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## HISTORY OF MODERN DANCE

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## ИСТОРИЯ СОВРЕМЕННОГО ТАНЦА

### *Annotation*

*This article is devoted to describing of modern dance history. The aim of the article is to provide the reader some material on famous choreographers and dancers of modern dances. The authors draws to the conclusion the dance schools, theyir chiefs and students.*

**Key words:** modern dance, elements of modern dance, choreographers, dancers, modern dance techniques.

**I. Introduction.** Developed in the 20th century, primarily in the United States and Germany, modern dance resembles modern art and music in being experimental and iconoclastic. Modern dance began at the turn of the century [13]. Its pioneers were Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, and Ruth St. Denis in the United States, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman in Germany.

Each rebelled against the rigid formalism, artifice, and superficiality of classical academic ballet and against the banality of show dancing. Each sought to inspire audiences to a new awareness of inner or outer realities, a goal shared by all subsequent modern dancers.

Modern dance refused classical ballet's stress on feet as the primary catalyst for dance movements. It, instead, put stress on torso employing such elements as contact – release, floor work, fall and recovery, and improvisation. It was usually performed in bare feet, often with non-traditional costuming.

**II. The aim of the article.** With this article, we are aiming to investigate the history and pioneers of the modern dance and all the associate styles, enlarging by those means our general knowledge of dance in generally and more specifically modern choreographers.

*To achieve the aim, we have defined such tasks:*

1. To analyze and to learn the theoretical material on the topic.
2. To introduce the most important choreographers of modern dance.
3. To describe the favorite styles of modern dance techniques.

**III. The Results.** The modern dance, created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and stated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has his intentions and his roots very distinct from one another. The dancer perform their dances on their bare foots, work with body contractions, torsions, disengagement, despite their movements are much more free, still follows an organized and complex technique. It refuses the support in pointe as a catalyst of the movements and focuses his working axis in the torso, in the contact, the fall, improvisation, breeding, and movement of the spine and articulations, and in the work with the floor.

The main artists that gave birth to this dance style were the Americans Loire Fuller (1862–1928), Isadora Duncan (1877–1927), Ruth St Denis (1879–1968) and Martha Graham (1894–1991), the Sweden Emile Jacques Dalcroze (1865–1950), the German Mary Wigman (1866–1973) and the Hungarian Rudolf von Laban (1879–1958). All of them with very distant styles and techniques, had one thing in common, the dissatisfaction with possibilities allowed for dancers of their time, and their main objective was to transmit to their audience, a sense of inner and outer reality.

The postmodern dance occurred in the 1960s in United States when society questioned truths and ideologies in politics and art. This period was marked by social and cultural experimentation in the arts. Choreographers no longer created specific «schools» or «styles». The influences from different periods of dance became more vague and fragmented [1].

In the other hand, the contemporary dance emerged in the 1950s as the dance form that is combining the modern dance elements and the classical ballet elements. It can use elements from non-Western dance cultures, such as African dancing with bent knees as a characteristic trait, and Butoh, Japanese contemporary dancing that developed in the 1950s. It is also derived from modern European themes like poetic and everyday elements, broken lines, nonlinear movements, and repetition. Many contemporary dancers are trained daily in classical ballet to keep up with the technicality of the choreography given. These dancers tend to follow ideas of efficient bodily movement, taking up space and attention to detail. Contemporary dance today includes both concert and commercial dance because of the lines being blurred by pop culture and television shows.

Isadora Duncan was a predecessor of modern dance with her stress on the torsomovements, bare feet, loose hair, free – flowing costumes, and incorporation of humor into emotional expression. Classical Greek arts, folk dances, social dances, nature, natural forces, and new American athleticism such as skipping, running, jumping, leaping, and abrupt movements inspired her, she thought that ballet was ugly and meaningless gymnastics. Although she returned to the United States at various points in her life, her work was not very well received there. She returned to Europe and died in Paris in 1927 [10].

Loie Fuller (a burlesque skirt dancer) began experimenting with the effect that gas lighting had on her silk costumes. Fuller developed a form of natural movement and improvisation techniques that were used in conjunction with her

revolutionary lighting equipment and translucent silk costumes. She patented her apparatus and methods of stage lighting that included the use of colored gels and burning chemicals for luminescence, and patented her voluminous silk stage costumes [5].

Disturbed by the Great Depression and the rising threat of fascism in Europe, the radical dancers tried to raise consciousness by dramatizing the economic, social, ethnic and political crises of their time.

Hanya Holm, a student of Mary Wigman and instructor at the Wigman School in Dresden, founded the New York *Wigman School of Dance* in 1931 (which became the Hanya Holm Studio in 1936) introducing Wigman technique, Laban's theories of spatial dynamics, and later her own dance techniques to American modern dance. An accomplished choreographer, she was a founding artist of the first *American Dance Festival* in Bennington (1934). Holm's dance work *Metropolitan Daily* was the first modern dance composition to be televised on NBC and her labanotation score for «*Kiss Me, Kate*» (1948) was the first choreography to be copyrighted in the United States. Holm choreographed extensively in the fields of concert dance and musical theater [9].

Anna Sokolow was a student of Martha Graham and Louis Horst. A. Sokolow created her own dance company (1930). Presenting dramatic contemporary imagery. Sokolow's compositions were generally abstract, often revealing the full spectrum of human experience reflecting the tension and alienation of the time and the truth of human movement [3].

José Limón, after studying and performing with Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, established his own company with Humphrey as artistic director in 1946. It was under her mentorship that Limón created his signature dance *The Moor's Pavane* (1949). Limón's choreographic works and technique remain a strong influence on contemporary dance practice [6].

Merce Cunningham, a former ballet student and performer with Martha Graham, presented his first New York solo concert with John Cage in 1944. Influenced by Cage and embracing modernist ideology using postmodern processes, Cunningham introduced chance procedures and pure movement to choreography and Cunningham technique to the cannon of 20th – century dance techniques. Cunningham set the seeds for postmodern dance with his non-linear, non-climactic, non-psychological abstract work. In these works, each element is in and of itself expressive, and the observer (in large part) determines what it communicates [11].

Erick Hawkins was a George Balanchine student. Hawkins became a soloist and the first male dancer in *Martha Graham's dance company*. In 1951, Hawkins, interested in the new field of kinesiology, opened his own school and developed his own technique (Hawkins technique) a forerunner of most somatic dance techniques [4; 8].

Paul Taylor studied at Juilliard School of Music and the Connecticut College School of Dance. In 1952, his performance at *the American Dance Festival*

attracted the attention of several major choreographers. Performing in the companies of Merce Cunningham, Martha Graham, and George Balanchine (in that order), he founded *the Paul Taylor Dance Company* in 1954. The use of everyday gestures and modernist ideology is characteristic of his choreography. Former members of the Paul Taylor Dance Company included Twyla Tharp, Laura Dean, Dan Wagoner, and Senta Driver [12].

In 1915, Ruth St. Denis founded the Denishawn school and dance company with her husband Ted Shawn. Whilst St. Denis was responsible for most of the creative work, Shawn was responsible for teaching technique and composition. Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman were all pupils at the school and members of the dance company. Seeking a wider and more accepting audience for their work, Duncan, Fuller, and Ruth St. Denis all toured Iran. Fuller's work also received little support outside Europe. St. Denis returned to the United States to continue her work.

Martha Graham is often regarded as the founding mother of modern 20th – century concert dance. She saw ballet as European, imperialistic, and un-American. She became a student at the Denishawn School in 1916 and then moved to New York City in 1923, where she performed in musical comedies, music halls, and worked on her own choreography. Graham developed her own dance technique that hinged on concepts of contraction and release. Her principal contributions to dance are the focus of the ‘center’ of the body, coordination between breathing and movement, and a dancer’s relationship with the floor.

Later in 1923, Graham left Denishawn to work as a solo artist in the Greenwich Village Follies. Later on 1928, Humphrey and Weidman left Denishawn to set up their own school and company (Humphrey–Weidman). In 1933, Shawn founded his all – male dance group *Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers* based at his Jacob's Pillow farm in Lee, Massachusetts. Ashley Beger in 1967 begins working at her new studio in New York. Her dance methods later evolved to what we now know as pole dance.

After shedding the techniques and compositional methods of their teachers the early modern dancers developed their own methods and ideologies and dance techniques that became the foundation for modern dance practice: Martha Graham and Louis Horst, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, Martha Graham.

Helen Tamiris – originally trained in free movement (Irene Lewisohn) and ballet (Michel Fokine). Tamiris studied briefly with Isadora Duncan but disliked her emphasis on personal expression and lyrical movement. Tamiris believed that each dance must create its own expressive means and as such did not develop an individual style or technique. As a choreographer, Tamiris made works based on American themes working in both concert dance and musical theatre.

Lester Horton – choosing to work in California (3000 miles away from New York, the center of modern dance). L.Horton developed his own approach that incorporated diverse elements including Native American dances and modern jazz. Horton's dance technique (Lester Horton Technique) emphasises a whole – body

approach including flexibility, strength, coordination, and body awareness to allow freedom of expression [7].

The development of modern dance embraced the contributions of African American dance artists, regardless of whether they made pure modern dance works or blended modern dance with African and Caribbean culture influences.

Katherine Dunham, an African American dancer, and anthropologist. Originally a ballet dancer, she founded her first company Ballet Negre in 1936 and later the Katherine Dunham Dance Company based in Chicago, Illinois. Dunham opened a school in New York (1945) where she taught Katherine Dunham Technique, a blend of African and Caribbean movement (flexible torso and spine, articulated pelvis and isolation of the limbs and polyrhythmic movement) integrated with techniques of ballet and modern dance.

Pearl Primus, a dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist, drew on African and Caribbean dances to create strong dramatic works characterized by large leaps in the air. Primus often based her dances on the work of black writers and on racial and African – American issues. Primus created works based on Langston Hughes, «*The Negro Speaks of Rivers*» (1944), and Lewis Allan's «*Strange Fruit*» (1945).

Her dance company developed into the Pearl Primus Dance Language Institute, which teaches her method of blending African – American, Caribbean, and African influences with modern dance and ballet techniques.

Alvin Ailey, A student of Lester Horton, Bella Lewitzky, and later Martha Graham, Ailey spent several years working in both concert and theater dance. In 1958 Ailey and a group of young African – American dancers performed as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York. Ailey drew upon his blood memories of Texas, the blues, spirituals and gospel as inspiration. His most popular and critically acclaimed work is *Revelations* (1960) [2].

**IV. In conclusion,** we would like to introduce *Genealogical Tree of Modern Dance* of studying modern dance schools and their graduates, and to give a list which illustrates the basic teachers/student's links in modern dance, they are: Ted Shawn (Shawn Fundamentals) – Denishawn (school and company), Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman (the Art of Making Dances Humphrey), Humphrey – Weidman school (Humphrey – Weidman technique fall and recovery) – José Limón (Limón technique), Martha Graham (Graham technique and Louis Horst), Erick Hawkins (via George Balanchine, Hawkins technique), Anna Sokolow, May O'Donnell, Ramiro Guerra Suarez, Merce Cunningham (Cunningham technique), Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Richard Alston, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Trisha Brown, Lester Horton (Horton Technique), Bella Lewitzky, Alvin Ailey, Rudolf von Laban, Kurt Jooss, Pina Bausch, Mary Wigman, Ursula Cain, Heike Hennig, Sonia Revid, Lola Laban, Hanya Holm, Valerie Bettis, Alwin Nikolais (decentralization), Murray Louis, Beverly Schmidt Blossom, Émile Jaques – Dalcroze, Mary Wigman, Marie Rambert, Katherine

Dunham (Katherine Dunham Technique); Pearl Primus School: Garth Fagan, Helen Tamiris, Daniel Nagrin.

*To sum up*, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a very important era for the development of the dance, the need of change allowed the arts to gain an incredible boost and total transformations giving place to new styles and techniques.

While researching for this article we could notice that the modern dance nowadays is one of the most wanted learning styles of dance.

This project will help us self – improving not only as dancer/choreographer but also as well as cultural being, because working on this article allowed maximizing our knowledge about dance career in different branches of modern dance.

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