

ON THE 'ETHNICITY' OF THE BALLET AND BALLET-DANCING

The text for this essay consists of Chapter III of a Master's thesis in the Anthropology of Human Movement, completed in May, 1985, at New York University. The thesis is entitled, 'The Structure of Ballet-Dancing, With Special Emphasis on Roles, Rules, Norms and Status' (Durr, 1985). Since 1969, when Joann Keali'inohomoku published a provocative article entitled 'An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance' in Impulse (1969/1970:24-33), that publication ceased to exist and the article became difficult for students of anthropology and the dance to acquire. In 1980, the article was reprinted in JASHM (1980, 1(2):245-260) because the arguments and the conclusions reached by the author are as relevant today as they were nearly two decades ago. Not only is Keali'inohomoku's article relevant today, it is still controversial; nevertheless, it provided part of the standpoint from which the subject of ballet-dancing was approached in Durr (1985). It thus seemed appropriate to reproduce the rationale for the rather different view of the ballet taken throughout the Master's research, mainly because of a prevailing notion about this form of dancing, i.e. its "ephemerality", and the equally difficult problem of the separation of dance forms into 'ethnic' and 'non-ethnic' categories, as if 'we' were not 'ethnics' like 'they' are.

In a significant, and in this writer's opinion, most important article, Keali'inohomoku (1969/1980) has drawn attention to the need for Western dance scholars in particular to adopt a more anthropological view -- in contrast to a provincial and ethnocentric view -- of the field of dancing as a whole. She confronts the issues squarely and does not cover up any of the embarrassing evidence that has contributed to problematic taxonomies of the dance (and definitions of the activity) that are implied by the terms "ethnic" dancing, "primitive" dancing and "folk" dancing. She clearly illustrates the many confusions which result from such classifications and gives considerable insight into the viewpoints about the nature of the world and humanity that they imply.

Social and cultural anthropologists are generally acutely aware of the tendency, prevalent in nearly all cultures (not just our own) to divide the world into 'we'/'they' classifications of some kind. Western dance scholars have applied the term "ethnic" to those forms of dancing that are (i) non-Western and (ii) to any form of dancing, Western or non-Western, that is foreign to their specific cultural values. The dancing performed by peoples of other ethnicities may be appreciated, but it does not hold the same status, in this case, of ballet dancing. Western dance scholars -- and many Western dancers themselves -- set ballet dancing apart and above other dance idioms, conforming to anthropologists' knowledge that a 'we'/'they' distinction usually

connotes a superior/inferior distinction. That which is unknown or different tends to be viewed as being less in value. Consequently, Western dance forms can be seen to be viewed as "superior" in the eyes of the majority of their practitioners.

This tendency to elevate Western forms of dance may be the result of the fact that in the West, some forms of dancing are classified as 'art' forms -- whatever that may mean. Keali'inohomoku, in another significant study (1980), has noted how problematical this categorical distinction is for anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike. She points to known dances in the world, e.g. Hopi movement traditions, that are not considered to be 'art' by their participants; where the performers themselves do not perceive themselves to be 'artists'. If a dance idiom does not meet the criteria of what is judged to be 'art' in one culture, we may ask if its value truly diminishes in any way, and if so, in whose eyes?

... the term 'art' has become increasingly elitist and submerged in mystique, so that today the term seems to require a selective critical value judgement (Keali'inohomoku, 1980:39).

Kaepler (1978) supports Keali'inohomoku's position, observing that once the dance is separated from other movement activities and classified under the rubric 'art', it somehow appears to be recalcitrant to investigation. She argues that all cultures do not perceive their dances to be 'art', and tells us that the category Westerners identify as 'dance' does not exist in some cultural contexts, using the examples of some forms of Japanese movement as evidence. Kaepler also stresses the need to analyze movement within its specific cultural context and to classify movements within the parameters that are identified by native informants, wherever they may be found.

The concept of "dance" may actually be masking the importance and usefulness of analysing human movement systems (Kaepler, 1978:47).

Social and cultural anthropologists are much more "... cautious in applying the concept of art to dance ... because the discipline of anthropology is committed to the principle of cultural relativity ..." (Keali'inohomoku, 1980:41). While my own study was not written from a standpoint of total cultural relativity, it does support the view that we need to comprehend the differences in systems of human actions and body languages before we make too many thoughtless and careless generalizations about their similarities. It would seem, too, that viewing all systems of human movement, especially the activity identified as 'dance', from a non-art standpoint is of particular significance, then, and it is easy to see how the classification of ballet dancing as an art has contributed to its elitist position -- a position that is supported by, and indeed, sought after, by its practitioners.

A ballet dancer can be seen to communicate a sense of superiority through the very body language that he or she uses, and they believe ballet dancing is superior to all other dance forms including indigenous American forms of modern concert dancing, jazz dancing and social dancing. Ballet dancing is often claimed to be the form of dancing that is foundational to the training of any dancer -- even those who are interested, professionally, in pursuing other dance idioms. Western dance scholars and Western dancers have, perhaps understandably, classified ballet dancing in a category 'elite', partly because they possess a longer history, a lingua franca that is used internationally, a syllabus of steps, movements, directions of the body, etc. that is also used throughout the world, and because, originally, the ballet (or pre-balletic danced forms) was the dancing of the 'elite', i.e. the aristocracy of the 17th and 18th century European courts.

However, as a group, ballet dancers also seem to believe that to give ballet dancing any other classification than 'superior' or 'elite' represents an attempt to reduce its importance and status. Ballet dancers often perceive the term 'ethnic' as derisive or derogatory in nature and they are offended when the ballet is defined as an 'ethnic' form of dance. That is to say,

... we treat Western dance, ballet particularly, as if it was the one great divinely ordained apogee of the performing arts (Keali'inohomoku, 1969/1980:26).

Ballet dancing is a genuinely 'aristocratic' form of dance: the ethnicities, the "folks" who originated it, were European nobility, but that fact, I believe, does not need to surround it with an atmosphere of mystery and separatism, especially within anthropology. Keali'inohomoku maintains that

By ethnic dance, anthropologists mean to convey the idea that all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed ... ethnic means a group which holds in common genetic, linguistic and cultural ties, with special emphasis on cultural tradition. By definition, therefore, every dance form must be an ethnic form (1969/1980:24 and 30).

In my work, I have attempted to show that the ballet is an ethnic form of dancing, not only because it is an example of an idiom of body language that encodes the customs and mores that were generated by the cultural traditions of a specific group of people, but that those common cultural and linguistic ties have persisted through time and can be seen in the body language of ballet dancers today.

Viewed anthropologically, "... ballet is a product of the Western world, and it is a dance form developed by Caucasians who speak Indo-European languages and who share a common European tradition" (Keali'inohomoku), 1969/1980:30). The ballet emerges, today, as an

idiom of dancing that has changed somewhat, as its social context has changed, but ballet dancing, like other ethnic forms of the dance, has not changed so much that it is unrecognizable. My work is based on the conviction that an understanding of the "code" of a body language¹ is a key towards understanding the culture and society, and the roles, rules, statuses and norms that support it.

The present-day ballet master, no less than his or her historical counterpart, is the holder of these traditions and is the one individual among the group surrounding the production and execution of performances, classes, etc., who transmits the rules, the norms and the very structure of the body language of the idiom to the next generation. These activities are sanctioned by the wider society in the form of patronage, economic supports and the like.

The structural principles which constitute ballet dancing can be identified through a combined analysis of the internal and external social organization and movement organization of the idiom of ballet itself. The Master's research carried out at New York University represents only a beginning attempt at a complete ethnography of one company -- or even of one dance -- however, some guidelines have been established regarding the elements that would be required. We may well wonder why no attempts have been made to understand in further depth this leading Western dance form until now, or why anthropological methods have not been utilized before. The stance assumed generally by dance scholars is that the ballet is "ephemeral" in its nature, or that it is so "autocratic" in its nature, that it cannot be talked about, except indirectly, implying that it cannot be understood.² The view that ballet-dancing is mysterious, awesome and fleeting simply compounds the problems already mentioned; those of 'superiority' and 'ethnocentrism'.

To refer to the ballet as 'ethnic' does not lessen the aristocratic nature of its origins, or of the idiom itself. Rather, it helps to re-focus the claims that its practitioners make about it, helping to locate the origins of the form where they rightly belong -- in a known period of human history, generated by an identifiable group of people. The classification of the ballet as an ethnic form of dancing also gives it a possible anthropological identity among many other phenomena of a like kind. Usage of the term 'ethnic' supports a major premise of my own research and work, i.e. that fundamental elements of social change and organization are to be discerned through a study of the dance form itself.³ Culturally specific usages of time, space and the body become meaningful units of analysis and comprehension when the ballet is viewed as an ethnic form of dancing, for

... human movements (are then) seen as linguistically tied, structured systems of actions which have meanings specific to spatio-linguistic contexts (Williams, 1975:ii).

In establishing the ethnicity of ballet, Keali'inohomoku cites several examples which reveal the kinds of roles, rules and norms that can be traced to traditions established in Western culture through a study of the idiom. She notes that the usage of the physical performing area as a proscenium stage is itself a Western concept and tradition. It is significant and not merely coincidental that the rules of ballet technique correspond to this kind of performing space, for as the more strictly theatrical aspects of the ballet grew and increased, the ballet presentation moved from the ballroom floor to a raised stage.

With this change in performance area, we can see that the intricate and elaborate floor patterns created by a dancing master for a couple or a group of dancers became less important in the new spatial context. The design of the body-instrument itself moving in space began to command more and more attention of the dancing master and the new space challenged his choreographic abilities in new ways. The audience no longer viewed the physical performing space of a production from three sides or from all around, but from one side only, which was designated as "front". The introduction of the proscenium arch provided a kind of 'picture frame' through which audiences could view the movements of the dancers. The point is that this notion of 'front' is a dominant feature of the whole idiom, so much so, that the belief that the idiom is somehow 'universal' is really a myth.

To this day, throughout a ballet dancer's training, steps and positions, indeed whole enchainements and dances are introduced and formulated so that they may be successfully danced on a proscenium stage. The dance studio is the place of preparation, where the dancing teacher establishes the concepts of the balletic usages of time and space in the training of ballet dancers. Ballet teachers constantly refer to "the audience" as if viewers were physically present during a lesson, although in the studio or rehearsal space, they are not actually there. The concept of 'front', i.e. the 'proscenium wall' of the studio or the 'black hole' of the audience, is one that is encoded in all the danced actions performed by ballet dancers.

The customs and manners which prevailed in the lives of the nobility in the 17th and 18th centuries were, and still are, observable in ballet performances. The role of Prince Siegfried in Swan Lake, for example, requires a dancer who can capture and make believable the elegant manners and refinements that were expected of a member of earlier nobility. It is not enough for the dancer to be technically competent (as it were, a gymnast). He must also be capable of expressing a range of emotions which encompass aspects of love, anguish, joy, despair and hope -- but, in a 'gallant' or 'noble' manner.⁴ The audience must believe he is, in fact, a Prince and the series of events in which he takes part is worthy of his position, his status and his mission in life.

Various scenes within this particular ballet are constructed so that the audience is given an inside view of life as it might have been conducted in the courts of the 17th and 18th centuries. The inter-

relationships of the members of the cast comply with the established rules which governed the protocol and deportment of nobility. The positioning of the characters of the ballet on stage and their individual postures establish recognizable social identities and an hierarchy of status which is meant to reflect courtly life. These customs and manners thus represent what was at least part of the social reality for a member of the aristocracy and the attention given to such detail by a choreographer is important, if one agrees with Winch that "...social relations are expressions of ideas about reality" (1958:23).

The interesting thing about any body language, seen from the standpoint of the 'agent' (i.e. the performer), is that it is grammatically⁵ and semantically understood just as a spoken language can be comprehended at this level. An audience who is totally unfamiliar with the protocol of 17th century aristocracy may have some difficulty relating to what is danced within the ballet Swan Lake, or any works of the same genre in a ballet company's repertoire. If it is true that "...social relations really exist only in and through the ideas which are current in society" (Winch, 1958:133), then the meanings encoded in the court scenes in Swan Lake may be lost to a 20th century audience who is unfamiliar with the historical significances of what is occurring on stage, especially in a nation, like the United States, which is founded on notions of a republic and democratic ideals.

Socially prescribed norms within 20th century America, however, are reflected in contemporary ballets such as Fancy Free (1944), Interplay (1945), Cakewalk (1951) and Harbinger (1967). The subject matters of these works is not centered around the lives of kings, queens, princes and peasants, but reveals themes that are both narrative or abstract in nature (e.g. Fancy Free and Filling Station -- narratives, and Fire -- abstract). The preoccupation of 20th century American artists with the exploration of the interactions of lines, colors and usage of space and time in new ways, contributed to the thematic material of many new ballets. Laura Dean's Fire (1983: a ballet choreographed especially for the Joffrey company), does not feature dancers who portray characters with easily identifiable social personalities, nor is there an evolving story line based on a theme of unrequited love or something of that kind. Fire does involve complex interactions between the dancers. The choreographed movement patterns themselves, in this case, are 'the message'. While the statement made by this ballet no longer reinforces a concept of deportment which permeated the lives of earlier noblemen and women, the same elements of body language are used. Here, the movements identify values, concepts and preoccupations that are dominant at certain periods in 20th century America.

Usages of terminology can be seen to reflect the idea of social change: for example, in a classical ballet,⁶ a dance between two people (male and female) is called a 'pas de deux' and is usually the vehicle whereby two characters express their love for each other. A pas de deux

will often serve as the climactic point within a major ballet. In Fire, Dean refrained from using the term and chose to call each of the three dances that are performed by a mixed couple, 'duets'. The interaction between each couple was not an expression of love between the characters but a display of technical virtuosity on the part of the dancers.

In Fire, the danced steps and lifts demonstrated Dean's fascination for presenting new concepts in the usage of time, space and the dancers' bodies. The older term, 'pas de deux' is associated with a traditional concept that an audience expects to see in a couple dance. Thus, the term 'duet' invites the audience to accept a newer and different view of two individuals dancing together. For the choreographer, this represents a departure from established tradition. The three male-female duets presented in Fire may therefore be judged on their own merits rather than be compared to the prescribed norms and standards that governed a different historical period.

Keali'inohomoku points out that

Our cultural heritage is revealed also in the roles which appear repeatedly in our ballets such as humans transformed into animals, fairies, witches, gnomes, performers of evil magic, villains and seductresses in black, evil step-parents, royalty and peasants, and especially, beautiful pure young women and their consorts (1969/1980:30).

The ballet Swan Lake contains many of these elements, i.e. a group of young ladies who have been transformed into swans, a handsome prince, the princess-mother, village couples, and the sorcerer (Von Rotbart) who appears as an owl-like creature. In Western culture, a fascination with the theme 'good' vs. 'evil' surfaces in the classification of characters within Swan Lake. An in-depth analysis of the use of color in this ballet could reveal that this theme is reinforced within the context by the codification of colors (the 'white' swan and the 'black' swan, for instance, the dual role of Odette/Odile). Colors and their use are culturally constituted (See Ardener, 1971; Turner, 1969; Berlin and Kay, 1969; Sahlins, 1977).

A study of the systematic ways in which a culture names and uses colors can provide insights into how it is that the culture endows colors with meanings. Wieschhoff reported that

The Baluba Hembe of the Congo region color the left eyelid of a deceased person with white earth ... On other occasions this same tribe uses the customary colors, i.e. white for right and red for left ... (1938/1973:69).

For the Ndembu, the color-triangle white/red/black are colors which ...constitute classificatory rubrics under which a hierarchy of ritual objects, persons, activities, episodes, gestures, events,

ideas and values are assembled and arrayed ... the triangle ... represents the whole cosmic and social order recognized by Ndembu in its harmony and balance, wherein all empirical contradictions are mystically resolved (Turner, 1969:85).

The social values of white/purity/good and black/evil/cunning are important features of the ballet Swan Lake, and are particularly prominent in the dual role of the white Swan queen (Odette) and her sinister counterpart, the Black Swan (Odile).

Colors are in practice semiotic codes. Everywhere, both as terms and concrete properties, colors are engaged as signs in vast schemes of social relations: meaningful structures by which persons and groups, objects and occasions, are differentiated and combined in cultural orders (Sahlins, 1977:167).

According to Keali'inohomoku, the ethnic identity of ballet dancing is also evident on the stage in the artifacts which have been endowed with meaning by members of Western culture. An educated Western audience can easily identify the stage settings, props, costumes and actions within ballets like Giselle (1841), Coppelia (1870) and Petrouchka (1911). In Giselle, the stage setting consists of a cottage, set in a village on the Rhine river. The clothing of the peasants and the royal cape of the prince, the wooden bench upon which the lovers sit while engaging in the plucking of flower petals in the game of "he loves me..." are all articles and actions well-known to Western viewers. The setting for Coppelia begins in the square of a small European town, while the ballet Petrouchka begins in the public square of old St. Petersburg. The carnival ambience of Petrouchka corresponds with the gathering of the people for purposes of celebration and feasting during the last week before Lent. To someone from another culture who is unfamiliar with Christian symbols and beliefs, the subject of Lent and its relationship to a carnival atmosphere would be lost.

Likewise, in the 'Dance of the Hours' (Coppelia, last act) viewers from a culture unfamiliar with clocks would miss the significance of the danced movements... Twelve peasant girls "...form a circle like the face of an enormous clock, kneel towards the center, and one by one rise, pirouette, and kneel again, telling the time away" (Balanchine, 1954:103). The movements in this dance provide an index to the value that individuals in Western culture place on 'time' and its passage. Not all cultures are as consumed by the passage of time as is our own culture.

According to Evans-Pritchard, "...the Nuer have no expression equivalent to 'time' in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth" (1940:103). The Nuer measure of time is based on the importance of activities and events themselves. The concept of a clock, used in a dance, would likely be enigmatic to a Nuer.

In sharp contrast to the Nuer, Americans allow time to rule them, for we tend to measure the importance of what we do and accomplish according to very precise time units (minutes, hours, etc.). How we think about time is revealed in our spoken language, and we often comment that we are in a 'race' against time, or that we need to 'beat the clock', or have 'no time to waste', or desire 'more hours in the day', or observe that the 'years fly by' and that we need to 'take more time for ourselves'. There are many body language cues in ordinary, everyday life which indicate how we think about time: it is easy to distinguish between the actions of an individual who is in a hurry and those of someone who is at leisure.

Ballets considered to be more modern, such as Stars and Stripes (1958), Filling Station (1938) and Fancy Free (1944) represent different values regarding social norms, rules and such relative to the time period in which they were choreographed. These ballets may differ from their early counterparts in dress, manners and message, but, like their early counterparts, they are endowed with the values which correspond to the political and social organizations prevalent within the context of the larger society. For example, it has been considered standard practice to establish divisions in ballets known as 'acts' and each act may consist of a number of scenes. Unlike this typical division which structures a ballet, Balanchine chose to divide Stars and Stripes into divisions known as 'campaigns' rather than 'acts', thereby complementing the theme of the ballet, the purpose of which was to encapsulate American concepts of parades, marches, and such.

Within this particular ballet, Balanchine satisfied his desire to express his fascination with more common forms of ceremonial and ceremonious movement. He developed roles within the ballet which were familiar to American audiences: in one 'campaign', a drum majorette leads a marching unit of twelve girls, and in another, the choreography consists of the drill of a rifle regiment. Balanchine based the grand finale (and the ballet's title) on a march particularly popular in American society: Sousa's 'Stars and Stripes'. The dedication of the ballet to Fiorello H. LaGuardia, the late mayor of New York City, "...who had epitomized America to so many of us for so many years" (Balanchine, 1954:395) further illustrates how closely the choreographer drew from the stock of values and ideas that are common to American society as a whole.

Filling Station (choreographed by Lew Christensen, 1909-1984), is considered to be the first ballet that is in all aspects American: the music was composed by an American (Virgil Thompson), the costumes and scenery were designed and executed by Americans and it was danced by American dancers. It was commissioned in 1938 by Lincoln Kirstein for Ballet Caravan. An American audience had little difficulty understanding the plot, since the characters in the ballet are based on familiar social roles, i.e. a filling station attendant, a motorist and his wife and daughter, two truck drivers, a drunken young couple, a gangster and a state trooper.

If a choreographer were to choose a geisha girl, a member of the French foreign legion or a Luo warrior to be the protagonists of a story ballet, many American audiences would need to be educated as to the meanings carried by these roles, for none of them are recognizable parts of American society.

A choreographer might design a ballet that focuses on an event in the life of a Luo warrior; however, it would be a difficult undertaking, as it would be the responsibility of the choreographer to alert the public to the cultural distinctions that would contribute to the understanding of this social role. The roles and relationships among the characters in the ballet Filling Station are understood mainly because they are recognizable. An American audience can follow the sequence of events in this ballet because that which occurs on the stage could very easily occur in 'real' social life. The arrest of the gangster by the state trooper following the shooting of the young girl is considered to be a logical sequence of events in this culture. The same audience would find it difficult to accept the 'logic' of the gangster arresting the state trooper for not having shot the young girl, since the expectations of an audience regarding the role(s) depicted on the ballet stage reflect known and expected sequences of events in the daily life of the people.

Finally, Jerome Robbins captures the spirit of three American sailors on leave in New York City in the ballet Fancy Free. The dancers are costumed in summer white uniforms reminiscent of those worn in the U.S. Navy. The movement patterns, postures, gestures and phrases of the sailors indicate a desire to have a good time as they strut, preen, flirt and compete with each other for a girl's favor. Encapsulated in the movement of the three male dancers is American society's view of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable behavior on the part of a sailor on leave. Jerome Robbins, or any choreographer, can thus be seen to be a kind of "culture-bearer"; as he chooses characters, establishes the plot and designs the movement patterns that reflect culture-specific attitudes and values. Like his earlier predecessor, the courtly dancing master, Robbins transmits societal values through the art of choreography and the medium of movement in the form of balletic body language.

The point of the above ethnographic sketches is this: once ballet dancing is understood to be an ethnic form of dancing, it begins to lose its 'ephemeral' character. The removal of the 'ephemerality' from ballet dancing is viewed by many dancers, critics, audiences, and teachers as detrimental to its classification as an 'art form'. Some of these people distrust and fear any kind of analysis because in a very real sense it removes the 'magic' of the ballet. They are perhaps not aware that a comprehension of rules and meanings can promote a different, but equally irresistible 'magic' -- one that is based on understanding.

In the body language game of ballet dancing, as in a spoken language, "...we could not speak at all if we could not speak to each other" (Crick, 1976:97). Conventional spoken language is a shared cultural

possession. It is not a 'private' affair, steeped in mystery and separatism (Crick, 1976); neither is a body language a 'private' affair. Spoken language has a lexicon, and a grammar which can be distinguished phonologically and syntactically. A linguist's study of language does not lessen its importance; if anything an investigation reveals how truly complex, technical and structured the elements of a language are. An analysis of ballet dancing will not lessen its stature, for like spoken language, the idiom is a highly complex, technical and structured set of moves that requires extraordinary efforts to learn and perform.

Keali'inohomoku's cogent argument that ballet is an ethnic form of dance underwrites this proposition. The usages of time, space and the body in ballet dancing are directly associated with the social rules and norms of the ethnicity to which it originally belonged, and these, in turn, are constituent to the idiom. The ballet is only rightly understood in relation to its heritage in Western culture, and this is why it can be said that it is not 'universal' in nature.

I suggest that similar analyses and understanding be directed to other forms of dancing as well. In any case, such investigation would reveal that no single idiom of dance or body language can be considered 'universal'; however, they are all, by definition, ethnic.

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NOTES

1. Following the Saussurian distinction between la langue and la parole (1966), Williams (1979) makes the distinction between 'body language' and a particular idiom of the dance, or other articulated actions, thus the 'code/message' distinction. Saussure noted that if we hear an unknown language spoken, we may perceive the sounds, but remain ignorant as to what is being expressed. Williams states that, "We are in exactly the same position if we see people articulating an unknown body language. We apperceive the motions but remain outside the social facts because we do not understand the systems of actions or the semasiological body images involved" (1979:43). If we do not understand the 'code' we cannot understand the 'messages' that are being transmitted in the actions.
2. Some scholars "...deny the existence of a dance, except during the period when an actual performance is going on" (Williams, 1980:19). Thus, when a ballet such as Swan Lake is not being performed, individuals might question whether or not it actually exists (See Sheets, 1966, for a phenomenological point of view). To deny its existence is to deny its ontological status or any duration in time, an awkward and unsatisfactory position which is rejected in my work and that of other semasiologists.

3. Usually, when someone attempts an anthropological investigation, it is assumed that the subject of investigation is in another country, e.g. Africa, India or the Pacific. The idea of an anthropological investigation of ballet-dancing is alien to that which some people think is the subject matter of anthropology. The mystique of ballet-dancing has contributed to the idea that it is an untouchable idiom to explore in these ways. Few see the potential of this form of dance, through examination, to reveal dimensions of meaning and context hitherto unknown.
4. The emotions expressed by a dancer in a ballet are not a representation of his or her ordinary 'social persona', but the persona of the character portrayed in a particular ballet. A dancer strives to create a believable and convincing character.
5. The actions in a body language, like words in a spoken language, can be thought of as possessing an internal structure. There is an established order in which they can be combined to form movement patterns appropriate to particular needs.
6. The term, 'classical' as it applies to ballet is usually thought to distinguish a particular style of ballet. For example, individuals will differentiate between classical ballet as it developed in the 1800's and the modern ballet as it is danced today in America and some European countries. However, the term 'classicism' applies "...also to a structure of dances, and it is the structure that Petipa so clearly defined in his ballets" (Hammond, 1974:12). Marius Petipa (1819-1910) is often given the title "the father of classical ballet". Ballet productions are still structured around many of his reforms (e.g. the inclusion of a pas de deux in almost all ballets).

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