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## DANCE

The impulse to execute patterned rhythmic movements that are different from simply walking or running lies deep in the human constitution. Dancelike forms are employed by some animal species for courtship and communication. As it has evolved, human dancing may be divided into social, ritual, folk, and art dance.

*Early Forms.* In ancient Greece dance events were associated with the sexually ambivalent god Dionysus. In many cases dance festivals that began as religious were transformed into opportunities for lasciviousness. In Athens at the Cotyttia festival dance performances took place by men in women's clothes in which the ceremonies, which at first had referred only symbolically to sex, gradually passed into homosexual orgies. During Roman times the castrated priests of Cybele were alleged to use religious dances as a prelude to the seduction of young men. In Islam, with its rigid segregation of the sexes, a long tradition has existed of boy dancers for the entertainment of adult men. The popularity of masked balls in eighteenth-century Europe permitted some revelers to dress as members of the opposite sex and to engage in amorous dalliance with members of their own.

*Modern Social Dancing.* In a remarkable description in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*—the encounter of Charlus and Jupien—Marcel Proust analyzed the separate segments of a male-male cruising episode in terms of dance. From the end of the nineteenth century homosexual balls have been given in which some male attendees dress up in glamorous women's attire. These events, frequently held on Hallowe'en, were tolerated as social oddi-

ties. Generally speaking, however, the law banned homosexuals and lesbians from ballroom dancing in which the couples hold one another. Changes in legal climate in most Western countries eliminated this barrier, and gay bars began holding "tea dances," sometimes to raise money for charities. The phenomenon of disco, which began in the early 1970s, was particularly associated with male-homosexual patronage. Opposed to disco is the **punk rock** trend, which has its own dance forms, most notably the "slam dance," which features turbulent mass body contact in a usually all-male context; the participants, however, are generally unaware of the implicit homosexuality involved.

*Modern Art Dance.* Familiarity with the world of classical ballet and modern dance reveals a disproportionate number of male homosexuals among the performers. Anton Dolin, who had his own company in England, and John Cranko, former director of the Stuttgart Ballet, stand out among dance figures who were straightforward about their sexuality. Despite great advances in the standing of dance in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the notion lingers among the general public that, in contradistinction to **athletics**, dance is not a truly masculine activity.

The explanation for these facts lies in part in the history of dancing. Before the French Revolution men dominated the dance, usually also assuming women's roles since respectable women were generally barred from the medium. Even kings such as Louis XIV performed in ballets. After 1800 the status of dancing declined, while at the same time women began to dominate, even dancing men's roles on occasion. The ballet girl as the plaything of the libertines became almost a stereotype in Victorian times. It is difficult to recover the biographical details of male ballet dancers during this period; many married women, but no small number of them were probably gay.

In the early twentieth century a remarkable upgrading of the status of bal-

let occurred. A remarkable group of innovative women, including Loie Fuller, Ruth Duncan, Mary Wigman, Ruth St. Denis, and Martha Graham, created modern dance. The homosexual impresario Sergei Diaghilev introduced the Russian ballet to the West. Inspired by his love, Diaghilev repeatedly shaped his erotic protégés into world-class dancers: Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Anton Dolin (born Patrick Healey Kay), and Serge Lifar. Ironically, in Russia, perhaps because boys were sent to ballet schools for economic reasons, most dancers remained heterosexual. It is perhaps of interest that of the two great male dancers to have left the Soviet Union after World War II, one is gay, the other heterosexual.

Several homosexual composers achieved notable success in writing ballets, including Jean-Baptiste Lully, Peter Ilitch Tchaikovsky, and Aaron Copland. Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* (1890) and *Swan Lake* (1877) are particular favorites of gay audiences.

A pivotal figure in American ballet was Ted Shawn, who formed the Denishawn company with Ruth St. Denis. Perhaps because he himself was bisexual, Shawn went to considerable lengths to dispell dance's sissy reputation. He employed athletes to provide an aggressive show of masculinity. Hollywood dancers—at least those who became famous as distinct from the chorus boys—were heterosexual, but belonged to different genres: tapdancers and jazz dancers.

In the more liberal climate of the 1960s all-male dances began to be common. The avant-garde Merce Cunningham, who has shared his life with the composer John Cage, was the inspirer of the unisex trend in "postmodern" dance. In Brussels Maurice Béjart innovated with shifts in sex roles in his company at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels; in 1987 he was succeeded there by Mark Morris, who continues the tradition, though in an entirely different way. A documentary film, *Nik and Murray*, tells the story of dance-

world luminaries Alwin Nikolais and Murray Louis, treating their long-term relationship simply as a matter of fact.

Understandably, dancers are anxious to protect their reputation from imputations of homosexuality, which would make their performances in classic male-female roles less credible. One group which has no such problem is New York's transvestite Les Ballets Trockadero de Montecarlo, which spoofs not only gender roles, but art dance itself.

*Conclusion.* What are the reasons for the affinity of gay men and dance? In part they are economic: the poor income can be borne by a single man more easily than a married one with children (women dancers are often married to a male breadwinner). Then there is the appeal of a "chameleon" role, a successful simulation before a demanding audience; the satisfaction that is gained in this way is not unlike that of the actor, the diplomat, and the spy. Professional dancing allows gay men to indulge a love of colorful costume and makeup during periods of gray social conformity. It may be also that the exhibitionism inherent in the profession is sexual sublimation. The performances are suffused with eroticism and emotion in a setting of simulated and unconsummated heterosexuality. This profession may be regarded as a haven from the harsh worlds of commerce and masculine competition, a haven in which one may nonetheless show one's excellence. Finally there is the social magnetism inherent in stereotyping itself: because dance was thought to be "faggy," impressionable young gay men were drawn to it.

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## DANDYISM

The dandy has been since antiquity the man who prides himself on being