

SEEING DANCE

UNDERSTANDING THE BODY IN MOTION



WHAT IS DANCE?

Dance is a body moving mindfully – attending to the experience in space, time and energy

Snowball “Another One Bites the Dust”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJOZp2ZftCw>

1:25 sec



WHAT IS DANCE?

"The strands of the dance medium
Like locks of long hair
Plait into one meaningful whole.
The interlock is all.

The web of connectedness
Between performer, movement, sound and space
Comes in several kinds."

Valerie Preston Dunlap

DO DANCES COMMUNICATE?

How does dance communicate?

Somebody,

The choreographer and the co-operating team

have something to say,

or something to share.

Their medium is dance,

that is movement by the performers, with sound and in space

into which, with which,

they put their ideas to make a dance message.

Performers then perform the dance message,

Spectators receive it, variously.

Valerie Preston-Dunlap

AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER YOU ARE THE RECEIVER OF THE MESSAGE

Spectators are not passive receivers – you have ideas, a past, experiences that you bring to the dance.

- Sometimes the codes are obvious – you laugh/cry immediately
- Sometimes the codes are mysterious.
- Sometimes a dance is a ritual, a meditation, a song to be sung together. What are the clues that this dance is to be shared? The code might be it is done in a circle or inviting participation.

WHAT ARE THE CODES OR GRAMMAR OF DANCE?

Codes abound:

Cultural codes

Theater practices

Movement behavior

Styles of dance

Historical references

Innovative and non-conventional aesthetics play with the codes.



DANCE CAN TELL A STORY –OR NOT

Does this dance tell a story?

**American Ballet Theater – Black Swan Pas de Deux
from Swan Lake** Marius Petipa choreography. Tchaikovsky music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9rEmB4h6TE>

1:45:00 to end



Swan Lake



HOW DOES THIS STORY DIFFER?

The Statement (2016) by Crystal Pite performed by the Nederlands Dans Theater

“I am inspired by things that cannot be measured or understood. What interests me is the human mind and how we are connected to each other.”
Crystal Pite, choreographer 'The Statement'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbUJelaRNZk&t=24s>
From Beginning



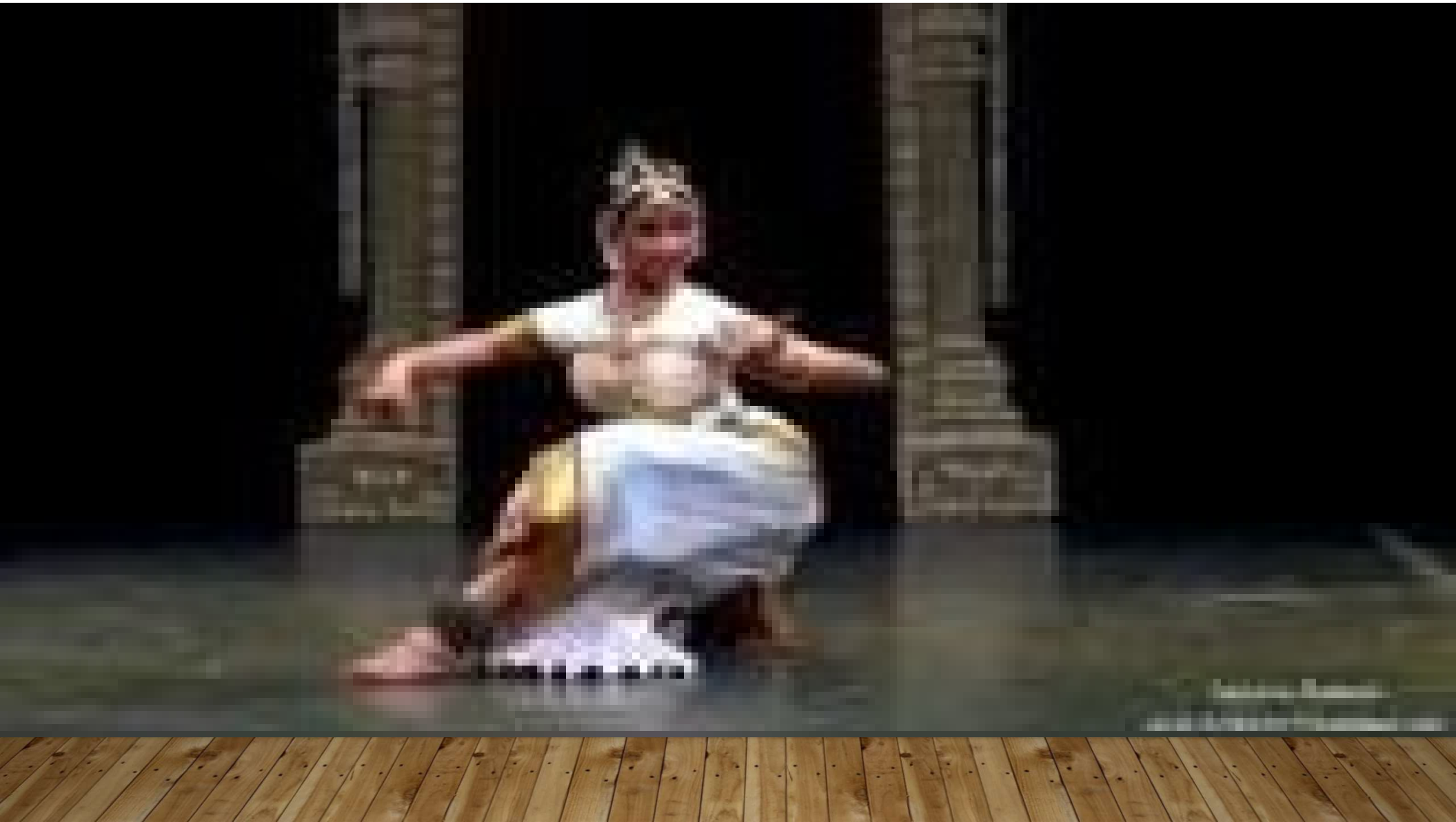
IS IT POSSIBLE TO DETECT A STORY WITHOUT
KNOWING THE CODES?

**Bharathanaytam Dance with Sanjena Ramesh – Sridevi
Nrithyalaya**

She is Sharadha, the consort of Lord Brahma and the giver of wisdom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2qmRcIYEU0>

2:04 – to end



NARRATIVE DANCES

Narrative is often the surface layer – a structural container necessary for the dancers to dance. Beneath it are deeper layers.

Even if you don't know the story you can enjoy and experience the medium - sound, movement, performer.

ABSTRACT DANCES STILL COMMUNICATE – HOW?

Sometimes space is a code – we watch the space between the dancers, the tension or passion in the space between.

Sometimes rhythm is the code – we delight in how many ways a rhythm reverberates through the body.

Sometimes costumes/music/lighting provide a code.

Sometimes the movement itself is the code.

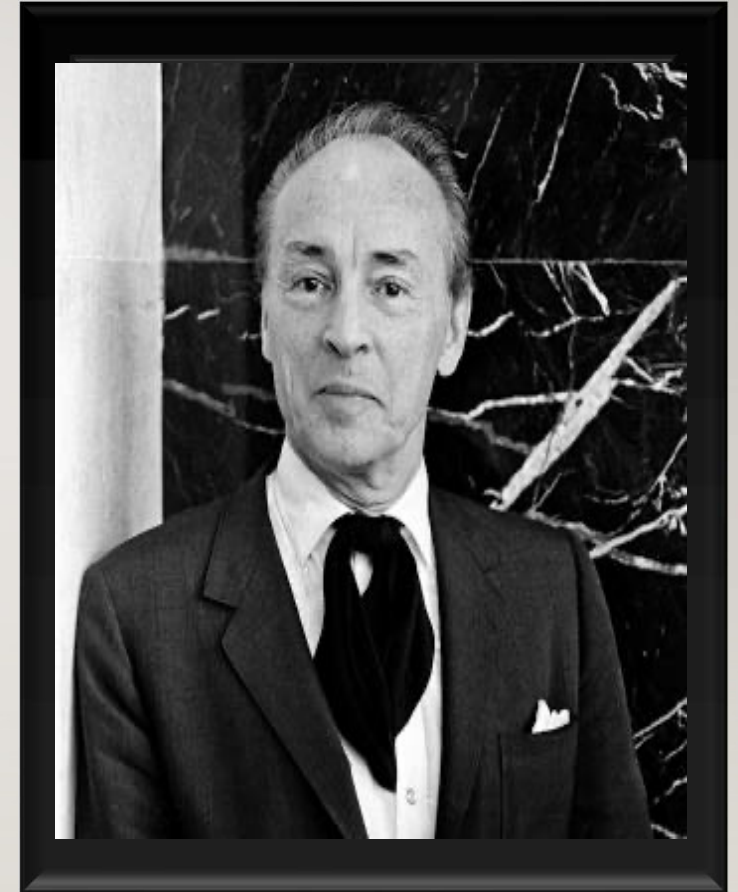


GEORGE BALANCHINE 1904 - 1983

Expanded the form of ballet from classics to modern ballets.

Migrated from Russia around the revolution – went to Paris met Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Matisse, Picasso

Lincoln Kirstein invited him to come to America to start the School of American Ballet. He eventually established the New York City Ballet.



ABSTRACT BALLET

Agon (1957) Choreographed by Balanchine Music by Igor Stravinsky

How is this different from the story ballet?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ud8zVcHPnuM>

11:42 – end



HIP HOP

Hip Hop dance was developed in the streets and clubs of New York, LA, Chicago in the 1970s. It originated as an improvisational form, in which “crews” showed off innovative tricks and moves – popping, locking, breaking, jerkin, krumping

Les Twins (on internet)

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1301654037392746>

POST-MODERN DANCE

MERCE CUNNINGHAM 1919 – 2009

American choreographer and dancer. Father of Post-Modern Dance.

Avant-garde innovator. Collaborated with major artists such as John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Brian Eno, Jasper Johns

Cunningham 'uncoupled' the traditional relationship of music and dance and let them co-exist as independent forms. Chance played an important role in his choreographic structures.



DESCRIBING THE MOVEMENT, COSTUMES, MUSIC PROVIDES HINTS TO THE CODES

Beach Birds by Merce Cunningham (1993)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IH_rrpj0CU

From Beginning





DANCE REVEALS CULTURE

Dances reveal cultures in multiple ways....

What values are revealed by the stance of the body – upright and ethereal, or grounded to the earth?

How are costumes, music, staging, lighting connected to culture?



JAWOLE WILLA JO ZOLLAR – URBAN BUSH WOMEN 1950-

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar founded Urban Bush Women as a performance ensemble dedicated to using cultural expression as a catalyst for social change.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idHpfjroH3g>

:35 sec to end





BUTOH – A JAPANESE ART FORM

Butoh started in post-war Japan as an avant-garde dance form and is known as a dance of darkness.

Butoh means “...to meander, or to move, as it were, in twists and turns between the living and the dead.” Kazuo Ohno.

Elements of Butoh –

- Dancers paint their skin (white or gold)
- Painfully slow movement with many body contortions
- Heightened emotion: anguish to rapture
- A spiritual practice connected to the nature of consciousness or being
- Sometime elaborate and/or dangerous performances like hanging from buildings.

FOUNDERS OF THE FORM:
TATSUMI HIJIKATA AND KAZUO OHNO

REACTING TO THE DEVASTATION OF POST-WAR
JAPAN – THEY WANTED TO RECLAIM JAPAN’S SENSE
OF SELF THROUGH THE BODY

“An authentic expression only emerges when body and soul reach crisis point. Look closely at plants. When in blossom, flowers are petal-laden right to the very tip of their limbs. But take a look at your fingertips: they’re lifeless. If your dance is to come to life in the same way a flower blossoms, then be flower-like. Look at trees! From the roots to the tip of their branches, they’re vibrantly expressive.” Kazuo Ohno



WHAT DOES A TITLE TELL YOU ABOUT A DANCE?

Meguri performed by Sankai Juku means “circles around”

Describe the costumes, lighting, sound.

Describe the movement

How do they thread together to create a whole?

MEGURI (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTHTPBp842g>

From beginning





FLAMENCO – A CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES

Flamenco is both song, dance and instrumental (guitar) associated with Andalusian Romas (gypsies) of southern Spain

Roots follow the Roma migration from Rajasthan (northwest India) to Spain in 9th to 14th Century.

These migrants brought with them the instruments – bells, tambourines, castanets - and a repertory of songs and dances.

In Spain they encountered the rich cultures of Sephardic Jews and the Moors.



WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DANCERS AND MUSICIANS?

How are the dancer and musician interacting, listening, responding?

Describe the setting, the costumes

FARRUCA - a form of flamenco music developed in the late 19th century. Classified as a cante chico, it is traditionally sung and danced by men. Performed by Melina Najjar – dancer and Yazan Ibrahim – Guitar.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIBCd4zmPDA>

5:05 to end



WHAT CULTURAL CODES DID YOU NOTICE IN THESE DANCES?

The costumes speak toward cultural codes – how so?

Space - is it full or empty?

Is there rhythmic energy or is there a sense of time?

In what part of the body do the rhythms exist?

Who are the dancers? What are their body types, ethnic backgrounds, age, gender?

Is the space formal or informal?



MODERN CONTEMPORARY DANCE

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?



MODERN DANCE WAS BORN IN REBELLION

UPSETTING THE NORMS OF WHATEVER CAME BEFORE

WOMEN WERE THE PRIMARY SHAPERS OF THIS AMERICAN ART FORM

VALUES BASED IN FREEDOM AND EXPRESSION.

ISADORA DUNCAN

1878 - 1927

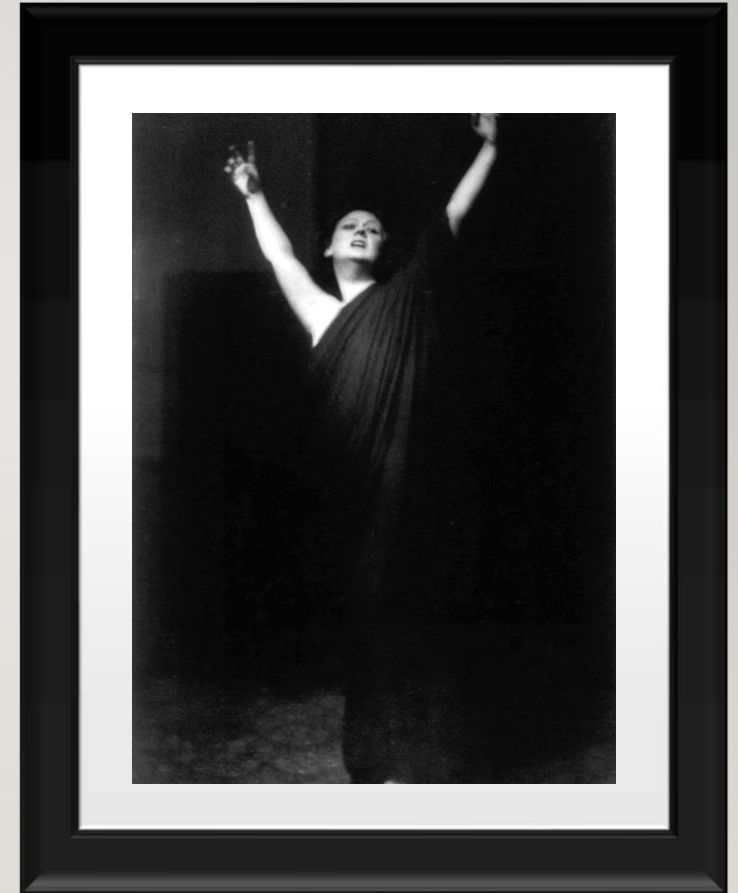
American born dancer and choreographer, born in California and considered the mother of "modern dance"

she espoused freedom by....

- dancing in tunics
- Dancing in bare feet (shedding shoes - pointe shoes – or any shoes)
- Favoring improvisation
- Expressing emotion and the feeling of nature

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEb6KIPrvRQ>

From Beginning to the end.





KATHERINE DUNHAM 1909-2006

American dancer, choreographer, anthropologist and social activist. Often called the “queen mother of black dance.” As an anthropologist she studied dances of the Caribbean and the African diaspora. She was renowned throughout Europe and Latin America. She was an innovator of African-American modern dance. She performed in many Broadway shows and Hollywood films.

Ballet Creole (1952)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSTuO5E9_Ig

From Beginning to end





KATHERINE DUNHAM: BALLET CREOLE (1952)



MARY WIGMAN 1886 - 1973

Wigman was a German dancer and choreographer who pioneered expressionist dance and dance therapy. She emphasized freedom, community and identity. She created a technique and trained dancers in her methodology. She was highly influenced by Émile Jacques-Dalcroze (eurhythmics) and Rudolf von Laban. Her students Hanya Holm and her students, Alwin Nikolais and Joan Woodbury, brought her work to the United States.

Hexentanz (Witch Dance) (1914 – revised in 1926)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtLSSuFIJ5c>

From Beginning to end





MARTHA GRAHAM 1894-1991

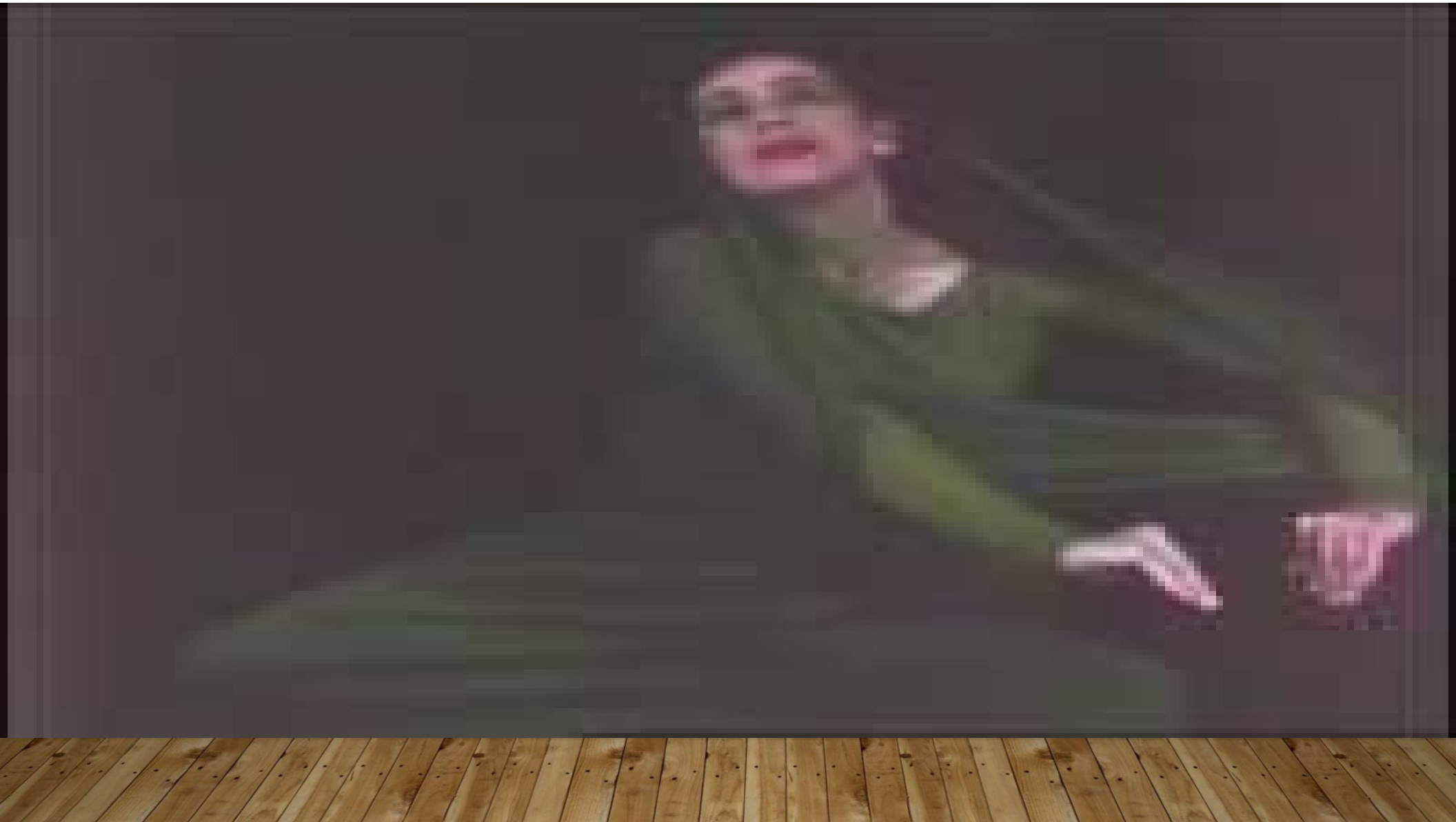
Graham was an American dancer and choreographer who revolutionized dance by creating dances that expressed the rawness of human experience, rather than being a form of entertainment. She is sometimes called the "Picasso of Modern Dance." She created the Graham Technique, which was taught all over the world, and provided a unique approach to dance training. She collaborated with many famous artists such as Isamu Noguchi, Aaron Copeland and Samuel Barber.

Lamentation (1930)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-lcFwPJUXQ&t=9s>

2:11





MARTHA GRAHAM TECHNIQUE

Graham Technique (c) 1975

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuCbs25LGh0>



CLYTEMNESTRA – DANCE OF THE FURIES

1965 Rehearsal filmed at the 54th street Theater, New York City

Dancers featured: Martha Graham, Carol Fried, Takako Asakawa, Noemi Lapzeson, Juliet Fisher, Phyllis Gutelius, and Jeanne Nuchtern.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz7mEaHxZus&t=5s>



CLYTEMNESTRA (1958)

Performed at the Joyce Theater 2017

Principal dancer Peiju Chien-Pott in Martha Graham's Clytemnestra.

Music composed by Halim El-Dabh

Set Design by Isamu Noguchi

Inspired by Oresteia, Aeschylus' famous trilogy of plays.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wrs3eaXETkQ>



APPALACHIAN SPRING 1944

1958 Television Performance

Music by Aaron Copland

Costumes by Edythe Gilfond

Sets by Isamu Noguchi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM5-Csl7I3g&t=1586s>



APPALACHIAN
SPRING

STEPS IN THE STREET (1936)

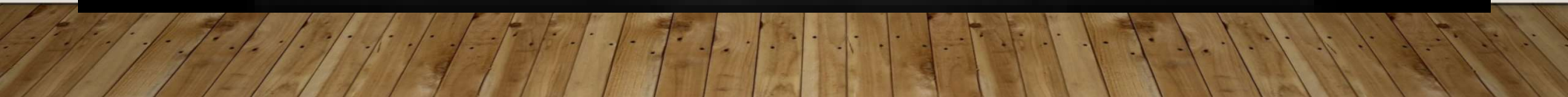
1930's footage of a rehearsal

Choreographed by Martha Graham

Music by Wallingford Riegger

Reconstruction on the Department of Dance at
University of Illinois

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYeXzXR6dr0>



DANCE CAN BE EXPERIMENTAL

A MANIFESTO BY YVONNE RAINIER (1964)

No to spectacle.

No to virtuosity.

No to transformations and magic and make-believe.

No to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.

No to the heroic.

No to the anti-heroic.

No to trash imagery.

No to involvement of performer or spectator.

No to style.

No to camp.

No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.

No to eccentricity.

No to moving or being moved.



TRISHA BROWN 1936 -2017

Founder of Judson Dance Theater, an experimental group of New York dance artists during the 1960s.

Her early experiments were about defying gravity – literally changing our relationship with the earth.

Walking on the Walls (1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWkkAUIRSLU>

Beginning





ELIZABETH STREB 1950 -

"I want my work to make all of us want to do more, go further. I believe that action – on the stage and in the street – is the most powerful force on earth. I believe it can cure sad hearts and sated minds, and I am trying to prove this point."

Action Hero

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK4a3lr3Q0>

Beginning





CODES ARE OFTEN MESSED WITH BY CHOREOGRAPHERS WHO ARE EXPERIMENTING

How was the code: “I’m going to the theater to see dance”
messed with in Brown’s work?

How did the code: “Dance is beautiful/pretty” messed with in
Streb’s work?

PINA BAUSCH – 1940- 2009

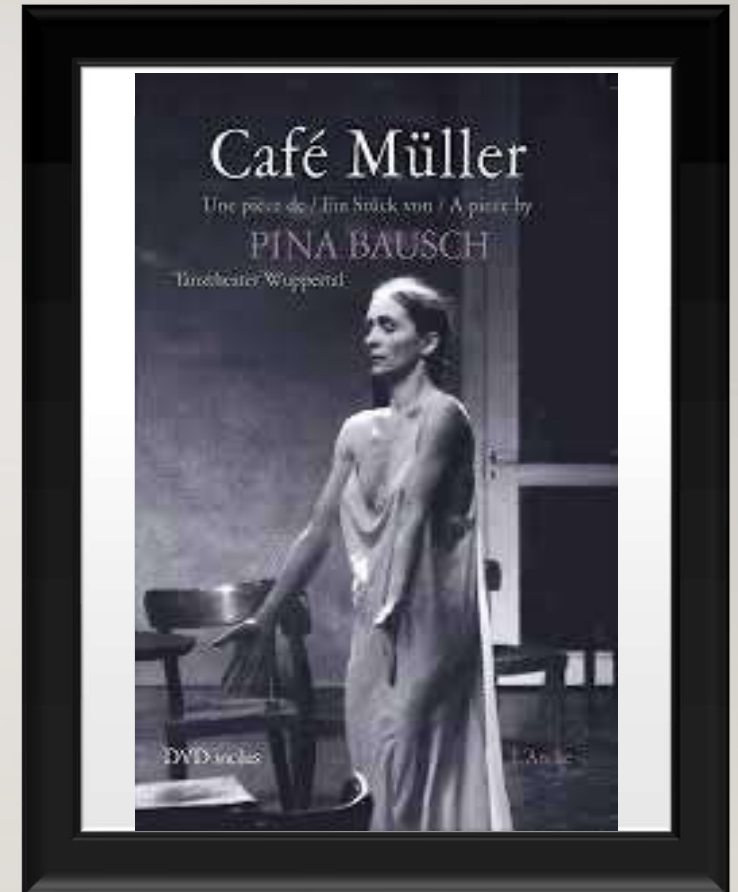
German artist who led European avant-garde through her company Tanztheater Wuppertal. She unleashed raw emotional forces through everyday actions and unmediated physicality.

Her dances mediate unflinching reality with the surreal magic of dreams.

Café Müller (1978)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WLazG0bQPI>

Beginning





CHOREOGRAPHIC DEVICES HEIGHTEN EMOTION

Repetition

Structural forms create a container

Everyday Actions

Space/props and costumes

EXPERIMENTAL WORK OFTEN CROSSES GENRES

What can film do that dance can't?

How was space and time changed through the use of film in this dance?

LA LA LA HUMAN STEPS

A Québécois contemporary dance company

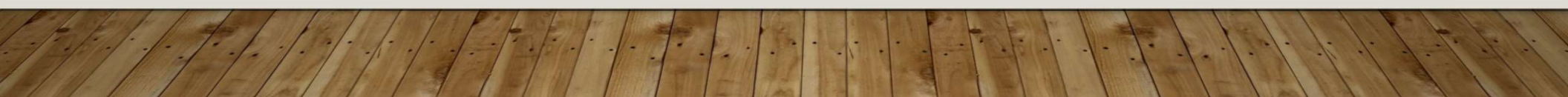
Active between 1980- 2015 known for their energetic, highly technical, fast paced athletic dancing and multi-disciplinary approaches.

Amelia, choreographed by Mistaya Hemingway

A Film by Edouard Lock, Music by David Lang

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcjF_EdYeLc

From beginning to end.





DANCE OFTEN PLAYS WITH A MIX OF STYLES TO CREATE A NEW WAY OF DANCING

New styles of dance are created when different styles are blended or fused.

TWYLA THARP 1941-

“Art is the only way to run away without leaving home” Twyla Tharp.

Twyla fused classical discipline with avant-garde iconoclasm. She combined ballet technique with natural movements such as running, walking, skipping and “show moves” from entertainment forms such as ballet and tap.

Push Comes to Shove (1992)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_aEbEqLdc

From beginning





DANCE AND MUSIC ARE TRADITIONAL PARTNERS CAN THE DANCE BE THE MUSIC?

The body moving is always moving in time – sometimes you can see rhythm, sometimes you hear the rhythm.

In the following dances –

- What choreographic devices were used to help you hear the rhythm in all these dances?
- Did the rhythm signal a feeling, an emotion, an energetic state of being?

ABBY Z AND THE NEW UTILITY

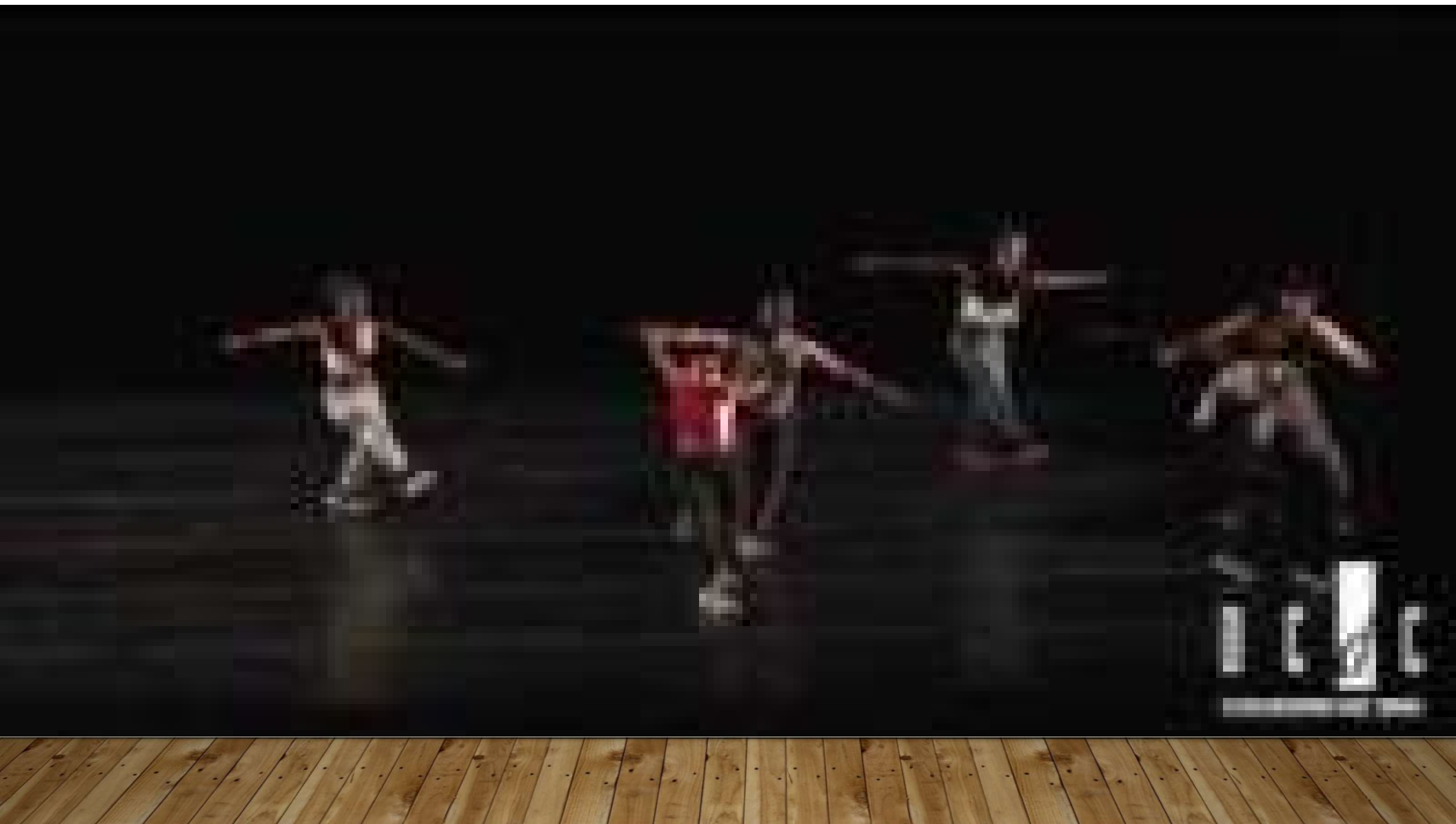
“I make contemporary dance works that pay homage to the effort of living, tactics of survival, and the aesthetics produced as a result, utilizing the physical aspects and psyche-emotional experience of my rigorous training background in African and Afro-diasporic forms, as well as playing sports and performing requisite acts of manual labor.”

Indestructible (2018) performed by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-MXHpyJmM&t=53s>

:44 sec





TAP DANCE

Tap began as a fusion of clogging rhythms from Irish dance and drumming rhythms from the African American enslaved peoples.

Gregory Hines, 1946-2003 was a tap dancer's dancer who starred in over 40 films. He was an avid improviser of tap steps, sounds and rhythms. He created what is called the “new black rhythmic tap.”

White Nights (1985) – a film by Taylor Hackford. Starring Hines and Baryshnikov

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfjwcmoP278>

1:07:00 – to end



WHITE NIGHTS
FULL MOVIE

THE DANCER AND THE DANCE

The dance is danced by the dancer – change the dancer and the dance is different. How so?

Think about how the next dances would be different if danced by a child? a woman/man? a person of color, or in a wheel chair? a volleyball player? a body that was largess, thin, small?

FRED ASTAIRE 1899 - 1987

According to Hollywood folklore, a screen test report on Astaire for RKO Radio Pictures, now lost along with the test, is reported to have read: "Can't sing. Can't act. Balding. Can dance a little."

Fred Astaire Dancing with a Hat Rack 1951

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faN0kPOQykM>

:28 seconds





JUDITH JAMISON 1943

Judith Jamison joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1965 and quickly became an international star. Over the next 15 years, Mr. Ailey created some of his most enduring roles for her, most notably the tour-de-force solo *Cry*. During the 1970s and 80s, she appeared as a guest artist with ballet companies all over the world, starred in the hit Broadway musical *Sophisticated Ladies*, and formed her own company, The Jamison Project. She returned to Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 1989 as Artistic Director.

CRY (1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjcUnTSunKs>

from beginning



