Chapter 12

New Directions: 1980–2000

# Overview

The giants of 20th-century ballet and modern dance passed the baton to the next generation. They brought the traditions of the past, expressed through their choreography, to communicate their messages about contemporary society.

American ballet solidified into a contemporary form with the inspirations and cross-fertilization of modern dance choreographers working with ballet companies.

American postmodern dance took new directions, again from the experimentations of the previous era. The choreographers took their earlier experimentations and transformed them into new forms to express their personal and artistic messages to the world.

# Activities and Assignments

The activities and assignments are in two parts: ballet and modern dance.

## Ballet

### Activity 1. Comparing Forms

Define each of the following terms:

* classical ballet
* neoclassical ballet
* modern ballet

Find a 20th-century ballet that exemplifies each of the forms. See a video performance of the ballet or collect several descriptions and critiques of the work. Justify how the specific work meets the criteria of that dance form by writing a one- to two-page paper.

### Activity 2. Characterizing American Ballet in the 20th Century

Ballets in the 20th century included either story ballets or abstract ballets.

* Story ballets: From the 19th century or from the Ballet Russe era ballets
* Abstract ballets: Beginning with Fokine and explored by Balanchine

Using a time line, indicate the significant story ballets and abstract ballets throughout the 20th century. Write a brief informational paragraph on each significant work. Include the choreographer, synopsis of the ballet, company, and date of premier performance.

**Extension**

If two or more choreographers created a work on the same subject or theme, compare and contrast their choreographic approaches. This extension could expand to include choreographers from different countries.

### Activity 3: Styles of Ballet

Classical ballet refers to the classic works from the 19th and early 20th century. Neoclassical style is associated with specific works of Balanchine. Modern ballet as a theme has surfaced through many choreographers’ works. How is each style the same? Different? What significant works are representational of these styles in 20th-century ballet? To answer these questions, do the following:

* Create a chart to explain the characteristics of each of these forms of ballet, their position in 20th-century American dance history, the choreographers and their significant work in each of these styles (start with the book, then include additional information), and their point of view with respect to the development of that variation of ballet.
* Based on your chart, write a conclusion (proof paragraph), which synthesizes and summarizes the information into a single statement.

## Modern Dance

### Activity 1. Definitions

The following are terms that became important in connection to postmodern dance in the last few decades of the 20th century. Define each of the terms, and provide an example of a choreographic work.

* task
* multimedia
* chance and intermediacy
* dance environments
* contact improvisation
* events
* rituals
* minimalism
* cycles and extended works
* cross-cultural influences
* world dance influences

### Activity 2. Characterizing Postmodern Choreography

What is postmodern dance? How did it evolve? Who contributed to this movement? What elements define the style and have become themes associated with postmodern dance?

Develop a concept map that includes the forms that postmodern dance can take and the choreographers related to these forms. A concept map is a graphic organizer that shows the relationships among concepts or other items. An example is in chapter 3, where the relationships and connections among different dances are explored (see figure 3.1). You can generate a concept map by using a drawing tool in a word processing program or a specific application for concept mapping.

### Activity 3. Choreographer’s Sketch or Summary

Create a summary of one or more of these choreographers and their significant works:

* Twyla Tharp
* Lucinda Childs
* Trisha Brown
* Laura Dean
* Mark Morris
* Urban Bush Women
* H.T. Chen and Company
* Bill T. Jones
* Charles Moulton
* Peter Pucci

### Activity 4. Trends

What are some of the cultural issues and trends from the 1970s to the end of the 20th century? Map them out on a time line and write a conclusion—a proof paragraph that summarizes these trends. What do you think will be the next evolutionary form for postmodern dance? In 2020? In 2050? Write a one- to two-page prediction paper.

# Web Links

The 1980s  
[www.1980sflashback.com](http://www.1980sflashback.com)

Salsa  
[www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/dance\_overview.asp?Dance=SAL](http://www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/dance_overview.asp?Dance=SAL)

Swing  
[www.learntodance.com/online-ballroom-dance-lessons/swing-dance-lessons-online](http://www.learntodance.com/online-ballroom-dance-lessons/swing-dance-lessons-online)

East coast swing  
[www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/syllabus.asp?Dance=ECS](http://www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/syllabus.asp?Dance=ECS)

West coast swing  
[www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/dance\_overview.asp?Dance=WCS](http://www.ballroomdancers.com/Dances/dance_overview.asp?Dance=WCS)

American Ballet Theatre  
[www.abt.org](http://www.abt.org)

New York City Ballet  
[www.nycballet.com](http://www.nycballet.com)

Joffrey Ballet  
[www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/joffrey-history-of-the-joffrey-ballet/2392](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/joffrey-history-of-the-joffrey-ballet/2392)

Garth Fagan Dance  
[www.garthfagandance.org](http://www.garthfagandance.org)

Susan Marshall  
[www.sumac.org](http://www.sumac.org)

Bill T. Jones  
<http://newyorklivearts.org/btj-az-company>

# Review Questions

1. What was society like during the era of new directions?
2. Who were the dancers and other contributors to ballet and modern dance during this period?
3. What were the dances, music, and other arts that supported dance during this period?
4. What were the significant dances, ballets, modern dance works, and dance literature of the period?

# Vocabulary

## Ballet

American Ballet Theatre

Armitage, Karole

*At Midnight*

Ballet Tech

*Calcium Light Night*

Feld, Eliot

*Fool for You, A*

*Grand Canon, Th*e

King, Alonzo

Martins, Peter

*Without Wax*

## Modern Dance

*Arms*

Brown, Trisha

*Cavalcade*

contemporary dance

*Dido and Aeneas*

Fagan, Garth

*Field, Chair and Mountain*

Gordon, David

*Hard Nut, The*

Jones, Bill T.

*Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land*

Lubovitch, Lar

Marshall, Susan

Miller, Bebe

Morris, Mark

*Murder*

*Othello*

*Prelude*

Rauschenberg, Robert

*Roof Piece*

*Spending Time Doing Things*