

Directorate: Curriculum Development

Dance Studies

Dance Theory and History Study Guide

Grades 10 – 12

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How to use this study guide

Welcome to the Dance Theory and History study guide. We hope that you will benefit from this guide and enjoy working through the tasks.

- This Study Guide focuses mainly on the theory and history aspects of Learning Outcome 3 in the National Curriculum Statement subject 'Dance Studies'. Learners are expected to develop an understanding of the philosophies and theory of dance, the importance of dance in the past, present and future and to develop the ability to watch all kinds of dance with an informed eye.
- The field of Dance Theory and History is very broad and you need to use many sources to find information. The study guide should show you how to access and use a variety of primary and secondary sources such as books, art works, photographs, illustrations, press releases, dance programmes, dance posters, newspaper articles, magazine articles and interviews.
- The study guide has been designed to support your learning. It should help to develop your skills in working with information while also providing some sources as examples. In each section there are source materials, illustrations, examples of tasks and examples of examination questions. Work through the tasks and examination questions as this will help you to engage deeply with the material. We suggest that you answer these tasks/projects in a journal. You will need to extract relevant information from sources, organise information logically and make judgements about information.
- Since Dance Studies can be applied across many dance forms, it would be impossible to write in depth about the history of all the dance forms. The material provided has been drawn from the dance forms studied by the majority of South African dance learners with a few examples of the lesser studied dance forms. The examples provided should guide you with your own research.
- Studying to attain this Learning Outcome should contribute to the development of your overall literacy – not only your ability to 'read' dance but also your ability to read in general, to look attentively, to comprehend and to communicate both orally and in writing.
- The study guide should also give guidance on examination writing, what to expect in examinations, and how to manage your time.

¹A primary source is something which comes from the time you are studying. A secondary source is produced after the time the event happened.

The tasks and examination questions focus on the verbs in the Learning Outcome 3 Assessment Standards, e.g.

Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
<p>Gather, classify, record and discuss information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance in transformative ritual • forms, styles and purposes of dance • dance performances in the past and present with reference to choreographic intention, use of design elements and skill of the performers 	<p>Investigate and analyse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance performances in the past and the present with reference to storytelling, biographies, choreographic intention, characteristics of style, skill of the performers, and visual or emotional impact • the function and value of dance within diverse societies, communities and cultures with reference to expression, communication, education, entertainment, inner fulfillment and self-realisation 	<p>Investigate and analyse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the works, influences and social, and other contexts of international and national choreographers in the past or the present

Be sure that you understand what the verbs in the Assessment Standards require you to do:

- **Classify:** To *divide* into categories
- **Record:** Set *down* information in writing or some other medium
- **Discuss:** To *converse* or *debate* concerning a particular topic
- **Investigate:** To *inquire* into. To *examine*.
- **Analyse:** To separate into the constituent parts, for the purpose of an examination of each separately.

We hope that you enjoy working through this study guide and develop a deep understanding of Dance

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Section 1

Dance Theory

Framing Questions:

Of what value is dance to you? Why do people dance? What exactly is dance? Who dances? Where do they dance? When do they dance? How do they dance?

In this section you need to think about these questions to understand what dance is all about and to recognize the value and the functions of dance in societies.

1.1 The Value and Functions of Dance in Society

What is dance?

According to the World Book Encyclopaedia (1989) "Dancing is an act of moving the body in rhythm, usually in time to music". Before young children can even walk properly, they will bounce and sway to music. Dancing is both an art and a form of recreation (see Concert and Cultural-Social dance forms page 11).

Anthropological studies (the study of mankind) have indicated that people have used dance as an integral part of their culture since as far back in time as humans can be traced. There are communities whose culture has not changed for many, many years and the dances used years ago are still used in their social activities today (see Dance in Transformative Ritual page 6). The actual activity of Dance (rhythmic movement) is universal. Dance has a very special language and provides a highly effective way to communicate.

Why do people dance?

People dance for various reasons, mostly to **have fun** and to **release energy**, but also for other purposes. For example, dance is used **to celebrate** birth, weddings and change of seasons. There are funeral dances, dances of prayer, dances to entertain, dances for hunting and dances for courting.

All dances have meaning. They do not exist in a vacuum. Dancing assists people to **express** their emotions, desires and ideas. Many people love dancing because it satisfies an emotional or spiritual need and gives them a sense of **inner fulfilment**. People can also learn a lot about themselves through dancing and can benefit by developing their innate potential, gaining confidence and an improved self-esteem which contributes to their sense of **self-realisation**.

Dance is used to communicate ideas, information, beliefs, thoughts and emotions. It can transcend language and culture because it uses a universal tool – the human body. Mostly dance communication is symbolic (see Dance as symbolic language page 5).

Various societies or cultures use dance for **education**. In some cultures the histories and traditions are passed from generation to generation through dance, e.g. in the warrior dance, young men are taught how to become warriors and this dance will simultaneously

develop their strength and agility. Dance is often used in schools as a vehicle to teach other subjects e.g. creative dance may be used to teach children about the rain cycle or to teach children about space, shape and direction.

Some dances are used for **transformation** (read the section on the San's Trance Dance page 9). Dance is used in religious ceremonies and to communicate with ancestors. Dance **therapy** is used to heal people with physical, emotional or even learning problems. Dance can be used for **political protest** e.g. the toyi-toyi or to comment on political situations (see Christopher Bruce's *Ghost Dances* and Alfred Hinkel's *Bolero* in Section 3)

Many people dance for **fitness**, for **entertainment** or for **recreation** e.g. dancing at a party or club. Others dance to **compete** e.g. Ballroom and Latin American competitions, Eisteddfods and Gumboot dance competitions done by teams of miners competing against each other.

Finally there are some people for whom dance provides a way to earn a living, a **career** or profession e.g. performers, teachers, choreographers, lecturers, costume designers, dance captain in a company, choreologist, examiner, company promoter, director, publicist, etc.





Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: Look at the definitions of dance above and find more definitions in dance books and dictionaries. In your journal, write your own understanding of:

1. What dance means to you?
2. Why you dance?
3. What influences people to dance the way they do?

Task: Draw up a table in your journal listing the various functions of dance in society. Give a brief explanation of each function e.g.

Functions of dance	Explanation
Education	
Transformation	
Political Comment	
Expression	
Communication	
Economic empowerment	

Task: List 5 careers related to dance and describe the training required for each career.

Task: Write an essay on the value of dance for personal development.

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1.2 Dance Symbolism

Framing Questions:

What is a symbol? What is transformative ritual? Where does dance come into transformative ritual?

In this section you need to understand dance as a symbolic language.

Dance as Symbolic Language

A symbol is something (often a picture or diagram) that represents something else. The picture or diagram chosen to represent something is often an abstract version of it and usually one you would easily associate with it. Symbols are used to portray an idea, message, a law or rule, or to identify certain objects, facilities or services without using language.

In your daily activities you will constantly be faced with symbols. You will recognize many of them, for instance road signs, safety signs, and symbols for certain brand products in adverts. There are also symbolic gestures you use that are recognized by other people such as a hand shake or nodding your head to indicate you agree with something. Some symbols are cultural and will only be recognized by people in a certain country. Some symbols are global and used in places that have different languages.



In the previous section, dance was referred to as a language, a means of communication. This language is not a spoken one, it is a physical one. Through movement and gesture dance tells a story, portrays emotions, it hints at ideas or dreams. It is because of this physical nature that dance is such a useful tool. It can cross barriers of language and culture. It is a **symbolic language**.

Choreographers / producers use symbolism to communicate with the audience. They usually have a certain story or idea in mind that they want to portray. This is what is called the 'intent' of the dance work. The choreographer/producer will try to achieve their intent through the movements that they choose and also through the music, costumes make up, set, lights and any other effects they select. These elements will be chosen carefully as they will all have some sort of symbolic value.

This description will give you an idea of how these elements may work together: *"a hard, bright spotlight from above illuminates a solitary dancer, making the rest of the stage dark and black."* This may symbolise aloneness, despair. *"Her outfit is torn and ragged."* This may indicate poverty, maybe even previous violence. Already the scene has been set! *"The dancer wrings her hands over and over again; she reaches out into the darkness with one arm and then quickly draws it back. She hugs herself, crouching low and rocks back and forth."* Her movements seem to show that she is worried, she reaches out for help but is scared and she retreats to the safety of her own body – the movements begin to tell you more about the story or situation.

These are all 'symbols' in the dance. Each element enhances the message or intent of the movement or choreography so that the audience can "read" or "understand" the dance

work. Even if each audience member “reads” something different into a dance work, they still have the experience of watching, thinking and feeling, of being entertained or educated!

Dance in Transformative Ritual

The easiest way to understand this phrase is to break it up into the two terms: **ritual** and **transformation**. A **ritual** can be defined as a set of actions, performed for their symbolic value prescribed by the traditions of a community or a religion. It is something that is repeatable, takes place on specific occasions and sometimes in certain places. Some rituals are social, some religious and some personal. An example of a simple everyday ritual is shaking-hands or saying hello. A personal daily ritual could be brushing your teeth. Some of these rituals are performed so often they become second nature. Some examples of social or religious rituals that we practice today are to be found in weddings and funerals, graduations, sports events, coronations, even presidential inaugurations.

Transformation refers to a change in form, appearance, nature or character.

Transformative ritual then would refer to rituals that revolve around change of some sort. For example, many cultures have initiation rituals and ceremonies revolving around the change from childhood to adulthood. At this time in their lives the young men or women are facing physical, emotional and social change. In their community recognition of this change is shown by the performance of certain rituals.

Another example found in most cultures/societies is the passage from being a single person to a married one. There is so much significance in this change of status that this event usually incorporates a large range of rituals.

Today dance has very specific and clearly defined places in society. It does still play a role in some of our social and religious ceremonies (e.g. dancing at a wedding), but it does not really have the same role as it did in the lives of our earliest ancestors. To really understand this concept we need to go back in time and explore the dance of early man.

Early history of dance

We have danced for thousands of years. We have danced across continents. We have danced in sunshine, rain, wind and even snow. We danced yesterday, continue to dance today and will dance tomorrow... but the role dance plays in our lives today is very different compared to a thousand years ago. Today we dance at parties (enjoyment), we dance in classes at school (education) and after school (recreation), we dance for fitness (exercise), we may dance at religious ceremonies (spiritual) and we may even dance for the entertainment of others (profession). Whenever and wherever we dance it is seen as an activity that is separate from other activities. It has a clearly defined place and function in our modern lives. This was not so for our earliest ancestors – they used dance in a very different way. For early man dance was part of everyday life. In fact according to scientists who study early societies, dance was used mostly for **communication**!

It is difficult to say with any certainty when or how dance first became part of human culture because unlike the production of stone tools, hunting or cave painting, dance does not leave behind any artifacts. All the information we have is based on findings by scientists – **archeologists** (people who dig up bones and artifacts of ancient civilizations) and **anthropologists** (people who study the cultures of societies past and present).

Archeologists have found tomb paintings in Egypt from prehistoric times depicting dancing figures from around 3300 BC and rock shelter paintings in India from the period of 5000 to 2000 BC. Archeologists have even found many examples of rock paintings in Africa depicting dances of some form such as the San paintings in South Africa.



Anthropologists draw parallels and speculate about dance by studying written accounts by early travelers and missionaries. They also observe lineage-based societies. These are present day societies that still practice many of the traditions, rituals and ceremonies of their early ancestors.

According to these scientists our very early ancestors probably did not have much in the way of language and so used gesture, grunts and movements to **communicate** with one another. Once language became more developed, dance was still used for **story-telling**. Before the introduction of written languages this was an important way of passing down information from one generation to another. The most important information we have gained from research is that dance was not for 'aesthetic' use, performed by only a few trained members of the tribe – it was a part of the life of the tribe and all took part.

In '*History of the Dance in Art and Education*' dance is described as being used as "a means of worship, a way of expressing and reinforcing tribal unity and strength, a framework for courtship or mating, a means of communication and a therapeutic experience." (1991: p28)

Our early ancestors, without the help of the findings of modern science, could not understand much of what went on around them – floods, drought, illness, and death. These early humans needed a way to communicate with the spirit world. They believed that these unseen forces provided food and good fortune in warfare, regulated weather, promoted fertility and generally controlled the welfare and survival of the tribe.

Dance therefore, played a role in both **religious ritual** and **social expression**.

Rituals vary from one society to another and because they are concerned with every aspect of life they do not fit into categories easily. Societies would have been affected by their **location** and **environment**. For example people from a cold climate would have had different rituals, movements and rules around these than people from a warm climate, and

similarly movements performed by people who lived in a sandy location would be very different from those performed by people in the rockiest of mountains.

Common elements in early ritual dance

Despite their differences some **common elements** have been found in the rituals of different societies. **Movements** used in ritual dance are themselves often symbolic and usually **rhythmic** and **repetitive**. Repetitive steps will often follow a pattern that may be curved, straight or circular. The use of circular patterns is common in many African dance traditions or rituals. In fact the circle is a widely used symbol in African philosophy, arts, society and architecture.

There are a wide range of African communities that provide examples of lineage based societies. Many of the African dances, traditions and rituals practiced today have been passed down through the generations giving us some insight into the beliefs, practices and traditions of their ancestors.

Listed below are rituals that are grouped according to purpose:

Fertility – for people, animals and crops, including rituals surrounding birth.

Initiation – rites of passage for boys and girls as they reach puberty.

Rituals of the hunt and animals – in societies where hunting and fishing provide food, rituals are found that show the affinity between man and animals, reverence for their spirits and thanks for the food they provide

Healing rites – healing rites are found everywhere, often performed by a special “doctor”, shaman or medicine man, or as whole community in “dancing frenzies”. A similar form is still found today e.g. dance therapy.

Funeral rites – rites for putting souls to rest, remembering or appeasing spirits, protection of community and those still living.

War and weapons rituals – asking for or giving thanks for victory, building spirit and unity amongst warriors.

Cross-over rituals – rituals were not segregated into categories like you see here. These are artificial categories created to help our understanding of the subject matter. This means that many rituals will have crossed over these artificial categories. Good examples are rituals for human fertility (vital for survival of the clan, tribe or village) – these could crossover into rituals for vegetation (as crops and plants are vital for food and medicine, which in turn is essential for survival.) A prime example of a crossover ritual or one that is difficult to categorise is the **marriage** ceremony. This event represents the end of single adult life and the start of life as a partnership (another **rite of passage** or **initiation**). It may mean that one family essentially loses their daughter (death or loss), or may even be a strengthening of community spirit, power and wealth as two families are joined (this would increase their access to land, crops, livestock etc.) It also lays the foundation for a new family to be born, therefore including the possibility of **fertility** rites.

An example of a dance ritual

A good example of this kind of dance tradition is the **Medicine Song of the Jo'hasie San Bushmen** (also known as Trance Dance). The KoiSan group (commonly known as Bushmen) were hunter gatherers who had no king or leader. There were various groups of KoiSan and it is hard to trace their religion in one context. Different groups had different beliefs and gods, but their religion was integrated into their everyday life. Evidence of this can be seen in their rock art and in their medicine song.



In the medicine song, everyone takes part except the very young or very old. There are various reasons for its performance – to involve the supernatural in their earthly existence, as an aspect of their hunting experience, to influence the spirits of the dead so that they do not harm the living and for curing the sick. The dance takes place in the evening and can last until the following morning. Although there are many variations of steps, patterns and other elements (i.e. there are no set steps in a set pattern for a set number of repetitions) there is generally a use of circles (one or many), singing and clapping, and different roles for men and women and of course for the medicine man. These are elements that are found in the ritual dances of many societies.

You will find more information about the San Trance Dance in Section 3.



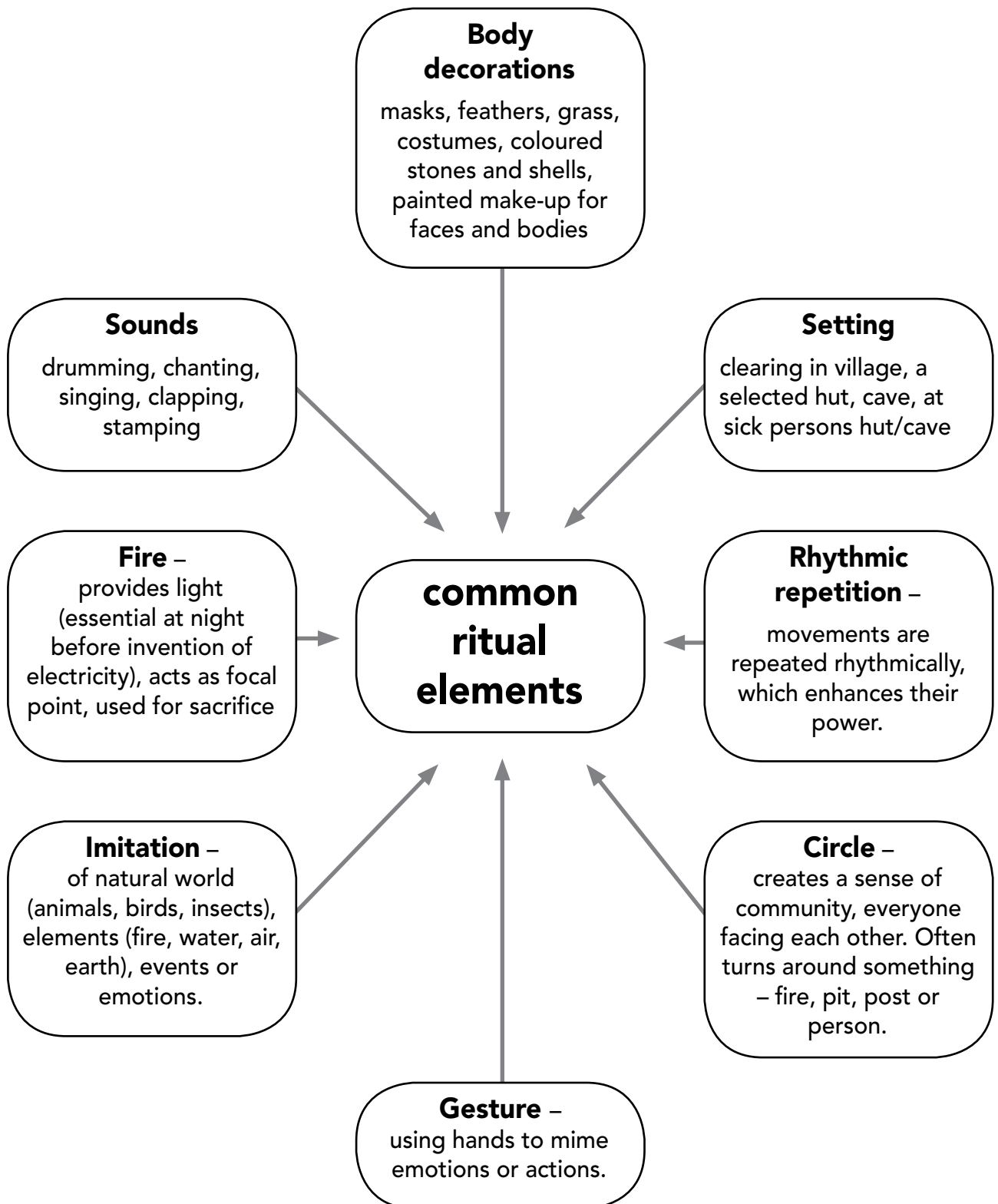
Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: Write a paragraph on how the study of dance can contribute to your understanding of other people's cultures

Task: Many dances are created as part of rituals that mark transformations in our lives, for example, religious ceremonies, courting rituals, customs at birth and death, themes around life cycles and social relationships. Select a dance that fits this category. Describe the dance and explain how it relates to transformative ritual.

Task: Use the worksheet in Annexure B to guide you as you watch dances from any culture.

In the mind map below, **common ritual elements** that can be found across societies are displayed:



Section 2

Dance Forms, Genres, Styles and Principles

Framing Questions

Why do people dance differently in various cultures, societies and places?
What is the difference between dance forms, dance genres, dance styles and

dance principles? In this section you will learn how to recognise and understand your own and other dance forms and to be able to identify similarities and differences.

Dance can be categorised into two distinct forms of dance, namely concert dance forms and cultural dance forms, based on how the people who participate in them are involved.



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: Study the mind map below and give examples of both cultural dance forms and concert dance forms. Discuss why they are classified into either cultural or concert dance forms.

CULTURAL – SOCIAL DANCE FORMS AND CONCERT DANCE FORMS

Concert Dance Forms:

- Performed to entertain an audience
- Danced mostly by professional performers
- e.g.: Classical Ballet, Contemporary Dance, Musical Comedy, etc.

Cultural Dance Forms:

- Representative of all members of the communities they represent
- Reflect the lives of the participants
- Have important cultural and spiritual functions
- Create a feeling of unity amongst the dancers

Traditional dances

These are dances passed down from one generation to the next e.g. Kathakah (see Indian Dance page 20)

Indigenous dance

Dances that originated where they are found e.g. Pantsula (see African Dance page 13)

Recreational/Social

Reflect the popular trends of a certain time e.g. Disco dancing of the 1970's

Different dance forms are known as **Dance Genres**. A genre is a category. Examples of some dance genres are Ballet, Tap, Jazz, African Dance, Contemporary Dance, Indian Dance etc.

Dance Style refers to the way in which a dance is done e.g. Classical Ballet, Romantic Ballet, Tango, Cha-Cha, Flamenco, Pantsula etc.

Each dance genre and style has certain **principles** or characteristics that identify it.

The information below is only an introduction to selected dance genres. You will need to do further research into the background, development, principles and detailed stylistic characteristics that underpin the style and technique of the **selected dance major of your choice**. You should have an understanding of dance forms other than your dance major.

2.1 Ballet

The Italians brought ballet to France where the technique developed during the 1600's. (Refer to the Dance time line in Section 3 for a more detailed history of Ballet). Today French words are used in all parts of the world for the various steps and positions of classical ballet. Although classical ballet is a strictly codified style of dance, 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.

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.

Many ballets are based on stories from literature. These are called **narrative** ballets e.g. Petipa's *Swan Lake*. Other ballets are more **abstract** and may communicate an idea, an emotion or celebrate beauty e.g. Balanchine's *Apollo*.

Principles of Classical Ballet

- **Stance:** Position taken, standing correctly
- **Turn-out:** Rotary motion of the legs in the hips, essential for classical ballet
- **Placing:** arranging of the head, spine and limbs in their proper place in proper alignment with each other to achieve an ordered, balanced form
- **Laws of balance:** a counter poise of limbs in order to maintain equilibrium (equal weight around a central point)
- **Basic rules of the head, legs, arms and body**



- **Transference of weight:** Changing of weight from one body part to the next
- **Co-ordination:** Bringing parts of the body into proper relationship with each other
- **Gravity:** Ballet defies gravity



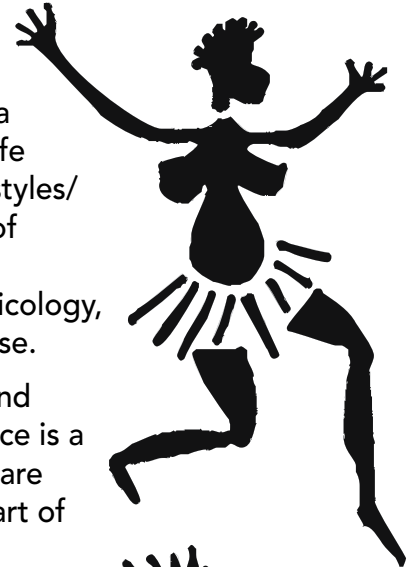
2.2 African Dance

Africa as a continent is very complex in terms of its people and their cultures. It consists of over 53 countries and Africans vary greatly, except that for most Africans, dance is a basic part of life. In the past decades, this aspect of African life was misunderstood and undermined. African dance/musical styles/traditions were considered primitive in comparison to those of European origin and not regarded by many Europeans 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 as 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 every day life. 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.

Some dance styles/traditions are exclusively used as accompaniment of story telling or poetry and other dances by herbalists, shamans and healers are for curing illnesses. There are dances to honour men and women, married or unmarried. Some are only for welcoming visitors or when a new leader steps into office.

African dancers do not view dance and music as separate entities. They are seen to interlock with and complement each other thus producing diverse and complex rhythms from both the dancer and the musicians.



Principles of African Dance

- 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 dramatisation of the natural world

animals, insects or plants) or the elements such as fire, water, earth and air.

- Dances generally have a theme (fertility, courtship, work, hierarchy etc.) and purpose (protest, socialization, celebration, questioning social issues etc.)

Elements that should be observed when watching African Dance include

- The participants in the dance; are they young or old, females or males
- Location of the dance (plains, mountainous, coastal, forest, outdoors or indoors, theatre etc.)
- Use of variety, repetition, contrast, transitions, sequence, climax, balance and harmony
- Aesthetics and technique of the particular dance.

2.3 Contemporary Dance²

Contemporary means “*of the times, belonging to the same times, modern or ultra-modern in style or design*” (The Concise Oxford Dictionary; 1979). We find the term contemporary relating to art, music and writing and includes 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 live/d in. Contemporary dance developed at the beginning of the 20th century with most of the early Pioneers having been born in the late 1800 (see the time line in Section 3).



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's.

Ballet has a history of companies and traditions which are passed down from one generation to another. The subject matter Ballet dealt with at the time 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. They found the existing dance forms limiting. As each individual established a style or technique, his or her students would break away and create something new, and so it would continue. See the time line for some of the people who were most influential in the development of Contemporary dance, e.g. Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn and Martha Graham

²Principles of Contemporary dance compiled by Jennifer van Papendorp 2001

Principles of Contemporary Dance

The principles below are interrelated and work together. They are separated here merely to be able to explore their meanings.

- **Centering:** Dancers need to find their centre (solar plexus). Movement should be controlled from the centre and a strong centre allows for freedom of movement of extremities: the arms, legs, head and neck. It also assists with balance.
- **Alignment:** Posture has to do with alignment, which is the placement of all the parts of the body in relationship to one another.
- **Gravity:** Gravity is “the force that holds you down on the earth”.
- **Breath:** Breathing is an expressive tool e.g. moving with a sense of breath brings a feeling of freedom and harmony.
- **Contraction and release:** Martha Graham focused on the physiological effects of the act of breath – the ebb and flow of breathing and its effect on the torso as it expands and contracts and on the function of contraction and release in the muscles.
- **Fall and recovery:** The principle of fall and recovery combines breath, suspension and gravity.
 - “Fall” is the complete release of the muscles as the body gives in to gravity.
 - “Recovery” is the rebound of the energy passing through the bottom of the fall and continuing on the same path like a pendulum swing.
- **Suspension** is a prolonged high point. It is created at the peak of the movement by continuing the movement and delaying the takeover of gravity.
- **Balance and Off-Balance:** Inner balance relies on an awareness of weight and pressure. In order to stand upright we have to have our weight over our feet otherwise gravity will cause us to topple over. The part of the body where the weight is centered is called the “centre of gravity” which is inside the body at hip height (the pelvis). When displacing the pelvis the body will go off-balance as in a tilt or in fall and recovery. Using off-balance movements gives a sense of urgency, vitality or danger
- **Tension and relaxation:** Muscles tense and relax to enable us to stand and move. Tension and relaxation also express how we feel. All movement exists between the two opposite poles – absolute tension – so tense you cannot move – to absolute relaxation – so relaxed you cannot move.
- **Opposition:** Opposition implies two things working one against the other or in the opposite direction.
- **Succession:** Succession is the opposite of opposition. It is a sequential path of movement through parts of the body – a wave-like reaction i.e. body parts go in the same direction rather than in opposite directions or movements one after the other.
- **Spiral:** This is the turn of the body on its axis (around the spine). It is used for balance, control and turning.
- **Swings and Momentum:** Swinging movements, like a pendulum, depend on the force of gravity. The down swing gives in to gravity but the momentum gained as it falls causes it to swing up again. There is a moment of suspension at the end of the swing before gravity causes it to fall again.

2.4 Ballroom

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 the past and the values we associate with a time which we would like to hold on to. 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.

Ballroom dancing, which includes the waltz, is very popular amongst both young and old, across various cultural groups. Perhaps one of the reasons for its sustained popularity is that it is regarded as the mark of being educated and refined. 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.

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. By the start of the nineteenth century, it had become part of 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 exciting; 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 which many did when it was first danced.

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

Other popular Ballroom dances include:

The Quickstep which is perhaps the most popular of the ballroom dances. It is danced to a bright $\frac{4}{4}$ 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 Ziegfield Musical

The Swing evolved from the jazz era of the 1920's. It was originally called the *Jitterbug* and thereafter the *Lindy-hop* in honor 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 said 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.

2.5 Latin American Dancing

The dances below are for couples, usually each consisting of a man and a woman. The holds vary from figure to figure in these dances, sometimes in a closed ballroom hold, sometimes with the partners holding each other with only one hand.

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 2

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 by a brilliant Brazilian dancer **Duque** in the form of the Brazilian **Maxixe** – a dance performed to a slow 'tempo' Brazilian music

Reference: <http://brebru.com/musicroom/latin/dancing.html>

The Complete Ballroom Dancer edited by Leonard Scrivener (1957)

Social Dance Steps to Success by Judy Patterson Wright (2003)



2.6 Jazz Dance

Any dance to Jazz music accompaniment, is composed of a number of dance forms. It radically altered the style of American and European stage and social dance in the 20th century. The term is sometimes used more narrowly to describe (1) popular stage dance

(except tap dance) and (2) jazz-derived or jazz-influenced forms of modern dance.

Jazz dance has always been more popular in the States than in Europe. It seems to have its roots among the black dancers in the Southern part of the States – developed probably from rural slave dances – and grew out of a combination of tap dancing and early American show dancing. By the 1940s elements of jazz dance had appeared in modern dance and in motion picture choreography as well as musicals, e.g. Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story*. Fusing ballet with jazz has led in recent years to the formation of such troupes as Canada's Les Ballets Jazz.

Katherine Dunham was most influential in promoting Jazz dance. Dunham researched the dances of the Caribbean and then formed her own dance company in New York, choreographing spectacular dances that were viewed all over the States and in Europe. Her technique is still used in jazz classes worldwide.

As a choreographer who dramatically revolutionized dance on Broadway with his Jazz technique, Bob Fosse is worthy of mention. From his early, dazzling *Steam Heat* number to his captivating *Chicago* his movements were infused with a fresh, cool jazz style. The splayed fingers and the bowler hat, tipped elegantly to one side, are some of the characteristics of Fosse's remarkable trade.



Principles of Jazz dance

There are no hard and fast rules for Jazz dance. It is a very personal and creative form of dance with an emphasis on pelvic and spine isolations.

2.7 Tap Dance

Tap dance is said to have originated from traditional Irish step dances, from Spanish flamenco dancing and from the footwork of many African dances. Tap dancing was mostly popular on the vaudeville and the musicals stage. Today it is incorporated into a total theatre dance form.

2.8 Spanish Dance

Mention the word "Flamenco" and one immediately thinks of stamping feet, clapping hands, clicking castanets and whirling skirts; women in colourful dresses and men in short jackets and tight trousers. 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 is a dance form that grew and was influenced during a time of both great tolerance and brutal oppression.

The very name flamenco came into general use only about 300 years ago. 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 people. The music was suggestive of hard times relieved through strong minor keys and the deep sadness of the words depicting death and deprivation. Later stringed and percussion instruments 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 discussion among Spaniards. There are some who think it may come from the Arabic, "Felah Mengu" meaning "peasant in flight. 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 behavior 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.

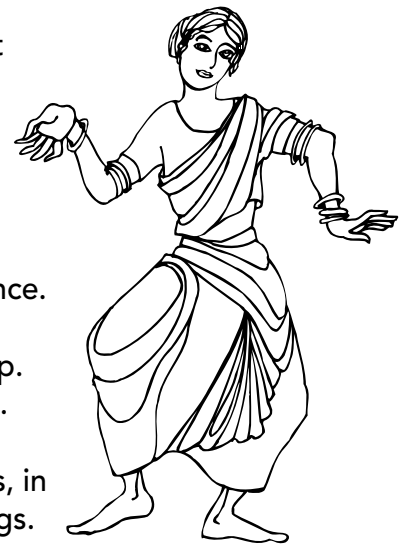
Flamenco song has a raw, rough sound. This reflects the sense of rejection and aggression when the early singers in southern Spain adapted and transformed the more lyrical style of Spanish ballads into something harsher to fit their lives and moods.

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. 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 accessories (castanets, musical instruments, fans and much more.)

Principles of Spanish Dance

- Rhythmic, use of cross rhythms, counter rhythms
- Lively, noisy with stamping, clapping, finger clicking, shouts of encouragement
- Intricate footwork including stamping
- Strong emphasis on arms ceaselessly circling and especially hands circles breaking at the wrists
- Sound and dance intricately linked using voice, castanets, guitars (guitarist follows dancer)
- Use of sound castanets while dancing
- Dramatic, emotional and sensual
- Very stylized dancing
- Upright body stance with an open and slightly arched chest
- Flamenco does not need much floor space, movements twisting around the body



2.9 Indian Dance

Indian dance can be divided into Classical, Folk 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 as *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 *Katakali* 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.

Odissi – 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 Indian 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

2.10 Irish Dancing

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 occasions 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 18th 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 e.g. 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.

2.11 Classical Greek Dance

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.

Ruby Ginner (1886), inspired by the Ancient Greeks, founded a style of Greek Dance based upon a very thorough knowledge of Greek culture, and meticulous images of Greek Dance. Today, Classical Greek dancing is still taught in this style

Principles 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 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. Varied and imaginative literature and **mythology** constitute an inexhaustible source of themes.



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: In the table below list four concert genres and four cultural genres practiced in South Africa and give examples of the different styles

Dance Genres	Examples of Dance Styles
Ballroom	Waltz, Foxtrot, Quickstep, etc
Ballet	
African Dance	
Contemporary dance	
Latin American	
Indian Dance	

Question: Explain the difference between dance genre and dance style

Task: Select three dance genres and discuss the principles and characteristics of each of them.

Task: Answer the following questions about the dance major you have selected:

Where does it come from, who performs it and how would you recognize this form of dance?

Task: Compare any two-dance forms that you have seen or experienced. Identify the dance forms. Explain their origin. What are the principles and characteristics of these dance forms? Discuss the similarities and differences in the two dance forms you have chosen.

Section 3

Dance History

Framing Questions

How did dance develop? What influences contributed to the development of dance? How was dance affected by world events, politics, cultures, societies, location, contexts and environments?

When did concert dance forms begin such as Ballet and Contemporary Dance begin? Who were influential people that contributed to the development of dance?

3.1 Introduction

Dance like any art form is influenced, defined and often in reaction to its historical, social and political environment. As you have seen in your exploration of the transformational and ritual dance of early man, dance is more than art – it is a form of expression, of communication and of release. In times when people experience hardship or troubles they use dance as a way of escaping their harsh reality, to give thanks and praise, and to just have fun! People also use dance to tell stories, give a message and initiate change. Because dance is done by people (and not animals or machines) it will always be affected by what the people performing it are experiencing!

It is for this reason that understanding the social/political/historical context of the dance form you are studying is so important. It helps you to have a clearer picture of how and why that dance form developed, and also enables you to analyse dance works from that period with more detail and understanding.

At the end of this section you will find a timeline that traces the development of dance. So that the timeline won't seem like just names and dates, the vital dance events as well as some interesting general social/political events which happened at the same time are listed so that you can gain a better understanding of how dance is shaped by the world around it.

Before the timeline provided below there are short biographies on some of the most important dancers, teachers and choreographers in history who have pioneered new ideas or techniques, challenged old ideas or have just been a great creative influence on dance across the globe. By reading a little more about these dance giants you will be more familiar with them when you see their names in the timeline. The additional information will hopefully also help you to understand how their social and political environments influenced their work.

Although there seems to be a large amount of information here, it is very broad and should serve as a background for your further research. Certain South African contributors have been briefly outlined; others are explored in more detail in other sections of this study guide.

In Section 1.2, **Dance in Transformative Ritual**, you read that man has always danced. There are many references throughout history to dance as part of religious ceremonies, village or community celebrations and cultural rituals but dance as a **performance art** is really believed to have been born in the Renaissance period. To have a better

understanding of this period and the sudden development of dance, one must first explore the period before it – the Medieval period. You will learn more about both of these historical periods below.

3.2 Dance in the Middle Ages³

The middle ages or medieval period was an era of dramatic population and cultural change. Historians have also referred to this era as “The Dark Ages” and the “Migration Period”. This period dates from the fall of the Roman Empire (3rd century) until the beginning of the Renaissance period (1350 in Italy and 1450 in France). Europe had experienced waves of “barbarian incursions”, where land ruled by Romans was seized and settled by force. Not all migrations into Roman territory were marked by violence, but they did initiate changes in the populations, cultures and government of the people living there.

The collapse of the Roman Empire meant new forms of government were necessary to prevent widespread anarchy and violence. The Christian church, the only centralised institution to survive the fall of the Roman Empire intact, was a major unifying cultural influence. It maintained the art of writing and a central administration through its network of Bishops who were literate (as most of the general population was not). In the more rural areas law and order was delegated to the **feudal⁴ lords**.

In the Middle Ages, as people experienced change – social, political, cultural, religious – they constantly had to adapt their view of life. There were many things that we understand today thanks to developments in science and medicine that our medieval counterparts did not. They could not turn on the television to watch the weather-report; in fact they could not even predict weather as we can today. Their crops were at the mercy of Mother Nature – drought, floods; frost could all strike at any time without warning. They also did not have the medical knowledge or care that we have today and even an illness like the flu would kill, especially the weaker members of a community (children and the elderly.) The high mortality rate due to illness, war, famine and plagues meant a preoccupation with death which led to various dance crazes. These ‘danceomanias’ spread across Europe from the 11th to 14th centuries.

One example was the “Dance of Death” where people danced in graveyards in the belief that this kept the dead at bay. Other examples of such dance crazes are: “St Johns Dance” where people danced in a wild delirium, and in Italy “Tarantism” where the seizure-like dance was believed to be the result of the bite of a Tarantula spider (later this became the folk dance called the Tarantella.)

The height of these ‘danceomanias’ was in the time of the black plague (1349) which raged all over Europe killing thousands, even wiping out whole villages of people. The church frowned against these dance manias, and tried to prohibit them. Although there

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feudalism>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance>

⁴ The **feudal system** was an economic and social class system where the nobility (upper class) would ‘loan’ land to a ‘vassal’ (lower class). In return for the land the vassals had to provide military service to their lord. These vassals were entitled to the revenue generated from their land and often had peasants working for them on their land. These peasants would represent the lowest rung on the class ladder and generally performed physical labour in exchange for military protection.

was still a certain amount of dance within the church it had become a more stylised form of ritual gesture performed as part of religious ceremonies.

Despite these prohibitions by the church there still continued to be wandering entertainers – poets, singers, actors, jugglers, musicians who performed in the village squares. Villagers also amused themselves doing social dances, which is where the beginnings of the court dances of the Renaissance period are found.

3.3 Dance in the Renaissance Period

Renaissance means “rebirth” and it describes the renewed interest in the scholarship, philosophy and arts of ancient Greece and Rome that occurred in this period. It began in Italy and was a time of new freedom of thought and expression. A more rational and scientific view of life was developing and commerce and trade began to expand throughout Europe. Due to increasing trade and capitalist business, and discoveries of gold and other treasures from mines discovered in the New World (North and South America), there was an influx of wealth in European society. These wealthy families lent their support to the arts, which laid the seeds for the development of Ballet.

Ballet has its beginnings in the early court dances of the Renaissance. These were performed by the nobility and borrowed from the merry, boisterous peasant dances as well as the more dignified court processions. Dancing lessons became part of the essential “education” of young men and ladies. The steps and style were simple for these noblemen were not trained dancers and were also restricted by their clothing.

There were also court entertainers who would use costume, music, setting, plot and theme to create entertainments at the many banquets in the Italian and French courts. Dance was used to pantomime the action and during interludes court dances were performed⁵.

3.4 Important Contributors to the Development of International Dance

The brief biographies below draw attention to some of the dance artists that have made contributions that have shaped the development of dance in the world. You need to follow up with your own research in books, dance encyclopedias and the Internet.

3.4.1 Ballet

Balthasar de Beaujoyeux (1500's)

Catherine de Medici, from a very wealthy aristocratic Italian family, moved to France from Florence at age 14 due to an arranged marriage to Henry, heir to the French throne. Many talented artists followed her and she became a benefactor, providing financial backing and encouraging artists and musicians to create new works. One such artist was de Beaujoyeux, an Italian violinist, who was given the responsibility of arranging entertainments for the French nobility. In **1581** he produced *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, the highlight of his career and what is recognised as the first real ballet. It lasted 5 hours

⁵ Interesting fact: The very first ‘ballet’ is credited to Balthasar de Beaujoyeux (more about him below), who produced it for the Queen mother, Catherine de Medici.

and used fancy sets, costumes and had many performers. He published notes and descriptions of his choreography, sending them along with the music to every court in Europe. This became a model that was copied by many artists.

After the Ballet Comique, France was seen as the centre of the development of ballet⁶.

King Louis XIV or "the Sun King" (1638 – 1715)

King Louis loved dancing! He staged and was the lead role in many "ballets" at his court. His ego was so big that he took the sun as his personal symbol. He ruled as an absolute dictator and his French court was tightly ordered. This sense of order and control was also evident in the arts. King Louis founded dance and music academies so that objective standards for perfection of technique and artistry could be fixed. In 1661 the 'Academie Royale de Danse' was established by the King. This was the beginning of dance as a profession.

Pierre Beauchamps

He directed the Royal Academy of Dance established by King Louis. He kept notes listing and describing the ballet technique that had developed so far. These notes included the five basic foot positions, the known patterns of movements and steps and the rules for executing them and emphasised the turnout of the legs.

Jean-Georges Noverre

In 1760 he wrote a series of essays which both criticised the current approach to ballet and outlined his own philosophies. He emphasised dance as a means of communication. He advised dance masters to constantly observe the way people moved in their everyday lives, in all walks of life.

Jean Dauberval

He choreographed *La Fille Mal Gardee* to apply Noverre's theories to comedy. This is one of the oldest ballets still used in repertoire of ballet companies today. The choreography is not the same but what remains the same is: the setting, plot and outline; the idea of combining naturalistic pantomime with dance interludes; the mix of folk dance and ballet steps and the use of French folk music.

Carlo Blasis (1795 – 1878)

He made his debut at age 12 and danced in Italy, England and Russia. He was a pupil of Dauberval. He organised the technique of ballet which had been developing for over 200 years. He is credited with setting the vocabulary and standards of classical ballet technique. He taught many of the famous 19th century dancers.

⁶ Interesting fact: the term 'ballet' is derived from the Italian 'ballare' meaning 'to dance' and from 'ballo' referring to dances performed in the ballroom.

Marius Petipa (1818 – 1910)

He was a top dancer in France, who moved to St. Petersburg in Russia in 1847. He stayed there and choreographed 60 ballets in the classical style. This period was known as 'The Age of Petipa'. His dances are still part of the classical repertoire today. Although Petipa took credit for all the ballets he choreographed, he did not work alone. In fact, his assistant ballet master Lev Ivanov did much of the work and was the main choreographer of the Nutcracker as Petipa was sick at the time.

Enrico Cecchetti (1850 – 1928)

Born in the dressing room of a theatre in Rome into a family of dancers, he made his debut at age 16 in a ballet choreographed by his father. He became a sensation and toured Italy and other countries in Europe. He married a dancer, Giuseppina De Maria. In 1887 he was invited to teach at the Imperial school in St. Petersburg and to dance in ballets at the Marinsky Theatre. He startled Russian audiences with his seeming ability to "fly". His technical ability and innate theatricality not only enabled him to perform past age 40 but also had a great influence on the Russian ballet. Some of the great names trained by him include Pavlova, Karsavina and Nijinsky.

His first writings in 1894, where he described his "method" of ballet training, showed his incredible understanding of a dancer's body. In 1903 he prepared a book of classes for Pavlova, providing exercises and even musical accompaniment. Diaghilev recognised his importance as a teacher and performer and brought him to the Ballet Russes in 1911 where Enrico and Giuseppina created many roles for the company's repertoire.

Sergei Diaghilev (1872 – 1929)

He was an art critic and patron of the arts who found his talent in administrating and producing ballets. His productions influenced the fashion and art worlds, and many memorable new artists and composers were introduced to the world because of him, such as Picasso, Matisse (artists) and Stravinsky and Prokofiev (composers.) His company, The Ballet Russes, started out with an annual season in Paris, arranged by Diaghilev for outstanding Russian artists who were still dancing and choreographing in St. Petersburg. Due to politics, the Russian revolution in 1917 and other personal conflicts, Diaghilev and many of the dancers broke away from Russia and took up residence in Paris. Some dancers formed their own companies and audiences all over the world were treated to a high quality of ballet never seen before. Due to Diaghilev's productions, men also began to be seen as dancers in their own right, not just as porters to carry ballerinas around, thus the appearance of first rate male soloists and choreographers. He worked with, discovered or provided opportunities for many of the dancers and choreographers who became famous such as Nijinsky, Balanchine, Fokine, Massine and Anna Pavlova.

Michael Fokine (1880 – 1942)

Trained at the Imperial School in St. Petersburg, he was the first choreographer for Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. He objected to the sterile technique and what he considered arbitrary and artificial conventions in ballet and strove for a more natural and expressive choreographic style. He still believed, however, that the classic ballet technique was best for training dancers and did not seek to destroy the old order as Isadora Duncan wanted

to do. His famous ballets are: *The Dying Swan* (the solo of this ballet choreographed for Anna Pavlova), *Les Sylphides*, *Spectre de la Rose*, *Sheherazade*, *Firebird* and *Petrouchka*. In 1923 he moved to the United States and re-staged pieces for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the American Ballet Theatre.

Vaslav Nijinsky (1890 – 1950)

He was a Russian dancer and choreographer of Polish origin. He is known as one of the most gifted male dancers in history. He could perform en pointe, a rare skill among male dancers at the time and is remembered for his ability to perform seemingly gravity-defying leaps. He danced and choreographed for The Ballet Russes.

The radical angular movements he created for *Le Sacre du Printemps* together with Stravinsky's modern score created a riot at its premiere at the Théâtre de Champs-Élysées in Paris. Similarly his *Afternoon of a Faun* caused a scandal in Paris due to his scanty costume and erotic movements. While on tour in South America he met and married a Hungarian dancer. Diaghilev was so angry he dismissed him from his company.



Nijinsky had a nervous breakdown in 1919, effectively ending his career, was diagnosed with Schizophrenia and spent the rest of his life in and out of psychiatric hospitals.

Marie Rambert (1888 – 1982)

Born in Warsaw, Poland, she collaborated with the Ballet Russes between 1912 and 1913, moving to the United Kingdom in 1918. There, in 1920, she founded her own ballet school. In 1926 she created her own company called Marie Rambert Dancers which later became Ballet Rambert. Marie had a flair for developing the work of choreographers, such as Frederick Ashton and Christopher Bruce. The decision was later taken for Ballet Rambert to become a contemporary company (1966).

Ninette de Valois (1898 – 2001)

Born in Ireland, she began dancing at age 10. She danced with the Ballet Russes, but was never a major star. She retired in 1926 at age 28 in order to promote ballet throughout Europe. She became director of Sadler's Wells Ballet in 1928. She also founded the Royal Ballet School. She is credited with being almost single-handedly responsible for British ballet. She modelled her company after the Imperial Ballet in Russia and emphasised a mix of classical ballets and contemporary works. She, like Rambert, had a flair for cultivating talents and invited Frederick Ashton to be the chief choreographer in her company. Some of the best known names in British ballet have been associated with her company, for example Margot Fonteyn, Svetlana Beriosova and Rudolf Nureyev. She also invited choreographers like Balanchine and MacMillan to work with her company.

George Balanchine (1904 – 1983)

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, he is considered the foremost contemporary choreographer in the world of ballet. He was accepted into the ballet section of St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre School at age 9. His father was a composer and Balanchine began piano lessons at age 5 and later, while still continuing to dance, he studied at the Petrograd Conservatory of Music. It is this extensive music training that enabled him as a choreographer to communicate with a



composer of the stature of Stravinsky. He began to choreograph while in his teens. Diaghilev hired him as ballet master (principal choreographer) for the Ballet Russes with whom he worked until 1929. It is during his time with the Ballet Russes that he injured his knee. This limited his dancing and was probably a great contributing factor to his commitment to full-time choreography. He choreographed 10 ballets in his time there, two of which are still performed – *Apollo* and *The Prodigal Son*.

Apollo is considered one of the most important ballets of the 20th century. It is choreographed to a score by Stravinsky which influenced Balanchine's **neoclassical**⁷ style.

In 1933 he met American arts patron Lincoln Kirstein who had a dream to establish a ballet company in America, filled with American dancers and not dependant on repertory from Europe. Balanchine moved to New York in October 1933 to work with Kirstein. *The School of American Ballet* was founded in 1934 and remains open to this day. A year later Balanchine and Kirstein created a professional company – the *American Ballet*. Balanchine choreographed there and for many other companies, musicals, and even for movies and television.

In 1948 the *New York City Ballet* was born, providing Balanchine with a permanent home for his talents and where he served as ballet master until his death in 1983. There is a catalogue of over 400 works by Balanchine including well known titles such as *The Nutcracker*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁷ The easiest way to understand this term is to break it up into neo which refers to restrained, sculptured lines, with bent straightforward (rather than turned-out) limbs and classic which refers to the use of strict, sharp, brilliant steps in the academic tradition of St. Petersburg.

Contemporary Dance (also called Modern Dance in USA)

[Forerunners to modern dance: **Delsarte** and **Dalcroze**.]

Francois Delsarte (1811 – 1871)

Delsarte trained as an actor and singer but his singing career was short-lived due to vocal damage, a result of bad training. He worked as a successful coach for singers and actors but his real legacy is his study and work with gesture. He was interested in enhancing performance through pose and gesture. He studied and recorded aspects of human gesture in everyday life. He believed that “the natural” is the most beautiful, and that natural movement is that which is made in accord with both the structure of the body and the pull of gravity. His work was very popular in Europe and had significant influence on modern dance and other fields. Dalcroze is reported to have studied his work as did Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn all of whom went on to create natural dance movement arising from and expressing human emotion.

Emil Jacques Dalcroze (1856 – 1950)

He was a Swiss musician and composer who researched the effect of human movement on musical perception and the impact of musical elements on movement technique. He created a system of rhythm analysis and a physical method for teaching it, called Eurhythmics (which means “good rhythm”). His approach was one of music theory, he wasn't interested in the emotional possibilities of movement but his classes were attended by artists in theatre, dance and in visual forms.

Isadora Duncan (1878 – 1927)

Born in San Francisco, America, Duncan was a free spirited hippie living wrong era. She stood for dignity for women and men, the education children in order to build a free society and of course for free love – America was not ready for her! She rebelled at the restrictiveness of ballet, its restraining clothes and clichés. She shocked audiences with her see-through costumes, her barefoot dancing, uninhibited behaviour and her open admiration of the new Soviet State. She made an impression on many artists, however, and was the subject of many sketches, paintings, photographs and statues. She was inspired by the ancient art and culture of Greece and also by the rhythms and shapes in nature. Although she did found schools, she was too busy to pay them much attention so they did not survive, nor did her ideas. By her example, however, dance was made a normal part of the curriculum in many schools, seen not only as exercise but as a life enhancing experience. She remains a legend, who danced freely, lived a colourful life and died young, introducing the idea of a freer dance form to the world – the beginnings of modern dance.



Ruth St. Denis (1877 – 1968)

In her early years she studied Delsarte technique, ballet lessons and other forms of social dancing. Like Duncan, she found the ballet technique not for her and disapproved of the female costumes. She spent the first years of her dancing career in commercial theatre as an actress who sang and danced. She became very interested in the dance/drama of Eastern cultures (especially those of Japan, India and Egypt). After 1900 she began formulating her own theory of dance/drama based on the dance and drama techniques of her early training, her readings into scientology, philosophy and the history of ancient cultures. In 1914 she hired Ted Shawn whom she later married. Together they founded the Denishawn Company and dancing school where many famous dancers trained, such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman.

Ted Shawn (1891 – 1972)

Ted Shawn was a key figure and the only male figure in the founding period of modern dance. Shawn began dancing as physical therapy for his paralysis from an illness in his junior year at university. He studied ballet and then went on to perform exhibition ballroom. In 1914 he decided to learn Oriental dance with Ruth St. Denis who at the time was looking for a male partner. They danced together, married and a year later opened the Denishawn School. Shawn taught stretching, ballet barre and free movement, St. Denis taught her oriental techniques, yoga meditation and music visualisation and another teacher was employed to teach the Delsarte system of pantomime. Ruth and Ted were married for 50 years but only lived together for 14. After a tour to the Orient they split and Ted went on to found an all men's group which performed for 7 years. They rehearsed at a farm he bought in Massachusetts, called Jacob's Pillow. In 1940 he founded a summer school and performed concert series there.

Martha Graham (1894 – 1991)

Born in Pennsylvania, her family moved to California when she was 14. She was inspired by a performance of Denishawn and began dancing, enrolling at the Denishawn school at age 22. She then danced and taught for the company until 1923. She founded her own dance company in 1926. She created close to 200 compositions over the next 50 years.

By 1928 she had broken away from the influence of Denishawn and was developing her own style – bare feet, parallel lines, no turn out in the hip, flexed foot, no airy lightness, and no soft curved lines. The dancers worked low to the floor. Her themes were taken from legend and literature and she used these to explore human emotions and behaviour. She conceived each work in its entirety – dance, costumes and music.

Graham developed a dance technique that has been compared to ballet in its scope and magnitude. Her technique grew out of her continuous explorations of the basic movement of the human body, beginning with the most elemental movements of contraction and release. Her exercises emphasised the torso as emotional centre. "Martha Graham's dancing and choreography exposed the depths of human emotion through movements that were sharp, angular, jagged and direct."⁸

Many great modern and ballet choreographers were inspired by her or danced in her

⁸ *website ref: http://marthagraham.org/resources/about_martha_graham.php⁸

company. Over the years her choreography and technique changed, becoming more fluid, but her vision forever altered the dance world.

Doris Humphrey (1895 – 1958)

Humphrey studied ballet, piano, ballroom dance, Dalcroze's system of Eurhythmics and an Americanised version of Delsarte. She joined Denishawn in 1917 as teacher and dancer (alongside Martha Graham) where she made long lasting friendships with Pauline Lawrence (who became her key advisor and costume designer) and Charles Weidman (her choreographer and dancing partner in the 1920' and 30's). In 1928 she founded her own school and company with Weidman.

Humphrey, like Graham, was interested in the fundamental importance of tension and relaxation in the body. She called her version of contraction and release of muscles and of the breath cycle, "fall and recovery". "Her vocabulary was based on the notion that all movement patterns fall into three divisions: opposition, succession and unison and that all movement characteristics fall into three divisions: sharp accent, sustained flow and rest."⁹ In 1958 she wrote a book called *The Art of Making Dances*, which was the first of its kind and remains an important document for dancers and choreographers.

Paul Taylor (1930 –)

In 1952, a 22 year old athlete with little training or experience won a work scholarship to the American Dance Festival, where he captured the attention of Martha Graham. He joined her company and while in her company danced for other choreographers such as Merce Cunningham and George Balanchine. In 1954 he founded his own company. His early pieces were composed of everyday gestures. It is his combination of the subtlety of ballet with the spontaneity of everyday gesture as well as his use of humour that has made him such a powerful force in Modern dance.

Alvin Ailey (1931 – 1989)

Born in Texas, Ailey moved to California with his mom, where he discovered dance while on a junior high school field trip to see the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. He took dance lessons with Katherine Dunham and Martha Graham but his biggest influence was to be Lester Horton. Horton had a racially mixed troupe and included American Indian and Japanese influences. In 1953 Ailey made his dance debut, Horton died and Ailey chose to take over the role of company director. He started his own dance company in 1958 featuring primarily African American dancers. His style is a combination of Jazz, Modern and African dance.

Christopher Bruce (1945 –)

He began taking classes in ballet, tap and acrobatic dance at a young age to improve the strength in his legs after they were damaged by an attack of polio. He joined the Ballet Rambert School at 13 and the company in 1963. Although he was one of the company's leading dancers, he was inspired and encouraged to choreograph by the company's

⁹ *Website ref: <http://www.pitt.edu/~gillis/dance/doris.html>

founder Marie Rambert. He choreographed his first work in 1969 and continued to create a further 20 works for the company. He also choreographed for many other companies such as the Nederlands Dans Theatre, Royal Danish Ballet and the Houston Ballet.

He often deals with political and social themes in his choreography and has used a wide range of music from folk music to popular tunes. His movement vocabulary is drawn from ballet and contemporary dance (mostly Graham technique which formed a large part of his training) but he also uses tap, folk and social dance sequences depending on the theme of the work. He has also incorporated everyday gesture and movements into some of his work.

3.4.3 Jazz

Katherine Dunham (1909 – 2006)

Born in 1909 in Illinois, USA, Katherine Dunham is considered one of the founders of the anthropological dance movement in America. She was a pioneer in the use of folk and ethnic choreography and through her understanding of the roots, images and implications of dance she showed the world that African American heritage is beautiful.

She studied Anthropology at the University of Chicago and received a fellowship to study anthropology and dance in the Caribbean. Her experiences in Haiti and Jamaica provided new insights and a wealth of ideas for choreography. She began implementing her new ideas back in the USA when she was appointed dance director for the Negro Federal Theatre Project in 1938 and the New York Labour Stage in 1939. In the 1940's and 50's Dunham's School of Dance became the premiere training facility for African American dancers. Her company travelled across America and Europe, enjoying world-wide success and popularity.

3.5 Important Contributors to the Development of Dance in South Africa

Many people have contributed to the development of dance as a performing art in South Africa. Selected artists are presented below as examples. You will need to do your own research through interviews, reading books, journals, newspaper articles and reviews and via the Internet.

Dr Dulcie Howes

Dulcie Howes founded the UCT Ballet School in 1932. This was the first ballet school in South Africa to be affiliated to a university. In 1935 she started the UCT Ballet Company using dancers drawn from the ballet school. Her company was the only ballet company in South Africa until 1962. In 1965 she became the first artistic director of the company when it was taken over by CAPAB. Howes energetically promoted the development of ballet in the so-called "coloured" areas during the apartheid era and established the Dulcie Howes Ballet Trust which provides scholarships for ballet students countrywide.



She retired from Ballet school in 1972 but remained actively involved in the ballet world until her death in 1993. Awards she received were: an honorary doctorate in music from UCT in 1976 and the Order for Meritorious Service (gold class) from the State President for her contribution to South African ballet.

Professor David Poole

David Poole, born in Cape Town, trained at UCT Ballet School and the Cape Town Ballet Club. He joined Sadler's Wells Ballet School in England in 1947. He was accepted to the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet Company and danced for the Covent Garden Ballet Company and for The Bolshoi Ballet when they visited London. In 1959 he joined the UCT ballet school staff. In 1963 he was appointed CAPAB's first ballet master and became artistic director in 1969. From 1973 onwards he held posts as director for both CAPAB and UCT ballet school. In 1983 he became the first South African professor of ballet. After his death in 1991 the David Poole Trust was created to take dance to underprivileged township children under the scheme, Ballet for All.

Veronica Paeper (1944 –)

Veronica was born in Port Shepstone, Kwa Zulu, Natal where she began dancing at age 5 to strengthen her feet. "I wanted to dance ever since I put on my first pair of satin shoes" (Veronica Paeper). She obtained her Ballet Teacher's Diploma from UCT Ballet School where she studied under Dulcie Howes, David Poole, Pamela Chrimes and Frank Staff (whom she later married.)

She performed as a principal dancer with CAPAB, PACT and PACOFS in her professional career. She created her first piece of choreography in 1972 called *John the Baptist*. In 1974 she became the resident choreographer for CAPAB. In her time as choreographer she added over 40 ballets to the company's repertoire.

Considered one of the forerunners of Modern Classical Ballet in South Africa, she has created works that fuse many art forms (including poetry, music and dance) and used diverse themes. She takes inspiration from the personalities of her dancers and encourages them to interpret their dance roles and contribute to the choreographic process.¹⁰

Alfred Hinkel (1953 –)

Hinkel was born in Namaqualand and began dancing at age 10, taking part in ballet classes much against his father's wishes. In the early 1970's he continued his training at UCT Ballet School, thereafter returning to his home in Namaqualand. It was the daily experience of teaching in the "coloured" communities there (without proper dance facilities) that "*laid the foundation for a truly original and resourceful approach to dance teaching and choreography.*" *(website ref: <http://www.jazzart.co.za/>)

In 1976, Hinkel met John Linden and Dawn Langdown in Okiep, Namaqualand, two

¹⁰ The history of Ballet in South Africa: Marina Grut, Human & Rousseau, Cape Town 1981

www.paeper.co.za

www.capetowncityballet.co.za

Personal interview conducted with Veronica Paeper in May 2006.

people with whom he would consistently collaborate over the years to come.

He joined Jazzart as a dancer and teacher, later taking over the performance company in 1986.

Hinkle's experiences in Namaqualand, his exposure to social African dance and his interactions with multi-racial casts in shows such as *Abamanyani* (1986) all had an influence on his developing approach to choreography and teaching.

His socio-political awareness is evident in his work. In the Apartheid era, Jazzart Dance Theatre provided a vehicle for political protest, through the medium of live performance.

Hinkle's direction of the company reflects his concerns about race and gender discrimination and the need to serve disadvantaged communities, operating according to non-racial, non-sexist and democratic principles.

His vision, commitment and contribution to dance in South Africa were acknowledged when he was awarded the Standard Bank Special Award in 1996. He has won many other awards.

Sylvia Glasser (1940 –)

Glasser's early dance training was in Ballet and American Tap dancing and in later years European National Dance, American Modern Dance and Creative Movement. In 1963 she graduated with a diploma from the London College of Dance and Drama, and in 1973 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of the Witwatersrand. She achieved her M. A. from the University of Houston in 1977.

She began teaching ballet and modern dance in 1963. In 1967 she founded the Experimental Dance Theatre, which sought to provide an annual platform for choreographers to present new original choreography.

In 1977 she pioneered '**Afrofusion**'¹¹ with her work *Primal Pulse*, performed in Houston by an American cast.

Glasser's non-racial performance company, *Moving into Dance*, started in 1978 with classes and rehearsals taking place in the garage of her house. From the first public performance of *Moving into Dance* in 1980, presenting black and white dancers performing together, Glasser wanted to demonstrate that dance was an integral part of the socio-economic, political and cultural belief systems of people and not just an art form isolated from everyday living.

Glasser has choreographed over 50 original works between 1963 and 2004 and has been the recipient of the FNB Vita Dance Umbrella Special Award in 1997 and 2000. Since 1992 an increasing number of Dance Umbrella awards in South Africa have been won by choreographers and dancers taught by Glasser.

Moving into Dance has played a major role in the training of many young dancers and choreographers. It continues to influence many new community dance groups, contemporary dance companies and individual artists in South Africa through its training programmes and skills development.

¹¹ *Afrofusion* reflects a philosophy of integration of African dance, music and ritual with Western contemporary dance forms. It is the result of Glasser's response to the separatist policies of apartheid as well as a reflection of the diverse cultures of South Africa.

Gary Gordon

Gary Gordon completed his Masters Degree in Dance Studies at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in the UK. He joined the staff as a teacher at the Laban and also gained experience as an educator, performer and choreographer in Europe and the UK.

He is recognised as one of South Africa's leading dance educators and choreographers. He is currently a Professor and the head of the Drama department at Rhodes University where he has pioneered the establishment of choreography, physical theatre, dance culture and education as options at Honours and Masters levels.

He is the artistic director of the First Physical Theatre¹² Company (the first of its kind in South Africa.)

In 1989 Gordon was the first recipient of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Contemporary Dance. Amongst others, he has been awarded Choreographer of the Year for *Shattered Windows* (1994), Most Outstanding Presentation of an Original Contemporary Dance Work for *The Unspeakable Story* (1996) and an FNB Vita Special Award for Choreography for *Bessie's Head* (2000).

Mavis Becker (1940 –)

Born in Cape Town, Mavis trained in ballet, modern and tap from age 6. She went to London in 1959 to further her career in dance and then to study Spanish Dance in Spain. There, after 5 months of intensive lessons, she joined a Spanish troop and toured Spain for a month. The troop then continued to perform at the Retiro Parque in Madrid. Returning to South Africa she opened a studio and continued to perform all over the country. In 1983 she started her company Danza Lorca. She has trained many successful dancers and teachers and was awarded the La Cruz de la Isabel la Catolica by King Juan Carlos in 2000, the highest award for a woman, for her services to Spanish culture.

Hazel Acosta (1942 –)

Born in Cape Town, she studied Ballet and Spanish dance at the University of Cape Town. She danced with LaLagia in London, and then became the Ballet Mistress of Luisillo's company in Spain. Back in South Africa she danced with CAPAB until breaking away to form her own Spanish Dance studio in the 1970's. In 1978 she was invited by Enrique Segovia to run the Mercedes Molina Dance Company with him after Molina's death. After teaching and examining for the SDS (Spanish Dance Society) for a few years, she broke away to form a new society – Alianza Flamenca – which focussed on Flamenco as opposed to Spanish dance in general.

¹² *Physical theatre has its roots in the political theatre of the 1980's, demanding transformation by drawing on all elements of theatre, dance, mime, voice and theatre devices. It is essential that all of these elements collaborate (work together) and that they are also equally recognised. The body is used as a source of power to question conventional views on gender, race, stereotyping and sexuality.*

Caroline Holden (1962 –)

Holden studied ballet with her mother, Barbara Holden and in 1977 started Spanish Dance classes with Mavis Becker. Holden danced in Mavis Becker's Danza Lorca from 1981 until 1995 and was an examiner for the International Spanish Dance Society. She trained with numerous teachers in Spain and names Jose Antonio Ruiz as her greatest inspiration. In 1990 she established the La Rosa Spanish Dance Company (LRSDT) – motivated by the need to create a platform for Spanish dancers to perform on a regular basis at a professional level.

In 2000 she won a FNB Vita choreographic award. In 2002 The National Arts Council awarded her with a 3-year grant enabling her to leave her work as an accountant and devote herself to dance on a full-time basis. Holden is very passionate about using dance, particularly the rhythms of flamenco, as a teaching tool to develop human capacity. She has been instrumental in introducing Spanish Dance into the schools syllabus.



Tasks and Questions to work through

The table below lists some of the professional choreographers and companies working in South Africa. Try to see them performing live, on DVD or visit their websites to find out more about them.

Your task is to conduct research and complete the table in your journal, filling in the missing information.

Name of Company/ Choreographer	Location	Genre	Interesting facts
Caroline Holden			
Savitri Naidoo			
Ballet Theatre Afrikan			
Remix Theatre Company			
Jay Pather			
Phenduka			
Gregory Magoma			
Boyzie Cekwane			
Vincent Mantsoe			

3.6 Dance Timeline¹³

Ballet and Contemporary Dance in Europe, America and South Africa

[Note: The events highlighted in the second column are just some of the historical, social or political happenings that played a major influence on dance. There are many more influential historical events that are not listed here, but you can research these further when you study specific artists.]

DATE	DANCE EVENT (and other important historical information)
1453	Dancing is used in a very formalised state as part of religious services. Renaissance begins (see more about this in section above) marking the end of the Medieval period.
1489	Bergorgio di Botta's dinner Ballet in Italy
1533	Catherine de Medici (age 14) is married to Henry, heir to the French throne. The violinist, Balthasar de Beaujoyeux follows Catherine de Medici from Italy to France.
1581	Catherine de Medici presents <i>Ballet Comique de la Reine</i> at the French court (produced by de Beaujoyeux).
1651	King Louis dances for the first time in public aged 12.
1653	King Louis XIV of France performs his <i>La Ballet de la Nuit</i>
1661	Under King Louis XIV dance and music academies (such as The Royal Academy) are founded to fix standards for perfection of technique and artistry. Pierre Beauchamps was the first to make notes of the five foot positions, the arm positions, the known patterns of movements and steps, and he emphasised the turn out of the legs for ballet.
1671	Paris Opera opens (the first theatre in France dedicated to professional entertainment).
1681	Madameoiselle de Lafontein (dancing under the reign of King Louis) is recorded as the first professional female dancer.
1699	"Choreographie" a manual of dance notation by Feuillet published.
1713	School of dance established at the Paris Opera.
1710 – 1770	Marie Anne de Cupis de Camargo – the first dancer to execute an <i>etrechat quatre</i> and to boldly shorten the 18thC skirt in order to extend her range of movement
1726	Camargo debuts at the Paris Opera. Royal Danish Ballet founded.

¹³ <http://www.time.com/time/time100/artists/profile/graham1.html>
http://www.sacbee.com/static/archive/news/projects/people_of_century/entertainers/graham.html
<http://www.shomler.com/dance/apspring/>
<http://www.pitt.edu/~gillis/dance/martha.html>
<http://www.afterimagegallery.com/morganandcallahan.htm>
<http://www.edwardsly.com/grahamm.html>

1734	Marie Salle performs <i>Pygmalion</i> , creating choreography, realising her ambition to express feelings through dance and designing dance costumes that allowed this through freedom of movement
1738	Imperial Ballet School founded in St. Petersburg, Russia, by Jean Baptiste Lande.
1760	Noverre publishes his "Letters on dancing and ballets", essays criticizing dance and outlining his own philosophies that emphasized dance as a superior means of communication of emotions.
1772	Gardel, the first dancer to appear without a mask, causes an uproar.
1789	Jean Dauberval choreographs <i>La Fille Mal Gardee</i> to apply Noverre's theories to comedy. This ballet marks the beginning of the use of the average person as the subject of ballets and is the oldest ballet, still performed today. French Revolution – the storming of the Bastille. This marks the start of a very unstable time in France which has far reaching effects on dance and theatre (see below).
1793 – 1794	France: "The Reign of Terror". About 25000 people executed at the guillotine – many French dancers fled to London.
1798	France: Post-revolution designers change ballet costuming. Heels, masks and other dress suggestive of the aristocracy disappear.
1802	The first ballet pantomime performed in South Africa by Jan Ludwig Petersen and his pupils.
1803	<i>Cinderella</i> , a ballet spectacle, opens at New York's Park Theatre for 13 nights. This is one of the earliest ballets mentioned in historical records of USA.
1820 & 1828	"Treatise on the Art of Dance." published by Carlo Blasis. These books set the standards and vocabulary of classical ballet
1827	Marie Taglioni the first ballerina to be identified with Romantic Ballet makes her debut at the Paris Opera. She is a very technical dancer who develops the art of dancing <i>en pointe</i> .
1829 – 1877	August Bournonville (choreographer and dancer) becomes director of the Royal Danish Ballet, creating a repertoire of ballets and method of training dancers that is still used today.
1830's – 1840's	The <i>golden age</i> of the Ballerina, where female dancers take the romantic leads. Ballet becomes more feminine. Men are no longer popular in ballet and only used for character roles or to lift the ballerinas.
1832	Taglioni's <i>La Sylphide</i> premieres at the Paris Opera ushering in the Romantic era in Ballet. (His daughter Marie Taglioni dances the lead.) (This ballet introduces the 'sylph' as a fantasy figure and is later copied in <i>Les Sylphides</i> .)
1834	Fanny Elssler debuts at The Paris Opera. A passionate dancer with considerable acting ability who becomes the rival of Taglioni.

1841	<i>Giselle</i> (one of the most popular ballets ever created) premieres at the Paris Opera. Written by Theophile Gautier and choreographed by Jean Coralli. <i>Giselle</i> danced by Calotta Grisi.
1847	French dancer Marius Petipa goes to St. Petersburg, Russia. This marks the start of the "Age of Petipa". During this period Petipa choreographs over 60 ballets in the classical style, which are still part of the classical repertoire.
1869	Marius Petipa becomes principal ballet master in St. Petersburg, where he creates <i>Don Quixote</i> .
1870	Saint-Leon's <i>Coppelia</i> debuts in Paris.
1877	Petipa's <i>La Bayadere</i> premieres. Petipa requires all corps de ballet to dance en pointe. The unsuccessful first <i>Swan Lake</i> opens in Moscow.
1881	Blocked pointe shoes begin to appear.
1887	Italian Enrico Cecchetti comes to Russia and soon becomes ballet master at the Imperial Ballet and instructor at the imperial school. He became the private instructor of Anna Pavlova.
1894	Martha Graham born.
1895	Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov's <i>Swan Lake</i> .
1900	1st London performance by Isadora Duncan.
1903	Petipa choreographs his last ballet, <i>The Magic Mirror</i> . Isadora Duncan's professional breakthrough.
1904	Birth of George Balanchine and Frederick Ashton.
1905	Isadora Duncan performs in Russia. Fokine arranges <i>The Dying Swan</i> for Pavlova.
1907	Fokine creates <i>Les Sylphides</i> . He tries to revive the romanticism that he believes ballet dancers have lost in their race for circus-type tricks.
1909	Sergei Diaghilev (as a manager-director, not a dancer or choreographer) forms the Ballet Russes, producing ballets using the most talented dancers, musicians and designers in Europe. He shifts the action from Russia to Paris.
1909 – 1929	Exciting works emerge from Diaghilev's company by Fokine, Nijinsky, Balanchine and others that lay the foundations for modern ballet.
1910	<i>Firebird</i> , <i>Scheherezade</i> and <i>Carnival</i> debut. Petipa died.
1911	<i>Petrushka</i> and <i>La Spectra de la Rose</i> debut. Dalcroze establishes institute near Dresden, Germany.
1912	<i>The Rite of Spring</i> by Nijinsky. Nijinsky also choreographs <i>Afternoon of a Faun</i> . This ballet used unconventional body positions and movements that were shocking at the time. Helen Webb, from London, opened a ballet studio in Cape Town, South Africa, training South African greats such as Dulcie Howes, Cecily Robinson and Frank Staff.

1913	Pavlova forms her own touring co.
1914	Ruth St Denis marries Ted Shawn.
1917	Nijinsky dances for last time in public. Russian revolution. The revolution affects dance as many great dancers, teachers and choreographers leave Russia seeking safer places to live.
1918	Nichols Sergeyev leaves Russia with notation of the great Maryinski ballets which formed the base for most western ballet productions since. Russian royal family executed.
1924	George Balanchine and Danilova join Diaghilev. Fokine forms the American Ballet.
1925	Anna Pavlova visited South Africa.
1926	De Valois founds her school. Ashton choreographs his first ballet. Martha Graham's first solo performance. Mary Wigman opens a school in Dresden, Germany. Fascist youth organised in Germany and Italy. This is the first stirrings of what will become World War 2 (see below: 1939).
1927	Death of Isadora Duncan. <i>Apollo</i> is Balanchine's first collaboration with composer Igor Stravinsky. Dulcie Howes (from South Africa) goes on European tour with Anna Pavlova's company.
1928	Dulcie Howes establishes a ballet studio in Cape Town.
1929	Death of Diaghilev. <i>Prodigal Son</i> by Balanchine. US stock market crash. This is commonly seen as the start of The Great Depression which due to instability in world markets saw an increase of poverty in previously "wealthy" countries. Like other events in history this had far reaching effects on theatre and dance. People have less money for recreational activities such as theatre, yet a great need for light hearted entertainment.
1931	Pavlova died. <i>Façade</i> by Ashton. Vic Wells Ballet and Ballet Club (later Ballet Rambert) founded in England.
1932	The Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo founded. Premiere of Kurt Joos's expressionist anti-war classic <i>The Green Table</i> .
1933	School of American ballet founded. Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival begins. San Francisco ballet is formed. Nazis force Kurt Joos from Germany.
1934	Balanchine is invited by Lincoln Kirstein to come to the US to establish a school and company. <i>Serenade</i> by Balanchine. Dulcie Howes joins her studio to the College of Music at the University of Cape Town. Hitler voted in as Fuhrer.
1938	<i>Les Sylphides</i> presented by Cape Town Ballet Club (founded by Cecily Robinson.)

1939	Outbreak of World War 2, an event spanning 6 years, involving many countries and resulting in millions of deaths. During this time many dance professionals move to different countries to escape persecution. They become major influences on dance in their new homes. Another effect of the war is that it provides subject matter for choreographers as people become preoccupied with topics such as life, death, violence, culture and religion.
1940	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> by David Nixon. Dance notation bureau founded. <i>Concerto Baroco</i> by Balanchine. <i>Swan Lake</i> presented by Cape Town Ballet Club. Churchill becomes British Prime Minister. Germany invades France, Belgium, Denmark and Norway.
1944	<i>Appalachian Spring</i> by Martha Graham.
1945	1st atomic bombs detonated. End of WW2.
1946	Cape Town Ballet Club's name changed to The South African National Ballet.
1951	<i>Pineapple Poll</i> by South African choreographer John Cranko. Beginning of enforced 'apartheid' in South Africa (1948) The effects of apartheid on the dance world are many. One obvious effect is that dancers of different races are not allowed to work and perform together. This is something that many dance companies fight against and become well known for. The events, laws and ideals of the Apartheid government also provide subject matter for choreographers, producers and directors of dance and theatre.
1953	1st performance of Merce Cunningham's own company.
1956	Robert Joffrey founds the Joffrey Ballet. Paul Taylor founds his company.
1960	Premiere of <i>Revelations</i> by Alvin Ailey. Nureyev stays in the west. Cranko directs Stuttgart Ballet.
1962	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> by Balanchine.
1963	South African government gives grants to various dance companies in order to promote the arts: CAPAB, founded by Howes, PACT in Johannesburg, NAPAC in Durban and PACOF in Bloemfontein.
1965	<i>Eugene Onegin</i> by Cranko.
1967	Sylvia Glasser founds The Experimental Dance Theatre.
Early 1970's	Sonja Mayo opens Jazzart studio in Cape Town, specialising in Modern Jazz Dance.
1973	German dance-theatre diva Pina Bausch stages her first work at Opera house in Wuppertal, Germany. David Poole becomes artistic director of CAPAB.
1974	Russia: Baryshnikov defects to the west. Veronica Paeper becomes resident choreographer for CAPAB.
1975	Premiere of Paul Taylor's masterwork <i>Esplanade</i> . Jiri Kyllian becomes director of Nederlands Dans Theatre. <i>Notre Faust</i> by Bejart.

1976	<i>Push comes to shove</i> by Twyla Tharp. Alfred Hinkle's first version of Bolero created in Namaqualand, South Africa. This work would be revised many times over the years.
1977	Sylvia Glasser pioneers "Afrofusion" with her work <i>Primal Pulse</i> .
1978	Baryshnikov stages <i>Don Quixote</i> for ABT. Sylvia Glasser starts "Moving into Dance" – an integrated dance group.
1980	First public performance of Moving into Dance with black and white dancers performing together.
1983	Balanchine dies. Nureyev named director of Paris Opera.
1986	Alfred Hinkle takes over as owner and director of Jazzart. <i>Abamanyani</i> – hit multi-racial show at Grahamstown festival.
1991	<i>Tranceformations</i> – Sylvia Glasser.
1994	<i>Shattered Windows</i> – Gary Gordon.
1996	<i>The Unspeakable Story</i> – Gary Gordon.
1997	CAPAB becomes Cape Town City Ballet.
2000	<i>Bessies Head</i> – Gary Gordon.

Section 4

Dance Literacy

Framing Questions:

Did I like the dance work? Why? Did it hold my interest? What should one look for when watching dance? How does one analyse a dance work? How do I find primary and secondary sources? How should material be presented? These and

many more questions found in the box below will guide you to become 'dance literate'. This means you will be able to watch dance works in any genre as an informed member of the audience.

In this section you will find information about some of the prescribed dance works. They are presented as examples to show you what to look for when you are watching dance.

This section focuses mainly on South African dance works because there are many books, journals, videos, magazines and Internet sources available on the well-known international dance artists and less secondary source material¹⁴ easily available on South African dance artists. It is important that you find and use your own additional material to add to the growing dance resources. You will need to use the information in application – in other words you need to practise writing reviews, critiques, programmes, articles, interviews etc to prepare for examinations and the world of work.

As a dancer in training you will learn how to analyse choreographic works. By looking at the roles the different elements play and how they contribute to achieving the intent of a dance work, it will be easier to understand the symbolism and message of a piece. Analysing other choreographers' dance works also helps you with your own choreography.

Whenever possible attend live dance performances. When you watch videos or DVD's to study a dance work, you will need to watch it many times. When you watch a dance work you need to look at the following elements and ask yourself questions (such as the ones provided below):

- **The title, choreographer, composer, designers**
- **Date and venue of performances** – When and where was the work first performed? Does this tell you anything about how the work was influenced by the social, political and historical environment of the time?
- **Biographical information** – What is the background of the choreographer?
- **Content** – Can you write a synopsis /summary of the work?
- **Movement genre** – What is the genre? E.g. Ballet, Contemporary, Spanish, Latin American, Folk dance or a combination of genres.
- **Movement style** – What is the style? E.g. romantic, classical, comic, narrative, flamenco, tango etc. What type and variety of movement is used? E.g. jumping, soft flowing movements, hard jerky movements etc.

¹⁴ Secondary sources are books, pictures, videos and articles written about the dance works and choreographers. Primary sources are the actual first-hand performances, programmes and interviews.

- **Patterns/use of space** – How is the stage space used? Are there recognisable patterns? What are the relationships between the dancers and how are they used in groupings? E.g. solos, duets, trios, big groups.
- **Structure** – How has the dance been structured? Is there a definite beginning, and ending, is there a climax? Has the choreographer made use of contrast, an ABA sequence pattern, and canon? Is there a theme and variations of the theme?
- **Music/time** – Who is the composer? What is the speed, genre, volume, and pitch of the music? How do the instruments and other aspects of the music contribute to the intent of the work? Also consider the use of silence, different types of music and sound effects and how the movement relates to the music.
- **Set** – Some sets are simple, some are very busy. Does the set provide a frame for the work? Are there different levels, platforms, arches etc? Do the dancers use the set or is it just a backdrop? Even an empty stage makes a statement
- **Lighting** – Is the lighting soft, hard and stark, colourful? Does the lighting come from above, below or the sides of the stage? What other special lighting effects are used?
- **Costumes** – What kinds of costumes are used? Look at the colours, fabrics and style of the costumes and how they move with the dancers' bodies.
- **Make up and props** – Make up can be used to indicate character e.g. a skeleton or a beast, or to enhance emotion. Are any props used and what is role do they play?
- **Other effects and art forms** – What other effects are used? Are any other art forms used? How do they enhance the symbolism or meaning of the dance? There may be many other effects used ranging from computer images to sculpture, art, drama, singing, poetry reciting or even acrobatics.
- **General impression** – What is the overall impact of the performance? Evaluate the skill of the dancers
- **Intentions** – Did the choreographer have a purpose for this work?
- **Innovative** – Is the work unique? What is the significance of this piece?

By looking at these elements when you watch a dance performance, your understanding of the message or intent of the work improves and so will your ability to create your own interesting meaningful choreographies

It is important to give relevant examples and reasons for your opinion. In critically analysing dance performances, the differences and similarities between different performances and dance styles become clear and well-defined.

Below you will find an example of an article written for a newspaper or journal on why Bolero is still successfully performed today.

This will give you an idea of what could be expected when you are asked to write an article as a task for your portfolio or in an examination.

4.1 Bolero (The Last Dance)

Choreographed by Alfred Hinkel and the Jazzart Dance Theatre Dancers
(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on Alfred Hinkel)



Bolero, danced mostly by members of the Jazzart Dance Company, has been restaged many times over the past 3 decades. With each production of *Bolero* the political-social structure in South Africa has shifted and the dance has changed accordingly. The award winning work is a fine example of dance reflecting the society.

Let us take a brief look at some of the performances of *Bolero*:

- **1976** 1st version, performed in Namaqualand,
- Focused specifically on the Immorality Act and “overcoming prejudice”
- **1987** 2nd version, performed at the Durban Westville University
- South African government declared the country to be in a “National State of Emergency”
- Combination of western classical music, a racially mixed cast, contemporary, classical, African traditional, gumboot, Indian and Mpantsula steps. The contrasts in dance and music provided a means of looking at local dance rhythms and contemporary dance forms.
- Hinkel experimented with gumboots to represent an oppressed people, mainly the miners and dockworkers
- **1990** 3rd version performed at the Dance Umbrella
- Drums were introduced for the first time
- Distinct cycle shown in the dance: Begins gently, followed by a period of aggression which leads into a sense of freedom
- There was a sense of hope, of what things could be in South Africa
- **1995** 4th version performed with CAPAB
- A celebration of the newly established democracy of South Africa
- **2000** 5th version performed at Artscape, Cape Town
- 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.
- Dance finally received the appropriate name, *Last Dance*.
- **2002** *Last Dance* was performed at the Spier Arts Festival in Stellenbosch
- celebration of life and of the youth: first time that younger dancers were used.
- **2003** performance of *Last Dance* at Danscape

- 40 dancers from many backgrounds (including Dance For All, CAFDA, Namjive) This Largest cast ever assembled to perform this work.
- The fusion of dancers of different races, backgrounds and training was a combination of everything that has been achieved since South Africa's democratisation in 1994.

Hinkel explained that in each version, the structure had been laid down but the movement content was work shopped by each cast so that it became their own. Hinkel 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."*

Bolero continues to move with the times. Every performance of the work shows a shift in the attitude of the people and of the country. This is how Hinkel has kept *Bolero* alive. The title *Last Dance* is certainly not applicable to this timeless and most enjoyable work.

This truly South African combination of image and music is one of the most powerful ever to grace this country's dance stages.

Let us review the fifth version of *Bolero*

The title, date and venue

The 5th version of Alfred Hinkel's abstract work, *Bolero*, was performed at the Artscape Theatre in 2000/1.

The content

The performance begins with a solitary female dancer stamping and clapping her gum boots as she talks to the audience. She is joined by five other dancers. They too chat and laugh amongst themselves. The final dancer appears. As she makes a gesture with her arm, the music begins

Throughout the piece there are solos, duets, trios and quartets, but as the music becomes more intense, the dancers begin to dance as a group, sometimes, but not always, in unison.

The intentions of the choreographer

Commencing with women chatting and laughing, *Last Dance* was not nearly as emotive as *Bolero* had been. Hinkel's intention for this version was about celebrating life and reminiscing rather than dealing with issues at the heart of a nation.

Costume

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

During the beginning of the piece, the use of the gumboots was hardly used. As the piece approached its climax, the boots were used increasingly and approximately half way through the dance, they were used to create a thunderous, angry surge of sound in combination with the ever-intensifying music.

Lighting and design

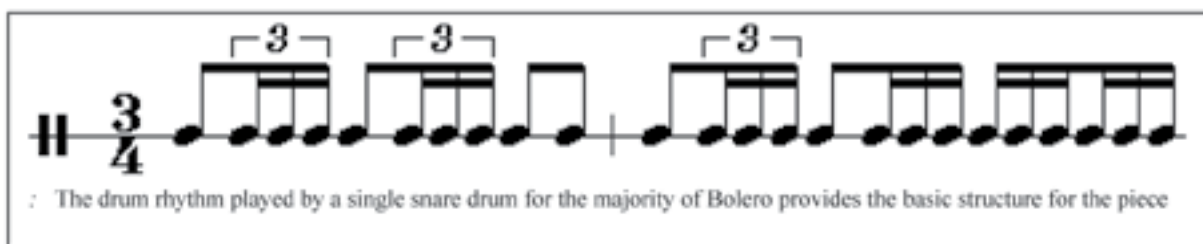
The design is reliant on the lighting. There are no sets or props. In general, the lighting consists of blue, red and white light. The work begins with minimal lighting and silhouettes (shadows) followed by combinations of colours occurring throughout the piece and towards the end, the lighting gradually 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 bright white lighting is especially startling. The boldest moment of lighting comes at the end of Bolero when the dancers *chasse* (*slide*) and end in a position on the floor. The moment the dancers strike their pose, there is a blackout. Most other transitions between coloured lights or between dark and bright lighting occur gradually. The range of the lighting never changes too dramatically.

Music

Ravel was commissioned to write Bolero by Ida Rubenstein – a dancer and impresario (she organized public entertainment), who danced with the Ballet Russes, a dance company in Russia. Her brief was simple: she wanted a ballet score with a Spanish character. *Bolero* has been popular ever since it opened at the Paris Opera on the 22nd of November 1929.

Bolero is written for a large orchestra and requires many instruments.

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* (softly). A snare drum simultaneously pounds a 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. The accompaniment broadens until the full orchestra is playing *forte* (loudly) at the end.

The piece is a popular choice as a dance score. Initially *Bolero* was composed for dancing. 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.

Bolero works magnificently as a score for the *Last Dance*. The work moves 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.

How is Bolero innovative?

(This will also cover the characteristics of the relevant dance style and reference to the historical, social and political contexts)

Alfred Hinkel's *Bolero* combines a classical, European element of dance with Contemporary and African styles of dance. 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. Similarly, 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 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 – Women, let alone white women, had never performed in gumboots before. When the female cast of *Bolero*, marched proudly onto the 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 changed for creative purposes when his dancers were seen performing their own, upright version of gumboot dancing.

The contact work featured in Bolero was very innovative for its time – Perhaps the contact work was an exploration of homosexuality – a controversial issue given the dance's historical context.

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 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 – politics, abuse, sexuality etc.)

Hinkel regarded himself as a director rather than sole choreographer¹⁵

Bolero is also innovative simply because Hinkel was continually innovating and developing his ideas.

4.2 Bessie's Head

Choreographed and Directed by Gary Gordon on The First Physical Theatre Company
(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on Gary Gordon)

To understand something about this dance work it is necessary to know something about the company and its particular innovative features. The First Physical Theatre Company

¹⁵ Hinkel refused to accept exclusive recognition as choreographer due to his emphasis on the dancers' input in the piece.

was founded in 1993 at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape by its Artistic Director and choreographer Gary Gordon: They have a very unique and innovative approach to their work:

Collaboration – Everyone is involved in creating the dance which promotes artistic and intellectual dialogue, a kind of “conversation” involving the ideas and inputs of various individuals. This assists in shaping the overall theatricality of the work. In other words, *all* the elements involved in the creation of the work (such as dance, design, lighting, music, text) are regarded as *equally* meaningful. This has directly contributed to establishing First Physical as a South African company well-known for its democracy, theatrical innovation and experimentation, drawing upon the talents and creativity of different artists and individuals. you may even view this type of theatre-making, involving dialogue and the principles of equality as particularly relevant to some of the broader social issues in South Africa at this time

Transformation – They are committed to creating works that challenge existing ideas of and attitudes to dance in particular and theatre in general in South Africa. To achieve such desired transformation the performers in the company need to be extremely versatile, to use their bodies and voices together with their mental and emotional resources in a disciplined and often daring way. They are required to be able to integrate into their performance dance, mime, text, song (or whatever skill the particular work requires) with emotional integrity and conviction.

Danceplay – The use of the term danceplay to describe a work is unique to First Physical. Fact is fused with fiction by theatrically recreating a historical event (the birth of Bessie Head), with the imagined feelings and thoughts, all of which are based on extensive and detailed research.

Bessie’s Head first premiered in 2000 in Grahamstown. It is a multiple-perspective investigation of the facts and mysteries that surrounded the birth of South African writer, Bessie Head, who was conceived of a black man and a white woman”.¹⁶

Synopsis/theme

The theme deals with the somewhat baffling circumstances surrounding the birth of the South African author Bessie Head. Gordon approached this work with a thorough research into the birth and life of Bessie Head. This very detailed theoretical approach sparked a creative dialogue for Gordon between the available documented facts and his own artistic vision and personal interpretation of them.

It was discovered that, despite the availability of several documented historical and literary sources, in addition to oral stories, there exist enormous contradictions surrounding the birth of Bessie Head. It appeared that Bessie Head herself remained unclear as to the actual identity of her mother and that this affected her emotional and artistic life as an author throughout her life.

When you view *Bessie’s Head* it should be evident to you how the text is delivered in a totally theatrical way –

- Visually and kinetically by the moving bodies

¹⁶ www.ru.ac.za/firstphysical

- Aurally by the spoken and recorded text and music
- By the design which consists primarily of a large and dominating abstract steel construction of *Bessie's Head*.

In performance each of these elements combines to form a unified flowing whole, revealing to us that *Bessie's Head* is the result of a careful collaboration between all those involved: choreographer, playwright, composer, set designer and of course the performers.

Why is *Bessie's Head* significant today?

Bessie's Head is a most appropriate example of physical theatre as it accepts the concept of physical theatre as a theatre of transformation. It challenges the spectators understanding of dance and of theatre (how do we view it, how do we identify it – when is it dance, when is it drama and should one attempt to differentiate between the two?). As physical theatre it connects both the mind and the emotions. In its holistic approach to theatre, the aesthetic of First Physical is particularly appropriate to South Africa with its indigenous heritage of integrated performance styles. Rather than following primarily Western models, physical theatre integrates both Western and African attitudes and approaches to dance and theatre.¹⁷

4.3 Lamentation

Choreographed by Martha Graham

(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on Martha Graham)

This section is written as a **review**.

Lamentation is an abstract solo piece, originally performed by Martha Graham in 1930. Graham was concerned with the tensions and sufferings of the human mind. Her mission was to explore emotion through movement.

Synopsis of Lamentation

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. We all experience grief at some point of our life.

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

1. In the opening of this work, a woman is sitting on a bench, rocking from side to side. She goes through a period of disbelief.
2. This is followed by the climax in which she is faced with reality and she battles with emotions of anger and sadness
3. Finally she turns to those around her to console her, but realises that in this comfortless

¹⁷ References: Paper by Gary Gordon titled *Re-configuring the theatrical presence of Bessie Head in First Physical's "Bessie's Head."* Presented at the Dramatic Learning Spaces Conference, September 2006, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Navigations and Fabrications: Creative encounters in writing the unofficial history of the First Physical Theatre Company by Professor Gary Gordon and Act Tang

world, she can only find peace 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 the Hungarian born composer, Zoltan Kodaly (1882 – 1967), 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 (harsh). Building up to the climax in which she faces reality are a number of strong dramatic discords and a series of menacing 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 diverse dances of Denishawn. Graham at this period was experimenting with a new dance vocabulary which according to Graham 'would make visible the interior landscape'. The dancer would reflect her inner thoughts through movement of the body.

Style and technique

By 1930, Graham had begun to identify a style of movement and discovered new principles of choreography. She identified a method of breathing and impulse control she referred to as "contraction and release" based on the principle of tension and relaxation. (Refer to Section 2 on the genre of Contemporary Dance.) Graham used angular stances,

explosive and stylized gestures. At the centre of Graham’s technique lies the control of posture as obtained through control of the breath. She encouraged awareness of the human body and the inherent mystery that it possesses.

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.



Tasks and Questions to work through

Question: Does Martha Graham achieve her intention which is “to express that grief is universal and that one should not be ashamed to grieve”? Substantiate/ explain your answer.

Task: Once you have viewed both *Lamentation* and *Bolero*, draw up a comparative study between these works and their choreographers in your journal. Apply all the dance literacy skills you have learnt.

Possible categories	Bolero	Lamentation
Period		
Genre		
Themes		
Similarities		
Differences		

4.4 Orpheus in the Underworld

Choreographed by Veronica Paeper on CAPAB Ballet Company

(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on Veronica Paeper)

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 (now Artscape Theatre) Cape Town in January 28th 1982.

Synopsis / content

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. Paeper’s narrative work 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.¹⁸:

¹⁸ Quoted from the Cape Town City Ballet website at 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 nightclub. 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 (Offenbach is one of the characters in the ballet).

Movement vocabulary / Characteristics of the relevant dance styles

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

Costumes and set design

Peter Cazlet designed both the costumes and the scenery. The beautiful 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.

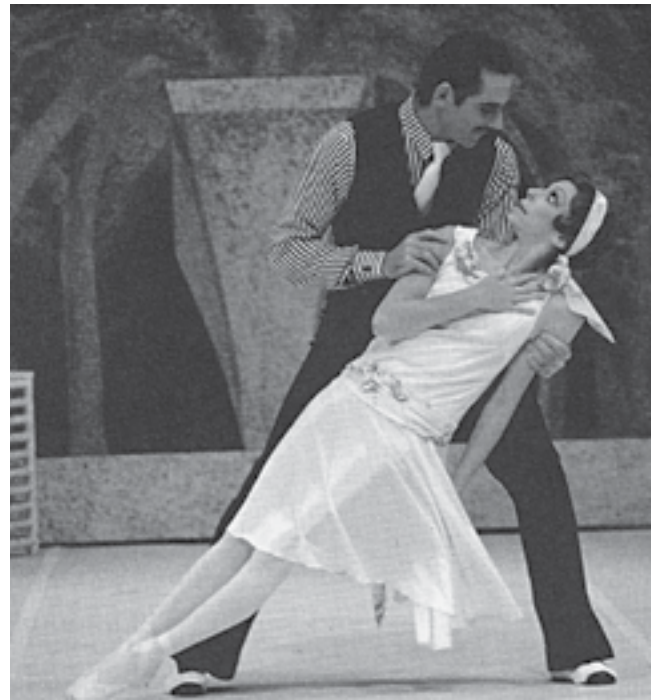
Music

Composed by French composer Jacques Offenbach. 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-Parisien Theater in 1858.

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.

Innovative features and the choreographer's intention

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. Paeper's objective is "never to bore an audience" and in this ballet she certainly has achieved her intention.



Historical, social and political context

South Africa at the time of the opening of *Orpheus in the Underworld* was in a "State of Emergency". Dancers of colour were unable to perform on the stage at the then Nico Malan Theatre. While choreographers like Alfred Hinkel portrayed the social/political aspects of the country in his works (for example *Bolero*), Veronica Paeper chose to entertain her audiences in this particular work by using comedy, lavish sets and costumes.

4.5 Apollo (Apollon Musagète)

Choreographed by George Balanchine

(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on George Balanchine)

The title literally means Apollo, Leader of the Muses. It was premiered in 1928 at the Ballets Russes in Paris and was first presented in the United States by the American Ballet at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in 1937.

There are two versions available to view; The German version is the full length ballet. The second version with the New York City Ballet featuring Mikhail Barishnikov does not have the Prologue. The cast consists of Apollo's mother, three female dancers and Apollo

Synopsis: (Theme/ Plot/ Scenario)

Scene I The Prologue

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, 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 in music.

Scene II:

Apollo stands at the centre of the stage with this lute. The three Muses, Calliope, Polyhymnia, and Terpsichore, approach and honour him. Apollo asks 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 as Zeus’s summons him.¹⁹

Set and Costume Design

Stewart Chaney designed the scenery and costumes. The dancers wear typically Grecian styled outfits. The set is very basic. A platform represents the rock

The Music

Balanchine worked closely with Russian composer Igor Stravinsky from the time of *Apollo* until the composer’s death. The score of *Apollon Musagète* is written for strings only and is classical in style.

Innovative characteristics

The choreography is based on the classical tradition, but introduces 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. *Apollon Musagète* combines traditional balletic style with the geometrical lines of modern dance. This combination of the “old” and “new” dance styles is called **Neoclassical**.

The significance of Apollo

Balanchine is said to have written this ballet to pay homage to his predecessors especially Marius Petipa. He took the classical ballet style from past choreographers but added an athletic feel to them. Greek culture is characterized in terms of this piece as being absolutely basic. There is little stress on character. Everything is contrived with great simplicity and immediacy. Like most of Balanchine’s ballets, the music and the dancing are the most important aspects. The storyline, sets and costumes are of almost no importance. Balanchine believed that “*Movement must be self explanatory. If it isn’t, it has failed*”. Apollo, as most of his ballets is danced in studio outfits.



Apollon Musagète is still staged throughout the world. It is danced by some of the world’s top classical dancers because that is what the work is intended to do – show the dancers off on an almost bare stage.

¹⁹ Reference:

Jack Anderson: Ballet and Modern Dance; Constance A. Schrader: A sense of Dance; Joan Selby- Lowndes: World Ballet Joan Cass: Dancing Through History; Judith Steeh: History of Ballet and Modern Dance; Bernard Taper: Balanchine (1960. London Collins)



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: Watch the video of *Apollo* and write study notes in your journal. Include information about the choreographer and composer. Is the work an abstract or narrative piece? Substantiate your answer. What motivated the choreographer to write this work? (Refer to his context, period, country, company, influences and collaborations) Why is this work innovative? What is the significance of this piece? Why do you think *Apollo* is still performed by most classical companies even today?

Task: Choose from any two of the companies below and discuss their contribution to dance in the 21st century. Include in your discussion when they began, what genre of dance do they use, name some of their well known works, choreographers who have worked with them, are they concerned with social and political issues and is this evident in their performances?

- Cape Town City Ballet
- Jazzart Dance Theatre
- Martha Graham Dance Company
- New York City Ballet
- First Physical Theatre

4.6 Ghost Dances

Choreographed by Christopher Bruce in 1981 for the Rambert Dance Company
(Refer to Section 3 for the biographical notes on Christopher Bruce)

Characteristics of Bruce's choreography:

Christopher 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 rock band 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 draws on other dance styles such as folk and social dance and tap

sequences depending on the ideas behind the work. His early training in acrobatics is evident in many of his works. 'Everyday' movements are incorporated and gesture is often used.

What was the initial inspiration for this work?

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.

Synopsis²⁰

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. There is a painted backdrop that represents a stark and rocky area which could be both a plain and a cave. On stage there are several rock like structures on which the Ghosts lie and wait for their victims. The dim greenish 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 white side lighting giving them a sculptural look. Certain moments are emphasised with particular lighting effects such as a powerful yellow down light on the characters at the moment of their death.

²⁰ Reference:

Ghost Dances Teachers' Notes. Rambert Education 2000

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet. Horst Koegler 1982

Costume

The skeletal image of the Ghosts is produced using body paint to emphasise bone and muscle structure. 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 and dripping sounds in the opening scenes are recorded.



Tasks and Questions to work through

- *Task: Watch and analyse the video of Ghost Dances.*
- *Watch the opening scene of the dance.*
- *Write down any words that come to mind as you watch.*
- *Find descriptive words that describe the movement, the set, the atmosphere.*
- *Identify the movement motifs in the opening scene.*
- *Work out how to describe these motifs in writing.*
- *Identify where these motifs can be seen in the other sections of the dance.*
- *Write in your journal what you think they mean.*
- *Write a review of the work. Include the following information:*
 - ◆ *Who the choreographer is and his biographical details. (Dates, nationality, training, influences).*
 - ◆ *What motivated him to create this dance and the ideas behind it?*
 - ◆ *The form of the dance, number of scenes and what happens in each.*
 - ◆ *The lighting, costumes, set and music. Be able to describe these and give reasons for why they were chosen.*
 - ◆ *Describe the movement both generally and specifically in terms of motif and development of motif.*

4.7 Swan Lake

Choreography Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov Performed by the Bolshoi Ballet Company in Moscow. Music by Tchaikovsky
(See Section 3 for biographical information on Petipa.)



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: You attended a video evening at your school. The two videos shown were Petipa's Swan Lake and Alvin Ailey's Revelations. It is your task as a dance learner to critically analyse these two different dances which seem worlds apart, discovering similarities and differences between styles in terms of their styles, settings, decades, continents, political contexts and companies.

Do you think these dance works are relevant in South Africa today?²¹

Swan Lake is, according to the video notes, "probably the best-known, best-loved of all classical ballets." In *Balanchine's Complete Stories of the Great Ballets (1954)* it is described as "undoubtedly the most popular of all classical ballets" both in terms of music and dance. Balanchine's description of the work as a "dance drama" indicates the importance of narrative.

Synopsis

The tale of *Swan Lake* begins in a castle garden during the celebrations of Prince Siegfried's 21st birthday. After much celebrating, dancing and drinking, the birthday party retreats indoors and the prince observes a passing flock of wild swans. (Here the composer, Tchaikovsky's familiar oboe motif features for the first time.) With his birthday present (a crossbow) in hand, Siegfried makes for the woods in search of the swans.

Act II takes place beside a lake. Princess Odette is under the spell of magician Von Rothbart – by day she is a swan and by night she becomes a human. Rothbart's spell can only be broken if Odette is proposed to by someone professing undying love. Conveniently, Siegfried swears his love and faithfulness to Odette. In Act III, a ball is held by the Queen. Von Rothbart enters with Odile, his daughter, disguised as Odette. After a dazzling series of solos, Siegfried



²¹ Suggestion: wherever possible, read the reviews of various works from your local newspaper or magazines. This will assist you in obtaining the skills to write a review.

proposes to Odile and Odette's hopes of being freed are destroyed. The final act finds Siegfried's at the lake once more. Odette forgives the Prince for his mistake. In this 1957 Bolshoi recording, Siegfried and Von Rothbart battle in the final act. Von Rothbart is killed and the couple, we assume, live happily ever after. An alternative ending sees the couple deciding to die together by plunging themselves into the lake.

Choreography

Petipa is noted as the main choreographer of *Swan Lake*. The white acts of the ballet – those with the swans – were choreographed by Ivanov who also created *The Nutcracker*. The choreography in *Swan Lake* is unique to the classical period of the late 19th century. Stylistic features of this period are described in *The World of Ballet* (1994). They include: an erect body, rapid use of the legs and feet, legs raised high and multiple *pirouettes* (turning steps).

Music

This version of the ballet was not created until after the death of the composer Tchaikovsky, who was commissioned to write the ballet some 20 years before the Petipa staging of 1895.

Stylistic features

Examples of stylistic features of late 19th century ballet are plentiful, from *developpes a la seconde* (examples of high leg lifts) to Odile's demanding solos in Act III with *pirouettes en diagonal* (a series of turns from the corner en pointe at a brisk tempo). While the swans often bend backwards, posture is predominantly upright. There are ranges of different floor patterns, particularly in the lake scenes. Ivanov arranges his swans in Vs and neat rows. In Act IV the curtain raises on swans arranged in a circle and semi-circle, downstage right, and rows of swans standing and kneeling, downstage left. In Act II three groups of six swans are joined hand-to-hand and placed along the three sides of the stage with the front 'invisible' wall of the stage left open.

Another stylistic feature of classical ballet is the various groupings of dancers. *Swan Lake* consists of a number of *corps* scenes (including large groups of swans and courtiers), *pas de quatre* or quartets (for example, the Spanish quartet in Act III), *pas de deux* or duets (Prince Siegfried and Odette have a number in Act II) and solos (Odile and Siegfried in Act III). It is particularly in the solos that dancers display their virtuosity. Plisetskaya's nimble feet, sharp turns and strong characterisation stand out in her Odile solos of Act III. She is a model of the Russian dancers of old: technically and dramatically strong. Her lyricism and musicality soared where members of the *corps* sometimes faltered. This recording of *Swan Lake* is a pleasure to watch.

4.8 Revelations

Choreographed by Alvin Ailey for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
(See Section 3 for biographical information)

Revelations is considered to be one of Ailey's ballets that reflects his upbringing in Texas during the Great Depression. Ailey explains in an interview that his first dance works

"were ballets about [his] black roots / blood memories." *Revelations* depicts Southern churchgoing in both its title (the name of a book of the bible) and score which consists of spirituals and gospel music.

Synopsis

The three sections of *Revelations* unite a narrative of themes and feelings. The first section shows the struggle of "black people wanting to get out" (Ailey). Songs in this section include *Didn't My Lord* and *Fix Me Jesus*. In the second section dancers dance the ritual of baptism to *Wade in the Water*. The final section depicts the social occasion of churchgoing on Sunday mornings, with the company in their Sunday best. The women flap fans about, wagging their fingers and chatting in Sunday dresses and hats while the men don black jazz shoes, slacks and satin waistcoats over shirts.



Style

While Ailey himself describes his works as ballets, the contemporary aspect of his choreography is obvious. Unlike late 19th century ballet, posture is not rigid and there is much undulation of the torso. Whereas use of the floor in *Swan Lake* is limited to kneeling and sitting one leg extended one bent underneath in a swan-like pose, Ailey's dancers *move about* on the floor. The male solo to the spiritual *I Wanna Be Ready* is the greatest example of use of the floor. The piece begins and ends with the dancer on the floor. Many movements involve the upper body (torso and arms) reaching up desperately towards the heavens while the lower body (legs) remains on the ground. A further characteristic of contemporary style includes bare-footed dancers.

Costume, props and lighting are used to great effect in *Revelations*. Colours include neutrals, such as brown and tan, orange, pale yellow, white and a light peach. The cut of the dresses is simple. The skirt is wide and has the occasional frill (as in the baptism scene). Mostly the dancers are barefoot, except for jazz shoes which feature on the male dancers in the *Didn't My Lord* trio (*pas de trois*) and final *corps* piece. Strips of cloth, poles and umbrellas are used in the baptism scene along with fans and stools in the final section. *Revelations* begins, company centrestage, warmly lit before a dark backdrop of a night sky. The sky backdrop stands throughout the piece, varying only in intensity of light and colour.

Personal significance and intentions

The emotional impact of Ailey's *Revelations* stems from the personal significance and intentions of the choreographer. Ailey's intention was to create a work relating to his upbringing and those things that were of particular significance: the struggle of black people, baptism as a rite of passage and the significance of the church in the lives of his

parents, aunts and uncles and, indeed, the community as a whole. The vocabulary of movement, well danced by Ailey's dancers, powerfully evokes deep feeling.

In the duet *Fix Me Jesus* the dancers strain their arms upwards, fingers splayed before contracting and crouching, their bodies speaking of pain and hardship. In this duet or pas de deux there are references to classical dance. The partnering mimics classical pas de deux with the male dancer lifting the female dancer. Ailey makes use of the plié, développé, tendu, pirouette and various other classical ballet moves. To this tradition, he introduces contemporary elements. Ailey uses hand gestures, arm movements and port de bras to great effect. Dancers join their hands in prayer, stretch arms out with hands wide, tap gently on the ground and curve their arms, bird-like. The arrangement of the different sections treats the viewer (and, no doubt, the performers) to a thorough range of moods and feelings. From the prayerful, pleading *I Wanna Be Ready* to the vigorous *Didn't My Lord* and the playful *Rockabye Soul*, Ailey thoroughly explores those memories running through his veins.

Comparative Study: (finding the similarities and differences)

Where *Swan Lake* has elaborate sets and traditional tutus, *Revelations* has a simple unchanging backdrop and understated costumes.

- The Bolshoi Ballet dances en pointe, in character boots or flats. Ailey's dancers perform barefoot or in jazz shoes.
- *Swan Lake* is performed to a score written specifically for dance, performed live by an orchestra. In contrast, Ailey has selected recordings of religious music for his work.
- Both dances can be described as narrative, rather than abstract but the nature of the narratives differ.
- *Swan Lake* follows a structured story with a particular setting and individual named characters over the course of four acts. *Revelations* explores a particular cultural phenomenon and the themes entailed in three sections.
- The skills of the different performers are specific to their disciplines.
- Finally, the overall impression and emotional impact of the performances is unique but similarly enjoyable and interesting from an analytical perspective.²²

4.9 Blood Wedding

Choreography by Carolina Rosa (Caroline Holden)

See Section 3 for biographical information

The section below is done as an interview to guide you in this process. The interview is with Geoffrey Hyland who was the director of BLOOD WEDDING 2005 a dance adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's work. It was choreographed by Adele Blank and

²² **Reference List**

Balanchine, G. 1954. *Balanchine's Complete Stories of the Great Ballets*. Doubleday and Company. New York.

Miles, L (ed.) 1994. *The World of Ballet*. Usborne Publishing. London.

Video Material Tulubyeva, T (dir.) 1988. *Maya Plisetskaya with the Bolshoi Ballet in Swan Lake*. RM Associates. Worldwide.

Image <http://www.duke.edu/~saundra/Kailey's>

Carolyn Holden and performed by dancers of Free Flight Dance Company and La Rosa Spanish Dance Theatre.

What inspired you to do *Blood wedding*?

I have always maintained that when ordinary words are not sufficient to express our deepest feelings, we turn to poetry. And when poetry no longer suffices, we are moved to dance, music and song. As a theatre director I have always been drawn to the more emotional and poetic texts and perhaps this is why I return again and again to the works of Shakespeare and Lorca. When I was approached by La Rosa and Free Flight to direct a dance version of Lorca's "Blood Wedding", I jumped at the opportunity to experience what was for me a new form of artistic expression. For its obvious Spanish connection, it had always been a dream to do a dance adaptation one of Lorca's plays. Carolina had often also discussed collaboration with Adele Blank; this proved an ideal opportunity.

Where was *Blood Wedding* first performed?

"Blood Wedding" was commissioned jointly by The Oude Libertas Theatre in Stellenbosch (First performed January 2005) and The Klein Karoo Nationale Kunstefees (Oudtshoorn) (performed April 2005).

What is the theme/synopsis?

Based on a true story of love, lust, and betrayal, *Blood Wedding* is one of the most powerful and innovative plays written this century. Federico Garcia Lorca, wrote his best known play years after reading a newspaper account of a young bride in Andalusia who abandoned her husband-to-be on their wedding day to escape with her childhood sweetheart. Through this work Lorca seeks to link the commonplace with the universal, probing attitudes toward class and convention of his contemporary Spain and how they blight the individual psyche. The play also depicts the powerful conflict of nurturing feminine energy and the attractive, but destructive masculine force.

The stark simplicity and poetic nature of *Blood Wedding* lends itself to interpretation through dance and there have been several dance productions since the play was first staged in the early 1930's. The first South African dance production of this work was choreographed by Hazel Acosta in the early 1980's.

What were your intentions?

Having directed the play twice before, I came to this dance production knowing Lorca's script very well. It is a play of character and deep emotions. The heart of the scenic technique, of the story-telling was to be the dancer. The actual story is very simple and this made it easier to translate into dance which, together with music and song, makes it the ultimate theatrical expression of an interior or emotional landscape. I wanted to focus on what I consider to be one of the major themes of Lorca's work: The instinctive passions of the individual versus the will of society. Whilst it was essential that the story made sense to an audience, all extraneous action was stripped leaving what I felt to be the raw essence of the original work. Whilst much could be expressed through the dance, I opted to have a male narrator weave the plot together with poetic words inspired by Lorca. It

was almost as though we were hearing Lorca's voice and witnessing his presence.

What were the choreographic intentions? Include information about the choreographic style.

It was important that the dance led the audience through the emotive aspects of the work. As with Lorca's work, many of the dances centred on a physical object that was loaded with poetic symbolism: the knife, the sheets, the child, the bull, the veil, the fan, etc. As such, these were often the starting point for the choreography.

Choreographically the work was a blend of Flamenco and Contemporary styles. In each case, either Holden or Blank would take responsibility for the particular dance. Once this was basically established, both secondary choreographer and I would make suggestions, thus enriching the work with more influences. As director I constantly challenged the dancers to find the dramatic reason behind the movement; what were the emotive qualities embodied in what they were doing?

Ultimately any work I do should be characterised by a style that is particular to itself

How did the design aspects contribute to the dance?

Sets. I chose to set the work in a heightened, ritualistic and austere space; red floor-cloth, a few red boxes and a large red fence/ wall with double doors which dominated the length of the upstage area. The fence/ wall came to symbolise many things: walls to keep people out, walls to confine, walls we build around our minds and hearts, walls that divide. The straight lines emphasized the hard masculine rational world from which the more instinctual feminine impulse struggles to escape. The red of course was evocative of both the passion and blood that is so much part of the work

Lighting. In the first 2 performances, lighting choices were limited by: 1. The outdoor venue or 2. Being within a festival set-up where lighting was shared and limited. So, though it was very basic, we managed to achieve quite a hot atmosphere. This echoed the dry, sterile climate of the setting. Side lighting also added atmosphere and isolations could be achieved on the boxes. An example of this is when The Bridegroom pictures The Bride in the opening scene; we know it is an image in his mind. In the forest we made use of gobos which added to the mysterious, gloomy atmosphere. Red was also used at the end of the second act ("the hour of blood has come again") and again at the very end of the show the stage turned slowly red during the knife fight.

Costumes. The costumes were chosen for their simplicity, and, whilst non-specific, drew on Spanish roots suggesting a poor rural community. The colour palette was kept to a minimum; white (purity, innocence, light, virginity, sterility, etc), black (death, formality, evil, darkness, etc) and browns (dryness, earth, etc).

Make-up. Faces are whited-out; an aesthetic motif recurring in most of my work and drawn from Japanese culture (as was the red of the set). This highlights the face, focusing the emotion, while creating an anti-individualistic effect. The dancing face is the face of everyone. It assumes the aspect of a lucid mask, through which we are allowed to see our own face and to feel the fluctuation of our emotions.

What is the relationship of the dance to the music used?

The music (a blend of live and recorded) was carefully chosen primarily for its emotive qualities, its ability to support, represent and hold the world of the presentation and the choreographic/ interpretive possibilities it offered. Thought was also given as to which style (Spanish or Contemporary) would be the main choreographic element. These needed to be balanced so that neither was ultimately fore-grounded over the other.

Does Blood wedding promote any political or social aspects?

I think the focus of this piece is intensely personal. It is about the battle of the individual will versus that of society. The two protagonists follow their passionate instincts and defy tradition. Ultimately Lorca sees this as a tragic situation and one which cannot be resolved.

What impact did you feel this work had on the audience?

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to all aspects of the work. Audiences were excited by the theatricality of the interpretation, the seamless fusion of dance and music styles. The world created enthralled them, the story fascinated them and the believable characters aroused their empathy.



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: You have been invited to interview any of the choreographers you have studied on one of their works. Prepare at least ten questions to ask them. Use the questions above as a guideline.

Task: Watch a dance work live or on video/DVD. Study the table below and then complete the **what, where and when, who, why and how** questions in your journal.

What	Where and When	Who	Why	How
Title	Venue	Choreographer	Choreographic intention	Design: sets, lighting, costumes
Description of dance	Date	Company	Context: politics, society,	Relationship of music
Synopsis/ theme	Period	Dancers	Background and influences	Choreographic style
Abstract/ narrative		Designers	Culture	Impact
Dance form		Composers/ Musicians	Own opinion	

4.10 Tranceformations

Choreographed by Sylvia Glasser for Moving into Dance Mophatong Dance Company
(See Section 3 for biographical information)

Tranceformations was inspired by the San/Bushmen trance dance and rock art. In order to understand *Tranceformations* we must first look at what is San/Bushman trance dance, rock art and how they link to each other (See also Section 1.2.) Although the term Bushman is considered by some a degrading term we will use it in our study but without any prejudice.

Bushmen Trance Dance

Trance dance is also known as the **Medicine song**. It is done as an important aspect of hunting. It is also danced to heal a sick person and to wish for good hunting and rain. This dance is mostly danced at night when all the people are back from their daily activities. The dance can last till the early hours of the morning. The dance is done by men with rattles tied to their feet, following a circular pathway on the ground around the women who also sit in a circle around the fire. This line of men will often change in direction depending on the man leading the dance line.

The women sing and clap a rhythm with their hands, and fingers spread apart to produce a sharp and high sound. As the singing, clapping and dance raises in intensity some of the dancing men, known as **Shamans** will enter into a trance. When this happens they often lean forward and contract the stomach muscles. Sometimes they use a stick to support them when they are in the leaning position. When in trance, they tremble and leave the dance line in pain, sometimes crying. They will start to hallucinate and in their visions, they see spirits that they must fight to save the sick person. Other visions are filled with images of **therianthropes** (half human, half animal). Sometimes they feel as if they are under water or they are animals. At the same time they may start to bleed through their noses. The *Shamans* can also use this blood from his nose to rub on a sick person if present. They believe that blood from a *shaman's* nose has healing powers. In addition it is also believed that when a *shaman* is in a trance he is filled with supernatural power. Some of the gestures and steps that can be seen during the Trance dance (*Medicine song*) include:

- basically erect posture with trunk bent slightly forward from the hip.
- hands are held backwards to ask God for power.
- arms held high and parallel straight out in front.
- torso in a right angle with the legs and arms extended to the front in line with the torso.
- arms raised to a shoulder height parallel and turned towards the women
- pounding the ground with the feet.
- hopping with both feet together.
- stamping both feet simultaneously.
- stamping in place with hands held towards the women circle.
- shuffling of the feet.

Rock art

Many Bushmen rock art paintings and engravings have been found in South Africa. They were mainly done on mountain rocks and caves. Some date back to 26,300 B.P. (before present) Paint that was used is a mixture of fat, blood and water. Paintings and engravings that are found in the Western Cape and Drakensberg mountains show the trance ritual. It is believed that the Shamans did these paintings to record what they experienced during their trance dance (Medicine song).

Choreography of Glasser's Tranceformations

In the opening scene the dancer's actions are silhouetted on the cyclorama, portraying the rock art figures and trance dance postures. All the dancers are wearing San/Bushman wear. This costume is symbolic of the outfit worn by the Bushman as it demonstrates his lifestyle. As the dancers portray these figures they are following a circular pathway on stage like that of the men in trance dance.



As the choreography proceeds, the males dance in a circle and constantly change directions. This is also common during trance dance. During this time all the female dancers are in a line next to the circle. Their movements symbolise that of San women. They clap with fingers spread as in the trance dance and in some rock art images.

Next, all the male dancers who were dancing in a circle start to tremble and perform jerky movements as they slowly fall down. With these movements they are symbolising a Bushman Shaman getting into trance and a journey by a shaman through trance stages. This is enhanced by rock art effects and images that are reflected on the cyclorama with effective lighting. One of the male dancers wearing a mask with two long red ribbons trailing from the nose to the floor walks on stage. In his arms he is carrying a body of another dancer. He puts the body on the floor and performs pressing movements and rubs his hands on the body of this dancer. With this he is symbolising a Shaman with nasal bleeding trying to rub the blood on the sick person for healing.

Half-human, half-animal characters move onto the stage. Their costume symbolises the double headed eland, lion, fishes and other creatures. Other dancers are dancing in between these characters. In some instance it looks as if they are confronting them. Their faces also show fear and when they move they keep looking around as if they are in an environment that is not safe. This symbolises the idea that trance is a painful and scary experience. Dancers use gestures like that of a torso in a right angle with the legs and arms extended either to the back or front. This is symbolic of a Shaman asking for power from God to help him fight the spirits in order that he may save the life of the sick person. Dancers start to tremble and shake as if off-balance. Their movement shows a sense of being in pain and exhausted. This symbolises the end of a trance ritual and the Shaman's mind returning from the spirit world to the real world. Dancers slowly leave the dance

space and go to rest symbolising what happens after a trance ritual that might have lasted the entire night. The performance ends with dancers, dressed in clothes that are old and dirty, carrying heavy baggage. This symbolises the plight of the modern San Bushman in South Africa.

Music that is used in Tranceformations is not Bushman music. It was composed by Shoun Naidoo. Only gestures are taken from the Trance dance and the rock art. Other steps are from other dance style e.g. African dance styles and contemporary dance.

4.11 Gumboot Dance (*Isicathulo*)

Information about Gumboot dance has been mostly passed orally and varies from source to source. According to some informants, this dance style originated from *amaBhaca*, migrants from Southern Kwazulu Natal. Although this was a form of recreation some people think that it was also influenced by similar clapping and hitting the legs dancing done in the Austrian *Schuplatzer* due to the presence of Austrian missionaries in that area. In the late 1890s these workers migrated to work at the Durban harbour, railways and the mines in Johannesburg. These migrant workers grouped themselves into teams and each had a team leader. Gumboots (*Isicathulo*) became a way of expression and group identity for these workers away from their rural homes.



Synopsis of the Dance

Gumboot (*Isicathulo*) uses complex rhythm and energetic unison dancing and line formations (*ifolo*) found in *amaZulu* traditional dance done by men. This symbolises manhood and military strength. The relationship of authority between the team leaders and other workers is represented in the call and response interaction between the dance team leader and the rest of the dancers. The leader controls the group by using commands and a whistle to which the team respond with precision. These commands are normally shouted out by the leader. The aim is to tell the rest of the team which sequence they must perform or which direction and formation they must take. This symbolises the discipline and interaction between the mineworkers and their leader at the mine compound.

The general dance vocabulary, rhythmic patterns and choreography are achieved by stamping the boots, slapping the boots while raised or on the floor; hitting the boots together at the heels; one boot swinging towards the other; one boot kicking the other; standing or kneeling on one leg with arms bent at the elbows and thumbs pointing upwards.

Between each sequence there is a waiting step, where dancers gently tap their right foot on the ground. In some cases the dance is done over a cycle of four beats. In addition there are two waiting steps used to mark the time: stamping of the right leg on the ground on the first and third pulse or alternating both legs e.g. right, left, right, left as in a

march.

Gumboot (*Isicathulo*) may include comical and humorous elements and everyday life experiences integrated into its choreography. This is symbolic of how people communicate in their day to day lifestyle.

Musical accompaniment

In Gumboots (*Isicathulo*) musical accompaniment is not compulsory; however in some instances it can be used. Dancers will normally use chants and working songs while dancing. This is symbolic of the men that normally do hard labour. They would sing and chant to ease the workload. Sometimes one of the performers may play a concertina or a guitar. Recently a drum is also used.

Costume

Gumboots (*Isicathulo*). The costumes are also symbolic of the clothes worn by the working class. This includes: overalls; helmets and rudder welling boots (*gumboots*). The gumboots are symbolic of the long distances people had to walk from the rural areas to the city. (As a point of reference, see notes Bolero in Section 4) The boots also reflect on the kind of work people wearing them do.

The Gumboot (*Isicathulo*) dance style has been constantly changing since the late 1890's transformed by the men who perform it. It continues to change even up to this day and is now performed by dance groups of both men and women in towns, cities and schools as a form of recreation, entertainment or theatrical productions. The members of these dance groups do not work in the docks, railways or mines. However, it still remains a symbolic dance that represented the railway workers, dock workers and the mineworkers.



Tasks and Questions to work through

Task: Observe a gumboot performance on either DVD/video. Look at how the dancers dramatise every day situations, e.g. how they communicate with each other. Learn two rhythmic patterns that can be demonstrated in class. Include symbolic language into your demonstration.

Question: What does it mean to be Dance Literate? Why do you think it is important to be Dance Literate?

Task: Compare any two of the works you have studied in terms of:

- terms of social justice
- theatrical elements (sets, lighting, costumes, music)

4.12 Suggestions on how to write a review by Sheila Chisholm

Firstly clearly accept there is no prescriptive way of writing a review which is based on knowledge and experience. But some basic rules should be observed:

- Derogatory personal remarks should never be written [e.g. She is too fat] Only deal with, and qualify, such personal remarks as are related to technique or interpretation.
- Reviews begin with an introductory paragraph – usually describing what the plot concerns or if it is plotless the mood/feelings expected or in the case of a classical ballet mention something concerning historical background.
- This should lead into the main body dealing with the dancers' abilities, interpretations, interaction, choreography, patterning, space utilisation, musicality, sound levels and balance if a backing tape is used, or comments about the conductor or orchestral playing when live music is used. Lighting effects also need to be discussed, as do sets and costumes.
- A short paragraph – possibly only one sentence – at the end wraps up the entire performance and whether or not the performance is worth seeing.
- In other words a review requires a beginning, middle and an end.
- Grammar is important, as is spelling and punctuation. Long convoluted words confuse rather than impress. Clichés show lack of individuality and thought.
- A rule of thumb is to write in the 3rd person.
- From start to finish the review must flow and make sense. Between 300 and 400 words is a normal length which leaves precious little room for any waffling.
- Sentences should vary in length. Don't be shy about exploring a Thesaurus for interesting vocabulary and avoid applying the same adjective twice.
- Common French technical terms such as plié or pirouette are quite permissible. But remember if you write about a gargouillade, chances are you'll leave your readers bewildered. However, if you must, then parenthesize the English meaning.
- Essential to being a good reviewer is integrity, honesty and fairness.

Annexure A

Tips on Writing Examinations

- Read through the whole examination paper before you begin writing.
- Plan how to divide your time to ensure completion of the paper.
- Identify where you have choices *between* questions and *within* questions and decide which questions to choose.
- Read the question carefully, underlining the verbs that tell you what to do
- Make sure you number your answers correctly.
- Plan or structure the answers in rough before writing
- Read the instructions carefully
- Leave spaces between questions and always start a new section on a new page.
- If you have time read through your answers to check your work.
- Write legibly so the marker can read it.
- Enjoy the challenge of testing your knowledge and do not panic.
- Always write as much as possible. The papers seldom expect 1 fact for one mark. Give more. Remember the marking will look at the whole answer and mark it according to the quality of the answer not only on the number of facts provided.
- Most questions will ask you to *apply* your knowledge. Write in the format requested e.g. as a programme, as a review, as an interview, etc.

Annexure B

Questions to help you analyse Cultural Dances

Does the dance tell a story? What is the story? Does any other community have a similar story inspiring a dance? Are the dances similar?
Does the dance signify a special occasion? If so, what is the occasion: a wedding, a funeral, the birth of a child, or any other occasion?
Is there a purpose to the dance? Is the purpose to bring rain, to heal the sick, to encourage their side to win a contest, e.g. football? Is the dance in praise of leaders? Is it in praise of any achievement present or past?
Who performs the dance? Are there special individuals, who must according to tradition, lead the dancing? Can anyone join the dance at any time? Must all those who participate do the same steps and gestures?
Does the dance with the same objective differ from one geographical area or climatic area to another? Does the climate influence the dance?
How long should the dance be? Should the dance be performed at sunset or sunrise? Is the dance to be observed by all? Is the dance only for the select few? Is it for males or females only?
Is interaction with observers required? Is such interaction discouraged?
Is there a particular start to the dance or is it spontaneous? Is there an ending to the dance? When does it end?
When is it an appropriate time to compare a non-Western dance with a Western dance? Can there be a combination of styles, steps or any particular movement? How would observers re-act to this?
Must there be music? If so, what is the nature of the music? Who are the musicians?
Does the music compliment the dance? Can Western instruments be used?
What clothes are worn by the dancer/s? Are the clothes essential for the dance?
Is there any ritualistic behaviour before or after the dance? Are dancers required to prepare themselves physically (perhaps they have to fast before a dance)?
Any other comments or insights:

Annexure C

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