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# CHOREOGRAPHIC MUSIC

WRITINGS IN  
AMERICAN ARTS PERIODICALS,  
1914–1993

by

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*To Marius Andaházy and the staff at the Andaházy School of Classical Ballet,  
who fostered my love of ballet.*

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## PREFACE

The idea for this research guide originated while consulting resources on the Martha Graham-Louis Horst collaboration at the Dance Division of the New York Public Library. The wealth of information in the “clipping files”—file folders full of uncataloged reviews and articles on choreographic works that were snipped from print newspapers and magazines—made me wish that there were more reference works devoted to dance music. While far from comprehensive, this research guide identifies and indexes writings that address choreography and choreographic music in the most important music and dance journals published in the United States in the twentieth century. Tailoring the project’s boundaries was a necessity, and I originally established the volume’s chronological parameters based on practical considerations: 1914 marked the publication of *Modern Dance Magazine*, the first American dance periodical devoted to modern dance. By 1994, most of the sources still in publication (see the section heading “Sources” in the introduction), notably *Dance Magazine*, are digitized and preserved in academic databases. However, just as I was finalizing the volume, the full print run of *Dance Magazine* was added to Alexander Street Press’s Dance Studies Collection. Digital access to *Dance Magazine* is a significant advancement for dance research, as the articles that are cited in this bibliography can now be viewed without having to track down bound journal volumes. These boundary dates also encompass in totality the work of the two twentieth-century choreographers who have received the most press coverage and scholarly attention: George Balanchine (1904–83) and Martha Graham (1894–1991).

I set out to compile a chronological record of writings by composers and choreographers about choreomusical interplay and dance music, and to position the work of forgotten dance music composers and choreographers alongside those of their well-known colleagues. Before the establishment of dance studies as an academic discipline, dance performances were often reviewed by music critics. Thus this bibliography also recognizes music critics who were obliged to cover dance—some of whom were more interested in the musical accompaniment than the choreography—and dance critics who offer illuminating commentary on choreographic music.

It was a pleasure to work with James L. Zychowicz and the Music Library Association Index and Bibliography series editors, Maristella Feustle and Richard Griscom. They all contributed wonderful suggestions about the volume’s scope, organization, and content. The text greatly benefitted from Maristella’s careful reading and thoughtful feedback. The staff at several libraries were extremely helpful and attentive to detail. Many of the indexed periodicals were only available on microfilm or had to be retrieved from storage facilities. I am grateful for insightful and expeditious assistance from research and staff librarians at the following institutions: the Dance Division of the New York Public Library, the Newberry Library, Oakland University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University. Research grants from the Oakland University Research Committee funded my travel to the New York Public Library to consult obscure periodicals.

Finally, much love to Michael and Raphaela, whose patience and good cheer allowed me to see this project through to completion.

## INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the twentieth century brought forth an entirely new genre of dance that became labeled as modern dance. The decline of aristocratic and/or state patronage, combined with influence from other long-term economic and artistic trends, resulted in a shift in choreographic production in which traditional full-length narrative ballets were replaced by shorter, and often abstract, dance works. In *Dance, Modernism, and Modernity*, Ramsey Burt and Michael Huxley examine historical factors that promoted the rise of modern dance, including both World Wars, artists' propensity to identify as transnational, and the commoditization of experimental visual art, design, and fashion.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, these new approaches to choreographic practices provided a fertile breeding ground for musical experimentation and collaboration. Early twentieth-century choreographers like Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Loïe Fuller viewed music as a crucial vehicle for choreographic expression and sought to create *Gesamtkunstwerke* for dance akin to Wagnerian models. Duncan and Fuller preferred dancing to classical and Romantic music, and they strove to match the mood and structure of the music with choreographic patterns, costumes, and lighting. In contrast, to facilitate her realization of a unified artwork, St. Denis frequently commissioned new musical works from her contemporaries for her dances.

Although a welcome trove of new research on dance has sprung from recent interdisciplinary explorations of body culture in humanistic scholarship,<sup>2</sup> the impact of dance's role in the emergence of modernism has historically been undervalued. Many choreographers are excluded from

1. Ramsay Burt and Michael Huxley, *Dance, Modernism, Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2020). This book is not limited to a discussion of the works of choreographers who develop a new modern dance technique; it also investigates the modernization of ballet and global dance traditions.

2. Formative examinations of body culture in dance studies scholarship respond to the complex dynamics of localized political and cultural situations. See, for example, Catherine E. Foley, "Irish Traditional Step-Dancing in North Kerry: A Contextual and Structural Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Goldsmiths College, 1988). In her doctoral dissertation and subsequent work, Foley, an expert on Irish traditional step dancing, uses the term "body dialects" to describe how the regionalization of Irish dance steps builds shared community heritage and imprints ideological stances on the body. See also Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture: 1910–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). After stating that "body culture appears as a mode of aesthetic performance that collapses conventional distinctions between mind and body, subject and object, self and world," Toepfer further specifies that "the uniquely German construction of the modern body involved two large categories of performance: nudity and physical movement, particularly ideas about movement introduced by the most turbulent dance culture in history" (p. 7). For the most up-to-date perspectives, see, among others, Gabriele Brandstetter, *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Christopher J. Smith, *Dancing Revolution: Bodies, Space, and Sound in American Cultural History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019); and Byron Suber, "Musicalities and the Moving Body in Western Concert Dance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Body*, ed. Youn Kim and Sander L. Gilman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

# 1

## PROSE WRITINGS ON CHOREOGRAPHIC MUSIC

### 1917

- 1 St. Denis, Ruth. "The Dance as an Art Form." *Theatre Arts* 1, no. 2 (February 1917): 75–77.

Without acknowledging Richard Wagner, St. Denis proposes an aesthetic theory for dance as a union of the arts that is remarkably similar to Wagner's articulation of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. She states that dance as an art form necessitates "the use of music, costumes, properties, scenery, people, and lighting effects, in addition to the actual movements. All these things had to be so chosen, and so blended, as to become each an integral part of a unity. This cannot be successfully done except by one directing, creative genius." Interestingly, she also specifies that a dance work should not exceed fifteen minutes.

- 2 Duncan, Isadora. "The Dance." *Theatre Arts* 2, no. 1 (December 1917): 21–22.

Duncan espouses a feminist conception of the "dance of the future" in which the purpose is to "show the ideal form of woman." She describes the form and movement of traditional ballet as "in discord with nature."

### 1919

- 3 McConnell, Frederic. "*Miriam, Sister of Moses.*" *Theatre Arts* 3, no. 4 (October 1919): 255–63.

McConnell, assistant director of the University of California's Greek Theatre, reports on Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn's first production with speaking roles, staged at the Greek Theatre. The play-pageant was written by Maxwell Armfield and Constance Smedley Armfield, with music composed for orchestra and chorus by Professor E. G. Stricklen.

### 1924

- 4 Shawn, Ted. "The History of The Art of Dancing in Four Parts." *Denishawn Magazine* 1, no. 1 (1924): 4–6; 1, no. 2 (1924): 5–8; 1, no. 3 (1925): 8–11; 1, no. 4 (1925): 4–6.

In the opening section of the essay, Shawn declares that "dance in modern times has lost power because it has become divorced from its primitive sources." Shawn considers similarities in ancient dance from Chaldea, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. He emphasizes that the Greek chorus performed dancing, as well as singing the poetry. In part 3, Shawn turns to European society, noting that during the Middle Ages expressive dance was not widely practiced in Europe, but Spain embraced liturgical dance more than other

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