

Contemporary

What is contemporary dance?

Contemporary is a style of expressive dance that combines elements of dance styles/techniques, allowing for expression, interpretation and emotional responses.



This style developed at the start of the 20th century in America, but is influenced from styles across the world.

What are the key features of this style?

Within the contemporary style, the main features consist of contact and release, floor work, fall and recovery and improvisation.

In this style, bare flexed feet are prominent and contemporary choreography encourages a performer to explore various lines and shapes with their body and methods of travelling.

Key Vocabulary and Terms:

Accuracy

The ability to perform given movements with precision

Artistic Intention

What the choreographer intends to communicate through the choreography to the audience/viewer

Focus

Where the dancer is looking or facing during a performance

Motif

A short sequence of movement (usually 8-16 counts)

Key Features:

Contractions, releases, tilts, rolls, turns, jumps, lunges, falls, shift of body weight, change of direction, use of levels.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a technique used in contemporary dance. The focus is mainly on the relationship between movements and performance and encourages a performer to explore.



Improvisation is a very personal technique as it is formed through the ideas, feelings and creativity of the individual.

Key Features:

- Use of space and floor
- Exploring ways of moving body parts
- Emotion and expression

Steve Paxton is a choreographer who focuses on a technique called contact improvisation. This can be a duet dance characterized by fluid movement, weight exchange, and touch. Partners improvise the dance using the natural movement of the body.

Contraction & Release

Martha Graham developed a technique called 'contraction and release'. Graham is known for being a pioneer in contemporary dance and this technique is used frequently in modern choreography.



Contraction and release uses different parts of the body in opposition to one another to create spirals for dramatic tension. It also incorporates formal exaggerations of "natural" movements

Key Features:

- Spirals
- Exaggerated movement
- Contrast in pace
- Floor work

Fall & Recovery

Doris Humphrey developed a technique called 'fall and recovery' which focuses on balance and how a body responds to gravity. Humphrey's technique is also thought to be one of the first traditional techniques that is still used in modern contemporary choreography.



This technique requires a performer to explore levels, high releases, tipping in and out of movements and suspension.

Key Features:

- Drop Swings
- Contrast in speed
- Relationship between levels and momentum

Lyrical

Lyrical is a form of contemporary dance that combines ballet and jazz. However, unlike the traditional technique of ballet and jazz, lyrical allows a performer to add their own personal style and expression and combine movements together.



Key Features:

- Expressive
- Communicating a story, theme or emotion
- Interpretation
- Combination of ballet, jazz and traditional contemporary

Year 8 Dance Term 1 Knowledge Organiser – Dancing through the decades

Key vocabulary – Physical & Performance Skills

Extension	The lengthening of body parts outwards. E.g. Straight arms and pointed toes
Flexibility	The range of movement possible in the joints/muscles
Coordination	The ability to use different parts of the body together smoothly and efficiently.
Posture	The way the body is held
Stamina	Ability to maintain physical and mental energy over periods of time.
Timing	Performing the correct movement at the correct time. This should be in time with your group
Musicality	How in time you are with the music
Energy	How much physical effort you apply to the performance
Facial Expressions	Animating the face to engage with your audience/communicate the theme of your performance
Projection	Projecting your movements outwards into the space with appropriate energy.
Dynamic Awareness	Noticing and applying the correct quality to each movement. For example: sharp, soft, fluid etc.

Key questions

Key question	Answer
What has influenced dance over the decades?	A decade is a period of ten years. Dance has evolved over time and has been influenced by many things such as music, art and culture. Over time, dance has been a way to socialise, to have fun, to distract from harsh realities of life events, to celebrate, to express emotions and to show off skills and techniques. Throughout the decades we have seen the change from vaudevilles and dance halls to the introduction of television, films, flash mobs, music videos and social media with the addition of new styles and trends.
What is Escapism?	Escapism is the tendency to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities, by seeking entertainment or engaging in methods of expression such as dance and performing. Events such as the two world wars caused devastation, separating families and destroyed homes and belongings. In order to feel better and express feelings, dance became a method of social interaction which has continued over time.

Fundamental/Topic specific knowledge:**Swing Dance: 1920s-1950s**

Swing dance is an 'umbrella' term that covers lots of individual styles and techniques. Swing dance combines ballroom and jazz with focus on fast footwork, partner work and musicality.

Key Styles:

- Charleston
- Jive
- Tap
- Lindy Hop

Swing dance dominated the 20s-50s and was regularly performed at vaudevilles, clubs, dance marathons and balls. Swing dance was made popular by famous performers such as Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, Ginger Rogers and Gene Kelly who performed swing and tap dance in movies and vaudeville shows.

1920's Charleston:

The Charleston is a dance named after the harbor city of Charleston, South Carolina. The peak year for the Charleston as a dance by the public was mid-1926 to 1927. The dance was first seen to be performed on the streets in America and in nightclubs, but the first official onstage viewing was seen on an all-black Broadway musical called 'Runnin Wild'.

Key Features of Charleston:

- Toes-in, heels-out twisting steps (footwork)
- Inverted knees
- Swinging arm movements

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Key vocabulary - Choreographic Devices:

Canon	Performing the same movement one after another.
Unison	Performing the same movement at the same time
Formation	The position you stand in to perform.
Levels	The height at which you perform your movement
Repetition	Repeating the same movement or phrase more than once
Accumulation	Gaining dancers as a phrase is performed
Juxtaposition	Showing a contrast on stage. This can be applied using speed or style etc
Fragmentation	Dividing the dance into smaller chunks and reordering this to create a new phrase

Key questions

Key question	Answer	
What was the timeline for the development of dance?	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Dance Style</u>
	1920s	Swing Dance
	1930s	Jive
	1940s	Mambo
	1950s	Cha Cha
	1960s	Locking & Popping
	1970s	Disco, Stepping, Salsa
	1980s	Jacking & Voguing
	1990s	Hip Hop & Iconic music videos (vogue, macarena, running man, electric slide)
	2000s	Krumping, electro dance, flash mobs
2010s	Viral trends (dougie, floss, watch me)	
Who influences the trends within dance throughout the decades?	There are many pioneers of dance, famous choreographers, music artists, dancers and icons to name a few. More recently social influencers have become the main influence for the trends within the dance industry. This is due to the increase in popularity of apps such as Tik Tok and YouTube.	

Fundamental/Topic specific knowledge

1970's Disco Trends:

Disco dance was heavily influenced by jazz, samba, cha cha and tango. Disco reached its popularity peak with the release of 'Saturday Night Fever'. Disco dancing was a style that emerged from nightclubs in Philadelphia and New York City and focussed on the musicality of the fast beats in funk music.

Key features:

- Large hip movements
- Pivot turns
- Pointing fingers

1990's Hip Hop:

Hip hop dance falls under the umbrella term for Street Dance. It began to develop during the 1970's, inspired by Hip-Hop music & the movements of African dancing. Hip Hop was a style for individuals without any professional dance training but with a natural instinct for movement. Throughout the 90's Hip-Hop became more of a commercialised style featuring in music videos and films.

Key features:

- Bounces and Rocks
- High Energy
- Social Grooves