

# 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

- Undefined
- 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

## Similarities

- Start standing
- Pedestrian movements like walking
- Pedestrian clothes
- Simple stage setup
- Pace of movement
- No clear movement vocabulary
- No eye contact with audience

## Differences

- Silence vs. music
- Contemporary
  - More fluidity
  - Impulse
  - Successive
  - Energy
- Postmodern
  - Isolated movements
  - Same energy level throughout

# Scholarly Work

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

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