

The Art of the Dance

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Abstract: What started since man/woman made their dwellings in caves spread. It absorbs most of our lives, music, but most importantly, dance. This methodological writing intends to expose are the origins of the dance. Furthermore, focusing on the importance of these dances worldwide and why in human history, many dances can be invented; however, few can reach a status that literally conquers the world. A society will always invent/make a dance known around the globe every century or two. The dances showcased are the following five: waltz, tango, cha-cha, samba and rock-n-roll.

Keywords: dance, waltz, tango, cha-cha, samba and rock-n-roll.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Art of the Dance is a basic essay or composition to focus on the five main dances that have influenced our global society.

Within these dances, you will notice a commonality that cannot be avoided. In this basic sociological and investigative paper, I intended to expose how in one way or another cultures are united; especially, we are all united by something called, the dance. But it's also a reference to explain how dances were invented/developed every 100 years or more.

The steps are always in pairs and easy to do.

Most feel that dancing is too complicated to perform. However, dancing has been in our genes since the beginning of the Homosapien period.

The following dances will be exposed with references. These references don't only showcase a way of life in some cultures. They are eclectic and attractive around the world to most others.

Have you ever mentioned the words: tango, cha-cha, waltz, samba or rock-n-roll and see how people smile, wanting to enjoy the moment?

Well, these are the dances which shall be exposed and I hope it can be an attractive way to not only learn about the history of these dances. It can also be a way to achieve a higher comprehension; while feeling inspired to learn them in a private, public or self-taught setting.

2. THE ART OF THE DANCE

Here's for all of you to enjoy this essay, 'The Art of the Dance'! A somewhat historical composition, with its five most distinguished dances: waltz, tango, cha-cha, samba and rock-n-roll.

The art of the dance can begin with many conditions. When people with their bodies decide to explore what's going on around them. This nature to flow with rhythm began since the homosapiens came to be 200-thousand years before.

Possibly the rhythm of a drumbeat, when people got it from the hide of an animal hunted and placed over a hollow piece of wood. As soon as people became enthralled by this magical spell of the beat. It was only then, they decided to move to this heart-pounding fashion of dance.

Men and women have existed for over 200 millennium. But for most of human history, it has been fought over where the art of the dance began. It is in this humble amateur-historian's opinion, that the dance elements began possibly in the Central African plains. Later, this style of drumbeat and dance extended into Asia and Europe. In the latter part of history or the last 50-thousand years, it spread nicely across the Americas.

Humans, when they started moving from the caves into huts/houses and into the agricultural way of life, decided to create dances to enjoy the blessings of the harvest, etc. Whether it was instruments or hand clapping, people always invented ways to manifest movement.

The dances that we will deal with today, will be in reference and focus for the most part in the 'new' world of the Americas.

The dance spread neatly throughout the world. But people needed first to invent instruments to be able to dance to these magical tunes.

At first, during the origins of man/woman, this took place as the 'hunter-gatherers' came to be in their respective communities. These groups of people felt the need first for shelter; therefore, they searched for cover from the elements. Later, they decided to look for something called warmth to warm their anatomies. This came through the invention of fire. It was then and only then, as they hunted, cooked and ate to their total satisfaction--when they had satisfied the basic needs.

Moving along the way, once people were satisfied, it was easier to focus on the daily pleasures of life. This was when cave dwelling began, their art decorated the caves and musical instruments were made not only to pass the time; but it was certainly a way to enjoy living!

Human beings continued with the finer things in life, and here was where in caves they extended their harmonic needs. The people gathered, made music, danced and invented the first steps to a world that's still in evolution today.

Dancing wasn't only to please the senses, but to calm the spirit from the dangers of everyday life. When the community came around, they could impress each other with their moves. These awesome body movements were invented or made to showoff in beauty. It was a way to impress the person one liked, do a ceremonial courtship [which is almost the same today], have fun between friends while the fermented drinks were consumed; and also another way to gather with one's nemesis. The latter was the way without having to kill each other and dance [passionately] the night away!

Still people gathered around the warm fire to be mesmerized by the hypnotic feelings of the dance. That's why today we consider the dance hypnotically-sexy.

As dance evolved, then, according to the respective localities, regions and countries--dances were divided into styles. It went further when European explorers went into the 'New World' and brought their cultures. Dances then were exchanged between the local inhabitants, Mesoamericans and Native Americans gave to the newcomers their cultures and vice-versa.

In this research, I'm here not only to uncover the history of the dance. But how the dances progressed. Therefore, this writing will be dealing below these lines with five categories of dances which have culturally impacted the world: waltz, tango, cha-cha, samba and rock-n-roll.

Dancing became popular after the age of exploration. It became a worldwide phenomena; which has continued to grow in the last 300 years, with the modern age.

In contemporary times, dance has seeped into the way we feel about music and life. That's why presently we have tunes like: 'Don't forget to dance'¹ and 'The Politics of Dancing'².

Now, let's further explore the following five dances for your enjoyment.

Waltz:

Controversially disputed between several countries in Europe. However, where did waltz really evolve? Its 'birth' is highly contested between countries like: Russia, Austria, Germany, France and England.

Developed over a period of 300 years. Waltz³ concentrates in a four-step square movement. Almost going in a circle, where the man leads and in a spin, twirls the female.

However, why is waltz so famous?

It's because it was invented and played during a historical-period called, Romanticism⁴. This was one of the best romantic periods in history and also, in was unrealistically portrayed for lovers on how to behave during a courtship. This courtship was supposed to last at least two years before the man proposed his hand in marriage.

Waltz began as one of the best dances for the elite to focus on the romantic aspects between people and hopefully, how their love would last forever.

Yes, waltz is rhythmically classical, one considered part of the 'old guard' and enjoyed by a new generation to help in the methods of romance through a Minuit.

Tango:

When people recall tango in contemporary society, the images which are conjured come from movies like: 'Schindler's List'⁵ and 'Scent of a Woman'⁶. The latter showed the magnificent steps of *Al Pacino* dancing the tango in a fashion few can conquer. But the most memorable thing is the song: created, composed and sung by the late, *Carlos Gardel*. This song is known as 'Por una cabeza'⁷ (roughly translated, 'By a head').

Tango is actually almost 170-years old. Born in the Argentinean steps of Buenos Aires. Tango started simple enough for the elite, but later became a part of the common peoples' lives.

By the way, when tango began, it was extremely controversial. It was considered literally like 'having sex with your clothes on'. Since most often, a man and woman danced joined at the hip!

With four steps backward and four steps forward, tango was made with spins and turns in a crisscross of leg movements.

When tango came into the 20th Century, sadly, it almost had disappeared. It was thanks to *Gardel* who brought it back to life for Argentinean and the world to enjoy in the 1930s. But tango literally 'caught on fire' after *Gardel's* death in a plane crash in Colombia (1935).

Today, thanks to this tango superstar, tango is stronger than ever; not only in Argentina but around the world.

Cha-cha:

Not to be confused with ballroom dancing. Cha-cha began in Cuba in 1896. From cha-cha, dances like mambo and salsa evolved.

With two-passionate rhythmic steps back and forth. The turns aren't only for the female, but for the male.

This fast and strong Latin beat was enjoyed throughout the Caribbean. It spread through Central and South America.

The cultural phenomena and impact started when this dance progressed from cha-cha into salsa. Songs like 'Lagrimas Negras'⁸ ('Black Tears') sung by the deceased singer, *Celia Cruz* gained international notoriety. It was first recorded in 1929 by *Trio Matamoros*. But what *Celia* did for salsa was bring it into the international-spot light for the next 50 years. Songs like, 'Rie y Lloro'⁹ ('Laugh and Cry') reflect on the singer's attitude towards life; that no matter what, life with its sour moments can still be festive.

Men like *Cachao*¹⁰ brought the sounds of salsa into a jazzier version that still remains supreme worldwide. Listen to one of his sounds and you'll understand what's to feel that funky-fiery rhythm; which is a cool and fun dance to also listen too.

Take the sounds from the *Gypsy Experience*, 'Woman del Callao' and you'll notice that it literally pays homage to composers like *Cachao*. It has that gorgeous and deep-Latin bass added to it.

Samba:

The Brazilian born dance came into the international spectrum thanks to *Carmen Miranda*¹¹. This "Brazilian Bombshell" was born originally in Portugal and she did something spectacular in the near three-decade career before her death of a heart attack.

She brought it all the way from Brazil to the 1930s and 1940s Hollywood. Sadly, even becoming herself a caricature of her times and often joked about or imitated in the United States. No matter what, what she left behind was a grand legacy of dance and Brazilian culture for all those interested in learning something new.

This dance in a basic two step beat is often sexy, brutal (in a good way) and quite rapid for those who want to enjoy it! Most who often learn it, do it during the period of Carnival. This two-week festivity back in Brazil throws the nation into a party of parades, costumes and dances.

Even portrayed on Chinese T.V. shows like, ‘Divas Hit the Road’ (花儿与少年)¹². It was sweet to see something so gorgeous throughout the streets of *Rio de Janeiro*.

Ricky Martin’s 2011 hit song, ‘Samba’¹³ tells what this dance is all about. In cooperation with *Claudia Leitte*, he ‘belted-out’ this raw and sexy music in song, as well as dance.

It’s a hip movement of hedonistic pleasures. One to not necessarily focus on the feet, but its magnetic visualization of the moving hips.

That’s why samba is loved, because it’s a dance for parties. But never to forget, it is also thanks to “The Brazilian Bombshell” known as *Carmen Miranda*.

Rock-n-Roll:

Back in the days of *Ella Fitzgerald*¹⁴ and when Rhythm and Blues (R&B) hit its peak, another form would make everybody’s head turn and body twirl. Rhythm and Blues had come from the Deep South of the United States. Some even stated that, it was invented by the African-Americans slaves, during the period of the American Civil War (1861 - 1865).

However, a new form of music grew popular with the tunes of *Chuck Berry*¹⁵ and ‘The King of Rock-n-Roll’, *Elvis Presley*¹⁶. Another fact deeply disputed in the American culture. African-Americans do believe that it was Mister Berry who first ‘belted out’ rock-n-roll and later it was Elvis who came to follow in his footsteps. Whether we believe in this theory or not, we still have to give its proper due to the African-American culture. For always redefining the songs and dances according to: the decade, era and generation.

Rock-n-roll with its fast spins and turns came to symbolize the best of the 1950s American society and culture. Two-basic steps and some even say, it has a foundation from dances like the ‘Jitterbug’¹⁷, that came to be by the 1920s and popularized till the end of World War II.

From R&B came Rock-n-Roll.

Later, it came to be a strong accentuation of guitar and bass. As in its origins, this beat became stronger with the passing of time. From Rock-n-Roll came: psychedelic rock, disco, heavy metal, punk, glam rock, new wave, electronic music, hip-hop, rap and the sounds of grunge. The latter with its depressive sounds which came from the West Coast and Seattle, Washington State (U.S.A.).

Among all of these styles, hip-hop stood out for the sharp contrast movements of the hips from side to side. It all began in the Bronx, New York City (1979). Thanks again to the African-American influence in the U.S. culture. For this simple reason, hip-hop and rap styles have meshed so well together throughout the better part of the last four decades.

Rock-n-roll is definitely here to stay and hasn’t shown any signs of slowing down since its conception nearly 70-years before.

3. CONCLUSION

Other than the common traits we all share or hold with other societies and cultures. One bonding factor through time and evolution has been the way people socialize, relate and dance.

In truth, it’s my theory expressed in this paper, that most dances which come down through history are seldom few and carry on throughout generations. Great dances which receive international recognition come or are developed every 100 years or more. It takes a full century or two to come out with a great concept which will stay around long after, and like they say, ‘There are built to last!’

To prove my point, the evolution of the dance took thousands of years. Starting since the stone age in the caves and later befalling unto the agricultural lifestyle.

With this rhythm came styles like: the belly dance (Middle East) and centuries later to accentuate further, it was Flamenco from Andalusia’s southern Spain in the 1500s.

Waltz impacted not only royal society and its nobles, but the rest of Europe in the 1700s.

Nothing came from the old world, till the new one invented tango in the 1850s.

Then, it was the Afro-Caribbean societies which came about with salsa, cha-cha and mambo (Cuba). These literally conceived in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

Samba hit the mark not only in Brazilian society, but outwardly after the 1930s/1940s; and as expressed before, it was Carmen Miranda who brought the best of it to Hollywood. Even with the prejudices of the times, Samba has proven itself and it's here to stay! It's popular today not only in the U.S., but throughout Asia.

Rock-n-roll like Samba were almost developed together, hand-in-hand and in the same historical period.

The dance which continues to inspire youths is hip-hop. This style hasn't only stayed in America, but presently has evolved into K-Pop (from South Korea).

Then, my question is the following, what's the next big thing? Well, we'll just have to wait to find out!

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