National College of Art and Design

Faculty of Design

Fashion

A Study of Social Dance, its Evolution, Character and Function in a Changing World.

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS -

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LIST OF PLATES -

INTRODUCTION -

DANCE

" Human behaviour composed from the dancers perspective of purposeful intentional rhythmical and culturally patterned sequences of non - verbal body movements " (Lynne ,1979, p.19)

" Rhythmic human movement performed as an outlet for or expression of ideas or emotions " (Franks, 1963, p. 4)

My interest in dance stemmed mainly from its mysterious intriguing nature. It is formed out of the raw material of basic instinct ; the instinct to move and express ourselves. Like language, dance is universal and like language it has power of expression. Like a kind of primitive deity, people from all societies can be controlled by it and because of their fear of the unknown force behind the dancing body they feel a need to harness this power . The language of dance is not universally identical, it is shaped by the different social and cultural experiences of a society and this is why dance is so intensely personal and why in one society a dance of pure religious expression, for example, may be an exhibition of sexuality in another. Unlike any other form of expression dance is unique in that it forms a type of aesthetic beauty that cannot be put into words and many of the statements made through dance cannot be made through any other form of expression. Before I became interested in the questions behind dance, it was something I took for granted. As far back as I could remember, people around me danced and eventually I was taught to do the same. My ballet lessons continued from the age of four until I gave up my ballet pumps and leotard for the sequins and glitter of disco dancing where we swooned after John Travolta, as he " strutted his

stuff " in films like 'Saturday Night Fever' and 'Grease'. The primitive urge to dance has been constantly utilised by the film industry, who in fast succession produce films like 'Flashdance', 'Dirty Dancing' and most recently 'Strictly Ballroom' creating a surge of enthusiasm which basically makes people want to get up and dance. They made me question exactly what is the function of dance in society. Is it a means of expression or a means of suppressing and channelling peoples emotions and where do you draw the line between 'pure dance' and dance which is sociably acceptable ? Throughout this Thesis I hope to make clear the function that dance plays in society. Although it is probable that dance began in the pre-history of mankind in the form of some sort of movement performed to a rhythm, there is not enough evidence in existence to support such a presumption. In chapter one we will begin with the earliest existing evidence from the scanty traces of depictions of dance from Greek and Roman ceramics and wall paintings. I would also hope to examine aspects of their Mythology, which describes the creation of the world in terms of a dance, glancing through history up to the pagan rituals of folk dance where it was not merely a form of recreation but had strong religious connotations. In chapter 2 I will be looking at the different attitudes towards dance, depending on the changing attitudes towards the body in various cultures and eras. These attitudes are a result firstly of the formation of a more 'sophisticated' society. As far back as ancient Rome the leaders of society tried to close down the dance schools of that time " before their influence could weaken the fibre of Roman youth ". (Gerald, 1992 , p41) Then to a greater extent the church , when first converting Pagans adopted, refined and spiritualised the existing popular festivals of dance rituals rather than forbidding them, sometimes to the point that the original sentiment and function of the dance is now completely distorted. In fact the tendency for dancers to go beyond what the church considered moral lead to the

eventual ban on dance in the church altogether. So heightening the tendency of people to separate the sacred from the secular meaning dance remained popular and became a very important part of their lives. It's not until we compare our own dance tradition with that of different societies, that we realise just how much it reflects our social beliefs and values, so my third chapter will take the form of a case study, to compare and contrast two different dance traditions. Irish traditional dance and the traditional dance of India. My final chapter will deal with how, throughout the ages the aristocratic and upper class have adopted and adapted dances from the folk dance repetoir of people considered inferior to themselves. Looking in particular at the black dance in America and Europe, from the black minstrels of early plantation days to its influence on popular dance in the 1920's where people like Josephine Baker, the greatly celebrated black dancer, danced the 'Charleston' and 'Blackbottom'.

She captivated her audience by the almost primitive charm in the freedom of her movements but yet again, the Europeans took these dances and refined them to what was considered acceptable for the ballroom. In the same way the Tango and Paso Double (the traditional dances of Latin America and Spain) were stripped of their raw passion in order to make them danceable on European dancefloors. These dances have been taken out of context, dressed up in glizty costumes and brought to a state that is so slick and false that, it now only suits the purpose of modern ballroom dance, which has become so commercial and competitive that it is hardly comparable with the original dance. Finally, my concluding chapter will reflect on the function of dance today in a summary of my observations.

CHAPTER 1

- The earliest existing evidence and depictions of dance.

Though little evidence remains today, there is little doubt that for primitive man dance served as a form of expression. But it was used also for another reason. He, by the means of dance sought to identify with the objects he loved, feared and admired. Through a type of sympathetic magic he believed that he could either gain power over or actually transform these objects. Out of these rituals folk dance emerged and developed right through the ages. Different societies have retained their cultures to different degrees. A particular dance is not something that stays the same from the day it was invented, it lives, changes and evolves with changing circumstances and attitudes. There are inherent difficulties in ascertaining whether a traditional dance is authentic or greatly altered. Writers in the past didn't feel the need to describe their dances in detail because they were so well known in their society. Then following Urbanisation, Industrialisation and war the continuity of their traditional dance was disrupted. Many of the folk dances today are revivals, based on the memories of a few old people nearer to a generation when folk dance was an integral social activity. Our investigation into the history of folk dance will begin with the earliest existing evidence that is available. Egyptian art work of 6,000 years ago - see (FIG. 1 and 2) - show that dance played a very important part in the religious rituals of the time. These dance forms then had an important influence on Greece. Plato, the Greek philosopher, came to the conclusion that this type of Egyptian dance symbolised the movement of the stars. Although we are not sure exactly what these dances consisted of, it has been possible to gain some knowledge of them by means of the careful

FIG. 1 - Female figure, painted terracotta, Egypt c. 4,000 B.C.

FIG. 2 - Fragment of a banqueting scene of c. 1420B.C. showing dancing girls, Tomb of Nakht - Egypt

FIG. 3 - Herecules fight with Triton, with a dance of Nereids, painted terracotta, Greek 6th c. B.C.

study of Greek vases and friezes which according to A. H. Franks are " the finest examples of the expression of movement in the plastic arts" . (Franks, 19 63 , p. 5)

The history of the Greek people (whose art work and myths constitute the main body of our early evidence) begins in the Isle of Crete and extends from 3000 B.C. - 1200 B.C., known as the Minoan age. Ceramics played a vital part in recording many favoured social activities and it is from this art form that we can guess as to the character of ancient dance forms. - (FIG. 3) Frescoes found in the Palace of Knossos in Crete include many which show women dancing before the king and his court. - (FIG. 4) What is presumed to be the dance ground of Princess Ariadne was discovered by archaeologists. It was noticed that the maze pattern in white marble relief was greatly influenced by the Egyptians and one form of Cretan dance which stemmed from this Egyptian influence was the Labyrinth dance. There are many different opinions as to the meaning behind these dances. According to A. H. Franks, they demonstrated the movements of the stars and constellations, probably in exactly the same way as the Egyptians had done. (Franks, 1963 , p. 6)
N. A. Jaffe, on the other hand thinks that the meaning is based upon a Greek myth about Theseus and the Minotaur.(Jaffe, 1988 , p.23-29) Every nine years seven young people were sacrificed to the Minotaur, (half man half beast), who was held captive in the Labyrinth, until Theseus outwitted and killed the Minotaur - See Footnote (1). Theseus emerged from the Labyrinth triumphant and travelled to Delos where he and his companions according to Plutarch danced the crane dance with consisted of "labyrinthian movements, trod with measured steps to the accompaniment of harps" (Jaffe, 1988 p. 32).

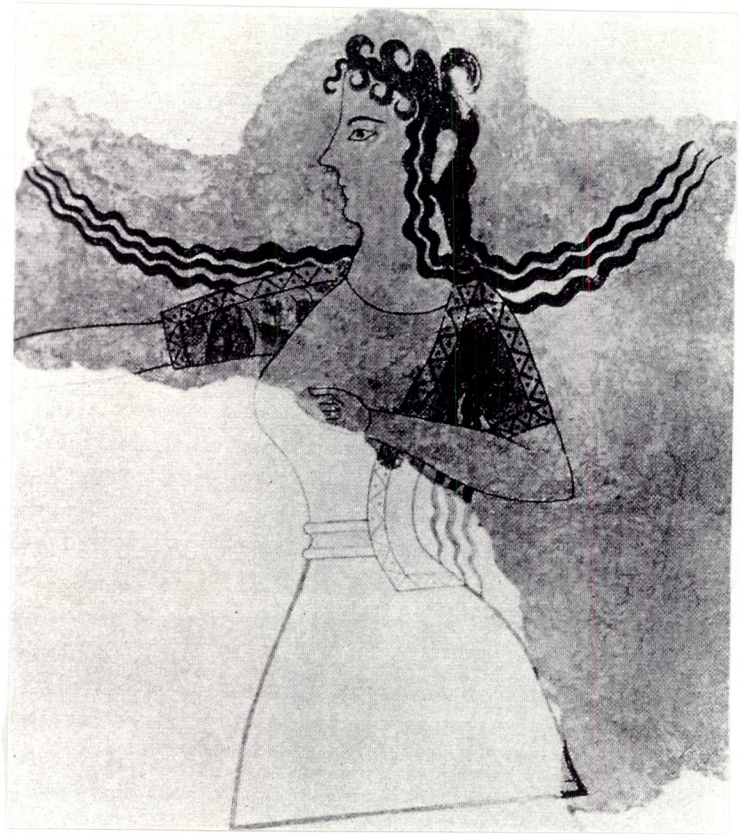


FIG. 4 - Dancing girl on wall of Knossos

Although myths like these may at first seem ambiguous, they have very often offered a firm historical basis on which to build knowledge of the origins of our dances. Many of man's ancient Myths describe creation itself in terms of a dance. In India Shivia, the Hindu god of creation and destruction is represented as Nataraja - Lord of the dance. Bronze icons found in South Indian temple, depict a four armed deity ringed by fire in the middle of what is known as Shivas cosmic dance. - (FIG. 5) Again in Greek mythology the Legend of Eurynome - the Goddess of all Things - tells of how before

she created the world she danced setting a wind in motion - see Footnote (2).
The earliest dances took place during the Summer and Winter Solstices probably around a fire or sort of monument or at harvest where the dancer reflects on the powerful forces of nature around him. He danced for a purpose and not only as a means of recreation. We can not take one particular dance and say that its roots are in a particular country. The pre-history of Europe is a subject of endless arguments and the origins of European culture are still a cause of controversy amongst researchers. With the constant migration of people over thousands of years, each culture has elements which will influence the other. It has been suggested that the spiral patterns on the entrance stone of Newgrange in Ireland were actually influenced by Greece, echoing the Spiralling maze of the Labyrinth of Knossos. Irish tradition has it that the Tuatha die Danaan a group of tribes were driven North from Greece by an invasion of Syria. They first settled in Denmark, thus the name Danaan and then on to Ireland in 1472 B.C. Two hundred years later another invasion took place and people sailed westward from Thrace, over the Mediterranean and Atlantic and arrived in Wexford Bay. Whether this is true or not it has to be said that there are striking similarities between Irish and Greek Mythology. There is a similar story line running through the legends of heroes who returned from their journey into the underworld. In Ireland it is told through the legend of Cuchulain and in Greece through Thesus's adventure into the Cretan Labyrinth. In both countries the spiral pattern is associated with death and the whole journey through life until it eventually ends in the centre.

The races within Europe are about as varied as their languages, their integration and evolution, who they are and where they live. How these races sing and dance is what makes their folk culture fascinating today.

FIG. 5 - Shiva, Lord of Dance, Bronze icon from South India

The strong relationship between the dancer and the audience is the basis of one of the oldest uses of dance - dance performed for the mysterious and invisible audience of spirits , of ancestors and deities. They danced, often reciting charms, to ensure fertile land and fertile women, to cure the sick or as a right of passage at funerals, births and weddings. These dances and rites took different forms. Some took the form of a circle with the belief, that everything inside the circle was magic protecting all inside from evil. During Spring rites people danced to welcome in the Summer and to usher out the darkness and evil which is associated with the winter ; or at Autumn to celebrate and give thanks to the gods for a successful harvest. The circle dances are in harmony with nature reflecting the ever changing cycles of the forces of nature that surrounded man. On some occasions they may have circled a sacred building or a tree of fire, a custom which still exists in many societies today . In Ireland, for example, to this day we have puck fairs where a goat is decorated and put on a platform and below it people dance for days. Morris dancing is another example of a folk dance which evolved out of these ancient spring rituals. Again because of a lack of historical documentation it is difficult to determine exactly the origins of this dance or indeed the origins of its name. Some think that it came from the 'Moors' who invaded Spain in the 8th century, but N. A. Jaffe argues that the actual ritual of this dance predates the coming of the Moors to Spain by thousands of years and was practiced by people who never had contact with Moors. (Jaffe, 1988, p93) Another theory about its origins traces back to Mediaeval England, where people used to employ the word 'Marry' or 'Marry Gyp' as an oath in honour of Mary Gypsy or St. Mary of Egypt. Her character has in fact stemmed from an ancient sea-goddess named Marian. This sea-goddess or 'merry-maid' - (which mermaids used to be called), is linked to the love - goddess, Aphrodite, who rose from the sea. Returning crusaders ; (who greatly influenced society of this time and

who I will refer to in more detail later) brought the cult of Mary Gypsy back home with them. In time, Mary Gypsy became identified with the 'Maybride' who was coupled with the Celtic Merlin, who is believed by many to be Robin Hood. Who coincidentally features in many Morris dances. The background to Robin Hood became confused by the fact that the mythical figure was mixed up with the historical - Robert son of Adam Hood, who was outlawed in reign of Edward II and became a bandit in Sherwood Forest. Later he was identified with Robin spirit of the Green wood and his wife Matilda who was was renamed Maid Marian. Robin Hood was then associated with the story of the robin and the wren in a dance to celebrate the new year. (This is interesting when one thinks of the 'Wren Boys' in Irish tradition, who at New Year travelled from house to house, singing, dancing and collecting offerings.) The variations of stories behind this one form of dance proves my point that folk dance, like the myths and the history behind them, are changed and sometimes distorted over the years. Like a Chinese whisper, time has managed to constantly renew and update the dance tradition of all societies.

FIG. 6 - A scene of Morris dancers

As I have mentioned earlier, society during the 12th and 13th centuries was very much influenced by the Crusaders, who left home to fight the Muslim enemy in the Holy Land and Spain. When they returned they brought with them stories of awe at the wealth and sophistication of Islamic society. They were effected by the Muslim attitudes towards women, as expressed in songs and poetry. Because the women were hidden away from the view of non-kinsmen, the unattainable was more appealing and these distant admirers wrote of a love considered pure, because it never satisfied the flesh. This idea of 'courtly love' brought about a new way of looking at women in Europe. It made more appealing the idea of pursuit or wooing, ie. the chase was more important than the catch. A women was deemed worthy of being pursued and adored by men and assumed the role of partner to men in the ballroom. Where as the idea of a physically linked couple dancing in public was unthinkable in places like North Africa and the Middle East, peasant dances of Europe had, for a long time, included intervals where a couple would break away from the group and engage in a short sequence together. - (FIG. 7) In fact it was probably these dances which inspired the couple dancing which grew increasingly popular in Western Europe towards the end of the Middle ages.

During the years of the Renaissance, dance of this kind became very popular and was soon featured amongst the essential skills needed to be successful at court. Professional dance masters were employed and the first dance manuals appeared (these eventually laid down the foundations of classical ballet). - (FIG. 8) Dance became a very important part of etiquette ; a dance manual of this time written by a catholic priest states " if you desire to marry you must realise that a mistress is won by the good temper and grace displayed by dancing". (Gerald, 1991, p122) The lesser aristocracy were eager to be involved in this elitist pastime, but in 1533 laws were passed to keep undesirables out of the

dance schools. Inevitably the peasant copied the dances of the higher classes and there is evidence of certain elements of these dances in the folk dance which followed this period. So a full cycle has occurred where the aristocrats were influenced by elements of folk dance and this dance was then equally fed by elements of the court dances ; two completely different types of dance, yet each would not be the same today if they were not influenced by the other. So we see how folk dance grew from the pure expression of primitive rituals to a god or deity. It was then shaped by the developing civilisation around it, by history, by wars and disasters and also by changing fashions, social etiquette and moral attitudes.

FIG. 7 - Pieter Brueghel's Wedding Dance, 1566, showing the type of couple dancing performed at this time

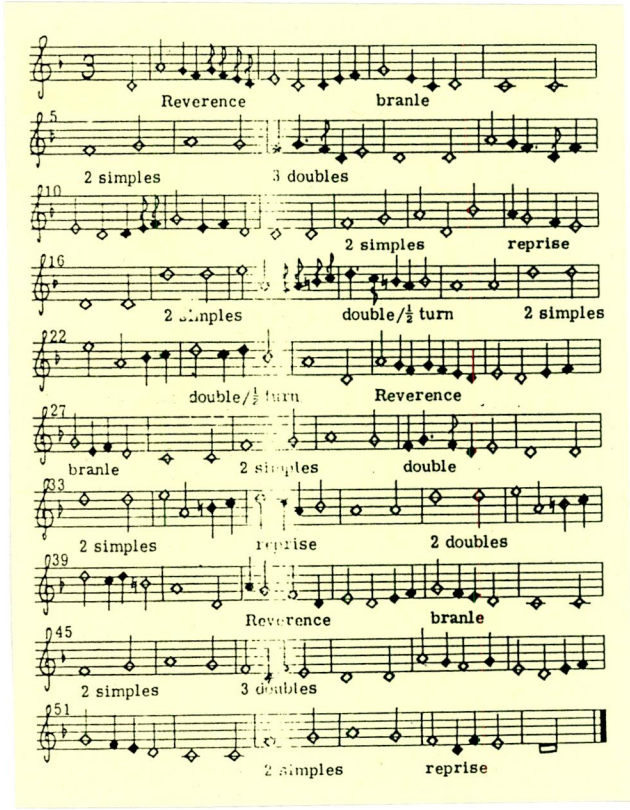


FIG. 8 - 15th Century Dance Manual explaining a Morris dance.

FIG. 9 - An engraving from Kellom Tomlinson's, The Art of Dancing Exlpained by Reading and Figures, 1724

CHAPTER 2

- The changing attitudes towards dance depending on the changing attitudes towards the body in various cultures and eras.

Dance, from all over the world, plays a very important part in controlling the social activities and attitudes of a certain group. The body is the main instrument for expression in dance and because of this a society's attitudes towards the body can have different effects on their dance tradition. These attitudes have been shaped by the ever increasing level of sophistication in most societies. So what exactly is the difference between primitive and sophisticated ? When I use the word primitive, I do not wish to imply that this society of people is less intelligent than our own, but rather that they are closer to the state from which our society has evolved. From evidence of primitive cave paintings of various animals we can obtain some idea of how the primitive mind works. We can only assume that these paintings in the bleak darkness of the caves were not merely for decorations sake. These drawings obviously possessed some magical powers for the primitive hunter ; a means of gaining power over his prey. In the same way today some primitive tribes perform animal dances. Some wear the mask of a particular animal and actually believe that they have transformed into this animal. - (FIG. 10) This behaviour is similar to the make believe games we play as children but the primitive world has no adults to decide when the game must end. The entire tribe take part in the dances, the importance and significance of which they have learned from past generations. All societies have their own established beliefs, which they take for granted until they are questioned by somebody who finds them unusual. For example, according to the legend of the Jicarilla Apache Indians, their creator made a bird from mud and whirled it around. These movements caused the emergence

FIG. 10 - Animal masquerade at an egungun festival in Nigeria

of 'dream like forms' ; the bird grew dizzy and saw strange images around him. Dazed man awoke from his dreams in a world he could not understand, a mysterious world that he looked upon with wonder and fear and from this moment he did his best to understand these mysteries. All societies began with the fear and awe at the unknown forces of nature. Man has always been confronted by powers which are far beyond himself (nature, growth, birth, illness and death) They test his limits making him question where exactly he stands in relation to the rest of the world. Faced with a feeling of powerlessness man felt he should communicate with and try to understand what ruled the forces around him. Dance was his way of getting in touch with the gods he held sacred. Dance was man's earliest means of expression, began as a rhythmic release of energy and only very gradually was transformed into fixed patterns of steps. The fundamental mystery to man was life, how it begins and why it ends and what is his purpose during his time on earth. Nature, unlike the mysteries of life was visible and associated with his experiences. He found he could relate to it and used it in an attempt to understand the mysteries which baffled him. In striving to relate to nature, man worldwide has evolved an enormous collection of dance forms which express the never ending ordeal of life's experiences. By re-enacting these experiences by means of dance it helped him understand more clearly his role in the overall view of things. It was not until much later that the power of reason took over from pure expression. The more educated man became and the more power he gained over the world he lived in, the more he strove to protect himself from the chaos of experience. He worshiped nature as long as it remained a source of fear but as soon as he had the knowledge and technology to overcome this fear he felt he ruled over it and possessed it. Instead of worshipping all the aspects of nature he once considered his gods, he attributed the creation of all these forces to one god who was to be associated with another world as his

mystery could not be explained by intellect. A. H. Franks describes primitive cause of dance as " powerful, emotional reactions which result in spontaneous muscular activity " and the sophisticated cause as " the constant demand of advanced cultures for forms of expression created by one mind for others to enjoy ". (Franks, 1963, p. 2) Primitive dance induced a state of hypnotic ecstasy which then encouraged further spontaneous dance. This state is not considered safe by the intellectually superior minds of today. They questioned everything and their activities had to have a definite function. In fact the more cultured people become the less they can appreciate the gift, that unconsciously - motivated primitives possessed, of being able to enter into the creations of their own imagination; a skill which eventually led to theatrical art but which will always remain powerful for its original purpose as long as its strength is not weakened by sophistication and disbelief. Primitive man saw the body as an instrument through which he could identify with the powers directly and which had spiritual dimension. Today the body is set apart from the spiritual. It has for centuries been hidden beneath clothing created by man to render it respectable. Free movement of the body bears connotations of seduction and sexuality, which corrupts the ordered structure of society. Man today has come to the conclusion that society is held together by the strength of human thought and fears that if he does not adhere to these ways of thinking society will disintegrate into a state of chaos. As far back as 450 B.C. the Greek philosophers Plato (427-374 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) show, in their analytical writing about dance, great ambivalence toward the dancing body. Plato was of the opinion that graceful dance was necessary for mans education but beneficial only as exercise to maintain perfect physique and thus heighten performance on the battle field. He found acceptable only a few dances which were either functional or modest and refined in their movements. The wilder or "dirty dancing" of his day associated with festivals, was totally

discouraged as it could lead to a state of trance, hypnosis or cause sexual arousal which they thought could cause chaos in their established calm. To avoid any infiltration of the evil aspects of dance he banned professional actor / dancers from his ideal republic.

In contrast Aristotle's whole concept of dance was that it was used as a means of expressing the actions and emotions of man. He believed that all Greek citizens should attend such performances as it taught important lessons about real life events but he also feared the effect which dance had on the dancer and so this occupation was reserved for slaves and foreigners ; corresponding to the theory of (Franks, 1963, p. 2) on sophisticated dance which I mentioned earlier. Although dance was used for the same means of expression it now became " governed by his identity with that group of likeminded people ". (Franks, 1963, p. 4) . The dancer's emotions remained just as strong but he became an expert at covering them up. In some cases art took the place of spontaneous reaction. Through art man could experience chaos safely through its symbolism.

This brings us to the next great influence on peoples attitude towards the body. The church, whose disapproval of the dancing body has stemmed from Greek and Roman thought. Dance throughout the Roman era was associated with lust and violence, and the earliest followers of Christ, who anticipated a second coming were set on leading a pure life including the denial of bodily desires. It was difficult therefore for them to incorporate dance into their worship and this set up a love-hate relationship with the body from the very start. This seems quite strange to me as the whole idea of Christianity is that it held the belief that Christ appeared in the form of a human with a human body. The continuing debate about the place of the human body in Christian worship was greatly influenced by the scriptures of Neo - Platonist writings, who believed that time, space and flesh

was inferior to intellect and spirit. Early leaders of the church believed that if they could get people to accept this attitude to the body, that only then would the body be pure enough to perform sacred dance to God. At the same time they were surrounded by various pagan dance rituals, which went totally against this way of thinking. The case against dance was backed up with a number of scriptures from the bible, such as the Old Testament stories, The Golden Calf and Salome. But surely even they could not ignore the scriptural examples such as the dances of David and Mariam or Paul's advise to them to " glorify god in your body ", which is " the temple of the Holy Spirit ", [1 Corinthians 6: 19-20] and where Matthew and Luke quote Jesus as saying "we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ". But the Bible has been translated and interpreted by various different cultures through the years and I share the opinion of many that

FIG. 11 - A renaissance painting of the biblical story, The Golden Calf.

the bible is a collection of life's experiences and lessons ; it is open to interpretation. My personal response to the story of The Golden Calf and Salome was not that God's teachings disagreed with dance but disagreed with that particular situation where dance was used in a negative way. It was from these pagan sects that the church found most of its converts. They could not expect these people to give up their old dance rituals totally and so they found ways to refine and spiritualise them in the same way as they found ways to give old myths and symbols a Christian coating. One of the most popular forms of Christian dance rituals was taken from the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and Minotaur, which I mentioned in chapter 1, in a type of Labyrinth dance. The Minotaur became associated with Satan and Theseus with Christ. The early church took from this myth the notion of journeying through life and all its obstacles with the overall goal of conquering Satan in the centre and then reemerging signifying rebirth and the continuation of life beyond death.

From the 11th century onwards labyrinths were found in many countries all over Europe, laid out in multi coloured stone on the floor of the nave of the churches. - (FIG. 12) Another dance ritual taken from pagan form was the pelda or Ball dance. In early Christian times the sun was a symbol of Christ who was " risen from all who dwell in darkness ". (Wosien, 1974 , p. 27) Signified in this dance as the ball which was passed from the leader to the members of the congregation it denoted the path of the incarnate Christ, his death, burial and resurrection at Easter. The original meaning of this dance was probably to represent the path of the sun throughout the different stages of the year although this is not certain, because like many other pagan dance forms the sentiment is often lost through association with Christian worship. In the Early Church sacred dancing took place in the choir, with the idea of the heavenly being encircling the throne of God. The belief goes back to the Talmud, where

dancing was described as being the principal function of angels. One of the most popular arguments supporting dance in Christianity is a quote by St. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in the 4th century in which he said "could there be anything more blessed than to imitate on earth the ringdance of the angels ". (Wosien, 1974, p. 29)

You see a contradictory idea, however, if you look then to a sermon which he gave condemning a drunken Easter celebration, in which he talked about women who " danced with lustful eyes and loud laughter as if seized by a kind of frenzy to excite the lusts of the youth". (Jonas, 1992, p. 44) It was this tendency for people to go beyond what was considered acceptable by the church which led to the eventual banning of dance in the church. While it was relatively easy to judge whether a statue or painting was morally threatening, the dancing body was spontaneous, and so, thought dangerous. The continuous efforts of the church to distinguish between the right and wrong type of dance had a very important effect on European society. The dancing which was forbidden by the church allowed people to release the tensions of daily life, so they began to separate their life into sacred and secular. While it was forbidden on sacred ground there was nothing to stop them dancing once outside the church. In this way to some extent the church had a positive effect on European dance. The people took back from the church the general format of the pagan dances which were to form the foundations of their folkdance. Through their concept of secular being apart from sacred this dance not only regained some of its' pre-Christian flavour but was now allowed to flourish with the changing times.

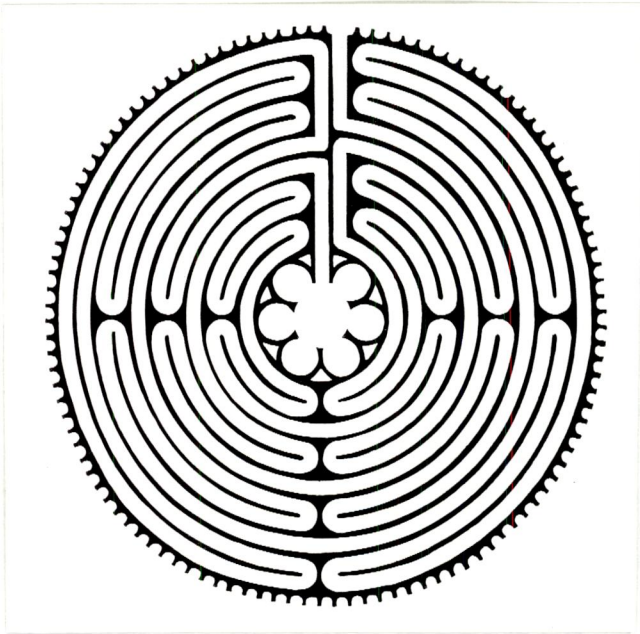


FIG. 12 - The Labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral, located in the centre of the nave.

FIG. 13 - Botticelli's Mystical Nativity c. 1500, depicts a circle of dancing angels

Not all the effects of the church on dance were positive however. When Protestant missionaries travelled to the Pacific islands in an effort to convert the people to a Christian way of life, it had a devastating effect on their dance tradition. When they reached Cook Island North-East of New Zealand, they were shocked and appaled by the indecency exhibited in the islanders' dance. All the movements concentrated on the lower body. The women swung their hips from side to side and the men flapped their knees. Upon examination of their god images which consisted of obvious phallic symbols, - (FIG. 14) they came to the conclusion that these dances could also lead to copulation and this, according to the missionaries, meant it was directly linked with the devil. But the Cook Islanders were more willing to give up their gods of fertility than their dancing. In 1945 the New Zealand authorities banned all native dance. But the natives through their passion for dance fought this ban.

Led by Sir Thomas Davis , who served as Prime Minister for nine years, they managed to get rid of the ban and revive much of their dance tradition. The effect missionaries had on Hawaiian dance tradition was more severe however.

Unlike the Cook Islanders their dance was only practiced by a few very specialised and meticulously trained dancers. Because it was all based around their religion, they were subject to numerous rules and taboos which they had to stick to rigidly. The dancers were sponsored by the aristocracy and sometimes the subject of the chants which accompanied the dancers concerned the patrons. Due to the strict structure of the dances there were no opportunities for dancers to improvise. It also meant that not everyone had the opportunity to join in with the rituals. Some might have thought that this restrictive refinement on Hawaiian dance would make it a high art form, but they nearly specialised themselves out of existence. For when Christianity hit the island, it was adopted by the general public and their symbols and rituals were

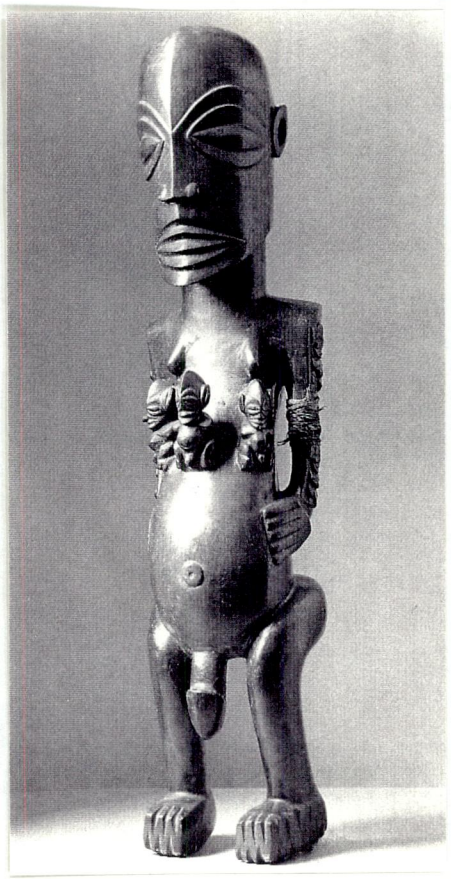


FIG. 14 - Icon of the god Te Rongo

FIG. 15 - The impact of Christianity on the dance and dance attire can be seen in this photograph, 1875

made public knowledge. Because their original dance tradition was incompatible with Christian teachings, it was greatly threatened by the successful conversion to Christianity and because of a lack of documented knowledge amongst the islanders, about their own culture, a great deal of this culture has disappeared.

CHAPTER 3

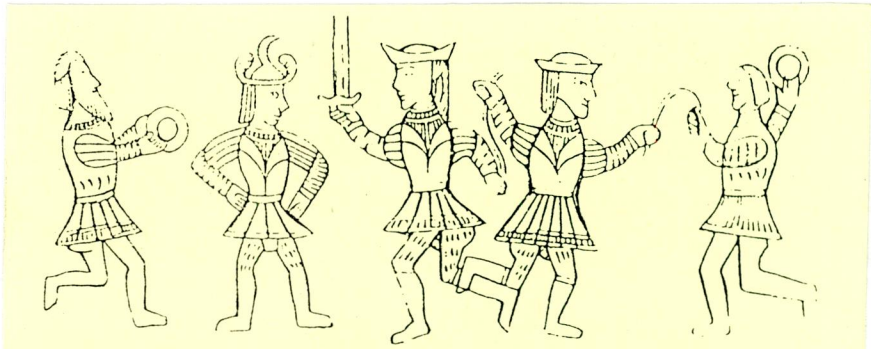
- A case study, comparing Irish and Indian dance traditions.

Social dance possesses a powerful instrument of social control which is very rarely recognised by society in general. Most social gatherings and celebrations involve some sort of dance and whenever young people feel the need to relate to their social peers, it usually involves social events with music or dance which a particular social group have in common. It provides a feeling of security ; an environment in which the dancer feels comfortable. There are very few societies who do not supervise these activities ; using them as a means of teaching its members what is socially right or wrong. It imparts to young people the gender - specific behaviours and attitudes they are expected to have, it also provides an opportunity to monitor and regulate challengers to group values posed by beliefs of a new generation or those imported from another society. It is used as a way of expressing and understanding life experiences and information which is necessary to maintain a society's cultural patterns. Even within the same society the meaning of a dance may be translated differently depending on the age of the dance or that of the audience whose sex occupation and political status also play a part. It may be the case that what is being communicated is not translatable by any other means of expression, or into another culture's way of thinking, as the meaning of dance can be culturally specific. The style of dance used is based on psychological, historical or environmental factors and in some cases a society's dance form is shaped by its reactions to a real or desired social condition or by the improvement of or relations against earlier rules. So a culture or society uses dance as a means of expressing and maintaining its cultural background and beliefs, by devel-

oping a range of movements, determined by a set of rule, which are acceptable to a certain group depending on its cultural concepts, dance not only reflects the cultural dance traditions, but also, the other elements of their culture which merged to create this particular dance form. It is not until we compare our own dance tradition with that of a different society that we realise just how varied our social and cultural beliefs are. To illustrate this point I have decided to do a case study of two different dance traditions that of Irish dance compared with Indian dance tradition.

Initially I approached this Thesis with absolutely no idea of the history behind Ireland's dance tradition. I had been taught the steps at school and had just assumed that they had always had been a part of Irish dance tradition. Before researching the subject, I had expected to be delighted with the discovery of a race of imaginative and mystical people that I had discovered when studying other aspects of ancient Ireland. I was however shocked to discover that there was no evidence of, or reference to, Irish dance until the 15th Century. I cannot believe though, that the same race that displayed such concern for ritual and ceremony through the building of such monuments as Newgrange, would not have performed some sort of ritual dance. Perhaps it was such an integral part of their lives that they felt no need to record it. It is therefore pure conjecture that writers attribute the origins of these dances to the ancient pagan rituals usually associated with folk dance. The first depiction of dance in Ireland is engraved on a bone plate and is dated from as late as the 17th century and shows five men engaged in some sort of dance. - (FIG. 16) The earliest reference to dance in literature, which is pointed out by Brendan Breathnach, is an account of a visit by the mayor of Waterford to the castle of an Irish chieftain - O'Driscoll on Christmas eve 1413

" the Maior ..... commanded O'h-Idroskoll and his company not to move or fear, for he would not nor meant not to draw no man's blood of the same house, more than to dance and drink and so to depart....." (Breathnach, 1973, p. 12)



The Withy dance; from an engraved bone plate in the National museum (first representation of dancing in Ireland).

FIG. 16 - Engraved bone plate, the first representation of dance in Ireland

There are then a number of references to dance in Anglo Irish and English literature in the 16th century. None of these accounts give sufficient descriptions as to the form these dances took, but they usually referred to 'Roundlays', 'Heys', 'Trenchmores', 'Jigs' and 'Rinnce Fada'
The origins of these dances again due to the lack of references, are mostly speculation. The round dances are usually credited with a Norman influence. At the time of the Norman invasion of Ireland the 'Carol' was a very popular song and dance in France and especially in Normandy. Breathnach states that 'Hey' or (hay) derives from the French 'Haye', meaning 'a row of stakes' and subsequently 'a row of dancers', and that these dances were introduced into England and Scotland around 1500. Both 'Hey' and 'Rinnce fada' were mentioned in the Complaint of Scotland, 1549. In this writing there was a description of a Scottish round dance and it was compared with the similarities of 'Rinnce fada' but it is not certain whether dance originated in Ireland and penetrated into

England or visa versa, but since references to this dance appear in English literature at a later date it is usually assumed to be Irish. According to J. Cullinane the Quadrilles arrived in Ireland either directly or indirectly from France and were put to Irish music in reel and jig time. (Cullinane, 1987, p. 13). There have been a lot of controversy about this fact, but even if they have been influenced by the French, the fact that they have been danced and developed in Ireland to a faster Irish tempo music has made them truly Irish in character. The intricate footwork or (battering) does not indicate that these dances are of Irish origins but that they have evolved and developed an Irish flavour. The addition of this footwork probably owes its origin to an improvisation which over the years has been formalised. These sets were very popular on social occasions. They were a simple and lively dance which could be enjoyed by virtually anybody. The fact that these 'sets' were foreign in nature was taken into consideration by the Gaelic League during the revival of the Irish culture and in an attempt to rid Irish dance of everything that was not truly Irish, they discouraged the performance and teaching of set dances and formalised the newly designated Ceili dances. In doing so they ignored the fact that these dances in providing a function for traditional musicians, helped greatly in preserving the traditional music and that it was from these 'sets' that the Ceili dances would have evolved. The Ceili dances are a relatively recent development and in fact were not even performed at the first ceili, which occurred as late as 1897. The invention and spread of these dances is usually attributed to the Irish dance master, who travelled the country teaching Irish dance. The farmers were his patrons and he was paid and given food and board in return for teaching the children Irish dance. His success was not only a result of his ability to dance but rested very much on his ability to compose steps, the principle step dances being the 'Reel', 'Jig' and 'Hornpipe'. The art of composing these steps was closely guarded by the

dance masters until recent times. These dances then, in an effort to preserve and revive our heritage, were committed to print in 1930 by the Dance Commission, in a book which was to become the basis for the Irish dance examinations. The lack of references to and the eventual loss of much of our music and dance can be explained by the invasion of the English and the ensuing repression. - Footnote (4) Because of these circumstances we do not know very much about what was lost during these years of repression, but have witnessed what has emerged as a result of them. Hedge schools, (hidden schools) were established during these years. These schools were connected to the emergence of the dance master and he was very often described as being essential for their success. In this way we see how English colonisation has served to promote interest amongst the Irish to preserve their dance tradition. Although a lot of their old traditions were

FIG. 17 AND 18 Irish dancer performing a 'Reel' and a 'Jig'

probably lost, with the advent of the dance master came new dance steps and styles which have been built up to produce a dance tradition and repetoir that can be considered truly Irish. Dance in Ireland was purely a social pastime and had no religious or ritualistic connections, apart from the fact that it became a custom to dance as a form of relaxation on Sundays and holy days : a custom which was frowned upon by the moral leaders and priests. The objections to these events can be seen in a speech delivered by sister Anastasia in 1670 Which states

" women dancers are the cause of many evils, because it is they who bear arms in the army of the devil. When a prince desires war and bloodshed, he orders his soldiers assemble at one spot on an appointed day and to show them their arms. Likewise the devil with young maidens and youths; he compels them to gather on holidays for dancing, a thing which leads them to bad thoughts and evil actions." (Breathnach, 1973, p. 37)

Although there are countless references to various moralists who condemn this dancing as evil, during the 1920's when there were various modern dance crazes being imported to Ireland, the Irish dances in comparison, were considered quite safe. During a meeting from 1925 the Archbishops addressed the matter as follows :

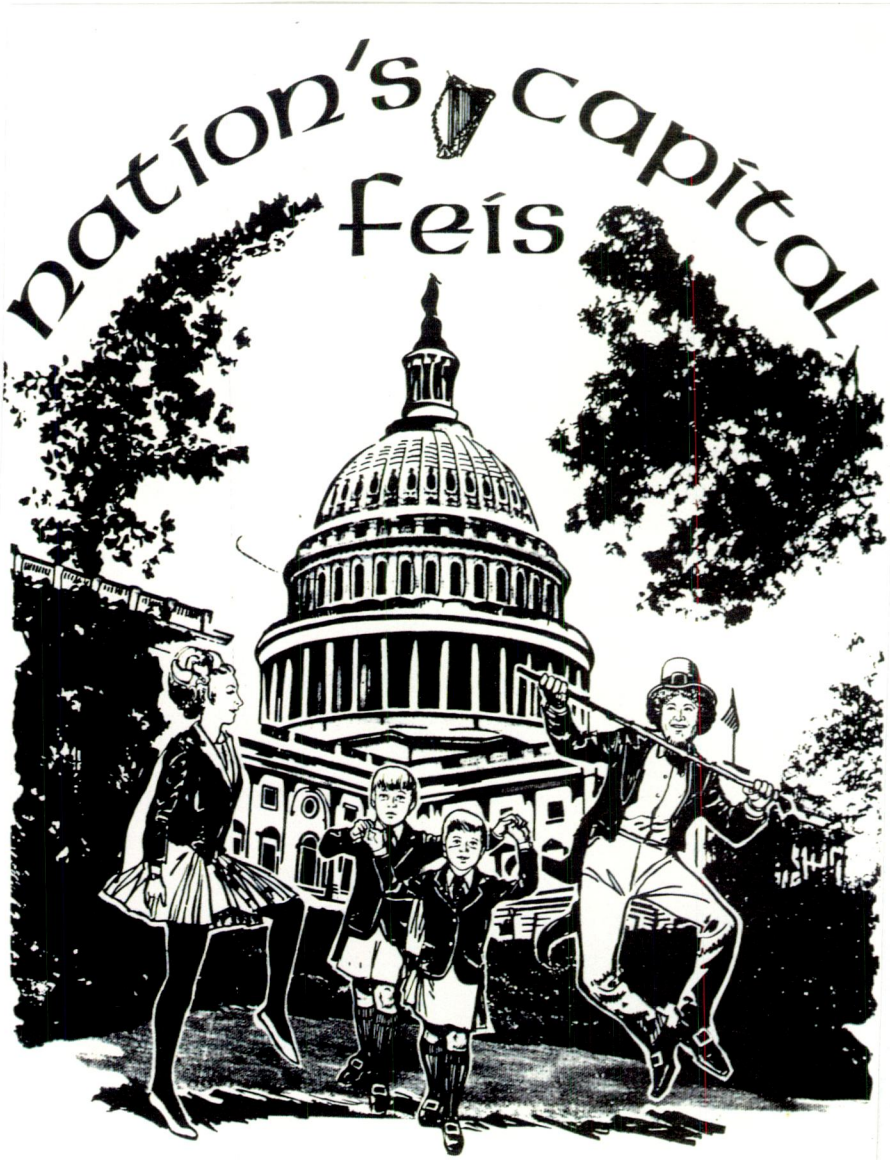
"It is no small commendation of Irish dances that they cannot be danced for long hours. .... while it is not part of our business to condemn any decent dance, Irish dances are not to be put out of the place that is their due, in any educational establishment under our care..... Irish dances do not make degenerates." (Breathnach, 1973, p. 44)

Until recently music was very rarely played unless accompanied by dance. This led to the term 'Dance Music' being given to our traditional music - ('Jigs', 'Reels', 'Hornpipes' etc). It is only in more recent times that the music has been played

purely for listening to. This has resulted partly from the evolution of modern Irish dance sequences, which have reduced the speed of the music in order to fit more intricate footwork into each dance,

(a result of the emphasis now put on Competition and the ability of the dancers to perform sequence of complicated and intricate steps). Breathnach wrote that when something is committed to paper it ceases to evolve. I can see his point, in that the dance printed became so specialised and standardised, that the spontaneity which usually contributes to the evolution, was lost. But they have not ceased to evolve. It would be nearly impossible for a dance form to stand still in the midst of an ever changing world. Irish dance has changed with changing attitudes. Until the last century it involved mainly men and in most places, women could not perform the same dances as men. Now the tables have turned, changing attitudes to women has resulted in an increase of women taking part in Irish dance. Then with the introduction of the ballet pumps in the dancing and due to the influence of female teachers dances have taken on a ballet style and have become more effeminate, this has led to a decline in male participation. The competition element of dance has led to a great emphasis being put on the development of footwork. With a constant endeavour to better the competition, it is this element which has made Irish dance so popular world wide and in fact there are more dance teachers in North America than there are in Ireland. These Ceili dances have been refined to a disciplined art which reflects nothing of the freedom and spontaneity which was once associated with dancing in Ireland. The idea of strict discipline in the dances was started by the dance master and brought to further extremes by the Ceili organisers and the Dance Commission. Although the competition element of Irish dance has played a great part in its revival of its popularity, it has taken completely from the original sentiment of Irish dance (which was a form of relaxation and celebration)

and has made it into a sequence of regimental steps. These are now truly Irish, but I believe, have evolved to such an extent, that accuracy and competition have taken priority over the freedom and pleasure which was originally present.



A Tribute To Our Irish American Presidents
July 29th, 1990

FIG. 19 - A poster promoting Irish dance in America, exhibiting the commercial element attached to Irish dance.

So Irish dance has been shaped on two levels. Firstly by the outside influences of the English who attempted to deprive the Irish of their culture, but secondly, by the Irish authorities themselves who felt that they should deprive the Irish of the sets they had taken pleasure in dancing, in the fear that they they were not truly 'Irish'. These dances may not have been Irish but the life with which they were danced had made them part of Irish life.

In comparison Indian dance history has been documented with an abundance of literary references dating back to the 2nd Century A.D. and in the art work depicting many of the different postures employed in classical Indian dance. The Aryan (Warrior-herdsman) entered India about four thousand years ago from Central Asia and brought with them scriptures 'The Vedas' which were said to be " the spiritual knowledge derived from the supreme self existence of God ". The scriptures were passed on orally in the Sanskrit language and were then later committed to writing. They are the source of knowledge for the Vedic culture. In the Rig Veda the gods are described as " Kicking up the dust of atoms that formed the Earth while clasping each other in dance " (Rig Veda v. 52, 12). The basic outline of Indian Dance was laid down in the Natya Shastra - a treatise that describes and analyses the techniques employed in Sanskrit plays of about two thousand years ago. In these writings, there is a description of the types of theatre suitable for the sacred drama, the erection of a theatre became like a ceremony where the gods were invoked with sacred rites and offerings, and it was prescribed that " No dramatic performance should be staged without first worshipping the deities presiding over the stage." It states that "dance drama properly performed Emboldens the weak, energises the heroic, enlightens the ignorant and imparts erudition to the scholars ". (Jonas, 1992, p58)
This is accomplished through the arousal of emotions in the

audience, which reveal what is common in human experience. These emotions (Rasas) are identified in the Natya Shastra as love, humour, pathos, anger, heroism, disgust, and wonder. It has laid down in great detail all aspects of the performers art form the elaborate sign language of hand gestures (Mudras), to the specific make-up and costumes worn by different characters. Orrisa Palm Leaf Sculptures figures of the 108 Karnas - (a unit of dance employing a particular gesture, step and attitude) in classical dance are carved in the base of the inner walls of the great Shiva temple at Chidambaram in South India. - (FIG. 20 and 21) They exhibit the grace and vitality of each movement and a descriptive couplet from the Natya Shastra is carved above it, symbolising a great dance manual exhibiting the priority which dance took in their religious beliefs. It was from these temples, that the temple servants called Devadasis emerged in a mergence of art and religion, it created a form of great elegance and beauty, performed exclusively by women. Who similar to a catholic nun they are married deity of the temple. In order to fulfil their function of translating the Sanskrit texts the dancers were highly educated in literature and music as well dance. The dancers were meticulously trained by the dance master who occupied a very important place in the palaces and temples of India and were known to be great composers of music and dance. Because the women were married to the temple god, they could not marry anyone else, however they could choose a mate to live with and have children with outside marriage. This custom of temple servants was sometimes likened to, ' sacred prostitution ', and the moral reputation of the Devadasis was very unstable. The British ruling class who did not understand the art began to condemn the Dances as unpure. This then reinforced the concerns of the disapproving Indians. In 1927 Gandhi wrote " There are I'm sorry to say some temples in our midst in this country, Which are no better than brothels " (Jonas, 1992 p59)

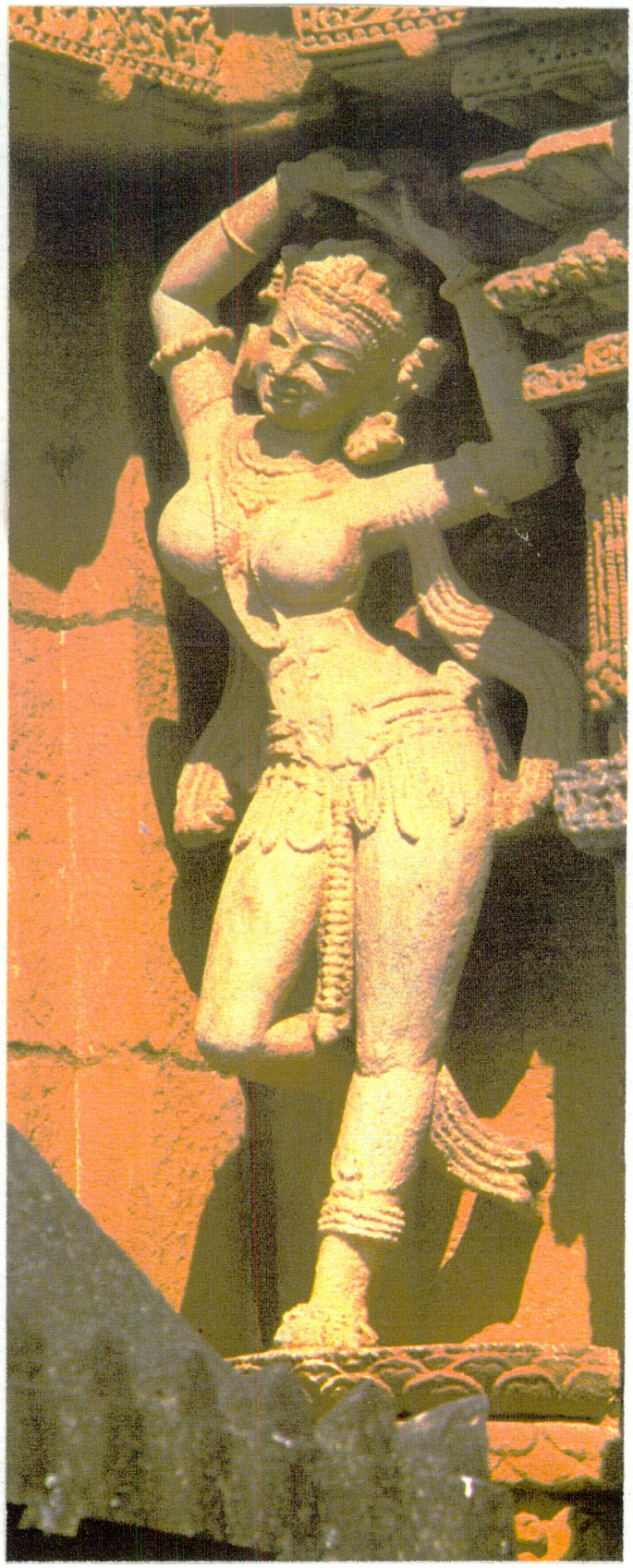


FIG. 20 AND 21 - Sculpture depicting dance, Brahmeshwara

Hindu society turned against these dancers and as a result of social ostracism, some Devadasis gave up there profession. But the art managed to survive carried on by a few dancers and teachers who had been devoted to the art for years and eventually found a secure place in the art-life of Madras under its new name 'Bharata Natyan'. It has developed a new social standing and is now danced in a purely theatrical setting by women of a middle or upper class, as opposed to the temple servants from which it originated. Having viewed a performance of classical Indian, at the Edmund Burke Hall, Trinity Collage, in October '93 (of a form called Odissi), I witnessed the emphasis which is put on accurately communicating a language with the use of gestures not only with the hands and feet but right down to the movements of the eyes and eyebrows. The edges of the dancers feet and her fingers were painted with bright red paint ; the eye is immediately attracted to them and this from the start revealed to me the importance connected with their movements. The elegant and enchanting character of these movements is emphasised by the hypnotic airs which accompany the dance, performed by musicians on the drum, the Veena and a type of violin called the Sarangi. Above the voice of a female singer a man uttered a continuous rhythmical beat which was then exhibited in the dancers movements ; as the dance and rhythm went hand in hand. One of the dances I saw performed, called Swara Chhanda, was danced in praise of the god Shiva. It began with a series of sculptural poses representing the playing of instruments such as the Veena, a drum, a flute and a pair of symbols (FIG. 27) This I felt displayed how the dance and music seem to have developed from one another. The dancer and the drummer play off each other but not in an effort to make a personal statement but to explore the endless combinations of rhythm and dance together. As her feet perform the steps, she herself performs the rhythm as her ankle bells jingle in unison with the drummer.

FIG. 22 and 23 - Performance of Bharata Natyam, which evolved from the Devadasis.

"ODISSI"

Classical Dance from India

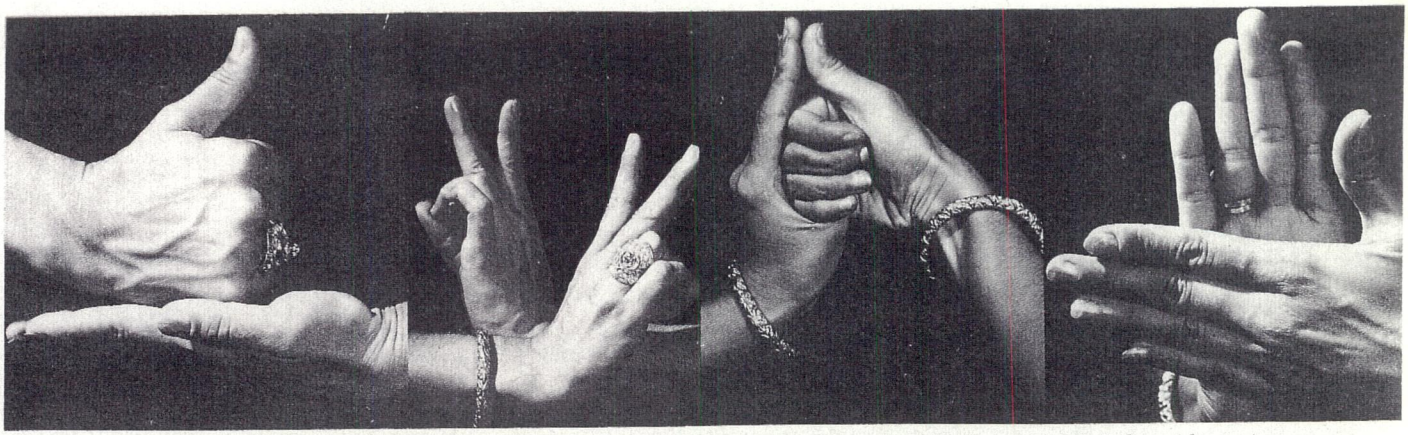
Presented by

THE IRELAND INDIA CULTURAL SOCIETY

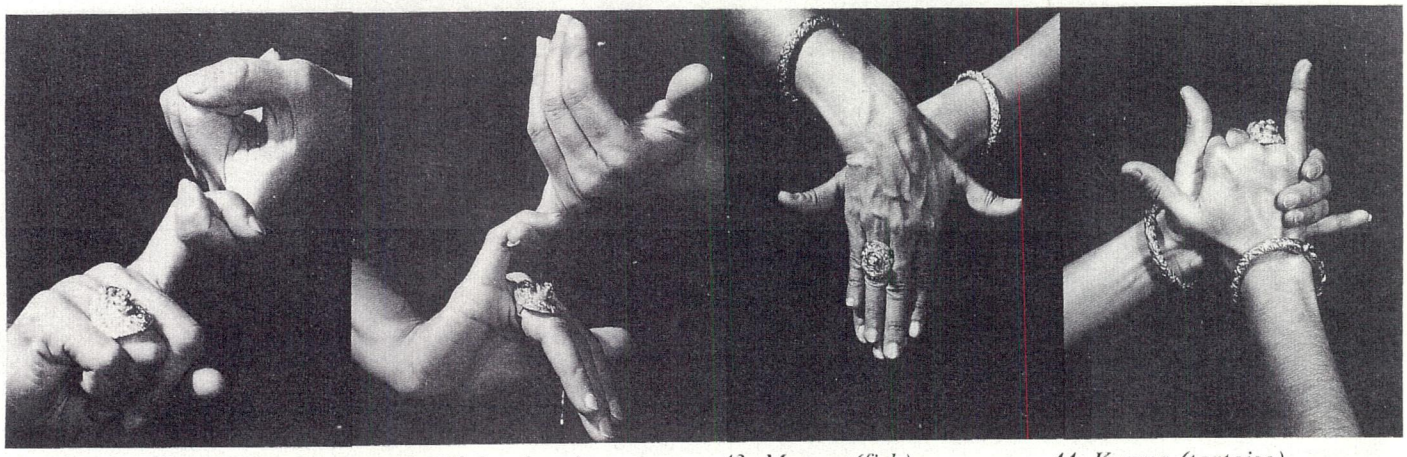
on Tuesday 5th October 1993

at the Edmund Burke Hall, Trinity College, Dublin.

FIG. 24 - Programme cover of performance in Trinity College, 1993



37. Siva-linga (Phallic symbol) *38. Kartari Svastika (crossed scissors)* *39. Sankh (conch shell)* *40. Cakra (discus)*



41. Pasa (noose) *42. Kilaka (bond)* *43. Matsya (fish)* *44. Kurma (tortoise)*

FIG. 25 AND 26 - Feet and hand gestures and sign language.

FIG. 27 - A sequence from Batu Nrityawith poses representing playing a Vina, a Flute and a Manjira

From what I have seen of this classical art, it has remained very similar to what was described and laid down in the scriptures. But not easily, apparently during British rule it suffered such neglect as to nearly have died out completely. Anne Pavlova who travelled to India in 1923 expected to encounter an ancient and most sacred dance form, instead she was confronted by a distorted version practiced by prostitutes. But unlike Irish dance, India had the back up and support of the ancient scriptures and religious devotion to motivate the revival of their dance and following independence, India eagerly readopted its dance. From a comparison of these two dance forms, we have seen how the survival and support of an ancient legacy has played a vital part in keeping these dance forms alive. In India, the religious beliefs agreed with the use of the dancing body in the worship of gods, to aid an exploration into life experiences, has been another contributing factor to its survival. In Ireland the church and moralists have often played an important role in condemning dance, (even outside of the church), led to the decline of the social set dances, which were associated with gaiety and merry making, with preference to the more regimental Ceili dances. Although in both cases, the dance master plays an important role in the training of the dancers, the foundation of this training is very different. In India the training has been taken from the ancient scriptures and has survived down the centuries to become an important part of Indian classical culture. In Ireland however the steps were taken from the spontaneity and innovation of the free dancer of the sets (themselves only dating back to the 15th century). They were standardised and used by the dance master to create new dances which have evolved and are now considered part of our Irish heritage. In both cases we see how the beliefs and objections of a foreign culture have served to repress their dance tradition. India however has managed to recover its dance form the degenerate state of commerciality and put it back on the right track to obtaining a life long tradition.

Ireland on the other hand, I was very disappointed to learn, uses this element of commerciality as a means of keeping the dance alive.

CHAPTER 4

- The adoption of the aristocratic and upper classes from the folk dance repetoir of people considered inferior to themselves. - Looking in particular at the influences of Afro-Americans on American and European dance.

The gentle rustle of chiffon and under skirts as every variation of sequins and feathers whirled past in a multi - coloured blur of dizziness. It was the 1994 Phibsborough Supreme Open Ballroom Dancing Awards, (Grand Hotel, Jan 30th), where the competitors ranged from 6 to 18. The Ballroom was full of eager parents who sat at the side lines and reminded their children to smile as they stood in position and awaited the exact bar of music which prompted them to begin. Each couple moved around the dance floor as if jelled together by the one sense of rhythm. They possess a skill and grace which is envied by the unskilled onlooker, but unfortunately the same effort at originality which is witnessed in the endless variations of ballroom dresses is not made in their performance of the various pre - set ballroom dances. In fact, according to Colm Wynn (Adjudicator) originality is not one of the considerations when judging ballroom dancing, but rather the skill with which the technical steps and rules are carried out. Therefore when a dancer performs the tango it has lost the richness and passion of the original version which first inspired its' popularity. Throughout history we see how constantly the aristocrats and higher classes have adopted the dance of people they consider inferior to themselves. All ballroom dance as far as it can be traced has derived from some sort of folk dance. The Minuet was originally a peasant folk dance of Poitiu introduced in Paris

FIG. 28 - Dancers at the 1994 Phibsborough Supreme Open Ballroom Dancing Awards, (Grand Hotel, Jan 30th)

in 1650. The Waltz stemmed from the landler or folk songs of Germany and the Polka from Bohemia. When they had taken all they could from European dance, the white North Americans turned to the rhythms of the coloured population and they developed the Foxtrot whose rhythm originated from Africa. Since then the rhythms of Latin America have become extremely popular in the ballroom. The Tango from the gauchos (lower classes) of Argentina, the Rumba, the Cha-Cha-Cha, the Samba and most recently came the Paso Doble from Spain. The people who have adapted these dances, are attracted to the rhythms of those who have not been restricted by the imitations of social acceptability in the higher classes.

It appears to me that they take the rhythms and refine the steps to suit their way of coping with expression in a safe way. The original instigators of these dances have not been touched to the same extent by the attitudes of respectability

and so possess a free spirit ; free from the self consciousness associated with what is acceptable in a civilised society. This fusion of dance forms is often a result of the movement, either voluntarily or involuntarily, of people from one society to another. The most dramatic example of this can be seen in North and South America and the Caribbean, where European and African influences combine to create dance forms which were to have a lasting effect on the world. This fusion of cultures was a result of the transatlantic transportation and trading of Africans to work on the sugar and cotton plantations in the New World. It has been estimated that over 11 million people from West and Central Africa were forced onto slave ships where more than half were said to have died. When they reached America the slave owners deprived them of everything that would remind them of their freedom in Africa, to avoid any attempt at rebellion. They were forbidden to practice their customs or religion or to play the drums which was an integral part of their lives, because it was thought that they could communicate with each other through drum beat. But not all dance was forbidden as the slave owners believed that the exercise would keep them healthy and on some occasions the slaves were literally forced to dance for their masters` entertainment. This is exemplified in an entry of the diary of Bennet Barrow , a slave owner , who wrote " January 1 1846..... finding no cotton to trash sent for fiddler and made them dance from 12 till dark " (Long, 1989, p87). On some plantations they were allowed to hold dances at night. Sometimes the master would come down from the big house to watch and there were often competitions and bets on the best dancer. They used their body to replace the beat of the drums , with their feet and hands in the form of the Jig and a slapping and clapping routine called ' patting Juba'. In this way the slaves retained aspects of their own culture, created, through necessity, new forms and mixed them with European style couple dancing, (which they had picked up from observing

parties at the big house), to create a whole new style which belonged to them and which was to dominate the dance floors of the 20th Century. The first unmistakable sign of African and European dance forms fusing was with the advent of the black faced Minstrels. It was first made popular in the 1830's by a man known as 'Jim Crow ' Rice. It began with white men blackening their faces and mocking the black plantation workers. It became the first original American theatre and was certainly responsible for causing a stereotype of plantation blacks to the American audience. With the exception of one man, William Henry Lane : - " Master Juba , Greatest Dancer in the World ", the entire cast was white. After the civil war however, there was an increase in the number of black performers. Of course by now the stereotype and structure of the shows was already set and the black performers had to stick to it but it also meant work for a generation of black dancers and musicians. People like Bert Williams and George Walker, whose dances such as the 'Walk around' and 'the Cakewalk' were to reshape 20th Century popular dance. 'The Cakewalk' which was the first black dance to be passed on to the American general public, just as the whites began to appreciate the rhythm of ragtime. It was a complicated and sophisticated dance, performed by the blacks with apparent great ease. - Footnote (5) By 1920 the T.O.B.A. - (Theatre Owners Booking Association or 'Tough On Black Asses' as it was known) - was formed to link up bookings for black performers. The touring black performers were responsible for a whole new style of entertainment, and also for the emergence of some of the greatest black entertainers. Amongst them was Josephine Baker, who not only made her mark on the American circuit , but became a legend in French theatre. Josephine was motivated by her ambition to escape the poverty and degradation of life for a black girl in St. Louis. She began her career with a group called the Jones Family

FIG. 29 - Bert Williams 1874-1922, playing a blackbird in Forenz Ziegfeld's Follies 1910.

FIG. 30 - The Cakewalk , which became an American ballroom craze of the 1890's

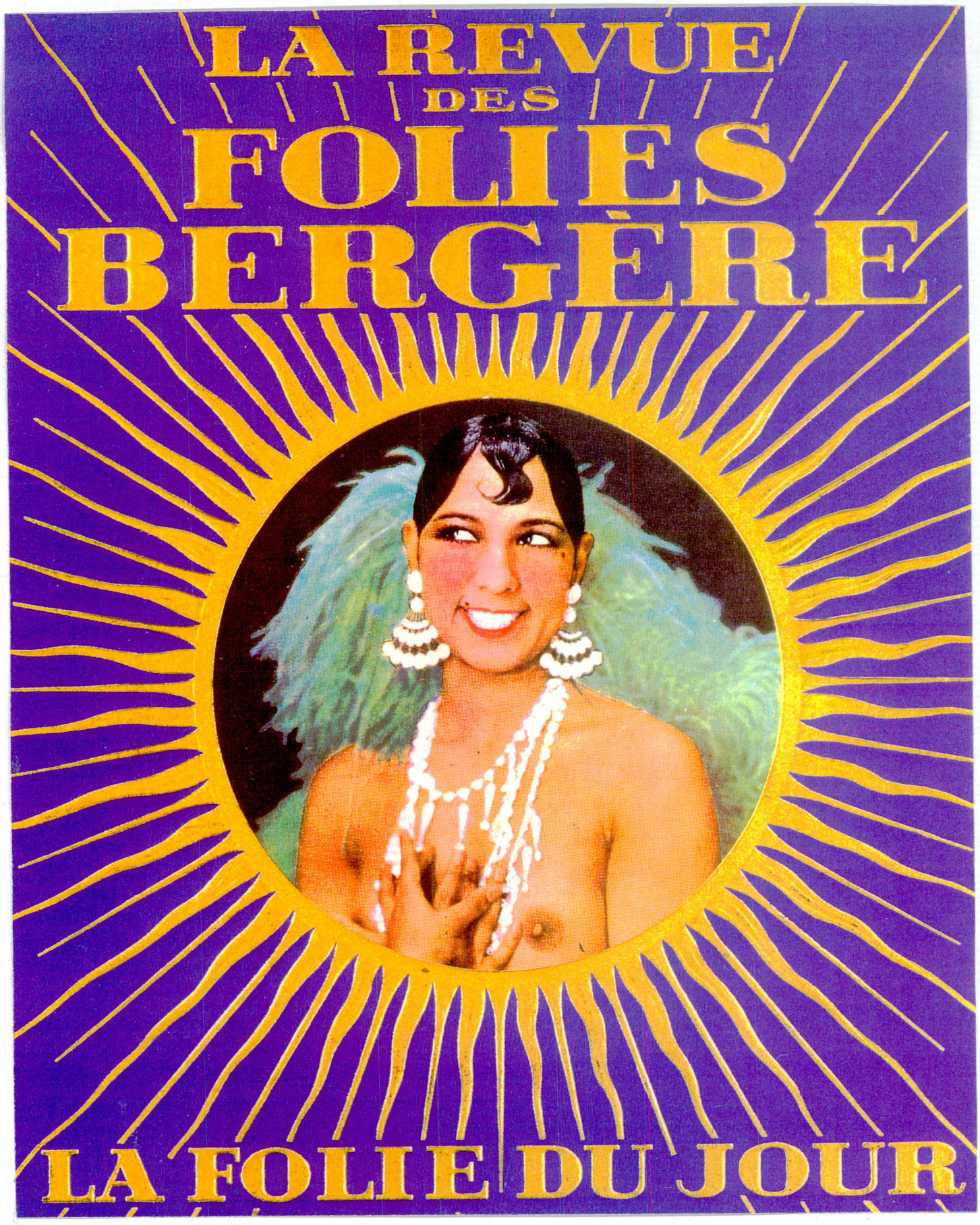


FIG. 31 - Poster for La Revue Des Folies Bergere featuring Josephine Baker

Band and worked her way up the circuit despite the racial prejudices found even within black productions. This is seen in an advertisement for actors in a Minstrel show which wrote :

WANTED coloured performers , men and women . Men who can double in band and orchestra or band and stage . Real black men and yellow women. (O' Conner , 1988 , p8)

But Josephine won over the audiences with her comic dances and she became known as the ' comedy chorus girl'. It wasn't until she travelled to France that her talents and beauty were truly recognised. The French at this time were fascinated with African art and music. Cubist artists had been inspired by African sculpture - (FIG. 32) and composers such as Debussy and Ravel had used instruments and rhythms of Afro - American music as early as 1908, but it was not until the 1920's that the Parisians became aware of this music . In Josephine's appearance in Le Revue Negre the audiences were to witness the coming together of two elements ; the sounds and rhythms of jazz and the beauty behind a free primitive art, as interpreted by cubism and as seen in the body and movements of Josephine Baker. The fact that Josephine had never set foot in Africa was irrelevant , she fitted nicely into the prevailing fashion. In fashion drawings of the time, the ideal figure and silhouette, not to mention cropped hair and garconne look, was one that Baker epitomised. - (FIG. 35) Josephine was to become the centre of attention at Le Revue Negre and an illustrator Paul Colin was commissioned to draw Josephine for the posters and programme covers where she was convinced to pose nude (FIG. 36) . This then led to the idea of her doing the performance nude , a new role which she took on with great confidence in 'Danse Savage '. She became the first Parisian performer to sing dance and appear nude. (FIG. 37) She made a sensation, sometimes to the extent that people came to see

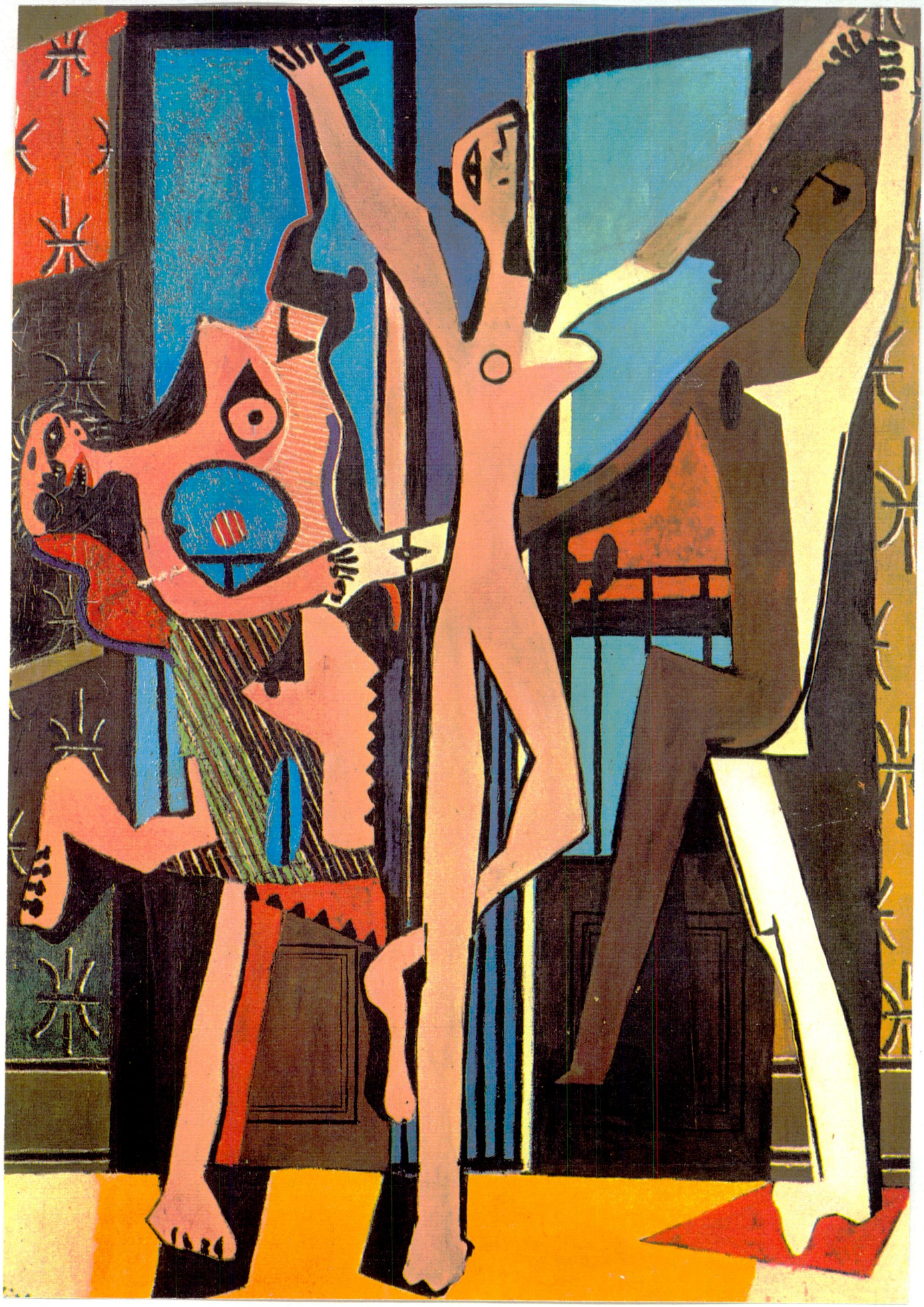


FIG. 32 - The Three Dancers, Picasso, 1925, showing the primitive influence of Africa on the Cubist movement.

FIG. 33 - Picasso's Les Demoiselles D'avignon when compared with FIG. 34 - Martha Graham, we can see that the influence of Cubism went beyond the comedy dance theatres and is seen in the angular movements of this classical dancer.

FIG. 35 - Illustration by Chanel

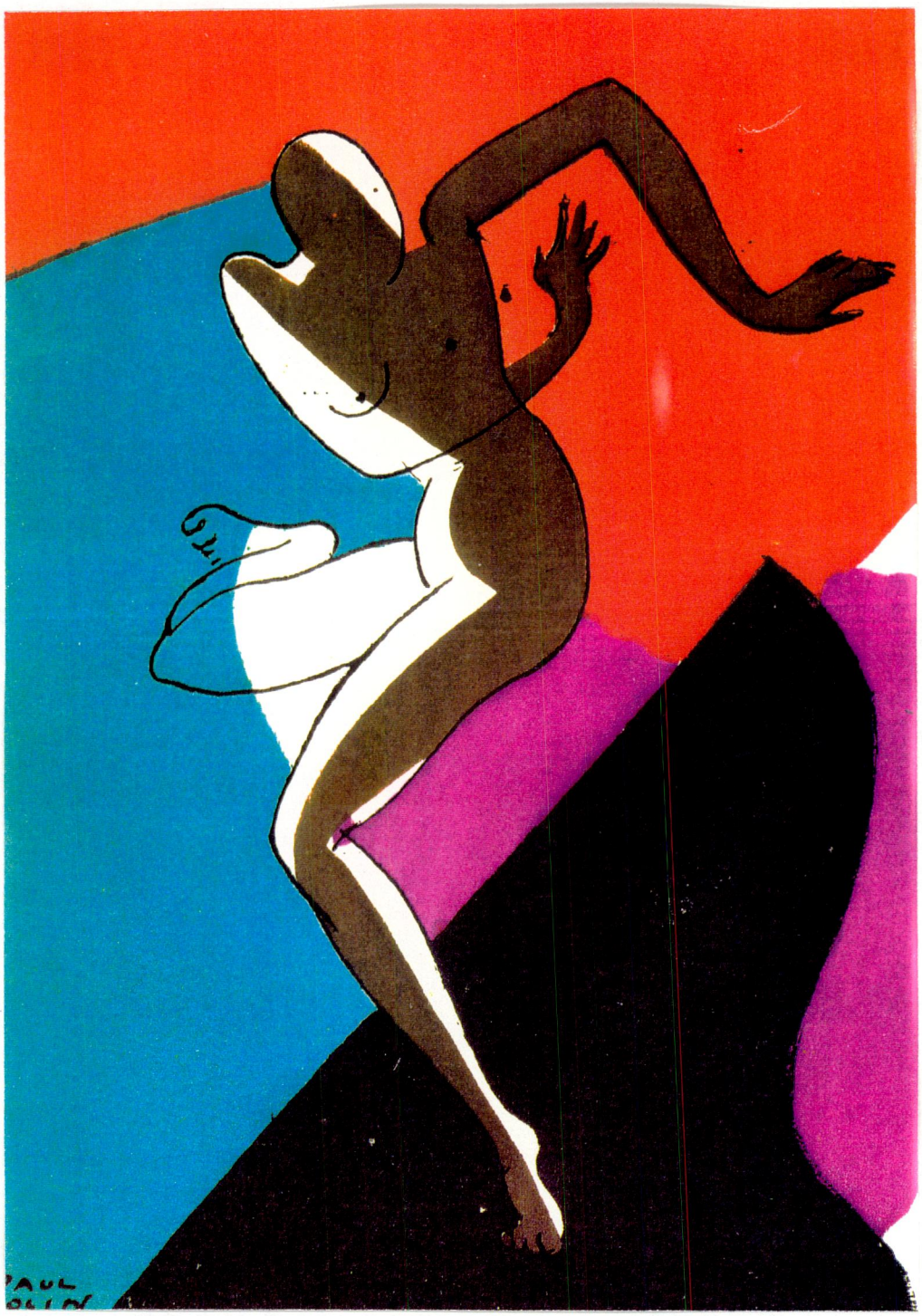


FIG. 36 - Josephine in La Revue Negre as seen by Paul Colin.

her repeatedly. Roger Kemp in 'Liberte' once said of Josephine -

" Josephine's success is because she is so foreign: from the virgin forest or the sugar-cane plantations." (O'Connor, 1988, p. 89)

Other times people stormed out of the theatre disgusted, claiming it was 'madness, anarchy and pandering to baser instinct'. (O'Connor, 1988, p. 35) Josephine was often compared with Isadora Duncan by contemporary critics who likened the freedom of movement Duncan had displayed to that of Josephine ; but Duncan did not respond favourably as she wrote, " It seems monstrous that any one should believe that jazz rhythm expresses America." (O'Connor, 1988, p. 43) It was this erotic, primitive character which the public found so appealing as she brought such dances as 'the Charleston' and 'the Blackbottom' to the fore. These dances greatly effected the way that women of this time dressed. Hemlines suddenly became shorter and Elizabeth Kendall wrote " Every smart dress was now a dancing dress, simply to talk about the cut of a dress was to describe dancing". (O' Connor , 1988, p. 43) But yet again the freedom and movement they admired so much in black dance was omitted from the popular version of it. Her biographer O' Connor quoted Josephine as saying -

"The Europeans had seen the Charleston danced by Negroes, they then went ahead and devised their own version of it, which was very well but hardly resembled the original..... it means dancing with hips together, one foot crossing the other sticking out the behind and shaking your hands - For too long people have hidden their behinds, they exist I see no reason to be ashamed of them". (O' Connor , 1988, p. 42-43)

Throughout the history of black influence on dance the Europeans have watched blacks dance complicated , polyrhythmic improvisations and steps, with an ease of quick smooth, apparently effortless and free movements and have translated

FIG 37 - Josephine in 'Danse Savage'

these dances, into a series of very rigid steps which involve a lot of jerky prancing and strutting. Beginning with 'the Turkey Trot', 'the Grizzly Bear ', 'the Lindy Hop' through to 'the Twist' , the blacks took over the dance floors and took pride in owning something which the whites could neither possess nor take away from them. It was this feeling of superiority which made them strive to perfect and make even more complicated , the dances which " came out of the blood and sweat of Harlem ". (documentary on Dancing, B.B.C. , 1993) The Savoy Ballroom was opened. It belonged to the blacks but white people came, creating a merging of black and white that had never existed before. They attempted to keep up with the effortless gliding performed by the blacks but their attempts were stiff and jerky and were described as "uncool " by dancers of this time (documentary on Dancing, B.B.C. , 1993) .

These differences in the way that people dance go way back to their ancestors. The Africans have a tendency to dance with their upper body directed toward the ground, in a sense of being in touch with the earth. The Europeans on the other hand if you look at their folk dances, dance with their upper body upright and stiff. In Africa the way a person walks denotes their station in life. In West Africa the Asante consider 'cool' to be a very desirable state . It is exhibited by the chief who dances to cool himself. The term ' cool ' like the dances which fulfiled this desired state , on a Saturday night in the Savoy, was taken from the Afro- Americans. Moralists saw these dances as rude and improper, they exhibited a sense of freedom and violated many peoples ideas of etiquette and decorum. People such as the Castles set up schools in an attempt to rectify the situation, setting guidelines which state, " Do not shake the hips. Do not twist the body . Do not flounce the elbows. Do not pump the arms. Do not hop". (Jonas, 1991, p. 175) But there were too many 'do nots' for the young society , who had already experienced the freedom of black dance, and young

FIG. 38 A 'Lindy Hop' competition.

people continued to tune into the latest black crazes. Black radio stations grew in popularity and white artist like Gerry Lee Lewis , were greatly influenced by the wilder black style. Upon discovery of young people's love for this type of song and dance the "Buddy Dean Show " was aired and became a huge success. Here they filmed young people dancing to the latest hits, but the very race that brought this type of dance into popularity and were really the basis for the shows success, were only permitted to dance one night in the month and not on the same night as white kids. This caused some

FIG. 39 - Vernon and Irene Castle

dispute with human rights activist, who demanded that the show be racially integrated. But rather than integrate they cancelled the whole show. Racial discrimination of this nature was, in a way counteracted by the very fact that by the 60's 'the Twist' took over the dance floors which separated the structured couple dancing and created a platform for improvisation. This meant liberation not only from the rules of who leads in dance but it also meant that it was no longer necessary to learn the steps. African improvisation had taken over from European style touch dancing for all stations of society, blacks and whites. Black Americans have not only managed to retain the essence of their African heritage, despite all efforts to deprive them of this right, but they have created traditions which have become part of the essence of America. So we see how society takes the pure expressive media of dance and for fear of the power it can have over people, they strip it of its spontaneity and restrict it with rules and instead of expressing the freedom of our responses it is used to constrict society to one way of thinking and acting.

CONCLUSION

So at the end of a long journey through the different countries, cultures and eras of dance what have I discovered about the function of dance in society ?

In my opinion there are two types of dance ; that practiced by those considered primitive - in the form of an uninhibited release of energy and responses - and that practiced by societies or members of society whose sophistication and constant analysis of human behaviour has led them to believe that the freedom expressed in primitive dance is dangerous and seriously threatens their social morals.

I have also discovered that where there is a merging of these two elements (primitive and sophisticated) it can have a number of different effects on the dance. Firstly it can have the obverse effect of the loss of culture. In an effort to take control, the more sophisticated society attempts to deprive the more primitive culture of its beliefs and traditions. On the other hand it often strengthens the repressed society's interest in their own culture, in their attempt to hold onto the last traces of what is rightfully theirs. It also results in the creation of new dance traditions - where both society's are influenced by each other and use these influences in different ways. The function of dance in both these society's (although often they reside in the same country) remains completely different.

The function of dance in a more sophisticated society is generally to repress any traces of primitive tendencies in the freedom of expression and movements. In some cases where extremely moralistic attitudes prevail, they attempted to ban dance altogether. Even in India where the dancing body is accepted and promoted in their religious beliefs ; this dance follows the rules and guidelines of the scriptures.

On the other side of the coin dance in Ireland, in a desperate effort to revive and save its heritage, has adopted such slick and disciplined forms, that there is now more emphasis

on its success as a commercial and competitive sport, than on its being used as an integral part of that society's life, so that everyone can experience and learn what is considered their national heritage. Sometimes I find it difficult to decide which is worse, those who attempt to censor and refine dance or those who abuse it in an effort to make it more popular. The overall lesson I have learned from my exploration into dance is that it is impossible to give an overall synopsis of the function of dance in society. These functions change with the different attitudes, beliefs and influences of each society. It is these elements which have produced an endless variety of dance traditions from all over the world and it was the extremely varied character and originality of each dance tradition which made my journey into and exploration of dance an interesting one.

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FOOTNOTES

(1) Legend of Theseus and Minotaur -
The legend tells of the Minotaur, half man, half bull, who was produced through a series of unnatural couplings. The bull was brought by Herakles from Crete and let loose on the plains of Argos where it killed hundreds of men include the King of Crete's
son, Androgeus. In requital for the death of his son, the King ordered the Athenians to send seven young boys and girls every ninth year to Crete, where, in the Labyrinth, the Minotaur waited to devour them. The third time this was due to happen, Theseus in Athens, through pity for the parents whose children were chosen, offered himself as one of the victims. Eventually Theseus and his companions arrived in Crete and there fell in love with the Kings' daughter, Ariadne. Before leaving Crete Daedolus gave Ariadne a magic ball of thread and taught her to enter and leave the Labyrinth. She gave this ball to Theseus and instructed him to follow it until it led to the Minotaur which he could kill on the spot.

(2) Legend of Eurynome
Eurynome danced, setting a wind in motion. This she rubbed between her hands creating the serpent Ophion. Eurynome danced to keep warm more and more wildly until Ophion grew lustful at the sight of her. He coiled around her and coupled with her. Later taking the form of a dove she laid a universal egg from which tumbled all things which exist.

(3) Association between Robin Hood and the story of The Robin and The Wren -

The association was made through the fact that Hood has the same meaning as 'Hod' or the log out from the sacred oak which was burned on the yule fire at midwinter. The Robin was believed to reside in this log and Robin himself was believed to have escaped up a chimney in the form of a Robin and killed his rival Bran the 'Lord of Misrule'. He disguised himself as the goldcrest wren, but always he was caught and killed by Robin.

(4) - Firstly during the Flight of The Earls, it was ordered that our ancient Irish literature be destroyed and then after the defeat of James II, the laying down of the Penal Laws' deprived Catholics from speaking the Irish Language and practising Irish customs and stopped their children from receiving an education in order to achieve these goals. It wasn't until the second half of the 18th century that the laws about education were relaxed.

(5) - Often there were competitions where 'the cakewalk' was danced with a glass of water balanced on their head and the person who spilt the least amount of water was the winner.

APPENDICES -

1) Interview with Dr. John P.Cullinane - Refer to enclosed cassette tape.

John Cullinane is a science graduate of the National University of Ireland.
In addition to his university qualification , he is a qualified Irish Dance Master (T.C.R.G.) and adjudicator (A.D.C.R.G.). His dancing pupils won various major awards. He himself had adjudicated Irish dancing in seven countries and is vice-chairman of the Irish Dance Commission.