

## The Ballet Continuum - Session 2 Outline Modern Dance Trailblazers

- 1 21<sup>st</sup> century ballet appetizer: *After the Rain*, choreography Christopher Wheeldon, 2005, music Arvo Part. Blending of classical ballet, neoclassical style, modern; use of sculptural poses, fluid transitions.
- 2 Factors that spurred and influenced the trailblazers in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - a Little ballet in US at the time, most existing dance being either social or light entertainment in form of vaudeville, minstrelsy, and spectacles with chorus lines
  - b Feminist activity for the right to vote and against social, economic, and clothing restrictions
  - c A national spirit of invention and pride in doing things differently from Europe
  - d Advances in technology and archaeology
  - e Orientalism in art
- 3 Trailblazing Artists
  - a Loie Fuller. 1862 – 1928. Adapted a form of skirt dancing to create a powerful visual experience by adding colored lighting, mirrors, and arm wands. *Serpentine Dance*
  - b Isadora Duncan 1877-1927. Introduced a new style of dance
    - i Simple, natural movements with focus on the arms, hands, and upper body more than the legs, and bare feet
    - ii Musical accompaniment featuring symphonic scores
    - iii Emphasis on the expression of emotion
  - c Ruth St. Denis 1879 – 1968. Tapped into Orientalism fervor
    - i Developed her version of “Oriental” movement and poses
    - ii Blended spectacle, spiritualism, sensuality, and the exotic
    - iii Retroactively, tainted with issues of cultural appropriation
    - iv Married Ted Shawn, also her dance and business partner
    - v Lasting accomplishment: creation, with Ted Shawn, of the Denishawn school and company in CA
      - (1) Taught ethnic dances, ballet, Delsarte poses, music theory, Dalcroze eurhythmics.
      - (2) Gave training and initial performance experience to great classic modern dancers Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman
  - d Ted Shawn, 1891 – 1972.
    - i With St. Denis, created the Denishawn brand in teaching and performance
    - ii After separating from St. Denis, started a company of all male dancers to develop a virile dance style for men and establish dance as an honorable profession for the American male
    - iii Lasting contribution: establishment of Jacob’s Pillow in western Massachusetts as a major dance venue, school, and archive, primarily focused on modern dance, and supporting innovative dance, young artists, and work of underrepresented groups
  - e Mary Wigman, 1886 – 1973.
    - i Leader in German Expressionist dance
    - ii Student of Rudolph Laban, creator of dance notation and movement analysis systems
- 4 21<sup>st</sup> century inspiration from the Orient: *Layla and Majnun*, choreography Mark Morris, 2016, music from 1908 Azerbaijan opera, arranged and played by Yo-Yo Ma’s Silkroad Ensemble.
  - a Musicians, singers, dancers on stage together, emphasizing interconnection of music, story, and dance.
  - b Distance between men and women indicating rules and restraint in the society.
  - c Movement vocabulary similar to many folk dance styles: moving in lines, stepping with syncopated weight shifts, spinning. Morris began dance training and performance career in a folk dance group.

I will provide outline of Ballets Russes discussion after we finish it next week.