MODERNIST ADVENTURES
IN MUSIC AND DANCE
PIANIST KATIE OSTROSKY
CHOREOGRAPHERS RENITA FERNANDES J'AIMÉE GRIFFITH
MARY ANN MAYER GRETA NUÑEZ BRIANA SAYLES CHRISTA ST. JOHN

WORKS BY HORST | LLOYD | CAGE | MILLER
MAY 2, 2021  7:30 PM  STREAMING AT MUSIC.OU.EDU/LIVE
SHARP CONCERT HALL, CATLETT MUSIC CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
PIECES

Perry-Mansfield Correctives in Dance Form, 1931

I. Posture

Five Pieces for Dance

I. Puritan Hymn (from Panorama), 1935
   Choreographers: Renita Fernandes and Briana Sayles
   Dancers: Emma Lozano, Randi Tucker, Emmy Wildermuth, Riley Henderson, Maggie Schoenfeld, Bethey Ruble

II. Blues, 1939
   Choreographers: J’aime Griffith and Mary Ann Mayer
   Dancers: Glenne Harvell, Reese Tweeter-Morris, Brittan Yalahilik

III. Piping Tune, 1939
   Choreographer: J’aime Griffith
   Dancers: Sarah Rutherford, Rosie Granito

IV. Theme and Variations, 1937
   Choreographers: Renita Fernandes and Briana Sayles
   Dancers: Maggie Schoenfeld, Nicholas Nickelberry

V. Dance Hall Study, 1939
   Choreographers: Mary Ann Mayer, Greta Núñez
   Dancers: Autumn Carman, Keeleigh Everett, Mia Robbins, Aubrey Scott, Hunter Sheehan, Lucia Torres

Perry-Mansfield Correctives in Dance Form, 1931

II. The Idol

III. Flip Flap

Our Spring Will Come, 1943
   for prepared piano (pre-recorded)
   Choreographer: J’aime Griffith
   Dancers: Hanna Golden, Camryn Fry, Corinne White, Lexie Conley

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V. Frog

The Daily Paper: A Ballet in Five Scenes, 1945

I. Headlines (Prisoner Escaped)
   Choreographer: J’aime Griffith & Dancers
   Dancers: Grace Evans, Candy Yuan, Jay Douglas, Emily Geffre

II. Foreign Affairs
   Choreographer: J’aime Griffith, Greta Núñez
   Dancers: Camryn Fry, McKinley Kear, Alycesandra Martinez

III. Bargain Sale
   Choreographer: Mary Ann Mayer
   Dancers: Lexi Connelly, Kimberly Hartan, Hallie Kurin, Lauren Rigney, Cameron Terry

IV. Advice to the Lovelorn
   Choreographer: Christa St. John
   Dancers: Keyve Martin, Hunter Sheehan

V. Comic Strip
   Choreographer: Greta Núñez
   Dancers: Sarah Marcus, Carson McHugh, Avery Beneett, Alex Brewster, Brooke Strachan, Emma Hallin

Perry-Mansfield Correctives in Dance Form, 1931

X. Inhalation and Exhalation
People

Katie Ostrosky
Pianist

Renita Fernandes
Choreographer

J’aime Griffith
Choreographer

Mary Ann Mayer
Choreographer

Greta Nuñez
Choreographer

Briana Sayles
Choreographer

Christa St. John
Choreographer

Dancers:
This work for movement and piano was published in 1931 for the purpose of focused technique-work on specific body forms. It contains “three series of Body Mechanics designed to attain an efficient and beautiful body for use in every day [as] life, in sports, or in dancing.”

These exercises were created for the Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School and Camp, which was founded in 1911 in Steamboat Springs, CO, and continues to operate to this day.

The school was established to teach and explore “natural dance forms” — a departure from the “unnatural” positions of classical ballet. Seeking natural modes of movement was one of the guiding principles of early modern dance, with Isadora Duncan’s (1888-1927) fixation on free movement inspired by classical Greek arts. Unsurprisingly, dance’s sister arts of music and theater also experienced trends toward natural movement and rhythm, as the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Eurythmics were also established during this time.

These selections from Perry-Mansfield Correctives in Dance Form have been chosen to highlight this important movement in modern dance. In addition to Louis Horst’s musical score, Portia Mansfield included detailed diagrams of movements with directions for how to synchronize the movements to the music.

Example 1

Five Pieces for Dance, Norman Lloyd (1909-1980)

This collection of dances by Norman Lloyd features works that were written between 1935 and 1939 in collaboration with, and inscribed for, several pillars of the modern dance scene. Puritan Hymns (from Panorama), composed in collaboration with Martha Graham (1894-1991), was first performed with piano and dancers at the Bennington School of the Dance in 1935. This was Graham and Lloyd’s first collaboration, and was later fully staged and orchestrated. The choreography for this concert represents the essential elements, fire, water, air, earth, and space.

Blues was written for Louis Horst, and is a modernist take on the vernaculariform. Opening with the dissonance of an Ebs6 10 chord, Lloyd blurs the line between major and minor mode, whose emphasis on the “blue notes” becomes prominent to the point of mannerism. The choreography mirrors the music’s dichotomy of formal vs. vernacular style, through the blending of jazz and classical form.

Our interpretation of Piping Tune diverges from the writings score significantly, in that the opening and closing sections are originally composed based on the musical elements found in the main piece. The sense of improvisation and exploration of space and sound are essential to this genre, and we honor that by working to create a unique vision of this piece.

Theme and Variations, features a short theme that presents the harmonic and melodic material that forms the rest of the piece. It is dedicated to choreographer Martha Hill.

Dance Hall Study, the final work in the set of Lloyd pieces, was written for Anna Sokolow (1910-2000), a dancer and choreographer known for her political activism, and inclusion of themes relating to communism and social justice in her work. The choreography highlights the asymmetrical meters of the music, depicting the uncertainty and instability of the lives of victims of the Holocaust, while juxtaposing suffering under horrific conditions with a sense of hopefulness.

Our Spring Will Come, John Cage (1912-1992)

This piece, composed for prepared piano, was written for the choreographer, dancer, and anthropologist, Pearl Primus (1919-1994). Primus dedicated her career to elevating African dance as a serious artform. Her choreography featured best beans, the isolation and articulation of body parts, and rhythmically persuasive movement. Our rendition of this piece underscores these characteristics, and portrays the exuberant optimism often seen in Primus’ work.

John Cage composed extensively for dance, and worked closely with many choreographers including Pearl Primus, Hanya Holm (1893-1992), Martha Graham, Paul Taylor (1930-2018), and especially his longtime partner, Merce Cunningham (1919-2009). This piece uses both prepared and unprepared piano sounds, and uses bamboo strips and screws to create the unique sound pallette. Due to logistical reasons, we pre-recorded the music for this piece.

Pearl Primus performance.

Baron-Hulton Archive/Getty Images


The Daily Paper is a cheeky take on what one might expect to find in the newspaper of the day in 1945. Lighthearted and fun, this piece does not take itself too seriously, and our interpretation preserves that aesthetic. The music was composed by Freda D. Miller, modern dance composer and accompanist for dance, and Broadway. As a student at the Bennington School of the Dance, Miller studied composition with both Louis Horst and Norman Lloyd. It is possible to hear both of their influences in Miller’s work, in particular with “wrong-note” writing present in both Lloyd’s Blues and Miller’s Comic Strip as well as quavil and quortal harmonies found in both Bargain Sale and Advice to the Loveram, which are reminiscent of Horst’s harmonic language. Miller’s style is much more theatrical, however, and it is possible to hear the strong influence of Broadway in her writing. From the humorous take on Rosie the Riveter in Comic Strip to the representation of North American trade policy in Foreign Affairs, and to the “Love in a pandemic” rendition of Advice to the Loveram, our presentation of The Daily Paper nods at the 1940’s while bringing this ballet into the present.
GRATITUDE

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