



Fifty Contemporary Choreographers

THIRD EDITION

ROUTLEDGE



KEY GUIDES

Edited by Jo Butterworth and Lorna Sanders

With an updated introduction by Deborah Jowitt

Praise for the second edition:

‘For those who think modern or contemporary dance is dead, this book opens a window of wonder, by revealing the intriguing and novel creations happening around the world. This book is the first of its kind to explore widespread contemporary dance diversity and its resulting rich global innovations. It is a must read for all those interested in contemporary dance.’

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FIFTY CONTEMPORARY CHOREOGRAPHERS

Fifty Contemporary Choreographers is a unique and authoritative guide to the lives and work of prominent living contemporary choreographers; this third edition includes many new names in the field of choreography.

Representing a wide range of dance genres and styles, each entry locates the individual in the context of contemporary dance and explores their impact. Those studied include:

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Kyle Abraham | Germaine Acogny |
| William Forsythe | Marco Goeke |
| Akram Khan | Wayne McGregor |
| Crystal Pite | Frances Rings |
| Hofesh Shechter | Sasha Waltz |

With an updated introduction by Deborah Jowitt and further reading and references throughout, this text is an invaluable resource for all students and critics of dance and all those interested in the ever-changing world and variety of contemporary choreography.

Jo Butterworth launched BA and MA dance degrees in the UK, the Netherlands and Malta. She wrote *Dance Studies: The Basics* (2012), co-edited two editions of *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader* (2009, 2018), and was awarded the DSA Distinction in Dance Award in 2018.

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Fifty Contemporary Choreographers

Jo Butterworth and Lorna Sanders

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EDITORS' NOTE

This book was commissioned as a contribution to the 'Fifty Contemporary . . .' series intended to provide, in handbook form, introductory guides to fifty practitioners or thinkers in various fields.

In setting out to determine the scope of a book on choreographers, it was decided that the notoriously fluid description 'contemporary' would, in this case, mean living choreographers whose work, spanning the decades from the late 1940s to the present, has often exemplified post-war trends in choreography. We therefore continue in this 3rd edition, in the 21st century, not to limit ourselves to a specific definition of the genre known as 'contemporary dance'. Contemporary choreography is no longer confined to theatrical contexts but is concerned with dancemaking in an ever-expanding and diverse field of applications. The boundaries between dance genres are increasingly blurred as choreographers from every continent and culture strive to find their own voice, as did their predecessors, but now they can be influenced in many ways: by the work of their peers, for example, through increased opportunities for international touring and a myriad of online sources which are available to them as never before. Dancers and artist-practitioners also learn a wide range of techniques and approaches in training and apply these in collaborative practice with other artists, whether in a small collective or an established ballet company. As experience and ability mature, their artistry develops and creative approaches multiply, so that the principles for making dance, and such questions as who should dance, and what dance might convey, are reconsidered and repurposed.

The choreographers chosen here are not intended to form a canonical or exclusive group. Rather, the forty new entrants have been selected from hundreds shortlisted, to demonstrate a wide range of dance phenomena from five continents across the globe that have developed in the decade since the 2nd edition. The emphasis here is on foregrounding choreographic practices that have not

yet been widely documented or otherwise made accessible to dance studies students, giving insights into the range of individual processes at various stages of their careers. Identifying the emergence of new styles which are boundary breaking and hybrid, we have included experimentalists in ballet, tap, kathak, bharata natyam and flamenco and those areas where dance merges with other art forms, such as opera, drama, performance art, film, site specific and site sensitive approaches and installations.

Choreographers today reflect the society in which they live, their individual artistic beliefs and often their increasing interest in political issues. Some undertake dramatic, narrative or character-based approaches, others transfer the canon of classical works to an unconventional environment; some prefer extremely abstract concepts or highly technical challenges, or find other methods of stepping beyond previous choreographic boundaries applied to the creation of dance content and its forms. The careers discussed here also highlight the significant numbers of dancemakers involved in youth and/or community work in local or national contexts, and equally the internationalism of the life of professional choreographers as they fly around the world making works for major companies.

Thus, in this third edition, while we acknowledge the recent concerns of dance studies with transnationalism, gender, hybridity and other provocations that challenge assumptions about previously accepted aesthetics, we also recognise that this dance is generated in a 21st century context, whilst still being grounded in footprints of traditional knowledge.

A NOTE ON THE ENTRIES

Each entry consists of four sections:

- 1 An essay on the choreographer's career by a commissioned contributor.
- 2 A biographical sketch, with essential details of birth, education and training, career, dance-company affiliations, and awards/honours.
- 3 A list of choreographic works, as comprehensive as possible, by year of premiere. Choreographic collaborators, where relevant (and known), appear in the brackets after the titles. Where collaborators are identified in the essay, we have not always further included them in the list due to reasons of space. Any significant later version of a work is usually noted alongside the original

version: there are some exceptions here, usually involving a change of the work's title.

- 4 A list of Further Reading, subdivided into interviews, articles, and books. Items are listed in chronological order. We have generally not included the normal review columns from newspapers and dance periodicals, though where a review has been substantial enough to become a feature article, or where little other available written material exists, then we have retained it. For the most part we have confined ourselves to English-language material, except where the most substantial writing exists in other widely spoken languages. Where journals –usually quarterlies – designate issues by season (e.g. Winter 1988), we have preferred to list them thus; sometimes periodical series are inconsistent in this respect, and so some citations here include volume and issue numbers instead. Web addresses are not given in full, but the reference includes sufficient information to find the material when the site is accessed.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

At least twice in the history of contemporary dance, renegade choreographers have rebelled against everything they have been taught, and pared dance back to a state of ardent simplicity. It was in the 1950s that Merce Cunningham, a former Graham dancer, began his controversial and thoroughly eye-opening reinvestigations of time, space, and compositional procedures.

Redefining ‘nature’ has been a crucial mission in the development of contemporary dance. Cunningham’s vision of nature followed the ideas of his colleague, the radical composer and theorist John Cage, who wrote in 1973, ‘Art changes because changes in science give the artist a different understanding of nature’. Ideas from eastern philosophy and particle physics helped shape the aesthetic that Cunningham developed from the early 1950s. The apparent negation of causality in quantum mechanics, the fact that even our choices may be the result of chance or random selection – such theories found parallels in Cunningham’s methods and in his vivid, disquieting stage pictures.

Viewing space as an open field, Cunningham upset the convention of central focus, a dominant feature of proscenium stage presentations. His compositional strategies included such chance procedures as tossing coins on charts to determine path, sequence, personnel, even movement. His beautifully trained dancers never played roles onstage or appeared to influence one another enduringly. In keeping with the Zen Buddhist principles that he and Cage subscribed to, he allowed each element of a dance to reveal its own nature with a minimum of manipulation: music, décor, lighting, costumes, and choreography existed as separate strands coming together only at the final rehearsal. The process and formal practice of his dances is one of complexity and unpredictability. It made many people uncomfortable, but Cunningham possibly had more direct impact on contemporary dance-making in the latter half of the twentieth century than those of anyone else.

Certainly, his ideas, and more particularly Cage's, sparked the influential revolution of the 1960s in New York, most of which occurred under the auspices of Judson Dance Theater, a group of smart, irreverent choreographers. They wanted to understand the essence of dance, in the vastly altered political and social climate of their times.

Prominent members included Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Lucinda Childs, Elaine Summers, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Morris, Deborah Hay, and Simone Forti, all included in *Terpsichore in Sneakers* by Sally Banes. In a preface to the second edition in 1987, Banes distinguished several strands, spanning three decades, of postmodernism in dance. But perhaps the term applies most neatly to choreographers of the 1980s and 1990s whose artistic strategies and interests are more in tune with postmodernism in art and architecture than were those of the Judson group and the independents who began to sprout around them (such as Meredith Monk, Kenneth King, and Twyla Tharp).

The radical dancers, composers, and painters of the 1960s have been compared to the Dadaists operating in Switzerland, Germany, and Paris around the time of World War I. True, some Judson performances echoed the witty and obstreperous playfulness of Dada performances, where, according to Tristan Tzara, the act of demanding 'the right to piss in different colors', and following it up with demonstrations, counted as a performance activity (Goldberg, 1979). However, neither the Judson dancers nor John Cage in his seminal composition courses at the New School for Social Research in New York were this nihilistic in their rowdiness. At a time when young people worldwide were questioning political and social establishments, these artists were querying the separation of the arts, the hierarchical arrangement of compositional elements, the elitism, and potential eradication of individuality inherent in much academic training. Further, if, according to Cage, any noise could be part of a musical composition, why couldn't any movement be considered dance?

Exploration of everyday movement, the use of untrained performers, dances structured like tasks or ingenious games, objects used literally, process as a possible element of performance, absence of narrative or emotion, avoidance of virtuosity and glamour to seduce an audience – these gave many dances of the 1960s a resolute purity. And the iconoclasm of the 1960s initiated another cycle of invention, development, imitation, and potential stagnation.

In American contemporary dance, the individual styles developed by such choreographers as Brown, Gordon, Tharp, Paxton, and Childs were seeded in part from ordinary behaviour, rough-and-tumble athletics, Asian martial arts forms, and the casual dislocations of rock and roll; they little resembled the dominant 'modern' dance. The loose, fumbly duets of Paxton's contact improvisation, Gordon's complicated word play, Childs's exacting rhythmic patterns of travelling steps, the liquid-bodies dancing, and brainy structures Brown built, Tharp's equally rigorous experiments with a style that, increasingly, drew on black vernacular dancing for its casual wit and complexity – however difficult these styles were to execute, they bred dancers focused on the business of doing, looking more spontaneous and more relaxed.

Following Cunningham's example, and perhaps Balanchine's too, many American choreographers of the 1970s tended to focus on movement and form, believing that these were in themselves expressive. However, radical choreographers elsewhere were not fighting to free dance of literary-dramatic trappings; they had other agendas. Butoh – a style and an artistic movement – developed in Japan during the 1960s as part of a reaction in all the arts against the rapid Westernisation of the post-war years. The impulse of the two men acknowledged as founders of butoh, Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno was transgressive and anti-conventional in expertise, but it took a darkly dramatic form. Like the work of radical contemporary Japanese writers, painters, and theatre directors, butoh emphasised poverty of means, bad taste, and extreme physical and spiritual states. It moved with excruciating slowness; it shattered all conventions, presenting the body with its imperfections magnified: toed in, club-footed, twitching, grimacing, knotted with tension. Images of violence, eroticism, and androgyny permeate the work, offset by irony and absurdity. The influence of butoh has extended not only to Saburo Teshigawara, but to non-Asian choreographers in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

The term *Tanztheater* is applied to the work of choreographers beside Pina Bausch, but it is she who made it world-famous. This renaissance of bold contemporary dance in the Germany of the 1970s shared with *Ausdruckstanz* its essentially dark nature and view of life as a struggle of adversarial forces. In Bausch's work, these forces were no longer located within the body as much as they were outside it; in her hours-long theatrical spectacles, performers persist in impossible or humiliating tasks, or battle one another. Involving singing, speech, and motion, her pieces are collages of small intense scenes which acquire a ritualistic fervour. With immense theatricality, they often present life as a no-win battle of the sexes in an inertly bourgeois

world. Compared to the abstract images of society in struggle that the early modern dancers created, Bausch's society is without visible ideals or heroes.



Looking back over the last decades of the twentieth century, one can note the remarkably accelerated growth of innovative contemporary forms in countries such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Canada. Martha Graham's formidable technique was already over 30 years old when Robin Howard founded the London School of Contemporary Dance (1966) and London Contemporary Dance Theatre (1967). Less than five years later, choreographers like Richard Alston were already attracted to a less emotion-laden aesthetic inspired by Cunningham. Mary Fulkerson and her fostering of release work and contact improvisation soon after its 'invention' by Steve Paxton also influenced Alston's company Strider, and the historian Stephanie Jordan (1992) saw the explosion of British 'fringe' dance beginning in the late 1970s as being triggered in part by the arrival on the scene of the first graduating class trained by Fulkerson at Dartington College of Arts in Devon. Choreographers like those associated with the X6 Collective (Fergus Early, Maedée Duprès, Jacky Lansley, Emilyn Claid, and Mary Prestidge) and those who presented work under X6's auspices (Laurie Booth, Rosemary Butcher, and others), were creating Britain's 'New Dance'.

An intriguing aspect of the postmodern scene has been the ways in which contemporary choreographers built on the radical experimental work of the 1960s, gradually reintroducing in new guises much of what was discarded. Virtuosity, once told to stay in the ballet world where it belonged, now often worked in ironic companionship with the unassuming, everyday look cultivated by dancers during the 1960s. Someone might slouch or saunter onto the stage, perhaps wearing street clothes, then offhandedly fling a leg towards the roof. The French choreographer Jérôme Bel included 'ordinary people' in his dances but presented them in frankly entertaining ways. Some choreographers, such as Belgium's Wim Vandekeybus, Britain's Lloyd Newson, Canada's Edouard Locke, or the United States's Elizabeth Streb (four highly dissimilar artists), began by reconstruing virtuosity as ordeal or as risk. Putting dancers in what looks like danger or working them to a point of visible exhaustion could induce a kinaesthetic response in spectators, different in quality but similar in effect to that caused by a ballet dancer's phenomenal leap.

During the early 1970s, the Grand Union – which included former Judson Dance Theater mavericks like David Gordon, Trisha Brown, and Steve Paxton – charmed (or alarmed) adventurous audiences with their wholly unplanned presentations. When spectators know that a performance is improvised, they're drawn into the process, aware that they're experiencing a heady kind of mind-body virtuosity involving on-the-spot decisions and instant responses. Nigel Charnock was proud to let theatregoers know that no two performances of his *Stupid Men* (2007) are alike. Berlin choreographer Felix Ruckert built on the notion of task or game structures developed in the 1960s; for instance, to create his 2005 *Messiah Game*, he devised, 'a syllabus of rules that allow for improvisation, spontaneity, and chance' (Guzzo Vacarino, 2007). Ruckert's structures also incorporated audience members into the performance, further heightening their perception of the unexpected. Some choreographers use improvisation more subtly – perhaps giving the performers a degree of freedom to choose in performance from among various composed phrases and movements or, like Susan Marshall, making it a vital part of the creative process. During the 1980s, Dana Reitz, who once likened her composition-improvisation strategies to those of jazz musicians ringing changes on a known melody (Jowitt, 1980), created solos so elegant and formally coherent that people were often unaware of the role that spontaneity played.

Contact improvisation, as Steve Paxton formulated it in the 1970s, was an 'art sport', a totally improvised duet form that featured exchanges of weight, with partners clambering over each other or levering one another off the floor. Because they so rarely use their hands to initiate moves, the action, although it can look erotic or competitive, never seems manipulative. Contact improvisation is still practised worldwide in its 'pure' form, but it also opened up new possibilities for generations of choreographers.

In the 1980s, a rekindled interest in emotion and narrative surfaced among choreographers who had been nurtured on the Cunningham aesthetic. Economic pressures, feelings of political helplessness, and the spread of AIDS may have had some influence in spawning themes of dependency, helplessness, anger. In response, a gritty physicality derived in part from contact improvisation became a metaphor for flawed human relationships and oppressive societies in countries as diverse as Canada, Croatia, and Venezuela. With the fall of communism, Eastern European countries hastened to nurture contemporary forms that had been disapproved of and suppressed by former regimes, and provocative works from South America challenged repressive ideologies. The lifts and supports are neither

effortless nor attractive; they may be about a person who can hardly stand up trying to help another, about the terrible weight of a human body, about embraces that never quite work, about diving through the air and daring someone to catch you.

These contacts are not always tender. Postmodern dance and dance-theatre alike often feature a violence that is more unabashed and far less glamorous than its equivalent in classic modern dance. Thinking over the contemporary scene of the last decades, one garners images of fierce, unstopping energy (as in the work of Stephen Petronio), but also more obviously dramatic ones of boots stomping, of people hauling one another around in painful or humiliating ways, of ordeals as punishment. In Jean-Claude Gallotta's *Docteur Labus* (1988), created for his Grenoble-based Groupe Emile Dubois, a man raised a woman by sticking his fingers in her ears; another pulled his partner around by a hand jammed into her mouth.

Radical artists of the 1960s occasionally presented the nude body as a statement against both censorship and prudery. In the 1970s, a climate that fostered free love and a return to nature engendered poetic presentations of nakedness that could be equated with innocence. In the twenty-first century, stripping someone of clothes can suggest not only erotic possibilities, as in the male duet in John Jasperse's *Fort Blossom* (2000), but a stripping away of identity.

A sentence by Jasperse (undated) about *Fort Blossom* resonates with various enquiries into the body that have permeated scholarly discourse over the last two decades: 'In *Fort Blossom*, through a very personal look at the body (alternately medical, eroticised and/or aestheticised), the audience is invited to examine contemporary notions of how we experience the body as both owners and spectators'. While innovators of the 1960s and into the 1970s vaunted a natural human body over a trained and polished one, it is difficult to imagine any of them designing the movements for a quite spectacular dance on the effects of a muscular disease on the human body, as Wayne McGregor did in 2004 with *AtaXia*.

Many of the elements that characterise postmodernism in art and architecture also figure in contemporary dance forms. Eclecticism is no longer a pejorative term; choreographers feel free to borrow from ballet and street dance in the same work. Karole Armitage and Michael Clark mixed ballet-born vocabularies with pop imagery. Twyla Tharp built her phenomenal style by mingling the slouchy complexity and casual manners of jazz with ballet's linear precision.

Critics of postmodernism have deplored its addiction to making references to the past as purposeless nostalgia and pastiche, but in

dance, such references often do point out ironic structural parallels, or disassemble the traditional so that new meanings may be squeezed out. One example is Pina Bausch's disconcertingly desolate and poignant update of Bluebeard (*Blaubart*, 1977). William Forsythe's *Impressing the Czar* (1988) deconstructed *fin-de-siècle* Russian art and social politics. In *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/ The Promised Land* (1990), Bill T. Jones used fragments of text and action drawn from Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel (with a performer representing Stowe as reader and commentator) to enquire into religious faith and the often subtle nature of prejudice against black people, women, and homosexuals. Equally political, Matthew Bourne's all-male *Swan Lake* (1995) not only wreaked gender havoc on a nineteenth-century classic but aimed darts at monarchy's power plays in general and Britain's royal family in particular. David Gordon's *Dancing Henry V* (2004) interwove Shakespeare's words with movements and additional text to create an eloquent – though subtle and unfailingly witty – denunciation of leaders who take their nations into war claiming that God is on 'our' side.

The fascination with history takes many forms and includes revamping classics or the music associated with them. Bourne has made a career out of revisiting famous ballets, operas, and films. Angelin Preljocaj recast Shakespeare's plot as a battle between the military of an unspecified communist state and a crew of homeless rebels in *Roméo et Juliette* (2005). Javier De Frutos choreographed four works to *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Molissa Fenley danced the entire score as a solo ordeal in her 1988 *State of Darkness*, and Finnish choreographer Tero Saarinen used it to create a powerful private drama, *Hunt* (2002).

Explorations of history also extend to personal, racial, and cultural heritages. Meredith Monk's great music-theatre-dance work *Quarry* (1976) could be said to prefigure this trend. In recent years, a number of contemporary choreographers worldwide have been exploring their roots or expanding upon an inherited tradition. While Alvin Ailey built two of his most famous early pieces, *Revelations* (1960) and *Blues Suite* (1958), on African-American religious fervour and urban jazz, later generations of dance-makers investigating the black experience, like Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, David Rousseve, and Kyle Abraham have employed speaking and singing, as well as dance, to render more specific dramatic insights into cultural phenomena. In very different ways and to different degrees, Akram Khan and Shobana Jeyasingh in Britain and the late Chandralekha in India have built contemporary works on reinterpreted classical Indian techniques: kathak, bharata natyam, and kalaripayat respectively. In the United States, Rennie Harris used his

expertise as a hip-hop artist to re-envision Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (as *Rome & Jewels*, 2000).

Postmodernist eclecticism fosters the incorporation or plundering of other forms – club dancing, hip-hop, burlesque, cinema, literature, closed-circuit television, digital manipulation – whether to enhance a work's visual texture as Philippe Decouflé has done with film, or to ignite ideas and visions by rubbing disparate 'texts' together. Choreographers such as Wim Vandekeybus became absorbed in the possibilities of cinema – not just to accompany dance, but as film-dance creations. Designers for Merce Cunningham and Trisha Brown utilised the process known as motion capture to create décor, and choreographers everywhere began to experiment with computer-generated imagery and techniques that juxtapose live dancers with virtual ones.

Postmodernism even embraces artists like Mark Morris, who in some ways might be considered a throwback to Balanchine because of his emphasis on music and musicality. Such practices as blending exalted feeling with down-to-earth manners, embracing culture via its music and social conventions, and downplaying or reversing traditional gender roles define Morris as undeniably contemporary. So do his references to past styles – the evocations of Balkan dance, early German modern dance, Greek friezes, scarf dancers, or down-and-dirty dancing are not simply quotations, but transformations.

Because of dance's ephemerality, styles of the past are continually being recycled in a more literal way too. Ballet choreographers have recreated late nineteenth-century Russia; Asian choreographers have paid homage to Martha Graham. In a larger sense, the 'contemporary' scene is as diverse as individual notions of contemporaneity and as subject to individual adventurousness. For Jirí Kylián, known for his lush movement style, to make a piece like *Last Touch* (2003), which suggests 'a silent Strindberg play performed at a butoh dancer's pace' (Jowitt, 2004), is as daring in its way as John Jasperse's *Prone* (2005), in which half the audience viewed the performance while lying on a gleaming installation of air mattresses.

As the twenty-first century advanced, politics and social issues began to tangle in often surreal choreographic ways; some dance-makers haven't shied away from thorny subjects. Jane Comfort pulled gender apart in her 1995 *S/he*, appearing as a gutsy male alongside a drag queen. In 2008, her *An American Rendition* juxtaposed reality shows like American Idol with the rendition of American terrorist suspects to be interrogated and tortured on foreign soil. The amount of repetition in Brian Brooks's 2006 *again again* doesn't ally him

with the Minimalism of the 1970s; instead 'the sequences he choreographs are strenuous, redolent of effort and emotion, and he worries them like a dog with a bone, changing them in small, compelling ways' (Jowitt, 2006).

Contemporary choreographers often see it as their mission to challenge decades-old rules. Gideon Obarzanek's 2008 *I Like This* created the illusion that the three members of his Australia-based Chunky Moves were controlling the piece's plugs and wires, flashes of light and coloured gels – all of which appeared to illuminate and alter what the audience saw and heard. Ohad Naharin's 2006 *Telofaza* challenged the accepted boundary that exists between a proscenium stage and an audience. A performer's taped voice instructed us to copy the gestures she exhibited on a projected video and consider how they might make us feel. She got the spectators on their feet and dancing, while the performers emptied the stage.

At one point in Sasha Waltz's *Kreatur* (2018), the dancers occasionally unrolled and held up in front of themselves what appeared to be translucent window shades. Seen through one of these, a moving dancer might fluidly distort and multiply, gaining on occasion an additional head. A society perhaps out of touch with its own reality – Marco Goeke's 2018 *Walk the Demon*, required the members of Netherlands Dance Theater to use their faces to express feelings as they writhed and twisted their bodies and those of others.

The proliferation of media techniques applied to dance could reflect the dystopian nature of unsettled times worldwide. No live dancers were on view in chameckilerner's 2016 *Eskasizer*, titled after a vintage exercise machine. And those visiting a gallery never saw the faces of Roseane Chamecki and Andrea Lerner's four dancers (one in her twenties, one in her thirties, one in her forties, one in her fifties). Instead, their bodies, seen in close-up, filled the screen, creating skin-covered hills and valleys, hollows and crevices. No flesh-and-blood dancers inhabited *Tesseract Part I* (2017) by media artist Charles Atlas, Silas Riener, and Rashaun Mitchell (both members of Cunningham's last company). The audience at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, wearing 3-D viewing glasses, saw the dancers on a virtual stage projected onto the actual stage and defined by its proscenium arch.

Much of the presumed cutting-edge dance created in recent decades can be characterised by its frequent social, political, and historical concerns, its voracious strain of eclecticism, its interest in text and narrative, and its use of digital technology as an expressive force. These interests broadened and deepened dancing itself, but did not, as some feared, weaken movement invention. Although Andrea Miller's

2016 *Boat* was created in response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis, it showed how people related to others through movement and structure, and by the music that bolstered these. The following year, Pam Tanowitz, another American, created a stunning work, over an hour long, titled *New Work for Goldberg Variations*. Although some artists may simply be shaping their ideas in accord with current trends, others respond profoundly and directly to contemporary life.

To scholars and admirers of modern dance, its glory lies in its diversity. At the core of each style is the single artist's way of moving and feeling, fuelled by his or her vision of what dance means in the world and how the world reveals itself in dance. We should, perhaps, be grateful that modern dance did not become a powerful monolithic entity like ballet, that choreographers can remain utterly susceptible to the world around them, able to design the present, even sometimes the future, on moving bodies.

Deborah Jowitt

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