

## EVOLUTION OF MODERN DANCE: FROM AVANT-GARDE TO THE PRESENT

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**Annotation.** *The article considers modern dance as a unique art direction combining freedom of expression, social significance and technological innovations. The origins of contemporary dance and its development are analyzed. The ways in which modern dance interacts with other forms of art, its role in cultural dialogue and its impact on society are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *modern dance, postmodern dance, social problems in dance, freedom of expression, choreographic innovations, multimedia and performance.*

Contemporary dance is a phenomenon that cannot be confined to a single genre or definition. Its defining feature is the synthesis of various traditions, techniques, and approaches that evolve and are reinterpreted depending on time, context, and the creator's personality. Today, this art form has become an essential part of cultural and social life, serving as a bridge between the audience, the performer, and the world of art.

The evolution of contemporary dance is a process of transformation in the art of dance, reflecting changes in culture, society, and philosophy. Contemporary dance emerged as a response to the need for freedom of expression and, over time, has become one of the most innovative forms of art.

Emergence of contemporary dance: late 19th – early 20th century.

Protest against ballet canons: Contemporary dance emerged as an alternative to the strict rules of classical ballet. It sought to free the body from rigid forms, exploring natural movement.

Isadora Duncan: One of the pioneers, inspired by nature, ancient art, and the spirit of freedom. Her movements were fluid, free, and intuitive.

Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman: They developed ideas of expressiveness and improvisation, focusing on movement as a means of expressing emotions and ideas.

2. Development of Expressionist Dance: 1920s–1930s.

Philosophy and emotions: During this period, dance became a means of conveying deep emotional experiences and philosophical ideas.

Martha Graham: Introduced the techniques of tension and relaxation (contraction and release), which reflected the inner struggle of a person. Her works explored themes of psychology, mythology, and human nature.

European modern dance: Choreographers such as Kurt Jooss addressed social themes, including war and humanism.

### 3. Postmodern Dance: 1950s–1970s.

Against modern traditions: Postmodernists rejected the drama and expression of modern dance, exploring chance, everyday movements, and simplicity.

Trisha Brown and Merce Cunningham: They integrated ideas of minimalism, improvisation, and interaction with space into dance. Merce Cunningham actively used chance and collaborated with composer John Cage.

Contact improvisation: Steve Paxton developed a technique based on interaction between dancers through points of contact, opening new possibilities for movement exploration.

Contemporary dance often serves as a tool for analyzing and critiquing society. It is not just a performance—it is an exploration of how we live, feel, and interact with one another. Productions can address a wide range of topics, from loneliness in the digital age to global environmental issues. For example, the works of choreographers Ohad Naharin and Wayne McGregor are known for their connection to current issues such as identity, memory, and technological progress. Dance becomes a space for expressing ideas, where physical movement replaces words, creating a universal language for discussing complex topics.

One of the key features of contemporary dance is the rejection of a single standard of beauty and technique. There are no "correct" movements, allowing each performer to express themselves uniquely. Dancers can experiment with forms, develop their own techniques, and work with different textures and rhythms. Many contemporary dance schools teach improvisation as one of the dancer's main tools. This enables performers to explore not only physical but also emotional space, incorporating their inner experiences and intuition into dance.

The aesthetics of freedom in contemporary dance reflect the spirit of the times, where individuality and experimentation take center stage. It allows dancers and audiences to rethink movement, the body, and creativity as a form of self-expression and liberation.

Contemporary dance actively interacts with the latest technological advancements. Today, dancers work with projections, interactive screens, robotics, and even artificial intelligence. This fusion of traditional art and innovation opens up new forms of artistic expression.

An example of this is the use of motion sensors that transform physical movements into digital visualizations. Dancers become a kind of "living brush," creating works of art in real time.

Contemporary dance breaks not only aesthetic and technical barriers but also social ones. More and more choreographers work with people of different ages, cultures, and physical abilities. Such projects demonstrate that art belongs to everyone. For example, ensembles featuring performers with disabilities create powerful works where barriers become a source of inspiration. This approach highlights the strength and universality of movement, its ability to overcome prejudices, and its potential to create new forms of beauty.

Working with emotional and mental diversity. Dance projects include individuals with mental health conditions or cognitive differences, providing them with a safe and supportive space. Dance is used as a therapeutic tool for emotional expression and strengthening social connections.

Contemporary dance raises issues of equality, diversity, and acceptance through performances. Choreographers explore themes of identity, discrimination, the fight for rights, and social justice.

Contemporary dance actively influences other art forms – from cinema to fashion. Many designers incorporate elements of movement into their collections, creating clothing that interacts with the body during dance. Visual artists and filmmakers also draw inspiration from the plasticity of contemporary dance, integrating movement into their works.

Contemporary dance, with its emphasis on natural movement and expression, inspires artists to explore the human body as an art object. Artists borrow ideas of movement and transformation from dance, which is reflected in painting, sculpture, and graphic design.

Contemporary dance changes the approach to musical composition. Choreographers often choose unconventional music: noises, electronic sounds, or the complete absence of musical accompaniment, which encourages composers to experiment.

The influence of dance on musical performances: The movements of dancers sometimes become a rhythmic element of the music, combining auditory and visual sensations.

Joint development of performances with live music, where dance and sound are created simultaneously.

Contemporary dance has given rise to a separate genre where body movement becomes the main form of storytelling. Video projections and dance recordings are used in modern films and music videos, adding dynamism and emotional depth.

Choreography often inspires cinematography and editing, especially in music videos and art films.

In literature, descriptions inspired by dance forms are increasingly appearing as a metaphor for change, freedom, and life. Dance becomes the theme of literary works, symbolizing transformation or rebellion against stagnation.

Virtual reality, where dance serves as a tool for exploring spatial and visual aspects, has influenced the creation of interactive installations.

Dance movements become the basis for algorithms in computer graphics and design.

Pina Bausch's performances, where dance is closely intertwined with dramaturgy and visual art.

Mary Wigman's projects and her influence on expressionism.

Modern cross-genre works (such as Wayne McGregor), combining dance, science, film, and fashion.

Contemporary dance expands the boundaries of perception, erasing differences between genres and encouraging the creation of art that embraces the body, space, and emotions.

Contemporary dance is a universal language that connects people, unites cultures, and awakens in everyone a sense of belonging to something greater. It proves that art can be not only an aesthetic experience but also a way to explore and comprehend our shared human heritage.

It is much more than just an art form. It is a way to understand the world, build a dialogue with society, and, most importantly, explore oneself. It is open to everything and everyone—new techniques, cultural traditions, ideas, and technologies.

Dance has always been a mirror of its time, and contemporary dance is a vivid confirmation of this. In its movements, we see a reflection of the complexity, beauty, and freedom of the modern world.

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