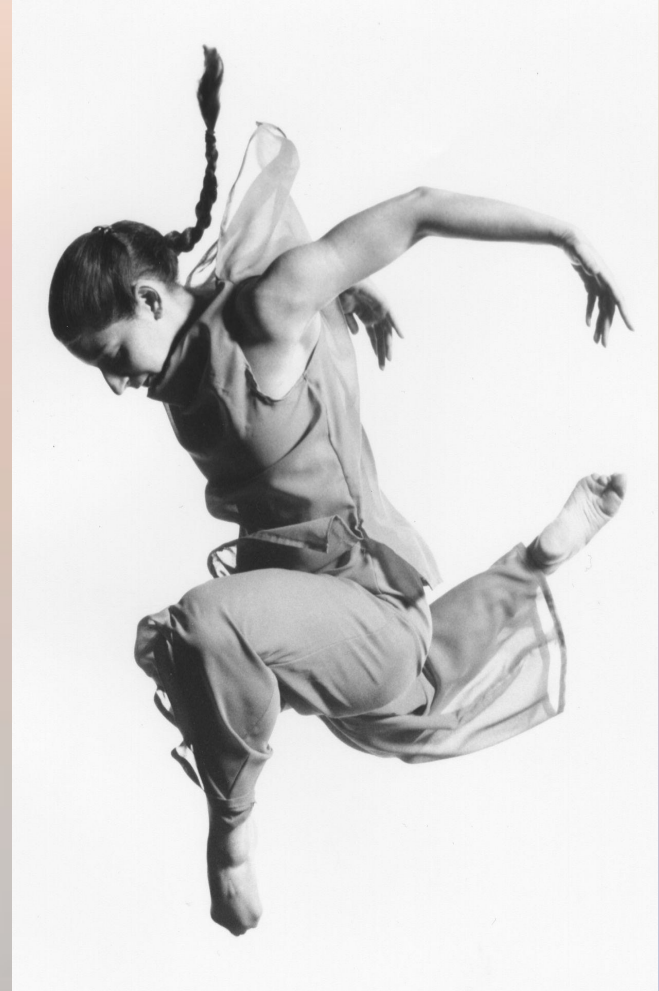


# *Modern Dance*

*Dance of the twentieth century*

# *Modern Dance*

- Intention was to create a new free dance and tear down the old ballet regime
- Multidimensional
- Originated in Europe
- By 1930, US had become center for dance experimentation



# *Choreographer vs Performer*



# Relationship of Movement to Music

- In traditional ballet- movement parallel to rhythms of music
- In modern dance-
  - Dance may be composed first
  - Momentum of dance may run counter to rhythms of music
  - Music may be absent

# History

## First 3 Decades (starting about 1900)

- Reaction against late 19<sup>th</sup> century ballet
- Isadora Duncan
- Two developments
  - System of natural expressive gestures
  - Eurhythmic



# Isadora Duncan



- Born May 27, 1878
- Youngest of 4
- Started dancing young
- Dance over formal education
- Mother of modern dance
- Did not believe in formal ballet

# Isadora Duncan

- Lived in many parts of the world
- Had many love affairs
- Criticized for what she danced in
- Tragedy made her not want to dance anymore
- Career over in 1920's
- Died September 14, 1927



# Isadora Duncan Choreography





# Second Wave (1930)

- Rejected external movement sources in favor of internal ones
- Martha Graham
- Defined modern dance and ballet in opposition to each other



# Martha Graham



- Born May 11, 1894
- Influence on dance compared to influence of Picasso on modern art
- Enrolled in Denishawn School
- Critics described her dances as “ugly”
- Louis Horst
- “contraction and release”

# Martha Graham

- Martha Graham Dance Company
- Dance career lasted 75 years
- Collaborations with other modern artists
- Dances had “spaztic jerks”
- Died April 1, 1991



# Martha Graham Choreography



Alessandra Prosperi and Kenneth Topping in Martha Graham's  
"Seraphic Dialogue" (1955)  
Photo: ©John Deane

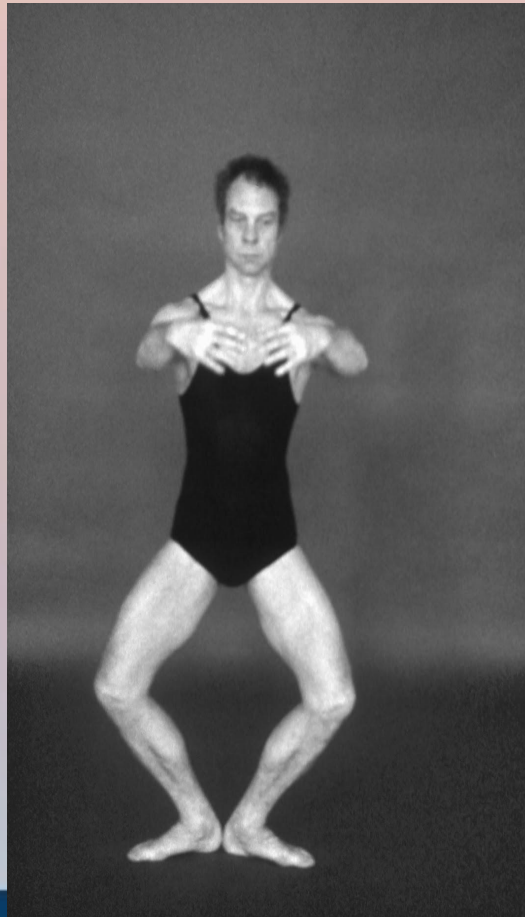
## Third Period (1945)

- Began after WWII ended and continues today
- Found movement sources in proliferation of 20<sup>th</sup> century dance styles
- Merce Cunningham revolutionized conventional dance
- No longer interested in traditional techniques



# Merce Cunningham

- Born in Centralia, Washington in 1919
- Studied different styles as a kid



# The Beginning

- Joined Martha Graham's Dance Company in 1939
- Questioned the use of music from the past
- Felt too much concentration on style in modern dance
- Every movement had a meaning
- Curious about other possibilities
- Ballet stimulated interests in mechanics of dancing

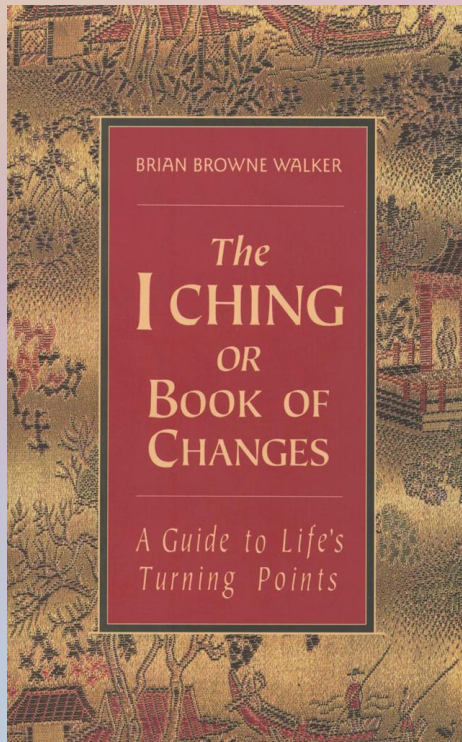
# Interaction with John Cage

- In summer of 1942, at Graham's Company, joined by Cage
- suggested the use of music as a determinant in choreographic structure
- Cornerstone of postmodern dance
- [Variations V \[Excerpts\]](#)



# Influences

- Both deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism
  - “Get out of his own way”
- *The Book of Changes*



# Root of an Unfocus 1944

- Start of Cunningham's belief that the independence of music and dance offered him greater expressive freedom



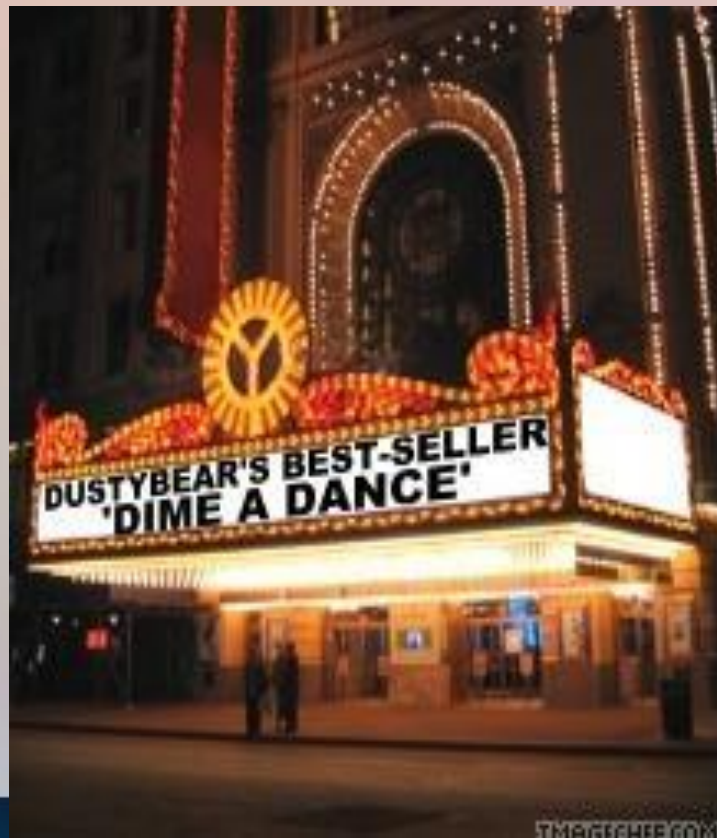
# Departure from Graham Company (1945)

- Experimented with motion for its own sake
- Structure without meaning
- Dancers had difficulty perceiving



# Chance

- Wanted to represent deeper level of reality beyond subjectivity
- By surrendering to chance, hoped to avoid patterns
- *Dime a Dance*



- A dancer could be “standing still one moment, leaping or spinning the next. There were familiar and unfamiliar movements, but what was continuously unfamiliar was the continuity, freed as it was from the usual cause and effect relations”-*Anton Dolin, Autobiography*

# Reactions

Viewers can give their imaginations freedom to  
wander

-or-

Feel boredom or anger

# Choreography

- Composed dances with interchangeable parts
- Non repeatable performances-reflects the multiplicity of modern life



# Technology

- For next 30 years, forged ahead into video then began composing with computers
- Computer- tool for indicating movement he no longer could





- For people who “think”, his dances reflected the expanded consciousness of the mid twentieth century

# Overview

- Movement more fluid and contains dynamic highlights
- Choreography very diverse and can not be categorized as any specific dance style

