

**The Lively Arts  
Fall Semester 2009  
Topic Guide**

Topic #9

**DANCE: THE DESIGN OF SPACE IN TIME**

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Professor Paul Dennis

*Paul Dennis* is a professor of dance at UMass Amherst. He earned his B.F.A. from The Juilliard School, and M.F.A. & Certificate in Arts Management from the Purchase College, State University of New York. A former member of the José Limón Dance Company, he restaged Limón and Doris Humphrey masterpieces for the 2006 New York City season. Paul has served as guest artist/faculty at Mt. Holyoke College, Amherst College, Ridgefield Dance Conservatory, and Trinity College, and as guest director for The White Mountains Summer Dance Festival. He was appointed at UMass in 2007.

**Dance: The Creative Process**

Dance is a collaborative effort. This collaboration is the foundation of the work that you see on stage. There are five fundamental production elements involved with the creation of a work of dance. The descriptions below should give you some insight into what is involved.

***The Dance:*** The choreographer is the creator of the dance, choosing the sequence of dance steps and the style of their execution. In creating a dance the choreographer has ideas, concepts, images and emotions that he/she wants to convey to the audience. The choreographer makes all of the artistic decisions regarding what the work will consist of.

In a company such as the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company the body of work that is performed was predominately choreographed by Artistic Director Bill T. Jones.

With a company such as the Limon Dance Company, the work performed is commissioned from many sources and thus is called a repertory dance company.

The choreographer works with the dancers in rehearsal from two to eight weeks to teach the dance and to perfect the execution of the steps.

***The Music:*** Many choreographers commission a new piece of music from a composer.

Sometimes, the choreographer selects an existing piece of music that inspires them or represents the images or concepts of the dance.

***The Costumes:*** A costume designer creates the designs for the costumes. The designer works very closely with the choreographer to ensure that the choreographer's vision is reflected in the costumes. They choose the fabric, colors and the best method of construction that will allow the dancers to move easily. Once the designs are completed and the dancers are measured by the wardrobe staff, the measurements and designs are sent to a costume construction company for assembly.

***The Set:*** The set designer creates the designs for props and sets. Most sets create the decor for the dance. Props are items that the dancers use in the dance. The props and sets should reflect the choreographer's vision and complement the choreography. Props can range from the umbrella,

stools and fans in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* to the wooden bench used in Doris Humphrey's *Day on Earth*.

**The Lighting:** The lighting designer creates the design using lights, color and special effects. Most dances use many lights at once to create the mood on stage. This designer also works very closely with the choreographer and all the other designers to create an atmosphere that enhances the dance. The lighting designer has to ensure that his/her ideas will coincide with the choreographer's vision. Once the idea is developed, it has to be put into a written format: the lighting plot. This plot informs the lighting technicians where the lights should be hung and how they are wired.

### **The Dancer**

In creating a dance the choreographer manipulates the fundamental elements of time, space, and energy to provide the shades of expression that the dancer reveals. While performing a dance, the dancer might ask themselves the following questions:

- **Space-** "In what manner do I approach space?"
- **Time-** "When do I need to complete the action?"
- **Energy-** "How much force will I use to execute this movement?"

## **GLOSSARY OF DANCE TERMS**

**Ballet** - a dance form which started in the royal courts of Europe; the body is held mostly upright and the legs are turned out from the hip; uses five basic positions of the feet; uses French as its language.

**Modern dance** - a means of expression that is different from ballet; uses the body with a wider range of motion, the legs turned parallel or turned in; feet can be flexed and the back rounded; head is not always held erect; there are many different modern dance techniques.

**Horton** - created by Lester Horton; a modern dance technique that explores how many different ways the body can move. He named these movements Studies. In the Horton technique, the dancer tries to use as much space as possible: turning, bending and jumping sideways, backward and even upside down.

**Graham** - created by Martha Graham; a dance technique that is based on the principle of contraction and release, movement which is similar to the act of breathing, creating a current of energy through the body; back appears rounded in a contraction and the chest is lifted in a release; movement itself is dramatic and expressive.

**Humphrey/Limon** - created by Doris Humphrey and further developed by Jose Limon; is based on the body's natural rhythm of breath- inhalation and exhalation, and the natural sequence of fall and recovery that takes place in everyday movement

**Dunham** - a technique created by Katherine Dunham; a blend of the Caribbean, West African and Afro-American folk patterns of movement and rhythms encompassing the movements of the indigenous folk

patterns of these cultures. The technique also employs the mediums of ballet, modern, jazz and basic folk patterns.

**Jazz** - a style of movement that grew out of American jazz music; uses the hips more freely than ballet or modern dance; there are many different kinds of jazz styles.

**Tap** - a type of dance characterized by the rapid tapping of the toes and heel on the floor; generally done in shoes fitted with cleats or metal plates to emphasize the beats.

**Solo** - any performance by one person.

**Duet** - any performance by two people.

**Ensemble** - the united performance of an entire group.

**Repertoire** - the list of works that a company is prepared to perform.

**Choreographer** - a person who composes dance works.

**Repertory company** - a dance company that performs many types of works by many different choreographers.

#### **Reminders:**

- Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, 11/5, 7:30pm, FAC Concert Hall  
Response due at lecture, 11/18
- No class/lecture 11/11
- Avanti Plus playing Mozart's *Grand Partita for Wind Instruments*, 11/17, 8pm, Bezanson  
May be used as classical music alternate event or extra credit option
- Quiz 5 in lecture 11/18
- *Marta the Divine* 11/19, 11/20, 8pm and 11/21, 2pm, Rand Theater  
Response due at lecture, 12/2