

Prompt - What are some of the functions of dance in our culture today? In your opinion, which of these is/are most important, and why?

Exposure through Expression

Artistic expression is graciously prevalent in today's culture. We have varieties of mediums and numerous ways to reflect upon them. Amongst all of these artistic forms, one of the oldest expressions still absorbs our culture, and that is dance. Dance serves many functions today for all people. It is entertainment, education, therapy, and worship. Dance can be social and competitive, an employment, or an educator. Yet beyond all of these thoughts, dance serves a greater purpose in today's culture. One of the most important functions of dance has to do with its means and results of its expression. Dance is an exposure of the human body in its most naked form whether one is raising their hand or performing in ballet. We can see the physical lengths and shortcomings of the human body through dance. Doris Humphrey once said, "the mass pattern of the dance may hold a mirror up to humanity." Dance and movement functionally allow the human body to be exposed to the world, communicating in every aspect, whether it is the magnificent art form or the daily movement.

Recreationally dance serves many purposes in society. It provides numerous ways for people to emerge themselves in dance unprofessionally, whether it is alone or with a partner. Line dancing, western dancing, aerobic and dance classes, are all taken for personal enjoyment. When a person uses dance as a means of exercise they are developing their motor skills and a better awareness of their body. Dance serves a recreational purpose when all people come together in dance at a party, club, or celebratory atmosphere. What is actually happening when these dances are occurring all take place within the viewing of the body. When taking dance classes a person begins to perfect the way their body is exposed to the people around them. Recreational dancing is one of the most revealing forms of movement in today's culture. When human beings come together, expressing themselves in various movements, they are viewing each other in the most primitive way. If a woman does not like the way a man moves or dances, she is ultimately not connected with him, and could not move with him.

None of the ways dance fully exposes the human body is sadly in a commercial aspect. Dance is used in various commercials to sell a product, advertise a show, or to produce the daily beauty image. It is all about movement. An advertisement will display a woman (scantly clad of course) moving across a tennis courts to sell a racquet. The cameras provide a perfect viewing of her entire body, the way it moves and looks, and finally at the end we see the tennis racquet. Commercials can sell through dance. Marcia Lloyd uses the example of MTV in accordance with commercial dance. The entire creation of the video, in which we could see the way the performer moves and dances, is an exposure of the human body. We can see the performer, which brings them closer to our reality, and closer to our pocketbooks!

Moving from sacrilegious to sacred, dance is still considered part of many aspects of worship. Lloyd makes this conclusion that, "sacred dance allows the participants to translate their faith and beliefs from mental...to physical...expression." Dance is ultimately the expression that Lloyd is talking about. Dance is a major part of religious liturgies and processions. People come together to create a dance for themselves or the divine. Through these dances the religious aspect of a person is projected through their

movement. In these cases, people move in relation to their feelings, hopes, desires, all leading them to a greater movement.

The creativity displayed in dance as an art form ultimately highlights the function of dance as an exposure and expression of the human body. The art, the ideas, emotions and movement that are created make an audience see the lengths the human body can achieve. The flexibility and force of the body move through space without any limits. A dancer has perfected her body and has come to know her body so well, it moves with such consciousness it looks unconscious. All of the movements are part of the language of the dancer. They are revealing to the audience (the world) and are revealing to the choreographer who has created them. The choreographer and dancer are a team, revealing dance as an art form. The expression of the dancer can find us within her soul, while the choreography can find us within a story.

Dance ultimately exposes. The dancer and the recipient of their movement gather an understanding from one another. The body is the vehicle for this understanding. It is exposed to the world providing an unsaid language for all to hear. Doris Humphrey once said, "when you move you stand revealed for what you are." Whether a professional dancer is performing a choreographed piece of work or a school girl walks down the street, we learn something about them. Dance is a revealer of the person. Dance functions as a communicator in every aspect of its being.

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