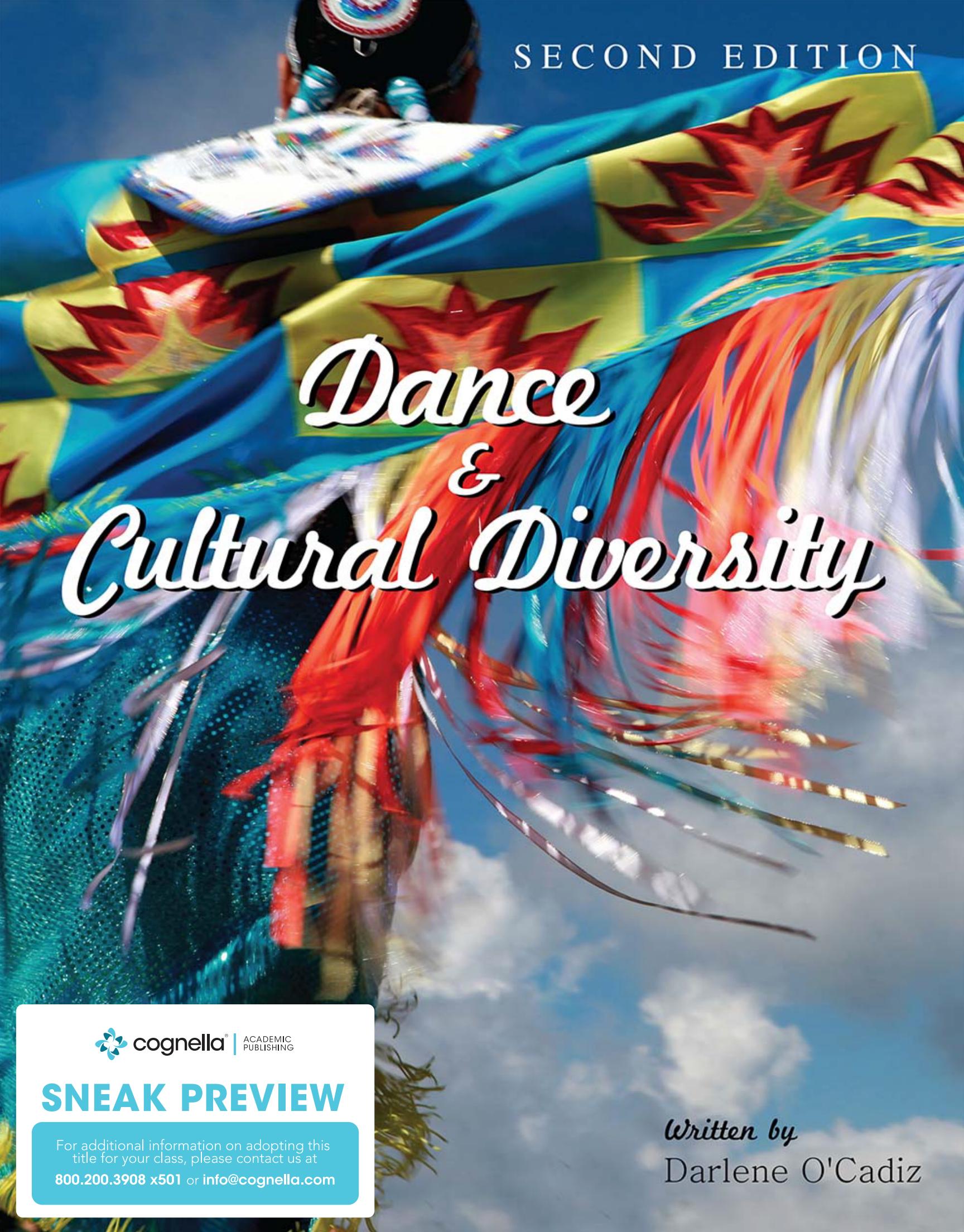


SECOND EDITION



Dance & Cultural Diversity



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written by
Darlene O'Cadiz

SECOND EDITION

DANCE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

WRITTEN BY DARLENE O'CADIZ

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-5165-1728-2 (pbk) / 978-1-5165-1729-9 (br)



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PREFACE

I have always been curious about humanity; I've often wondered what makes us different and what similarities ring true in all human beings. I am fascinated to learn what people believe and how societies are formed to support one another, ensuring survival and a sense of community. Finding that unifying factor of humanity has proven to be a passion of mine because I think it will bring harmony and balance to my understanding of the human condition. Early on in my career, my intention was to bring peace to the world through the study of dance. Although this was a highly idealistic venture, I still believed it to be my purpose in life. I was hired at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) to teach dance technique classes, and in the process of sharing my knowledge with college students, I was also busy participating in life: gathering experience and pursuing my passion to seek harmony and make sense of the world. Eventually, all my research afforded me the opportunity to teach a course in cultural diversity through the medium of dance, allowing me to contemplate this idea of a common human spirit.

Dance and Cultural Diversity examines how the belief systems and structure of leadership in different cultures manifest in the dance styles, revealing the idea that "art reflects society." At the end of each chapter is a list of vocabulary terms to build knowledge, along with discussion questions designed to encourage critical thinking. Illustrations within the text, along with a list of video references, offer visual examples of the dance styles, exhibiting the correlation between culture and dance. In the appendix, there is a class project designed to bring awareness of the components required to build a society following the principles set forth in this text. Also included are four in-class assignments to use as tools to encourage group discussion and problem solving to complete the group project in a cohesive manner. This course is much more than a dance history or cultural

diversity class—it is a course designed to evoke ideas about beliefs, emotions, and the expression of life, while building a sense of community.

Dance is a universal language that transcends language barriers to express and relay emotions. It is a form of communication and a means to discover. In a deeper sense it allows the dancer, if the dancer can surrender, to achieve a state of mind through body movements that explore the depths of the soul and discover the essence of self to connect with the world. Exploring different cultures, and the purpose and methods of dance, reinforces the idea that there is an essence of unity in all human beings, despite our cultural differences and diversities. I still believe that dance can generate peace in the world, and by writing this book and teaching this course, I continue on my journey to fulfill my purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely appreciative to all my colleagues at CSUF for their fellowship and the shared experience of teaching and learning. Barbara Arms, Gladys Kares, and Robin Johnson were my mentors as I was just beginning my dance career and have offered encouragement and support during each step of my journey. I must offer a big thank you to Robin Kish for sharing information and being an inspiration to me. Throughout the many years of working at CSUF, I am constantly amazed by the numerous resources available that facilitate every aspect of my job. It is a great place to work. I would like to express my appreciation to my family and friends for the countless hours of discussion pertaining to the topics of dance, culture, and life. I also want to thank my friend Bob Adams for his encouragement and his suggestions to clarify the information presented in this textbook. In addition, I would like to thank all the dancers who have been part of the dance department at CSUF for their dedication to the art of dance, and also Edwin Lockwood for allowing me to include his photographs of the CSUF Dance Theatre in this textbook. Finally, I would like to thank the editors at Cognella for exercising patience with me and bringing this project to fruition.

CHAPTER 1

THE ESSENCE OF DANCE

What Is Dance?

Popular Dance

Universal Components of Dance

The Essence and Origins of Dance

Explanation of Alan Lomax's Study of *Dance in Human History*

Dance Ethnology

The Purpose of Dance

Dance as a Metaphor for Life

WHAT IS DANCE?

Before we can explore the history of dance, we must first define what dance is, and why humans do it. Most simply put, dance is **movement to an internal rhythm**. The first instinct of a human being is to put his or her body in motion. While still in the mother's womb, a baby listens to the rhythm of the mother's heartbeat and has the urge to move. Before language is learned and developed, communication is revealed by means of

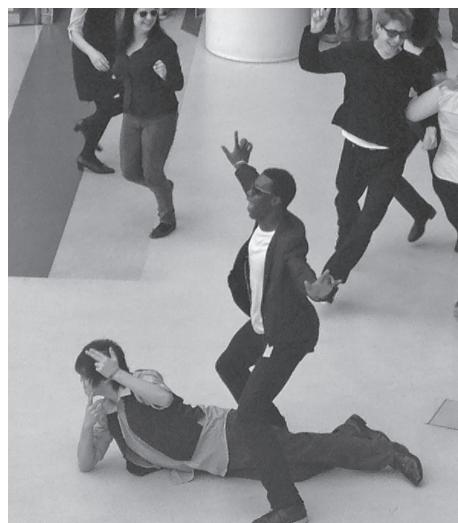


Fig 1.1 Students "spontaneously" burst into dance in the Atrium, Bradford University.

movement and gestures. Movement is the most basic experience of life. Movement is essential to human survival. But even though dance is a form of moving, its function goes beyond the simple movements humans rely on every day. Dance is expression. Webster's dictionary defines dance as, "Moving rhythmically to music," but it is so much more. Dance is a vehicle that has the power to unite mind, body, soul; it is a nonverbal means of communicating in the universal language, expressing abstract ideas and emotions by emitting an energy that can be recognized and felt by the affected observer. It has the power to transcend cultural boundaries and speak to people on a deep, spiritual level.

POPULAR DANCE

Anyone paying attention to popular culture can see that dance is becoming extremely visible throughout the world. Many popular movies these days exhibit dance as a means of communication, expression, and sheer delight. For example, in the movie *Guardians of the Galaxy*, the main character expresses his underlying desire for connection with his love interest, as well as re-experiencing comforting memories of his mother through his movement to the music. In the movie *Trolls*, even the animated characters express their love of life through dance. Ellen DeGeneres opens her popular talk show by dancing through the audience. Her preshow entertainment offers the audience members a chance to improvise their unique dancing styles. Occasionally, Ellen will show a clip of her favorite audience dancers and comment on their expressive movement. She encourages everyone to move to the rhythm of life, expressing their essence in a fashion that suits them and allows them to find pleasure in being who they are in discovering the joy of improvisational dance. Can we bring peace to the world through dance? If it is used as a positive means of expression to discover one's true feelings and delight in the experience of life, I sincerely believe that we can.

UNIVERSAL COMPONENTS OF DANCE

There are five basic components of dance that are inherent in every type of dance from any culture or generation. These components are **movement**, **posture**, **balance**, **gesture**, and **rhythm**. Every dance contains some form of **movement**. While some portion of dance may involve stillness, there must be some form of motion in every dance. The second component is **posture**. This is the way one aligns the body. If one dancer is standing tall and erect, they have a different posture from one who is hunched over. A dancer's posture can indicate certain emotions to his or her audience. For example, if a dancer is standing tall and erect, this can express a sense

of confidence and pride. Meanwhile, if a dancer is crouched or hunched over, this exhibits a sense of humility, or even despair. From the standpoint of the dancer, posture is the key to a successful performance. Proper alignment helps a dancer to maintain balance and therefore helps him or her to express with fluidity and grace. **Balance** is a person's ability to maintain his or her position while resisting physical forces, especially gravity. In order to balance, the dancer must be able not only to stand still in a given posture but also to transition smoothly from one movement to another. The fourth component is **gesture**. A gesture is a movement that conveys an idea or message. In dance, gesture is often used to tell a story, and is used to draw the attention of the audience toward specific ideas. For example, Hula dancers and Bharata Natyam dancers use hand gestures to tell traditional myths and stories.

Ballet dancers also often use pantomime to get the story across to the audience. Finally, **rhythm** is any kind of strong, regular beating. In dance, rhythm joins one movement to the next connecting the dance in harmonious motion. Dances are either performed to the beat of music or with an internal rhythmical beat, such as a heartbeat. The rhythm can be fast or slow. It can stop and start, change at random, or be completely consistent. Nonetheless, it is always there in some form. By using these five components, the body moves through time and space to express the abstract emotional ideas. Some of the more subtle and complex components of dance are **centering** and **breath**. These highly emotional elements are what allow a dancer to be capable of exquisite expression.

Centering is related to the basic component of balance. In order to achieve a sense of balance, a dancer must engage the solar plexus and lower torso. This portion of the body is where most of the body's crucial organs are located. Focusing on this area gives a dancer a greater sense of strength and connectedness within his or her body. This stability allows the dancer to bring forth a spiritual essence that can be displayed and expressed with confidence. These deep feelings can be seen and felt by the audience. Dance is not the only practice that is aware of the power that comes from focusing on one's center. Centering has also been used as a term in ancient philosophies and religious practices to define a pathway for realizing bliss and inner peace. Zen masters refer to it as a way to focus inward, while the Quakers used the term "centering down" to explain a state of focused attention, of attentive listening to one's inner voice. (Richards, 1989, p. xx)



Fig 1.2 Centering and breath—subtle and complex components of dance

Breathing and **breath** are essential to all humans. Breath is life; we must breathe to live and move. More specifically, our muscles need oxygen in order to respond to the command of our brain. In dance, an awareness and control over the breath allows the dancer to maintain a sense of rhythm. Most dances are synchronized to some form of music or sound. If the music is faster, the dancer must move faster and therefore breathe faster. If the music and dance is slow and elongated, the dancer will be better able to perform if he or she focuses on taking deep and deliberately elongated breaths. The dances of some cultures employ chanting, and these dances require an even deeper focus on the breathing patterns. But regardless of the type of dance, a dancer must be aware of breath to get oxygen to the part of the body producing the energy to move. It takes concentration and practice to learn to breathe efficiently while moving, but once this element is mastered, a dancer is able to express a greater sense of grace and control.

THE ESSENCE AND ORIGINS OF DANCE

When studying the history and development of dance, we must start at the beginning. Where and when did dance originate? The answer is simple: dance has existed for as long as mankind has. It is believed by many to be the first means of artistic expression, preceding even ancient forms of music and painting. In primitive societies, dance was both a social and ritualistic practice. Primitive men danced to celebrate every aspect of life. They danced to appease the gods, believing it would keep them from causing natural disasters and other forms of calamity. They also danced to express emotion and to understand their relationship with nature.

Many early peoples believed that when they danced with a particular energy and rhythm, they could bring about a desired effect. For example, some cultures believed that a well-executed rain dance could bring rain. Rhythmic movement was seen as one way to communicate with the gods. Early man had many elements to deal with, including natural catastrophes. Without the aid of modern science, these events often seemed random and inexplicable. They attributed these events to the will of the spirit world. Often the meditative collaboration of tribal musicians and dancers would send the performers into what was thought to be an altered consciousness. This was believed to be a sign of divine presence. In this state of being, the participants often claimed to commune with the spirit world, and receive messages and instructions for how to survive. While to the modern viewpoint these ideas may seem illogical, ritualistic practices, such as dance, were one way that ancient peoples could explain or cope with forces beyond their control. They danced with the hope that it could influence the decisions of the gods. And when a desired result followed their dance, such as a heavy rainfall following a rain dance, it gave people a sense that they had some impact on their situations. It made them feel intuitive and powerful.

In fact, some of the earliest rock paintings show dancers, indicating that it was a well-established part of primitive existence. For example, archeologists have discovered prehistoric rock paintings from the Paleolithic era (circa 17500 BC) in Lascaux, France that depict dancing figures. Many other primitive drawings and paintings found in caves and burial tombs around the world attest to the fact that dance was a major part of expressing life.

The well-known dance critic, John Martin, discusses the significance of dance in ancient cultures:

If we go back to the earliest times, we find that primitive men danced when they were deeply moved. ... Whenever the primitive mind came into contact with something that happened without his having anything to do with it, something with the element of mystery and supernaturalism, he danced. (Martin, 1989, pp. 8–9)

Dance has survived as a means of communication and a way of preserving traditions in different communities in different cultures. The ritual of dance connects the dancer to a supreme force outside of self. Social dance connects the dancer to the tribe and others in the community. The art of dance brings self-awareness to the dancer and their audience through storytelling and expression of emotion.



Fig 1.3 Prehistoric rock painting depicting dance ritual

EXPLANATION OF ALAN LOMAX'S STUDY OF DANCE IN HUMAN HISTORY

Since dance is the most repetitious, synchronic of all expressive behaviors, it has turned out to be a kind of touchstone for human adaptation.

—Alan Lomax, 1975

Alan Lomax was an anthropologist interested in analyzing dance from different cultures, and identifying communication that occurred on a kinetic and subconscious level. He searched relentlessly for footage of dance from around the world, particularly in remote locations. In his article “Toward an Ethnographic Film Archive,” Lomax expresses his concern about the changing world and the threat this had to primitive cultures. He believed that the negative by-product of scientific progress and modernization could cause these cultures to lose their traditions, rituals, and art. Dance in particular was in extreme danger. Unlike a painting or sculpture, which can be preserved in its original form or reproduced in photographs, dance is an ephemeral art, and can only be understood by experiencing or observing it. Written descriptions can only hint at the message the actual kinetic movement displays. Thus, Lomax felt it crucial that cultural dances be documented not through static media such as photography or written descriptions, but through film. His film, *Dance in Human History*, produced in 1976, makes use of the footage he collected to demonstrate his theory of movement defining cultural traditions.

At the American Anthropological Association meeting held in San Diego in the fall of 1970, Lomax presented his reasons for preserving original dances on film. This presentation was monumental in the field of dance history, and as a direct result, anthropologist Margaret Mead was elected the president of the Anthropological Film Research Institute. Her work led to the establishment of The Ethnographic Film Archive in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. (Lomax, 1971). Alan Lomax, Margaret Mead, and other leading anthropologists dedicated themselves to filming and archiving films of indigenous dances to help preserve the study of cultural traditions. The work of Lomax and Mead, along with John Wesley Powell, led to the establishment of the National Anthropological Archives in 1979.

Alan Lomax created the term **choreometrics** to describe his study of dance as a form of expressive behavior. He took advantage of the film archive and analyzed dance styles from around the world, classifying them by the type of repetitive movements found in each culture's dances. One of his most ground breaking discoveries was a correlation between the type of dance movement a culture participated in and that culture's economic status and standing. He described movement types in terms of **dimensions**. The most basic dance dimension is **one-dimensional style**. It consists of linear (straight up and down) movements, which reflected

the kind of work movements someone uses when working with stone or wood. He determined that 70% of simple economies employ a one-dimensional movement style. For example, people working with stone or wood must apply careful straight strokes in order to carve into these hard and brittle media, and also to skin animals for food and use the pelts for clothing. Meanwhile, the **two-dimensional style** uses curved or circular movements. Eighty percent of the economies that used metal tools like sickles, which require a semicircular slashing motion to cut wheat or other materials, also used that kind of motion in their dance. Examples of this two-dimensional style can be seen in many dances that originated in Africa, and also in some European dances, such as the Spanish Jota. Finally, **three-dimensional movement styles** use a spiral motion, which mimics water wheels used in Asia and Europe for agricultural irrigation. Eighty percent of these more sophisticated economies use the full body spin in their dance styles. The correlation between the motion of a culture's daily tasks and the type of motions found in that culture's dances suggest that these dances were meant to express or record specific aspects of their civilizations. On the other hand, if these correlations were not conscious, Lomax's theory is supported by what we know about human muscle memory, which naturally lends itself to any repetitive bodily motion. Even when these cultures used movement as a means of release and recreation, they tended to move in the same way as they did when working.

In addition to his classification of dimensional movement, Lomax also defined **single-unit** and **multi-unit** movement styles. The **single-unit style** uses a solid torso, mostly moving the legs, feet, and arms and sometimes bending or using a rhythmic rocking motion forward and back at the waist. Eighty-five percent of the cultures that displayed this kind of dance were from patriarchal hunting cultures. They also tended to exist in cultures from colder climates. Meanwhile, **multi-unit styles** use an articulated torso, in which there is movement in the hips and undulation in the rib cage. Ninety percent of cultures displaying multi-unit styles of dance are from matriarchal and agricultural societies. These styles are found in warmer and often tropical climates. One explanation for the difference styles of dances found in patriarchal and matriarchal



Fig 1.4 Images of Alan Lomax's studies of dance

societies is that in matriarchal and agricultural societies, there is a greater value of fertility. The hip-rocking motions found in these cultures are representative of sexual motion, and can be seen as a way to prepare a person for sexual activity.

DANCE ETHNOLOGY

Although Alan Lomax was successful in cataloging ethnic dance forms and his theory of repetitive cultural work styles represented in certain ethnic dances has some credence, dance ethnologists claim there are more complex and significant psychological bases revealed in cultural dance forms. Dance ethnology is the study of ethnic dance as it represents a society. Gertrude Kurath, a dance ethnologist, defines it as “the scientific study of ethnic dance in all their cultural significance, religious function or symbolism, or social place” (Kurath, 1960, p. 235). The study of ethnic dance delves deeper into the patterns of movement, along with the psychological and cultural significance exhibited in the expressive movements of the dance styles. Over time, these cultural dance styles have evolved and developed naturally and spontaneously through everyday activities and experience to represent the societies’ lifestyles. Franziska Boas, one of the pioneers of dance therapy, defines dance ethnology as “a study of culture and social forms as expressed through the medium of dance; or how dance functions within the cultural pattern” (Kurath, p. 235). Joann Kealiinohomoku was an anthropologist who focused on ethnic and crosscultural dance. Her approach to this study included tracing popular dance art forms to their ethnic roots. Her book *An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance* explores the rudiments of ballet. It is important to study these ethnic dance forms, discovering the basic root of this nonverbal expression along with the cross-cultural similarities and differences of rhythmic patterns, attitudes, and beliefs to gain a better understanding of the human race and the common thread that binds us humans on an emotional level.

THE PURPOSE OF DANCE

While modern science informs us that human rituals do not affect environmental forces—that rain dances do not, in fact, cause rain—dance is still an effective means of communication and a way of preserving traditions in different communities and cultures. The ritual of dance has the power to connect. Primitive people danced in honor and celebration of every aspect of life. There were dances to give thanks and honor the gods and ancestors along with dances to cast out evil spirits. There were dances to celebrate the rites of passage like birth, puberty,

marriage, and death. There were dances to prepare for the hunt and war. Some dances were used to tell stories and pass on tribal traditions. A strong and mobile body was vital to survival in prehistoric times and dancing helped to keep the people strong. Ritual dances and social dances were a way of life.

In our society today we still celebrate certain aspects of life with dance. Children naturally dance to music as they express happiness. Teenagers and young adults go to school dances or clubs to dance and socialize. There are coming-of-age dances that are still celebrated. In the Hispanic community, the quinceañera, or girl's 15th birthday, is a celebration where dance is a component. Also at the Bar Mitzvah, a Jewish coming-of-age celebration for boys turning 13, a circle dance called the Hora is performed along with some social dancing. Dancing is also a part of a wedding celebration. The bride and groom do a first dance and their parents cut in to have one last dance, then all the guests join in to celebrate.

Cultural attitudes are reflected in dance. While watching a dance from a country where you don't know the language, you can somehow interpret the basic idea. This is because movements expressing emotions transcend language. As part of the human race we all seem to feel and understand the same emotions. All human beings experience joy, sorrow, honor, fear, gratitude, love, empathy, anger, and disappointment. All these and a multitude of emotions that are expressed in body movements and gestures along with the mind's intentions that can be recognized by the sensitive observer. Because of the awareness of different cultures and blending of different cultures around the world, dance styles from different cultures are blending too.

Dance can express feelings and emotions but can it also heal the spirit or the world? In the popular reality TV show "Dancing with the Stars," Steve Guttenberg, one of the contestants in season 6, made the comment that dancing with a partner requires a level of cooperation and communication that is highly sophisticated and if the world leaders would learn the cooperation and coordination of dancing, the world would be a better place.

It is important to study dance history to contemplate and gain understanding of the rhythms of life, to realize its universal communication possibilities, and to better understand cultural differences and similarities as a means of broadening our awareness of humanity.

DANCE AS A METAPHOR FOR LIFE

Dance seems to mimic not only natural human movements and experiences, but also complex natural processes. There have been many metaphors using dance as the reference. Scientists talk about the dance of particles and organisms. The idea of something in constant motion, cooperating, flowing rhythmically, triggers one to compare it with the idea of dance. As

Santhanam Nagarajan states in his article "Carl Sagan, Fritjof Capra on The Dance that Reveals the Mysteries of Universe? Part II,"

Physicists speak of the continuous dance of sub-atomic matter which goes on all the time. They have actually used the words dance of creation and destruction or energy dance. This naturally comes to mind when you see some of the pictures of particles taken by physicists in their bubble chambers.

Writers also often describe ideas of life using the metaphor of dance. Nietzsche uses metaphors of dance to describe life and one's connection to the earth. He refers to "primal unity" as surrendering will in the Dionysian ecstasy dance of the reveler:

In song and dance man expresses himself as a member of a higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and speak and is on the way toward flying into the air, dancing ... he feels himself a god, he himself now walks about enchanted, in ecstasy, like the gods he saw walking in his dreams ... He is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: in these paroxysms of intoxication the artistic power of all nature reveals itself. (Nietzsche, Friedrich (1871), *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 38)

Defining dance is like defining life to some people. A common Bantu greeting is "What do you dance?" meaning how do you express life? What is life about? As we explore different



Fig 1.5 Dance expresses emotional experiences. "My Brother."
Choreographer: Louis Kavouras, Photographer: Edwin Lockwood,
Lighting design: Debra Lockwood, Costume and makeup: Natalie
Cervantes, CSUF Dancers: Bradley Beakes, Joshua Romero

cultures and their dance styles, we will embark upon a journey of the human spirit and how people express life through movement. Witness the dance as it reflects belief systems and societal structures in different cultures. Discover the human psyche, life, and how to live it revealed in the dance.

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