



The Joyce Dance Education Program Resource and Reference Guide



Photo by Laura Diffenderfer

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December 10, 2018

Dear Teachers,

The resource and reference material in this guide for Malpas Dance Company is filled with information and ideas that support the performance and the study unit you will create with your teaching artist.

For this performance, Malpas will present Ohad Naharin's *Tabla Rasa* in its entirety. *Tabula Rasa* made its world premiere on the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre on February 6, 1986. Thirty-two years after that first performance, on May 4, 2018, this seminal work premiered on Malpas Dance Company in Cuba. Check out the link [here](#) for the mini-documentary on Ohad Naharin's travels to Havana to work with Malpas. This link can also be found in the Resources section of this study guide. A new work by company member Beatriz Garcia Diaz will also be on the program, set to music by the Italian composer Ezio Bosso. The title of this work is the Spanish word *Ser*, which translates to "being" in English.

I love this quote by Kathleen Smith from NOW Magazine Toronto:

"As the theatre begins to vibrate with accumulated energy, you get the feeling that they could dance just about any genre with jaw-dropping style. Which makes their unique expression of Cuban culture in all its profound and complex glory all the more special."

Feel free to select material and ideas from these pages that are most appropriate for your use and give us feedback on what you applied in your classroom along with the results.

Best always,

Heather McCartney
Director of School & Family Programs

ABOUT THE COMPANY

“Malpaso's aim is to bring ‘Cuban contemporary dance into the 21st century.’
Clearly, they have already arrived.”

-The Pittsburgh Examiner



Photo: Laura Diffenderfer

In the five short years since its establishment in 2012, Malpaso Dance Company has already become one of the most sought after Cuban dance companies with a growing international profile. Emphasizing a collaborative creative process involving both North American and emerging Cuban choreographers, Malpaso has a growing repertoire of works that place it among the most exciting contemporary dance companies in the world today. The company tours with 11 dancers and is led by its original three founders; resident choreographer and Artistic Director Osnel Delgado, Executive Director Fernando Sáez, and dancer and co-founder Daileidys Carrazana.

An Associate Company of Joyce Theater Productions, Malpaso — together with The Joyce— has commissioned original works from a number of prominent North American choreographers, including Ron K. Brown (*Why You Follow*), Trey McIntyre (*Under Fire*), and acclaimed Canadian choreographer Azure Barton (*Indomitable Waltz*). Touted as “totally engrossing” (Palm Beach Arts Paper), *Indomitable Waltz* was supported with a production and touring grant from The National Dance Project and made its world premiere in Havana-Cuba in Fall 2016.

Company Founder, Dancer and Choreographer
Osnel Delgado

Co-Founder and Executive Director
Fernando Saéz

Co-Founder and Dancer
Daile Carrazana Gonzalez

Malpaso Dance Company – Who’s Who?

Osnel Delgado

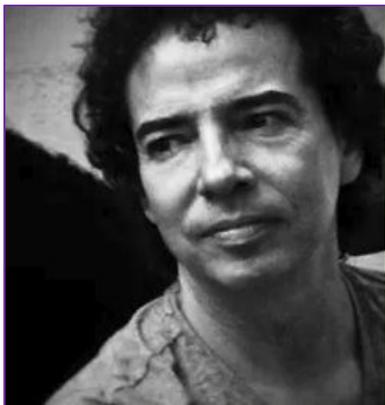
Founder, Artistic Director, Dancer, and Choreographer



Osnel Delgado danced with Danza Contemporanea de Cuba from 2003 to 2011, before founding Malpaso. He has worked with choreographers Mats Ek, Rafael Bonachela, Kenneth Kvarnström, Ja Linkens, Itzik Galili, Samir Akika, Pedro Ruiz, Isidro Rolando and George Cespedes, among others. Delgado has created works for DCC, Rakatan and Ebony Dance of Cuba. Delgado is a 2003 graduate of the National Dance School of Havana, where he is also a professor of dance studies.

Fernando Saez

Founder and Executive Director



Fernando Sáez graduated from the School of Performing Arts at the Superior Institute of Arts (ISA) in Havana in 1988. He is also a founder and actor of Estudio Teatral de Santa Clara, was the head of the sociocultural development project in Las Terrazas, Pinar del Rio from 1993 to 1997, and has served on the staff of the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba since 1998. He is also a member of the Foundation’s Board of Directors.

Daile Carrazana Gonzalez

Founder, Associate Artistic Director and Dancer



Daileidys Carrazana graduated from the National Ballet School in Havana in 2003. She was a member of Danza Contemporanea de Cuba from 2003 to 2011, before founding Malpaso with Osnel Delgado. Daile has worked with choreographers such as Mats Ek, Jan Linkens, Samir Akika, Pedro Ruiz and Isidro Rolando, among others.

Conversation Starters



Where is Cuba located?

(Caribbean Sea/Atlantic Ocean)

Which state in the U.S. is nearest to Cuba?

(Florida is 90 miles away)

Which other island nations are nearby?

(Bahamas, Jamaica, Haiti, Cayman Islands)

What is the primary language that Cubans speak?

(Spanish)

What are some of the natural characteristics associated with living on an island? (Water, wind, sand, heat)

Which social dances have a Cuban origin?

(Cha cha cha, Rumba and Mambo)

Do you know anyone who has travelled there?

What do you think makes Malpaso Dance Company *unique*?

Things to Know: *About Cuba*

GEOGRAPHY

- Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean Sea. Cuba and its neighbors form the Greater Antilles, a chain of islands created millions of years ago when two of Earth's tectonic plates collided.
- Cuba is a long and narrow island. It stretches 750 miles (1,200 kilometers) from east to west, but is only 60 miles (100 kilometers) wide in most places.
- High mountains and rolling hills cover about one-third of Cuba. The other two-thirds of the island are lowland plains used mainly for farming.

NATURE



Cuba has many different habitats, from mountain forests to jungles and grasslands. There are even small deserts. These different ecosystems are home to unique plants and animals found only in Cuba.



Many interesting creatures live in Cuba's thick forests. Most famous is the **bee hummingbird**, the world's smallest bird. Adult bee hummingbirds grow to only two inches (five centimeters) long. **The world's smallest frog also lives in Cuba**, the Monte Iberia eleuth (*Eleutherodactylus iberia*)

PEOPLE



The mixture of native, African, and European influences in Cuba gives this island a lively culture that is known around the world. The introduction of communism to the country in 1959 has had a big impact on the people, both positive and negative.

Cuba's original inhabitants were the Ciboney and Guanahatabey people. About a thousand years ago, the Taíno people from Venezuela took over the island. Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus is recognized as the first European to arrive in Cuba in 1492, when he claimed the island of Cuba as Spanish Territory. The Taíno and Ciboney were prehistoric cultures that existed in a time period during which humans created tools from stone, yet they were familiar with gold and copper alloys. They took part in similar customs and beliefs, one being a sacred ritual using narcotized tobacco vapors and particulates called *coboba*, known in English as smoking.

During the Spanish subjugation of the island of Cuba, the Native Cuban Indian population, including the Ciboney and the Taíno, were forced in to reservations. Many indigenous Cuban Indians died due to the brutality of Spanish conquistadores and the diseases they brought with them, such as the measles and smallpox, which were previously unknown to Indians. Hundreds of thousands of African slaves were then brought to Cuba, mainly to plant and harvest sugarcane. American forces helped drive the Spanish out of Cuba in 1898, and by 1902, Cuba had won independence, but the United States had a strong influence over the island. In 1959, communist revolutionaries, led by Fidel Castro, took control.

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/cuba/#cuba-matanzas.jpg>

GOVERNMENT



Fidel Castro, arriving at MATS Terminal, Washington D.C. (1959)

Cuba is a socialist state run by the Cuban Communist Party. Cubans vote for their leaders, but the communist party is the only legal party. Fidel Castro was president, prime minister, and commander of the armed forces until February 2008, when he stepped down due to a lengthy illness. His brother, Raúl, now leads the country.

The United States had been hostile toward Cuba since the communists took power in 1959. But since Fidel Castro stepped down, the United States and Cuba have become friends again. In 2015 the United States reopened its embassy in Cuba—where American diplomats live to work with the Cuban government. Soon after, Cuba did the same in the United States.

Cuban Revolution



Museo Che Guevara/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain

In 1959, Fidel Castro led a revolution against Fulgencio Batista. Castro took power in Cuba with Che Guevara from Argentina, his brother Raul, and others who fought against Batista. Castro made many changes to Cuba. He ended American ownership of Cuban businesses. This made Castro unpopular in America and the United States banned all contact with Cuba. Many Cubans went to America because of this. In 1961, the Americans helped some of these Cubans to attack Cuba and try to remove Castro, but they failed. Castro then asked the Soviet Union to help defend them from the Americans, which they did. The Soviet Union put nuclear weapons in Cuba and aimed them at the United States.



American President Kennedy demanded that they be removed or a new war would begin. This was known as the ***Cuban Missile Crisis***. The Soviet Union removed the missiles when the United States agreed to not continue attacking Cuba and to remove missiles from Turkey. Cuba became a communist-led country like the Soviet Union after this. The Soviet Union bought most of Cuba's sugar for expensive prices. Cuba spent this money on health, education and the army. This made Cuba's schools and hospitals some of the best in the world. The

army fought in Africa to support black Africans against the white South African army. Cuba also supported groups in South America fighting against the dictators of those countries.

However, the Cuban government began to control most of life in Cuba under the communist system. Disagreeing with the Cuban government and Fidel Castro in public was not allowed. Some Cubans did not like this and tried to leave Cuba. Most Cubans who left went to the United States. Some Cubans who did not like the government and stayed were put in jail. Many groups from around the world protested against Cuba because of this, and demanded that Fidel Castro give up power.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed. This meant that Cuba, which had sold most of its products to the Soviet Union, had no money coming into the country. The Americans made the restrictions against contact with Cuba tighter. America said the restrictions on contact would continue unless Fidel Castro gave up power. Cuba became very poor in the 1990s. This became known in Cuba as "The Special Period". Because of the disaster, Cuba changed to allow less control by the government, more discussion amongst the people, and private shops and businesses. Cuba also tried to get tourists to visit the island.

<https://kids.kiddle.co/Cuba>



Raúl Castro meets with U.S. President Barack Obama in Panama, April 11, 2015

In the 2000s, tourism to Cuba began to make money for the island again. Though Fidel Castro had remained in power, he had passed all duties to his brother Raul after an illness. Fidel Castro was one of the longest-serving heads of state. In 2008, Raúl Castro became the official president of Cuba. In April 2015, historic talks took place with US President Obama and Cuban General Secretary Raúl Castro in improving relations between the two nations. The trade embargo issued by President Kennedy in the 1960s was been considerably loosened under Obama's administration. US citizens can now travel directly to Cuba at certain times of the year. Before, Americans had to go via Mexico if they wanted to go to Cuba.



Americans are still not allowed to purchase or smoke Cuban cigars. The cigars are smuggled over the US-Canadian border since they are legal in Canada.

<https://kids.kiddle.co/Cuba>

CUBAN SOCIAL DANCE PRIMER



During the colonial period, Spanish ships stopped in Havana to have their cargoes inventoried and taxed. The ships then sailed to their final destinations of Buenos Aires, San Juan (Puerto Rico), and other ports. When they returned to Spain, they would stop again in Cuba for inspections and taxation. Consequently, Cuba's developing dances, such as the closed-position habanera (with its steps on counts "1, 2, and," to a $2/4$ rhythm), were as well known in Montevideo, Uruguay, as they were in Havana. In the 19th and 20th centuries Cuba's habanera, danzón, son, cha-cha-chá, and mambo would continue the island's influence on dance throughout Latin America.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/Latin-American-dance/The-Caribbean#ref1093947>



Danzón is the official musical genre of Cuba and is also the name of a slow, elegant partner dance with concise footwork and elegant pauses allowing couples to stand listening to virtuoso instrumental passages.

Also revered in Mexico and Puerto Rico, the danzon's characteristic look has become iconic: the closeness of partners, the swaying hips, and the minimal use of floor space, limited to a single floor tile (ladrillo).

“The elegant three-step can be traced back to Matanzas on Cuba’s northern shore, in 1870. The father of danzón, **Miguel Failde**, mixed European and African rhythms to which couples moved gracefully and precisely, gently flirting with each other, storytelling with their bodies. The women, holding a fan or flowers, are dipped and twirled, but with only fleeting touches and eye contact.”

<https://thenewtropic.com/event/little-havana-social-club-danzon-cubano/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/18/danzon-mexico-cuba-forgotten-dance>

Salsa dancing originated from the cha-cha-cha and mambo dances of the early 20th century and actually began in New York in the 1970s. American dancers incorporated their own favoured dances like swing and hustle into the mix as well as guaguanco and pachanga, dances that are synonymous with Afro-Cuba and the Afro-Caribbean. Ideally, the upper body is to remain level whilst the legs move in time to the music. It’s a very rhythmic dance, often associated with passion due to the intensity of the dancers’ concentration.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance_in_Cuba



The **Cha-cha-chá** is a dance of Cuban origin that is danced to the music of the same name introduced by Cuban composer and violinist **Enrique Jorrin** in the early 1950s. This rhythm was developed from the danzón-mambo. The name of the dance is an onomatopoeia derived from the shuffling sound of the dancers' feet.

Bolero

Cuban Bolero originated in the 19th century. It is thought to come from the **trova** musical tradition, a popular style during this time which used some characteristics of the Cuban Bolero, including a romantic singing style and a guitar as the primary instrument. The first Bolero is believed to have been written by **Jose 'Pepe' Sanchez**, a trova artist, around 1885.



A bolero dancer by Antonio Cabral Bejarano, 1842

Rumba is a genre of Cuban music involving dance, percussion, and song that originated in the northern regions during the late 19th century. Rumba is based on African music and dance traditions, as well as the Spanish-based *coros de clave*. Traditionally performed by poor workers of African descent in streets and *solares* (courtyards), rumba remains one of Cuba's most characteristic forms of music and dance. Since its early days, Rumba's popularity has been largely confined to Cuba, although its legacy has reached well beyond the island. In the United States it gave its name to the so-called "ballroom rumba".



“After the 1959 Revolution, Cuban dance, like other Cuban arts, got fed into a Soviet-style propaganda machine”

In her 1995 book *Rumba*, dance anthropologist Yvonne Daniel describes what happened to the rumba dance after the 1959 Cuban Revolution, when the arts were fed into a Soviet-like propaganda machine. She describes how before the Revolution, Rumba, often overtly sensual and cheerful, was something that poorer people did in the street on a Saturday night. **Once Castro came to power, Rumba was made the property of designated “folkloric” troupes, where it was supplied with fixed choreography and set to new, frequently patriotic, lyrics.**

Daniel quotes one sample:

*“I love Cuba and I die for my flag...
Havana is the leader as the blessed Capital.
There you can find everything you need,
from a flirtatious babe who can turn your head,
to the highest authority in the country.”*



Mambo is a dance form that originated in Cuba and has since been developed by Cuban musicians across North America and Mexico. Modern mambo began with a song called ‘Mambo’ from 1938 and was heavily inspired by danzón and African folk music. *See the links for Mambo music on the next page!*

Quick Fact:

The word “Mambo” means “**conversation with the gods**” in the Kongo language, which is spoken by Congolese in Africa.

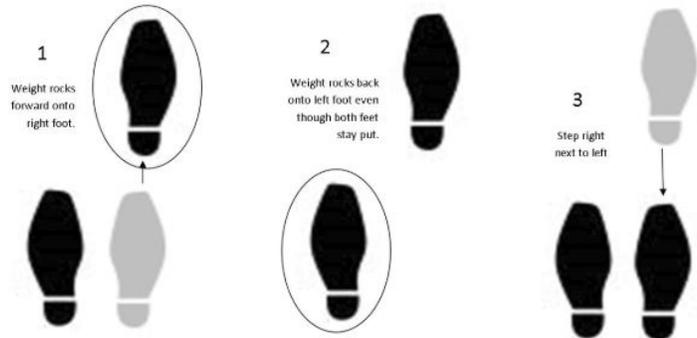
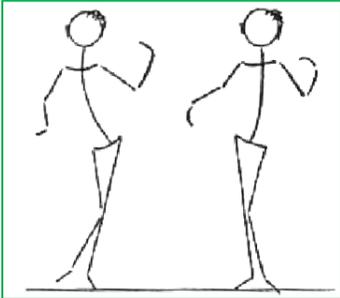
Pre-Performance Activities

Exploring Cuban Rhythms – Social Dance Forms

MAMBO!

ACTIVITY:

I. Listen to Mambo music



Count is 1&2, so step 1 is count 1, step 2 is count "and" and step 3 is count 2.

Tito Puente - *Cuban Mambo*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQuKOiPKlos>

Start with the basic rhythm, everyone clapping together with their hands, along to the music to find the beat.

Then ask the students the rhythm into their feet, doing the basic Mambo step as outlined in the diagram above or find a video on YouTube.

II. Body Part Warm Up with *Clave*

Clave is a rhythmic pattern used as a tool for temporal organization in Afro-Cuban music. It is present in a variety of genres such as Abakuá music, rumba, conga, son, mambo, salsa, songo, timba and Afro-Cuban jazz. The five-stroke clave pattern represents the structural core of many Afro-Cuban rhythms.

View the video below to find the **Clave rhythm**, and have students clap along.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sv3jZjeHgg>

Now ask students to move that rhythm with different body parts –keeping the true to the Clave rhythm.

“Try keeping the rhythm with your...”

Elbows

Your Knees

Your Belly Button

Head

Shoulders

Nose

Bottom

Hips

Rib cage

Fingers

Try a free for all- *all-body-parts-at-once* dance!

Variations:

-For more advanced student dancers try simultaneous body part Mambo coordinations.

-Alternate with stillnesses, or “freezes”. Have half the room do the movement, then freeze and watch the other half, and visa versa.

-Experiment with speeding up the tempo and slowing it down, changing levels, and facings in the room, dancing with a partner, a trio, or a group.

Some suggested music for Clave(find your own via Youtube search):

Celia Cruz – *La Vida es un Carnaval*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lArGoRhFr4E>

For an extra challenge - try this modern jazz experimental version of the mambo:

Arturo O’Farrill – *One Adam 12 Mambo* (modern interpretation)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h1JbmX-j9Y>

ART AND CULTURE IN CUBA

Cuba's history is reflected in its music, art and dance.

MUSIC

Known by the stage name **Pitbull**, Armando Christian Pérez (born January 15, 1981), is an American rapper of Cuban heritage. His first recorded mainstream performance was on a solo track from Lil Jon's 2002 album *Kings of Crunk*.

LINK: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitbull_\(rapper\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitbull_(rapper))



Camila Cabello (b. March 3, 1997) Cuban-American singer and songwriter. She rose to prominence as a member of the girl group Fifth Harmony, which was formed on the second season of the American edition of *The X Factor* in 2012, and thereafter signed a joint record deal with Syco Music and Epic Records.

LINK: <http://www.camilacabello.com/>

Celia Cruz (b. October 21, 1925 – d. July 16, 2003) was a Cuban American singer and a popular Latin artist of the 20th century, gaining twenty-three gold albums during her career. She received a star in the "Walk of Fame" in Hollywood. U.S. President Bill Clinton awarded her the National Medal of Arts in 1994. She was renowned internationally as the "Queen of Salsa", "La Guarachera de Cuba", as well as "The Queen of Latin Music". She spent much of her career working in the United States and several Latin American countries. LINK: <https://celiacruz.com/biography/>



Los Van Van is a post-revolution Cuban musical group, led for many years by bassist **Juan Formell** until his death in 2014. Formell and former band members Changuito and Pupy are some of the most important figures in contemporary Cuban music. LINK: <http://www.vanvandeformell.com/>

Arturo "Chico" O'Farrill (October 28, 1921 – June 27, 2001) was a Cuban composer, arranger, and conductor, best known for his work in the Latin idiom, specifically Afro-Cuban jazz or "Cubop", although he also composed traditional jazz pieces and even symphonic works. Born to an Irish father and a German mother, he played the trumpet early in his career. He composed works for Machito (*Afro-Cuban suite* with Charlie Parker, 1950) and Benny Goodman's Bebop Orchestra ("Undercurrent Blues"), and arranged for Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Kenton, among others. In the 1990s O'Farrill led a big band that took up residence at New York's Birdland nightclub. Chico's son, pianist **Arturo O'Farrill***, eventually took over the band.

LINK: <http://www.arturoofarrill.com/about-arturo/about-chico>



Dreaming of Lions

*Chico's son, **Arturo O'Farill** lives here in New York City and has collaborated with Malpaso Dance Company, creating original music for Osnel Delgado's 2017 choreography *Dreaming of Lions*.

You can view a video of the work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrK5p9pzHCs>

VISUAL ART



Carmen Herrera is a Cuban-American abstract, minimalist visual artist and painter. She was born in Havana and has lived in New York City since the mid-1950s. Herrera's abstract works have brought her international recognition late in life. She turned 102 in May 2018.

LINK: <https://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1410683/carmen-herrera-nothing-more-nothing-less>



Wilfredo Lam (b. 1902 – d. 1982) was a Cuban artist who sought to portray and revive the enduring Afro-Cuban spirit and culture. Inspired by and in contact with some of the most renowned artists of the 20th century, Lam melded his influences and created a unique style, which was ultimately characterized by the prominence of hybrid figures. Though he was predominantly a painter, he also worked with sculpture, ceramics and printmaking in his later life.

LINK: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/wilfredo-lam>

CELEBRITIES



Desi Arnaz, Sr. (March 2, 1917 – December 2, 1986) was a Cuban-born American actor, musician, and television producer. He is best remembered for his role as **Ricky Ricardo** on the American television series sitcom *I Love Lucy*. He co-starred on that show with dramatic and comedienne actress Lucille Ball (1911-1989), to whom he was married at the time. After *I Love Lucy* ended, Arnaz went on to produce several other television series, at first with Desilu Productions, and later independently; examples of which included *The Ann Sothern Show* and *The Untouchables*. He was also renowned for leading his Latin music band, the Desi Arnaz Orchestra.

LINK: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desi_Arnaz

SPORTS



Baseball

Unlike most countries in Latin America, Cuba's favorite sport is not soccer. It's baseball! Baseball came to Cuba from the United States in the 1860s. Many international baseball stars have come from Cuba, and the Cuban national team is one of the best in the world. ***Did you know that Fidel Castro loved baseball and went to an open tryout held by the Washington Senators?***

LINK: <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/30/503752196/no-fidel-castro-wasnt-nearly-a-new-york-yankee>

DANCE



Companie Irene Rodriguez

"...I am focused on creating new trends that make the Spanish genre evolve, fusing it with everything that will extend the stage language." -Irene Rodriguez

Irene Rodriguez will appear at The Joyce Theater in January 14-16, 2019 as part of our Cuba Festival.

LINK: <http://www.irenerodriguezcompania.com>

BALLET in Cuba



Alicia Alonso

Alicia Alonso (born Alicia Ernestina de la Caridad Martínez del Hoyo; (b. December 21, 1920) is a Cuban prima ballerina assoluta and choreographer whose company became the Ballet Nacional de Cuba in 1955. She is best known for her portrayals of Giselle and the ballet version of *Carmen*.

From the age of nineteen, Ms. Alonso was afflicted with an eye condition and became partially blind. Her partners always had to be in the exact place she expected them to be, and she used lights in different parts of the stage to guide herself.

Ballet's prominence in Cuban culture is largely due to Ms. Alonso and her husband, Fernando who taught at the school. After the revolution, and with funding from Fidel Castro's government, the school was given the revolutionary charge to bring ballet and its "spiritual goodness" to the masses. While Havana fell into disrepair and the utopian promises of the revolution dissipated, the Ballet Nacional excelled. Cuban ballet has been at the pinnacle of international dance for decades, and Cuba continues to produce some of ballet's best dancers.

Through the Ballet Nacional and its network of schools, Alicia and Fernando Alonso have created a uniquely Cuban style of ballet. Earning worldwide acclaim, the company has performed in 58 countries and received hundreds of international awards. Cuban-trained dancers are some of the best dancers in leading ballet companies throughout the world.



Ballet and Politics

When Castro took control of Cuba in 1959, he had a commitment to level the social structure and make the arts available to everyone. "The old government was out and the new hope was coming for the arts and the ballet in Cuba," recalled Margarita. Although the school was thriving artistically, it was struggling financially. Castro gave \$200,000 to Alonso, a supporter of the revolution, and her school was reborn as the Ballet Nacional de Cuba. With the state funding, suddenly ballet became important to the country and its identity. "We now had social security. We now had professional recognition," Ramona remembered.

Government funding for the Ballet Nacional continues to this day. The money allows the Ballet to scour the country and hand pick students, and it funds a country-wide teaching organization called the National School of Ballet, where Ramona is a director. There is no shortage of eager young hopefuls on this island, because placement in the ballet program can lead to respectable salaries, government subsidies, the opportunity to travel internationally and recognition as a Cuban cultural asset.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/mirrordance/balletcuba.html>

What is the *CUBAN* technique of MODERN DANCE? "la técnica cubana"



The Cuban modern dance establishment started with dancer and choreographer **Ramiro Guerra**, who founded Cuba's first professional modern dance company in 1959. Guerra combined North American dance techniques with Cuban folkloric traditions to create a unique Cuban modern dance aesthetic, which came to be known as *la técnica cubana*. Modern dance training was institutionalized with the Escuela Nacional de Arte founded in 1965 (today the National Dance School in Havana).

Cuban contemporary, in the latin dance world also known as "la técnica cubana", evolved under extraordinary circumstances. North American modern technique (Duncan, Graham, Sokolow, Limón, Cunningham) and European ballet (Alicia Alonso) met with African traditions and popular influences of creole colonial ballroom dance. In the island's isolation a unique new form of contemporary dance developed. Cuba's profound academic training today includes composition, improvisation, partnerwork, theater and musical training, technical didactics, anatomy, methodology of centerwork, floorwork, and barre.

Contraction and Release technique is combined with spine undulation movements from African dance styles. This wave-like movement starts at the pelvis and moves up the torso, where it is combined with independent movements of body parts in a complex rhythmic coordination. The dance is polycentric and the body is not thought of as a single unit but as a combination of different parts, each one feeling its own rhythm. Unusual head and torso isolations are added to ballet technique, Graham and Cunningham brought to a musically more complex and dynamic level. Cuban Contemporary technique is a challenge for every dancer with ambitions – and it's fun accepting the challenge!

Choreographer and dance critic Suki John describes her first encounter with rehearsing cuban dancers as follows:

"I have never seen dancers so versatile, so able! They soar and spin and dive to the floor, spiral swiftly back to standing, vibrate their torsos, and stretch their legs in sculpted lines. They'll finish a flying tour jeté with a daring plunge to the shoulder. They perch on one leg, head cocked to the side like tropical birds, listening. They dance with such rhythmic complexity, such sensuality, such confidence-they are unlike any dancers I have ever seen!"

<https://hop.dartmouth.edu/online/malpasodancecompany>

Quoted from the highly recommended book of Suki John: *Contemporary Dance in Cuba. Técnica Cubana as Revolutionary Movement*.

Pre-Performance Activities

Everyday Movement and Dance



Activity:

Pretend that you are drinking a glass of water. Do the **literal** (real-life) **move- ments** of picking up a glass, lifting it to your lips, tipping it up, and setting it back down. Create a dance study from this idea by making the movement more **abstract**.

Abstract movement expresses a quality or characteristic apart from the real subject matter.

- Change the literal movements by changing the rhythm, speed, or size; repeat movements;
- put movements into different body parts;
- add **contrasting** or opposite movement reversals of order;
- mix in unrelated movement; interrupt or take a detour from the original action;
- and finally, let the movement grow and change.

All dance is movement, but not all movement is dance.

From the moment of conception until death, the human being is in motion. Movement means life. The difference between movement and dance movement is found in the intention of the mover. There is a certain awareness that dancers bring to movement. This awareness makes the movement more focused. Eric Franklin states,

“Every movement begins with intention. Focusing on a body part with the intention of moving it in a certain direction creates energy that supports movement in this direction. If you focus on a movement a split second before you initiate movement, the ensuing movement will be clearer.”

A dancer’s awareness, intention, and attention bring movement to a more symbolic or universal state.



Dance movement can be abstract and symbolic but still convey emotion and meaning. Consider a simple **battement** (kick). Depending on how the movement is done (which dynamic is used), this kick can represent a break for freedom, an attack, a high-spirited gesture, or even a lazy swing. If choreographic elements, such as levels, size, direction, facings, and rhythms, are added, then the battement’s meaning grows in importance and clarity.

Here are some other **examples that show how everyday movement can become dance:**

- A plain walk becomes dance when you change the levels and directions, add arm movements, and alter pace and rhythm.
- The process of standing up from and sitting down in a chair becomes dance when you find different ways of doing this action and add torso, head, and arm movements.
- Jumping for a basket or swinging a tennis racket becomes dance when you follow through the end of the move or make a move leading up to the jump or swing.



Experiencing Dance-2nd Edition: From Student to Dance Artist
by Susan McGreevy-Nichols, Marty Sprague, Helene Scheff, pp.105-107.
Dynamic Alignment Through Imagery, by Eric Franklin pp..52

Conversation Starters

(for High School)

1. Have your students read the following articles about **Decree 349**

Cuban artists and international rights activists are pushing the government to revise legislation due to take effect in December, 2018 that they fear will hamper creativity and increase censorship on the Communist-run island. **The decree, published in July, bars artists, be they musicians or painters, from “providing their services” in any space open to the public, including private venues, without prior government approval.**

It updates a decree redacted before the market reforms launched in 2010 by former President Raul Castro, which required them only to get approval to operate in state-run spaces. Since then, the government had tolerated artists independently presenting their work in private venues, as part of a broader Cuban economic, social and political opening.

Tania Bruguera and Other Artists Are Protesting a New Cuban Law That Requires Government Approval of Creative Production

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/artists-protesting-cuban-law-government-approval-1333169>

Cuban artists urge revision of decree feared to hike censorship

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-art/cuban-artists-urge-revision-of-decree-feared-to-hike-censorship-idUSKCN1N51GV>

Cuba’s Slow Rebirth - As the traumas of Fidel Castro’s revolution fade, young Cubans are letting go of the past and embracing a new, global present.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/04/opinion/cuba-castro-economic-growth.html>

2. Facilitate a discussion about **Decree 349** and the **Artistas Cubanxs en Contra del Decreto 349**. Create a “Word Wall” on the chalkboard or a large pad of paper. This could be a prompt for students to write an essay or opinion piece.
3. Have students discuss the ways that artistic expression is allowed/encouraged/contained in Cuba and The United States. Encourage questioning such as: “Imagine what would this country be like without its’ independent street artists and buskers? What is the nature of creative expression? What is the purpose of the arts? Should the government be allowed to control the arts? Who are the “gate-keepers” for the arts in the United States? In New York City? How do they formally or informally exist? Discuss the role that the government and independent producers play in curating the performing and visual arts. How has the internet and venues such as You Tube, Vimeo and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook impacted artistic expression.
4. Discuss the role of censorship in a society. “What is the purpose? What would be an example of a positive aspect of censorship? Does it serve to protect its’ citizens or deny them access to information and ideas? What are some examples of censorship from world history? In the United States?” You could talk about the movie industry’s Hayes Code, and the “NEA Four” (The NEA Four were a group of four performance artists whose proposed grants from the United States government’s National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) were vetoed by John Frohnmayer in June 1990).
5. See the 2015 article on the next two pages of this study guide titled, “*Growing Pains in Cuban Dance*”. Discuss how the relationship between Cuba and the United States has fluctuated since this article was written, since Donald Trump was elected president.

Growing Pains in Cuban Dance

By Joan Acocella March 11, 2015

What effect will Obama's easing of trade and travel between the United States and Cuba have on the island's most important artistic exports, music and dance? Plenty, no doubt, and soon. After the 1959 Revolution, Cuban dance, like other Cuban arts, got fed into a Soviet-style propaganda machine. The dance anthropologist Yvonne Daniel, in her 1995 book "Rumba," describes what happened to rumba, for example. Before the Revolution, this social dance, often cheerfully dirty, was something that poorer people did in the street on Saturday night. But once Castro came to power, rumba was made the property of designated "folkloric" troupes, where it was supplied with fixed choreography and set to new lyrics, frequently of a patriotic cast. Daniels quotes one sample: "I love Cuba and I die for my flag.... Havana is the leader as the blessed Capital. There you can find everything you need, from a fine, hot flirtatious babe who can turn you on, to the highest authority in the country."

Furthermore, the dance party got moved from the evening to the afternoon, before anyone could get properly drunk. Rumba thereby lost much of its popularity with Cubans, especially the poor and the dark-skinned (highly overlapping groups), to whom the government's choice of rumba as the national dance was supposed to pay tribute. Those people stayed home and played cards, or whatever. The spectators at the government's "Rumba Saturdays" were mainly white tourists, together with bureaucrats who had to attend for some official season but snuck away as soon as they could. Such Potemkin-village folk dances are likely to be casualties of any cultural opening-out, or even just of time and TV. In the words of Eduardo Vilaro, the Cuban-born artistic director of New York's Ballet Hispanico, "The younger Cubans are removing themselves from all that. They're saying there's something else out there."

Among the things out there is a larger dance repertory. Repertory is a special problem for the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, an organization that was founded by the celebrated ballerina Alicia Alonso and her first husband, Fernando, in 1948, and was then declared the state ballet company, generously funded, by Fidel Castro when Alonso lent her support to his revolution. Thereafter, ballet became immensely popular in Cuba. This seems strange on the face of it. What could "Swan Lake" have in common with Che Guevara? But as the Soviet Union had shown, classical dance, if pumped up with a lot of emotionalism and high lifts, could be a good servant of socialism. So it was in Cuba. The U.S.S.R. sent teachers to Havana. People often say that the Cuban company is a fusion of Russian technique, Spanish soul, and Afro-Caribbean pizzazz.

Meanwhile, though, the repertory remained steadfastly conservative, because Alicia Alonso remained the artistic director. Not only is she now ninety-four years old, with the tastes of a person that age, but she is blind—her sight was failing already when she was in her twenties—so that even if she had cared to take an interest in modern ballet she couldn't have. She couldn't see it. The last time the Ballet Nacional came to New York, in 2011, it presented one program, a "highlights" show consisting almost entirely of excerpts from nineteenth-century ballets: "Giselle," "The Sleeping Beauty," "The Nutcracker," "Swan Lake," and "Don Quixote."

Faced with the prospect of doing this type of thing for the rest of their performing lives, a number of Cuban dancers have left their country. To a few, Alonso has given her blessing. José Manuel Carreño, a virtuoso and a great hunk of male beauty, went off to become a principal dancer at English National Ballet, London's Royal Ballet, and finally American Ballet Theatre. More important historically is Carlos Acosta. "I'm the only black guy at this level," he has said. That is true, and it means that there is now one real international superstar who can serve as a role model for black children who would like to go to ballet school. Acosta, too, became a principal dancer at the Royal Ballet.

Such favors did not go unreturned, however. (In 2005, Erika Kinetz, in the *Times*, reported that Acosta gave the Ballet Nacional a portion of his earnings, returned regularly to perform in Cuba, and sent videos of his non-Cuban performances to be broadcast on Cuban TV.) They were also very rare. A number of young stars coming up in the past ten or fifteen years have been denied permission to accept contracts elsewhere. The Cuban government's reasoning, presumably, is that it gave these people their education for free and is owed something in return—a common argument in totalitarian countries, and one that you can sort of understand. The problem is that the government then has to erect a very high wall to prevent its beneficiaries

from finding out that there are many attractive things to be had beyond its borders. A ballet company, in order to become and remain top-rank, must tour, and on tour the dancers are likely to see Prada handbags and William Forsythe ballets. But you didn't have to be a ballet dancer, or a star, in order to defect. In 2004, forty-three members of a show called "Havana Night Club," arriving to perform in Las Vegas, requested asylum en masse. Alicia Alonso sometimes expresses regret over the attrition rate at the Ballet Nacional. "What other company can give them more art, more beauty, more love?" as she put it once. But at other times she apparently doesn't want to talk about it. Once, when an interviewer raised the subject, she answered, memorably, "Okay. Thank you. I think I have a phone call."

This can't last. With the reduction in foreign subsidies and the increase in actual trade, Cuba is going to change. As that happens, along with a few other things (Alonso cannot go on forever; when I last saw her, four years ago, she could not walk unaided and repeatedly lost track of what she was talking about), Cuban dance is going to become something different. It is likely that things will start stirring not at the most privileged level, ballet, or at the humblest, such as Rumba Saturdays, but in the middle, in modern dance. Cuba has one fairly old, fairly large modern-dance company, Danza Contemporánea de Cuba, founded in 1959, the year of the Revolution, and numbering thirty-odd dancers. Though state-supported, it has always been a kind of stepchild. Modernism was apparently not to Castro's taste any more than it was to Stalin's. The company did succeed in producing some contemporary-looking dance works and also in importing some work from up-to-date Europeans, but it did not generate much excitement or even much real modernism, in the sense of serious tinkering with classical conventions.

The field is expanding, however. As part of Raúl Castro's economic reforms, more Cubans are now allowed to own small businesses, such as taxi coöperatives, street-food stands—and dance companies. Modest-sized troupes—with ten dancers, say—are proliferating. New Yorkers saw one last week at the Joyce: Malpaso, three years old, with two former members of Danza Contemporánea, Osnel Delgado and Daile Carranza, as its artistic directors. Alas, the sight was a little depressing. There was one strong piece, "Under Fire," but it was by an American, Trey McIntyre. The other offering, the Cuban one, "Despedida" ("Farewell"), was enlivened by Arturo O'Farrill's eight-member Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble, but even O'Farrill's bongos and brass could not prevent you from noticing that this piece epitomized the old idea of modern dance as energized anguish. There were nine dancers, on the floor much of the time. When they got up, they moved in and out, often as couples into which the lead dancer, Osnel Delgado (he was also the choreographer), tried in vain to insert himself. After about twenty minutes of this, he ended up back on the floor, alone and very unhappy, and you felt like running out to see somebody do the cha-cha.

In fact, New Yorkers did get to see a good cha-cha, shortly before, when another independent Cuban company, Ballet Rakatan, came to City Center for a week. Their show, "Havana Rakatan," like many other productions based on popular dance (tango evenings, Moiseyev) is essentially a revue. It charts the development of Cuban dance from the encounter of the Spanish islanders with the African slaves (woman in ruffled gown meets man with bongos) down to today's salsa, with, in between, mambo, bolero, rumba, cha-cha, and a lot more. Nilda Guerra, the company's founder, director, and choreographer, has said that when she started out she made abstract modern dance. But then representatives of the government came to her and asked her to do something more Cuban, less "contemporary"—that way, they told her, she could get more touring dates—and she said to herself, "Okay. I can do that."

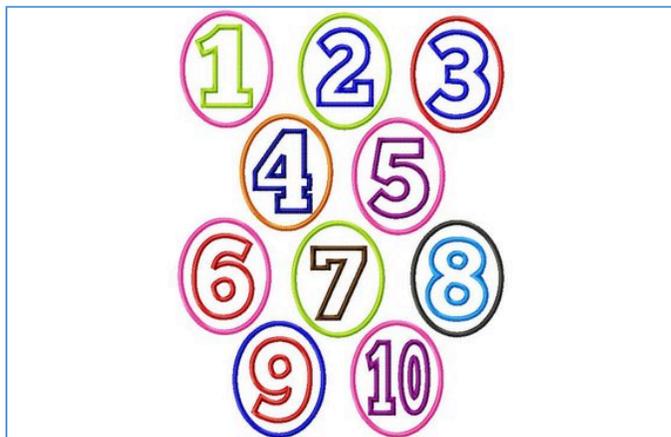
This, by rights, should be a sad story: bold young experimentalist caves in to government demands for nationalist art. Guerra says that she wanted to avoid clichés, but her pieces, like almost all popular Cuban dance, have to do with either combat, celebration, or, above all, seduction, and are set to the justly famous but also standard rhythms of Cuban dance music. Are these clichés? If so, bring them on! Likewise the tone, which is one of unforced happiness. Touchingly, Guerra told Laura Barnett, of the *Guardian*, that her show was about what Cubans really are: "It reflects the way that, however little we have, we have always managed to enjoy ourselves."

Probably the most important cause and result of the happiness is the company's sheer skill. Rarely will you see such dancers—the speed, the phrasing, the pelvic freedom, the sexiness without luridness. And, oh, the rhythmic certainty, as if they had been born doing these steps. A lot of them think they were—that Cubans have dance in their DNA. Guerra agrees: "You can find anyone in the street here in Havana who can dance as well as most professionals," she told the *Guardian*. That may or may not be true. (It should be noted that Cubans actively recruit children for their national dance school. They go to orphanages, to soccer games.) In Malpaso and the Ballet Nacional, especially within the men's ranks, the performance level is likewise staggeringly high. That in itself must be a form of happiness. Even if Osnel Delgado never gets a girlfriend, and even if Cuban dance never gets a modernism, the people manage to enjoy themselves.

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/growing-pains-in-cuban-dance>

Pre-Performance Activities

Space/Time Exploration (grades 5–8)



In a large open area, (or you could push back the desks and chairs to create more space in the class room), have students explore the tempo of their movement by silently walking at what they might consider an “average” speed in various directions throughout the space—the pathway can be determined by each individual. After students establish walking an “average” speed, announce that, on a scale of 1-10, whatever speed they are moving at is a 5. Continue the activity by calling out numbers between 1-10, as the students respond by varying their tempos to move faster or slower than their own “average” speed.

Next, divide students into two groups, one group will be the “watchers” and one the “movers”.

In an open area have students walk through the space in straight lines, as if the floor were covered in graph paper turning at 90 degree angles. After exploring this way of moving for a few minutes, tell students that in addition to walking, they can try stopping (finding stillness) and sitting down. Once they have added in the stopping/stillness and sitting activities, call out the numbers for the tempo (1-10).

After a few minutes, ask the watchers to comment on what they see. Switch groups and repeat. After both groups have moved, discuss what both groups noticed as they moved around the space. Repeat, this time with movers varying their own speeds as they wish by using their own internal cues, rather than via an external prompt.

hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach



Pre-Performance Activities

Tabula Rasa



Ohad Naharin's *Tabula Rasa* performed by Malpaso Dance Company

Groupings: Relationships in Space



Photos of Malpaso Dance Company by Laura Diffenderfer



MOVING AS A GROUP

Group Activity: Students are placed in groups of 5-6. Each group finds a “**group shape**”, where various levels (high-medium-low) are present and the bodies are connected not just by hands, but by arms, legs, backs, heads connecting. See the photos of Malpaso Dance Company above for some ideas! Via the teacher’s directives, each group starts to find different pulses, such as swaying or soft bouncing. Without speaking to one another, they find ways to move through the space with their group, using the “pulse” of bouncing or swaying, stomping, etc.. Groups are also prompted to find stillnesses, and the “group shape” can change and be modified while the group travels through the room. Encourage groups to interact with each other without losing their “group” form.

Next, without talking, one student from each group will move away from the group, dancing/moving away in space and then returning to the same or a different place within their group. Each person in the group should have a chance to feel what this is like. Then experiment with two people, three people leaving the group and then returning. No talking aloud! Each group could then create their own choreographic study based on this exploration. Emphasize that students are making their choices using non-verbal cues.

Each group then performs for the class and students respond by drawing pictures and/or talking about what they saw happening, and what they noticed about how students were able to communicate with one another without words to create a dance.

This exercise pertains particularly to the second half of the work *Tabula Rasa*. View the video link provided in the program section of this study guide (on the next page) and discuss similarities and differences to their own explorations. For those of you who attended out Professional Development in October, this exercise is based on what we all did that day, guided by our very own Joyce teaching artist Susan Thomasson.



Performance for Study
Malpaso Dance Company

Thursday, January 10, 2019

PROGRAM

Tabula Rasa

Choreography by Ohad Naharin

Music by Arvo Pärt

Costume Design by Eri Nakamura

Lighting Design by Ohad Naharin

VIDEO LINK: <https://vimeo.com/276107155>

Password: sam1234

Ser (Being)

Choreography By Beatriz Garcia Diaz

Music by Ezio Bosso

Costume Design by Beatriz García

Lighting Design by Manuel Da Silva



Quotes

"...a pinch-me moment, one of those times when you catch an artistic dawning... Malpas's dancers were exceptional."
-Laura Bleiberg, *Los Angeles Times*

"Surely, Malpas, with its fluid, sexy athleticism, can put the lie to the old saw that contemporary dance is too cerebral to be fun to watch."
-Helena Alonso Paisley, *Miami New Times*

"[They do] what dancers do best. They take classes, they rehearse, they create, they perform. And they do so with technical strength, precision, and passion."
-Gillian Anne Renault, *Arts Atlanta*

"...a blend of unfussy ballet technique and lushly earthy modern dance, spiked with now-soft, now-explosive capoeira."
-Janine Parker, *Pittsburgh Examiner*

"Malpas's aim is to bring 'Cuban contemporary dance into the 21st century.' Clearly, they have already arrived."
-Adrienne Totino, *Pittsburgh Examiner*

Post-Performance Assessment

(Describing - Analyzing - Interpreting)

Drawings, Letters, and Reviews

After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Help your students think about, discuss and internalize the production they've just seen. Have the students make drawings or write thank you letters and reviews. These items will be shared with artists and the funders who make these performances possible. Encourage the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible.

Questions to Evaluate (for the specific dance chosen for Performance for Study):

Did you enjoy this performance? Explain why/why not.

Describe the most memorable moment.

Did the dance remind you of other performances you have seen? Tell us.

Did the dance remind you of experiences in your own life?

What do you think was the motivation of the dance you are critiquing?

What did the dance communicate to you? Did it explore emotions?

How many dancers performed? Did you have a favorite?

Was the dance representational (realistic and/or having a story line) or abstract?

What was the predominant energy level of the dance?

HIGH ENERGY

Medium energy

Low energy

What were the spatial characteristics of the movement? Angular, curved, staccato, legato, light, heavy, symmetrical, asymmetrical, low level, high level, something else.

Include the groupings that you observed during this dance. Solo, duet, trio, quartet, entire cast.

Was the dance divided into separate sections? If so, how many did you observe?

How would you describe the music?

What was the relationship of the music to the movement? (Similar to the dance, contrasting to the dance, if music wasn't used, was there a different source of sound? Was there silence?)

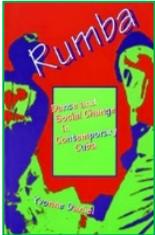
What else did you notice about the performance? Props, backdrop, lighting, costumes, etc.

After the performance, conduct follow-up activities with your students. Have students think about, discuss, and internalize the production they've just seen.

Describe one of the dances you saw at The Joyce. Imagine you are re-telling the performance to a friend or family member who did not attend. Use complete sentences and the dance vocabulary you've acquired from your teacher and dance specialist

Resources

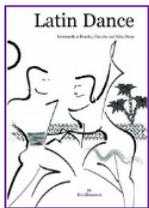
Books



Rumba : Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba

by Yvonne Daniel. World Publication, c.1995. ISBN: 978-0-253-20948-1

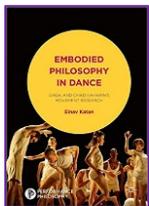
Author Yvonne Daniel illuminates the values and attitudes embodied in rumba through the lens of dance anthropology and explores relationships between dance and the complex changes in contemporary Cuba.



Latin Dance: Intermediate Rumba, Cha-cha & Salsa

by Eric Zimmerer. Ace of Hearts Publishing (September 9, 2005).

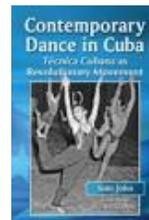
ISBN-10: 1932358129, ISBN-13: 978-1932358124. An easy-to read illustrated dance steps manual that make it simple to learn Latin dance.



Embodied Philosophy in Dance: Gaga and Ohad Naharin's Movement

Research by Einav Katan-Schmid. Palgrave Macmillan; 1st ed. 2016 edition. ISBN-10: 9781137601858

ISBN-13: 978-1137601858. A comprehensive analysis of Gaga and Ohad Naharin's aesthetic approach, which deciphers forms of meaning in dance as a medium for perception and realization within the body. The book addresses embodied philosophies and social theories in connection with the perceptual experience of dancing.



Contemporary Dance in Cuba. Técnica Cubana as Revolutionary Movement

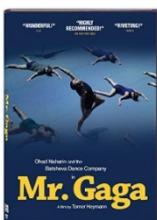
by Suki John: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012. Author Suki John demonstrates how Cuba's contemporary dance perennially transforms the human body into a rich form of artistic expression.

Movies and Documentaries

(Teachers must preview a DVD prior to student viewing)

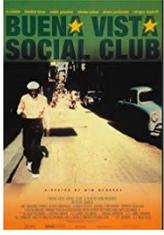
Mini-documentary about Ohad Naharin working with Malpaso Dance Company to set *Tabula Rasa*:

LINK TO VIEW: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3glFL8Muek>



Mr. Gaga

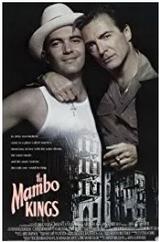
This insightful documentary reveals Batsheva Dance Company's Artistic Director Ohad Naharin to be a man with great artistic integrity and extraordinary vision. Filmed over a period of eight years, director Tomer Heymann mixes intimate rehearsal footage with an extensive unseen archive and beautiful dance sequences. <http://www.mrgagathefilm.com/>



Buena Vista Social Club

Oscar nominated 1999 film directed by Wim Wenders. Aging Cuban musicians whose talents had been virtually forgotten following Castro's takeover of Cuba, are brought out of retirement by Ry Cooder, who travelled to Havana to bring the musicians together, resulting in performances of extraordinary music, resurrecting the musicians' careers.

The Mambo Kings



1992 French–American musical drama film based on the 1989 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* by Oscar Hijuelos. Directed by Arne Glimcher, it stars Armand Assante, Antonio Banderas, Cathy Moriarty and Maruschka Detmers. Set in the early 1950s, the story follows Cesar (Assante) and Nestor Castillo (Banderas), brothers and aspiring musicians who flee from Havana, Cuba to New York City.

Websites

Malpaso Dance Company

www.malpasodance.com

Contemporary Dance in Cuba

<https://havana-club.com/en-ww/havana-cultura/danza-contemporanea-de-cuba>

Arturo O'Farrill's *Cuba: The Conversation Continues*

<https://www.npr.org/2015/10/22/450853351/arturo-ofarrill-presents-cuba-the-conversation-continues>

Afro Cuban Folkloric Dance Classes

<https://www.aileyextension.com/classes/afro-cuban-folkloric-0>

Dance Magazine: The Dancer's Guide to Cuba

<https://www.dancemagazine.com/dancers-guide-cuba-2307024944.html>

Ezio Bosso (music for *Ser*)

<http://www.eziobosso.com/en/>

Batsheva Dance Company (Ohad Naharin)

<https://batsheva.co.il/en/home>

Arvo Pärt (music for *Tabula Rasa*)

<https://www.arvopart.ee/en/>

Artistas Cubanxs en Contra del Decreto 349 – Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Society---Culture-Website/Artistas-Cubanxs-en-Contra-del-Decreto-349-1720789794636907/>

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Created by: Heather McCartney (Director of School and Family Programs)

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PRESS

The New York Times

What Comes Next for Cuban Modern Dance?

By Brian Seibert May 6, 2016 (excerpted)

HAVANA — Idania Wambrug teaches dance in a capacious, brick-vaulted studio with so much light streaming down from high windows that it almost feels like an outdoor pavilion. It's the same studio where she was a student in the 1960s, and over the years, all that natural light has been helpful when the electricity has gone out.

The studio is in the National School of Dance here in Havana, part of the National Arts Schools, an avant-garde architectural project conceived not long after the 1959 Cuban Revolution but never completed. What Ms. Wambrug teaches comes from that time as well. With a mandate from the revolutionary government, the Cuban choreographer Ramiro Guerra created “técnica cubana,” a hybrid of American modern dance — the language of Martha Graham, José Limón and others, which Mr. Guerra had studied in the United States — with ballet and Cuban tradition, both Spanish and African.

For a dance-cognizant visitor from the United States, watching a class in técnica cubana is heady: very familiar and then suddenly not, as torsos contracting in Graham style turn ultra-sinuous, ultra-African, or a standard ballet exercise swerves into the gestures of an Afro-Cuban god. Yet the alloy is coherent and potent. It's a great, under-recognized invention that develops dancers of extraordinary strength with the agility to manage all of its wild twists.

Still, técnica cubana can seem rather like the 1950s Chevys famously still cruising Cuba's streets: gorgeous, miraculously maintained, way behind the times. (Cuban ballet, better known and also better funded by the state, is even more trapped in amber.) Information about dance, in the form of videos or visiting choreographers, is easier than automobiles to get through a blockade, but traces of developments in American modern dance from the last 40 or 50 years, though present, are scarce here. Like everything else in Cuban-American relations, that may now be changing. And the dance-maker taking the most advantage of the changes is Osnel Delgado, Ms. Wambrug's son.

For decades, the main outside influence on Cuban dance has come from Europe. That can be seen in DanzAbierta, a troupe that will make its New York debut on May 14, following Malpaso in the Joyce's 12-day festival of Cuban dance. Marianela Boan, who founded DanzAbierta in 1988 and who has since moved to the Dominican Republic, believed in what she called “contaminated dance” and drew heavily on European dance-theater, like that of Pina Bausch.

Her aesthetic has been furthered by Susana Pous, a Spanish choreographer who has directed DanzAbierta since 2008. Her works, collaborations with Cuban visual artists and musicians, are, she said, about “the problems of Cuban life, more than just pretty dance.” Many of Ms. Pous's pieces — like “Showroom,” which DanzAbierta is bringing to the Joyce — address and resist exotic stereotypes of Cuban dancers still promulgated by tacky tourist cabarets.

An ambivalence about Cuba's dance heritage is expressed more intensely in the choreography of George Céspedes, one of Danza Contemporánea's most prolific homegrown talents. His recent pieces seem to tamp down on the dancers' virtuosity and sensual pleasure, to be *about* a Cuban body struggling within a dour, oppressive conceptualism.

In person, he's refreshingly frank. While many Cubans respond to questions about how Cuba is changing by rolling their eyes, Mr. Céspedes says that maybe his grandchildren will see change. Having started an independent company three years ago, he's trying to get back into the government-funded system. It's too hard, he says, to survive outside.

Mr. Delgado, whose company is surviving and who may find a different path forward through American models, is somewhat concerned about Cuban dance losing its identity — buffeted by European influences and now by the coming flood of tourist money and what kind of dance that might encourage. He can sound a lot like a modern-dance choreographer in New York (who would envy his free dance education and health care): pining for a bigger audience, longer runs and a permanent space to work. He wishes he had a place to host a choreographic lab, “which we really need in Cuba,” he said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/07/arts/dance/what-comes-next-for-cuban-modern-dance.html>

DANCE: OHAD NAHARIN AND COMPANY

By ANNA KISSELGOFF JAN. 11, 1987

Ohad Naharin's choreography is notable for its movement quality -especially for its smoothness within technical difficulty. But there is also an undercurrent of feeling that makes itself evident at all times.

The fact that few viewers have agreed on the specifics involved may be either a virtue or a weakness in Mr. Naharin's work. He seems deliberately to leave interpretation to the audience. A more dubious appraisal might suggest the choreography is needlessly obscure in some cases.

Friday night's performance by Mr. Naharin's company at the Bessie Schonberg Theater, 219 W. 19th St, happily indicated a new direction. In the company premiere of "Tabula Rasa," originally created for the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater, Mr. Naharin made movement serve dramatic ends more forcefully, without giving up the ambiguity he favors.

Commissioned by the National Choreography Project, **"Tabula Rasa" radiates a general sense of loss.** The music by Arvo Part in the first half has an affecting melancholy as a violin melody repeatedly builds and fades, while the second half of the work is danced through a textured melodic haze.

Among five couples, the first -Mari Kajiwara and Michael Gallo -eventually ends the piece, with Miss Kajiwara mourning over Mr. Gallo's lifeless body. A range of relationships is explored along the way but some of the movement invention proves more interesting than the basic emotions.

There is an eye-boggling sequence when the dancers juxtapose non sequiturs of energetic movements -with almost everything performed while lying on the floor. Mr. Naharin has some very fine dancers, and they push and pull into his athletically propelled shapes with ease.

The ensemble, dressed in A. Christina Giannini's plain costumes, emerges out of Chenault Spence's dramatic shadows. **The second half has them rocking, walking sideways, looking dazed or clustering as a love triangle with two men and a woman makes a pretense of communal love.** A duet for Ani Udovicki, a very versatile dancer, and Jeremy Weichsel is a quiet counterpoint to the yank-and-pull final duet for Miss Kajiwara and her partner. The other dancers were Carl House, Kraig Patterson, Robin Preiss, Natalie Rogers, Torbjorn Stenberg and Megan Williams.

Mr. Naharin is hardly a slouch as a dancer himself, and he was the man flanked by Miss Udovicki and the wonderfully high-flying Miss Rogers in a new piece, "Bez and a Half." Danced first to some Japanese lute sounds arranged by John Zorn and then repeated to an Art Tatum recording, the dance was more notable for its energy than its meaning.

Mr. Naharin and Miss Kajiwara did some witty battling via some musical instruments in Mr. Naharin's "Sixty a Minute." He stopped her metronome, she tightened the strings on his guitar, he slammed her against a piano and slithered behind it to oblivion. "Innostress" and "Black Milk" completed the program, which is repeated today at 3 P.M.

A version of this review appears in print on January 11, 1987, on Page 1001040 of the National edition with the headline: DANCE: OHAD NAHARIN AND COMPANY.

Tania Bruguera and Other Artists Are Protesting a New Cuban Law That Requires Government Approval of Creative Production

By Sarah Cascone, August 15, 2018



Artistas Cubanxs en Contra del Decreto 349.

Photo courtesy of Artistas Cubanxs en Contra del Decreto 349.

The Cuban government says it must pre-approve all independent cultural activity starting December 1, according to legislation first published in the official state paper, *Gaceta de Cuba*, in July. But artists are pushing back against Decree 349, as the legislation is titled.

Artistas Cubanxs en Contra del Decreto 349 have created a Facebook page and published an opposition letter to Cuban president Miguel Diaz Canel, who has been in power since April.

“We believe that Decree 349 does not present a sound vision of the future for Cuban culture,” reads the letter. “The new laws restrict the creativity of the Cuban people, and criminalize[s] independently produced art, limiting the ability to determine who can be an artist to a state institution.”

The signatories include artists Tania Bruguera, Coco Fusco, and Enrique Risco, as well as human rights attorney Laritza Diversent and curator Yanelys Nuñez. They are calling for a dialogue between state officials and Cuban artists, who they say were not consulted about the new legislation. So far the letter has drawn more than 300 additional signatures.

“The law will empower a new cadre of inspectors to act as roving censors that can shut any cultural event down at a moment’s notice,” wrote Fusco in an email sent to artnet News and other journalists. “Not only will artists be penalized with fines, possible confiscation of their equipment, and eventual arrest—any owner of an establishment that provides space and resources for performances and events will also be liable.”

Under the decree, bars and music venues cannot hire musicians to perform without government approval, and artists will need state permission to sell their work. It also bans the sale of “books with content that is prejudicial to ethical and cultural value[s].”

The law appears aimed at rappers and reggaeton musicians in particular, Fusco says, but will “also affect other artists who exhibit or publish independently. There is an implicit class and race bias in this legislation in that the targeted cultural production is authored by black musicians and poorer, self-taught artists.”

Several artists have staged public protests about the decree. According to Fusco, police detained Yanelys Nuñez Lleyva and Otero Alcántara in order to prevent an August concert staged to oppose the legislation and physically assaulted more than a dozen musicians in attendance. And at a July performance in front of Havana’s Capitolio building, artists Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Amaury Pacheco, and Soandry Del Río were among those arrested, as reported by *Translating Cuba*. Earlier this year, Alcántara co-founded the #00Bienal de La Habana, an independent art biennial organized as an alternative to the state-funded Havana Biennial, which had its 2018 edition postponed because of damage caused by Hurricane Irma.

The government cracked down on the event, preventing some artists from entering the country and threatening others with detention if they did not leave voluntarily. The Cuban Artists and Writers Union denounced the crowd-funded exhibition as being “organized with funds from the counter-revolution’s mercenaries.”

The recently published letter on the legislation addressed this statement as well. “The fact that a Cuban artist manages to finance his or her creations independently does not make him or her into an opponent of the government—millions of individuals around the world have found opportunities to express themselves outside established cultural institutions and industries,” it says.

“The history of the arts demonstrates that the questioning of established systems of thought is the motor of aesthetic progress,” the letter reads. “Without it, art would not have advanced.”

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/artists-protesting-cuban-law-government-approval-1333169>

Cuban artists urge revision of decree feared to hike censorship

OCTOBER 31, 2018 / 7:16 AM By Sarah Marsh

HAVANA (Reuters) - Cuban artists and international rights activists are pushing the government to revise legislation due to take effect in December that they fear will hamper creativity and increase censorship on the Communist-run island.



Painter Roberto Loeje shows his work at his studio in Havana, Cuba, September 14, 2018.
REUTERS/Alexandre Meneghini

The decree, published in July, bars artists, be they musicians or painters, from “providing their services” in any space open to the public, including private venues, without prior government approval. It updates a decree redacted before the market reforms launched in 2010 by former President Raul Castro, which required them only to get approval to operate in state-run spaces. Since then, the government had tolerated artists independently presenting their work in private venues, as part of a broader Cuban economic, social and political opening. Cuban artists’ greater autonomy, thanks also to increased access to the internet and freedom to travel, led to a blossoming of cultural activity. Independent recording studios and art galleries have burgeoned.

But that autonomy has made it harder for the one-party state to ensure artists are paying taxes - many do not - and to police the cultural sector, which it has promoted heavily since the 1959 revolution.

Some independent artists are worried they will not be able to get state approval due to bureaucratic hurdles and that the decree will cost them their livelihood.

“I never thought of emigrating before but now I am,” said Luis Puerta, who has been sustaining his family of four by privately selling his stylized paintings of jazz musicians.

Others are convinced the decree is destined to silence them.

“This is a measure of repression because you won’t get government approval if you are not within the socialist ideology,” said performance artist, sculptor and self-described “artist” Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara.

In a country that frowns on public dissent, Otero Alcantara has led a rare campaign against the measure, known as Decree 349, by dozens of artists working outside state institutions.

Together they have flooded social media with slogans like “Law that converts art into a crime,” hosted musical and other artistic performances in protest at the decree and sent letters to authorities.

Amnesty International has backed their campaign, saying Decree 349 - one of the first to be signed by President Miguel Diaz-Canel after he took office in April - is a “dystopian prospect” for Cuba’s artists.

The European Union also raised concerns in talks with Cuba on human rights in Havana this month.

The Cuban government did not respond to a request for comment. Commentators for state-run media have said Decree 349 aims to prevent tax evasion and the spread of a pseudo-culture of bad taste or that aims to “incite public disorder.”

A NEW GREY PERIOD? There are signs the artists are making themselves heard. According to the Communist Party newspaper Granma, the culture minister said this month that the decree “would be revised (with the artists) with regard to the redaction of norms and contraventions.”

Not as many well-established artists working with state institutions have come out openly against Decree 349.

Yet the measure affects them too, as it establishes sanctions for any artist whose work misuses national symbols or includes certain content such as violence and sexist or vulgar language.

The decree outlines punitive actions, such as confiscation of goods and fines, to be taken against those who sell books with “content against ethical and cultural values.”

Some Cubans say they agree with restoring traditional values and believe the decree will, for example, curtail the proliferation of reggaeton videos reducing women to sex objects. However, Amnesty International has warned that the vague wording of the decree could allow it to be used broadly to crack down on dissent.

“It would be a painful return to a gray, anti-cultural past of censorship,” said Marco Castillo, an artist who was part of the critically acclaimed collective Los Carpinteros (The Carpenters) until it disbanded this summer. Castillo was referring to the “gray five years” of Stalinization of culture in the early 1970s, when Havana persecuted artists for a supposed lack of commitment to the Revolution - a move for which it later apologized.

Havana theater group El Ciervo Encantado has posted a video on social media parodying the prospect of a new class of inspectors tasked with ensuring artists stick to the rules. “Is this a work of art?,” asks self-important bureaucrat “Comrade Chela,” brandishing a magnifying glass at a work of graffiti in the video. “Or is this simply a maltreatment of social property?” she asks, raising her eyebrows and pursing her lips.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-art/cuban-artists-urge-revision-of-decree-feared-to-hike-censorship-idUSKCN1N51GV>

The New York Times

Cuba’s Slow Rebirth

As the traumas of Fidel Castro’s revolution fade, young Cubans are letting go of the past and embracing a new, global present.

By Ruth Behar. Dec. 4, 2018



Idania del Río, the owner of the graphic design shop Clandestina, in Havana. Credit: Yamil Lage / Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Turning Point: Raúl Castro resigns as Cuba’s president.

“It was yours,” my mother announced. She held out a girl’s blue school uniform.

She’s 82 now and still surprises me with mementos she took from Cuba and has kept packed away since the ‘60s.

A star was sewn onto the front and it had a thick hem to be let out as I grew.

“Don’t you remember?”

I shook my head.

“You wore it when you were 4 years old. You went to the same Jewish day school in Havana that I went to. Classes were in Spanish and Yiddish. Wasn’t that amazing? Then Castro came.”

I grew up, as did so many children of Cuban exiles, traumatized by what my parents had lost in the revolution of 1959 led by Fidel Castro. They had believed in the social reforms Castro envisioned — equal rights for women and Afro-Cubans, free day care, land for farmers, housing for the poor, health care for all and education for every child — and felt betrayed by his turn to authoritarianism and communism.

Like other exiles of their generation, my parents refuse to return to the island. They prefer to hold on to their memories of a vanished Cuba. For nearly 30 years I’ve been going back on my own, trying to understand what Cuba has become.

There are also the children who stayed, the generation raised by revolutionaries, who tried to build a just society through volunteer work and communal sacrifice. They struggled through periods of profound scarcity and now face the decline of Cuba’s national welfare system. A friend who supports her parents with her Airbnb business wondered who she might have been, what she might have attained, had they left.

“You’re lucky your parents took you away when you were little,” she told me.

But as Cuba approaches the 60th anniversary of its revolution, a new generation, both in and out of Cuba, the grandchild generation, is shedding the traumas of the past.

Young Cubans today are individualists who would have been labeled “ideological diversionists” by elders who cut sugarcane for the good of the nation. Although they’ve grown up hearing about the horrors of American imperialism and the ongoing trade embargo, they sport tattoos that declare, “All You Need is Love” or “Live Hard.”

And they adore brands. In May, 2016, Chanel came to Havana for a fashion show. The contrast in generations was starkly on display when Fidel Castro’s grandson Tony Castro (Antonio Castro Ulloa), an aspiring 19-year-old model who is the spitting image of his grandfather, made an appearance on the Paseo del Prado.

A self-made celebrity of this new generation is the 37-year-old Idania del Río. She returned to Havana from working abroad when private businesses became legal under Raúl Castro. Her graphic design shop, Clandestina, offers silkscreened T-shirts that caught President Obama’s attention on his historic visit to Cuba in March 2016, and are now sold on Amazon.

A surprising number of young Cubans can afford to spend \$28 — close to the island’s average monthly salary — on a Clandestina T-shirt, but their ambitions can only go so far. They work in private restaurants, fix up rooms to rent to tourists, give an old Chevy a second life as a hot-pink taxi. They want Cuba to become an “ordinary” country. Meanwhile, almost all transactions are still in cash, no one has a credit card and money is kept under the bed.

Reopening the island to the capitalist world has also brought growing inequality. In the early 1990s, when I started returning to Cuba, I noticed dark curtains hiding the goods in tourist shops to prevent Cubans from desiring things they couldn’t afford. Now, everything is in plain view — including Chanel.

In the past, emigration was a way to escape. But countries around the world are closing their borders, and the United States no longer offers Cubans a fast route to citizenship.

Young Cubans now dream not of emigrating but of traveling. The grandson of my Afro-Cuban childhood nanny wants to visit Guantánamo, where his father is from. Yet earning the equivalent of \$12 a month, he finds even saving for a bus fare from Havana to Guantánamo, about 600 miles, to be prohibitively expensive.

His brother-in-law chimed in during our conversation, “My dream is to travel the world and then return to Cuba.” He laughed, yet there was no sense he yearned for political change. “Cuba doesn’t have gangs or guns. It’s a safe country.”

The economic difficulties that confront these two young Afro-Cuban men have to be weighed against their feeling of security. Racism has not ended in Cuba, and many feel it has increased with the rise of private enterprise, whose benefits tilt clearly toward white Cubans. But one of the revolution’s lasting achievements is to have instilled a strong national pride in Cuba’s African heritage, giving black Cubans a voice that continues to push for greater equality and the right to black self-expression — even the Black Lives Matter movement has supporters on the island.

But Cuba is on an uncertain threshold as it moves into a post-Castro future. While it can be proud of constitutional reforms that include proposing to legalize gay marriage, a primal demographic issue haunts the country.

Birthrates in Cuba have dropped alarmingly, and the population is the oldest in all of Latin America. A woman I know used to say, “I’d never bear a child for Fidel Castro.” Others say it is economic conditions, particularly a severe housing shortage, that has made the decision to have children especially complex.

Our former neighbors in Havana still live in the same modest two-bedroom apartment. Their granddaughter has slept all her life in the same bedroom with them, her now 90-year-old grandparents, who are walking advertisements for Cuba’s excellent health care, while her parents occupy the other bedroom. She’s 37 and her boyfriend of more than a decade has lived in his grandparents’ apartment his whole life.

“We can’t get married because we don’t have anywhere to live,” she told me. “I don’t think we’ll have children. I’m getting old. Anyway, we don’t earn enough to support a child.” I imagined what her daughter might look like, wearing the school uniform and red kerchief of a young pioneer, and I remembered the uniform my mother kept, clinging to the memory of my interrupted childhood in Cuba.

Her grandmother was, in Cuban grandmotherly fashion, listening in. Years ago she sold her wedding ring to buy an electric fan, but she lives without regrets. Smiling at her granddaughter, she said, “You never know what might happen. Aquí vivimos de la esperanza.”

Here we live from hope. I know her granddaughter no longer believes in utopian dreams of what might be. She is determined to live her life in the present, like other Cubans of the new generation.

But she kindly smiled back at her grandmother and said, “I know, abuela.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/04/opinion/cuba-castro-economic-growth.html>