and parks, as well as presentations of lecture-demonstrations.

A strong *esprit de corps* has developed among all members of the Company. Rina Minervini wrote in the Sunday Star (August 9, 1987): "...they're enjoying themselves....there is a remarkable cohesion of spirit....a celebration of the joy of dancing together"

Sylvia Glasser points out that there have been problems which arise when people from different cultural backgrounds, with different levels of education and dance training, work together. She says "At first the black dancers in the Moving into Dance Company were not interested in performing dances that in any way reflected traditional African dancing. They were mostly urbanised young men, who were interested in American pop culture.

Furthermore, traditional culture had become identified with the government ideology of cultural separation, and for some time many of the politically aware urban black youth did not want to be associated with it. On the other hand, many of the white dancers looked down at African dance as unchallenging and unworthy of their attention – a legacy of colonialism".

However, the co-operation which was essential for success has reflected a fusion of South African Indigenous Black music and Dance, with Western Contemporary dance forms. Dance and Dance related activities have been an ideal medium for bringing peoples of disparate backgrounds together. Dance ultimately communicates through movement, not words, and this is an advantage in uniting people of disparate educational backgrounds as well.

## Selected Work: TRANCEFORMATIONS

Choreographer: Sylvia Glasser  
Music: Shaun Naidoo  
Design: Sarah Roberts  
Directed by: Dick Voorendyk

*Tranceformations* was inspired by Bushman rock art and trance dancing. This ritual journey explores the images and transformations visualized and experienced by the medicine men or shamans while in trance. The trance dance was part of the Bushman's religious beliefs and experiences. It seems probable that rock art arose out of these experiences of the shamans.

In rock art creatures which are part-animal part-human are found. They represent the bushman belief that while in trance the shamans acquire the power of animals, fish and birds. In trance feelings of elongation or rising up, flight, being under water and death are also experienced.

The final transformation in our journey takes the Bushman into the modern world.

This dance pays tribute to a dispossessed and dying people and their culture. The Bushman rock art and trance dancing which inspired 'Tranceformations' speaks powerfully to us of the need to conserve our environment, and so to secure a better future for all South Africans.

The choreographer drew on the work of Professor David Lewis-Williams and Thomas Dowson for source material.

### Set, lighting effects and costumes:

In the opening the dancer's actions are silhouetted imaginatively on the cyclorama, portraying the rock art figures.

The dance moves through the different stages of the trance dance with rock art effects and images reflected on the cyclorama with effective lighting and costumes.

### Music

First section starts with just the dancers creating the rhythm with foot rattles, followed by an instrumental piece by Shaun Naidoo- very captivating.

### Costumes

Initially dancers wear traditional 'San/Bushman' wear, then during the trance dance the part-animal, part-human characters move onto stage with elaborate costumes depicting the eland, double-headed eland, lion other creatures and the nose bleeding that occurs during trance is depicted by one dancer/shaman wearing a mask with red ribbon trailing from the nose for about 10 meters.

Running time: 25 minutes



Sylvia Glasser's Tranceformations  
[www.midance.co.za](http://www.midance.co.za)

## Bibliography

All information for this paper was from a publication presented by Sylvia Glasser in May 2006

## VINCENT SEKWATI MANTSOE

South African dancer, choreographer and educator, Mantsoe was born in Soweto on 26 April 1971. His mother, aunts and grandmother were all sangoms who instilled in him an appreciation for his culture and a love of ritual singing and dancing.

He was educated at the Bona Secondary School in Diepkloof. There were no formal dance studios in Soweto. He learned street dancing in the Michael Jackson style, forming a group called Joy Dancers with his friends. He joined two youth groups called Street Dance and Rathabile Youth Club. In 1990 he auditioned and received a scholarship to the Moving Into Dance (MID) studio. He was exposed to contemporary and jazz dance and studied Afro-fusion and choreography under Sylvia Glasser. In 1992 he received a Diploma from the MID Community Dance teacher's Training Program in anthropological studies.

### Dance Career

Mantsoe's first public performance was in *Tranceformations* which was choreographed by Glasser in 1991. He also made his debut on SABC-TV as the work was broadcast.

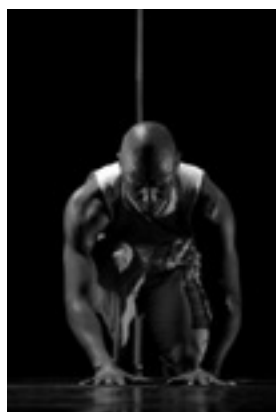
Mantsoe was recognised not only for his technical skills in this performance, but also for his deep spiritual understanding of the *San (Bushman) "Trance Dances"*. He drew on his own heritage and was to use these themes as an inspiration for his own choreography.

### Career as a choreographer/Significant achievements

Like Glasser, the fusion of different cultural identities within dance is explored in Mantsoe's works. He made his debut as a choreographer with his work *Gula Matari*, which was inspired by tapes of bird sounds and choreographed for MID to perform at the Dance Umbrella in 1993.

Originally a solo dance, it was extended into a group work which became one of the most highly acclaimed works in MIDM repertoire.. *Gula Matari's* beauty is timeless and it has won a number of awards in various countries. The work has since been performed all over the world, opening many doors for Mantsoe and led to his international acclaim over the years.,

In 1997 he set his piece *Sasanka* on the Dance Theatre of Harlem Company. They performed this piece in Washington D.C., at the Kennedy Centre and then in New York. Mantsoe was resident choreographer for MID and associate director. Apart from being an esteemed choreographer, he is also a skilled drummer.



### Bibliography

Article by Jill Waterman

Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe  
[www.sekwaman.co.za](http://www.sekwaman.co.za)

## NTSIKELELO “BOYZIE” CEKWANA

Internationally acclaimed choreographer and role-model

### **Biography**

Boyzie Cekwana was born in Soweto in 1970. He recalls that although his mother struggled to earn an income, there was always music in the house and the neighbourhood. Great musicians like Vusi Khumalo and Arthur Shabalala were both friends and neighbours. To young Cekwana, music and dance were synonymous. His elder brother introduced him to gumboot dancing. Soon his energies which may well have gone into active resistance to the apartheid regime were channelled into dance.

### **Career as a dancer**

He was inspired to try to learn formal dancing when he saw an episode of Fame, a television series, and realised that through dance he could express his innermost feelings. His mother could not afford dance lessons but Carly Dibokoane who was teaching ethnic and contemporary dance in Soweto made it possible for him to attend classes. He progressed so well that the multi-racial Johannesburg Dance Foundation (JDF) awarded him a three year scholarship to the Foundation’s teaching programme.

He graduated in 1989 and then danced professionally with the Free Flight Dance Company and then with PACT (PDC), a contemporary dance company attached to the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal

In 1990 PACT was renamed the State Theatre Dance Company and was soon one of the leading professional contemporary dance companies in South Africa.

### **Career as a Choreographer**

Cekwana’s first attempt at choreography came when he was with the PDC. He created a dance piece based on his childhood memoirs for the Vita Dance Umbrella called *Recollections* in 1992.

In 1993 he was appointed as resident choreographer to the Playhouse Dance Company in Natal, the first black person to achieve this distinction.

### **Significant achievements**

His work has been acclaimed overseas. He does not hesitate to combine different dance styles such as traditional dances with classical ballet.

Cekwana has won many awards for his choreography, including joint first prize at the International Ballet and Choreography Competition in Helsinki, Finland. He frequently is commissioned to create new works for the Dance Umbrella and has also been commissioned to do so for the Scottish Dance Theatre and the Washington Ballet companies.

His motto is “learn from life” Through dance, he tells the stories of Africa to the world. His works have been performed in every part of the globe.

### **Bibliography**

Booklet by Linell van Hoepen

## GREGORY VUYANI MAQOMA

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma started creating dance work in 1987 while in a Soweto Youth Club, dealing from the start with issues that were affecting South African society.

He started his formal training in 1990 with Moving into Dance Mophatong, a Johannesburg based dance school and company. A year later he was accepted into the main company as a dancer. In 1992 he completed a one year-long teachers training course at Moving Into Dance Mophatong, and in 1994 he presented his first choreography for the company, which earned him an FNB Vita Pick of the Fringe Award. In 1997 he was awarded a scholarship to attend a five-week choreography DanceWeb program in Vienna. In 1998 he was the recipient of the Young Choreographers Grant, which he used to create "Layers of Time" dedicated to Moving Into Dance Mophatong's 20th Anniversary; the work was premiered at the FNB Vita Dance Umbrella.

In 1999 he was nominated in the category Choreographer of the Year for "Layers of Time", and received a scholarship to study at PARTS (Performing Arts Research and Training Studios) in Brussels under the direction of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. Whilst in Brussels, Maqoma formed **Vuyani Dance Theatre Project** and created "Rhythm 1.2.3", which was premiered at the Its Festival in Amsterdam. In 2000 he was named the FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year for "Rhythm 1.2.3", and created "Rhythm Blues".

He and with Faustin Lenyekula from the Congo created the African Project "Tales Off The Mud Wall", the only work selected by the Internationale Tanzwochen Wein Committee. He co-produced "New Directions" a dance program for the Standard Bank National Arts Festival together with Moeketsi Koena, Sello Pesa and Mandla Mguni. He was commissioned by the Pretoria Technikon Dance Department to create "...and denial, and silence and ignorance...". He was invited by the International Theatre School Company in Amsterdam to create "Autumn Harvest" for the company. In 2001 Maqoma received an FNB Vita Dance Umbrella Award for the best original presentation of work in contemporary style for "Rhythm Blues". In 2001 he was selected to choreograph "Revolution", a collage of his works dating from 1996 for the Dunhill Symphony of Fire in Nigeria, Lagos. In 2001 he was selected as the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Dance 2002. Maqoma is the Associate Artistic Director for Moving Into Dance Mophatong Company.

In 2003 Maqoma created "Rephrase a replay" for Jazzart Dance Company in Cape Town. He served as Artistic Consultant for Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble in London and was appointed as the Artistic Director for Afro-Vibes Festival based in Holland. He created "Ketima (Run)" for his company, and "Silver Synergy" as a tribute to Sylvia Glasser. He was named Choreographer of the Year by This Day Newspaper and came second in the arts category of the Star Top Hundred People for 2003.

Apart from working and producing work for his company, Maqoma teaches and choreographs for other companies and institutions like the Pretoria Technikon, Moving Into Dance Mophatong, The Dance Factory, Jazzart Dance Company, Siwela Sonke, International Theatre School in Amsterdam, Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble in London and gives international workshops on African dance and culture and choreography.

# AFRICAN DANCE HISTORY AND CULTURE

## Introduction

Africa is a continent that has an unsurpassed diversity and complexity in terms of its people and their cultures. It consists of over 53 countries and Africans vary greatly, except that for most Africans in Africa and the Diaspora, dance is an elementary part of life. In the past decades, this aspect of African life was misunderstood and undermined. African dance/musical styles/traditions were primitive in comparison to those of European origin and not regarded as art. However, evidence drawn from social sciences like Ethnomusicology, Musicology and Anthropology shows that this was not the case.

African dance styles/traditions have their own true essence and aesthetics that are complex and diverse as its people. Dance is a component of the people's history and their ways of life that are constantly changing and being renewed. Dance in Africa is part of the whole complex of living. Its subject matter is inclusive of every activity between birth and death. When a child is born, and when the person is buried there is dance. Some dances are for puberty rites and initiation. Some are for preparation for hunting or even warfare.

Other dance styles/traditions are exclusively for accompaniment of story telling or a poet rendering his/her poems. There are special dance style/traditions of secret societies. Furthermore, other dances are by herbalists, shamans and healers for curing illnesses. There are dances to honor men and women, married or unmarried. Some are only for welcoming visitors or when a new leader steps into office.

Another established fact is that Africans never viewed dance and music as separate entities. Both interlock with each other and complement each other thus producing diverse and complex rhythms from both the dancer and the musicians.

## PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS OF AFRICAN DANCE STYLES

### Principles

African dance styles/traditions like any other art form have their guiding and fundamental principles. They are present in all the styles of dance in Africa.

- -Usage of natural bends of the body
- -Dancing towards the ground and complimenting gravity instead of defying it
- -Articulation of basic and complex rhythmic patterns in the time line scale
- -Imitating and dramatization of the natural world (birds, animals, insects or plants) or the elements such as fire, water, earth and air.

The principles mentioned above need to have variety, repetition, contrast, transitions, sequence, climax, balance and harmony. In order to achieve true essence there must be aesthetics and technique of the dance they constitute.

### Elements

About five elements are observable in most African dance style/traditions, these include:

- -Theme of the dance (fertility, courtship, work, hierarchy etc.)
- -Purpose of the dance (protest, socialization, celebration, questioning social issues etc.)
- -Time in which the dance takes place (at night or day time, daily, weekly or annually)
- -Participants in the dance (young or old, females or males, individual interpretation of the dance, roles and characters)
- -Location of the dance space (plains, mountainous, coastal, forest, outdoors or indoors, theater etc.)

## BASIC MOVEMENTS IN AFRICAN DANCE STYLES/ TRADITIONS

Though it might be impossible to list all basic movements found in African dance styles, nonetheless, there are a handful of these common ones. Some are locomotive while others are non-locomotive.

### Locomotive

- Walking and striding (eg. *Mohobelo* of the southern *Basotho*)
- Shuffling of the feet (eg. Trance dance of the *San* and *umXentso* of *amaXhosa* diviners)
- Leaping (eg. Ostrich mating dance of the Kalahari *San* and *Setap* by the *Batswana*)



- Stamping (eg. *iNgoma* of *amaZulu*)

### Non-locomotive

- Vibrating and shaking (eg. *uMtyityimbo* of *amaMpondo*)
- Mime and gestures (eg. Charm dance of *Bororo Fulani*)
- Kneeling (eg. *Mokgibo* of southern *Basotho* women and girls)
- Jumping (eg. *Ilmoran* warrior dance of the *Masai*)

Based on this diverse complex face of dance styles/traditions in Africa it is not easy to make a neat grouping of what is "African dance", as there is no one profile of an African. However, broadly speaking in respect of dance in the context of Africa we can use a formula in defining African dance/musical performance styles/traditions by placing them into two main categories, namely the ritual / ceremonial dance styles / traditions and the contemporary / theatrical dance styles / traditions. Each of these categories of styles/tradition has their distinctive features. However, though this is not conclusive, this approach may provide some understanding of different African dance traditions/styles.

### RITUAL / CEREMONIAL DANCE STYLES / TRADITIONS

These kinds of performance styles are observable in most African countries, villages, towns and cities danced by people of same ethnic and cultural or historical background. The ritual or ceremonial dance styles/traditions are an act of faith in renewal of life; they trace the order of the universe. Most of these ritual dance styles/traditions cannot be accurately traced back to where they really originate. However, they are the bone and blood of African culture. Ritual dance style/tradition has deep psychological and religious roots embedded in African ways of life. These dance styles/traditions often stay unchanged.

Ritual dance styles/traditions have a distinct character which is repetition of simple steps or movements that follow a very complex pathway on the ground which might be curved, straight or circular. However, in most cases these dances prefer a circular pathway. A circle as mode of symbolism is mostly favored in African philosophy, arts, spirituality, society and architecture, eg:

In villages many huts are round in shape and they surround one which is in the center. This is also the dwelling place of a chief. The whole village is surrounded by a fence. This gives us three circles, one within the other in terms of architecture.

On the other hand, every family in the village during meals sits in a circle around dishes of food and cooking utensils. They are also cylindrical in shape. Elders tell stories and legends to the young ones while sitting around the fire. The court meeting of the chief and its proceedings take place with everyone sitting in a circle.

There is also a lot of symbolism used by performers during the course of ritual dance styles/traditions. These symbols are evident in the masks, costumes, musical instruments and particular objects like fly-whisks, amulets, magical objects, to convey the true essence of that ritual performance style.

There are ritual dance styles/traditions performed for seasonal rites in particular the harvest festivals. The performance can be before or after the fieldwork has taken place. The primary aim is the bringing of rain and above all to cleanse the earth from impurities with which people have defiled it in the course of the year. By performing, the ritual dances they attempt to reconcile the spiritual force that control these phenomena, including the ancestors who are intermediaries between the living and unseen world of spirits.

These dance styles/traditions are instrumental in rites of passage, which mark a passage from one state of being to the next. This ranges from birth of a child and conferring the name of the child; initiation rites which follow marking ones transition from child hood to adulthood and finally the burial rites allow the deceased to join the realm of his or her ancestors.

An example of a ritual/ ceremonial dance style /tradition of Africa is:

## **Selected Works: THE MEDICINE SONG OF THE JO'HASIE SAN BUSHMEN (TRANCE DANCE)**

### **Historical background**

About 10,000 years ago before the arrival of Bantu farmers and the settlers in South Africa, a nation once occupied and travelled the region. They were a hunter-gatherer community with no leader or a king. These people were members of the KoiSan group of people, also known as the Bushmen. (Although Bushman is considered a degrading term we will use it in our study but without any prejudice.) Today a small number of Bushmen live in the Kalahari Desert, Namibia and Northern Botswana. The settlers and the Bantu farmers drove them there and others were killed. They accused them of stealing and killing cows.

Bushman groups do not have a single name for themselves; it is therefore not easy to track their religion in one context. However the south Bushmen who were also the rock-paint artists, believed in one god 'Kaggen, who is able to transform into an eland bull, snake or a vulture.

Modern !Kung Bushmen on the other hand and other Bushmen groups believed in two gods, one who lives in the east and the other in the west. Other groups also believe in the spirit of those who lived before them but they do not worship them as ancestors. For the Bushmen their religion is integrated into their everyday life. This is displayed in their medicine song (Trance dance) and their rock art.

### **Dance purpose**

The medicine song or Trance dance is a collective act among the Bushmen. Everybody takes part in the performance except the very old and the very young. There are various reasons for its performance. They claim that the reasons are the human desire to involve the supernatural in their earthly life. It is an aspect of their hunting experience. However curing the sick is the most important reason. The dance can also be associated with their mythology and mysticism as a reason for its existence. To influence actions of spirits of the dead (Ilgau wa-si), the dance and song makes these bad spirits happy so that they do not harm the living.

A sick person or an adult in their family may request the dance on behalf of the person. That person will call particular medicine men also known as shamans to organize the affair. Sometime during the day, women also are informed. The dance may be anticipated during the course of the day. However, the actual dance takes place in the evening and it can last till the next morning. Though curing is centered on the person who is ill, nevertheless all the people present receive treatment. The shaman or medicine man lays hands on the body of the sick person. He can also detect illness in the bodies of those present. However, if there is no illness found, the medicine song and dance serves as a shield against illness for the whole community. When illness is detected, the shaman will ask women to sing with more intensity to increase his healing energy.

### **Choreography**

The first stage of the dance is very casual even though the idea is to heal. Furthermore, the status of the sick person does not affect this informality. Girls will move and sit at the dance area. Only two may start the song and begin to clap, while others will be chatting to their peers and one will fetch a coal twig to start a fire for the dance circle. The song stops frequently as if those singing it are not sure. The boys and young men around the wharf will pass comments like; "What kind of song is that? You girls sing terrible; your singing is terrible". Responding to the insults the girls will ask the boys to join in to make the situation better. At this stage, the participants are the children aged three to seven years. To them this is the only chance to learn the curing dance and it is fun.

Boys with their toy rattles they received from their fathers start to dance and girls clap and sing in a happy mood. When the older boys join in the dance, it starts to take shape and follow a circular pathway on the ground. For the dancers to carry on depends on the amount of good singing and less disruptive activities. This will then lead it to the next stage of the curing dance.

This stage of the dance starts with a different cast; young ones will drop out completely and sometimes move away from the dance area to have a dance practice on their own. One or two of the adult males will start to join the dance circle and boost it with their intense dancing. They will be also shouting "you there, women, come and sing! Do you not see me dancing? Come and sing." The intensity starts to grow slowly as more women and men become drawn closer to the dance circle. More men will join the dance and the women,

the singing and clapping. Unlike in the first stage, the song does not stop frequently it carries on for ten to twenty minutes or more. The time itself must be enough to allow the dance to reach its peak, which provides tangible excitement, tasteful for everyone present. To reach this, the tonal and rhythmic elements of the piece are firm and solid. Exuberant laughter and loud conversation come between the songs, but it does not last long. Even before the women catch their breath, a man starts the other song, he will sing out the melody, and that song starts. Signs of impatience towards the process are visible, because it is clear to everybody that they are reaching the ultimate goal of the dance.

The third stage is indicated by the sounds of the medicine man or shaman that he projects vocally. This is an indication that the curing rite has begun.

### **Participant's activities**

Women are responsible for the singing and clapping their hands. Nevertheless, sometimes one can jump up and perform some dance steps and gestures that are different from those done by men. They usually arrange themselves in a roughly circular order that may take two forms around the fire. The most simple and common arrangement is that of the closed circle. They sit with legs crossed and close to each other, in such a way that the leg of each person touches those of a person sitting next to them. Their shoulders will also be touching because of this sitting arrangement. The circle becomes larger as more women move. Young girls sit behind their mothers. The circle can also double and produce two rows if necessary, but this does not mean that this is a prescribed arrangement. Furthermore, women can go and sit with who ever they choose, be it a friend or a neighbour.

Men dance around this circle of women in a single file with rattles tied to their feet. The dance tracks enlarge as more men join the dance circle. Its diameter will be stable when it reaches fifteen feet. As men dance around the women, they will also turn on the spot and each man then continues with his dance steps. In some instances, the man leading the dance will lift his arms high and parallel straight out in front of himself. Always when he begins to turn, it is towards the circle of the women. Other men will not rush to turn rather they will suitably follow each other until everyone has reversed the direction.

The line moves off making the beginning the end and the end the beginning. Different variations of dance steps and gestures are displayed when the men are dancing. Men, while still moving with others in the line, use the standard dancing posture at first, a basically erect stance with trunk bent slightly forward from the hip. A dancing stick or hunting bow will be in one hand and the other hand will hold an animal tail switch. In a rhythmic dance fashion, he will be pounding the earth. As the excitement of the music mounts and grips him, he will elaborate on the dancing. He will then change his rhythmic pounding and vary his gesture. While this is happening, the line will be proceeding on the dance track. Another gesture that is common is that of a wand extended above the head to the right of the dancer in front. The left hand holds a stick and the other hand is on his hip.

As spirit heightens, the dancer bends forward and deepens the standard position stamping both feet simultaneously. When the music reaches the fullest melodic rhythmic complexity, the dancer starts hopping on both feet together. He bends forward until the torso is in a right angle with the legs. His arms are extended to the fore in line with the torso or kept on both hips. He may also hop behind one woman and then hop sideways to carry on with the movement on the dance track. This gesture approves the singing of the women and encourages them to do more. He may also shout "ts o-si ge:ge:ge:ge:"(women sing,sing,sing).

For the ending of songs, men perform the same gesture with arms raised to the shoulder height parallel and turned towards the women. This does not happen simultaneously and it follows along the dance line in a rapid succession. All men will then stamp in place holding their arms towards the song circle.

Women from time to time also jump up and join the dance. From her sitting place, she will energetically stand up gathering her garments and adjusting a baby on her back, if any. In small mincing steps different from those of the men, she will start to dance. She does not pound her feet, rather she moves along in a nervous jerky style alternating from leg to leg, her ankle bracelets producing a jingling sound to emphasize the rhythmic pattern of the song. Her gesture keeps her still with arms close to the body looking straight

ahead or towards the ground. At times, she will appear motionless except the fluttering of the leg motion. She can join the line of the men for a short while if she desires. Alternatively, she will rather jump to the side of the dance plot and do her dance separately. In this case, she may perform vigorous gestures with arms bent close to the body as if in a running motion. She will be constantly swaying back and forth from side to side as she centers herself more or less on her shuffling feet. The dance is normally short and intense. She does it for several beats and then suddenly stops. Sometimes she can perform her dance going in an opposite direction with the line of the men. She will point her forefinger of her right hand to one man in the line; the arm will be extended and moving up and down. While shuffling her feet she will seem as if she will collide with the men's line. Nevertheless, she will stop and freeze in her tracks with her face turned away and the body in a disdainful attitude. She holds the posture for a short moment and suddenly drops the pose and walks to join the song circle.

Though most of these movements and gestures have animal names, they do not connect with every day life of the Bushmen. They are fragments of structured religious practice that incorporates hunting observations.

### **Trance, curing and rock art**

When the song has reached the total rhythmic complexity the medicine men will enter into a trance. A potency that has been slowly building up in side their stomachs causes this trance. The southern /xam Bushmen word for this potency is !gi hence the medicine man is known as !gixa. On the other hand the !Kung Bushmen of Namibia and northern Botswana refer to it as the N/um and the medicine man is called n/um ka'au.

As each of the men fall into trance the dancers' line is changed. It fragments as entranced men drop out of the line and others will move out to go and help the entranced ones. Some of them while in trance will suffer nasal bleeds and the blood may be rubbed on the body of the sick person to cure them. It is during this stage of the dance when the medicine men perform their task, which is to cure people of their ailments. They lay their trembling hands on all present at the dance to draw sickness out of the people into their own bodies. By using high pitched shrieks they expel the sickness through an imaginary hole on their necks known as n//au spot. When in this trance state, the medicine men hallucinate and in their visions, they see spirits that they must fight in order to save the sick person's life. Other visions are those filled with images of therianthropes (half man, half animal from the Greek word *therion*= animal and *anthropos*=human).

The performance of the medicine song and the curing might last until the early hours of the next morning. Medicine men, after they have had their rest will later go to rock surfaces to paint, especially those in caves. In these paintings they record all the activities of the ritual they had the previous day. In their painting, they will depict the dance and song circles, and activities of medicine men. Even minute details like nasal bleed, the dance track of the dancers or sickness leaving the bodies of people; these are painted in great detailed manner. They will also paint things they felt or visualised while in trance. These may be images that are half human and half animal or images of people with elongated bodies with distorted faces.

Other examples of the ritual / ceremonial dance styles / traditions are:

- *Dogon mask dance done by males wearing a sirige mask*
- *Reed dance (Umhlanga) of the amaSwazi done by women or girls carrying butcher knives.*
- *Isigekle performed by Shembe Church of the Nazarenes.*
- *Python dance (Domba) by young female initiates of baVenda.*
- *Gaza dance of young female initiates of Bangui region.*
- *Yake dance of young Fulani males and females of Niger (Dakoro area).*
- *Mask dance of the Kuba of Zaire*
- *The possession dance of the Ekpo ritual performed in Nigeria.*

## CONTEMPORARY AND THEATRICAL DANCE STYLES/ TRADITIONS

These dance styles/traditions are contemporary in origin. They draw their inspiration from the ritual dance styles/traditions and give them new meanings and interpretation. Urban social, economic and political setting also influence these dance styles/traditions in their creation, essence and aesthetics. Contemporary and theatrical dance styles/traditions also serves as a mechanism in which the rural influences the urban or vice versa.

For example, in South Africa there was the establishment of a large number of urban crowded slum yards in Johannesburg in the early twentieth century as a result of restrictive legislation and poverty. *Shebeens* were a common feature found within these yards; they provided income and on the other hand a space for social gathering. Moreover, regular weekend parties with dance and music took place in these *shebeens*. Out of this a new breed of professional musicians and dancers arose. Their dance and music had elements of traditional African, afro-western, Afrikaans, folk music, American ragtime and jazz. A fusion of all these styles developed into a distinct urban style of dance/musical performance style/tradition known as *Marabi*. This dance/musical style/tradition grew out of slum yards as a response to deprivation and exclusion of Africans in social and economic affairs of South Africa. *Marabi* established itself as a form of resistance and also became dance/music performance used to socialize and to meet new people.

*Iscathamiya* (to step lightly) also developed out of many forms of dance/music styles/traditions. This includes the *iNgoma* songs, amaZulu wedding songs and dances, Christian hymnody and American minstrel, ragtime music and dance. Within itself, *Iscathamiya* carried a working class consciousness, urban status, Christianity, rural reminiscence, pan African nationalist ideology and amaZulu nationalism.

The step that characterizes *Iscathamiya* also developed as a reaction to social change especially the shift from rural to urban dress code. The 'step' unlike the 'stamp' and vigorous movements in *iNgoma* allow you to dance in a suit, tie and polished shoes. *Iscathamiya* competitions are still popular among amaZulu migrant workers in Johannesburg and Durban. Occasionally *Iscathamiya* groups of these migrant workers perform without competing, but only as a sign of showing solidarity among themselves. Now in recent years, *Iscathamiya* groups are in different parts of South African towns and cities, performed by youth groups and choral choirs. This dance/music style/tradition has gained popularity in Europe and America through the efforts of *Black Mambazo* performances; their recorded music and collaborations they did with foreign musician like Paul McCartney and Dolly Parton. *Iscathamiya* sounds of *Black Mambazo* now also in sound tracks of movies like the *Lion king*.

Another South Africa contemporary or theatrical dance that also carries this influence of urban and rural is *Gumboot* dance. The isiZulu name given to this dance style/tradition is *isicathulo*, which initially referred to the leather boots worn by those who traveled long distances. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term has referred to Wellington rubber boots (gumboots). This dance/musical style/tradition arose in the late 1890's among the *Bhaca* male migrant workers who were workers at the Durban harbours and railways. They were from Southern KwaZulu Natal and later moved to *Witwatersrand* mines in Johannesburg.

Although it was a form of recreation, some people say its influence came from clapping and hitting the legs like the dancing performed in the Austrian Schuplatter, due to Austrian missionaries that were present in the area. The authoritative association of the work team leader (*Basesboyi*/Boss boy) and other workers is evident in the call and response interaction between dance leader (*igosa*) and the rest of the dancers. The *Gumboot* dance movements and commands are an explicit display of discipline and interaction between workers and the leadership in the mine compound. The effects of mine culture on this dance style/tradition are still evident as performers usually dramatize this historical experience of their kin. The leader controls the dance with commands and each respond from the team is precise. In most of the performances, blowing of a whistle reinforces the commands. The musical accompaniments are from amaZulu migrant's traditional songs or in some other case a concertina or guitar. Other observable features are comical displays of everyday life experience that are included in the choreography.

Development of *gumboots* depended on *Gumboots* dancers; competitions sponsored by mine bosses and big companies. Moreover, the way it transformed and changed was due to the men who performed it. Due to the lack of centralized structure to organize, large competitions have been on the decline since the 1980's. This happened due to large companies that withdrew from sponsoring teams partly due to political violence between teams. This dance style/tradition continues to change and to be adapted by dance groups who do not work in docks, or the mines. Dance groups in towns and cities of South Africa now perform it as a recreational or theatrical dance/musical performance. Schools are also nurturing the dance style/tradition as an extracurricular activity for boys and girls, and the creation of new commands and choreography is evident.

The other dance style/tradition arising out of the mixture of urban dance/musical styles is the *pantsula*. It is loosely described as a township jazz dance and its roots are in popular dance styles of the 1940's and 1950's. It also includes some elements of American dance styles like the Charleston with its cross-stitched footwork. Recently the *Pantsula* dance style has been influenced mainly by urban street dance forms that include Breakdance and Hip-hop styles. *Pantsula* as a dance style can also be paralleled with the birth of *Kwaito* music. Moreover this kind of music has become a popular choice in *pantsula* dance performances because it is multi-lingual; it incorporates within its lyric seSotho, isiZulu, English and Afrikaans.

As a male dominated dance form, *pantsula* performance style context emerged from the street dances, *shebeens* and community social gatherings that include music and dance.

Examples of contemporary / theatrical dances are:

## **Selected Works: INGOMA**

### **Historical background**

Among *amaZulu*, Ingoma denotes a special type of dance/song performed at festivals, especially that of the first fruits. One will also hear *amaZulu* when they say " *uya yi shaya ingoma*"(which is a term associated with the kings Royal Dance song of *amaZulu*) It also means that one is a good dancer or one is a performer of the dance/song. The term *iNgoma* was later applied to hymns-sacred songs e.g. *izingoma zasesontweni* (church hymns). Therefore, one can ask how come this one word is used to explain two different things. The fact of the matter is, unlike in European or the West, Africans do not perceive music and dance as being separate from each other. It is a widely published fact that African music demonstrates this total integration of song and dance. Thus *iNgoma* among *amaZulu* means both to sing and dance, *iNgoma* dance/songs were performed at festivals, especially that of the first fruit. *iNgoma* performance styles that are found today in the cities came into existence during the migration of labour from the rural areas to urban areas.

Informants say that *iNgoma* started as a musical activity reflecting the rural experience of *amaZulu* migrant labourers in the urban setting. The dance was also institutionalised in the hostels as a way to control the behaviour of *Amalaita* (susceptible young men who joined the groups/teams voluntarily and were to an extent detrimental to the reputation *iNgoma* teams came to have among Europeans, and the dominant white city authorities. *Amalaita* were also involved in crime and joining these *iNgoma* groups did not curb them; as a result they gave *iNgoma* groups a bad reputation. *Amalaita* is the unusual spelling that originated from a notorious Johannesburg gang "the Allrighters" and therefore *amalaita* is a corrupt version of this gang's name).

These *iNgoma* teams held competitions sponsored by the mines and big companies and could win money as their prize. This approach was aimed at making sure that *Amalaita* did not get themselves into trouble with the state police by doing crime. In addition, the *iNgoma* teams were the only means of getting some recreational activity.

The first *iNgoma* dance performances were seen in the hostels being performed for the white bosses. It was done in *iFolo* (a line formation, standing drawn up as if warrior troops are being mustered). This line formation that dancers take during a performance can also be found in *isikhuze* (this term denoting an earlier form of the *iNgoma* dance and it also has military associations. The verb *khuza* is to describe the performance of *izaga* [battle cries]. Though the "battle cries"are melodic in style, they are not traditionally conceptualised as 'song'). The military aspects of *isikhuze* are also apparent in the dance choreography, which incorporates drill-like formations, an older variant style of *iNgoma*. Drumming and singing with

participants holding a stick and a small shield is one of its characteristics. Shields are held with the left hand and the stick with the right hand.

One member of the group known as *iGosa* (customarily he was a messenger of the *Zulu* king, and today is also used to refer to a church steward or musical director of *iNgoma* team) his duty is to control the team. This he does by using a whistle that he carries on a thong around his neck. The leader is the one who gives the dancers the cues when to change the movements and when to progress to the next phase in the music.

*iGosa* in terms of *iNgoma* dance song, is a person who possesses a high level of performance skills, techniques and experience and he is the team leader. When he is busy directing his team in the dance, he also displays his high level of technique and skill. By performing acrobatics, tumbling and falling on the ground in a stylised way and, having performed his 'solo', he will then join the other dancers in the dance formation.

*iGosa* is also responsible for boosting the morale of the team. It is the achievements of *iGosa* that make the audiences favour one group above the other. Furthermore it is also the activities of *iGoso* that make the audience excited by thrilling them in the way he executes his stamps and the complex movements of the style. In return the audience shouts and ululates thereby motivating *iGoso* to increase his effort. During this, his fellow team members will be shouting out his *izibongo* (praise name) that includes *izithopo* (nickname) and *isithakazelo* (clan names that also include the lineage of *iGosa*).

When a large *iNgom* team performs, it is accompanied with three or four drums. The drums are large and double skinned based on the western military model, which a player strikes with a beater in each hand. The dance consists of stamping on the ground, the shield on the left hand strikes the thigh, and the stick held with the right hand.

The concerted (arranged in parts) stamping has to be co-ordinated and executed with accuracy; this is secured by the whistle commands of *iGosa*. These preparations which form part of the cueing system of *iGosa*, which are associated with a style of non-melodic rhythmic 'chanting' using syllables like "a zhi hom, a zhi ha", which directly precedes the stamping. These customs are not only confined to *iNgoma* dances only, they occur in other styles of *Zulu* dance traditions/styles as well.

*IsiKhuze* is a variant type of *iNgoma* performance that according to the informants, is said to be the oldest and has made this tradition popular among *amaZulu* and also among those who are not of *Zulu* cultural origin. According to these informants, it grew into a competition among "Amalayita" members and teams. The developments of these migrant teams on mines made *iNgoma* performance tradition/style become regional in both the *kwaZulu* Natal urban and rural areas and also in *Gauteng* province especially in Johannesburg. However, *iNgoma* is not that popular in Cape Town, but one can still see it performed. Its development popularity was through work migration. These migrants came to work at the Cape Town docks. More recently, youth groups are also practicing *iNgoma* tradition/style in and around the townships of South Africa.

Let us view some examples of different styles of *iNgoma* that developed through the years:

### **Selected Works: UMZANSI**

This style is mostly popular around the wider region in areas like *Mbumbulu* and *Ndwedwe*, in *KwaZulu*, Natal. It can also be found in the commercial district of Durban metro like in the Dalton road hostel.

### **Costume**

- (1) *iBeshu* (a skin buttock-covering, worn by men, being the rear part of *umutsha*, a loin-covering; extending to the knees)
- (2) *isiShababa* (a skin buttock-covering, longer than *ibeshu*, extending to the calves of the legs).
- (3) *umQhelo* (a head dress of beads, or skin worn encircling the head).
- (4) *iziNcabulela* (sandals with straps made of leather, with sole cut from a car tyre)

## Musical Instruments

The musical instrument that accompanies the performance is *umMsalveshe* (a big double skinned drum (like the model on the western military drum) and is played with two beaters with rubber heads). The term - *msalveshe* is derived from 'salvation' pertaining to the Salvation Army bands that use such drums. (The Salvation Army is an international charitable organisation, set up and operated on a military pattern.)

## Dance

The dance has its own choreography: the dancers hold a stick in one hand in *ifolo* (line) formation like in *isikhuze*. It also consists of stamping of the feet. Before each dancer can execute the stamp, they perform "*ukuland'iNgoma*" (to trace or follow *iNgoma*) where the dancer moves two steps backwards with the knees slightly relaxed. When one watches this, one is reminded of photographer when he/she wants to take a perfect photograph and their subject, who will then jostle themselves into a favourable position before the camera clicks. Alternatively, a golf player who is about to hit a golf ball with a club he does so by practice strikes as preparation before actually striking the ball. These two examples of preparation activities are comparable with the preparation before stamping. This is followed by the raising of the leg (on which the dancer rests momentarily on the second step) forward in high kick before bringing the foot down on the ground in a sturdy stamp.

The leg that is swung forward and up is relatively straight and the supporting leg has a slightly bent knee. When the foot hits the ground, what follows is a change of direction in the body of dancers who then move in the opposite direction. During the dance, when *iGosa* display their skills, members of the team usually squat on the ground or stand. At certain points in the dance routine, the dancers will crouch to the ground as directed by their leader (*iGosa*).

## Music

The drum pattern stresses a basic rhythm of triple beats, supplemented by clapping. This drumming and clapping also accompany the vocal parts of the song. Here is an example of an *Umzansi* song, which is antiphonal (call and response phrases) in structured.

*Ngahamba nge jike ndleleni.*  
(I left and returned on my way)  
*Ngaphindele nga khumbulu mama.*  
(Again, I longed for my mother)  
*Wawu khale lani ?*  
(What were you crying for?)  
*Inkomo ngezanina?*  
(What are these cows for?)  
*Inkomo nge zombango.*  
(These are cows of disagreement)

## Selected Works: ISISHAMENI

Like other *amaZulu* dance styles, *isiShameni* is also regional in origin. This dance style emerged in an urban hostel migrant labour environment just like *Umzasi*. *isiShamenni* style is more popular in *Maphumulo* District of KwaZulu, Natal. The roots of *isiShameni* are also traced back to the variant old form of *iNgoma* "*isikhuze*".

*isiShameni* unlike other types of *iNgoma* has shifted away from unison line (*ifolo*) that one finds in traditional *iNgoma*. *isiShameni* is a style that is concerned about showmanship between dancers.

## Costume

- Vest with a tiger or lion print /shirt which is colourful with beads.
- *Isiqweba* (made of coat or sheep skin worn to cover the shins)
- *IsiJaha ndoda* (short trouser that is decorated with pieces of material)
- *Umqhelo* (head dress made of beads or skin worn to encircle the head)
- *IziNcebulela* (sandals with straps made of leather and sole cut from a car tyre)



## Music

The music of *isiShameni* is mostly made up of chanting and singing. The drum is optional in the performance. Sometimes during *isiShameni* performance, a *kudu* horn is an accompanying instrument. The clapping stresses a basic rhythm of five beats and an accent on the third beat. To accompany this, both audience and performers sing and chant.

## Dance

The drummer, if present in a performance, will stand with the dancers and the audience in a half circle while they are clapping and chanting. The dancer will usually step into the centre of the half circle and do a short sequence of stamping (the leg that is used to stamp must not go up high) and forward rolling on the ground. The dancers are generally showing off their physical tricks and technique that define each dancer's style. The audience and the dancers who are still waiting to enter the circle reinforce each step, movement, or a stamp with clapping of hands.

In *isiShameni* each dancer is known for his technique that reflect his *Zulu* manhood and style. In most cases during the performance, the audience anticipate certain techniques, by calling and shouting. The duets lean towards gymnastic and martial art display of jumping and forward rolling. In some cases like in Dalton Road Hostel, dancers have also begun to incorporate some of the Breakdance (a form of dance that originated in the USA in early 1980's. It is influenced by the *Capo era* dance form which originated in the Congo and moved to Brazil and the rest of the new world through slave trade and it is now viewed as a form of martial art) In addition, steps like "running man" and body dislocations' that are from the Hip-Hop culture can be observed. Shouting complements for these new re-inventions that are displayed in *isiShameni* and cheering from the audience is an acknowledgement of these incorporated urban influences.

These new step for these re-inventions are taken from the media, movies and pop music videos.

## Comparing *Umsanzi* and *isiShameni*

Though *Umzansi* and *isiShameni* are both derived from the same source, they have some differences in terms of style. These can be observed in their costumes, music and dance style.

For example, in *Umzansi* the costumes are more traditional, meaning that they are made of animal skins and beads. In addition, the dancers carry sticks and shields which is a kind of traditional armament.

However, when one views *isiShameni*, it is almost a modernised version of the original form of *iNgoma*. The costumes are more urban in appearance e.g. shirts, vests and trousers. The dancers do not carry anything when they dance.

In *Umzansi* though the drum is not optional, its function is to follow the dancer. This means that the dancer dictates musical and rhythmic patterns.

While on the other hand, in *isiShameni* the drum is optional. The dance is dependent on the clapping and it stresses that a clap emphasizes each step or movement.

*Umzansi* choreography is in *ifolo* (line formation) and with *iGosa* taking solo performances. Other dancers are also given a chance to do solo performances but they are selected. A whistle and commands from *iGosa*, who patrols in front of the team during the performance, directs the dance routine. It is also characterized by drill precision uniformity and body position. The good *Umsanzi* dancer is characterized by strong leg stamping accompanied by direction changes in the body. The assessment of good *Umsanzi* technique is on how high the leg can go before bringing it back to stamp the ground.

*IsiShameni* on the other hand has shifted the extreme commitment of dancers away from the traditional *iNgoma* line formation. This style centres on showmanship between dancers. Moreover, even though stamping is one of *isiShameni* elements the height of the leg is not emphasised. What is important is for a dancer to develop their distinctive styles that makes each dancer unique.

Unlike *Umzansi*, which is mainly influenced by traditional *Zulu* cultural life, *isiShameni* is more influenced by urban culture of the city and the media. This is reflected in the costumes and steps or movements that are borrowed from other cultures e.g. Breakdance, Martial art and movies. Another aspect that distinguishes

*Umzansi* and *isiShameni* is the idea of 'ukulandi ingoma' which is only applicable to *Umzansi* performance style/tradition and other *Zulu* dance styles/traditions.

### ***iNgoma* Breaking new grounds**

Though *iNgoma* was a distinct dance and song performance style, it has now become regional and developed into many different styles, which also claim their roots from the old form of *iNgoma isikhuze*. Some of these styles include *Bergville* (this style originated in Bergville, Kwazulu, Natal and this style can be found in most theatre productions of *Mbongeni Ngema* especially "The Zulu" and "Sarafina". The dancers normally gather in one place and make a cluster and the dance is performed as a solo. The dancers usually use one leg to stamp for several times before they fall on the ground. The leg that stamps must be straight at all times. The dancers do not carry anything when dancing because most of the movements start with the arms raised above the head or in front of the body. The drumming is usually fast and demands the dancers to be energetic during the performance. Some people also claim that *isishameni* and *Bergville* is one style. This claim is still questionable;

*isiZingili* style is more popular in *Ulundi*, *Vryhied*, *Madadeni* and *Nquthu*, all in KwaZulu, Natal. This style is performed by young people, because it demands lots of energy and it is very fast. The speed of the dance depends on the drummer. The dancers also carry small shields and sing; before they dance, they put them down and stop singing and rely on the drum for rhythm.

*isiBhaca* style originated from *amaXhosa* culture but it has now become popular among *amaZulu* and is danced by old men. The leg that stamps must be first kicked to the back and then swung to the front. When this leg comes to the front the knee must go into the armpit before the foot can be placed/stamped on ground. Chanting, singing and clapping usually accompany the performers.

Women did not participate in *iNgoma* except for being part of the audience. In the past couple of years, *iNgoma* has found its space in theatre stages around the world. The circles and *ifolo* (line formation) have also shifted through time but so too has male ownership of this performance style. Now recently women perform *iNgoma*. In other cases, a mixed group of men and women can perform it. Occasionally, people who are not originally from *amaZulu* culture also perform it.

### **Selected Work: GUMBOOT DANCE**

The popularity of Gumboot dance is almost everywhere in the South African townships as well as outside South Africa. Unlike *ingoma* that has distinctive styles, *Gumboot* developed through different groups and communities and it stayed with its generic name. For our study example let us use the *Gumboot* dance version of Steven Shelembe of the Southern Drakensburg. It was taught to him by his father and uncle. Shelembe is now a member of a *Gumboot* dance company known as the "Crocodile Gumboot Dancers" the group mainly comprising relatives of Shelembe.

#### **Costume**

- Overalls
- Helmets
- Gumboots with rattles

In Gumboot dance, no musical instrument is required, but if one chooses to include musical instruments, the options are a concertina or a violin. Shelembe uses a guitar as an accompanying instrument. The technique that he applies when playing the guitar is that of vamping (improvised accompaniment) after picking up the introductory phase (*idlala*). The commands given during the performances are when he is vamping. There is also a general dance vocabulary of sound combinations and associated choreography. For example:

(1) Stamping the boots, (2) slapping of the boot while the leg is either raised on the ground, (3) hitting the heels of the boots together, (4) one boot swinging towards the other, (5) one boot kicking the other one, (6) kneeling, (8) standing or kneeling on one leg with arms bent at the elbows and the thumbs pointing upwards.

There is a constant call and response between the leader and his team or group. The commands are normally shouted aloud, and after the command the dancers must execute their combination in unison.

Between the combinations there is a waiting step that involves the gently tapping of the right foot on the ground. Some of the commands that Shelembe shouts to his team-mates include:

"Amaphoisa" --- referring to the mine police, as gumboot was also popular in the mines.

"Saluto" - normally used by police or military when one sees a senior member. However, in the *Gumboot* context it is for greeting the judges and the audience at competitions.

"Attention" - is to get the attention of all dancers and their attentiveness.

"Caps... Off" - a salute that is followed by standing at ease with the arms loosely at the waist height.

"Sihamba no dali" - meaning 'I am going with my sweet heart.

"Skhula nengane" - meaning 'we grow up with children' this phrase is usually used to acknowledge the newcomers in this performance team.

"Isitich" or "stich"- this phrase, according to Shelembe, refers to the most important combination in his sequences, which combines all the steps from other combinations into one sequence. Thus the name "isitich" (station), because this also marks the last sequence of the performance.

During the dance performance, strong dancers stand in the outer limits of the line. The dancing takes place over a cycle of four beats. There are two waiting steps used to mark the time. That is stamping of the right boot on the ground on the first and third pulse or alternating both legs e.g. right, left, right, left as in marching. During this marching, the leader moves up and down in front of the team inspecting it. Each command given is followed by a dance combination. These are usually composed, rehearsed, and learnt by the team over some period. Sometimes a leader can command that they must one at a time perform a solo.

## DANCE SYMBOLISM

Besides the steps, movements and gestures that are in African dance styles, carry with them some other kinds of symbolism. These may be in a form of costumes, props and musical instruments used during the performance. To illustrate the symbolic use of objects in dance performance; let us look at how the stick is used by *emaSwati*. The stick is a symbol of authority, power, unity, protection and a means of communication. For example, if one dancer accidentally drops the stick he has to hold an imaginary one. During the performance should one dancer move their stick from the right hand to the left, this signals to the drummer that he /she is out of character or exiting the dance space. If the same stick shifts back to the right hand, the drummer knows that the dancer is stepping back into character or re-entering the dance space. This cue is for the drummer to change the rhythm in order to stop or start the beat.

Another symbolic use of objects in dance is that of a butcher knife in the performance of *emaSwati* women. During the performance, they all carry butcher knives, and while holding them, they place them next to their hearts. This butcher knife symbolises humility, power and authority and is a celebration of femininity. This holding of the butcher knife also connects with another performance style of *emaSwati* a ritual known as *Umhlanga* (Reed dance) in which dancers carry long reeds). To cut these reeds, they use the same butcher knives. Therefore, these reeds are associated with the birth of life. According to some African stories of human origins such as that of the Southern *Basotho* people, people emerged from wet bed of reeds in the east known as *ntswanatsatsi* (where the sun comes from)

Another dance style/tradition that has symbolism incorporated within its performance is the *Domba*. It is one of the *baVenda* girls' initiation school dance performance styles. In the past woman who attended the initiation school were at an age to get married. The aim of *Domba* is to teach young girls or woman about their role in a society. It also teaches them a code of conduct in how to be a real *baVenda* woman. *Domba* can still be observed even today and it has now been given an equal status to the modern schools of *Venda*.

The big hemispherical drum *dzingoma* is still used in *Domba* performances. Among other things that are used at the *Domba* are wooden or clay tablets with figures engraved on them. These figures consist of lines and curved shapes that are metaphorical and their mystical meanings are explained to the girls during the *Domba*.

One of the most important symbolisms in the *Domba* is the python, which is associated with the creation of humans and animals. It is claimed that the python vomited everything out of its belly. This symbolism can also be seen during the performance of the *Domba* dance. The female initiates stand in a line close to

each other connected on the side by each other's elbows. The visual effects of the movements of the arms are likened to that of a snake. On the other hand these movements are also likened to the movements in the reproductive system organs especially the womb.

During the dance performance three drums are used, the *ingoma* for bass, *thungwa* for alto and *murumba* for tenor. The *ingoma* according to the *baVenda* mystical teachings symbolises the python or the pool of water. In some cases it is also seen as the womb of the woman. The combination of these three drums symbolises the heartbeat of the mother, the father and a child.

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## THEATRICAL DANCE FORMS (OTHER THAN BALLET AND MODERN/CONTEMPORARY DANCE)

All over the world, social or recreational dances may reflect not only the changes that a society is undergoing, but also a desire to hold on to the values of the past. There is a continued interest today in dances that remind one of a yearned-for past and the values we associate with a bygone era and which we would like to embrace and uphold in the present. When we look at dance styles from the past, we usually find that they hold clues to understanding how dance styles in the present have emerged. Such a dance is the waltz.

The **waltz** first began in the second half of the eighteenth century as a popular social dance amongst the lower and middle classes of Germany and Austria. However, by the start of the nineteenth century, it had become embraced with enthusiasm by the upper classes and aristocracy. Its popularity rapidly spread to France, England and even America.

There are several reasons why the waltz became so popular: the rhythm in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, with its emphasis on the first beat was intoxicating; the emphasis on individual expression was very liberating - once they had grasped a few basic steps, everyone could do the waltz; the close physical contact between the dancing couples as they whirled around the dance floor had never before been allowed. The universality of the waltz made it very appropriate for the social and cultural mood of the time, as it emerged during a period of nationalism, romanticism and a desire to return to a state of naturalness. The waltz came to represent freedom from the confines of pre-Revolutionary society. Today it is hard to imagine the waltz, with all its associated grace, being regarded as scandalous and a threat to morality, but at the time, there were clergy who were horrified by the whirling and twirling couples who seemed to "lose themselves" in the waltz.

Several composers, like Chopin and Johan Strauss, have used the waltz in some of their compositions.

**BALLROOM DANCING**, which includes the waltz, is very popular amongst both young and old of several different cultural groups across the world. Perhaps one of the reasons for its sustained popularity is that it is regarded as the mark of being educated and refined to be able to do ballroom dancing. For this reason many children are sent to attend ballroom classes as a compulsory activity. Ballroom dancing features at formal functions and events such as weddings and presidential inaugurations. Ever since the first ballroom dancing world championships were held in Paris in 1909, it has remained a competitive dancing activity. More recently it has evolved into a dance sport and is even a component of the Olympic Games. Wheelchair ballroom dancing, known as Wheelchair Dance Sport, is included in the Paralympics.

### **Other popular Ballroom dances:**

The Quickstep which is perhaps the most popular of the ballroom dances. It is danced to a bright 4/4 rhythm.

The Foxtrot is described as one of the classic dances on the social dance floor. It originated in America between 1913 and 1914. The dance was named after Mr Harry Fox, a musical comedy star who performed a fast trotting step to ragtime music in a Ziegfeld Musical

The Swing evolved from the jazz era of the 1920's. It was originally called the *jitterbug* and thereafter the *Lindy-hop* in honour of Charles Lindbergh who flew solo across the Atlantic in 1927. The Swing bands gained enormous popularity in the 1930's and the *Lindy* became simply known as *Swing*. The *Jive* evolved from the Swing and is characterized by sharp kicks and flicks.

The Polka originated as a folk –dance found in English country dances and German and Polish folk dances. It is an energetic and vigorous dance.

The Charleston is to have originated in 1926 from the coloured "folk of South Carolina wherein the town of Charleston is situated

Rock-and-Roll is a simplified version of the jive. The film *Rock around the Clock* (1956) gave tremendous public awareness to this form of dance.

### **LATIN AMERICAN DANCES**

The Tango has Latin origins that are exemplified in the characteristic Staccato action.

The Salsa. The word Salsa refers to 'sauce' or 'hot flavour.' It is similar to the Mamba but not as structured. The Mamba was imported from Cuba at the end of World War 11

The Cha-Cha which originated from Cuba in the mid 1950's was called Cha-Cha-Cha to reflect the three quick steps used in the footsteps and the calypso sounds heard in the music. It is an interactive, flirtatious dance.

The Rumba uses a slow tempo. It has been called the 'dance of love' because of its suggestive body and exaggerated hip movements styling. It was originally from Africa where it was used as a courtship or marriage and street dance. Instruments used for the Rumba are maracas, claves (sticks) and drums.

The Samba was brought to Paris in about by a brilliant Brazilian dancer Duque in the form of the Brazilian Maxixe- a dance performed to a slow 'tempo' Brazilian music

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## SPANISH DANCING

Mention the word "*Flamenco*" and one immediately thinks of *Flamenco* dance. The spectacle of stamping feet, clapping hands, clicking castanets and whirling skirts; women in colourful dresses and men in short jackets and tight trousers; this is the image conjured up in most minds. It has become as much a clichéd image of Spain as bullfights, paella or sangria. And, like all clichés, it is mainly superficial, taking no account of the long and tortured history associated with this dance type. It does not explain its complexity and artistry, nor indeed does it recognise that *Flamenco* as a dance was a late arrival to what *Flamenco* originally stood for.

The dance element of *Flamenco* is what probably most people want to see and experience. But dance is only a part of a whole, and that the whole picture is not only integral to *Flamenco* dance, but deserves attention as much because of its fascinating tale that takes in a mixture of exquisite culture on the one hand and religious persecution on the other. A dance form that grew and was influenced during a time of great tolerance and brutal oppression, but mostly a fusion of peoples that gave rise to one of the finest artistic forms in the world of music and dance.

The very name *Flamenco* came into general use only about 300 years after it first saw the light of day. Originally called "*Gitano*" after the gypsy communities where it evolved, it was in fact "*canto Gitano*" ("gypsy song"), which plaintively told the story of these set-upon people. The music was redolent of hard times relived through strong minor keys and the deep sadness of the words depicting death and deprivation. Later, instruments, both stringed and percussion accompanied the songs, and only much later did the performers get up and contrive dance steps to accompany the music.

The origin of the name *Flamenco* is still a matter of some conjecture among Spaniards. There are some who think it may come from the Arabic, "*Felah Mengu*" meaning "peasant in flight." Most Spanish dictionaries, however will tell you that *Flamenco* means "Flemish." At the time that the gypsies were developing *Flamenco* music, many Flemings (*Flamencos*) arrived in Spain so that "Fleming" became synonymous with the word "foreigner" and this came to be applied to the gypsies. More generally accepted among Spanish dancers is the theory that the Spanish mercenary soldiers who returned from the low countries, drank and sang so much in the taverns that any noisy, public behaviour came to be called "*Flamenco*" (Flemish,) and soon the term was applied exclusively to the noisy, singing gypsies.

When these persecuted individuals and families came together in the inns and taverns of, say, Seville, and had consumed a large quantity of wine, their frustrations were released in the form of song. These groups of singers were often led by the "*cantaor*" whose skill and artistry survives today in songs that speak of strong, emotional memories that reflected the lives of the people in those far off times.

As is well known, *Flamenco* song has a raw, rough sound. This reflects the sense of rejection and aggression when the early singers in southern Spain adapted and transformed the more lyrical style of Spanish ballads into something harsher to fit their lives and moods.

### Characteristics of Style

Although *Flamenco* is the most recognisable, accessible and best appreciated of Spanish dances world wide, it is by no means the only style. *Escuela Bolera*, stemming from the ballet and regional dances, are very different. There is no country that has a richer heritage of dance types, costumes, music and sheer variety. Each province has its unique aspect of Spanish dance and its type is predominant in its own area. The study of Spanish dance ranges between *Flamenco* and ballet (distinctive from classical ballet.) and every related regional variation. Study of Spanish dance concerns itself with costumes and accoutrements (castanets, musical instruments, fans and much more.) There is no national dance heritage in the world that comes even close to comparing with Spain in variety, artistry and style.

## MAVIS BECKER (MARINA LORCA)

**BORN:** Cape Town 31 December 1940

### Training

Becker began her training at the age of 6 in ballet, tap, modern musical teachers Freda Fernandez, Grace Klugman, Kay Zaymes and Francis Harrison.

In 1959 she went to London to further my career in dance. From London she went to Spain to study Spanish dance for a full year of intensive private lessons. After 5 months she joined a Spanish troop and they toured Spain for a month. The director and main dancer was Carlos de la Camara. After the tour the company continued performing at the Retiro Parque in Madrid. She had many wonderful teachers. Although Luisillo was not strictly speaking her teacher, her knowledge and expertise grew under his direction and that of Maestro Azorin (the musical director of Luisillo's company).

### Influences

Becker's Spanish friends in Spain at the time of Franco's rule were understandably influenced by the current political situation. Everyone was very aware of current events and how their lives were affected. It fascinated her that people acted the way they did. It was like going back to the dark ages. Everything spoken about politics was said in whispers. It had a profound effect on her in two ways:

Firstly, deep *Flamenco* came alive as its tragic overtones captured the mood of the Spanish people. No one was sure of their future especially the women, who had very little say over their lives. Women were protected by society in some ways; men could only take a female out if accompanied by a chaperone.

Secondly, the situation made her more aware of events in her own country as she compared the sadness of the gypsies, who were second-class citizens under Franco, and the black people suffering similar indignities in South Africa. She came to know and appreciate the special qualities of gypsy people and what they had to offer through their songs, music and dance.

The following people left an indelible impression on Becker

**Luisillo**, whom she had worked with in Spain and, particularly, after winning a competition in South Africa that gave her access to his company and its tour of Australasia and the Far East.

**Dame Marina Keet de Grut**. Her mentor and great friend.

**Jose Antonio**. He had a great influence on her by imparting his artistry and insight to interpretation of the dance. She was privileged to partner him on at least four occasions in Cape Town when he joined her company, *Danza Lorca*.

Others who influenced her and whose friendship and artistry she valued were: **Emilio Acosta**, **Emilio de Diego** (a guitarist of note who joined Jose Antonio on three occasions), **Jorje Luis**, **Raphael Aguilar**, **Manilito**, **Roberto Amaral**, and **Eduardo Lopez**. All came to join my company as guest artists from Spain, to partner me, and were unstinting in passing on their knowledge.

### Collaborations

Her major ballet, based on **Uys Krige's story, *Die Goue Kring***, had as the leading man, Eduardo Lopez. The ballet was staged for a summer season at the Oude Libertas in Stellenbosch.

Brian Astbury at the Space commissioned her to choreograph a dance drama production ***Lysistrata***. Similarly she was choreographer and dancer in John Badenhorst's and John Caviggio's ***Cachiporra***, a Lorca play, at the Oude Libertas.

Becker was guest artist and principal dancer with luminaries such as Antonio Salas, Jose Antonio, Dame Marina Keet, Hazel Acosta, Pablo Navarro, Deanna Blacher, and Pamela Chrimes in various productions both in South Africa and overseas. The Cape Town City orchestra under Omri Hadari presented her with an opportunity of being a soloist in castanets at the Cape Town City Hall. CAPAB (as it was known at the time) employed her as the choreographer for *Carmen* and *Man of La Mancha*.



### **Contribution to Spanish Dance in South Africa**

Having toured Spain for almost a year Becker decided to return to South Africa where she opened a studio.

She also performed in Cape Town and all over the Western Cape, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth, and recruited many pupils. In 1983 Becker started a company, Danza Lorca, with the help of John Badenhorst, who was her manager from the start.

Becker trained many successful dancers, teachers and choreographers. Some emigrated and continued spreading the love of Spanish dance. Of note are Sherrill Wexler in London, Rosanna Maille in Malta and Carolina Rosa in Cape Town, who also runs a very successful company, La Rosa Spanish Dance Theatre (see below).

### **Awards**

In August 2000 Becker was awarded the *La Cruz de la Orden de la Isabel la Católica*, by King Juan Carlos — Spain's highest award for a woman, for her services to Spanish culture, particularly excellence in dance.

### **Selected dance Work: FLAMENCO DE AFRICA:**

**Synopsis | Theme | Mood | Idea:** In the year that all South Africa went to vote for the first time ever, *Flamenco de Africa* presented the first-ever fusion of Spanish *Flamenco* and indigenous African dance. First the indigenous black South Africans (led by Sonwabo Masepe) danced, followed by the Europeans (led by Carolyn Holden); each doing their typical movements. A catalyst (Mavis Becker) appears, Moorish in style (evoking Morocco, where the Arab and African cultures first met one another) and breaking down the barriers separating the two groups.

In Section Three the two styles mixed and mingled, working through traditional African "calling and answering", and ends in a spirited finale, with all dancers moving together in a harmony of spirit.

The country most influenced by African music is Spain, so with the help of guitarist Santiago Luna, Becker synthesized some traditional *Flamenco* music, a type heavily influenced by African conquerors, and Moorish music from Africa, combining the two into an amalgam of exciting, evocative sounds

There already existed a strong musical link between Spain and Africa. Musicians in Andalusia and Morocco have confirmed a rich Moorish influence in *Flamenco*. Sung poetry and music borrowed from the Arabs and Berbers who ruled in southern Spain until they were expelled in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly, percussive elements of *jaleo* are still found in the folk music of Africa with its reliance on drums, stamping and hand clapping. The fusion between the two types compliments each other in aspects of rhythm and style

The ballet was divided into three themes that were linked together by a fusion of music and steps where the dancers "speak" to each other in the universal language of dance and find a commonality that ties them to each other. A mysterious, misty Moorish scene leads naturally into a joyous *Flamenco alegrías* during which the male dancers evoke the sounds and beats of Southern Africa. Out of this the softer, Moorish theme is picked up by the music and dancers expressing the hypnotic, mysterious sound of the deserts and the Kasbah. But the joy and beats of Spain and Africa cannot be resisted and the finale comes with the Spanish and African dancers melding to the same Spanish music but expressing it in their own ways.

### **Music: Santiago Luna**

In 1994 Becker was commissioned by John Badenhorst to choreograph a ballet for the M-Net film awards. Her brief was to produce a unique presentation to original music depicting the links in dance between Europe and Africa.

This was to capture both traditional *Flamenco* rhythms and an authentic African beat. It achieved this level of success because the fusion of styles demonstrated choreographically was also present when the music was composed /adapted by indigenous South African musicians working within the authentic *Flamencotradition*.

**Design|Costume:** Both Spanish and African costuming had become overused and hackneyed by 1994, so the production team (John Badenhorst, producer, Mavis Becker, choreographer, and John Caviggia, designer) agreed to use Vlisco WaxPrints from Java, to evoke both styles, with traditional *Flamenco* and African shapes being adapted to the full bodied fabric, and was presented in glowing jewel colours. The colour spectrum also matched the evocative M-NET All Africa Films Awards sets; M-NET having commissioned the work for this occasion in the first place.

## CAROLINE HOLDEN (CAROLINA ROSA)

### Historical background, training and influences

Born in 1962, Caroline Holden studied ballet with her mother, Barbara Holden. She started Spanish Dance classes in 1977 with Mavis Becker (Marina Lorca), and completed the Spanish dance Society teachers' examinations with Clive Bain. An examiner for the International Spanish Dance Society, Holden danced in Mavis Becker's Danza Lorca from 1981 until 1995 (the year of Becker's official retirement from performing). She trained with numerous teachers in Spain, most importantly Maria Magdalena, Pedro Azorin, La Tati, La Truco. Greatest inspiration – Jose Antonio Ruiz – “his vision” – exposed to him through Danza Lorca in 1981, 1983 and 1995.

Holden established the *La Rosa Spanish Dance Company* (LRSDT) in 1990 – motivated by the need to create a platform for Spanish dancers to perform on a regular basis at a professional level. She was the winner of a FNB Vita choreographic award in 2000. She worked as an accountant until able to go full-time after the national Arts Council's 3-year grant to her company in 2002.

Holden is very passionate about the development of human capacity amongst the youth using dance, particularly using the rhythms of flamenco as a teaching tool. She has been instrumental in introducing Spanish Dance as a subject into the schools syllabus

Current work – collaboration with Jazzart & Vadhini Indaina Dance Academy  
Collaboration with Adele Blank and Free Flight Dance Company

### Selected Work: IMAGENES / EWEBEELDE

(First version 2001; 2<sup>nd</sup> version 2003 with co-director Debbie Goodman)

#### SCENARIO:

**Scene 1:** Four sisters sit on the lawn, contemplating their lives, each with her own issues. The dancers “pose” in snapshots of life. Each owns a box, positioned on each corner of the stage. The first poem is narrated – no music. Rhythm from the cajons and footwork moves them to carry and reposition the boxes to look like a display cupboard

**Scene 2:** “In die kas sal almal netjies pas” is the point of the entire piece – society places us in boxes and we fight to get out. This poem tells about the dysfunctional family from which the sisters come – brother in prison, father has left, mother looks for forgiveness, sister is a lesbian – unacceptable. Each dancer returns to her own box. The four “dance” in their boxes – as if pushing at the sides – rhythm on the cajones again, as well as created by the dancers hitting the sides and the stage.

**Scene 3:** The first sister to try to leave does so for love – she has been hurt, and returns to her box, (Solea). One box is moved by the dancers

**Scene 4:** Two sisters are jealous of one another – they confront each other and fight. (Tientos) One sister strikes the other – she lands on the floor.

**Scene 5:** The sisters rearrange the boxes, as if setting a table for a family dinner. The struck girl gets up off the floor to join the others at the table – her sisters are not very caring. They beat out a rhythm (Siguiriya) using their cutlery. The sound brings out her frustration – she slams her hands on the table as if to silence them, and picks up a sharp knife. She leaves them. They appear indifferent – carry on eating. She tries to cut her wrists, but is stopped by one of the sisters. They seem to regret that they have not taken care of one another.

**Scene 6:** The boxes are moved once again – this time, arranged as if a hiding place, a place of safety. One of the sisters laments a broken heart – it is springtime in Spain, but in her heart, it is still winter, as her love is not with her – she dances with a shawl (Manton) to Petenera.

**Scene 7:** The boxes are set as if to form a bed. One of the sisters is wrapped in a sheet from the bed of yet another hotel room near an airport – another paces the space nearby.....the dancer on the bed is having a sleepless night, an unsatisfactory life, constantly moving, constantly busy, restless...she dances (solea por buleria) with the sheet, using it as a shawl.....it represents the entrapment in her life

– she tries to shed it, but it draws her back. Ultimately she is able to let it go. It is this that gives the sisters the motivation to move out of the boxes – they dance together (Buleria) as an expression of their triumph.

### **Style Characteristics:**

Contemporary Flamenco. Some leg elevation, contractions, contact work and floor work, with arm and body angles mostly flamenco style- sharp, angular. Individuality of expression.

### **Rosa's style:**

Contemporary influences – use of floor & contact work. Props used are not traditionally Flamenco-eg/ use of boxes.

Arm and body angles, some leg elevation, no jumping, some contact work.

### **Individuality of expression**

Rosa extends beyond Spanish dance's traditional boundaries by drawing on South African heritage e.g. African dance and music, in this case Afrikaans poetry and fusing this with elements of Flamenco to create a "fresh take" on this dance style – she 'modifies' flamenco. Active mostly in the 1990's to date, LRS DT has managed to sustain and even grow the South African Spanish dance audience by performing regularly – fusion appeals to a wide audience = accessible. Expanded the SD audience to other dance and theatre **forms**.

### **Context:**

Spanish dance in South Africa has largely been based on the formula of Flamenco, Neo-Classical (Estilizado) and regional dance combined in a "Variation" format to comprise a dance programme. Some choreographers have created pieces around Spanish plays, e.g. Acosta's Blood Wedding. Although some SA Spanish dance choreographers have used South African material as a basis for work, e.g. Becker's "Die Goue Kring" & Uys Krige), Rosa's use of Joan Hambidge's Afrikaans poetry has been incorporated to Flamenco song in this piece, retaining the "live" element of Flamenco performance, but introducing a local element.

The use of non-traditional musical instruments – why? No flamenco singers here – have had to adapt...teach voice artiste, cellist & viola player the role of the "cantaor".

### **Motivation:**

The piece was initially created for the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees, a largely Afrikaans Festival, thus the motivation to use a local, particularly Afrikaans poet. Hambidge's poetry was chosen as its texture and earthy feel is reminiscent of Lorca's style. Coincidentally, Hambidge had written many of the poems in "Ewebeeld" whilst in Spain. She was invited to rehearsals, attended these, and endorsed Rosa's interpretation.

### **Music:**

In 2001 the only accompaniment was a recorder, a *cajon* and the narration of the poetry. In the 2003 version, musical director and guitarist Bienyameen was tasked with setting the poems to traditional Flamenco tunes. Voice artist Nicole Holm and cellist Robert Jeffery, along with Caterina Estevez as percussionist, completed the ensemble.



La Rosa Spanish Dance Theatre

[www.larosa.co.za](http://www.larosa.co.za)

## HAZEL ACOSTA

Born in Cape Town 1942, Acosta studied Ballet and Spanish Dance at the University of Cape Town with Cecily Robinson and David Poole. She then moved to London for a year, where she danced with La Lagia. She moved to Spain, where she met Luisillo, who would become one of her greatest inspirations. She became the Ballet Mistress of Luisillo's company.

Acosta moved back to South Africa, where she danced with the CAPAB Ballet Company. She broke away to form her own Spanish dance studio in the 1970's before being invited by Enrique Segovia to run the Mercedes Molina Dance company with him after Molina's death in 1978.

Her main influences and inspirations are Luisillo, Cecily Robinson, Antonio Gades and José Antonio. She was a teacher and examiner for the SDS until a few years ago, when she broke away to form a new society - Alianza Flamenca - focused on Flamenco as opposed to Spanish dance in general.

**Selected ballet: BLOOD WEDDING (BODAS DE SANGRE) –**  
Hazel Acosta on Mercedes Molina SDT (1982)

### Scenario:

**Scene 1:** The moon (Carmen Arroyo) takes the role of narrator. (This is not part of Lorca's scenario – a different take)

**Scene 2:** The groom, his mother and the discussion about knives and the influence of knives on their family.

**Scene 3:** Love duet – bride and Leonardo - estilizado

**Scene 4:** The fixing of the marriage – bride's father involved and her servant.

**Scene 5:** Servant helps bride to prepare for ceremony – her lover visits her. His wife sees them. Servant is angry at her charge "breaking the rules"

**Scene 6:** The wedding – photo shoot – groom performs a solo de pies (footwork solo).

**Scene 7:** Leonardo and bride dance solea – most flamenco styles piece in production

**Scene 8:** Wedding guests dance buleria. The wife and the Mother look for the Bride and Leonardo. Mother gives the Groom a knife and sends him to search for the lovers

**Scene 9:** The Moon narrates and Death appears

**Scene 10:** Couple on the run in the forest, pursued by Groom and his henchmen, observed by Death and the Moon. Love duet – estilizado style dictated by music chosen

**Scene 11:** Fight between Leonardo and the Groom. Both die.

**Scene 12:** Mourners / guests enter – carry the bodies away. Mother rejects the bride.

**Scene 13:** The Moon and Death remain – the Moon is stained with blood.

### Style Characteristics:

Some flamenco, mostly "estilizado" or Neo-classical. Dance drama, dance style largely dictated by Fina de Calderon's music – modern, orchestrated, sometimes jarring / strident, interspersed with flamenco tunes & rhythms.

### Choreographer's

### style:

Acosta's base is flamenco, although her classical ballet training has clearly influenced her choreography. Mostly flamenco steps used, but in the context of dance drama, she uses gestures and stylized movements, some contact work and "pas de deux" with classical arm lines, turns and lifts.

### Context:

As co-director of Mercedes Molina Spanish Dance theatre, she was commissioned to make this piece by the SABC. The company had done TV productions of Misa Flamenca, El Amor Brujo and Carmen (shortly before Molina's death in 1978). It was their last piece before the company disbanded in 1982. Acosta was subsequently commissioned to write House of Bernada Alba by the SABC – this was performed by ex members of MMSDT.

# CLASSICAL GREEK

Dance in Ancient Greece was an important part of daily life and considered essential in the education and training of athletes. Ancient Greeks are admired for their countless artistic and intellectual glories.

## Historical Overview

When the Roman Empire split in two, Greek became the language of the Eastern or Byzantine Empire. The Western Empire later collapsed leaving Latin as the learned language. Not for another thousand years did a Greek revival come and this only when the Byzantine Empire was destroyed by the Turkish invasion in the fifteenth century. Displaced Greek scholars sought new lives in Western Europe.

The first revival of Greek was a stimulus hard to overestimate. It led to translations of the bible which changed the pattern of religious and political life, and opened the books of ancient learning. Greek words gradually came into daily use. With the rise of industry and science in the nineteenth century, attention was turned to new subjects. A revival and interest in Greek revival This was mainly driven by archeology, which increasingly revealed ancient Greece in a different, more visual way. Thus was born the historical setting which produced Coubertin's idea for the revival of the Olympic Games, along with Ruby Ginner's marvelous idea of Greek Dance. She was not alone; others like Isadora Duncan were also enthused.

Both dance and sport are of course, like language, means of communication. In the long record of human exploration, one of the most symbolic events has been the ascent to the moon. For the first time humans traveled into the vastness of the cosmos- to use a Greek term- and set foot on another celestial body. "A giant leap for mankind": the greatest challenge ever undertaken. A name in keeping was needed and found in "Project Apollo", perhaps because the Greek god alone had the qualities to symbolize it.

## Dance

Ruby Ginner founded a style of Greek Dance based upon a very thorough knowledge of Greek culture, and meticulous images of Greek Dance.

The aim of Classical Greek Dance is to perfect natural movements of the body in grace and health through rhythm and poise and to produce a flexible physique through controlled action. It seeks to encourage individuality, self expression and the creative and artistic powers, and by the harmonious co-ordination of mind, body and spirit to develop an appreciation of the beauty in life and art, joy in movement, health of body and serenity of mind. Greek dance has freedom from unnatural demands such as ballet's turn-out and pointe work using only barefoot. Greek Dance teaches control of the body through relaxation, breathing, poising, athletics, lyrical, drama and emotion, co-ordination and stillness. As a projective dance form, it is not limited to the picture frame stage as with ballet for example. It is potentially more mobile and suited for open arenas.

Students taking Greek Dance will most likely learn the Greek culture through the dance, rather than *visa versa*. Varied and imaginative literature and mythology constitute an inexhaustible source of themes.

## Greek Dance Themes

- *Pyrrhic*
- *Athletic* – strong and powerful
- *Lyrical* – peaceful and lilting
- *Ritual* - history
- *Tragedies* – drama and emotion
- *Ball work* – co-ordination
- *Bacchic* – freedom, relaxation, release
- *Nature studies* – stillness

## IRISH DANCE

In past centuries, dance in Ireland as with many places in the world, was largely part of the country's social structure. Gatherings such as weddings, parties and the like proved to be an occasion where people would express their enjoyment and celebration in dance.

Irish dance in Ireland really developed an organised structure with the emergence of the 'travelling dancing masters' during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. These teachers took their profession very seriously and insisted on a rigid dance discipline within their classes. With the establishment of the Gaelic League in Dublin in 1893, Irish dance took on a new life where Irish culture and nationalism was promoted through dance and this in turn led to a culture of competitive Irish dancing which has exploded into a world-wide phenomenon.

The popularity of Irish dance has grown internationally since the first performance of Riverdance during the Eurovision song contest in 1994. Additionally, the impact on the popularity of Irish dance created by dancer and choreographer Michael Flatley has been enormous and has subsequently seen an increase in the number of young girls and boys taking Irish dance lessons across the globe.

Irish dance is characterised by two types of dance – soft shoe and hard shoe. Ceili dancing or group dancing is a popular form of social dance (particularly in Ireland) and has also become increasingly competitive. The 'soft shoe' dances consist of various elevated, high kicks and twists of the ankle. Movements are fast, legs and feet are turned out and crossed over and toes are pointed (similar to a classical ballet style). Boys execute a series of rhythmical clicks using the heel of their shoes, high jumps, cuts and kicks. Hard shoe dancing is also performed by both girls and boys. Rhythm, timing and energy in an 'Irish style' are most important. Many traditional dances are performed eg. St Patrick's Day and Garden of Daisies. Modern sets such as Blackthorn Stick and Downfall of Paris are performed competitively and these dances are especially choreographed by teachers and senior dancers. Arms are held at the side at all times. One of the exciting aspects of Irish dancing is that it allows the teacher and dancer to be choreographically creative. Although some dances are 'set' traditional dances, others allow for an individual creative vocabulary within the boundaries of the Irish style of dance.

There have been references to Irish dance in South Africa from the early 1900's. However the rekindling of enthusiasm for this dance form occurred in 1998 with the formation of IDSA and the society's registration with the Irish Dance Commission (IDC) based in Dublin..

# INDIAN DANCE

Indian Dance represents probably the most varied and highly developed ethnic dance forms. Indian dance can be divided into Classical, Folk dance and Tribal dance. Indian dance can be traced back way beyond medieval times when dance was considered to be the highest form of worship. Dancers were then referred to as *Devadasi's*-servants of God. The art form is a way of life with its roots firmly planted in tradition and religion. This can be seen in carvings on temples, in paintings and decorations on many of India's heritage buildings.

There are various classical styles:

**BHARATA NATYAM** - a South Indian classical dance form which is a composite art. It encompasses drama, music, poetry, colour and rhythm. It originated in the temples practised by *Devadasi's*. It has many vehicles of expression: the movements of the limbs, the language of gesture, rhythm as executed by the feet, poetry as sung by the musicians and the dancers. But most important of all is "*bhava*" or expression. The intrinsic emotion through the dance is harmonious with music.

**KATHAK** – a North Indian classical form also originated in the temples where Brahmin priests known as *Kathaks* told religious stories with the use of gestures. This period is known as the *Kathak Hindu period*. During the *Mughal* dynasty (1526 to 1858), Kathak underwent a renaissance. Fast turns and complex footwork with poetry in praise of the ruling Emperor replaced the religious themes. This period is referred to the *Mughal Period*.

**KATHAKALI** – a highly stylised dance drama from the southern state of Kerala, performed by males (males dance female roles). What is most striking about *Kathakali* is the emphasis on costumes, ornaments and coded facial make-up which serve to distinguish the various characters depicted. Dance dramas are performed from sunset through to sunrise.

**KUCHIPUDI** – a classical dance form from the state of Andhra in the south. Although this style may seem similar to *Bharata Natyam* it is danced at a much faster tempo and is not as rigid. Dancers often balance a pot on the head, while executing intricate footwork. They sometimes dance on a tray.

**MANIPURI** – a very flowing and graceful dance form where intricate hand gestures play an important role. Dances are almost always based on Lord Krishna. The costume is very elaborate and unique. Females wear a barrel like skirt. Males do a vibrant drum dance.

**MOHINIYATTAM** – a south Indian classical dance form, done by females only. The basic costume is white with a coloured border. Body posture is in second position and movements are very circular.

**ORISSI** – a very sculptural dance form from Orissa: The body posture is known as *tribangi*, meaning triple bend in the body. It is a graceful dance style with intricate footwork. It has an elaborate headgear.

## FOLK AND TRIBAL DANCE

These dances depict the daily happenings, customs and traditions of people from a particular region. The climatic conditions and geographical situations influence the dances. It is a community dance form and therefore has lots of repetitive steps. These simple dances have helped Indians all over the world to hold onto their identity.

All Indian art forms have been recorded in works such as the *Natya Shastra*, the dancers bible, and till today classical dance is practiced with unerring accuracy and absolute precision taking many, many hours of hard work whilst striving for perfection

## Bibliography

Article by Savitri Naidoo of the Vadhini Indian Arts  
[www.indianconnection.bravehost.com](http://www.indianconnection.bravehost.com)



## WEBSITES FOR MOST OF THE PROFESSIONAL DANCE COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA ARE LISTED BELOW

Agulhas Theatre Works - <http://www.agulhas theatreworks.co.za/about.htm>  
Ballet Theatre Afrikan - <http://www.ballettheatreafrican.co.za/>  
Cape Town City Ballet-<http://www.capetowncityballet.org.za/ctcbframeset.html>  
Dance For All – <http://www.danceforall.co.za>  
First Physical Theatre Company – <http://www.ru.ac.za/academic/departments/dram/ fphysical>  
Jazzart Dance Theatre - <http://www.jazzart.co.za>  
La Rosa Spanish Dance Theatre – <http://www.larosa.co.za>  
Moving into Dance Mophatong - <http://www.midance.co.za/>  
Remix Theatre Company - <http://www.remixtheatre.co.za/>  
Siwela Sonke Dance Theatre - <http://www.culturalradius.co.za/picz.html> (contact details only)  
The South African Ballet Theatre - <http://www.saballettheatre.co.za/>  
Vuyani Dance Theatre Project - <http://www.vuyani.co.za/>

### **The following companies do not have dedicated websites:**

The Soweto Dance Theatre  
The Free Flight Dance Company, directed by Adele Blank  
The Inzalo Dance and Theatre Company, directed by Moeketsi Koena  
The Lebohang Dance Project, directed by Portia Mashigo  
The Flatfoot Dance Company, directed by Lliane Loots  
Theresa Morena Flamenco Dance Company, directed by Theresa Morena

In the Kwazulu-Natal region, however, the dance pages at ARTSMART offer both current and archived dance news on the following pages:

<http://www.artsmart.co.za/dance/index.html>

<http://www.artsmart.co.za/dance/archive/index.html>

