The Effects of the Postmodern Era on Contemporary Dance

By Lea Rose Allbaugh
Postmodern Era

Postmodernism:

The 20th century style of art that separates itself from the dramatic expression of the modern era, to practices and methods that question and explore the mundane.

- Judson Dance Theatre
- Improvisation
- Exploration, experimentation, and collaboration
- Based on everyday movement
- Anyone and anything can be dance
Contemporary Dance

“Contemporary:”

Blending of genres; when you don’t know what to call a style of dance; what is considered “new.”

Contemporary:

Can be characterized by what is contemporary:

- Undefinable
- Open to artistic choice
- Of the contemporary temporal moment
Is Postmodern Dance Contemporary Dance?

Thesis:

The experimental approaches taken during the era of postmodern dance have resulted in lasting aesthetic effects on what is now considered contemporary dance.

- Understand the aesthetic principles
- Analyze artistic expression
- Compare and contrast
- Seeking to define
Postmodern vs. “Contemporary”

“...everything in visual art, music, and dance was about to explode in different directions and reinvent the terms and the boundaries of artmaking.”

-Yvonne Rainer
Postmodern vs. “Contemporary”

“Do you think you have to understand contemporary dance to be able to appreciate what is being shown to you?”

-Suse Tietjen
# Comparing and Contrasting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Start standing</td>
<td>● Silence vs. music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Pedestrian movements like walking</td>
<td>● Contemporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Pedestrian clothes</td>
<td>○ More fluidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Simple stage setup</td>
<td>○ Impulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Pace of movement</td>
<td>○ Successive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● No clear movement vocabulary</td>
<td>○ Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● No eye contact with audience</td>
<td>● Postmodern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Isolated movements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Same energy level throughout</td>
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Sally Banes: “Judson Rides Again!”

- Contributions at Judson Dance Theatre led to the creation of “new dance”
- Paved the way for new choreographic and performance approaches

Ramsay Burt: “The Judson Tradition at the Start of a New Century”

- Dance is open ended, should continue to evolve, and shouldn’t be held back or tied to history
- Dance is highly subjective and cultural events evolve; embrace the avant garde

Beatrice Volbea: “Contemporary Dance Between Modern and Postmodern”

- The intellectual process should be emphasized over the end result
- “Contemporary” cannot be pinned down because it is always changing, and is therefore arbitrary
- Dance/art will mirror society
What does this mean for us?

At UNC Charlotte

- Improvisation and contact improvisation
- Choreography classes
  - The process/choreographic structures
- Theoretical classes
  - Questioning what dance is or is not
- This generation’s postmodern dance
- “Contemporary” is undefinable
Bibliography


