

Proposal

I will speak about the piece called *Strange Fruit* by iconic modern dance choreographer Pearl Primus because she is an important voice for black America and black concert dance. I chose this topic because according to scholars namely, John Perpener and Susan Manning, black concert dance is not acknowledged enough. I feel that like I can relate to this observation because as a black female who predominantly dances in traditional concert styles like ballet and modern, I see a lack of minority representation. During my training, I have rarely learned about the important black leaders in concert dance. In order to fulfill my project, I will look at video sources of “*Strange Fruit*”, critical review sources of *Strange Fruit*, historical background of Pearl Primus, and historical investigations on the progression of black concert dance and its effects. Noted African American dance-scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild’s chapter called “Past Imperfect: Performance, Power, and Politics on the Minstrel Stage” in her famous book *Digging the Africanist Presence* is especially important to my project because it dives into the topic of lynching. Throughout the chapter, Gottschild presents historical information alongside references from other works. I will be bringing the past to the present through my analysis for my audiences to easily relate to and care about bias in representation that has relevance even today. I will utilize dance analysis to investigate how *Strange Fruit* advocates for the social progression of black concert dance as well as the American society. I will question how black concert dance has changed over time, how perceptions of *Strange Fruit* modulated over time, and what lasting sociopolitical effects remain from Primus’s work in dance.