Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophy: A Holistic Dance Pedagogy

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Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophy: A Holistic Dance Pedagogy

By

Molly Christie González

May 2015

Photograph by Author

Katherine Dunham Teaching at the NYCBOE Dunham Institute in 2002
A thesis submitted to the Department of Dance of the College at Brockport
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Dance Education with Pre-K-12 Teacher Certification

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Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophy: A Holistic Dance Pedagogy

By Molly Christie González

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my teachers, mentors and friends in the Dunham world whose ancestral voices and dancing bodies have swirled their way through my mind, body and spirit as I researched, wrote and discovered my way through this document. It is my intention that parts of you be set on paper to live on and be shared with others through this written thesis.

Vanoye Aikens, Joyce Aschenbrenner, Talley Beatty, VèVè A. Clark, Katherine Dunham, Lucille Ellis, Tommy Gomez, Yao Marshall, Walter Nicks, Alicia Pierce, and Jeanelle Stovall.

As each of you has passed on, I have felt an urgency to represent your legacies and to translate the Dunham language and way of life that I have been so honored to be a part of. I hope to echo the spirit of truth, thoroughness, strength, perseverance and beauty that you collectively embodied, with today’s generation of dancers, scholars, and creators. Ms. Dunham, your words have echoed repeatedly in my head when you said to me numerous times: “You are a teacher.” As you told all of us: “Get your degree in higher education so that you may translate the work you are doing into a language understood by all levels of educators and learners.”

To my Dunham family, fellow committee members and board members, and certified and master teachers: the bodily wisdom and life experience that you possess and have shared with so many including myself, is invaluable. I am most grateful to have the continued opportunity to learn and share with you all as we weave our individual and collective voices, and bring to light all that Ms. Dunham has bestowed upon us through the gathering and training of new Dunham teachers.
“Many, many years ago, I was walking out of a large, empty room in a museum, and I heard, but I didn’t hear—I heard with a sense that was not hearing—an interior voice say, ‘You must never forget that you are here to teach.’ It was tantalizing! I had always known this about myself on some deep level, but never had it been as clear to me as it was at that moment. I realized, of course, that it was up to me to develop my own scenario for making that happen. But from that day on, all my relationships, all my undertakings with people, have been about teaching…Teaching through and about everything I could.”1 Katherine Dunham

Acknowledgments
I acknowledge the many teacher/mentor/friends who have been incredible models of teaching excellence in my life, and whom have inspired, encouraged, and supported me in my growth as an artist/educator/scholar: Barbara Star Christie, Claire Oglesby, Kathy Keller, Patricia Wilson, and Albirda Rose-Eberhardt among others.

Thank you to the faculty and staff of the dance department at the College at Brockport for supporting me in the completion of this MA degree with Pre-K-12 Teacher Certification, especially Dr. Juanita Suarez and my mentors in my student teaching practicums at SOTA and GVCC.

And a special thank you to my partner Alí, for supporting me through a second graduate school program and thesis, and to our children Alyma and Mahali who have literally been born and grown up through my journey with this degree.

1 Katherine Dunham as quoted in an interview at age 95 with Margaret Wolff, In Sweet Company: Conversations with Extraordinary Women about Living a Spiritual Life (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 165-166.
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Abstract

Artist/scholar/educator Katherine Dunham (1909-2006) focused her life’s work on finding ways to educate people about themselves and each other, through a pedagogy that emphasized an integration of the thinking mind, emotional self and expressive physical body. Over her lifetime as an educator, anthropologist, performer, choreographer, writer, activist, and humanist, she developed and enacted a holistic model of pedagogy that remains an exemplary model in the field of education.

The Dunham Pedagogy promotes intercultural awareness and understanding, social skills development, artistic training, and encourages scholarly pursuit, through its foundation in the Dunham Philosophies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts*. This thesis will trace Dunham’s dual training in dance and anthropology and the intertwined development of the Dunham Technique, Philosophies, and Pedagogy. It will explore the underlying values and aesthetics present in the physical Technique, the cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary curriculum within Dunham schools, the role and practice of a teacher within a Dunham classroom, and the process of Dunham Teacher Certification.
Chapter One:  
Master of Arts Thesis Proposal  

Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophy:  
A Holistic Dance Pedagogy

“I feel that to know Dunham Technique you have to be willing to accept a holistic view of life. That is the body, mind and spirit working together. They don’t work separately from each other. They grow together and unite. So when you are deeply into Dunham Technique and are performing the choreography or are teaching, or learning, then all of those parts of your body begin to sing. And they begin to sing not in solo voices but in unison. It’s like striking a wonderful chord and the response from the person who is receiving is so great that the teacher grows from it too.”    

Katherine Dunham

Introduction

Artist/scholar/educator Katherine Dunham (1909-2006) focused her life’s work on finding ways to educate people about themselves and each other, with dance as her primary vehicle. Over her lifetime as an educator, anthropologist, performer, choreographer, writer, activist, and humanist, she developed and enacted a holistic model of dance pedagogy that remains an exemplary model in the field of dance education.

Katherine Dunham’s life and work embodied an integration of the thinking mind, emotional self and expressive physical body. Her philosophies provided structures and methods that she utilized within all aspects of her academic and

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2 Katherine Dunham is often referred to as a “Renaissance Woman;” the descriptive roles listed were primary in her life, but are not inclusive to all that she embodied and accomplished.
creative work. These methodologies are applicable and relevant for today’s dance educator, student, performer, choreographer and researcher.

The Dunham pedagogy promotes intercultural awareness and understanding, social skills development, artistic training, and encourages scholarly pursuit. It is a technique and philosophy that connects body, mind and spirit and asks each student and practitioner to continually develop their personal self-awareness and inclusivity of those around them. Together, the Dunham Technique and Philosophies provide an accessible framework and model of education for teaching arts and humanities to all ages and levels of students within a multitude of educational and community based settings.

Proposal

During her formative years as an undergraduate and graduate student at the University of Chicago in the 1930’s, Katherine Dunham trained jointly in dance and anthropology, creating a philosophical and structural link between the two fields that greatly influenced her creative and academic approach to her life’s work. It is through the merging of these fields that she began developing the philosophical methodologies and their underlying values and aesthetics, that together form the framework for her dance education and artistic pedagogies, as well as her scholarly work.

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3 Katherine Dunham was a student at the University of Chicago between 1928 and 1936, where she received a bachelor’s degree in Social Anthropology. Although she completed her masters thesis that resulted in her book *Dances of Haiti*, she left school prior to completing her course work for a masters degree to pursue her career as a full time artist and teacher. In subsequent years she received over sixteen honorary Doctoral degrees, among her many awards and honors. Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 238.
Through the writing of this thesis, I aim to offer a greater understanding of Dunham’s contributions to the field of dance education. I will trace the intertwined development of her physical dance technique and accompanying methodologies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts*, along with their supporting philosophies of *Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Detachment* and *Discrimination*, and will show how together they create a holistic dance pedagogy relevant for today’s dance student and teacher.

Recognition of Dunham’s contributions to the development of modern and jazz dance, technically, aesthetically, pedagogically and choreographically, have often been racially and culturally classified and separated, contributing to her marginalized representation and misidentification within the dance field as a whole. Critics, historians, artists and academicians have had difficulty categorizing Katherine Dunham’s interdisciplinary and multifaceted creative and academic work, thus prohibiting their ability to fully describe, critique, and acknowledge her multidimensional and lasting contributions.

In the last decade, there has been an increased focus on the various issues of exclusion that Dunham and other African-American dance artists have experienced, including a call for a re-writing of dance history narratives and of dance technique curriculums to become more culturally inclusive. Wendy Perron, while Editor in Chief of *Dance Magazine*, wrote: “(Katherine Dunham) was a force in the evolution

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4 This masters thesis is a continuation of the research I began with the writing of my MFA thesis titled: “Katherine Dunham’s Methodologies of Form and Function, Intercultural Communication and Socialization Through The Arts, as a Choreographic Model,” copyrighted in 2008.
of American dance. Your dance history teachers might tell you that the “four pioneers” of American modern dance were Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm. But Miss Dunham was in some ways busier and more productive than any of them.”

I will examine the cross-cultural blend of values and aesthetics that informed and are perpetuated within Katherine Dunham’s pedagogy, and will present the holistic models of education that she envisioned and practiced within the schools she established nationally and internationally over the course of her lifetime.

It is my hope that this study will contribute towards a greater understanding of the richness and relevancy of Katherine Dunham’s Technique and Philosophy by encouraging a greater number of artists, scholars and educators to recognize her profound contributions to the fields of dance and education, and most importantly to utilize and practice her technique and philosophies.

**Background in Dunham Technique**

I began training in Katherine Dunham technique and philosophies in 1987 with Dunham certified teacher Patricia Wilson. In 1992 she brought me and others to the Annual Dunham Technique Seminar in St. Louis, IL, where I met and studied

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5 Wendy Perron, “Isn’t it Katherine Dunham’s Centennial too?,” *Dance Magazine*, June 2009.
6 In 1993, Patricia Wilson was part of the first group of students to be officially certified by Ms. Katherine Dunham as a teacher of Dunham Technique and Philosophies, after years of rigorous technical and academic training. This marked the beginning of the Dunham Technique Certification Process; prior to this time the only certified teachers were former company members of the Dunham Dance Company along with a few select individuals chosen by Ms. Dunham, some of whom had trained within the Performing Arts Training Center program in East St. Louis, Illinois.
7 The Annual Dunham Technique Seminar began in 1984 and has been hosted by various institutions in the East St. Louis, IL and St. Louis, MO vicinity over the past thirty years.
with Katherine Dunham and her master teachers\(^8\) for the first time. My studies in Dunham Technique, philosophies and history has continued since then through training with Katherine Dunham and her master and certified instructors at seminars, classes, workshops and intensives throughout the United States. Beginning in 2002, Katherine Dunham asked me to serve as her female technique demonstrator at the seminars in East St. Louis.\(^9\) In following years I also served as a teacher for both children and adult students at the Dunham Technique Seminar.

In 2004, Katherine Dunham and the Certification Committee of the Institute for Intercultural Communication led by Dr. Albirda Rose, granted me Dunham Technique Teacher Certification “to teach and carry on the philosophy of Dunham Technique.”\(^10\) Since becoming certified, I became a founding member of the Dunham Technique Certification Board,\(^11\) and currently serve on the Executive Board. I am Chair of the Academic Committee, which oversees the creation and grading of the History and Theory Exams as well as the monitoring and cataloging of written material concerning the legacy of Katherine Dunham. In addition, I am Co-Chair of the Pedagogy Committee, responsible for the teaching of the Dunham Pedagogy classes at the Annual Dunham Technique Certification Workshop for Dunham

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\(^8\) Master Dunham teachers present at this seminar included: Vanoye Aikens, Talley Beatty, Lucille Ellis, and Tommy Gomez.

\(^9\) I acted as a demonstrator until 2005, Ms. Dunham’s last Annual Technique Seminar in East St. Louis before her death on May 21, 2006, one month short of celebrating her 97\(^{th}\) birthday. During this time I also assisted Vanoye Aikens, Principal Dunham Company member, as a demonstrator in his class.

\(^10\) Quote extracted from my diploma of Dunham teacher certification signed by Katherine Dunham and Dr. Albirda Rose, Founder of the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification, granted in June 2004. See Appendix to view author’s Certification diploma.

\(^11\) Founded by all certified and master teachers in 2007, in the year following Ms. Dunham’s death.
students and teachers in the process of becoming certified, as well as for supporting best teaching practices for Certified Dunham Teachers. Certified teachers help in various capacities through teaching, coaching and in their support to candidates.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to examine and explain the holistic pedagogy created by Katherine Dunham as seen in her dance technique and philosophies, and to study and show examples of its relevancy as an exemplary model in today’s field of dance education.

**Problem Statement**

The following questions will help guide this research:

1) What contribution did Katherine Dunham’s study of anthropology during the 1930’s-1940’s, have on the development of her dance technique and educational philosophies, particularly in relation to its underlying values and aesthetics?

2) What are the origins and evolution of Katherine Dunham’s methodologies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication and Socialization Through the Arts*, as well as the supporting philosophies of *Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Discrimination and Detachment*, as they relate to her practice as an educator and the creation of her holistic dance pedagogy model?

3) What are the cultural, social and artistic origins of Katherine Dunham’s physical dance technique, how did it evolve throughout her life, and how does it look in today’s classroom?
4) How are Dunham methodologies and philosophies intrinsic to the physical movements of Dunham technique as well as Dunham’s dance pedagogy, and what are examples of how these methodologies and philosophies are realized within a dance class and educational setting?

5) How did Katherine Dunham enact her model of pedagogy in the schools she created nationally and internationally over her lifetime, and how do they compare to what is seen in education today?

6) How is Katherine Dunham’s dance pedagogy holistic?

7) Is Katherine Dunham’s pedagogy model relevant for today’s dance student, teacher and educational institution?

8) What is the history of Dunham Technique Teacher Certification, and how does a dance artist/scholar/educator prepare for this process?

**Delimitations**

The focus of this study will be on Katherine Dunham as an educator and the evolution of her dance pedagogy model, and its application and relevancy in today’s field of education. Although her practice as a dance artist, choreographer, scholar, anthropologist, activist and humanist are all intertwined, I will limit my description of these roles in her life to how they contributed to and affected her choices and actions as an educator.

**Limitations**

I am reliant on written, recorded and videoed documentation of Katherine Dunham’s Technique, Philosophy, and pedagogical models, as conducting an
interview with her in person is no longer an option. I will focus on primary sources, using Ms. Dunham’s written and recorded voice as my first resource. I will draw on my memory and written notes of personal interactions, conversations and training with Katherine Dunham and her master and certified instructors between 1992 when I began my training in Dunham Technique and Philosophies until the present, through my journey as a student, seminar assistant, technique demonstrator, and certified teacher.

**Definition of Key Terms**

- **Anthropology**: The study of humanity.
- **Dance Anthropology**: Katherine Dunham originated this branch of anthropology where the movement language, function and expression of a society or group are viewed as paramount in understanding the culture as a whole. She initiated the practice of active participation in combination with observation, as a method to be utilized during the research and learning process.
- **Holistic**: an understanding that each person and area of learning is made up of interdependent and interconnected parts that together contribute to the functioning of the whole system.
- **Pedagogy**: the practice and art of teaching.
- **Holistic Pedagogy**: a method of teaching that acknowledges the social, physical, mental and spiritual aspects of each student in the learning process. Subject matters are not presented in isolation, rather they are taught within a context that addresses
the supporting areas of content and recognizes the value of each contributing part and its role.

- **Primitive Dance:** Katherine Dunham makes continual written and spoken reference to “primitive dance” as an essential research and training source for her dance technique, choreography and philosophies. Although the word “primitive” carries negative connotations today, when Dunham was a student in anthropology in the 1930’s this was the accepted word to use when referencing what might today be called an “indigenous” or “traditional” society or dance form, one that still contains primary elements of cultural roots within its artistic forms.

**Chapter Outlines including Modes of Inquiry, Methodology and Procedures**

In Chapter Two, *Dance as a Social Act: The Philosophical Origins of Katherine Dunham Technique*, I will explore through historiographic inquiry, the social and political environment that surrounded Katherine Dunham during her initial development as a dance artist/educator/anthropologist/scholar/humanitarian in the 1920’s and 1930’s in Chicago. I will trace the origins and evolution of Dunham’s educational methodologies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts*, as they developed from the ideas and research she experienced while conducting her collegiate studies in social anthropology.

In Chapter Three, *Seeking the Universal: The Physical Origins of Katherine Dunham Technique*, I will describe the international group of artist/teachers whom Katherine Dunham studied with in the 1920’s and 1930’s, and how the movement languages she learned influenced her developing artistic ideas. I will show how she
began developing pedagogical ideas that answered the social and cultural needs she saw around her, through her initial experiences teaching, founding schools and choreographing in Chicago.

In Chapter Four, Dignified Art: The Creation of a Dance Technique, I will follow the artistic, scholarly and pedagogical path that Katherine Dunham forged between her anthropological fieldwork in the West Indies in 1935, and the development of the Dunham Company as they gained recognition in Chicago, prompting their move to New York City in 1939. I will discuss the social, cultural and artistic stereotypes that Dunham reacted to during that time, motivating her to develop a socially based pedagogy and artistic form that worked to educate the whole person.

In Chapter Five, Merging Academia and the Arts: Dunham Technique as a Model for Education, I will track the Dunham Company’s artistic growth and recognition as they performed on Broadway and in Hollywood and toured nationally during the early 1940’s, leading to Dunham’s ability to found the Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research in New York City in 1944. I will illuminate the remarkable multi-arts, multicultural, humanities infused curriculum and degree program that Dunham created, along with the school’s course of objectives, during its thirteen year existence.

In Chapter Six, The Artist/Scholar/Educator: National and International Repercussions, I will investigate the challenges and eventual recognition of Katherine Dunham’s fused identity as an artist/scholar/educator over the course of her lifetime. I will trace the international influences of Dunham’s work as she performed and taught
in fifty-seven countries in thirteen years. In addition, I will examine the national impact of the Performing Arts Training Center, a connected community arts center and college degree program she established in E. St. Louis, IL, along with the non-profit Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities, still in existence today.

In Chapter Seven, *Dance as Rhythmic Motion: The Feeling and Shape of Katherine Dunham Technique*, I will illustrate how Dunham’s life-long definition of dance as “rhythmic motion” (used following her anthropological fieldwork studying why and how people dance), affected the physical shape, polyrhythmic integration, and social purpose of her dance technique. Descriptions from Dunham Company members who experienced the physical evolution of the Technique along with its mental, spiritual and emotional effect, accompanied by a syllabus Dunham created for teachers of her Technique and my own embodied experience, will guide my research.

In Chapter Eight, *Becoming a Dunham Certified Teacher: Dunham Technique and Philosophy as Applied in the Classroom*, I will discuss what makes a Dunham classroom and learning environment unique, and will provide examples of how each Philosophy can be integrated into lesson plans and applied to the creation of objectives. I will describe the history of the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification, and how an artist/scholar/educator would prepare for this process. I will analyze current trends in dance pedagogy, and propose why I believe Dunham Technique and Philosophy to be a relevant, holistic pedagogy model that is of benefit to current dance students, teachers, and educational institutions.
Review of Related Literature and Resources

In reviewing the literature available on the life and legend of Katherine Dunham and her noted place within the dance education field as well as American modern and jazz dance, I am aware of categorical divisions that continue to perpetuate separations between her artistic and academic work, leading to an under representation of her contributions to these fields. Also apparent, is an insufficient acknowledgement and understanding of her core philosophical methodologies and their integration within the physical form and pedagogy of Dunham Technique, her choreographic process and product, and her dance research and academic writing. These fragmented portrayals are in contrast to my twenty-five plus years of integrated study of Dunham dance technique, history and philosophies.

A number of written sources mention Katherine Dunham’s methodologies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts* as separate entities, stating them by name with no accompanying definition, and generally only in relation to a single aspect of Dunham’s artistic or academic work. The first source to define and document the evolution of each of these three methodologies and how they function in conjunction with the supporting philosophies of *Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Discrimination* and *Detachment*, is the book *Dunham Technique: A Way of Life*, published in 1990 by Dr. Albirda Rose, the Founder and former Director of the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification.

In this book, Dr. Rose refers to *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts* as “theoretical methodologies”
and “theoretical models,” not philosophical methodologies as I have termed them. Dr. Rose presents *Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Discrimination* and *Detachment* as the Dunham philosophies that are used in conjunction with the above methodologies by both the teacher and student within the technique. I agree that these four secondary philosophies (not methodologies) are meant to provide a constant reflective process for the teacher, student or choreographer when enacting the principal methodologies of *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts*, artistically, pedagogically, or in everyday life.

Dunham Technique is often referred to as “A Way of Life;” the methodologies and philosophies that are integrated into Katherine Dunham’s work are applicable outside of the studio and theater setting. Within the Dunham Pedagogy, it is understood that a Dunham dancer and teacher continues to apply these philosophical principles throughout their life.

From approximately 1928-1938, Katherine Dunham was an undergraduate and graduate student in Social Anthropology at the University of Chicago. It was during this incubation period in Chicago that she developed the technical, artistic, and philosophical foundation for her education model, physical dance technique and choreographic style, which supported her lifelong work as an artist/educator/scholar. Dr. Joyce Aschenbrenner, an anthropologist who first began working with Katherine Dunham in the 1960’s when both were professors at Southern Illinois University, published the anthropological biography *Katherine Dunham: Dancing A Life* in 2002. In this book Aschenbrenner quotes Katherine Dunham on page twenty-eight as
saying: “I could not have choreographed as I have or written the books I have written without the foundation of those early years at the University of Chicago.” This resource is the definitive guide to understanding these formative years as well as her career as it evolved through the year 2001, from an anthropological perspective.

In 1981, the Congress on Research in Dance focused their Dance Research Annual solely on Katherine Dunham. This out-of-print publication contains only two chapters, both of which are essential to my research. Part One: “Katherine Dunham: Reflections on the Social and Political Contexts of Afro-American Dance,” represents the first major publication by Dr. Joyce Aschenbrenner on Ms. Dunham. Although various writers have written about the social, cultural and political climate surrounding the careers of African American modern dancers since, this study represents a detailed account of the environmental factors that both challenged and inspired Dunham. Part Two, titled “Katherine Dunham Method and Technique: The 1940-1945 Notations,” is drawn and written by former Dunham company member and teacher, Lavinia Williams. To my knowledge, it contains the most comprehensive series of drawings of the technique that exist. Although they represent only a portion of the Technique, and some of the names and details of exercises have changed, it is incredible to get such a detailed glimpse into the ideas Ms. Dunham was experimenting with her company members and students at that time and to see what she had already codified physically and philosophically within the technique. It is clear through Lavinia Williams’s descriptions of herself, that she thoroughly absorbed the Dunham Pedagogy Model and embodied it through her own practice as a teacher.
Vèvè A. Clark was Ms. Dunham’s archivist between 1977 and 1983. In 1978 she co-edited with Margaret B. Wilkerson *Kaiso! Katherine Dunham an Anthology of Writings*, filled with published and unpublished works by and about Ms. Dunham. Contained within this collection is a copy of the brochure for the “Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research: including Dunham School of Dance and Theatre, Department of Cultural Studies, Institute for Caribbean Research” from the 1946-1947 school year, clearly showing the school’s developmental curriculum, and range of classes and teachers. It is an amazing resource. An unpublished paper written by Katherine Dunham in 1963 titled: “Dunham Technique: Prospectus,” includes an outline for a book she proposed called ‘Dunham Technique’, which unfortunately she never had a chance to write. “Notes on the Dance” by Katherine Dunham published in the book *Seven Arts #2* in 1954, includes valuable evidence of the philosophical and physical impetus of the technique. Two additional unpublished papers by Katherine Dunham titled: “The Dunham Schools” from 1964, and “Performing Arts Training Center as a Focal Point for a New and Unique College or School” from

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1970, address the pedagogy models she had implemented in her schools up to that point in time.\textsuperscript{17}

In 2005 this manuscript was republished in an updated form as: \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham}, edited by Vèvè A. Clark and Sara E. Johnson. In this second edition of \textit{Kaiso!} excerpts from Ms. Dunham’s unpublished and never completed memoir “Minefields” are included, which details her life in the 1930’s and 1940’s as she made inroads in Chicago and New York to establish her artistic career. Three new interviews conducted by Vèvè A. Clark with original Dunham Company members Vanoye Aikens, Glory Van Scott and Julie Robinson Belafonte,\textsuperscript{18} reveal insider perspectives of how each learned Dunham Technique while it was being created and evolving on their bodies. These two \textit{Kaiso!} collections contain large numbers of important primary and secondary source materials written by and about Katherine Dunham that are invaluable to my historiographic research.

A holistic dance pedagogy model is only effective if the teachers of its model have been educated in a holistic manner, ensuring that they personally embody its principles. Carey E. Andrzejewski proposes four tenets that together create a holistic model for training dance teachers. Her first, most in-depth study was published in 2008 as her dissertation from Ohio State University titled: “A Holistic Investigation

\textsuperscript{17} Because almost all of the writing and articles included in 1978’s \textit{Katherine Dunham an Anthology of Writings} were reprinted in 2005’s \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham}; for subsequent references within this thesis to any documents that appear in both publications, I will refer to page numbers from the 2005 edition as it is more readily available.

of Teacher Identity Knowledge and Practice.” A year later she condensed her research into a paper published in the Journal of Dance Education titled: “Toward a Model of Holistic Dance Teacher Education.” The process she proposes aligns with the holistic pedagogy model that Ms. Dunham led her company members through as she prepared them to become Dunham teachers at her various schools nationally and internationally, beginning in the 1940’s. It is also similar to the process that the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification has created through which to guide future Dunham teachers.

In 2012, dance artist/teacher/scholar Joshua Legg published *Introduction to Modern Dance Techniques: Cunningham, Dunham, Graham, Hawkins, Horton, Humphrey, Limón, Nikolais/Louis, Taylor.* This book is for students and teachers, presenting an introduction to the technique and pedagogy of each of the aforementioned dance artists in relation to the cultural and political environments that their work was created in. This is the first book I have seen where Dunham’s technique and philosophies are presented alongside her fellow modern dance pioneers in equal standing, without being relegated to a “Black Dance” section. In his sample Dunham lesson plans, Legg addresses both the technical and philosophical methods of Dunham Technique.
Chapter Two:
Dance as a Social Act:
The Philosophical Origins of Katherine Dunham Technique

“After many efforts to arrive at some conclusive decision when thinking of dance, I have decided upon this, that dance is not a technique but a social act and that dance should return to where it first came from, which is the heart and soul of man, and man’s social living.” 19 Katherine Dunham

Introduction

Every Certified and Master teacher in Dunham Technique has gone through a lengthy process to train in not only the physical aspect of the technique, but to understand and embody the philosophies that support the technique as it applies to their individual lives as well as to their teaching process. Roy Thomas wrote:

“Dunham Technique must be understood in the light of the philosophy and aesthetic of the larger system from which it derives. Many students have learned Dunham Technique without this understanding… The technique is codified, demonstrated, and transmitted daily; the system, on the other hand, is not immediately perceived, not directly demonstrable.” 20

Although the roots of both the physical and philosophical aspects of Dunham Technique are intertwined and continued to evolve throughout her lifetime, the impetus to create each aspect can be traced back to the late 1920’s and 1930’s while Katherine was living in Chicago and immersed in her dual studies of anthropology and dance. Each of the three primary educational methodologies of Dunham

19 Katherine Dunham’s writing as quoted in Albirda Rose, Dunham Technique “A Way of Life” (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt, 1990), 23.
Technique began forming at this time: *Form and Function, Intercultural Communication*, and *Socialization Through the Arts*, along with their supporting philosophies of *Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Detachment* and *Discrimination*.

**Socialization Through The Arts**

At the heart of Dunham Technique, is the humanistic development of one’s relationship to self and others. This socialization includes the teacher/student relationship as well as the development of an increased awareness of one’s own and other cultures. Dunham wrote: “Being born into or living through the traditions of our heritage do not make us automatically aware, but making the effort to carefully sift and determine those things in our heritage of humanizing value, and spread that knowledge to us all does lead to awakening.”

Katherine Dunham left her hometown of Joliet, Illinois in 1928 at the age of nineteen joining her brother Albert, a student in philosophy, at the University of Chicago. It was here that Dunham began her studies in anthropology, supporting her desire to frame her dance experiences from a social and cultural perspective and providing her with the tools and experiences to develop a holistic dance technique and pedagogy. Dunham said: “In anthropology, I learned how to feel about myself in relation to other people…You can’t learn about dances until you learn about people.”

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Soon after Katherine’s arrival in Chicago, her brother co-founded the experimental and activist minded Cube Theater. This organization provided an important creatively collaborative meeting space for “…a person inclined toward intellectual and artistic freedom…” as Dunham described it, and included the company of writers Langston Hughes and Alain Locke, and musicians Louis Armstrong and Paul Robeson, among many. The Cube provided a place to develop her activist, political and humanitarian voice through writing and choreography, and facilitated her practice and belief in the arts as a powerful tool for socialization and intercultural communication.

The long-term professional, artistic and personal relationships that Dunham developed during her ten years in Chicago, continued to influence her academic, creative, and humanistic development over the course of her lifetime. “(The development of) Dunham Technique took advantage of every possible experience that I could have with people and what they did and why they did it,” said Dunham. Her growing ability to interact with, learn from, teach to, observe and navigate between a wide range of cultures, classes, races and personalities within both academia and the arts, contributed to her emerging teaching philosophies focused on social development and cross-cultural dialogue.

Dunham was immersed in learning new ways of dancing, teaching and living in the world. She was forming cognitive, psychological and artistic frameworks with which to view herself and the world around her. Dunham’s process of self-examination during this time became an essential aspect of her developing holistic dance pedagogy. “Over and above style information, idiom, an individual teaches, finally, what she is. Dunham teaches a respect for truth, an open-mindedness, and a penchant for self-criticism that is essential for those who would master the technique and learn the system,” 26 wrote Roy Thomas when describing Dunham’s philosophy as a teacher.

Katherine Dunham came to the understanding that dance itself is a social act that carries within it the power to affect and educate all of its participants. Developing a student’s desire to grow not only as a dancer but also as a person became paramount to Dunham’s pedagogy. “I am not interested in dance routines. I am only interested in dance as an education, a means of knowing peoples, and I want students who want to learn and have a desire to develop people and tastes.” 27 Dunham chose to address the social process of developing the whole person through *Socialization Through the Arts*, one of three educational methodologies at the core of Dunham Technique.

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Intercultural Communication

The University of Chicago was a unique place at this time, primarily because of the revolutionary philosophies and actions of its new president Robert Maynard Hutchins. Dunham reflected: “I could not have choreographed as I have or written the books I have written without the foundation of those early years at the University of Chicago.” Hutchins believed in creating a holistic learning environment that encouraged providing a global view on education, promoting interdisciplinary studies, and giving students freedom to pursue their studies independently.

This unique academic atmosphere allowed Dunham to move freely between her studies at the University and her growing dance and artistic life in Chicago. It fostered her humanitarian and activist sensibilities, and gave her the courage to pursue her goals. Dunham stated: “Anthropology helped me to be me… Anthropology brought itself to my motion, my desire for dance and movement, even the building of a company.” Each realm informed the other, leading her to ultimately combine her two passions, dance and anthropology into her culminating research and fieldwork in the West Indies, as well as into her growing dance pedagogy and technique.

Dunham held regular social gatherings at her apartment where she invited leading figures in the arts and sciences, including her professors, to socialize and

communicate. These meetings established an environment that allowed for intercultural communication and socialization to occur between the diverse groups of individuals she brought together, who collectively representing a broad range of cultural, ideological and professional backgrounds.  

During Dunham’s time at the University of Chicago, the anthropology department was internationally recognized and at the forefront of new developments in research and theory. Dunham incorporated key concepts from each of her core professors: Bronislaw Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Fay Cooper-Cole, Robert Redfield and Edward Sapir, all leading scholars in their field, into her developing philosophies and practices as an educator, researcher, writer, performer, choreographer and activist. Melville Herskovits, an anthropology professor at Northwestern University in Chicago, also became a primary influence.

Anthropologist Dr. Joyce Aschenbrenner wrote, “The influence of the anthropologists and other social scientists who taught her is apparent… in her teaching, and in her artistic presentation of these cultures.”

The newly formed anthropology department was founded on Franz Boas’s belief that race and culture are separate entities, and that comparisons between

31 Ibid., 30, 37.
32 When Dunham was awarded a Rosenwald Foundation grant to study why and how people dance in the West Indies, it was with the understanding that she would study intensively with Herskovits prior to leaving, in preparation for her fieldwork.
differing races and cultures are to be viewed and studied from a position of equality. \(^{34}\)

These beliefs profoundly affected Dunham’s development as an academic and artist, as well as her experiences as a student. She wrote that anthropology became a “haven from racial discrimination,”\(^ {35}\) during her time in Chicago. Dunham combined Boas’s values of racial and cultural equality with Radcliffe-Brown’s teachings emphasizing the identification of “universal commonalities in social behavior…in establishing general laws of society by comparing social forms in different societies,”\(^ {36}\) to create her universally minded cross-cultural artistic, academic and humanistic perspective.

This practice of finding the connecting universalities between cultures, races and people in general, versus emphasizing the differences, became the foundation of one of Dunham’s three educational methodologies: *Intercultural Communication.* Dunham said in a 2004 interview: “I feel that the roots of Dunham Technique are in the knowledge or the effort to know self and to know man. And knowing man it means that there is no one single culture that is essentially different from another. Now anthropology helped a great deal in this you know.”\(^ {37}\) Dunham’s professor Cooper-Cole, “attuned her to rhythm and percussion as components of cultural

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 29-33.


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 34-35.

communication,” further affirming her growing understanding of dance and music’s interrelated social components.

Dunham’s experiences of a holistic, interdisciplinary education offered by the University of Chicago during this period, are clearly reflected in the dance pedagogy and education models she developed for future schools worldwide. “When I founded the Dunham School, the curriculum was often criticized. Why the teaching of the humanities, philosophy, languages, aesthetics, as well as the Dunham Technique? I believe these things are necessary for the complete person, and so to be the complete dancer I could not simply teach dancing.”

**Form and Function**

Both Sapir and Redfield taught that individual elements within a culture or society were connected, thus affecting each other’s formation. The shape and role that music, dance, religion, beliefs and customs took within a culture or society formed recognizable patterns based on their interconnections. Dunham wrote: “For a long time I was merely a happy participant in every dance…then my academic training got the better of me and I began to get seriously into the question of the choreographic

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form, psychological and sociological significance, organization and function of what I was seeing and participating in.”

The view in the department was that students should focus their research studies on “primitive” or “folk” societies in an effort to learn about these unique cultures before they were lost. Redfield lectured on the disharmony that is brought about as a result of urbanization and the urgent need to study these cultures prior to this occurring, in order to gain valuable insights into repairing modern societies. This emphasis greatly affected Dunham’s future trajectory in dance and education, causing her to see dance as a method of restoring harmony to people’s lives through the principles of rhythmic motion. She wrote: “Since there is every evidence of the ascendency of malaise in our own industrialized societies, it becomes increasingly timely and of interest to observe in societies still enjoying a primitive or folk state to what degree dance serves as a unifying element, to what degree rhythmic motion reaches into the depths of community and individual life and effects equilibrium, maintains balance, channels emotion.” These queries into restoring balance in people’s lives through rhythmic motion became central to her future development of Dunham Technique, and continued in her lifetime through her ongoing research of dance and music traditions in the cultures and countries she visited around the world.

Radcliffe-Brown provided Dunham with the framework through which to analyze the role of dance in general within a society, as well as how to discern the specific reasons behind the creation of individual dances and the physical shape that movements take within a culture. She wrote: “Radcliffe lectured in terms of function, so that I was always reminded to look for the purpose and the use of whatever I saw, as well as the form.”

Dunham crystallized her practice of Form and Function into one of the three educational methodologies of Dunham Technique. It is an analytical tool that she used throughout her lifetime, influencing why she chose specific movements for her developing dance technique and stage presentations, as well as the purpose and structure of her dance pedagogy.

**Fieldwork**

Dunham’s professors recognized the dual engagements in her life, and encouraged her to unite her artistic and academic lives. Dunham wrote; “it was my growing interest to know not only how people dance, but even more importantly, why they dance as they do. By the time I was studying at the University of Chicago, I had come to feel that if I could discover this, not only as it applied to one group of people, but to diverse groups, with their diverse cultural, psychological, and racial backgrounds, I would have arrived at some of the fundamentals, not only of choreographic technique, but of theater artistry and function.”

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Dunham was being introduced to African, Caribbean, Polynesian, and Central American cultures through the fieldwork and research experiences of her professors. In reflecting upon the universal principles that she saw in these cultures along with their unique traits, she recognized the African cultural presence in the African American music, dance and cultural traditions that she saw around her in Chicago.

“Her interest in the traditional roots of African Americans and her exposition of those connections on world stages owe much to Herskovits’s pioneering work… Herskovits took the position, contrary to W. E. B Du Bois and other proponents of integration, that black Americans shared many cultural expressions deriving from African cultures.”

This view was controversial, as many feared that segregationists would use a black American association with African culture as a reason to oppose integration.

Dunham’s professors encouraged her to study dances in the Caribbean, where African cultural elements were more visible than in the United States. Dunham said: “My desire was to see first-hand the primitive dance in its everyday relationship to the people.” She knew that by focusing her initial field research on these “primitive” forms, she would gain the context and tools to objectively research and synthesize African American dance and music forms. She later wrote: “I could not consider

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67 Ibid., 48.
myself a conscientious field anthropologist if I neglected the rich heritage of the American Negro.”

Prompted by her desire to pursue this research quest, Katherine Dunham approached the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, explaining to them her study interests through a combined danced lecture demonstration and academic presentation. In 1935 her request was granted, and she was awarded a fellowship titled “Anthropology and the Dance” to conduct anthropological fieldwork focused on dance in the West Indies, including Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique and Trinidad, for a year and a half. Dunham described her experiences: “I took photographs and motion pictures, and became over-burdened with notebooks in which I carefully wrote down every movement and combination of movements I saw, as well as bits of life I saw about me- incidents I recognized immediately as having dramatic possibilities for the theater.”

The practical and philosophical methodologies that Dunham developed in order to carry out her anthropological fieldwork, involved active participation conjoined with observation. Dunham wrote: “It occurred to me, also, that someone who could actively participate in this activity would be able to arrive much more clearly at the function of the dance in a specific community than the field worker who

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50 Katherine Dunham, Katherine Dunham’s Journey to Accompong (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1946), 1. Dunham also received a Guggenheim Award that further supported her fieldwork.
depended primarily on observation.” The practice of physical participation, so essential to a dancer, not only challenged and expanded existing fieldwork research methods, but created a blueprint for how she conducted her future creative, intellectual and humanistic life work.

Although Dunham’s official Caribbean fieldwork ended in 1936, she continued to practice active participation and observation as a research method for herself and her dancers as she lived and performed in different cities, communities, and cultures in the United States and abroad for the duration of her life. “The total commitment of intellect, body, and spirit she experienced in dance, together with its key role in the culture, and the social connections she experienced through performance gave her a special insight she could not have gained as a passive observer; yet, at the same time, she maintained a choreographer’s objective eye.”

This research directly affected the physical development of Dunham Technique as it is experienced both in the classroom and on stage.

Katherine Dunham’s three primary educational methodologies: Form and Function, Intercultural Communication and Socialization Through the Arts were solidified during her fieldwork, giving her a structure from which to translate her new knowledge, experiences, and ways of understanding herself and the world, into a technique in the classroom and a danced choreographic language on the concert stage.

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As Dunham wrote in her essay “The Anthropological Approach to Dance,” it was through…interpretations…of Redfield, Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Herskovits, and others, that I was able to arrive at a sane translation of classroom and field material in terms of the theater.

Dunham succeeded in combining the arts and sciences. By integrating her two passions, Dunham became the originator of the field of dance anthropology, where the movement language, function and expression of a society or group is viewed as paramount in understanding the culture as a whole. “It (anthropology) helped take me out of the dichotomy of art and entertainment… The art world was still not really legitimate in terms of the academic world. Somewhere in me was a determination that it would be legitimized…that this part of me would have meaning in the academic world. And it did. Little by little I began to see that there was no division at all.”

Dunham’s research in the Caribbean provided her with artistic and academic fodder which fueled future choreographies, the development of Dunham Technique and Philosophies, schools, and academic scholarship including lectures, teaching, articles and multiple books that organized and chronicled her experiences.

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54 The full title for this paper delivered in 1942 at the University of California in Los Angeles was: “A Lecture Demonstration of the Anthropological Approach to the Dance and the Practical Application of This Approach to the Theater.”
In 1936, Dunham was awarded a Ph. B. (bachelor of philosophy degree) in social anthropology from the University of Chicago. Her fieldwork resulted in her thesis titled: “Dances of Haiti: Their Social Organization, Classification, Form, and Function” that she submitted in 1938 as partial fulfillment towards the requirements of a Master of Arts degree in anthropology. She ultimately chose to not complete the additional exams that would have resulted in the completion of her master’s degree, and instead placed her focus on translating her academic knowledge and developing artistic and educational philosophies through her voice as a dancer, teacher and choreographer. In an interview in 1986 Katherine Dunham said: “It wasn’t easy making it all flow together, but eventually I saw that my dancing could be based on anthropological research and satisfy both my artistic and theatrical needs.”

Chapter Three:
Seeking the Universal:
The Physical Origins of Katherine Dunham Technique

“Most of my adult and performing years were spent in creating from ‘primitive’ societies a technique and language of dance that would satisfy the demands of Western, then world theater. A holistic approach, taking into account physical structure, personality, culture, the variables within an individual or society that would make a dynamic, complete, ecstatic experience for performer as well as observer.”

59 Katherine Dunham

Introduction

Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophies are often referred to as a “universal technique.” A method of educating the body in physical and rhythmic techniques, and the mind and spirit in cultural and social elements that will prepare a Dunham dancer to physically and philosophically move with ease between and within various traditional, social and classical movement languages from around the world.

In 1948, Peter Waddington wrote a review in Opera and Concert Magazine:

“Audience reaction to Katherine Dunham and her dancers is immediate and enthusiastic. It’s the same everywhere they appear… This is not hard to understand because, if there is something fundamental in the Dunham dance technique, there is also something elemental and, therefore, universal in it.”

60 Dunham studied “primitive” dance forms from around the world to find universalities in movement forms and functions, which became the basis of both the physical and philosophical


elements of her technique, as well as the communicative and educational intent of her choreography.

Katherine was born in Chicago on June 22, 1909 as the second child of Annette and Albert Dunham. Her family moved to Joliet, Illinois when her father remarried, following the death of her mother. She was drawn towards physical expression at an early age through her involvement in sports and through her freestyle dance experiences based on the movement ideas of Jaques-Dalcroze and Rudolf von Laban, with her high school Terpsichorean Club. Deterring her full participation was the fact that she was plagued with arthritis in her knees since childhood, a problem that lasted throughout her life and affected the technical formation of the dance technique she later developed. Although Dunham was exposed to music, dance and theater growing up, her formalized training as an artist did not fully begin until she joined her brother in 1928 to attend the University of Chicago, after completing Joliet Junior College.\(^6\)

Dunham’s classroom existed both outside the university and within, as she dually engaged in her training and development as a performing artist, teacher and choreographer in addition to her immersion in anthropological studies. Her degree of study and artistic practice grew exponentially during her ten years in Chicago as she absorbed the dance forms and philosophies of an international group of resident teachers and artists, along with techniques and styles from companies passing through

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on tour. “To observe, record, classify and teach became an aim of mine, and in so
doing to establish a rigorous discipline and form much as must have been intrinsic in
the evolving of classical ballet from primitive northern ritual, to country fair
celebrations, to court entertainment, to Convent Garden.”\textsuperscript{62}

\textbf{Ballet Foundations}

Dunham’s formal technique studies in Chicago began with ballet. She
recognized the value it possessed in training the body, and subsequently integrated
both structural and technical elements from it into Dunham Technique, and included
it in the curriculum of each school she established. She said: “I wouldn’t have a
school that didn’t have some sort of classical ballet, because of what it does for your
body.”\textsuperscript{63} In addition, ballet was included in the daily training regimen for the Dunham
Company. As principal company member Vanoye Aikens explained: “We did
nothing but tour. But wherever we would settle for a week or ten days, she would go
find a ballet teacher…and your day would begin with ballet. And then if (she could
not find a teacher) then \textit{she} would teach a ballet class, which I hated. It was too
difficult.”\textsuperscript{64}

Dunham’s primary ballet training was with Ludmilla Speranzeva, one of the
few teachers who accepted African American students at that time. She was a Russian

\textsuperscript{63} Katherine Dunham as quoted in an interview with Constance Valis Hill, “Collaborating with Balanchine on Cabin in the Sky: Interviews with Katherine Dunham,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 244.
\textsuperscript{64} Vèvè A. Clark, “On Stage with the Dunham Company: An Interview with Vanoye Aikens,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 280.
émigré who had been touring with the Théâtre de la Chauve-Souris à Moscou, a Parisian based vaudeville troupe, when she decided to stay in Chicago. Speranzeva was from the experimental Kamerny Theater tradition in Russia, which emphasized the integration of acting, mime, music and visual arts with the language of ballet. This lineage also believed in separating ballet from its association with the elite and upper class. Studying in this tradition gave Dunham an example of a dance curriculum that embodied a multi-arts approach and treated ballet as a functional technique accessible by all, aspects that Dunham adopted in the curriculum of schools she founded, and in the training of her company. In addition to Speranzeva, Dunham trained in ballet with Adolph Bolm of the Civic Opera, and Mark Turbyfill and Ruth Page of the Chicago Opera Company, along with Léonide Massine and Michel Fokine, dancers and choreographers with Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

Combined with classical ballet, Speranzeva also had a modern dance background from the Mary Wigman tradition, which she taught to Dunham, along with choreography she had learned from her performing days with Chauve-Souris. In describing Speranzeva, Katherine Dunham said: “She was great on these things with explosive movements... I remember her as designed abandon- and that was very Russian in those days. I think I must have gotten a lot of that explosive feeling, and

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65 Théâtre de la Chauve-Souris à Moscou, was a Russian troupe based in Paris. Speranzeva remained in Chicago when their American tour came to an end, and decided to open a dance school.
66 Developed in Moscow in 1914 by the Russian director Aleksandr Tairov.
also a freedom of sexual presentation…I can see how I would have been influenced
by her.”

Speranzева became a friend and supporter of Dunham during her years in
Chicago, introducing her to fellow dancers and teachers, encouraging her to teach and
develop her own creative voice, and financially supporting her in opening a school.

**Multi-Cultural Community**

Prior to breaking away and creating her own pedagogical and technical
philosophies, Dunham immersed herself in learning the classical and cultural dance
forms that were available to her in Chicago. Although Dunham later became known
for bringing movements and philosophies from the African Diaspora to the concert
stage, she began by studying, teaching, performing and choreographing in a wide
range of cultural art forms from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, all of which
greatly contributed to the creation of her dance technique. Dunham later said in an
interview: “So part of the roots of Dunham Technique are in knowing that there are
infinite cultures, more than we know or will ever know, infinite people, infinite ways
of thinking, ways of living, ways of dancing, ways of doing that we must learn how to
not only accept, but to know and understand.”

Dunham studied and socialized with an international group of artist/teachers
who introduced and taught her in a wide range of cultural and movement languages.
In addition to ballet, she studied German modern dance with Harald Kreutzberg, a

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69 Katherine Dunham as quoted in an interview with Constance Valis Hill, “Collaborating with
Balanchine on *Cabin in the Sky*: Interviews with Katherine Dunham,” *Kaiso! Writings by and about
Katherine Dunham* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 237-238.

70 Katherine Dunham as quoted in, *Cool Books Hot Topics: Katherine Dunham Interview*
disciple of Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban. Dunham also began intensive training in classical Spanish dance with La Argentina (Antonia Merce), Vicente Escudero and Quill Monroe, as well as Balinese, Javanese and East Indian dance with Vera Mirova, and Bedouin and Arabic dance from Carmela el Khoury. \(^{71}\) “My ballet background was very pure from these people who had broken away from the old Russian tradition. But surely, in searching for what my own body could do, and searching for (maybe I didn’t even know it) what might develop out of black people, people like La Argentina and Kreutzberg and Mary Wigman gave me a great deal of hope.”\(^{72}\) Dunham studied with these artists for many years as she slowly transitioned from being a student only, to being able to teach, perform and choreograph in the cultural movement languages that they each taught and coached her in.

Vera Mirova was one of the friends whom Speranzeva introduced to Dunham. Mirova was also from Russia, but her specialty was “Oriental” dance. She had spent more than five years living and studying dance in Bali, Burma, China, Japan, Java, India and Siam, and was an internationally known solo dancer who performed detailed choreographies of traditional dances from these cultures. \(^{73}\) Although she did not have a background in anthropology, Mirova was an example to Dunham of an artist who had traveled to and lived in different cultures learning “primitive” dances

and the philosophies that informed them, with the purpose of embodying and artistically translating them to the stage. “I took roots between Mark Turbyfill and Ludmilla Speranzeva…and practiced castanets with Quill Monroe and finger positions with Mirova until Robert Redfield opened the flood-gates of social anthropology.” 74

**Universal Connections**

Dunham’s studies in social anthropology encouraged her to begin identifying universal commonalities in form and expression between the different dance movement languages and cultures that she was studying both within and outside the university. Dunham wrote: “In art, it is likely that a study of the dances of various groups of primitives would lead to the discovery of those principles of technique which are fundamental and universal in character, and to their incorporation into a basic dance form which has not yet been developed by the modernists.” 75 Dunham recognized that Mary Wigman and Martha Graham had been inspired by “the classic Greek, the primitive, and the Oriental” 76 in the creation of their techniques, but felt that their inspirations were limited due to their uninformed observational skills. “I would say that the dance of the primitive has been scarcely touched, and this, perhaps, because… it is the work of a student of ethnology as well as a student of dance, to observe and record that which can be transferred to the field of art and

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76 Ibid., 520.
which will serve as a stimulus for creation.” The concept of finding universality in movement form and expression through her training as an anthropologist became Dunham’s key as she began to develop her own artistic voice through teaching and choreography.

**Pedagogical Beginnings**

Katherine Dunham recognized a kindred spirit in her ballet teacher Mark Turbyfill, causing her to join forces with him in 1930 to co-found Ballet Nègre School and Dance Company. Turbyfill acted as the primary teacher at their school, conducting classes in ballet and some modern, while Dunham who also taught ballet and modern, was the principal choreographer. When announcing the opening of their school, Turbyfill published an article in *Abbott’s Monthly* magazine in which he wrote: “As pure white light is the union of all the colors of the rainbow, so is the ballet the creative blending of dances from all the countries of the world. Colors and influences whirl within it— and the result is a form capable of expressing ideas and emotions that are universal.” Both artists sought to find the universal communicative purpose within the movement languages that they taught, and studied.

Turbyfill recognized that ballet evolved from socially based, multicultural traditional dance forms to create the stylized movements seen on stage and in the classroom. He wrote: “Bacchanalia and sacred dances of the ancient world; the seguidilla and fandango of Spain…the rhythms and characteristics of all these, and

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77 Ibid., 520.
many more dances, have been developed and polished by composers and choreographers, and in ballet they live and move…”79 This understanding of ballet’s “primitive” roots gave Dunham an example of how traditional movement forms evolve into codified techniques in the classroom and on stage, and gave her further permission of ballet’s utilization as an equal source along with other “primitive” forms, in the creation of her developing movement ideas.

In 1931, Ballet Nègre successfully performed in A Negro Rhapsody at the Chicago Beaux Arts Ball, marking Dunham’s first professional choreographic presentation. After a year of renting various spaces for their studio and still not managing to build a steady group of students, the studio was closed. In an interview Dunham recalls that when “she taught straight ballet she had crowded classes, but when she taught basic rhythms as they related to the Negro her classes dwindled, for her students wanted something more showy and sophisticated.”80 Although no longer teaching at her school, Dunham continued working at the Chicago Public Library, a job she had maintained since her arrival in the city. Along with continuing her studies in anthropology, Dunham took a dance education class with a disciple of Margaret H’Doubler,81 allowing her to continue her investigation into finding her pedagogical voice.

79 Ibid., 62-63.
81 Margaret H’Doubler was at the forefront in the field of dance pedagogy, and was the creator of the first Dance Major at the University of Wisconsin. Ibid., 248.
With the financial help of Speranzeva, Dunham opened a new school named the Chicago Negro School of Ballet, which emphasized ballet, Spanish and modern dance. Both she and Speranzeva were the teachers. Upon opening she realized that this new title discouraged some customers, saying in an interview: “The Negro mothers immediately disapproved. They refused to send their children to me, for fear they might be taught Negro dancing!”

Dunham persevered and overtime her most promising students from this school became the corps of her new company the Negro Dance Group, who performed at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933. Later, upon her return from fieldwork in the West Indies, this group was reformed as the Dunham Company.

Dunham and Speranzeva were criticized for the intensity at which they demanded their students to study. A few years later Dunham said: “The African Negro is habituated to a certain kind of musical technique in which rhythm is basic…But that does not mean that there is no technique. There is. And it is every bit essential that we train as rigorously as any other group, even in presenting ordinary folk material… because our struggle for a permanent and dignified recognition must come through an outstanding contribution. We must always do twice as well and be twice as original to be accepted as genuine artists- and not on any basis of condescension, ever!”

Dunham was beginning to realize that she would need to educate her students socially, culturally, and mentally in conjunction with their

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83 Ibid., 192-193.
physical and artistic training, in order to attain the degree of artistry and professionalism she knew was necessary in her pursuit of “permanent and dignified recognition.”

In 1933, Ruth Page asked Dunham to perform in her new ballet *La Guiablesse* that she was choreographing for the Chicago Opera, featuring a commissioned score by the renowned African American composer William Grant Still.84 Talley Beatty and Archie Savage, two male dancers who were to have a long performing career with Dunham and as independent artists, were in this large cast of mostly African American dancers chosen by Page. This ballet was based on a Martinique legend involving ritual dance from the West Indies that Page and Adolph Bolm had learned about while on tour in South America. This ballet marked Dunham’s first time working with folk material from the West Indies in a translated form for the concert dance stage, albeit through another choreographer’s vision.85

Ruth Page was asked to mount *La Guiablesse* again the following year. She recommended to the Chicago Opera that they hire Katherine Dunham in her place to rehearse the ballet and dance the lead, allowing Dunham to re-stage and direct her largest production to date, while assuming her first starring role. Carmencita Romera, a dancer who became a long-time Dunham company member, was a part of this cast along with Talley Beatty and Archie Savage.

Although Dunham was beginning to gain notoriety as a dancer and choreographer, and as a result increase the student enrollment at her school, she was not satisfied creatively. Dunham said: “The techniques that I knew, and saw, and experienced were not saying the things I wanted to say. I simply could not, with purely classical ballet, say what I wanted to say. I could do a story, of course- as you know, so much of ballet is narrative- but to capture the meaning in the culture and the life of the people, I felt that I had to take something directly from the people and develop that.”86 This strong desire to go deeper into her study of people from both a dancer and anthropologist’s perspective, as a means of finding “universal” movement and cultural patterns from which to generate new source material for her creative work, drove her to leave Chicago and study dance in the West Indies.

Arriving at the Universal

Armed with her training in anthropology, her experiences as a dancer/educator/artist, and funding from the Rosenwald Foundation, Dunham lived in the Caribbean for a year and a half researching the function of dance within different societies, in Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique and Trinidad. Dunham wrote: “Laymen who attend dance concerts, dance teachers, and even performers are usually unconcerned with the function of dance. Instead, they are concerned, largely, with its aesthetic principles, its technique, the ideology of modern forms, and the form of the

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choreography. As an anthropologist, however, I became increasingly interested in the functions of dance, both religious and secular, in primitive and folk societies."\(^{87}\)

By seeking correlations between the physical forms of dance steps, their movement functions within a specific dance, and that dance’s purpose in the society it originates from, Dunham began building a blueprint for the creation of her own dance technique. Aschenbrenner wrote: “She credited Herskovits with alerting her to the study of the meaning of the use of the body. According to Dunham, ‘Very few think of (dance) isolation in terms of the culture from which it comes,’ its history and values. To appreciate the gesture, she studied the culture and the total vocabulary of bodies in motion. The emphasis of different body parts discloses something about a culture if one knows how to interpret it.”\(^{88}\) Studying the motion and emotion of the body from a culturally and socially perspective based on a movement’s form and function, is an essential aspect of Dunham Technique and pedagogy.

Through her practice of participant observation, Dunham began to absorb and notate the dances, rhythms, and movements she encountered, as well as the social roles that dancers play both individually and in a group, within their community. In describing her fieldwork summaries, Aschenbrenner wrote: “Her (Dunham’s) writings reflect Radcliffe-Brown’s stress on social functions, as well as Malinowski’s concern with social functions as the satisfaction of individual needs: she described not


only the forms and patterns of dance but also the role of dance ritual in the formation of social groups, the transmission of values and worldview, and the well-being of individuals in the society. “89 Dunham’s writing was socially centered, reflecting her understanding of the powerful role that dance can play in society and its interrelated effects on both the individual dancers, as well as on the audience and affected community members.

What Dunham was becoming attuned to were Africanist cultural elements that had retained a stronger presence in the Caribbean than in the United States. Through her fieldwork Dunham saw dance existing as an integral part of society where the focus was not on the individual star performer, but rather the individual and the group functioning together for the experience of the greater community. In an essay describing cultural commonalities found within African based performances, anthropologist Roger Abraham wrote: “When an individual sets himself apart from the group, he does so not to demonstrate his individual talents but rather to set up a dialogue between himself and the rest of the group…This (African) vision of life…differs greatly from the Western (and especially Euro-American) system which tends to project life as an individual journey…”90

Through her fieldwork experiences in the West Indies, Dunham understood that her artistic mission would include more than expressing her personal voice; she felt responsible for creating a dance technique that would expand the previously...

accepted range of physical motion, as well as degree of social, cultural and political
expression, seen on concert stages worldwide. The performance presence and
physical capability of her company members, along with their social development and
cultural savvy, would change the course of concert dance by presenting with dignity
and respect, sacred and secular dance forms from primitive and industrialized
communities around the world.
Chapter Four:
Dignified Art:
The Creation of a Dance Technique

(When asked to describe her immediate goals in 1938)
“To establish a well-trained ballet group. To develop a technique that will be as important to the white man as to the Negro. To attain a status in the dance world that will give the Negro dance-student the courage really to study, and a reason to do so. And to take our dance out of the burlesque to make it a more dignified art.”91 Katherine Dunham

Introduction

Prior to conducting anthropological fieldwork in the Caribbean, Dunham spent seven years studying, teaching and performing with a range of artists in Chicago who exposed her artistically to new dance philosophies, cultures and techniques. In a paper she had written titled “Need for Study of Dances of Primitive Peoples”92 she said: “I realize the necessity of highly specialized training. For this reason I would study...so that I would be capable, in every sense of the word, to train a group of dancers with which to interpret the materials collected in research and to produce ballets which I am confident such research would inspire.”93 Although she was gaining a name for herself as a performer, teacher and choreographer, she had come to realize that current ballet and modern dance vocabulary along with its social

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92 This paper is undated, but due to the content it is my guess that it was written while she was a student at the University of Chicago, prior to embarking on her fieldwork to the West Indies (1935-1936).
and cultural intention, lacked the range of movement, rhythmic diversity and social and cultural philosophies, to support her developing artistic and pedagogic ideas.

Encouraged by her professors at the University of Chicago to combine her two passions of dance and anthropology, Katherine Dunham traveled for a year and a half in Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique and Trinidad conducting fieldwork. Dunham wrote: “Social anthropology offered the best possible solution for joining my wish to be an anthropologist, and the great physical urge to be a dancer.”^94 Her research focused on gaining a greater understanding of the social purposes that dance plays for individuals and communities as a whole, as well as seeking out the universalities in movement, rhythm and expression.

Dunham embarked on her fieldwork journey for both anthropological and artistic reasons. In her paper stressing the “Need for Study of Dances of Primitive Peoples” Dunham wrote: “The dance as an art form is an increasingly strong social force, and undoubtedly contributions to the development of new, vital material and technique would be of great social significance.”^95 In answer to this quest, Dunham left Chicago in 1935 to study the form and function of sacred and secular dances among “primitive” societies in the Caribbean. She was particularly interested in the process of acculturation, studying the unique ways that Spanish, French, English, 


Amerindian, and West African cultural dance and music forms mixed together in the West Indies, and their resulting innovations.

Dunham’s anthropology professors recognized the unique skill set she was bringing to her research. Dunham explains: “(Franz) Boaz told me, ‘You will do something not one of us has done.’ He was referring to the fact that because I was black and a woman, I would be able to gather data no man had been privy to before. So I went to Haiti with that purpose in mind.”96 Katherine Dunham hoped that her cultural, social and artistic experiences along with the anthropological observations and connections she made, would be the impetus she needed for generating new movement and choreographic material as well as for crystallizing the social, cultural and pedagogical intentions in her art. Indeed it proved to be, as the success of her fieldwork validated her career as an anthropologist, and provided creative, academic, and philosophic inspiration for the remainder of her life.

**Form and Function: Integrating the Primitive**

At the conclusion of her fieldwork Dunham returned to work at the Chicago Public Library and again opened a school, this time adding “primitive” dance to her repertoire. Dunham wrote: “we had some very staunch supporters in those days- mothers who would bring their children through rain and snow to take their lessons in ballet and “primitive,” the material gathered from the Caribbean, chiefly Haiti, which

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would eventually develop into the Dunham Technique." 97 At this time, Dunham also formed the Katherine Dunham Dance Company 98 composed of new and returning members, giving her the opportunity to teach both children and experienced dancers her developing movement material and pedagogic techniques.

Anthropological fieldwork had given Dunham the opportunity to study how African, European and Amerindian dance and music forms combined in various gradations to create the unique rhythms and movement structures found within the West Indies. Dunham said: “I lived a sort of dual existence of having my intellect absorbed in searching out and annotating the real and authentic steps and movements and an eye trained to see all of this color and movement into theater idiom.” 99 These embodied observations provided her with examples in how to functionally bring together individual technical elements from each of the dance/music/cultural forms that she had absorbed up until that point, into the creation of her own universal movement language. A reviewer in London later wrote: “By mixing up ballet and Central European movements with her West Indian raw material Dunham has created what almost amounts to a new system of dancing.” 100

98 The Katherine Dunham Dance Company consisted of previous company members from both Ballet Nègre and The Negro Dance Group that she had worked with prior to her fieldwork, as well as new dancers.
100 Richard Buckle, “Commentary,” Ballet and Opera, July 1948, 6.
Understanding the meaning, intent or function behind the form of a movement was essential as Dunham was developing her dance technique. Her anthropological based educational methodology of *Form and Function* became the analytic lens through which she chose the movements included within the physical practice of Dunham Technique, as well as how she chose to translate traditional movements learned in her fieldwork and from her teachers into the classroom and on stage in choreography. Dunham wrote: “As in the primitive community, certain specific movement patterns could be related to certain functions, so in the modern theater there would be a correlation between a dance movement and the function of that dance within the theater framework.”\(^{101}\) She consulted with Uday Shankar, renowned performer and choreographer who fused Indian dance forms with western theatrical techniques, who encouraged her to develop “a systemization of dance movements similar to that in Hindu classical dance.”\(^{102}\) Dunham explains: “I had an interest in Eastern religions long before I was even old enough to know where India was on the map…when I was at the University of Chicago, I was greatly influenced by the beautiful dancing of Shankar, a prominent Indian dancer of the day.”\(^{103}\)

Katherine Dunham knew that she could not solely replicate movements learned in her fieldwork and from her teachers, but rather had to find the universal


\(^{103}\) Katherine Dunham as quoted in Margaret Wolff, *In Sweet Company: Conversations with Extraordinary Women about Living a Spiritual Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 161.
kernel within each movement and understand its essential purpose to both the
development of her dancers and the communication of her ideas. Dunham wrote:
“Every person who has a germ of artistry seeks to recreate and present an impression
of universal human experience… Consequently, any effective artistic communication
is impossible if the artist’s understanding of human experience is limited by
inadequate knowledge.”104

The challenge to educate her students and company members in such a diverse
range of movement and cultural styles caused Dunham to physically forge new
territory for the American dancing body as she formed her dance technique. Reviewer
Alan Kriegsman wrote: “(Katherine Dunham) actually made a new dance language,
embracing rhythms, shapes, and degrees of bodily freedom until then unknown to
American dance.”105 Although many tried to categorize her movement as “Black
Dance” or “Negro Dance”, Dunham never subscribed to this limitation. Dunham
stated: “I am so tired of being considered a leader of black dance. I am just a person
who happens to be what in this country is called ‘black’. I will insist on being called,
one, a person, and two, a human being…Stop dividing people.”106

104 Katherine Dunham, “Thesis Turned Broadway,” Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham
(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 214-215. First published in California Arts and
Architecture, 1941.
105 Alan M. Kriegsman, “Ailey Does Dunham,” Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham
106 At a New York City tribute in her honor in 2003, Katherine Dunham at the age of ninety-four
responded to a mayoral citation with this statement. Anna Kisselgoff, “Katherine Dunham’s Legacy,
Intercultural Communication: Creating Multicultural Legitimacy

When Katherine Dunham returned to the University of Chicago in 1936, she received her Ph.B. in Social Anthropology, and began work on her masters thesis titled: *A Comparative Analysis of the Dances of Haiti: Their Form, Function, Social Organization, and the Interrelation of Form and Function.* While writing about the physical and social form and function of the dances that she had observed and immersed herself in during her fieldwork in the West Indies, Dunham was actively creating a movement technique and choreographic vocabulary that would bring legitimacy to the culture and artistry of secular and sacred “folk” forms. “In the European academic tradition, popular translates as ‘folk’ or ‘of the people’ and refers to dance that is traditional or attached to traditional behaviors.”

Dunham’s company members were being asked to embody and perform a wide range of cultural, rhythmic and movement techniques, motivating the development of the technique to include aspects of each representative culture. Carmencita Romera, who had been performing with Dunham since the first staging of Ruth Page’s ballet *La Guiablesse* in 1933, explained the multicultural breadth of influences in Dunham’s choreography at that point. “We did Russian folk dances with

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107 A bachelor of philosophy degree. Although Katherine Dunham completed her masters thesis, she did not complete the additional exams needed to receive an actual MA degree in anthropology, due to choosing to focus on applying her anthropological knowledge through her artistic work.


full skirts, Spanish dances influenced by La Argentinita and Carmen Amaya and (African American) plantation dances like Br’er Rabbit an de Tah Baby.”

Dunham was beginning to recognize that her integration of ballet, modern and “primitive” dance forms held a purpose much greater than just the physical creation of new modern and jazz movement languages. In describing the factors included in the creation of her technique, Dunham wrote: “Also involved was an element of rebellion against the often condescending attitudes toward not only Negro performing arts but those of all deprived, minority, “exotic” folk.” The anthropologically based education process that she was developing with her students in preparing them to fight these condescending attitudes, became as much a part of her rebellion as was her choice of movement vocabulary and choreography.

Dunham was aware that her dance technique, philosophic pedagogy and choreography could be used to battle the hierarchical separations between secular, sacred and concert dance languages through the performance of impeccably trained dancers, whose dancing presence would fight the assumption that there is little skill, artistry, or training involved in the staging or performance of “traditional” movement forms. Susan Manning wrote: “Dunham’s stylish productions and her credentials as a researcher of Latin American and Caribbean dance forms made her artistry appear as

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exactly that— as artistry rather than as innate dancing talent possessed by all African-Americans or as imposed style derived from Eurocentric precedents.”

Dunham understood that she and her dancers would serve as cultural ambassadors who represented not only African-Americans, but also each cultural form they represented on stage. Therefore, she coached her dancers in the value and cultural context of the physical movements she taught, an educational methodology she came to call Intercultural Communication. In a paper titled “Dance As A Cultural Art And Its Role In Development,” Dunham wrote: “When we express our cultural heritage to the rest of the world, it must be, not with arrogance, but with authority: the authority which comes through the deep rather than superficial or habitual understanding of what we are.”

Principal Dunham Company dancer and teacher Vanoye Aikens, said in an interview: “It had never been done…no one thought of ethnic dancing presented in theatrical form. Because, face it, folk dancing is boring as such. But to keep the flavor, to keep the basic and add a little theater to that without disrupting it, or making even the basic more interesting, that is what she did. And you needed trained dancers to do it, so she trained them in her own way.” Dunham knew that it would be

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112 Susan Manning, Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 143.
114 Vanoye Aikens was a principal dancer with the Dunham Company, and Ms. Dunham’s primary dance partner, from 1943 until the company’s dispersal in 1965. He maintained an active role in maintaining the Dunham legacy by teaching on the faculty of the Annual International Dunham Technique Seminar, among other venues, since its inception in 1984. He passed away in 2013.
through the well-trained technical performance of her company members and students, in combination with their internal understanding of the movements and their origins, that acceptance of her new movement language would begin. Susan Manning wrote: “it was Dunham’s productions that undid the critical conundrum of natural talent versus derivative artistry that white critics had scripted for African-American choreographers.”

Socialization Through the Arts: Elevating Perceptions of Blackness

Studying the movements, rhythms and cultural expressions in the Caribbean attuned Dunham to the importance of African American social and folk/plantation dances as another source of movement and cultural material to incorporate into her developing technique and choreography. In an interview Dunham said: “I was running around getting all these exotic things from the Caribbean and Africa when the real development lay in Harlem and black Americans…So I developed those things in jazz.” Not all students, parents or community members fully embraced the integration of the social and secular movements discovered during fieldwork and at home into the classroom, because as Dunham recalled in an interview, “the black community at that time ‘was not in the least bit interested in having presented a (dance) technique that was based on blackness.’”

116 Susan Manning, Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 143.
The resistance she discovered to her multi-culturally based movement integration, reinforced the need for Dunham to educate her students (and their parents and the community) in the cultural, social, artistic and political importance of what her new physical technique represented, through her pedagogical approach in the classroom. “I am particularly interested in presenting to the public one segment of the American people- the Negro,” Miss Dunham said. “To this end I have chosen the members of my company… They have been trained in my school, in the Dunham Technique, especially for the type of theater I am now presenting to the public. There is no doubt but what we are doing is creating a better understanding of, and sympathy for, the American Negro. From the beginning, I aimed at sociological as well as artistic targets.”

It was Dunham’s quest to bring into the classroom and onto the stage, opportunities for people to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of themselves and the diverse world we live in. “I do believe that Dunham Technique has helped those who immerse themselves in it to feel a relationship to and care for and love for other people, other cultures, I could say other ethnic groups, but I mean more than that, just others. And I know that we have had a certain impact in that way.”

Dunham was conscious of the need to educate the whole person through building both interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness in her students, resulting in

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the creation of her educational methodology *Socialization Through the Arts*. Not only was this philosophy present in the classroom and rehearsal studio, but also shaped the choreographic choices she made in theme and presentation, as well as her communicative purpose with her audience.

**Bringing Dunham Technique and Philosophy to the Stage**

In 1937, the Katherine Dunham Company was invited to perform as a part of the now historic *Negro Dance Evening* at the Young Men’s Hebrew Association. This event was created to trace through performance how dance in America had been shaped by its African roots and transformed through modern interpretations.  

Dunham wrote: “The emotional life of any community is clearly legible in its art forms, and because the dance seeks continuously to capture moments of life in a fusion of time, space, and motion, the dance is at a given moment the most accurate chronicler of culture pattern.”  

This marked the Company’s first major choreographic showing since Dunham’s return from the West Indies, providing an opportunity to share her developing dance technique and artistic philosophies with an audience outside of Chicago.

In the company of fellow choreographers Edna Guy, Alison Burroughs, Clarence Yates, and Asadata Dafora; Katherine Dunham presented five choreographies. The first three: *Haitian Ceremonial Dances, Biguine-Biguine*, and *Carnival Dances*, reflected social and religious dances inspired by her

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anthropological fieldwork. In the second half of the program titled “Modern Trends,” Dunham performed a solo titled *Moorish Dance*, and the company closed with *Tropic Death*, a dance depicting lynching. Although this evening of dance received very little press, it paved the way for Dunham’s celebrated return to New York in a few years.

The Dunham Company began performing weekly for political fundraising events in Chicago, becoming known for a suite of dances that were inspired by her political reaction to the Spanish Civil War occurring at that time. Dunham wrote: “*The Spanish Earth* was my first ballet of protest against social injustice, otherwise known then as fascism…I represented the roots of peasant Spain with heels and castanets in a fiery protest to the fascist armies of Franco.” In addition to her teaching, choreography and performance, Katherine Dunham’s cultural, political and social philosophies were now gaining attention through her published articles in local newspapers and through interviews in magazines.

Encouraged by the success of her writing and as a means to further support her company, Katherine Dunham submitted her manuscript for the book *Journey to Accompong* chronicling her fieldwork experiences living with the Maroon people in Jamaica, as a part of her job application to the Federal Writers Project. Dunham

123 Perhaps a pre-cursor to *Southland*, her 1951 seminal anti-lynching choreography.
126 Ibid., 88. *Journey to Accompong* was first printed in 1946 by Henry Holt publishing in NY. See Appendix to view book cover.
was subsequently hired to supervise a study investigating Black Muslim religious
cults in Chicago for the FWP, a division of President Roosevelt’s New Deal
program that provided governmental support to artists. Dunham wrote: “…the artist
must be educated as a person, a living, developing humanist, aware, as all artists are,
of the happenings of the times, but aware with the equipment that will serve him in
his technique and as an instrument for social balance and, if necessary, and this is a
constant in all societies, of social change.” This project allowed her to continue
researching in America the subject of individual and group expression within
religious communities, which she had begun during her fieldwork in the West Indies.

In 1938 as a result of her work with the Federal Writers Project, Dunham was
appointed as director of the Negro unit of the Chicago branch of the Federal Theatre
Project, whose emphasis was on “developing dance as a form of theater.” With the
FWP’s financial backing Dunham produced *L’Ag’Ya*, a story ballet she had created
based on religious stories and movement forms that she experienced during her time
in Martinique and other places in the Caribbean. Dunham’s published narration
describing *L’Ag’Ya’s* storyline appeared a year later in *Esquire* magazine, when she
was hired as their first female author, having to write under the pseudonym “Kaye

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128 Katherine Dunham, “Performing Arts Training Center as a Focal Point for a New and Unique College or School,” *Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 553.
130 See Appendix to view a photograph of *L’Ag’Ya*. 
L’Ag’Ya was to become an established piece of choreography in the Dunham Company repertoire that was performed for audiences worldwide for decades.

As a means of providing work to those unemployed during the Depression, the Federal Theatre Project instructed Dunham to audition and incorporate “fifty non-dancers into the ballet and prepare it for a gala presentation.” Dunham embraced this opportunity, later writing: “My real delight and sense of achievement was derived from the ‘proletariat’: the chauffeurs and maids and cooks…Their presence on stage was solid and reassuring. They enjoyed every moment of it, and though they started out as background, these non-professionals soon gave the stage the dimension of reality that made the folk myth believable.” Crafting a believable image of village life with such a large and diverse cast was possible through Dunham’s educational methodology of Socialization Through the Arts. She understood that in order to create a physical appearance of community on stage she would have to build one socially within the rehearsal process. Dunham wrote: “As I worked with the dancers, I got to feel great responsibility for them. I could see, constantly the need for socializing, for educating, as well as absorbing the music and atmosphere and learning the steps.”

**Finding Artistic and Life Partnership**

It was during the production of L’Ag’Ya that Dunham had the fortuitous opportunity to first meet and work with the scenographer and costume designer John

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132 Ibid., 99.
Pratt, who was to become her husband\textsuperscript{134} and life-long artistic partner. Dunham wrote: “From the moment I noticed John Pratt watching our rehearsals and sketching, I knew that here was someone special, someone with whom I could take wings and fly.”\textsuperscript{135} Pratt became the exclusive costume and set designer for Dunham and her Company, ingeniously staging and illuminating through rich costuming, all of the unique cultural and dramatic environments that Dunham imagined and represented through her visionary choreographies. Millicent Hodson wrote: “Working with John Pratt… she set a new level of design for dance theatre, extending the lines of dance movement through the cut and color of costumes, using the tropical context of her dances to awaken the kinesthetic sense of the audience.”\textsuperscript{136}

As the company grew in their reputation they were afforded more opportunities to perform, pushing Dunham to synthesize her developing technique and pedagogy as she created new artistic works. In 1939 Katherine Dunham and John Pratt combined their artistic talents to produce the Dunham Company’s most elaborate dance and music production to date, \textit{Tropics} at the Goodman Theater in Chicago. Through the combination of beautifully crafted choreography performed by well-trained richly costumed dancers surrounded by unique and dramatic set designs, and accompanied by live music, the company set a new precedence. Dunham said:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{134} John Pratt and Katherine Dunham were married in 1941, remaining together until his death from cancer in 1986. In 1951 they adopted their daughter Marie-Christine, 4 years old at the time.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Katherine Dunham, “Survival: Chicago after the Caribbean,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 92. An excerpt from Book 1 of Dunham’s unpublished manuscript, \textit{Minefields}.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Millicent Hodson, “How She Began Her Beguine: Dunham’s Dance Literacy,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 498.
\end{itemize}
“People in the audience felt a part of the beauty. They stopped resenting the fact that we were black doing it and sort of drifted along in escapism, but escapism which was based on scientific fact… that’s when I must have begun to see art and science as belonging together, each one supporting the other, I think that’s what gave me the courage and the imagination and the strength to present what I thought went together.”

Building Momentum: The End of the Chicago Era

The production of Tropics was separated into three acts, a format that the company would retain over the next twenty-six years of touring nationally and internationally. Dunham explained her purpose for adding a third act: “So the show automatically became divided into three parts instead of the average show then of two acts, because I had to get in there one important big expression of our combined creative and technical capacity.” Generally the show would open with a suite of dances reflecting traditional dance and music from outside the U.S., the middle would be the “big expression” story ballet that synthesized Dunham Technique’s modern, ballet and “primitive” elements, and the closing would be an Americana suite inspired by African American social and plantation/square dances. The popular success of Tropics ushered in opportunities for Katherine Dunham and her company that resulted in their inevitable need to leave Chicago for professional pursuits. Their first opportunity came when the International Ladies Garment Workers Union based in

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138 Ibid., 242.
New York, recruited Katherine Dunham to choreograph their popular annual Broadway musical revue *Pins and Needles*, asking that her company of fifteen dancers come with her to perform in the show.\(^{139}\)

In need of money to support the company’s imminent move to New York City, Dunham and Pratt created new costumes, sets, choreography, music and songs for a more intimate nightclub “Supper Show” version of *Tropics* that the company performed twice nightly at the Sherman Hotel in Chicago.\(^ {140}\) The success of this show began a future trend for the Dunham Company of performing in nightclubs as a way of generating additional income, allowing them to bring a cross-cultural experience to a different set of audience members than would normally view them on the concert stage. One member of this audience was choreographer George Balanchine who had traveled to Chicago to see the Dunham Company perform. Upon conclusion of the show he promptly asked Dunham to play the leading role of Georgia Brown in the upcoming musical production of *Cabin in the Sky*,\(^ {141}\) providing another reason for the Company to take up residency in New York. Dunham agreed to this opportunity, insisting that the two artists collaborate on the choreography and that her company be a part of the production.

When Dunham and her company arrived in NYC to begin rehearsals for *Pins and Needles*, they also began working on a revised version of their Chicago show now re-titled *Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot:” From Haiti to Harlem*. The single

\(^{139}\) Dunham and her company rehearsed and performed with *Pins and Needles* for their revues in 1939 and 1940.

\(^{140}\) See Appendix to view a Dunham Company “Supper Show” program from the Sherman Hotel.

\(^{141}\) See Appendix to view a photograph of Katherine Dunham as Georgia Brown in *Cabin in the Sky*. 

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performance they arranged to present at the Windsor Theatre in New York was so popular that the company continued to perform to sold-out audiences for twelve more weekends, stopping their run only to focus on rehearsing their next Broadway show, Cabin in the Sky. Reviewer John Martin wrote: “(Katherine Dunham’s) performance with her group last Sunday at the Windsor Theatre may very well become a historic occasion, for certainly never before in all the efforts of recent years to establish the Negro dance as a serious medium has there been so convincing and authoritative an approach.”

In the four years since returning from her fieldwork in 1936, Katherine Dunham had achieved her goal of creating a dance technique that embodied new shapes, qualities, rhythms and artistic expressions, while successfully training her dancers to communicate their art with grace, power and technical precision. She had succeeded in the creation of a dignified art form recognized by all races. In his review of the Windsor Theater performance from February 1940 John Martin continued: “if she were not possessed of creative gifts, no amount of research could possibly turn itself automatically into art. It is because she has showed herself to have both the objective quality of the student and the natural instinct of the artist that she has done such a truly important job.”

Katherine Dunham understood the power of bodily representation on stage and the gravity in how we choose to represent not only ourselves, but also others. By

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143 Ibid., 211-212.
teaching movement integrity and context along with physical form within her pedagogy, Dunham empowered her students and company members to develop ownership and pride in their body’s physical and expressive capabilities and affective power. Dunham’s holistic approach empowered not only her students, but also cultural groups as a whole that grew to recognize the dignity and beauty of their cultural worth and roots through the humanist based artistry of her technique, choreography, and company members.
Chapter Five:
Merging Academia and the Arts:
Dunham Technique as a Model for Education

(When asked what her ambitions and future plans were in 1941)
“I believe that a person who dances should know why they dance, and to do so they must have an historical background…I want a school in New York where I can train dancers in the knowledge and use of primitive rhythms. I want to lecture on the subjects of anthropology and dance; and of course I want to dance.”

144 Katherine Dunham

Introduction

Katherine Dunham moved to Chicago in 1928 to attend University. For the following decade she immersed herself in an intensive interdisciplinary learning cycle from which she emerged as a recognized anthropologist, teacher, dancer, choreographer, director and writer. During these years in Chicago she opened three dance schools to train students from the community as well as members of her growing dance company, while working to synthesize her unique movement technique and anthropologically based pedagogy philosophies. She left the Midwest in 1939 to tour with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, traveling with her artistic partner and soon to be husband, John Pratt. Although her career was taking off as a performer, writer, choreographer and director of a dance company, she still carried with her the dream of establishing a school that merged her training and belief systems as an artist and anthropologist into a holistic curriculum.


145 Archie Savage, Talley Beatty, Tommy Gomez, Carmencita Romero, Laverne French and Lucille Ellis were among the dancers she brought with her from Chicago.
The movement vocabulary of Dunham Technique draws from three primary bases: ballet, modern and social/folkloric/cultural dance forms. In describing Dunham’s choreography on stage reviewer Alan M. Kriegsman wrote: “It was startling to see, in the middle of passages otherwise dominated by swiveling hips and undulating torsos, a flash of pirouettes, brisés, and sissones, seamlessly blended into the phrasing.”146 Dunham observed universally recognizable elements in the movements, rhythms, and contextual expressions drawn from social and cultural dance forms, and sensed that they would “enrich the concert stage, if time be taken to provide it a specific technique.”147 She fused structural and philosophical principles from ballet and modern dance within her new dance language, crafting a universally expressive technique that supported her choreographies. Dunham explains: “the student of anthropology gradually comes to recognize universal emotional experiences...he notes patterns of expression which have been repeatedly effective and which, though modified by many material circumstances, persist in their essential form.”148

Katherine Dunham approached the education of her dancers from an anthropologist’s perspective. She wrote: “Awareness must precede the understanding

which results in communication and leads to cooperation and exchange.”\textsuperscript{149} She translated the cultural values, philosophical ideals, and research methods that she had learned from her anthropological and artistic training into her pedagogical approach with her students and company members. By fusing this background she formed her three primary educational methodologies of \textit{Form and Function} (each shape and action of a movement holds a purpose), \textit{Intercultural Communication} (the communicative strength of a movement is formed by deeply understanding its context) and \textit{Socialization Through the Arts} (physical, mental and emotional education is interconnected), which together guided the shape and intention of her movement vocabulary and choreography, as well as how she approached the training of her company members and students.

\textbf{National Recognition: Uniting the Physical and Philosophical on Stage}

The Dunham Company arrived in New York City in 1939 with contracts to perform in the socially minded musical revue \textit{Pins and Needles}, produced by the Labor Stage with new choreography by Katherine Dunham. While in rehearsals with the production, Dunham recruited and auditioned new dancers in preparation for the Dunham Company’s debut performance at the Windsor Theater for their new show \textit{Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot:” From Haiti to Harlem}. Because many of these new dancers were already established performers, she was able to train them more quickly in her movement vocabulary, pedagogy and choreography. Lavinia Williams, whom

Dunham noticed while she was performing with Agnes De Mille, described her entrance into the company: “We had to learn about ten dances or more in seventeen days. We started performances at the Windsor Theatre and I remember getting $15 a week. After a few months in the company, I was made student instructor for Katherine Dunham, serving in that position until I left.”

As her company advanced, she was pushed to develop more. Dunham wrote: “To teach or create without participation was foreign to me; every day the dancers were developing to where singly and in concert they moved ahead, becoming the company I wanted and at the same time challenging me in demonstration of my own creations.” As student instructor and company member, Williams kept detailed notes and drawings of Dunham Technique exercises and methodologies that she was learning while performing with the company. Lavinia later wrote: “I believe in the “Dunham” technique because she conceived a way and method of working to produce well-trained dancers able to perform in any given style.” America began to take notice of this dynamic and well-trained dance company who was slowly breaking cultural, racial and artistic boundaries through their expressive technique and cross-cultural, theatrical choreography.

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152 These notations were eventually published by the Congress on Research and Dance in 1980 in *Dance Research Annual XII*, and exist as one of the few physical records of the technique and pedagogy from the time period 1940-1945.
Building on their critical success at the Windsor Theatre, the Dunham Company was contracted for a one-hour television performance in 1939, making theirs the first full-length dance program to be broadcast on CBS. Dunham wrote: “Our show turned into a travelogue of many places, with Mary (Hunter) narrating; the Pacific Islands (*Rara Tonga*), Haiti (by now I had developed a suite of Haitian songs and dances), Cuba (a suite of dances: *Son, Rhumba*), the deep south of North America (square dances, *Barrelhouse Shimmy*) and, of course, the Brazilian *Batucada*.” Following their television appearance the Company was invited by Warner Brothers to record Hollywood’s first Technicolor dance film titled *Carnival of Rhythm*. This twenty-minute narrated short combined four Brazilian themed choreographies and was dedicated solely to the Dunham Company.

In 1940 George Balanchine and Dunham collaborated on the choreography for the hit Broadway musical *Cabin in the Sky*, in which her entire company performed while she co-starred as the character Georgia Brown, singing, acting and dancing. Although the two artists worked well together in the choreographic process, they disagreed as to how a dancer should be taught. Dunham described Balanchine telling her: “You invest too much in the individual dancer. A dancer should be an object for a choreographer. The dancer should not think.” Her response was: “No, as a

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154 Mary Hunter was a friend of Dunham’s from Chicago, and her manager at the time.
155 See Appendix to view a photograph of the Dunham Company in *Rara Tonga*.
156 See Appendix to view a photograph of Katherine Dunham and Vanoye Aikens in *Barrelhouse*.
158 Although recorded in 1939, *Carnival of Rhythm* was not released until 1941.
choreographer I don’t want simply to use the dancer as a pawn.” She explained “I never ask anyone to do something they don’t want to do, and I insist that they know the total complex of the role they’re playing…I want to instill in the dancer a person, and a person that has to know how to do whatever he’s assigned. That’s the anthropology coming out, of course.”

By teaching context in conjunction with form, Dunham was developing each dancer’s ability to understand and take ownership of their body’s movement and expression. Dunham said: “A drive to know this body, to know it inside out…what the different parts of it serve, how they add to our life experience. I think that’s probably what Dunham Technique is. I think it is a matter of the willingness to go through what it takes to know yourself, know your body.”

Dunham was not interested in creating dancers who solely copied her, but rather guided individuals in understanding why and how each movement took shape and the context of its social, physical, cultural and expressive purpose.

As the company’s performance schedule increased, Dunham’s own analysis of her body affected the development of the physical technique. “I simply could not afford knee problems in the future I had begun to hope for. As therapy I had begun to concentrate on building what was established by now as the Dunham Technique as a support and protection of my troubled connectives. I started advanced stages of

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strecthing, of muscle building from inside to outside.” Katherine Dunham had suffered from arthritis in her knees since childhood, prompting her to develop training methods within the technique to counteract the pain and limited range of motion she experienced as a result. These adaptations and additions contributed to Dunham Technique’s lasting ability to develop physically strong, resilient and versatile dancers.

**From Nightclubs to Concert Stages: Sustaining a Family**

After a highly successful nine month run in New York City, the cast of *Cabin in the Sky* began a tour of the production, connecting Dunham and her company to audiences around the nation. The tour ended in California where the company remained, performing in theaters and clubs as they built new repertoire and incorporated new dancers. Company member Lucille Ellis said: “We were working in little clubs there in the Bay Area. She (Dunham) was choreographing and sustaining us; we were not working, and so she was writing and selling articles, and that is how we lived. We stayed together, all in one house.” Dunham was building a family as well as a company. She was their matriarch and sole financial supporter, a responsibility she retained over the next twenty plus years as they toured both nationally and internationally. Ellis said: “We were all together, a family, growing

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162 Lenwood Morris who became the company’s ballet master, Syvilla Fort and Ruth Beckford joined at this time. Janet Collins was also a member of the company during their California tenure.

and developing and (it was) her nurturing which was teaching us and developing us.” According to Ellis, Dunham would say to them: “Now we are going to go out and see what we can do in this great big world, but we’re going to do it together.”

In 1942, Dunham was hired to perform in the patriotic film *Star Spangled Rhythm*, as well as choreograph for the Universal Pictures production of *Pardon my Sarong*. As a result of this success, Dunham was asked to choreograph a scene in the movie, *Stormy Weather*. In this dream sequence Dunham and her Company moved seamlessly between partnered lifts and movements on the floor, projecting a cool confidence while fluidly embodying balletic lines and modern contractions, interfused with precise body isolations. In contrast to the Company’s performance in *Carnival of Rhythm*, the Brazilian inspired film short that had been released a year earlier, this choreography portrayed a more lyrical aspect of the technique that continued to break pre-conceived images of African Americans in performance. Ellis said: “We paved the way, we pioneered all that time; that’s what we were supposed to do, and that’s what she was supposed to do, to take a band of people and change some of these things that have been going on for years.”

During this time dance impresario Sol Hurok, who had sponsored Anna Pavlova, Isadora Duncan, and Mary Wigman among others, signed the Company and financially supported the creation of their next show. Hurok wrote: “When Miss Dunham came under my management she already had a company of Negro dancers

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164 Ibid. 163.
165 See Appendix to view a photograph of the Dunham Company in *Stormy Weather*.
superbly trained by herself, a repertoire of productions with ingeniously economical sets and costumes designed by her artist husband, John Pratt, and a record of performances which jockeyed back and forth unbelievably between the most serious concert halls and the rowdiest of nightclubs.”\textsuperscript{167} While in California, the Company’s pianist Paquita Anderson transcribed their musical scores for full orchestration, allowing the Company to perform with both the San Francisco and Los Angeles Symphony Orchestras.\textsuperscript{168}

The Dunham Company returned to New York in 1943 to debut their new show \textit{Tropical Revue}\textsuperscript{169} on Broadway. Critical acclaim extended the show’s run from two weeks to three months, leading to the Company embarking on several nationwide tours over the next two years. Program notes in a 1944 playbill for \textit{Tropical Revue} state: “Her presentations are founded on natural historic dance techniques of the negro. They are not distorted copies of the whites. This necessarily called for tireless research and academic study, plus a liberal percentage of that singular ‘theatrical sense’ which only Miss Dunham possesses.”\textsuperscript{170} Over time, Dunham grew to feel that Hurok was more concerned with commercial success than in the integrity of her production, causing her to become his first client to buy out her remaining contract.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{169} See Appendix to view a promotional flyer, program, and cast photographs from \textit{Tropical Revue}.
\textsuperscript{170} “The \textit{Tropical Revue}... and what’s behind it,” \textit{S. Hurok presents Katherine Dunham in Tropical Revue at the Blackstone Theatre} (Chicago, IL: Chicago Stagebill, May 8, 1944), 4. (Author’s collection)
In 1945 while John Pratt was away on military duty, Dunham experimented with a new performance format for the Company through the choreography and staging of an original musical play called *Carib Song*, a love story set in the West Indies that the company performed on Broadway. “It is seldom that any member of the Katherine Dunham Troupe is merely a dancer and nothing more. The thorough Dunham method of training her company- and the strict Dunham requirements- make versatility prerequisite. Thus, the Ensemble consists of people who are all accomplished dancers, singers, and musicians.” Response to this show was not as favorable as previous productions, causing Dunham to return to the three-part revue format for the majority of the Company’s productions that followed. In 1946 when John Pratt returned, the Company began touring nationally again with their new show *Bal Nègre*, the success of which piqued international attention and future touring opportunities.

As the Company toured within the United States they experienced contradictory treatment; the same primarily white communities that applauded them while on stage refused to provide them proper housing, sometimes forcing them to stay in brothels or tenements due to the Company’s racial make-up. In a magazine article titled “Katherine Dunham Is Weary of Hotel Trek” Dunham is quoted as

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172 Book and lyrics by William Archibald, music by Baldwin Bergersen, directed by Mary Hunter.
173 “Who’s Who in the Cast…,” *Katherine Dunham presents Her New “Tropical Revue” at the Studebaker Theatre* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Stagebill, February 8, 1948), 8. (Author’s collection)
174 Generally the show would open with dances reflecting traditional dance and music from outside the U.S., the middle would be a dramatic story ballet, and the closing would be an Americana suite.
175 See Appendix to view a promotional flyer and photographs from a *Bal Negre* program.
saying: “It is gradually beginning to wear me down. Some of the kids in the company say they’d almost rather stop dancing than go through all this over and over.”176

In 1944 when the Company was due to perform in Louisville, Kentucky for another segregated audience, Dunham had reached her limit. She described her actions prior to stepping on stage: “I took one of those ‘For Whites Only’ signs and pinned it to the back of my dress. When I danced, I turned my back to the audience frequently to make sure everyone saw the sign.”177 At the conclusion of the Company’s performance she addressed the audience saying: “It makes me happy to know that you have liked us, that you have felt some of the beauty and happiness that we feel when we perform. But…There comes a time when every human being must protest in order to retain human dignity. I must protest because I have discovered that your management will not allow people like you to sit next to people like us.”178 She went on to explain that the Company will no longer perform in Louisville until this practice stops. “Until then, God bless you- for you may need it.” Dunham’s actions successfully prompted the theatre to desegregate shortly after, leading the town’s restaurants and hotels to follow suit.179

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Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research

As the Company was gaining national recognition and fame through their national tours, Dunham sensed a need to establish a home base and school for the company in New York City that would allow her to continue the training of her dancers, support the development of new artists, as well as to share her pedagogical beliefs with the general public. In 1944 the opportunity to open the comprehensive educational institution she had been dreaming of since her days as a student of both anthropology and the arts in Chicago finally arrived. News of this revolutionary school spread, causing a reviewer in London to write: “It is unconventional in every way. First, its pupils have to learn not only the drill and routine of several schools of dancing, but also music, languages, philosophy, and much else. Next, her school is racially ‘mixed’, and, therefore, controversial amongst the ‘whites’.”

The groundbreaking Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research included the Dunham School of Dance and Theater, the Department of Cultural Studies, and the Institute for Caribbean Research. A Dunham Company program from that time describes the school: “Today 430 lovers of the dance and theatre embracing all ages, races, creeds and degrees of proficiency study 30 different courses under a faculty of 20 distinguished instructors.” Dunham attracted a renowned group of teachers to conduct classes geared towards professionals, the general public, as well as children.


181 See Appendix to view photographs and description of the school within this program book.

The program continues: “The only interracial institution in the country concerned with dance and theatre arts, and approved by the U.S. Attorney General for the admission of non-quota immigrant students it boasts a truly international flavor drawing students from foreign countries.”182 As the school grew in its recognition, it was also accepted under the G.I bill, allowing veterans returning from the war to study there along with college students from Columbia University who received class credits.183

Dunham created two, three and five-year cross-disciplinary courses of study that led to “professional, elementary, and master graduate certificates in the fields of dance, drama and cultural studies.”184 Certificate students studied for twenty-five hours a week, taking a diverse range of classes within their major as well as in subjects that supported their primary area of focus. The 1946 Dunham Company playbill reads: “These cultural courses have been established because of Miss Dunham’s experience in finding theatrical artists too often handicapped by lack of understanding of the development of general culture and its importance in a specific field.”185 For example, in addition to their physical studies in ballet, modern (with José Limón), Dunham Technique, classical Spanish technique, and tap and boogie,

182 Ibid., 14.
184 “Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research Brochure, 1946-1947,” Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 472.
certificate applicants within the dance division studied dance history, notation, anthropology, percussion, music appreciation, visual design, and languages.\textsuperscript{186}

**Dance in Relationship**

Central to Katherine Dunham’s pedagogical practice is the belief that each individual subject has evolved from and continues to exist in relationship with other art forms and aspects within a society. Therefore education in the Dunham model must include the complex from which an art form has originated along with its active interrelationship to other forms. Dunham explains: “if each element of a performing company or each artist- even each politician, economist, or scientist- has been subjected to intense training in his own and related techniques, if his learning has been historic, socioeconomic, religious, aesthetic, organizational, and traditional, then the risk of misinterpretation is practically minimal.”\textsuperscript{187}

This depth of knowledge was evident in the performance of the Katherine Dunham company members. European reviewer Anne Manson wrote: “she exacts from each member of (her) company knowledge of the significance of the prescribed movements in her choreography…Each step, each gesture, become symbols of tribal ritual, and the interpreters of her show know well why this must be so. Perhaps it is owing to such sense of responsibility that the Dunham Company succeeds.”\textsuperscript{188}

\textsuperscript{186} “Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research Brochure, 1946-1947,” *Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 473-477.


integrating the humanities within her education process, Dunham built layers of mental, emotional and physical understanding and responsibility within her dancers. Company member Talley Beatty explained: “We learned about a society while learning a dance, so we knew it! I love Dunham technique; it’s what I always teach. It’s logical/creative.”

Dance as Community

Dunham’s New York school was remarkable not only for the strength and breadth of its curriculum, but for the racial, cultural and social diversity of its student base. Dunham actively created a space and structure where Socialization Through the Arts and Intercultural Communication could occur naturally. Not only were multiple arts and their supportive humanities brought into dialogue, but so were the wide range of participants. Every month the school hosted a “Boule Blanche,” a fundraising party that created opportunities for students, faculty, guest artists and the general public to dance together, play music, and gather socially. This practice of creating opportunities in the classroom or in a community social setting for diverse groups of people to interact socially and learn from each other, was one that Miss Dunham realized throughout her life’s work.

In addition to the multi-year professional programs leading to Research Assistant and Master Teaching Certificates, there was an established children’s program that mirrored the cross-cultural curriculum created for adults. Lavinia

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190 Joan Peters, long time Dunham Technique teacher at the Alvin Ailey School in New York City, was a children’s scholarship student at the Dunham School. She never danced with the Dunham Company.
Williams who taught at the school wrote: “Dunham liked working with children. She always had children’s classes and she taught them the same way she taught her company.” Artists of all ages were drawn to the Dunham School, hoping to benefit from its multi-arts education. An article describing the school reads: “the Dunham School attracts producers, writers, musicians; all sorts of theatre artists and technicians…Harmony exists as a natural outgrowth of mutual understanding and artistic feeling.” A few of the students at the school who later went on to achieve fame in their field included: Marlon Brando, James Dean, Geoffrey Holder, Arthur Mitchell, Louis Johnson, Eartha Kitt, Chita Rivera, Shelley Winters, Ava Gardner and Doris Duke, among many others.

**Continuing the Dunham Lineage**

The Dunham Company was engaged in almost constant international touring during much of the school’s thirteen-year existence. When company members left to pursue other professional or personal engagements, the Dunham School served as a place for many of them to teach. Dunham explained: “We’ve always been a dance education institution- I couldn’t be a dance educator unless I developed leaders, and once developed as leaders, there’s no particular reason why their careers should continue within the Dunham Company. That type of company becomes too much like

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a cult, which I’ve never really approved of.”

Talley Beatty, Archie Savage, Tommy Gomez, Lavinia Williams and Syvilla Fort were among those who taught in Miss Dunham’s absence, steeping the next generation of dancers in Dunham Technique and Philosophies. Advanced dancers at the school became a part of the Dunham Experimental Group, a pre-professional company supervised by Syvilla Fort and Walter Nicks. This ensemble maintained the Dunham Company’s presence nationally through performances, lectures and small tours, while also serving as a highly trained group for Dunham to audition from as needed.

Julie Robinson Belafonte who joined the Dunham Company in the late 1940’s, began studying at the Dunham School while in high school. “I had a scholarship. I never thought Dunham would take a white girl. I never thought of performing, actually, but I loved the technique, so I thought I would teach.”

In describing her first experiences with the Dunham Experimental Group prior to auditioning for Miss Dunham and the main Company, she said: “We had no money. We had to make our own costumes. We weren’t getting paid, but it was a tremendous education…a tremendous training for being able to perform the technique.”

Although many perceived the Dunham Company to be all African American, they were a multicultural, multinational company. Miss Dunham would hold dance and music auditions in each country that the company toured to, adding to the

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196 Ibid., 368-369.
company’s universal make-up. Principal company member Vanoye Aikens explained that “in every country ‘Miss D’ would collect ‘something’: a cultural expression, a movement, a local musician or a dancer.”

**Ending the New York Era**

The New York Dunham School operated from 1944-1957, with Miss Dunham fully sponsoring its financial operation. John Martin wrote: “Dunham steps in, whips together a tropical revue, wows them on Broadway and elsewhere, and sinks the profits in the school. It is a procedure that probably does not make sense, but no stubbornly idealistic project ever quite does.” Scholarships were awarded as needed with students running the elevator, cleaning the studios and repairing costumes among other duties, in exchange for classes. All of the profits that Dunham received from her publishing, teaching, lectures, choreography and performance over these years were directly returned to the funding of her school and company. The school functioned for over a decade until Dunham was forced to close due to a period of unfavorable exchange rates from the Company’s international performances, eliminating her financial capabilities.

In 1962 the company returned to the United States after a five-year period of international touring to present their new production *Bamboche*, based on research

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200 See Appendix to view the Dunham Company’s *Bamboche* program.
that Dunham had conducted while in North Africa, and featuring members of the Royal Troupe of Morocco. Upon their return Dunham noticed a change in the social and artistic climate in the States, prompting her to again open a school in New York, this time with a more social agenda. Dunham explained: “One of our objectives will be to stimulate the interest of and prepare a working program for young people of deprived backgrounds who are not conditioned to training for the performing arts, and who have no opportunities to pursue these studies... Important, also, will be the re-education of the professional dancer of today who is, in my opinion, fast losing in all performance prerequisites excepting perfection of superficial techniques.”

The school was in existence for only two years, during which the tour of *Bamboche* concluded and Dunham was hired as the choreographer for the Metropolitan Opera’s new version of *Aïda*. With this appointment, Katherine Dunham became the first African American to choreograph for the Met. The school became a meeting ground where she trained the cast members in Dunham Technique and related forms, in preparation for their performance of her well researched, albeit controversial, culturally and racially inclusive choreography and staging. In her program notes for the production Dunham wrote: “*Aïda* has always been a production challenge. Until the last decade, however, authenticity counted for less than random extravaganza…production staffs of operas of exotic themes are obliged to restudy scores and original notes and research in ethnic and archeological backgrounds.”

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201 Ibid., 480.
202 This production opened in 1963, and ran for five years.
Contrary to popular interpretation, Dunham envisioned Africans in the Egyptian scenes causing her to cast members of the Dunham Company along with children and other students from her school in the Somalian, Bedouin and Egyptian roles, thus diversifying the predominately white Metropolitan Opera ballet company.\(^{204}\)

In 1964 Miss Dunham left for Southern Illinois University at Carbondale to choreograph the opera *Faust* and to serve as their artist-in-residence and guest teacher for a year, causing the school to close and the Dunham Company to disband. Joshua Legg wrote: “Unlike her contemporaries Graham and Limón, Dunham had artistic, intellectual, and social interests that could not be met by concentrating her work almost exclusively in (New York City).”\(^ {205}\) The social and artistic objectives she had hoped to accomplish at this second New York school were later applied in the creation of the Performing Arts Training Center, a school she opened in East St. Louis, Illinois in 1967.

What others viewed as opposites, a dancer who possessed both academic intelligence and artistic physical mastery, or a curriculum that taught cultural, social, linguistic and artistic literacy simultaneously, Dunham viewed as a logical pairing. In an essay describing cultural commonalities found within African based performances, anthropologist Roger Abraham wrote: “The African aesthetic…calls for the dramatization of the wholeness, the integrity of experience, through the yoking


together of opposites. The either/or categories of Western analytic thought, so helpful in learning to control nature through technology, actively threaten this integrative socially-based conceptual system.”

By uniting her two passions of anthropology and dance, Dunham erased the boundaries between mind and body, and academia and the arts. This in turn allowed her to integrate into the fabric of her technique, pedagogy and artistic work perceived opposites: European and African based movements, social and concert dance, the development of the individual and the building of a community, as well as choreography that both entertained and educated. The Dunham Company’s Bal Negre program from the 1940’s stated: “The Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts Inc. is firmly established in America as a moving cultural force whose liberal scope and serious purpose reflect the integrity of its founder, Katherine Dunham.” The comprehensive multi-arts, multicultural, humanities integrated, tiered curriculum that Dunham established at her New York school, still proves to be an inspiring educational model for high school, college and community based arts and cultural departments and institutions.

“The artist must be educated as a person, a living, developing humanist, aware, as all artists are, of the happenings of the times, but aware with the equipment that will serve him in his technique and as an instrument for social balance and, if necessary…of social change.” Katherine Dunham

**Introduction**

In 1939 while Katherine Dunham was in the process of completing a masters degree in anthropology, Broadway contracts beckoned, causing her and her dance company to move to New York City. Dunham wrote: “It was one thing to write a thesis and have it approved for a masters degree. It was another thing to begin earning a living on Broadway.” Her training and practice as an anthropologist guided her development as an artist and human being, and sent the philosophical and physical development of Dunham Technique along a unique path, not previously seen in other dance techniques or pedagogical models. A review in *Opera and Concert* magazine states: “Audience reaction to Katherine Dunham and her dancers is immediate and enthusiastic…a strong sociological purpose pervades her work, and this gives it a

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209 Katherine Dunham received a Ph.B. (bachelors in social anthropology) from the University of Chicago. Although she completed her written thesis towards a MA in anthropology, she never took the remaining exam requirements, therefore did not receive a masters degree.

special flavor that sets it apart from all other dance and balletic groups now before the public.”\textsuperscript{211}

In her transition to Broadway Dunham embraced her opportunity to both entertain and educate from the concert stage. Her anthropological research was ongoing, contributing to her choreography, technique and pedagogy, while she continued to write and lecture. In an article published in 1941 titled \textit{Thesis Turned Broadway} Dunham wrote: “I find myself referred to in the very same day, both as ‘the hottest thing on Broadway’ and ‘an intelligent, sensitive young woman…an anthropologist of note.’…eager reporters, confronted by the simultaneous presence of two such diverse elements, have often failed to grasp the synthesis between them.”\textsuperscript{212}

Although Dunham and her Company’s recognition increased as they began to tour nationally and appear in Hollywood films, audiences and critics saw academic intelligence and artistic physical expressiveness as opposites, giving them difficulty in accepting Katherine Dunham as both an artist and a scholar.

In addition to the disbelief that was expressed towards the presence of an academically trained performing artist, Dunham and her company consistently battled racial stereotypes. After turning down a movie role because she felt it was racially demeaning, Dunham was quoted as saying: “Hollywood still doesn’t consider Negroes people…Always they want us to be servants, generally comic servants. At


\textsuperscript{212} Katherine Dunham, “Thesis Turned Broadway,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 214. First Published in \textit{California Arts and Architecture} magazine, 1941.
the very best, they let us appear as entertainers. Why don’t the movies move with the times?” Dunham later recalled being brought repeatedly into the offices of producers where they would ask her: “‘Why don’t you get some good-looking girls in your company? Do they have to be so dark? And I’d get very indignant and reply: ‘You’re not seeing what we are; you’re just seeing what you want to make of us.’ That’s why I never really stayed there (in Hollywood) for any length of time.”

When viewing the Dunham Company onstage critics became uncomfortable when they saw movements that were outside of their stereotyped idea of appropriate “Negro dance”. John Martin wrote: “With the arrival of Katherine Dunham on the scene, the prospects for the development of a substantial Negro dance art begin to look decidedly bright.” In the same 1940 review for the New York Times he continued: “The group as a whole is handsome and competent, though there is among certain of the male dancers…a distressing tendency to introduce the technique of the academic ballet.” In an overall favorable review of the Dunham Company’s show Bal Nègre six years later, John Martin had still not grappled with Dunham’s use of ballet aesthetics within her technique and choreography, writing: “The Choros is spoiled by the introduction of brisés volés and the like…In general, some of the boys

should be reminded that they are not Russian Ballerinas and that it would be nice if they would comport themselves accordingly.”

**International Response**

After eight years of national touring and Broadway appearances, the Dunham Company’s success of their show *Bal Nègre* attracted the attention of Doris Duke who sponsored the company on a tour of Mexico in 1947. Dunham said: “Our appearances in Mexico…did much to counteract Hollywood’s clichés for the Negro. They discovered that the Negro can also be an artist and not always a shiftless, ignorant person…They expressed surprise at the intelligence and the artistry of my dancers.”

*Bal Nègre* also brought invitations from European producers who contracted the company for their first European tour in 1948, sparking the beginning of the Dunham Company’s international phase of touring and teaching.

Long time company member Tommy Gomez said: “We didn’t get away from (prejudice) until we finally left this country and went to London. And we had such a fantastic reception in London.”

European audiences immediately embraced the Dunham Company, comparing the impact of their arrival to the Ballets Russes’s first Paris appearance in 1909.  

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219 Ibid., 140.

Richard Buckle, who later went on to publish the book Katherine Dunham, Her Dancers, Singers, Musicians\textsuperscript{221} wrote in London’s Ballet Magazine in 1948: “Pale, travel-starved Londoners watching this show, catch glimpses of a remote world of passionate music and movement, and long to journey there...Dunham has viewed the world with a wide impartial eye, turning her anthropology into our entertainment, providing entertainment for the anthropologist of the future.”\textsuperscript{222} European critics were able to accept the unity between her training as an anthropologist and her artistic expression, while also recognizing her academic contributions. Upon her arrival to London the Royal Anthropological Society requested Miss Dunham present an academic paper,\textsuperscript{223} and subsequently offered her membership. As the Company’s tour continued, she was later asked to present for the Anthropological Society of Paris and the Anthropological society of Rio de Janeiro.\textsuperscript{224}

A review from the London Observer written when the Dunham Company performed in 1948 states: “She strives for great things- dances that mean more than entertainment and represent more than stereotyped cultures. Her ideas reach far back into history and sociology, go deep into human feelings, and yet move forward, creating something new.”\textsuperscript{225} The response of European audiences validated Katherine

\begin{footnotes}
\footnoteref{221} This book is filled with rare photographs of the company performing on-stage. Richard Buckle, Katherine Dunham, Her Dancers, Singers, Musicians, (London, UK: Ballet Publications, LTD.)
\footnoteref{222} See Appendix to view the cover of this magazine, featuring the Dunham Company. Richard Buckle, “Commentary,” Ballet and Opera, July 1948, 7.
\footnoteref{223} Katherine Dunham’s lecture to the London Royal Anthropological Society in 1948 was titled “The State of Cults among the Deprived.”
\footnoteref{224} Dunham also presented for the Anthropology Departments at Yale as well as the University of Chicago. Joyce Aschenbrenner, “Katherine Dunham: Anthropologist, Artist, Humanist,” African-American Pioneers in Anthropology (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 146.
\end{footnotes}
Dunham’s philosophies and technique through their ability to appreciate the aesthetics of the Company while connecting to the deeper sociological and cultural intent within the choreography. In 1950, after a two-year tour of over a dozen countries in Europe, the company made a brief New York appearance prior to embarking on a yearlong tour of South America. The Broadway program booklet from this show explains the overwhelming reception that the company received in Europe stating: “Such appreciation is always gratifying to the artist, but of deeper significance to Miss Dunham was the critical perception of her work, not merely as racial entertainment, but on the level of pure creative artistry.”

In 1944 prior to the Company embarking on their first international tour, Dunham presented her vision of how scholarly and artistic pursuits can support each other in an educational curriculum, through the opening of the Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research in New York City. “Her school work is based on the idea that dance routines in themselves are quite meaningless; Miss Dunham’s pupils have to take courses in philosophy and anthropology, and must maintain the liveliest interest in dancing (and allied studies) as a means to spreading the idea that Man’s chief interest must ever be Man.” The curriculum supported student development culturally, socially and physically, by providing simultaneous training in a range of physical techniques as well as in related arts and philosophies.

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The thorough training and stellar artistic reputation of dancers who had studied within the Dunham model of education was far reaching. Dunham explained: “the New York Dunham School of Arts, Sciences, Humanities, and Applied Skills and the Dunham Company had reached such a prestigious level that people from the Dunham Company or School were excused from auditioning from other companies or Broadway shows.”\textsuperscript{228} The physical presence resulting from an immersion within the study of Dunham Technique was notable as well. Dunham wrote: “In Paris, Stockholm, or Beirut a member of the Dunham Company could be recognized from far off by carriage and stance by those who may have seen the show only once.”\textsuperscript{229} The school provided a base in New York City for the Company to return to between international tours, and served as a model for schools and teaching residencies that Miss Dunham instituted in other locations around the world as she toured. “…all schools which have carried my name…in many countries of the world- Italy, Sweden, Germany, France, South America, Australia- which teach the method and philosophy…follow the format of performing arts, applied skills, and humanities.”\textsuperscript{230}

Over the course of thirteen years, the Dunham Company performed in over fifty-seven countries,\textsuperscript{231} touring more internationally than nationally during their

\textsuperscript{228} Katherine Dunham, “Survival: Chicago after the Caribbean,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 90. An excerpt from Book 1 of Dunham’s unpublished manuscript, \textit{Minefields}.
\textsuperscript{229} Katherine Dunham, “Early New York Collaborations,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 134. An excerpt from Book 2 of Dunham’s unpublished manuscript, \textit{Minefields}.
\textsuperscript{230} Katherine Dunham, “Performing Arts Training Center as a Focal Point for a New and Unique College or School,” \textit{Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 553. An unpublished paper, 1970.
existence. Although their extensive worldwide travels led them to becoming the most well-known American dance company of their time,\(^{232}\) they never received any financial support from the U.S. government. From 1941-1947 they traveled between the United States and Canada, from 1947-1949 to Mexico, Europe and South America, from 1951-1953 to Europe and North Africa, from 1956-1957, to South Pacific and the Far East,\(^{233}\) and from 1959-1960 to Europe for a third time.\(^{234}\)

Throughout this time Katherine Dunham managed to uphold the “largest unsubsidized company of dancers in the United States”\(^{235}\) by her constant teaching, lecturing, and writing, as well as performance, directorial and choreographic contracts for movies, television, nightclubs and theatrical stages.\(^{236}\) The Dunham Company’s size averaged between thirty-five-fifty members, including dancers, musicians, singers and stage hands.\(^{237}\)

The artistic, cultural and social impact that the Dunham Company’s performances had on individuals and communities nationally and internationally is far reaching. Dance scholar Richard Long wrote: “Dunham’s European success led to considerable imitation of her work in European revues and...to a cultic emulation of

\(^{232}\) “a distinction which was to be inherited by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in the 1970’s.” Richard A. Long, *The Black Tradition in American Dance* (London, UK: PRION), 98.

\(^{233}\) In 1958, the Dunham Company paused their tour while Katherine Dunham spent a year living and writing in Japan working on her first memoir *A Touch of Innocence: Memoirs of Childhood*, which was published in 1959. See Appendix to view the front and back covers of the first edition of *A Touch of Innocence*.


\(^{236}\) See Appendix to view Katherine Dunham choreographing on the movie set of *Green Mansions*.

\(^{237}\) When possible, the company toured with a full orchestra.
the troupe and of its dancers, it is safe to say that the perspectives of concert-theatrical
dance in Europe were profoundly affected by the performances of the Dunham
troupe. 238 Dunham Technique is still taught in Europe today, known by many as
“Ballet Jazz,” as a result of decades of teaching by senior Dunham company member
Vanoye Aikens in Sweden, Germany and Spain, Walter Nicks in Scandinavia and
France, and Carmencita Romero in Italy, Spain and Germany (as well as Japan and
Cuba), among others. 239

Social Repercussions

Dunham approached her choreography with well researched objectives,
choosing carefully how she chose to represent and translate for the concert stage the
cultural traditions and social messages her dancers communicated through their
bodies. Dunham explains: “Too often when these (traditional) arts are presented to
foreign cultures they are not prepared for the industrialized world. This is not to mean
they lack value, but simply because what has been performed through inheritance will
be known and appreciated within the framework of its own inheritance, but runs the
risk of misinterpretation outside its own culture.” 240 By developing her philosophical
methods of Form and Function, Intercultural Communication and Socialization
through the Arts, Dunham created a process of educating through her pedagogy,
creative and scholarly work that maintained integrity and dignity for each culture and

239 Joyce Aschenbrenner, Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life (Urbana and Chicago: University of
240 Katherine Dunham, “Dance As A Cultural Art And Its Role In Development,” Kaiso! Writings by
and about Katherine Dunham (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 546. An unpublished
paper delivered in Dakar, Senegal, 1976.
way of life that she drew from when creating her physical technique and choreography.

Katherine Dunham conducted anthropological research within each country and culture the company toured to, strengthening the diversity and universality in the movement language of Dunham Technique, and inspiring new choreography. Dunham incorporated new members into the company during these tours, contributing to the Company’s artistic and cultural interchange and influence worldwide. Giovannella Zannoni, an Italian dancer who became a member of the Dunham Company in the late 1950’s said: “The impact of the show for me and most of my generation was tremendous. We had never been exposed to anything so culturally different from us and yet with such a power of total involvement. It was much more than the enthusiastic reaction to a brilliant theatrical experience. It was an exposure to a different civilization, to a sense of magic and of beauty we knew nothing about. I think that for many of us this was an authentic cultural initiation.”

Katherine Dunham’s practice of scouting and recruiting master musicians to join her company during her travels abroad facilitated a music crosspollination around the world. Scholar Dr. Marta Moreno Vega wrote: “Before they became major performing artists in the Latino community, Mongo Santamaría, Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Pérez Prado, Julito Collazo, and Francisco Aguabella all exchanged

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information and ideas in the nurturing environment Dunham established.” Many of these musicians made the United States their new home after working with the Dunham Company between the 1940’s-1960’s, becoming seminal performers, teachers and leaders within the burgeoning Latin, Caribbean, and African music scenes who in turn influenced the development of American musical forms as well as the transference of new religious dance and music practices.

Dunham built a regenerative web that continues to grow and evolve, by establishing connective threads between all of the communities and individuals with whom she studied, created and performed with around the world. Scholar and certified Dunham teacher Halifu Osumare wrote: “Dunham’s returning of her anthropological considerations to her native United States and other cultures during her international tours, through her interaction with theater audiences, was, in effect, applying theory to the reality of cultures interacting in the real world.” In 1963 after the Company had stopped touring, Dunham began writing a paper titled “Dunham Technique: Prospectus” in which one of her stated future goals was to: “explore further the workings of the Dunham Company and the dance technique which has served as a model for a large part of dance development, in many countries of the world for more than twenty-five years.”

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Technique and the Company’s presence on the development of dance companies internationally and nationally, is an area of research that deserves further attention.

**West African Political and Cultural Interchange**

When the Company appeared in Paris, France on their first European tour, Dunham noted that there were no people of color in the audience. Dunham said: “I think every artist should think not only of a performance…they have to think that even artists belong to society, and they must know the society in which they work.”

Commencing the following night she designated a number of free tickets for African students who were attending the historic La Sorbonne University, for each subsequent performance. Through her invitation, many of the future leaders of the African independence movement filled the audience, seeing for the first time African derived cultural forms being represented in a positive light on the European concert stage. Dr. Joyce Aschenbrenner wrote: “In her dance and teaching career, (Katherine Dunham) was committed to reveal to African Americans, along with other races and nationalities, the value, dignity, and beauty of African expressions.” Included among the many members of her African student audience were Sékou Toure and Léopold Sénghor, who later became the first presidents of Guinea and Senegal.

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245 Katherine Dunham as quoted in Marta Vega, *Katherine Dunham In Her Own Words* (NY: Caribbean Cultural Center, 1994), 14.
As these students returned home to their respective countries at the completion of their studies, they were inspired to initiate not only a political and economic revolution but a cultural one as well, by forming nationally representative dance and music companies inspired by the Dunham Company’s presentation of cultural dance forms on the concert stage. Katherine Dunham wrote: “Therefore the ‘return to the sources,’ the tendency to revert to the traditional, should not mean a turning of one’s back on ‘modernization,’ and thus something to be feared, but rather the coming into full awareness of one’s cultural heritage in order to better reinforce and intensify one’s development, through pride and knowledge of one’s heritage.”249 The renowned dance and music company Les Ballets Africains of Guinea who still tours internationally today, was formed in Paris in 1952 (during the Dunham Company’s second European tour), and was invited by Sékou Toure to move to Guinea, West Africa once the nation gained independence in 1958.250

In 1966, President Senghor appointed Katherine Dunham as his Technical and Cultural Advisor in Senegal, asking her to participate in the first World Festival of Negro Arts held in the capitol city of Dakar. Her mission was to prepare plans for an arts academy to be located on the former slave deportation island of Gorée,251 as well

as train and choreograph Le Ballet National du Senegal, the dance and music company Senghor founded in 1960 when he was inaugurated as president, to culturally represent his country nationally and internationally. Dunham explained the importance of the multifaceted process that must be undertaken when preparing culturally representative dance forms for outsider audiences: “Those who interpret these art forms…to the rest of the world must know the art form—not only the externals, but in its fundamental meaning to the society, its social organization, its historical importance and its form related to its function. Without this knowledge of the history the ethos and mores, we are apt to present only entertainment, airport art, or at most a superficial view of a trait of the culture, of a people deserving far more attention, and thus give rise to minimization.”

Dunham Technique and Philosophies in Higher Education

After over twenty-five years of performing, the Dunham Company held their last official performance at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, New York in 1965. Following her choreography of Aïda at the Metropolitan Opera, Katherine Dunham received multiple offers to teach in higher education, choosing to return to her home state to teach and work as an artist-in-residence for Southern Illinois University at

Carbondale to choreograph for the opera *Faust*. Dunham, along with the opera star Marjorie Lawrence who starred in the production, chose to stage this production of *Faust* as if it took place in Nazi Germany.\(^{255}\) From there she was contracted to design a cultural arts and dance program at the SIU Alton, IL campus, prior to establishing long-term residency in East Saint Louis, IL. “In 1967 I accepted a professorship at the university, planning to stay a single semester. Once there, I was so moved by the terrible situation of East Saint Louis, the hopelessness, apathy and utter despair that had been intensifed by the riots that I remained.”\(^{256}\)

Katherine Dunham’s humanitarian vision and activist mindset rose to the forefront as she fought for funding from the Equal Opportunity Commission to establish a cultural center in East St. Louis. In 1967 she received the funds to establish The Performing Arts Training Center (PATC) as a part of the Southern Illinois University Experiment in Higher Education. PATC was aligned with both the dance and anthropology departments at the University, and was designed to establish a link between academia and the community of East St. Louis through the creation of a connected community arts center and college degree program. “The aim here is to provide a context in which the growing student may taste the range of educational possibilities, stimulating his curiosity and in some cases preparing him to move on into more conventional institutions of higher learning… The substructure of the


university depends upon its relationship with a wider body, and this wider body is the community outlying the university.”

The Performing Arts Training Center’s multidisciplinary arts and humanities fused curriculum was the next evolution of the school designs that Dunham had previously established nationally and internationally. Dunham explains: “The most complete studies of dance encompass not only the complex surrounding dance— that is music, instruments of accompaniment, artifacts, and social organization— but enter easily into the fields of design, psychology, the humanities, and the social sciences. It has been on this basis that the former and present Dunham Schools have operated and from this complex has come my own career and more than twenty-five years of world touring of the Dunham Company.”

PATC’s community based centers and academic program grew to include a semiprofessional dance touring company, a theater group and a children’s company, in addition to housing specific programs for senior citizens, children, and those with physical disabilities. Established as an additional cultural resource, the Katherine Dunham Dynamic Museum (still in existence today) was moved to East St. Louis, to house artifacts Dunham had been collecting from around the globe for close to

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260 The museum was first established in Alton, IL when Dunham and Pratt were in residency at SIU.
three decades through interactive educational displays and a community resource library, along with her personal and professional archives.\textsuperscript{261}

As Dunham established the Performing Arts Training Center she also maintained her international connections, choreographing in Italy and Paris, working as the artistic and cultural advisor to the Senegalese National Ballet, and advising and presenting for the first World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture as an official U. S. state representative. She continued to write, publishing her second memoir \textit{Island Possessed}\textsuperscript{262} which narrated her initial fieldwork experiences in Haiti, while still remaining an active contributor to magazines and journals. She maintained Habitation Leclerc, her home in Haiti that she had purchased almost thirty years prior, which housed a medical clinic for the local community and served as a tourist attraction and host site for seminars. When interviewed in 1976, she had plans to: “establish a school here of the arts and sciences for students of anthropology, the humanities, the occult, tropical medicine, and dance.”\textsuperscript{263} Unfortunately, this vision has not yet come to fruition.

During her time in Senegal Dunham established life-long and instrumental relationships with Jeanelle Stovall, an American United Nations translator who was assigned to her, and Mor Thiam a drummer for the National Ballet, both of whom she convinced to leave West Africa for a short period to work as teachers and assist with

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\textsuperscript{262} \textit{Island Possessed} was first published in 1969. See Appendix to view the cover of \textit{Island Possessed}.  
\end{flushright}
her project in East St. Louis. For Stovall this brief visit extended for close to forty years as she worked tirelessly as Dunham’s closest assistant, advisor and administrator for the duration of her life. Mor Thiam joined Ms. Dunham in 1968 to begin teaching classes at PATC and became the Head of the Percussion Department of Southern Illinois University in 1975. Concurrently he served as Ms. Dunham’s lead musical accompanist for classes, residencies and performances for the remainder of her life, while building a professional career as one of the premier Senegalese musicians in the United States.

As the Performing Arts Training Center continued to develop over the next fifteen years, Dunham worked to codify her technique and pedagogy while training all ages of community members, college students, and developing artists. Dunham wrote: “The overall objective is to employ a creative and flexible educational methodology in pursuit of the fullest possible humanization and socialization of the individual and the community, through a program which emphasizes the performing and cultural arts as its principal method.” Among the many faculty members were John Pratt (Ms. Dunham’s husband) teaching Stage Design, Sewing and Print Making, Jeanelle Stovall teaching African Nations of Today, and Mor Thiam teaching Percussion. She brought together a stellar, international faculty who

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264 Jeanelle Stovall was Associate Director of the Katherine Dunham Center of the Arts and Humanities (among many other titles and roles) until her death in 2005 of pancreatic cancer.
265 Mor Thiam was hired by Disney World in Orlando, FL in 2006 as a musical consultant and performer, and has remained there since. His son, who grew up attending the annual Katherine Dunham Technique Seminars, is the famous rap artist Akon.
“redesigned curricula, developed and wrote new texts, participated in team-teaching projects, and created strong instructor-counselor relationships with students.”

The Performing Arts Training Center’s “Spring Quarter – 1970 Class Schedule” shows evidence of this intensive curriculum, and lists former Dunham Company members Tommy Gomez, Ural Wilson, and Christine de Rougemont as teachers of Dunham Technique, Primitive Rhythms, and Classical Ballet. Other specialists were scheduled to teach Anatomy for the Performer, Martial Arts for Dance and Theatre: Karate-Zentu, African Woodcarving and Plaster Casting, Cross Cultural Studies of Children, Socialization Through the Arts: Drama, Oral and Written Communications, Conversational Yoruba and French, Basic Survival, and Practical Law among other classes. Although producing professional artists was not the ultimate goal of PATC, many graduates went on to become professionals in their artistic fields as a result of the interdisciplinary arts and humanities based classroom training they received, along with experiences they gained performing on

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268 “Performing Arts Training Center and Dynamic Museum, Southern Illinois University, East St. Louis, Illinois, Spring Quarter – 1970 Class Schedule and Course Descriptions,” courtesy of the Newberry Library in Chicago, IL.
269 Other Dunham Company members who taught at PATC included: Norman Davis, Lucille Ellis, Clifford Fears, Lenwood Morris, Archie Savage, Camille Yarbrough, and Giovannella Zannoni.
regional U.S. tours, including the world premiere of Scott Joplin’s opera *Treemonisha*, which Dunham directed and choreographed.\(^\text{272}\)

**Community Development via Socialization Through the Arts**

Katherine Dunham worked to transform individual lives and a community as a whole by providing arts training as a viable alternative to other more negative forms of expression, and by facilitating access to higher education. “In our capsule of arts training here in East Saint Louis, we have seen art serve as one of the methods of arousing awareness, of stimulating life to be thinking, observant, comparative, not automatic; of surpassing alienating, and of serving as a rational alternative to violence and genocide.”\(^\text{273}\) In an interview for National Public Radio Harry Belafonte said: “Katherine Dunham’s presence in any community commanded that the community move its own interests and its own behavior to a higher level.”\(^\text{274}\)

In 1970 Dunham founded a non-profit with Jeanelle Stovall as Associate Director, to support her on-going community work and global vision separate from the University affiliated programs, and to oversee the operation of The Dynamic Museum. The mission reads: “The Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities focuses on new forms of education and human relations. Its fundamental purpose is to promote understanding, research and training in the arts and humanities,

\(^{272}\) World premiere at Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. Later performances at Wolftrap Park for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia in 1972, and the Kiel Opera House in Saint Louis, MO.


\(^{274}\) Michele Norris, “Recalling Choreographer and Activist Dunham: Interview with Harry Belafonte,” All Things Considered, National Public Radio, May 22, 2006, 4pm.
leading to 1) arts-based communication techniques for people of diverse cultures, and 2) a multi-arts training program to humanize and socialize individuals, as well as provide them with marketable skills. It achieves these ends through continued scholarship in the field of intercultural communication, carried on by DUNHAM and others, and an innovative arts training program developed and perfected by her in the late 1940’s.”

Dunham’s holistic educational constructs were based in the belief that dance and all arts are socially based and can play a powerful role in the community in which they are practiced. When describing how she was drawn to East St. Louis she said: “Everything was needed…Factories were closing. But it still had a family life. All of a sudden I found myself closing out my theater career and using my background in anthropology to bring together a community, not only to be preserved but developed.”

Her curriculum supported educating all people in a range of supportive artistic techniques that incorporated a development of social, cultural and humanistic awareness within individuals and communities. In a 1986 interview Dunham reflected: “I always say that my first period of learning was at the University of Chicago, my second was the world, and my third was East St. Louis.”

By acting on her humanitarian instincts Dunham transformed a community through her arts activism and educational curriculum. Poet laureate and former PATC teacher Eugene Redmond said: “Miss Dunham advanced the idea of a global village

without preaching…in the whole arena of culture, gender, race, class and language, ethnicity, she just blew that wide open…that’s one legacy, one contribution that endured…She stood in and outside of art, in and outside of social structure, in and outside of (academics), in and outside of gender.”

After ten years of working in East St. Louis, Dunham and Stovall created the Institute for Intercultural Communication (still in existence today) under the auspices of the Dunham Centers, based on the “conviction that the arts and humanities help immeasurably in the process of removing barriers between diverse cultures, and in neutralizing alienation of the individual from his own society.”

Achieving Recognition

Although Dunham’s community based work in East St. Louis was geographically outside of much of the national arts radar, both academia and arts organizations began to recognize her lifetime of work with awards from Dance Magazine in 1969, the American Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance in 1971, and her first of sixteen Honorary Doctorate degrees in 1972 from MacMurray College, where she delivered the commencement speech


Reflections on Survival stating: “The challenge of life is to find what is right for the to all of humanity, and live by it.”

Dunham continued to write, publishing various essays and articles along with her fifth book, a children’s story based on her time in Senegal titled Kasamance: A Fantasy, prior to taking a leave of absence from PATC to become a visiting professor of Afro-American studies at the University of California at Berkeley in 1976. Her stay culminated in an exhibit in her honor that ultimately resulted in the publication of Kaiso! Katherine Dunham an Anthology of Writings, edited by VèVè A. Clark and Margaret B. Wilkerson. This ground-breaking collection of published and un-published writing, articles, papers and reviews by and about Ms. Dunham, was the first of its kind and pivotal in the recognition and archival process of her artistic, scholarly and pedagogical works and global impact. In an event at New York’s Carnegie Hall in 1979 titled “A Katherine Dunham Gala”, she was awarded the Albert Schweitzer Music Award for “her contributions to the performing arts and her dedication to humanitarian work.”

Master Dunham Technique teacher Dr. Albirda Rose-Eberhardt said: “When (Dunham) got (to East St. Louis), something else started happening…she was

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280 Katherine Dunham, Reflections on Survival MacMurray College Commencement Address, Jacksonville, Il, May 21, 1972, 10. Collection of the author.
281 See Appendix to view the cover of a 1965 Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine, in which Ms. Dunham’s “New Crime Story” was featured.
282 Kasamance: A Fantasy was published in 1974. See Appendix to view the cover of Kasamance.
283 The first edition of Kaiso! Was published in 1978 by the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California, Berkeley.
actually using (dance) as a means of dealing with people, of training people, and of teaching people how to live and not just to dance. I think that’s the aspect of this technique that sets it aside from any other technique that I’ve studied as a dancer.”

Results of this innovative community and academia based curriculum can be seen in the 1980 PBS television feature: “Dance in America, Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People,” narrated by James Earl Jones. In this production Dunham is seen teaching in both Haiti and East St. Louis, and PATC students are featured dancing alongside former Dunham Company members in a re-staged, professional performance of Dunham’s seminal choreography Rites de Passage, produced specifically for this show.

By 1982, Southern Illinois University had lost most of its funding that supported PATC among other programs, prompting Ms. Dunham to retire with Professor Emeritus status. With the dissolution of PATC, Katherine Dunham shifted her attention to the founding of the Children’s Workshop, an arts and humanities community program for pre-k through high school age students (still in existence today), whose primary instructors include PATC graduates and whose curriculum is overseen by the Dunham Centers. In 1983 at the age of 71, Dunham was awarded the Presidential Medal of Arts from the Kennedy Center Honors Awards. Agnes

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286 Ruby Streate and Darryl Braddix, were both a part of The Children’s Workshop since graduating PATC.
DeMille when presenting the award stated: “She (Katherine Dunham) told us what art
really is- communication- a direct speech of the heart.”

**Continuing the Educational Legacy**

Under the auspices of the Institute for Intercultural Communication, whose
ultimate objective “is that of guiding and encouraging people toward a fuller
awareness of themselves and their potential cultural contributions to society, while
enabling them to develop a greater understanding of the cultural dynamics of
others,” Dunham established the Katherine Dunham Technique Seminar in 1984.
This annual seminar (still in existence today) was created as a way of bringing
together professional and non-professional artists and academicians of all ages from
around the world, along with former Dunham Company members, to train in and
study Dunham Technique, history, theory, pedagogy, choreography, and related
cultural arts and humanitarian studies. Former Company members Vanoye Aikens,
Talley Beatty, Lucille Ellis, Tommy Gomez, Walter Nicks, Pearl Reynolds, Archie
Savage, and Dr. Glory Van Scott (among others) again answered Dunham’s call,
traveling from national and international locations to serve as teachers in her Seminar
curriculum. Most of these teachers returned annually to transmit their Dunham
wisdom for the remainder of their lives.

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289 See Appendix to view photographs of many of these former Company members teaching at the Seminar.
The Dunham Technique Seminar maintained a similar curriculum schedule from its inception until Ms. Dunham’s passing in 2006. The day began and ended with Primitive/Intercultural Rhythms, taught by guest artists from Brazil, Haiti, Cuba, Senegal, Ghana, Bali, etc. teaching traditional dance and music. In between there were multiple levels of Dunham Technique classes offered in the morning and afternoon, including Dunham III which was a Dunham Jazz class with Vanoye Aikens. Katherine Dunham taught a two to three hour Master Class with lecture and movement in the afternoon, alternated with anthropology, history/theory/philosophy, or film lectures on opposite days.

Each class featured live accompaniment, primarily of a percussive, rhythmic nature, with Dunham’s Master Classes often having upward of fifteen musicians accompanying her. Certified Dunham teacher and musician Anindo Marshall described this ensemble: “When she taught class, Miss Dunham always had the whole percussion orchestra, and so she was able to take (each) class on a spiritual journey.” While adults progressed through their program, children participated in a similar schedule of classes including Primitive/Intercultural Rhythms, Ballet, Dunham, Voice, Percussion and Theater classes. The older children worked with Dr. Glory Van Scott, who wrote and directed an original musical play each year for the students in the two week period. The intensive closed with choreography and

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290 See Appendix to view the 1992 Dunham Technique Seminar brochure and schedule.
technique demonstrations open to the community, performed by the teachers and attendees who collectively represented cultures from around the world.

The goals of the Institute for Intercultural Communication are to “create, document, research, and present means of facilitating and extending communication among peoples of diverse cultures and of varying degrees of social and economic condition, through the media of the arts, the social sciences, and the humanities.”  

The Seminar along with the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification Workshops (conducted by certified and master Dunham teachers), serve to carry out these goals and remain the primary sources for study of Katherine Dunham Technique, history, theory and pedagogy existing today. Both the Seminar and the Certification Workshops continue to exist as an opportunity for generations of Dunham dancers, including former company members and certified and master teachers from around the world, to congregate and strengthen their embodiment of and education in Dunham Technique and Philosophies amongst themselves and with new and returning students.

**Artist/Scholar/Humanist**

Katherine Dunham’s contributions to the field of anthropology began to be recognized when she received the Distinguished Service Award from the American Anthropological Association in 1985. The following year the American Dance Festival gave her the Samuel H. Scripps Award, the National Portrait Gallery of the

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Smithsonian Institute honored her with an Oral Self-Portrait, and she was appointed as Distinguished Fellow of the United States Fulbright Commission to Brazil, allowing her to research and teach there while being presented with the Medal of Artistic Merit in Dance by the International Council on Dance. During this time Brazil, along with Haiti and France recognized her artistic and humanitarian contributions as well through a multitude of awards. In 1987 the National Museum of Dance honored Katherine Dunham as a Founder of Dance in America and inducted her into their Hall of Fame. Following a month-long residency at Stanford University in 1989, where she taught, lectured and edited her sixth book *Minefields*, Katherine Dunham was awarded the National Medal of the Arts "for her pioneering explorations of Caribbean and African dance, which have enriched and transformed the art of dance in America." In an address delivered at the first World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in 1966, prior to establishing PATC, Dunham acknowledged the humanitarian vision that has always been her beacon. “…none of this could have been done- neither the development of the intellectual stimulus nor the professional

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293 Accompanied by Dr. Albirda Rose (Master Dunham teacher) as her demonstrator and assistant.
295 To this date, *Minefields* has not been published in its entirety. The Prologue along with an excerpt from Book 1 and an excerpt from Book 2 of the manuscript were included in: *Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005)
297 in Dakar, Senegal
success, which has taken (the Dunham Company) into more than fifty different countries of the world- had not the approach been that of the humanist preceding the scientist. Great art comes from love and is a constant dedication in love. If this is coupled with clear vision, durability, insight into the necessary techniques and the materials with which to work, I see no barriers in front of either institution or individual.”

Dunham understood the strength and integrity that is gained by joining the arts and humanities and thus united the two in her artistic presentations, pedagogical philosophies, and school curriculums.

On February 1, 1992 at the age of 82, Katherine Dunham began a hunger strike in protest of the U.S. government’s forced repatriation of Haitian boat refugees seeking political asylum. In an interview with National Public Radio Dunham explained: “There is little difference between a hunger strike and a piece of choreography if people come back with a better understanding of the world and the people in it.”

She fasted for 47 days, stopping only when ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide visited her home in East St. Louis and begged her to stop.

Katherine Dunham said: “I cannot conceive of people not looking for a means to connect through their art. I as an artist would feel very incomplete if I had not ultimately had another side to me, which has been to speak out. I know of no one who

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should be more politically inspired than artists. We don’t live in a vacuum. As an artist you have to let things start bothering you.” 301

Chapter Seven:
Dance as Rhythmic Motion:
The Feeling and Shape of Katherine Dunham Technique

“The meeting of art and science is very important to me. I’m glad to have been one of the forerunners of that fusion. But nothing satisfied me as much as the investigation of dance, the participation in dance, the creation of dances, and helping develop dancers.”

Katherine Dunham

Introduction
Katherine Dunham began experimenting with new movement combinations and pedagogical methodologies through the formation of her first dance school and performing company in the 1930’s, while a student at the University of Chicago majoring in anthropology. After returning from fieldwork in the Caribbean studying how and why people danced, Dunham defined dance as “rhythmic motion singly or in a group” and concluded that “1. Play... 2. Release and building of emotional and physical tension... 3. Establishment of social cohesion or solidarity... 4. Exhibition of skill...” were the primary social reasons that dance existed within the societies she observed. She recognized that dance was a means for self-expression as well as for community development, and that dance existed in conjunction with other art forms.

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303 Katherine Dunham received Rosenwald Foundation and Guggenheim grants to conduct anthropological fieldwork in the West Indies for a year and a half.
During her fieldwork Dunham experienced rhythmic dance movement and percussive accompaniment as an ordinary and integrated aspect of daily life in societies where sacred and social happenings intermingled. “In the setting of the West Indies, I also became aware of what my physical self was… The religious drums of Africa, still alive in the Caribbean, led me to a sense of self through the rhythmic motion of flesh, bone and muscle. Something extremely important to my survival happened to me during that period.”

Dunham returned from her fieldwork with the need to integrate her knowledge and practice as an anthropologist with her training as an artist, choosing to use the classroom and stage in addition to the written word, as a method of educating people about themselves and each other.

**Opening Boundaries**

Upon her return to Chicago to work with her re-formed dance company, Dunham broke often imposed boundaries between sacred and secular dance, and presentational and community dance by combining ballet, modern, folkloric and religious movement and rhythms from a range of cultures and traditions into her technique and choreography. Dunham company member and teacher Lavinia Williams explained the purpose for these combined elements: “The classical side is for discipline, body training, correct academic study of dance and theory. Modern is for freedom in expression, creative possibilities- a new way of using the body. Ethnic training touches the soul, reaching into the very heart of the dancer, giving her a

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feeling of being a real human being, identifying her very body and reactions to the rhythms of nature.”

In creating a cross-disciplinary technique, Dunham was seeking to build a universal movement language capable of communicating across cultures, races and classes.

Many critics and audience members assumed that the movements Katherine Dunham and her Company performed on stage were primarily African in origin, not realizing the international scope of influences reflected in her technique and choreography. As a means of educating their audience in the movements they were seeing performed onstage, a description titled “Primitive Rhythms: A New Dance Vocabulary,” was included in the Dunham Company’s show programs during the 1940’s. The explanation states: “To the classicism of the ballet, the fire and virtuosity of Spanish dancing, the sinuous stylization of Oriental dancing, the abstraction of Modern dancing has been added the fundamental vigor of primitive dancing with its awareness of the most basic elements not only of rhythmic movement but of living itself.”

Dunham retained key elements of ballet (external rotation, port de bras, partnering, barre work) and modern (parallel alignment, contractions, swings, spirals, floor work), while infiltrating body isolations, spinal articulation, polyrhythm, and an increased range of torso and pelvic movement into her theatrical dance technique. An

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307 “Primitive Rhythms: A New Dance Vocabulary,” *Katherine Dunham presents Bal Negre A Brilliant Dance Revue with The Dunham Dancers Singers and Musicians A Katherine Dunham Production*, Al Greenstone Souvenir Booklet, undated, 8. (Author’s collection)
example of how Miss Dunham experimented with these diverse elements in the classroom was recorded by Lavinia Williams. “On May 29, 1944, Miss Dunham gave an extensive class on turns, turns and balance, jumping turns, turns from leg swings, fouettés, tours en l’air, pelvic arc turns, turns on contractions and releases, pirouettes. She created what she called ‘primitive turns’ that were turns off balance, stemming from ‘primitive movements.’ The turns were taken center and on progressions.”

While Katherine Dunham was a student of anthropology at the University of Chicago in the 1930’s-1940’s the word “primitive” was a common term used by her professors Melville Herskovits, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Robert Redfield, and Edward Sapir, to describe cultures and societies that were non-urban, less industrialized or those whom had minimal assimilation into Western cultures. A footnote that accompanied Dunham’s 1941 article titled “The Negro Dance” states: “In explaining her use of the word primitive, Miss Dunham denies the connotations of either loose, or inferior, or simple.” Throughout her life, Dunham used the word primitive with the highest respect, accrediting her study of primitive dance and rhythm and societal belief systems as primary to the creation and development of her technique. She writes: “In primitive societies, dance is an accepted functional element of both personal and community life. For this reason the conflict of classification does not

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arise, as it does in modern society where a dispute continues to remain, placing dance in the ambiguous position between science and art, between exposition and entertainment.”

She continues: “The source of the Dunham Technique is the vast theatre of primitive dance. With time, the components of these dances and rituals have been reduced to formal classifications.”

**Form and Function**

Katherine Dunham drew from her training as an anthropologist to create her philosophy of *Form and Function*, giving her a process to follow when determining which movements from traditional sources, ballet and modern to retain, modify or combine, based on their structural or expressive purpose. “Dunham used movements from ritual dances as exercises. She would break down the movements of such dances as Yanvalou, Petro, Congo, etc. from Haiti, or dances from Cuba, Brazil, Fiji Islands, Melanesia, Trinidad and Jamaica.”

Her goal was not to replicate these dances in their entirety, but rather to contextually recognize the unique elements from each dance language and culture that cumulatively would contribute to the development of a movement language and pedagogy capable of training the whole person. In 1938, Dunham explained her intention: “The value of transplanting the dance as such is

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311 Katherine Dunham, *Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, for the Performing Arts Training Center, undated, 1. (Author collection)
312 Ibid., 2.
mostly educational…but my ultimate achievement must be to modify this, that it may be applicable to whichever theme I choose.”³¹⁴

Although ritual and social dance were primary sources in the development of her Technique, Dunham’s training in ballet also played an essential role in contributing to movement formation and class structure, helping to develop the technical and qualitative virtuosity of her dancers and students. “Miss Dunham did all of the ballet (classical) exercises at the barre every day. She believed that the classical ballet was a very necessary technique for all dancers.”³¹⁵ Williams continued: “In every one of her numbers, Dunham included some kind of pas de deux or pas de quatre using ballet technique and classic lifts.”³¹⁶ Dunham understood that ballet vocabulary and staging was partially created through its incorporation of movements and rhythms from folk dance, and served as an example of socially based movements translated and codified for presentation from the concert stage.

The values and methods she learned within anthropology informed how she chose to create and teach movement, as well as held her accountable to the communicative and educational purpose of her choreography. “In making use of (anthropological) field training to choreograph for my group, I found persistently recurring in the back of my mind in some form or another ‘function.’…the cultural

³¹⁶ Ibid., 154.
and psychological framework, the ‘why’ became increasingly important.”\(^\text{317}\) As her pedagogy developed, it became vital that each Dunham student understood the “why” of what they were learning so that their external expression was initiated from an internal understanding. In the early 1940’s Dunham said: “The Dunham Techniques should be firmly established. It should be just as academic and disciplined as classical ballet and other art forms. It should not be so far removed from the audience, however, and inner expressions should be learned and emphasized.”\(^\text{318}\)

By centering her teaching methodologies on helping each person develop in their understanding of themselves and in their consciousness of what they were learning physically, culturally and socially, Dunham built an integrity to what each dancer understood and projected from stage. Company member Talley Beatty said in an interview: “We did a lot of interior work; what was on stage was a result of what you were spiritually.”\(^\text{319}\) Dunham’s expectations for her dancers included their development of Self-Examination and Self-Knowledge as a means of taking active ownership in the role they played in their development as artists. Roy Thomas wrote: “Basic Dunham Technique involves vigorous work at the barre, isolations, movement, and control of energy flow. The technique perfects the body; the system


clarifies the mind. Such a system decrees change, demands rigorous self-interrogation.”

Dunham coached and guided her dancers in their development as artists, providing to them a method of pedagogy that she had hoped for in her early years. Dunham wrote: “(Growing up) I had been quite good at athletics and wanted to dance, but no system of learning open to me offered that break-through where the body knows itself to be a thing of beauty and strength, or energy and power.” By empowering her dancers and students to take active ownership in what they were learning she was cultivating a mental awareness and emotional expressivity that in turn radiated out through the performance of her choreographies.

**Polyrhythmic Integration**

Katherine Dunham constructed her technique by bringing into relationship a multitude of music and dance forms. Dunham writes: “In short, the Dunham Technique is a series of exercises and forms based on primitive rhythms in dance creating an awareness of time, space, form, and function derived from their most basic interrelation.” Live music, particularly percussion, is the preferred accompaniment for a Dunham Technique class, giving the dancer ongoing practice in responding to and contributing to the rhythmic intercommunication. Dunham explains: “In our work, we have concentrated on a range of percussive instruments,

322 Katherine Dunham, *Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, for the Performing Arts Training Center, undated, 3. Author collection.
because of their relationship to our areas of concentration, and because they, with vocal accompaniment, arouse and stimulate dormant impulses. They are most closely related to primal rhythms.” 323 The embodied rhythmic focus within the technique is a continuation of Dunham’s belief that dance is rhythm in motion.

Throughout her professional life Miss Dunham aligned herself with musicians who were masters in the traditional rhythms and dance forms of their native countries, incorporating them into her company as composers and performers, and into her schools as teachers and accompanists. Dunham writes: “Until the student and master have related spiritually, have recognized similar or corresponding, interchangeable rhythmic cycles, and the student has mastered the exercises and forms, accompaniment by appropriate instruments is important.” 324 Throughout a Dunham class, the teacher is responsible for instructing the students in the physical, musical, and cultural connections between the movements and the rhythms being played, utilizing live music whenever possible. Dunham continues: “Knowledge of these rhythms and the complex surrounding them is as basic an element in training Dunham Technique as barre, floor, or progression exercises.” 325

Dunham began integrating musical training into her pedagogy after meeting Henri “Papa” Augustin, a Vodou priest and master drummer well versed in the songs and rhythms of both sacred and secular dances from Haiti, when the Company had their first choreographic showing following Dunham’s return from her fieldwork in

323 Ibid., 2-3.
324 Ibid., 2.
325 Ibid., 3.
the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{326} Dunham described how she began this process of rhythmic integration at the beginning stages: “I would, when developing exercises which later became Dunham Technique, work closely with what drummers were available. As a school we taught Haitian, Cuban, and Brazilian drumming, with smatterings of what I had recorded or could remember from first-hand-experience.”\textsuperscript{327} Augustin became a longstanding member of the company, setting an artistic precedent for other Haitian musicians as well as a long lineage of Cuban musicians,\textsuperscript{328} African American musicians and singers, and many others who all contributed culturally, musically and pedagogically to the Dunham Company and Dunham schools.\textsuperscript{329}

The musicians and singers within the Company and in her schools acted as in-house primary resources for Dunham’s continual pursuit of new and/or deeper layers of understanding in musical, spiritual, movement and cultural realms that she in turn infused into her movement vocabulary, pedagogy, and choreography. Dunham writes: “It is essential that a serious student or instructor of the Dunham Technique, much as possible, master primitive techniques, which precede the Dunham Technique in instruction. Here, movements and dance and ritual researched in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa, the Near East, the Far East, and North and South America, are analyzed within the framework of their respective societies and again in relationship

\textsuperscript{326} In New York City in 1937 at the \textit{Negro Dance Evening} at the Young Men’s Hebrew Association in the company of fellow choreographers: Edna Guy, Alison Burroughs, Clarence Yates, and Asadata Dafora.

\textsuperscript{327} Katherine Dunham, “Open Letter to Black Theaters,” \textit{The Black Scholar}, (July-August 1979), 5.

\textsuperscript{328} Cuban musicians whom Miss Dunham had worked with in Chicago officially joined the company when they provided accompaniment for the production of \textit{Cabin in the Sky}.

\textsuperscript{329} See the Appendix to view a sampling of the musician biographies from a Dunham Company program from 1955-1956.
to form and function.” Each of these musical artists played multiple roles, often serving as accompanists, composers, musical directors, teachers, and occasionally as dancers, for her company and schools.

In an essay describing cultural commonalities found within African based performances, anthropologist Roger Abraham wrote: “The individual and the group interact to thicken the texture of the performance, by interlocking voices (whether it be in drumming, singing, dancing, or orating). The more interlock, the greater the complexity, of course, and the more vitality the community feels is being channeled through them.” Dunham constructed a multi-arts infused community in the classroom, rehearsal studio and while on tour, bringing into her Company members’ lives and thus onto the stage, the cultural and social context of the movements and rhythms she witnessed during her initial fieldwork and in subsequent research.

Throughout her career, Dunham sang in many of her roles onstage and on film, and recorded a number of albums with the musical artists who were a part of the Dunham Company. In the liner notes accompanying her second album, Katherine Dunham, Syllabus on Dunham Technique, written for the Performing Arts Training Center, undated, 2. Author collection.


In 1946, Decca Records released “Katherine Dunham and Ensemble – Afro-Caribbean Songs & Rhythms,” featuring vocals by Katherine Dunham along with Dunham Company members including: Haitian artist Jean Léon Destiné and Cuban artists La Rosa Estrada and Julio Mendez. Accompanying these musicians are pianist Naro Morales, trumpeter Juan Ramirez, string bassist Louis Richko, and tres player Cándido Vicenty. (See Appendix to view the cover of this album) In France this album was released by CID Records as “Katherine Dunham et su Ensemble,” and two different shortened versions of this album were later released by Brunswick Records titled: “Katherine Dunham: Batucada,” and “Katherine Dunham: Choucounne.” Other albums include: “Voyage Au Bresil avec Katherine Dunham Et Sa Compagnie,” released in France by Columbia Records in 1953 and “Paris-Haiti avec Katherine Dunham Et Sa Compagnie,” released in France by Columbia Records in the 1950’s, both featuring songs that appeared in the Dunham Company’s stage choreography.
Dunham presents Drum Rhythms of Haiti, Cuba, Brazil: The Singing Gods,\textsuperscript{333}

Dunham writes that touring with these musicians deepened her research into the “surrounding cultural traits including musical instruments and their uses and rhythms” of the dances she has studied, while increasing “evidence of the interchangeability of cultures and of the universality of true rhythms.”\textsuperscript{334} She goes on to describe the results of bringing together artists from different cultures within the context of the Dunham Company, “Francisco (Aguabella) from Cuba meets (Albert) La Guerre from Haiti. They discuss the water-goddess Yemanjá as she is known in their respective countries…go to all-night ceremonies and there exchange ideas…Forgotten African cult language is remembered, rhythms are refreshed.”\textsuperscript{335}

Dunham Company dancers in-turn were expected to be knowledgeable of the rhythms they were embodying as well as able to sing and play instruments as part of their performance. Dancer Julie Robinson Belafonte explained the integration of rhythms and techniques that each member was trained to embody. “Well, I think that what was so unique about the Dunham Company was that we had to, at a moment’s notice, go from one technique to another. And I think that a ballet dancer or a modern dancer is not accustomed to doing that.” Belafonte continued in her explanation by giving an example of a specific Dunham choreography. “Choros”\textsuperscript{336} is very

\textsuperscript{333} Released in 1956 by Audio Fidelity Records. This album features songs and rhythms researched and recorded under the supervision of Katherine Dunham, performed by Dunham Company members including: Haitian artists Albert La Guerre and Jean Marie Durand, Cuban artists Francisco Aguabella and Julito Besabe Collazo, Brazilian artist Antonio Rodrigues and others.

\textsuperscript{334} Katherine Dunham, “Personal Notes,” Katherine Dunham presents Drum Rhythms of Haiti, Cuba, Brazil: The Singing Gods, Audio Fidelity Records, 1956.

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 1956.

\textsuperscript{336} See Appendix to view photos of the Dunham Company in Choros.
demanding. You have to go from ballet into… (Brazilian) samba, folk. A completely different attitude psychologically, and your body is working in total contrast rhythmically as well… It all had to look easy, but it was very, very difficult.” By creating a pedagogy that taught technique within context, Dunham developed the abilities of her Company members to recognize and embody cross-cultural music and dance languages.

**Holistic Isolations**

The separations between body, mind, and spirit that are so often present in America, along with the distinctions between entertainment, education and religion, were often blurred or non-existent in the communities Dunham studied during her fieldwork. Dunham embraced these blurred boundaries by placing equal value on body, mind and spirit in her pedagogy, adopting a holistic belief that individual parts of a person cannot be viewed as separate as they have a direct effect on the whole being. Roy Thomas explains: “This system (Dunham Technique), …is based on a monism which postulates a single unity for all life…The aesthetic for such a view naturally finds completeness and beauty in the correspondence of parts with the whole, that whole with other wholes so that ultimately there is universal harmony.” This whole/part/whole approach is reflected physically in the technique as well as philosophically. Thomas continues: “Isolated dance movements, individual parts of

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the body, single spaces are completed and fulfilled in relationships. Mental health is related to physical health similarly.”

In “Syllabus on Dunham Technique” written while she was Director of the Performing Arts Training Centers in East St. Louis as a part of Southern Illinois University, Dunham wrote: “Isolation of parts of the body is an integral principle of the Dunham Technique. From the primitive came the recognition of segmentation, horizontally and in a variety of other points of the compass. The extremities hands, arms, head, limbs, pelvic girdle, and vertebral column show the lateral, anterior, and posterior possibilities of posture in motion.” Isolations are practiced in warm-up and barre work, layered into across-the-floor movement progressions and featured in choreography.

Dunham developed her dancers’ abilities to respond to and reflect the rhythmic dialogue present between musicians and dancers through a studied use of body isolations in the physical technique. “In polycentrism, simultaneous movements originate from multiple centers in the body. Polyrhythm is the employment of more than one rhythm occurring at the same time. As you will see in Katherine Dunham’s work…moving from multiple centers in the body then allows the dancer to simultaneously perform layers of rhythm.” In polyrhythmic based music and dance

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339 Katherine Dunham, Syllabus on Dunham Technique, written for the Performing Arts Training Center, undated, 2. Author collection.
forms, the body simultaneously makes visible the cumulative whole rhythm as well as its distinct individual rhythmic parts.

Isolations are not seen as a separation of a body part, but rather a practice of focused attention leading to an awakening and development of individual parts contributing to greater overall expressive abilities of the whole body. Dunham explains how this process can lead to: “Muscle consciousness through set patterns of breathing, of stretching and expanding, of dispersing and gathering together the forces released once this muscle consciousness has been achieved: the contracting and condensing and directing of these forces.”

Each Dunham class begins by addressing this stage of body development through the practice of focused, rhythmic breathing.

As Ms. Dunham grew in her understanding of herself and the world, her Technique continued to evolve. In the 1980’s she brought the concept of isolations to a deeper level by incorporating the practice of energetically focusing on and initiating movement from the seven chakra points, or energy centers, located along the body’s midline between the base of the spine to just above the crown of the head. In the Dunham “Chakra Series,” energy is sequentially drawn-up through the spine and rippled-out the top of the head, initiated from specific movements caused by breathing, isolations, and vocalizations, which culminate in a fluid, repetitive, spiraling rise and descent of the body between the floor and standing. When teaching

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341 Katherine Dunham, *Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, written for the Performing Arts Training Center, undated. 1. Author collection.
this series, Ms. Dunham guided her students through the mental, emotional and spiritual qualities often associated with each chakra’s energy center.

**Dancing from the Inside Out**

Katherine Dunham battled pain caused by arthritis in her knees since her adolescence, prompting her to physically investigate and incorporate ways of strengthening the body’s muscular core into her technique. “This spurred me on to greater effort, to…(create) more stretches and off-the-knee exercises to build support for my ailing connectives. I have always stressed an emphasis on the inner rather than the outer muscles.”

Dunham explains this further: “This inside muscle emphasis was… (a way) of correcting skeletal deficiencies on some of us and developing undreamed of possibilities in others, always building a protective muscle support around the knees.”

As a performer this persistent pain contributed to Dunham’s ability to develop and rely on more than her physical self to express and communicate. “I’m getting back to that concept of dynamic energy. What you are you don’t have to talk about. It shows. With a feeling of confidence in your movement, truth in it is just about all you need… Part of the style of my work- like Graham’s from her back- came from my knees. Having always had arthritis, I have probably developed more of that dynamic

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energy.”\textsuperscript{344} Often critics reflected that they were mesmerized by Dunham’s subtle movements performed on stage. A 1956 review in \textit{Dance Magazine} reads: “she manages…to rivet the audience’s attention despite the feverish and far more intricate dancing of the young swains encircling her…She is always her own cool languid self, moving deliberately, making each gesture count in her composite picture of the eternal Lilth.”\textsuperscript{345}

Choreographically Dunham connected each movement form to its expressive function, while pedagogically strengthening her dancers’ abilities to emotionally, mentally, and physically connect with their audience. Dunham said: “The audience wouldn’t be there if they didn’t want to be there. The minute you step onto the stage you have to feel their awareness and willingness and gather it into your whole being. Every move that you make goes out with love and with an understanding of body, mind and spirit being united into one feeling, being, one ‘itness,’ so that you are a successful performer and your audience is able to receive with an open self.”\textsuperscript{346} Dunham valued the power that movement and rhythm has in connecting people in body, mind and spirit and incorporated that understanding into her Technique and Philosophies.

Educating the Public through the Dancing Body

Katherine Dunham studied the context, movement and rhythms of a wide range of dance languages, choosing with care which elements of each to unite and focus on when developing her Technique. “By adding her observations on the Afro-Caribbean use of the pelvis as well as isolations and undulations of the torso to the more European-American ideas about concert dance, Dunham created an entirely unique dance technique and vision of not only what modern dance might be, but also how it might affect racial and cultural understandings worldwide.” ⁴⁴⁷ Form and Function, the process through which she chose each movement, helped her to clarify the underlying social, cultural, and expressive purposes within her choreography and Technique, affecting her ability to educate and change perceptions through her art and models of education. Dunham said: “If people could only understand they belong to a much vaster society than they live in, this would give them courage to live life with less fear…A bit of the whole is in everybody.” ⁴⁴⁸

Dunham operated as a social and cultural educator, honing the power that artists have to bring about change based on how they represent themselves. “When I was forming my company, from about 1938 on, the ideal dancer was light skinned…But that was not my ideal. My company was what you might call a ‘Third World Company’ right from the beginning. We had Cubans, West Indians, Latin Americans,

and their complexion didn’t matter. What mattered was their talent.” In her effort to create a universal movement technique that demonstrated the multidimensional expressions of the human body, Dunham battled racial and ethnic double standards and stereotypes. A reviewer in 1941 wrote: “It comes as a surprise to hear from Katherine Dunham, newest and strangest of Negro dancers of modern times, that her people, like white folks, have to learn to dance”.

Through her academic, scholarly and creative work, Katherine Dunham “challenged the notion that U.S. history was not a shared history and the widely held racist notions that blacks were without culture, history, intelligence, dignity, or greatness.” Dunham approached this process of re-education by building a pedagogical approach that connected the physical training of her dancers and students with an expansion of their mental, emotional, cultural, social awareness, and expressive capabilities. Dunham said: “I was...determined to have a group of dancers who would be able to show the people of the United States what others have contributed to our culture.”

The effect of her holistic, arts-integrated, multi-culturally inclusive pedagogy is far reaching. Arthur Mitchell, Co-Founder of Dance Theater of Harlem, wrote: “Katherine Dunham’s contribution to American dance

349 Katherine Dunham as quoted in James Haskins, Katherine Dunham (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan Inc., 1982), 73.
cannot be too highly valued... As an educator, she counseled and inspired while
developing a deeply thought-out and viable technique of moving. Every
choreographer and dancer working today owes her a profound debt of gratitude.\textsuperscript{353}

**Dunham Technique Made Visible**

In 1987, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater premiered *The Magic of Katherine Dunham*, a three hour, three act tribute to Ms. Dunham featuring many of her most famous choreographies as well as a demonstration of her dance Technique. The Ailey Company was only able to produce the show for one season\textsuperscript{354} as it proved too costly to run such a production (elaborate by today’s standards), requiring extensive costumes and sets created by John Pratt, Dunham’s husband and co-creator, along with a forty person orchestra that included singers and percussionists. These few performances marked the first time since the Dunham Company gave their closing performance in 1965,\textsuperscript{355} that audiences got a glimpse into the multisensory, theatrical productions that the Dunham Company shared with audiences for years in over fifty-seven countries.\textsuperscript{356}

John Pratt and Katherine Dunham’s artistic collaboration and partnership lasted for forty-nine years until Pratt’s death in 1986.\textsuperscript{357} Anthropologist and Dunham

\textsuperscript{354} The show premiered at City Center in NYC in December 1997. The company went on to perform the show in May of 1988 in Washington, DC, and again in San Francisco, CA.
\textsuperscript{355} At the Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY.
\textsuperscript{356} In recent years, other companies have been approved to re-create and perform a number of Ms. Dunham’s choreographies, most notably the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble.
\textsuperscript{357} John Pratt was already an established costume and set designer when he and Dunham met in Chicago in 1937, where he designed the costumes and sets for their first collaborative work *L’Ag Ya*, premiered in January 1938. He went on to design every costume and set for Katherine Dunham, the Dunham Company, and all of her artistic projects for the remainder of his life.
scholar Dr. Joyce Aschenbrenner writes: “The union of art, theater, dance, and text, validated and realized through their marriage, was the powerhouse that carried the Dunham Company through world tours for thirty years of successful professional performance that irrevocably altered the character of dance theater. In *African Art in Motion*, Robert Farris Thompson demonstrates the unity of the arts in African performance, which is paralleled in the aesthetic totality of Dunham Company performances.”

In order to create this united multi-arts environment, Dunham taught physical techniques in conjunction with their supportive art forms, producing multi-lingual artists able to express the interconnectivity and context of what they were embodying.

Towards the end of her life, national recognition and public access to Dunham’s artistic, cultural and scholarly contributions increased. In 2000, Dance Heritage Coalition named her one of “America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures,” and the Library of Congress established the multi-media online accessible *Katherine Dunham Collection*. Part of this project included the creation and filming of *The Katherine Dunham Technique DVD*, featuring basic Dunham barre exercises, center floor isolations, and across-the-floor progressions. Throughout the two-week filming process Ms. Dunham gave the Master and Certified Dunham teachers who were leading the classes, nuanced daily coaching in the detailed explanations they

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359 Following a million dollar grant from the Doris Duke Charitable fund.

360 Although filmed in 2004, the DVD was not made available until 2013. It is available for public purchase at www.DUNHAMDVD.com or through a link on the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification website.
were to provide to their students.\textsuperscript{361} Although drawings of a few Dunham exercises are seen in \textit{Katherine Dunham Method and Technique: The 1940-1945 Notations}\textsuperscript{362} and in \textit{Dunham Technique “A Way of Life,”}\textsuperscript{363} this DVD represents the only comprehensive, publicly available record to date of Dunham Technique classwork.\textsuperscript{364}

\textbf{Recognizing Dunham’s Impact}

Trinidadian born artist and performer Geoffrey Holder, who taught at Dunham’s New York City school said: “Dunham goes beyond black dance. The entire world of dance has been influenced by her technique, but it has become so diffused many don’t recognize it as Dunham. She created a whole vocabulary of dance, and we have all benefited... She is an incredible universal force.”\textsuperscript{365} In 2001, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) produced three one-hour programs titled \textit{Free to Dance}, which chronicled the vital and often ignored contributions of African-American artists in the development of American modern dance. Interviews with Katherine Dunham as well as her former Company members and Dunham scholars are featured prominently, along with film footage of her choreography and

\textsuperscript{361} Master Dunham teacher Rachel Tavernier and Certified teachers Keith Williams and Doris Glasper-Bennett were the teachers on the DVD. They took documented notes of the daily teaching and demonstration feedback they received from Ms. Dunham during the filming process.

\textsuperscript{362} Written by Dunham Company member Lavinia Williams, published by the Congress on Research on Dance in 1980 as a part of their Dance Research Annual XII. Currently out of print.

\textsuperscript{363} Written by Master Dunham teacher and Director of Dunham Technique Certification Dr. Albirda Rose in 1990, in an effort to begin codifying the Technique and Philosophy. Currently out of print.

\textsuperscript{364} Films and videos taken of Ms. Dunham and her master teachers teaching class at the Performing Arts Training Center and at the annual Dunham Technique Seminars, in E. St. Louis, Il are available in the few locations (besides the Library of Congress) who hold the majority of Ms. Dunham’s papers and artifacts including: The Missouri Historical Society, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, and The Dynamic Museum.

Technique, helping to bring to light the creative, scholarly and pedagogical 
contributions her work has had on the rhythmic shape of American and international 
dance.

In celebration of her 93rd birthday in 2002, Jacob’s Pillow dance festival 
designed an educational residency in Katherine Dunham’s honor, along with a gala 
“Tribute to Katherine Dunham” performance. Although considered “the dance center 
of the nation and possibly the world,” the Dunham Company had never performed 
there in the seventy seasons of the festival’s existence. A photo exhibit titled 
“Images of Katherine Dunham” was on display for the summer while the Jacob’s 
Pillow School focused their Cultural Traditions program on “The Dunham Legacy.” 
Katherine Dunham with former Company member Julie Robinson Belafonte and 
former teacher and Director of the Dunham School in New York, Walter Nicks, 
served as faculty. In aligning with Dunham philosophies of *Intercultural 
Communication* and *Socialization Through the Arts*, student members of the Ghana 
Dance Ensemble (from the University of Ghana) were brought in to perform at the 
gala and to join the American students in the classroom, facilitating music, dance and 
cultural exchange as part of the program. In a letter of appreciation sent to all 
participants involved in her Tribute residency and performance she wrote: “The time I 
spent at Jacob’s Pillow was exciting, rejuvenating and certainly magical. To see

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367 “Images of Katherine Dunham,” *Jacob’s Pillow Magazine* (Summer 2002), 23.
368 The Cultural Traditions Program ran from June 17-30, 2002; Reginald Yates served as the Program 
Director. Other faculty included Program Scholars Joe Nash and Dr. Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr. Guest 
artists included Cleo Parker Robinson, Ronald K. Brown, Donald McKayle, Rex Nettleford, and 
Danny Glover among others. I was in attendance.
dancers dance and dream; to be a catalyst for the development of mind, body and spirit was for me a great gift."³⁶⁹

As public access to Dunham Technique classes by Master and Certified teachers, publications of her scholarly work, performances of her choreography, and education about her holistic pedagogy grows; the impact of Katherine Dunham’s legacy on past and present generations of dancers, educators, choreographers, artists, scholars, activists, and anthropologists, will increasingly become understood and recognized. In 2005, the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD), presented Ms. Dunham with an "Outstanding Leadership in Dance Research" award, and in January 2006, months before she died, a revised and expanded version of Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham was released.³⁷⁰ This publication made available to the public the largest volume of articles, essays, and documents chronicling her life’s academic, creative, humanitarian and pedagogical work. In reading the breadth of her written work along with interviews she conducted from her beginning undergraduate days through her waning years, one is struck with her continual drive to educate through all mediums she expressed herself through. Dunham managed to simultaneously research, innovate and reflect, write and publish, perform and

³⁶⁹ Katherine Dunham, Jacob’s Pillow Tribute Thank You Letter, July 2, 2002, 1. (Author collection)
³⁷⁰ In 1976 Ms. Dunham was a visiting professor of Afro-American studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Her stay culminated in an exhibit in her honor that 2 years later resulted in the original publication of Kaiso! Katherine Dunham an Anthology of Writings, edited by VèVè A. Clark and Margaret B. Wilkerson. It had a limited printing of 130 copies by the Institute for the Study of Social Change, U.C. Berkeley. The revised version was edited by VèVè A. Clark and Sarah E. Johnson, and was published by The University of Wisconsin Press.
choreograph, manage and direct, all while synthesizing her discoveries through an on-going teaching practice.

In a commencement address Dunham delivered titled Reflections on Survival, she said: “Not long ago someone asked me when I had stopped dancing. Almost without thinking I said ‘Never.’…It is perfectly clear to me with time, that is, if dance is what I have defined it to be, something of this will continue, well after the last molecule of the recognizable me has disappeared.”371 On May 21 Katherine Dunham died in her sleep in New York City; memorials were held around the country honoring her life and legacy on June 22, to celebrate what would have been her 97th birthday. Although her dancing body is no longer with us, her humanist driven, artist/scholar fused, holistic Technique, philosophy and pedagogy is, carried on through rhythmic motion in our bodies, minds and spirits. As Dunham said: “dancers are acutely aware of the fact that flesh has its limitations. But that really doesn’t matter once there is an organic relationship between the rhythm of self and the rhythms of the cosmos. The internal, intrinsic rhythmic motion continues like a pendulum in a void, ad infinitum.”372

371 Katherine Dunham, Reflections on Survival, MacMurray College Commencement Address, Jacksonville, Il, May 21, 1972, 13.
372 Ibid., 13.
Chapter Eight:
Becoming a Dunham Certified Teacher:
Dunham Technique and Philosophy as Applied in the Classroom

“You cannot be a teacher of Dunham Technique without receiving back from the pupil or the person that you teach…Stop and think and don’t try to put aside or shut your eyes to those things that are showing you where you’ve made mistakes. Open your heart to these things.”

Katherine Dunham

Introduction

When Katherine Dunham embarked on her anthropological fieldwork in the West Indies in the 1930’s, it was with the feeling “that dance was more than physical exercise or a pretty art; that it was closely related to the people who dance…” She immersed herself in communities where music, dance and visual arts were woven within the mundane and ritualized aspects of life, affirming her instincts that greater society could benefit from socially and culturally connecting with each other through experiences in the arts. She wrote: “Man is a social being, and the arts, verbal and nonverbal, provoke sensations of sound, color, meter, or movement, and these provoke social feelings. In the fragmentary, specialized, industrial, and technological societies of today, art becomes more important than ever to answer man’s need to participate, to experience total involvement, to restore psychic balance,

374 In 1935 Dunham received fellowships from the Rosenwald and Guggenheim Foundations to study “Anthropology and the Dance” in the West Indies for 1 ½ years, while a student of anthropology at the University of Chicago.
to compensate for the spiritual inadequacies of the present.”

Upon her return, she put her hypothesis into action by developing a socially minded movement technique, pedagogy, philosophy, and choreography that focuses on relationships between dance and other art forms, between the individual and the group, and on the artist’s social responsibility to the community.

Throughout the span of her lifetime (1909-2006), Katherine Dunham’s humanistic drive was centered on an innate responsibility to educate through all mediums that she expressed herself through. She said: “If I knew something and knew it could help somebody else, I had to impart it.” Through her dual training as an anthropologist and artist, Dunham understood that strength and integrity was gained through the bringing together of the arts and humanities within her artistic presentations, pedagogy, and within the many school curriculums which she established nationally and internationally. Dunham Technique and philosophy, often referred to as “A Way of Life,” represents a holistic pedagogy where each theory, methodology and philosophy interweave to strengthen and train the physical body along with the mind, spirit and emotional self. Katherine Dunham explains how an artist and/or teacher trained in her Technique and philosophy has “a firmly

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377 Kate Mattingly, “Katherine the Great” Dance Teacher (September, 2004), 56.
378 Dunham Technique “A Way of Life” is the title of the 1990 book by Dr. Albirda Rose-Eberhardt, Master Dunham Teacher, and former Co-Director of the Institute of Dunham Technique Certification.
established body, mind and spirit approach (and they) know that movement is worthless unless it has all three of these elements behind it.”

Dunham recognized the physical body as a polyrhythmic epicenter in her definition of dance as “rhythm in motion.” She writes: “The rhythms of the human body itself - the beating of the heart, the motion of breathing, the delicate system of waves emanating from the brain centers, the flow of the bloodstream, and the unconscious urging of the muscles are in constant competition with the cacophony and disharmony which are the fruits of our industrial age.” She understood many of our individual stresses and societal ills to be caused as a result of having lost our connection to our internal bodily rhythms, and thus layered into her technique and pedagogy ways of helping people re-connect to themselves, each other, and our surrounding environment through experiencing rhythmic motion.

Within the Dunham model of education, connections between individual art forms are retained through the teaching of physical techniques in conjunction with their contextual and supportive forms, including music, visual arts, theater, language, cultural history, and anthropology. Certified teacher Ronald Marshall described the faculty that Ms. Dunham brought together for her Performing Arts Training Center in E. St. Louis, IL, whose programs led to college degrees as well as provided

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379 Kate Mattingly, “Katherine the Great” Dance Teacher (September, 2004), 56.
380 Throughout her lifetime, Ms. Dunham wrote various definitions of dance, all included “dance is rhythmic motion” in their wording.
382 The Performing Arts Training Center (PATC) was a community based organization founded in 1976 by Katherine Dunham that was affiliated with Southern Illinois University in East St. Louis.
community classes for all ages and levels: “Master drummers, dancers, musicians, singers, historians, and cultural craftsmen and women were brought in to work in the PATC curriculum. This created the international/anthropological atmosphere that Ms. Dunham felt was necessary to train a person artistically and scientifically.” By educating dually in the arts and humanities, the Dunham pedagogy builds context, integrity and authority to what each student is learning and expressing.

**Teacher as Guide**

When you become a certified Dunham teacher your diploma reads that you are certified in “Dunham Technique and Philosophies.” Being a Dunham teacher does not necessarily mean that you will be teaching the physical form of Dunham Technique in every class, but rather that the Dunham philosophies of *Socialization Through the Arts and Intercultural Communication* will guide how you approach your students, while *Form and Function* will guide what you teach and how you go about it. These three primary Dunham philosophies also provide a framework for your choreographic process, guiding why and how you choose movement, the formation of your communicative intent and purpose, and the coaching process with your dancers.

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384 See Appendix to view this quote within the author’s diploma.

385 See Appendix to view lesson and unit plans constructed in the Dunham Model by the author.

386 An extensive discussion of this topic can be found in the author’s MFA thesis titled: “Katherine Dunham’s Methodologies of Form and Function, Intercultural Communication and Socialization Through The Arts, as a Choreographic Model,” copyrighted in 2008.
Inside the classroom and through choreography and performance, Dunham Technique embraces the holistic development and ongoing personal journey of each teacher, dancer and participant. Miss Dunham encouraged teachers to act as guides in the classroom, allowing themselves to connect with their students as they progress along their path of discovery. Dunham states: “By being able to identify with others, the good teacher is so sensitive, so willing to know and love and be a part…The open-minded student feels that.” Dunham Technique and Philosophies embody a communal based education model that recognizes the interwoven affect each individual has in the building of a classroom community.

Dunham knew that her pedagogical approach must align the physical training of her teachers and students with an expansion of their mental and emotional awareness and expressive capabilities. Dunham wrote: “The constant interplay of conscious and unconscious finds a perfect instrument in the physical form, the human body which embraces all at once. Alone or in concert man dances his various selves and his emotions and his dance becomes a communication as clear as though it were written or spoken in a universal language.” Dunham methodologies address interior emotional and spiritual development in tandem with exterior physical development, strengthening each artist’s ability to express and communicate with context and truth. Dunham explained: “As I learned to give myself over to the rhythmic motion of the dance, I discovered how to use my body to express my deeper feelings and ultimately,

to reach for something beyond the body that would not only captivate my beholder, but also allow me to feel satisfied no matter what else was going on in my life.”

In Dunham pedagogy, the teacher models and incorporates within their lessons the supporting philosophies of Self-Examination, which helps students develop Self-Knowledge, allowing them to recognize and build the necessary skills to become intrinsically motivated and responsible for their own learning. Dunham explains: “Take yourself apart like an analyst would do, like a jeweler with a wonderful watch. Put it all in front of you on the floor, and live with what you are until you can put it back together again, and be what you should be as a human being.” Along with the building of Self-Knowledge in the classroom comes the development of focused, holistic decision making, which Dunham aligned with the practices of Discrimination and Detachment.

As a Dunham teacher, Form and Function, Socialization Through the Arts and Intercultural Communication, along with their supporting philosophies, align themselves with best teaching practices and serve as a framework when structuring a class and writing lesson plans. Dunham writes: “The Master Instructor should know at the start of each class his objective or objectives for that particular session. In this way, all exercises and forms lead to the realization of this objective. Often, the

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389 Katherine Dunham as quoted in an interview with Margaret Wolff, In Sweet Company: Conversations with Extraordinary Women about Living a Spiritual Life (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 158.
391 Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Detachment and Discrimination
392 See the Appendix for examples of lesson plans and assignments written in the Dunham model.
objective may not at once be apparent to the student, but if the procedure is slow, correlating body and mind and the exercises fall into a logical, sequential pattern, the student will then have no problem in guiding his body to the intended objective.\footnote{393 Katherine Dunham, Syllabus on Dunham Technique, written while Director of the Performing Arts Training Centers at Southern Illinois University, East St. Louis, IL. 2. Unpublished, undated.}

The basic structure of a Dunham Technique class includes breathing exercises, barre work, center-floor movements, isolations, traveling progressions, and choreographed combinations. Each Dunham Philosophy considers student/teacher/class objectives from a different perspective that when united, address the development of the whole person and together create a holistic Dunham Technique class.

**Form and Function in the Classroom**

The concept of *Form* encompasses the physical shape, movement, rhythm, spatial or choreographic pattern a complete dance or dance movement takes. This aspect focuses on the physical training of the body and its movement through space. The co-concept of *Function* involves the kinesiological purpose or history behind the movement and the resulting effect on the individual and/or group dancing these movements. The practice of *Form and Function* engages the student’s psychomotor\footnote{394 The Psychomotor Domain is associated with physical aspects of learning.} and cognitive\footnote{395 The Cognitive Domain is associated with mental aspects of learning.} domains, and is a form of intrapersonal\footnote{396 The prefix “intra” means “within”. Intrapersonal Communication is your own inner dialogue and reflection.} communication in the classroom. Dunham pedagogy expects both the student and teacher to be able to bodily demonstrate and cognitively articulate why they are
moving in a particular form, the origin of this movement, and the intended physical and communicative purpose of this movement.

As a teacher and choreographer, the practice of *Form and Function* leads to an investigation into the anatomical purpose and anthropological history of a movement. This process in turn informs the type of movement chosen, along with its timing and placement within a class or choreography. Dunham explains that a teacher’s planning should result in “predetermined exercise(s) flowing from the first stage of muscle consciousness into a form which will aid in the preparation and strengthening of those muscles necessary for a predetermined objective: extension, elevation, leaping, whirling, falling, contracting, and releasing all frontal, posterior and lateral, thus seeking to utilize full potential of the human body.”

Dunham continues in her teaching expectations: “When (Dunham exercises and progressions are) repeated in order, and with a free and yet attentive spirit with proper breathing and a feeling of fullness and emptiness at the same time, the body becomes lighter, more assured, and prepared for the next stage of development.”

An example of backwards planning prompts based on *Form and Function* that a Dunham teacher could follow when planning their class are: 1) What is the physical focus of today’s class? 2) How does the focus of today’s class fit into the progression of the end goals to be accomplished over the length of the week/month/session/unit/

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397 Katherine Dunham, *Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, Southern Illinois University, East St. Louis, IL, 2. Unpublished, undated.
398 Ibid., 2.
semester etc.? 3) What across the floor progressions will I teach? What will my final combination be? 4) What muscle groups and physical planes of action do I need to warm-up in preparation for the final progressions and combination? 5) What barre and center floor exercises will I include to prepare the dancer specifically for the progressions and final combination that I plan to teach? 6) How am I guiding my students in the development of their ability to understand and internalize the function of the movement forms and concepts I am addressing?

An example of a Form and Function based teaching objective for a Dunham class is: “I will create a kinesiologically sound lesson plan sequence that will adequately warm-up my student’s bodies so that they will be muscuarly warm and physically and mentally prepared to perform all of the movements leading up to and contained within my culminating combination. The movement concepts that I am addressing today will be clearly communicated to my students and echoed throughout my whole class, leading towards mental and physical understanding and internalization.”

Socialization Through the Arts in the Classroom

Rather than separate art forms or the artist from society, Dunham championed the social power of the arts to connect people and cultures and to build community. By emphasizing Socialization Through the Arts in the classroom, the technical training of each student is connected with the development of their ability to express

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and communicate through their art. Dunham wrote: “Since body rhythm, body motion, exercises and forms are all a part of the effective self, each movement or combination should, in its final analysis (during class or in performance), be re-executed with some consideration for an accompanying emotion or sensory reaction…play, social cohesion, catharsis, aggression, exhilaration.”\(^{400}\) Choreography created under the Dunham model considers and values the unique artistic voice of each performer. Dunham said: “keeping the individual personality and casting the individual to be sure the choreography suits the person, so that they are happy in what they are doing, is of the utmost importance.”\(^{401}\)

A Dunham trained teacher values the building of a class community and personal connections while supporting individual exploration and expression, thus establishing a classroom environment where student receptivity to learning and growth is supported. Dunham explains: “Anyone can talk, demonstrate or show videos, but you must have a real personal interest in the students and what they’re doing, what they’re thinking… allow them to express what they feel. Always, always keeping a warm interrelationship. That’s what makes a student want to go on.”\(^{402}\) The practice of *Socialization Through the Arts* engages the student’s affective\(^{403}\) and cognitive domains, and is a form of interpersonal\(^{404}\) communication in the classroom.

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\(^{400}\) Katherine Dunham, *Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, written while Director of the Performing Arts Training Centers at Southern Illinois University, East St. Louis, IL, 3. Unpublished, undated.


\(^{402}\) Kate Mattingly, “Katherine the Great,” *Dance Teacher* (September, 2004), 56.

\(^{403}\) The Affective Domain is associated with emotional aspects of learning.

\(^{404}\) The prefix “inter” means “between”. Interpersonal communication is your dialogue with other people.
An example of backwards planning prompts based on *Socialization Through the Arts* that a Dunham teacher could follow when planning their class are: 1) What are the expressive goals of today’s class? 2) What actions will I take towards creating a supportive learning environment for my students and what moments of community will I facilitate? 3) How will I guide my students in mentally, emotionally, and/or spiritually connecting to what they are physically learning in class? 4) What opportunities will I create for individual expression and moments of improvisation?

An example of a *Socialization Through the Arts* based teaching objective for a Dunham class is: “I recognize that the mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, and social growth of my students is intertwined in their development and communicative ability as artists. I will create moments for interpersonal connection as well as individual expression within my lesson plan and will intentionally structure my classes to build community.”

**Intercultural Communication in the Classroom**

Dunham sought to make visible through her technique, pedagogy and choreography, universal artistic threads between cultures, classes and ethnicities, by placing an equal emphasis on dance and music forms derived from concert, social and sacred contexts from around the world. Dunham said: “I live to share my enthusiasm, my love and knowledge of anthropology and dance as it relates to honoring African based and indigenous cultural traditions throughout the world. This has been and

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continues to be my true legacy for as humans learn to honor all cultures; a new pathway to acceptance, understanding and peace is created.\textsuperscript{406} The movement, musical and cultural training built into the Dunham Technique and pedagogy attunes the participant to be able to hear, respond to and articulate not only their own internal rhythms, but polyrhythms and music and dance dialogues from a range of global cultures.

A Dunham teacher/guide actively seeks to understand and connect to the diverse learning styles and needs of their students while building a multi-arts, multi-sensory classroom that engages multiple intelligences. Dunham explained her intentions as a teacher: “As an anthropologist and a humanist I felt that I could give something (in the classroom), make individuals aware of themselves, their environment, and create a desire to be alive.”\textsuperscript{407} Practicing \textit{Intercultural Communication} in the classroom activates the student’s affective and cognitive domains through interpersonal communication.

An example of backwards planning prompts based on \textit{Intercultural Communication} that a Dunham teacher could follow when planning their class are: 1) What words, physical cues, visual images etc. will I incorporate into my teaching and physical classroom to meet the different learning styles and needs of my students? 2) What opportunities will I create for my students to broaden and deepen their cultural, geographical, historical, rhythmic, and social awareness of their own and different

\textsuperscript{406} Katherine Dunham, \textit{Jacob’s Pillow Tribute Thank You Letter}, July 2, 2002, 1.
ways of being and living in the world? 3) How will I ensure that the music I use in my classroom reflects a diverse range of rhythms, musical phrasing, and instruments? 4) How will I incorporate musical accents, polyrhythm, body isolations and shifts in dynamics into the exercises and progressions that I am teaching?

An example of an Intercultural Communication based teaching objective for a Dunham class is: “I will work to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that builds an integrative understanding to different ways of being and living in the world. I appreciate that each of my students learn differently and will make conscious choices in lesson structure, body language, word choices and the physical space of my classroom to support all levels of learning. I acknowledge the range of physical, emotional and spiritual connections that exist between music and movement by incorporating rhythmic diversity and musical dialogue into my lesson objectives, movement choices and choreography.”

**Discrimination and Detachment in the Classroom**

Practicing Discrimination in the Dunham classroom involves choosing where to place mental focus and where to direct physical and emotional energy, in a way that will best contribute to the teaching, learning and classroom performance process. Dunham explains: “As you grow older you find that you not only need to know this (body) of rhythmic motion, but where the motion comes from, which parts of the body are involved, what you can arouse and what you can quiet, what you can control

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and how you can avoid being controlled by it.” By understanding Detachment, students and teachers learn to override distractions, allowing them to hone their mental, physical, musical, and expressive focus. Dunham said: “Think clearly about what you want to accomplish. Discern! Discern! Examine your life carefully so you don’t create something that’s false for you.” The practice of Discrimination and Detachment engages the student’s affective and cognitive domains, and is a form of intrapersonal communication in the classroom.

Teachers utilize Discrimination by choosing specific objectives, assessment methods, and degree of feedback for their self, class, and individual students, while using the practice of Detachment to let go of set objectives when needed, and be able to revise lessons on-the-spot. Dunham wrote: “In 1935, through the friendship and guidance of Erich Fromm, a lifetime search began for the keys to self-knowledge, self-love and humanism. There began a daily and continuous battle for involved detachment and the selective process known as discrimination.” When opportunities are provided for students to provide constructive peer feedback based on the assessment objectives outlined by the teacher, their ability to detach and truly

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411 Erich Fromm, psychoanalyst, philosopher and social activist, remained a friend to Dunham throughout her life until his death in 1980. His ideas greatly contributed to the development of Dunham’s supportive philosophies of Self-Examination, Self-Knowledge, Detachment and Discrimination as a practice within her own life and within the Dunham Technique. Katherine Dunham from her unpublished book Minefields, appearing as: “Prologue: Excerpt from Minefields,” Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 78.
412 Katherine Dunham, Reflections on Survival, MacMurray College Commencement Address, Jacksonville, II, May 21, 1972, 3-4.
self-assess improves. Watching and listening as students give peer feedback provides the teacher with insight into the learning process and progress of each student, while also serving as an assessment of one’s teaching based on the content of each student’s observations.

An example of backwards planning prompts based on *Discrimination* and *Detachment* that a Dunham teacher could follow when planning their class are: 1) In what ways will I clearly communicate the physical and expressive objectives I am using to assess the growth of my students and how will I deliver individualized and group feedback based on these objectives? 2) What opportunities will I build into class for students to observe each other and provide constructive feedback? 3) How will I access if my students and I as a teacher have met our class objectives?

An example of a *Discrimination* and *Detachment* based teaching objective in a Dunham class is: “I will clearly communicate my class goals and expectations to my students and will implement them within my lesson plan. I will incorporate opportunities into my lesson for students to observe specific class objectives in themselves and each other and to provide constructive feedback. I will practice discrimination in how I assess and deliver feedback to my students. I will detach from my expected results and truly see the learning progress of each individual student and the class as a whole, as a reflection and assessment of my teaching practice.”

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Self-Examination and Self-Knowledge in the Classroom

Katherine Dunham believed in each person’s ability to search for and develop their integrity, and to utilize that knowledge in each movement and life choice by asking themselves: “‘Why am I Here?’ ‘Am I fulfilling the thing I am here for?’… That’s terribly important. And, I think, when you (answer these questions), you follow a sort of guidance from whatever you have decided was your drive...And when you find out the big pattern, the whole pattern of your life falls into place. You begin to know yourself which most people don’t.” 414 When the process of self-reflection is emphasized in class along with the responsibility for self-correction, competition or comparison between students is diffused. Instead, students take ownership for their actions and expressions learning to ask themselves “Am I communicating to others what I know to be true?”

*Self-Examination* and *Self-Knowledge* are evolving, connected processes that give each student practice in connecting their internal selves with the outer physical shapes, and with the communication they are expressing. Dunham said: “If you really believe you are supposed to do something, keep on believing in it even if others tell you differently…Look within yourself to find a way to make it happen…Then, if you decide to go for it, focus on those qualities of your goal that you love- its beauty or its truth, the devotion or kindness it will bring to the world- and this will inspire you.” 415

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414 Vega, Marta, *Katherine Dunham In Her Own Words*, (Caribbean Cultural Center, New York, New York, 1994), 17.
Dunham pedagogy emphasizes the development of deep, interconnected knowledge, where each person is responsible for their own development and growth. The teacher models these processes in themselves, allowing vulnerability to be an open part of the learning environment, while providing opportunities for students to re-examine, revise and reflect upon their movement choices and progress in class. Dunham said: “And when all this examination is done- when you know yourself, when you’ve learned how to see the beauty that is all around you, then love and enjoy what life has done for you.”

The practice of Self-Examination/Self-Knowledge engages the student’s affective, cognitive and psychomotor domains, and is a form of intrapersonal communication in the classroom.

An example of backwards planning prompts based on Self-Examination/Self-Knowledge that a Dunham teacher could follow when planning their class are: 1) What opportunities will I build into class today for students to practice self-examination and actively apply their self-knowledge to revise their dancing? 2) What will I maintain/adjust/add to my next class with these students as a result of what I learned today as a teacher?

An example of a Self-Examination/Self-Knowledge based teaching objective in a Dunham class is: “I will model the process of Self-Examination and the building of Self-Knowledge in the classroom. I will guide my students in their self-development of these skills and will provide ongoing opportunities for them to apply

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and reflect upon what they are discovering. I recognize that my evolution as a teacher and as a student is ongoing and embrace the opportunity to learn from each student and teacher that I interact with.”

**Training in the Dunham Model**

In August of 2000, New York City Center’s Outreach Education Department sponsored an extensive weeklong program titled *Dunham Institute: Linking the Arts and Humanities with New York City Schools*. The Institute’s intention was to train dance educators and teaching artists “…to use her holistic approach to dance as a model for dance education in public schools as well as in the dance community at large.” Participants took daily classes in Haitian Dance, Dunham Technique, Rhythms and Instrumentation of the African Diaspora, and Dance Making, while attending seminars in the Socio-Cultural/Political and Historical Context of Dunham, along with a lecture with Ms. Dunham. In an interview following the training, Dunham stressed that she wanted participants to understand that: “she doesn’t want (her Technique and legacy) to be seen as simply part of a study of Black history… ‘Afro-American studies are important but there’s so much more to the world… I won’t be happy until the whole thing becomes global.’”

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418 The Institute took place from August 12–18, 2000 at City Center in New York City, NY. It was primarily organized by Jannas Zalesky, City Center’s Director of Educational Programming, with assistance from Gaynell Sherod. The impetus to host this event was prompted by Ms. Dunham becoming a resident of NYC in 1999, sponsored by Julie and Harry Belafonte, to improve her access to health care and overall living conditions. I was in attendance.


Following Katherine Dunham’s 93rd birthday celebration and educational residency at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in 2002, the New York City Board of Education sponsored *Dunham Institute: Based on the Katherine Dunham Model*, focusing on curriculum writing in the Dunham Model for Pre-K-12 and higher education, including special consideration for special education student populations. In addition to curriculum writing, daily classes in Dunham Technique, Haitian Dance, Music and Instrumentation, Historical and Social-Cultural Lectures, and Dance Making were held, along with a lecture and movement master class with Ms. Dunham. This institute resulted in the writing of sample curriculums based on the Dunham Model. At both New York City institutes, participants were provided with an extensive resource reader filled with articles, interviews, reviews and writings by and about Katherine Dunham.

Although these one week intensives brought important recognition to the Dunham Pedagogy, and gave many dance educators holistic and culturally inclusive tools to add to their teaching repertoire, it did not provide the long-term training needed to truly embody the Dunham model. Katherine Dunham recognized this problem almost twenty years earlier, and in response began holding the Annual Dunham Technique Seminar in the East St. Louis, IL area, beginning in 1984. The Seminar is still in existence today, and continues to serve as a location for musicians,

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421 The Institute took place from August 10-17, 2002 at Hunter College in New York City, NY. It was directed by Gaynell Sherrod, Director of Performing Arts/Dance for the NYC Board of Education, with Jannas Zalesky as Institute Coordinator. I was in attendance.

422 Jeanelle Stovall and Dr. Albirda Rose-Eberhardt worked with Ms. Dunham to organize and institute the annual seminar, and began setting the plans for technique standardization and teacher certification.
dancers, scholars, and educators from around the world, along with local community members, to study Dunham Technique and theory/history with former Company members, along with Master and Certified teachers.

As Dunham Company members grew older, their national and international teaching presence declined, increasing the need to develop an official teacher certification process. In a 1992 interview “Dunham stated her criteria for teaching Dunham Technique: First, one must have a sense of compassion; second absolute honesty is critical; finally, one must study as much as possible and be a perennial student constantly learning.” The following year, Ms. Dunham selected a group of eight long-term Seminar attendees (each were established professional artists and teachers whose technical abilities she approved), to undergo an intensive certification process a week before the Seminar. Their experience included coaching from Ms. Dunham and her Master teachers in history/theory, technique, pedagogy, philosophy, and anthropology, along with teaching observations and a written exam, which resulted in their becoming the first recipients of Dunham Teacher Certification.

Continuing the Legacy through the Certification Process

The Institute for Dunham Technique Certification (IDTC) was formally created in 1994, following the first group’s certification, with the stated purpose: “1)
To perpetuate the legacy of Katherine Dunham, 2) To maintain a professional standard for the teaching of Dunham Technique thereby ensuring that instructors have a thorough technical and philosophical understanding of the technique, 3) To create a worldwide network of professional Dunham teachers who actively maintain current knowledge and practice of Dunham Technique.”

The organization trains Dunham Technique teacher candidates through their Certification Workshops, either held in conjunction with the annual Dunham Seminar in E. St. Louis, IL, or at a separate time and location depending on the year. Although they are distinct entities, IDTC works in collaboration with the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities (the organization who oversees the Seminar) to perpetuate Ms. Dunham’s legacy.

The Dunham pedagogic view involves body, mind and spirit integration combined with a passion for teaching both the cultural arts and humanities, making the ideal candidate for Certification, someone who is an established artist/scholar/humanist/educator. Former Dunham Company member and teacher Tommy Gomez said in 1991: “There are so many people that have taken some Dunham Technique and they think that they are informed enough to teach it…It takes years to grasp the technique and the philosophy behind the technique.”

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427 The pre-requisites for applying for Dunham Technique certification state: “Candidate must be an established professional dance teacher/educator, choreographer, and/or performer with previous training in Dunham Technique.” In addition, “Candidate must have completed 200 hours of technique and theory training with a Dunham Master Teacher or Certified Instructor, including attendance at the annual Dunham Seminars.”

certification is layered, asking each candidate to research, study and apply Dunham history, theory, philosophy, pedagogy and Technique into their teaching, scholarly, artistic, and life practice. This process takes time.

My journey in Dunham Technique began at age twelve with Certified Instructor Patricia Wilson, one of the eight teachers whom Ms. Dunham first chose for certification. In 1992 she brought members of her Dunham based dance company to the annual Seminar in St. Louis, where we met and studied with Katherine Dunham and many former Dunham Company members for the first time. Pursuing my Dunham education became a central goal of mine, causing me to attend the Seminar yearly, as well as pursue other means of studying the Technique intensively whenever possible. During the Seminar in 2004, I was summoned for a personal meeting with Ms. Dunham following a two-hour master class where she had repeatedly requested me to demonstrate various exercises. I was escorted outside to meet with her when she asked: “What books of mine have you read?” Upon my listing each of the books she had written, she asked my age and then responded by saying “I’d like

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429 Patricia Wilson is currently Co-Director of IDTC with Penny Godboldo, having replaced outgoing Co-Directors Dr. Albirda Rose-Eberhardt and Dr. Halifu Osumare in July 2014.  
430 Teachers at the 1992 Seminar included: Katherine Dunham, Vanoye Aikens, Talley Beatty, Lucille Ellis, Tommy Gomez, and Mor Thiam among others. See Appendix for the 1992 Seminar Schedule.  
432 Wednesday, June 23, 2004 in East St. Louis, IL. The day after Katherine Dunham’s 95th birthday. Marie-Christine Dunham-Pratt, Ms. Dunham’s daughter, and Madeline Preston were also present.
you to receive your certification. Theo (Jamison), see that she gets it tomorrow.”

My body, mind and spirit vibrated in disbelief and amazement as her car pulled away.

In 2000, Ms. Dunham officially named Dr. Albirda Rose-Eberhardt Director of Certification, and a new group of candidates were identified to begin the process. In between groups of candidates, individuals whom had already been active Dunham practitioners for decades, were chosen to go through the teacher examination. In 2002, Katherine Dunham explained: “I don’t teach anymore but I exude. I try to let good come from me.” She maintained her teaching presence in the classroom by continuing her regularly scheduled master classes each summer at the Seminar, along with residencies and lecture/interviews at other colleges and institutions throughout the year. At age 95 Ms. Dunham was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for her lifelong contributions to the field of dance education by Dance Teacher Magazine, prompting a feature article/interview titled “Katherine the Great.” On May 21, 2006, Katherine Dunham transitioned weeks before her 97th birthday, causing the certification process to be suspended. The following year all current certified and master teachers gathered to re-evaluate and re-fortify the Institute for

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A few weeks later I attended the Certification Workshop in San Francisco, where I was observed teaching a Dunham class by certified and master teachers, and then was given the written exam to complete the following week. I was certified in 2004 at age 29, becoming the youngest certified instructor at that time.

During this in-between time, Theo Jamison, Sarah Anindo Marshall, Dr. Halifu Osumare, and Keith Tyrone Williams went through the certification process.


Ms. Dunham regularly taught a 2-3 hour class that consisted of both lecture and movement, on alternating days of the traditionally two week long seminar. Currently the Seminar is one week long. Her last Seminar was 2005, she died 1 month before the 2006 Seminar where she had planned to teach.

The award was given August 9, 2004, at the Dance Teacher Summer Conference in NYC. Ms. Dunham appeared on the cover of the September, 2004 issue, accompanied by an article/interview.
Dunham Technique Certification mission and process, allowing certification to officially resume in January 2008.

**Cultural Relevancy in Higher Education**

Over the past decade, educators and scholars have increasingly recognized the growing need for cultural diversification along with greater social/cultural equality in course offerings for both secondary and higher education curriculums. Within dance there has been a call for departments to not only include multiple levels of more culturally and socially based movement techniques, but to give those courses equal course credit and degree status to modern and ballet. Dance educator/scholar Julie Kerr-Berry has long advocated for dance to open their primarily modern and ballet centered departments, to become more culturally inclusive within higher education. She wrote: “Most of our dancers (in academia) are unaware that chances are, every time they learn a new combination or try-on a new step, they are embodying movement from a multitude of cultural origins other than Western Europe… progressive dance education should reflect this profile of American culture.”

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438 At this meeting in New York City, an Academic Committee was formed to oversee the grading of the exams, and a Technique Committee was formed to oversee the codification of the Technique. I became a member of both committees. In 2013 I was nominated to Chair of the Academic Committee, and Co-Chair to the newly formed Pedagogy Committee with Sukie Keita.
Katherine Dunham took this decree one step further by honoring technical and cultural elements of modern, ballet, social and sacred dance traditions equally, within her Technique and philosophy. She wrote: “From the steps of the gods (sacred dances) I devised forms, exercises and techniques which later, filtered through classical ballet, and other perceptions, became the basis for Dunham Technique." 441 Dunham explained further: “I was not totally satisfied with classical ballet or modern or one or another folk dance…what I felt was missing, was a kind of understanding of one’s body, along with the movement. I think that is terribly important." 442 The Dunham philosophy of Intercultural Communication ensures that Western and Non-Western artistic forms are valued equally in the classroom and taught through an interdisciplinary, arts and humanities based methodology. This practice creates engaged learning that builds critical thinking skills and encourages scholarly pursuit, by teaching artistic and cultural content in socio-historical context.

As academia strives to become more inclusive, it is important that we not only embrace and place equal value to diverse movement traditions, but that we give equal credit to all pioneers in our field. “For almost an entire century, concert dancers embodied Martha Graham’s famed technique of pelvic contraction and release- the basis of African and Afro-Caribbean dance forms. Graham’s contemporary, Katherine Dunham, while never receiving the fame, used the same movement principle. Graham…‘legitimized’ its place in the canon of ‘high art,’ while Dunham

442 Kate Mattingly, “Katherine the Great,” Dance Teacher (September, 2004), 56.
was excluded and her work was considered ‘primitive.’”443 It is time to move Katherine Dunham’s legacy out of the marginalized “Black Dance” section of history books and truly recognize her contributions to modern, jazz, anthropology, and dance scholarship, as well as the remarkable relevancy of her work in education.

A Holistic Model of Arts Education

As the field of dance education moves towards a more holistic and inclusive pedagogy, so must our teacher training programs. In a paper titled: “Toward a Model of Holistic Dance Teacher Education,” author Andrzejewski proposes key aspects that include: “focus on the whole person, integrated curriculum, explicit identity development.”444 All three of these elements were present within the pedagogy that Ms. Dunham developed to train members of her company, in the school curriculums she established nationally and internationally, and exist within the Institute for Dunham Technique Certification teacher training program. In an interview at age 96 Dunham said: “Be sure that your every breath, every thought, every movement, every deed is being helpful to someone or something. Be sure that you are honest and true. Find ways to be stronger and wiser every day.”445

In her book Dances of Haiti,446 Dunham describes the dance Yanvalou, whose signature serpentine-like spinal articulations inspired core barre work exercises and...
progressions in her Technique, and can be seen rippled through her choreography.\textsuperscript{447} She wrote: “The movement of the Yanvalou is fluid, involving spine, base of the head, chest, solar plexus, and pelvic girdle, the effect is complete relaxation. There is no tenseness or rigidity of muscles; instead, a constant circular flow acts as a mental narcotic and neural catharsis. The dance is decidedly soothing rather than exciting, and one is left in a state of complete receptivity.”\textsuperscript{448} Although many people associate Dunham Technique with outwardly focused, dynamic and strong movements, it has always been balanced with internal sensing and subtle isolations since its inception, serving to embrace the totality of life’s social, emotional and spiritual communicative expressions. Dunham dancers in 1948 explain that: “Miss Dunham has created… the “Dunham Technique” which the dancer insists, despite its strenuousness, actually permits the participant to \textit{rest} in action.”\textsuperscript{449} Somatic based dance educators explain how: “At the center of somatic education is a pedagogical emphasis on balancing rest with activity.”\textsuperscript{450}

In a 2013 National Dance Educators Organization conference titled \textit{DANCE 2050: The Future of Dance in Higher Education}, the keynote address described the future of dance education as having an “interdisciplinary, integrated and inclusive

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\textsuperscript{447} Yanvalou is the dance for the Haitian Voudun loa (god) Damballa, associated with snake imagery.  
\textsuperscript{448} Katherine Dunham, \textit{Dances of Haiti} (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1983), 61.  
classroom- one that is socially aware and engaged, that empowers students, fosters reflection and catalyzes new knowledge.”¹ Although created in the 1930’s, Katherine Dunham’s holistic model of dance education fulfills the requirements envisioned for best teaching practices to be achieved by 2050, and continues to serve as a relevant and valuable curriculum model that honors the development of the whole person. Dunham wrote: “Dancers are given the great gift of motion and design. They live holistically, body, mind and spirit molded into single and continuous acts.”² In the polyrhythmic footsteps of Katherine Dunham’s legacy, may we dance, educate, and learn with our whole beings as we progress along our interconnected life paths. At the commencement of a masterclass in 2003 Dunham said: “Think of everything you learn from me today as part of a way of life. Now breath.”³

Appendix
A Visual Timeline of Katherine Dunham and her Company

Promotional Photograph of the Dunham Company
From the Choreography Rara Tonga
Program from Author’s Collection

Dunham Company *Tropics and Le Jazz “Hot”* Nightclub Program, Chicago 1940
SUPPER SHOW 11:30 P. M.

(1) "St. Louis Blues" _______ Raymond Scott and Orchestra
    a paraphrase by Raymond Scott himself, featuring entire orchestra.

(2) Primitive Rhythms ___ Katherine Dunham & Dance Company
    b)—Tempo Bolero
    the BOLERO, originally a Moorish rhythm, sets the basic tempo for a pattern of primitive movements.

(3) "Do You Pamper Your Husband At Night"?
    Raymond Scott and Orchestra
    sung by Nan Wynn. Music and words by Raymond Scott.

(4) Bahiana _______ Katherine Dunham & Dance Company
    Bahia, most picturesque region of coastal Brazil, is the scene of this flirtation between a young woman (Bahiana) and a group of native rope-makers.

(5) "Boog It" ___________ Raymond Scott and Orchestra
    a new comedy version sung by Chubby Jackson.

(6) Power House ___ Raymond Scott’s Famous Composition
    By the Quintette

(7) Le Jazz “Hot”_____ Katherine Dunham & Dance Company
    a)—Barrel House Shimmy
    (Florida swamp region any Saturday night.)
    b)—Variations on the Theme “Boogie Woogie”

(8) "Tuxedo Junction”, _______ Raymond Scott and Orchestra
    in Raymond Scott’s opinion, the best jazz tune ever written.

RAYMOND SCOTT AND HIS ORCHESTRA

are on the air twice nightly-11:00 to 11:30 p. m.
12:30 p. m. to 1:00 a. m. over the N B C Network

Program from Author’s Collection

Dunham Company 11:30pm “Supper Show” Program Order
In the Panther Room…Malaya Room at the College Inn, Chicago 1940
Photograph from Author’s Collection

Katherine Dunham as Georgia Brown in *Cabin in the Sky* (1940-1941)
Photograph from Author’s Collection

Photograph of “Katherine Dunham and her Troupe” in Stormy Weather 1943
BOSTON OPERA HOUSE  
Under the Management of  
MESSRS. LEE & J. J. SHUBERT

Week beginning January 17 (except 19th), 1944  
Matinees Thursday and Saturday

S. HUROK  
Prepresents

KATHERINE DUNHAM  
in  
TROPICAL REVUE

Choreographed and Staged by  
KATHERINE DUNHAM  
Costumes and Settings by  
JOHN PRATT  
Stage Direction and Lighting by  
DALE WASSERMAN  
Orchestra under direction of  
ALBERT ARKUS

PROGRAM I.

1. HARA TONGA  
Music by Paquita Anderson  
A folk tale of the Melanesian people on the island of Hara Tonga in the South  
Pacific. The Chosen Woman, proud of her beauty, is taken over by the God of  
the snake.  
The Chosen Woman  
The God  
The Jealous Husband  
Narrator  
RAMONA ERWIN  
ROGER OHARDIEO  
TOMMY GOMEZ  
KATHERINE DUNHAM

2. CUBAN SLAVE LAMENT  
The Singer  
Possessed Dancer  
BOBBY CAPO  
LUCILLE ELLIS

3. MOORISH BOLERO  
LAUWIA WILLIAMS, TOMMY GOMEZ and GROUP  
Music by Paquita Anderson

4. CHORO  
A 19th Century Brazilian quadrille.  
KATHERINE DUNHAM with FORT, MARCHANT, GOMEZ  
Music by Gogliano

5. RUMBA WITH A LITTLE JIVE MIXED IN  
ELLIS, FRENCH, MARCHANT  
Music by Andre

6. CALLATO (“Sh - Be Quiet”)  
KATHERINE DUNHAM with OHAIRDO, MORRIS, AIKENS  
Music by Candido Vicente

7. RITUAL DANCE  
SYLVIA FORT and ROGER OHARDIEO

8. PARA QUE TU VEAS  
BOBBY CAPO

9. PROMENADE—Havana 1910  
KATHERINE DUNHAM and COMPANY, BOBBY CAPO, DOWDY QUARTET

INTERMISSION

1. RUMBA from RUMBA SYMPHONY  
ELLIS, GAUCHO, MANDEZ  
HARL McDONALD

2. STREET SCENE—PORT AU PRINCE  
KATHERINE DUNHAM, with OHAIRDO, MARCHANT, AIKENS, GOMEZ

3. BAHIANA  
A Brazilian song.  
Music by Don Alonso

4. TROPICS—SHORE EXCURSION  
Music by Paquita Anderson — Percussion by Gaucho  
KATHERINE DUNHAM  
ROGER OHARDIEO

INTERMISSION

III.

1. PLANTATION DANCES  
a. Square Dance, Juba, Jeanie Cooler, TeaK Annie, Palmer House, Pas  
Malin, Fallin’ Off a Log, THE COMPANY  
b. Shirers’ Ball  
HELEN DOWDY with J. DeWITT SPENCER

Program from Author’s Collection  

Excerpt from a Tropical Revue Program 1944
Program from Author’s Collection

Dunham Company Cast Photographs from *Tropical Revue* Program 1943-1945
Program from Author’s Collection

Dunham Company Cast Photographs from *Tropical Revue* Program 1943-1945
First Edition of Katherine Dunham’s Book *Journey to Accompong*, 1946
The Incomparable
KATHERINE DUNHAM
AND HER FAMOUS DANCERS
presented by
NELSON L. GROSS
in association with DAN MELNICK

IN A BRAND NEW
HURRICANE OF TORRID
DANCES FROM VOODOO
TO JIVE!-HAVANA TO
THE SOUTH PACIFIC—
MARTINIQUE TO BRAZIL!

The Sensational Revue

COMPANY OF
50

"BAL NEGRE"

9 DAYS ONLY
SHUBERT THEATRE
STARTING
THURS. SEPT. 12

Matinees Wednesday and Saturdays—Seats Now

Flyer from Author’s Collection

Bal Negre Promotional Flyer 1946
Program from Author’s Collection

Photographs of the Dunham Company Rehearsing from a Bal Negre Program
The Dunham School in addition to a full curriculum of dance and theatre subjects provides classes in philosophy, anthropology, French, Spanish, West Indian Folk culture, music appreciation and reading, semantics and design. These cultural courses have been established because of Miss Dunham’s experience in finding theatrical artists too often handicapped by lack of understanding of the development of general culture and its importance in a specific field. The only interracial institution in the country concerned with dance and theatre arts, and approved by the U. S. Attorney General for the admission of non-quota immigrant students it boasts a truly international flavor drawing students from foreign countries. Harmony exists as a natural outgrowth of mutual understanding and artistic feeling. An exciting professional air pervades its activities: used by Miss Dunham as a creative laboratory and the company as a home base, the Dunham School attracts producers, writers, musicians; all sorts of theatre artists and technicians. Students of ability therefore have an unusual opportunity to associate with leaders in their chosen fields. In connection with the school is the newly-established Institute for Caribbean Research whose library provides material for concentrated study in the arts and sciences of the West Indies.

Approved by the Veterans’ Administration and by the New York State Board of Education the school is a center in which veterans are continuing their studies. The Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts Inc. is firmly established in America as a moving cultural force whose liberal scope and serious purpose reflect the integrity of its founder, Katherine Dunham.
Photograph from Author’s Collection

Promotional Photograph of Katherine Dunham from her choreography *L’Ag Ya*
Magazine from Author’s Collection

Dunham Company in L’Ag Ya, Cover of Ballet Magazine, London, England 1948
Katherine Dunham and Ensemble Album, Decca Records, 1950
Program from Author’s Collection

Program Booklet from the Cambridge Theatre in London, England 1952
Vanoye Aikens and Katherine Dunham in *Barrelhouse*
Photograph in Dunham Company Program from Barcelona, Spain 1952
Promotional Photograph of Katherine Dunham from her Choreography *Choros*
Photograph of Lenwood Morris, Jaqueline Walcott, and Ural Wilson in *Choros*
In a Dunham Company Program from Buenos Aires, Argentina 1954
ANTONIO RODRIGUES

Antonio Rodrigues joined the Dunham Company after having belonged to the "Brazilian Folklore Company" with which he had previously been touring Europe and South America. His unusually athletic body, remarkable sense of rhythm and serious knowledge of the Candomble and Macumba cults are only some of the attributes of this young Brazilian, born in Rio de Janeiro.

FRANCISCO URRUTIA

Francisco Urrutia, like Julio Collazo was born in Cuba and joined the Dunham Company after working in a group organized by Fernando Ortiz for the investigation and preservation of Cuban Cult material. They both have become strongly integrated into the Dunham Company and are known for the subtlety and precision of their drumming and the intensity of their Santos and Nanigo songs.

ALBERT LAGUERRE

Albert Laguerre was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and joined the Dunham Company in 1950. His extraordinary lithness of body is surpassed only by the intensity of his drumming. A master of the Moma or Hunter drum, which dominates the ceremonies of the Rada Dahomey cult. Laguerre as a drum priest holds the respect of every Haitian drummer and all folklorists who in any way specialise in the Caribbean Aerea.
Katherine Dunham Teaching Children on the Movie Set of *Green Mansions* 1958
Katherine Dunham
A Touch of Innocence


Katherine Dunham in Tokyo, where she wrote most of *A Touch of Innocence*
Stephen Papich presents

KATHERINE DUNHAM

in

“Bamboche!”

with

VANOYE AIKENS
Lucille Ellis  Ural Wilson  Dorothy Speights  Ricardo Avalos
and the Singers, Dancers and Musicians of the
KATHERINE DUNHAM COMPANY

introducing

BESSIONE GRIFFIN

With the Performers of the Royal Troupe of Morocco

With the consent of

HIS MAJESTY HASSAN II
KING OF MOROCCO

and the cooperation of

S. E. MOULAY AHMED ALAOUI
Minister of Information and Tourism of Morocco
and S. E. ALI BENGELLOUN
Ambassador of Morocco in the United States
and MME. MIRIAM AHERDAM
and in gratitude for their many kindnesses to
HIS EXCELLENCY LEOPOLD SENGHOR
President of the Republic of Senegal
and SIR ADESOGI ADEREMI
Oni of Ife
Governor of Western Provinces of Nigeria

Staging and Choreography by Katherine Dunham
Settings and Costumes by John Pratt
Lighting by Joseph Privitier, Sr.
Orchestra under the direction of Leslie Harnley

Henry Polakov, General Manager, Bamboche Company

Program from Author’s Collection

“Bamboche!” Program 1962
With Thanks to Officials from Morocco, Senegal and Nigeria

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Magazine from Author’s Collection

Dunham’s Fictional Crime Story “The Devil’s Accomplice,” 1965
Kasamance
A Fantasy

by Katherine Dunham

Book from Author’s Collection

Children’s Book Kasamance, Based in Senegal, 1974
Brochure from Author’s Collection

1992 Annual Dunham Seminar Promotional Brochure
Registration Deadline: July 1, 1992
Early-Bird: May 1, 1992
Early-Bird registrants receive a $25 discount.
Full and partial scholarships are available. All registrations (including scholarship applications) must be accompanied by a $75 non-refundable deposit made payable to the "Katherine Dunham Centers." Registrations cannot be honored without a deposit. Participants may also register at the door for daily sessions of five classes ($50 for adults, $25 for children), or individual classes ($15 for adults, $9 for children). Call 314-863-0525 for more information.


Class Schedule:

**Primitive Rhythms.** Daily morning, afternoon, and evening sessions at all levels, in Cuban, Brazilian, Ghanaian and Haitian Rhythms. Adult classes with Louisn, Marshall, Sticus, and percussionists Burrell, Ganyo, Strong, and Thiam. Children's classes with Louisn, Pierce, and Thiam.

**Dunham Technique.** Twice daily adult classes at Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 (Jazz), with master Instructors Atkins, Beatty, Ellis, and Gomez, and demonstrator Bennett-Glasper.

**Guest Lectures and Films.** Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday afternoon talks on dance history and dance anthropology by Dunham experts Rose-Eberhard, Stovall, and others—plus videotapes on Dunham and Dunham choreography.

**Master Classes.** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, with Katherine Dunham and members of the Dunham Company.

**Conversations.** Intimate discussions with the remarkable dance legend, Miss Katherine Dunham. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings, following Dunham's master classes.

Katherine Dunham is a legend in her own time. Her impact on the world of dance is immeasurable. During her sixty-year career, Miss Dunham's work for Hollywood films, the Broadway stage, and the mass media has influenced most modern day dancers and choreographers. Through the Dunham Centers, she presents a series of innovative programs devoted to the socialization and education of young people and adults in Illinois and Missouri, and from Around the World.

Be a part of the Katherine Dunham experience this summer! Sponsored by the Katherine Dunham Centers for the Arts and Humanities through its Institute for Intercultural Communication, the 1992 Dunham Technique Seminar is two weeks of intensive training in the phenomenal dance methodology developed by America's Renaissance woman and pioneering giant in the field of dance, Katherine Dunham. You'll dance to the rhythms of Africa, Cuba, Haiti, and South America, as you study with Katherine Dunham and former members of her World-Renowned Company.
Author and Katherine Dunham at the 1996 Dunham Seminar

Keith Tyrone Williams and Author in an Improvisation Directed by Ms. Dunham in her Class at the 2001 Dunham Seminar

Author Demonstrating the Chakra Series for Ms. Dunham’s Class at the 2000 Dunham Seminar
Author Demonstrating with Theodore Jamison for Ms. Dunham’s Class at the Annual Dunham Technique Seminar 2003

Photographs by Roscoe Crenshaw
Talley Beatty (left) and Vanoye Aikens (right) from the 1992 Dunham Seminar
Author with Tommy Gomez and Walter Nicks at the 1997 Dunham Seminar

Walter Nicks and Julie Robinson Belafonte at Jacob’s Pillow
Spontaneously Remembering Dunham Company Choreography June 2002

Institute for Dunham Technique Certification Board Meeting in NYC 2007
Author’s Dunham Technique Teacher Certification
Awarded June 2004
Sample of a Year-Long Course Curriculum in the Dunham Model

11th-12th Grade Dance Elective Class at an Expeditionary Learning Charter High School, Class met 3 times a week for the 2011-2012 School Year
Molly Christie González

Social Dance: Your Passport to the World

Big Idea:
Investigating the Form and Function of Social Dances around the World

Guiding Questions:
What is social dance?
How does dance build community?
How does social dance reflect and/or define a culture?
How are social dances created?

Long Term Learning Targets
I can learn, perform and choreograph the movement vocabulary of each social dance that I study in class.
I can identify the interactive form of each social dance I learn. I can express how the change in form of each dance changes its social function, and affects my personal experience.
I can describe the cultural and historical origins of each social dance I learn, and can express how these influences affect the movement, appearance and social interaction within each dance.
I can develop and improve my physical skills, technical knowledge, and expressive confidence as a dancer.
I can create and teach my own unique social dance form, complete with its own movement vocabulary, interactive structure, and cultural/historical origin.
Social Dance: Trimester I Learning Targets (Sept.-Dec.)
(Brazilian Samba, American Swing, Big Apple)

I can learn, choreograph, and perform the movement vocabulary of Samba and Swing dance.
I can identify the different structures for social interaction in Samba and in Swing dance, and can describe how this affects how I interact with and get to know others in class.
I can identify the cultural origins and expressive purposes of Samba and Swing dance, and can describe how dancing these two forms feel different in my body.
I can develop and improve my physical skills, technical knowledge, and expressive confidence as a dancer.

Social Dance: Trimester II Learning Targets (Dec.-March)
(West African Doundounba, Lamban, Cuban Suelta, Partner Salsa, Casino de Rueda)

I can learn, choreograph, and perform the movement vocabulary of West African and Salsa dance.
I can identify the different structures for social interaction in West African and in Salsa dance, and can describe how this affects how we are building community in our class.
I can describe the cultural and historical origins of West African and Salsa dance, and how these backgrounds influence the movement, appearance and social interaction within the dance.
I can develop and improve my physical skills, technical knowledge, and expressive confidence as a dancer.

Social Dance: Trimester III Learning Targets (March-June)
(Breaking, House, Student Invented Social Dances)

I can learn, choreograph, and perform the movement vocabulary of Hip Hop dance.
I can describe the cultural and historical origins of Hip Hop, and how that background influences the movement, appearance and social interaction in the dance.
I can create and teach my own unique social dance form, complete with its own movement vocabulary, interactive structure, and cultural and historical origin.
I can develop and improve my physical skills, technical knowledge, and expressive confidence as a dancer.
Social Dance: Student Work Sample

Social Dance: Trimester 1 Portfolio Reflection - 11/11

Name: ________________________________

A dancer can be described as someone who uses their body to communicate emotions and ideas.

In social dance each movement has a purpose:
1) To interact with and get to know other people
2) To express yourself as a dancer
3) To showcase a culture

Each dance that we have studied this trimester does this in a different way.
The steps you have learned and performed, how you interacted with each other, and how you expressed yourself, changed between Samba and Swing.

Not only did each dance feel different in your body, but also how you got to know other people in class changed with each dance that you have learned.

Directions for Written Reflection

1) Think about your experience dancing Samba and dancing Swing. Read the words below in the Word Bank. Use those words to fill in each box, based on what you know about Samba and Swing. Some words may fit well for both dances, and some for only one dance. Feel free to add your own descriptive words as well.

2) Use the information that you collect in these boxes to help you answer the reflection questions on the following pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samba</th>
<th>Swing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnival</td>
<td>America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil circle</td>
<td>partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>costumes</td>
<td>bent knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>african influen...</td>
<td>leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sexy</td>
<td>follower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cau &amp; response</td>
<td>fast foot work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solo</td>
<td>partner lifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hip circles</td>
<td>fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no physical contact</td>
<td>improvisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drumming</td>
<td>happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvisation</td>
<td>rock step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoulder shake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Word Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choreography</th>
<th>America</th>
<th>Fast foot work</th>
<th>Shoulder shake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Costumes</td>
<td>Body isolations</td>
<td>Carnival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner(s)</td>
<td>Upright torso</td>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>Kicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>African influence</td>
<td>Call &amp; Response</td>
<td>Holding hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bent knees</td>
<td>Sexy</td>
<td>European influence</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>No physical contact</td>
<td>Rock step</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Dance: Trimester 1 Portfolio Reflection - 11/11

Portfolio Reflection Learning Targets

I can describe how dancing Samba and dancing Swing feels in my body, and how I grew as a dancer while learning and performing these two forms.

I can identify the different structures for social interaction in Samba and in Swing dance, and can describe how this changed how I interacted with and got to know other people in class.

How does it feel to dance and perform Samba? What challenges did you overcome as you learned and performed this dance? What did you enjoy and feel confident about from this dance experience?

It feels like you have to be in unison & if not you'll ruin the whole dance.
I overcame that & learned to dance faster.

What kind of social interactions did you have with your classmates when you were learning and performing Samba? How did this dance help you to get to know them?

I had to dance near different people each time. Taught me there way of dancing.

How does it feel to dance and perform Swing? What challenges did you overcome as you learned and performed this dance? What did you enjoy and feel confident about from this dance experience?

I liked swing it made me feel happy just performing it.
I overcame the challenge of an exchange.

What kind of social interactions did you have with your classmates when you were learning and performing Swing? How did this dance help you to get to know them?

We danced with different partners & had to decide different movements that worked with both people.
Social Dance: Trimester 1 Portfolio Reflection - 11/11
How was your social and personal experience in class different when you were dancing Swing vs. dancing Samba? What dance skills and classroom habits do you need to improve upon in this class? How do you plan on doing this? Set and describe at least 3 goals for yourself for next trimester.

Samba was just about you and you only. Swing was about being on point with your partner(s).

Goal #1: Don’t forget these dances!! 😊
Goal #2: Pay more attention!! 😊
Goal #3: Go to class!! 😊

Students Rehearsing for their Swing/Big Apple Performance
Culminating Assignment for a 6 Week Unit on Dunham Technique
Molly Christie González

School of the Arts Dance Major Seniors
Dunham Inspired Choreography Study

Due: 4/15/11
In this dance study, you must choreograph a piece based on 2 central ideas within Katherine Dunham’s work:
1) Using art as a form of activism.
2) The translation of traditional and social dance forms for the concert dance stage.

You will be performing this piece in class on 4/15. This will count for 20% of your 5th marking period grade. I will be grading you using a scale from 1-10.

Requirements:
1) SOTA (and all of the Rochester City School District) is facing major budget cuts. Create this dance as a message to the school board expressing why the arts at SOTA are important. You may interpret this intent in any way that inspires you.

2) Your movement vocabulary for this piece must include movements that you have learned in Dunham Technique class, as well as movements from traditional and/or social dances that you are familiar with. Do not replicate these movements exactly as you have learned them in their original context ie. class, party, a club etc., but rather translate them to work for the communicative intent and context of your piece.

3) You can create a solo, duet or small group choreography (max 4 people). Work together, listen to each other, and let each person have a say in the choreography. If you are creating a solo length should be a min. of 1 ½ min., if it is a group piece a min. of 2 ½ min.

4) Music for this piece must be either instrumental or spoken/sung in a language other than English, and approved in advance by me or Ms. Bell-Harris.

5) Push yourselves technically and creatively. Remember to include changes in level, tempo, rhythm etc. and to maintain a clear theme/idea in your movement.

Have Fun!

If you have problems, questions, or concerns, see me as soon as they come up. Do not wait until the last minute. Ms. González

Movements from Dunham Class
Traveling Isolations 4th Position Cross-Contraction Hinge Walks
Leg Swings 2nd Position Chugs and Turns Rocking Horse
Drop and Recover Contraction Walks w/ Piqué Dunham Walk
Brazilian Samba Haitian Yanvalou Donkey Kick
**SOTA Dunham Choreography Study Rubric**

Seniors/Ms. González

Name: __________________ Date ________________

Name: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

Name: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 points each</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activism message relaying the importance of the arts at SOTA was evident</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of Dunham movement vocabulary was evident</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choreography looked complete and well-rehearsed</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 point each</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporation of social/traditional dance vocabulary was evident</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music used was in a non-English language or instrumental</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 min. solo/2.5 min. group time minimum was achieved</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity and skill was demonstrated in choreographic choices</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Points** ______

_____/10 = ______%
Dances of Haiti Book Inscription to Author from Katherine Dunham
“For Molly much much love and confidance in your gleaming future.”
August 18, 1997

Photograph by Kati Stovall
Photograph of Author and Katherine Dunham
2003 Annual Dunham Technique Seminar
Selected References

Books and Articles


_________. “Katherine Dunham’s Floating Island of Negritude: The Katherine Dunham Dance Company in London and Paris in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s.” In Rethinking Dance History: A reader. Edited by Alexandra Carter, 94-106.


“Performing Arts Training Center as a Focal Point for a New and Unique College or School.” In Kaiso! Writings by and about Katherine Dunham. Edited by Vèvè A. Clark and Sara E. Johnson, 551-556. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.


*Reflections on Survival*, MacMurray College Commencement Address, Jacksonville, IL, 21 May 1972.


*Syllabus on Dunham Technique*, Southern Illinois University, East St. Louis, IL, undated, 1-3.


“Transbodied/Transcultured: Moving Spirits in Katherine Dunham’s and Maya Deren’s Caribbean.” In Recharging the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections. Edited by Annalisa Oboe and Anna Scacchi, 197-211. New York: Routledge, 2008.


“How Images of Katherine Dunham.” *Jacob's Pillow Magazine* (Summer 2002), 23.


_________. “Recognition For Dunham’s Pioneering Work In Modern Dance”. St. Louis Post Dispatch, 8 June 1986.


“The Tropical Revue... and what’s behind it.” In *S. Hurok presents Katherine Dunham in Tropical Revue at the Blackstone Theatre*, 4-5. Chicago, IL: Chicago Stagebill May 8, 1944.


Katherine Dunham Lectures, Seminars, Institutes, Workshops

City Center Dunham Institute: Linking the Arts and Humanities with NYC Public Schools, City Center, New York, New York, August 12-18, 2000.


Cultural Traditions: The Dunham Legacy at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Jacob’s Pillow, Lee, MA, June 17-30, 2002.


New York City Board of Education Dance Institute: Based on the Katherine Dunham Model, Hunter College, New York, New York, August 10-17, 2002.

New York City Board of Education Dance Institute: Based on the Katherine Dunham Model Follow up Meeting, Martin Luther King Jr. High School, New York, New York, December 7, 2002.

Video and Musical Recordings

Carnival of Rhythm with Katherine Dunham. Produced by Warner Brothers. 18 min. Dance Films Association, 1941. Videocassette.


Stormy Weather. Produced by Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment. 77 min. Cinema Classics Collection, 2005. DVD. (originally released in 1943)

Internet Websites

Institute for Dunham Technique Certification www.dunhamcertification.org

Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities: www.kdcah.com

The Katherine Dunham Collection at the Library of Congress lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/html/dunham/dunham-home
Author’s Vita

Molly Christie González holds both an MFA in Dance Performance and Choreography and an MA in Dance Education with New York State Pre-K-12 Teacher Certification from the College at Brockport, and a BFA in Modern Dance from the University of the Arts. In 2004, she was awarded Teacher Certification from Katherine Dunham, and is honored to have the privilege of carrying on the Dunham legacy through her artistry, teaching, and scholarship. A life-long student of the Technique, Molly served as a demonstrator for both Ms. Dunham and Vanoye Aikens and has presented on Katherine Dunham’s legacy at the New York Dance Critics Association Conference and the Dance on Camera Festival. She has served as an instructor at both the Annual Dunham Technique Seminar and the Dunham Technique Certification Workshops and is currently Chair of the Academic Committee, Co-chair of the Pedagogy Committee and on the Executive Board for the Institute of Dunham Technique Certification. Molly has conducted dance and music research in Havana, Cuba, Rio De Janeiro and Salvador Bahia, Brazil, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, and in 2000 received a Leeway Foundation grant to study dance and music in Dakar, Senegal with Mor Thiam, Katherine Dunham’s long-term lead drummer. She co-founded and managed Trio Dourado Brazilian Dance Company and Cuban Latin Cabaret Productions, and has performed, choreographed, and costumed for a range of modern, Brazilian, Cuban and West African based companies. In addition to Katherine Dunham Technique and Philosophies, Molly’s artistic and academic work is focused on the structural and expressive transformation of
traditional, sacred and social dance/music languages and accompanying cultural philosophies, in their evolution to the modern concert dance stage. She has taught extensively within elementary through university level school and community settings for over twenty years, designing curriculum and directing programs for children through adults within diverse dance educational and performance environments, as well as in the Pilates and HIV/AIDS risk reduction education fields.