



World of Dance

Latin & Caribbean Dance



Margaret Musmon

Consulting editor:
Elizabeth A. Hanley,
Associate Professor
Emerita of Kinesiology,
Penn State University

Foreword by
Jacques D'Amboise,
Founder of the National
Dance Institute



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African Dance, Second Edition

Asian Dance, Second Edition

Ballet, Second Edition

European Dance:
Ireland, Poland, Spain, and Greece, Second Edition

Latin and Caribbean Dance

Middle Eastern Dance, Second Edition

Modern Dance, Second Edition

Popular Dance: From Ballroom to Hip-Hop

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INTRODUCTION



The world of dance is yours to enjoy! Dance has existed from time immemorial. It has been an integral part of celebrations and rituals, a means of communication with gods and among humans, and a basic source of enjoyment and beauty.

Dance is a fundamental element of human behavior and has evolved over the years from primitive movement of the earliest civilizations to traditional ethnic or folk styles, to the classical ballet and modern dance genres popular today. The term *dance* is broad and, therefore, not limited to the genres noted above. In the twenty-first century, dance includes ballroom, jazz, tap, aerobics, and a myriad of other movement activities. The joy derived from participating in dance of any genre and the physical activity required provide the opportunity for the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle in today's world.

The richness of cultural traditions observed in the ethnic, or folk, dance genre offers the participant, as well as the spectator, insight into the customs, geography, dress, and religious nature of a particular people. Originally passed on from one generation to the next, many ethnic, or folk, dances continue to evolve as our civilization and society change. From these quaint beginnings of traditional dance, a new genre emerged as a way to appeal to the upper level of society: ballet. This new form of dance rose quickly in popularity and remains so today. The genre of ethnic, or folk, dance continues to be an important part of ethnic communities throughout the United States, particularly in large cities.

When the era of modern dance emerged as a contrast and a challenge to the rigorously structured world of ballet, it was not readily accepted as an art form. Modern dance was interested in the communication of

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emotional experiences—through basic movement, as well as uninhibited movement—not through the academic tradition of ballet masters. Modern dance, however, found its aficionados and is a popular art form today.

No dance form is permanent, definitive, or ultimate. Changes occur, but the basic element of dance endures. Dance is for all people. One need only recall that dance needs neither common race nor common language for communication; it has been, and remains, a universal means of communication.

The WORLD OF DANCE series provides a starting point for readers interested in learning about ethnic, or folk, dances of world cultures, as well as the art forms of ballet and modern dance. This series features an overview of the development of these dance genres, from a historical perspective to a practical one. Highlighting specific cultures, their dance steps and movements, and their customs and traditions underscores the importance of these fundamental elements for the reader. Ballet and modern dance—more recent artistic dance genres—are explored in detail as well, giving the reader a comprehensive knowledge of the past, present, and potential future of each dance form.

The one fact that each reader should remember is that dance has always been, and always will be, a form of communication. This is its legacy to the world.

In this volume, Professor Margaret Musmon explores the history of dance on the islands of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba and in the South American countries of Argentina and Brazil. She also describes the music and dance of indigenous Indian cultures, an important part of the history of dance. This volume includes European, African, and Creole influences on dance and describes the popular celebration of Carnival (Karnival) in detail. The role of religion takes on special significance in many of the dances highlighted in *Latin and Caribbean Dance*, from Catholicism to voodoo. Politics also played a definitive role in shaping and popularizing these dances.

Examples of specific dances discussed in this volume are the rumba and its variations, the son, the bolero, the mambo, the cha-cha-chá, the merengue, the salsa, the tango and milonga, the samba, the maxixe, the bossa nova, and the capoeira. Each dance has distinguishing

characteristics, which Professor Musmon presents to the reader in an interesting fashion.

Latin dance clubs in New York, Miami, Havana, and San Juan are popular today; Argentine tango lessons are on the rise; and International Salsa Congresses (Colombia is a transnational hub for salsa!) are gaining popularity throughout the world.

—Elizabeth A. Hanley

Associate Professor Emerita of Kinesiology at

Pennsylvania State University

FOREWORD



In song and dance, man expresses himself as a member of a higher community. He forgets how to walk and speak and is on the way into flying into the air, dancing. . . . His very gestures express enchantment.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

In a conversation with George Balanchine [one of the twentieth century's most famous choreographers and the cofounder of the New York City Ballet] discussing the definition of dance, we evolved the following description: "Dance is an expression of time and space, using the control of movement and gesture to communicate."

Dance is central to the human being's expression of emotion. Every time we shake someone's hand, lift a glass in a toast, wave good-bye, or applaud a performer, we are doing a form of dance. We live in a universe of time and space, and dance is an art form invented by human beings to express and convey emotions. Dance is profound.

There are melodies that, when played, will cause your heart to droop with sadness for no known reason. Or a rousing jig or mazurka will have your foot tapping in an accompanying rhythm, seemingly beyond your control. The emotions, contacted through music, spur the body to react physically. Our bodies have just been programmed to express emotions. We dance for many reasons: for religious rituals from the most ancient times; for dealing with sadness, tearfully swaying and holding hands at a wake; for celebrating weddings, joyfully spinning in circles; for entertainment; for dating and mating. How many millions of couples through the ages have said, "We met at a