

## **The Advent of Contemporary Dance in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Contemporary dance is a new genre of dance which emerged in America and Europe as a break away campaign from classical ballet. Whereas contemporary dance began in America and Europe as a revolution against convention, in Nigeria, its advent is not seen as a rebellion against convention per se, but a redirection/reinvention of tradition based on current observations. Prominent Nigerian contemporary dance artistes such as Christopher Abdul, Dayo Liadi, Usman Abubakar, Qudus Onikeku, Kafayat Oluwatoyin Shafau (popularly called Kaffy) and Becky Umeh have been popularising the dance genre by creating personalised contemporary dance steps under the influence of tradition. This study examined how contemporary dance emerged in Nigeria mainly through a method where various scholarly perceptions were analysed. The discovery is that contemporary dance has been evolving in Nigeria from 1861 through the conflict of the Nigerian and European cultures experienced during colonialism before the age of cultural consciousness in Nigeria influenced particularly by the Aladura church. Hubert Ogunde became the doyen of contemporary dance by fusing Nigerian and European dance steps. This was the dawn of dance commercialisation in Nigeria with Hubert Ogunde forming the first professional dance company in 1961 to package aesthetic dance presentations. Nigerian universities also contributed its quota towards the emergence of the dance genre, especially through the academic and practical foundations laid by Peggy Harper. Contemporary dance in Nigeria is continually being influenced by different shades of the

indigenous culture in addition to application of imported materials, especially from America and Europe. In as much as contemporary dance in Nigeria is perceived to reflect traces of the Nigerian culture/attitude and perspectives exotic/imported cultures, it is never static. It evolves with time; and with each generation of dancer-choreographers professing the trend of contemporary dance prevalent during that period.

**Keywords:** Contemporary dance, Tradition, Ogunde, Aladura, Culture.

### **Introduction**

Whenever contemporary dance is mentioned, America often comes to mind owing to her revolutionary dance development in the 20th century, especially with the emergence of Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Charles Taylor, Doris Humphrey and Jose Limon. Many scholars often define contemporary dance in relation to these artistes' contribution to the world of dance. For instance, in the Queens Land School Curriculum, contemporary dance is defined as recent dance techniques and choreographic approaches used to interpret movement in an innovative way or to express current issues or ideas that reflect on contemporary life. Derived from and often inclusive of modern dance technique developed by artists including Martha Graham, Jose Limon, and Alwyn Nikoliase (Queensland School Curriculum, 2002).

Obviously, these artistes were prominent with their dance expressions during the modern era, yet, they are often mentioned as key players during the contemporary age. So what is the connection? An attempt to answer this question through deduction from the dates of the modern period is not always successful as different and conflicting dates are usually projected such as: 1500 to 1800; 1500 to 1815; 1450 to 1750 and so on. However, dates of the modern period are also specifically written to reflect different movements and historical landmarks such as literature (1900s - 1940s), modern arts (1860s to 1970s), and modern theatre (1880 - 1945). Modern dance was witnessed from 1880 to 1923 and Isadora Duncan became the first artiste to revolt against conventional dance, particularly ballet to demonstrate her free dance style in 1902. Although, Loie Fuller had her own debut public performance

earlier in 1892, she was more interested in experimenting with stage craft as costume and lighting while Duncan concentrated on pure dancing. These two American artistes led the way for others to establish the modern dance form and style.

Modern dance is declared to have started mainly with Isadora Duncan, yet, a number of scholars proclaim that contemporary dance can be traced to the exploit of Isadora Duncan, thereby making it somewhat difficult to separate the two periods. However, certain scholars are of the view that contemporary dance started from the 1980s. One thing to understand about both modern and contemporary dance is that they are both new, nevertheless, contemporary is newer than modern. Both are revolutions against convention, but the revolution of contemporary is more intense and thorough than that of modern which revolted mainly against the rigidity of ballet. With the coming of modern, there would not have been any need for contemporary since both are new ways of doing things. Modern and contemporary mean something recent or happening now. Staff Writer (2020) defines contemporary issues as "any modern-day trend, event, idea or topic around a current subject that is relevant to people." However, in spite of modern and contemporary dance being synonymous, they are different in time, structure and purpose. Modern dance which started from 1880 to 1923 came mainly as a revolution against ballet and its restrictions. Modern dancers were concerned about creating personalised movements which were revelations of their inner feelings; a reflection of 'expressionism.' Expressionism in dance is a movement which began in 1900 to revolt against ballet because of its restriction or strictness.

In as much as these modern dancers were able to launch their individual dance styles in order to break away from structured steps or convention, they were able to create dance steps and personal dance conventions; the same problem classical ballet was guilty of. In other words, ballet and modern dance movements are codified according to the principles and intentions of the creators. The difference is that, while ballet is centralised with its unified structured steps, modern dance is limited to the steps, style and philosophy of the individual dance-choreographer. Ballet is an academy as much as Graham, Cunningham, Limon and Horton dance techniques are academies of their initiators. With this observation, one can see that modern dance has become centralised

by limiting itself to particular techniques, styles and structures, especially in line with the campaigns of the dance originators

Whereas modern dance is specific in declaration according to the dance drift of dancer-choreographers, contemporary dance does not agree on any global form, style, technique or direction. Rather, it can comprise of many styles or genres such as “classical, ballet, lyrical and jazz” (Dancer’s Gallery, 2020). The list is however inexhaustible as contemporary dance can include any genre or style of dance or reflect any idea the dancer-choreographer wish to communicate which is not streamlined by any convention or standard or by any dance step. It is based on this revolution against convention that the modern dancers are considered in the contemporary world in spite of the fact that their dance style ended up becoming their labels and conventions of their campaigns. All over the world, many nations have their histories and reasons for the emergence of contemporary dance. Whereas contemporary dance started in Europe and America as a rebellion against ballet from 1880, its emergence in Nigeria stems from enculturation from 1861 during colonialism. From then on European and American culture have continued to influence the average Nigerian man in his activities leading him to evolve a new dance genre called contemporary dance and style, in addition to the already existing traditional dance.

### **The Emergence of Contemporary Dance in Nigeria**

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, the various tribes in the geographical area of Nigeria (since the name Nigeria had not been adopted then) were living as homogeneous entities and their art dances were created from their day to day experiences and interactions with the supernatural world. In other words, dance originated from the Nigerian man’s social interaction and ritual engagement. However, in spite of the homogeneity of these communities, they also imbibed dance ideas from other foreign nations. These imbibed ideas were then modified to suit the culture and dance expression of the accepting ethnic communities (Ayandele, 1980, p. 367). Cultural idioms imbibed from neighbouring communities were not seen as contradictory or conflicting with the original intention of the traditional dances of the accepting communities; they were rather appreciated and

absolved into the culture with satisfaction. The indigenous culture(s) and traditional dances remained largely homogeneous until the arrival of the Europeans in 1830. However, Mensah (2006, p. 5) reports that the real impact of Colonialism started in 1861. This was when various traditional institutions and dances were openly discounted by the missionaries (Unuora, 1963, p. 35) and regarded as uncivilised.

Disregarding Nigerian traditional institutions and dances which had been held from generation to generation as sacred and legitimate resulted to an era of confusion and uncertainty for the people. The reason was that the Europeans who were regarded as strangers had become lords over the indigenes. The confusion and uncertainty Nigerians faced was made manifest in the invading European culture leading to its conflict with the Nigerian cultural dances. The Europeans deliberate imposition of their culture, the Christian religion and European dances on the people gave rise to the major social change in Nigeria. Although, Islam was the first invading religion (with much of its impact felt in the north), Christianity which came in later with Colonialism became more effective as Europeans maintained their dominance over the entire Nigerian area and making Western dance more widespread. Kole Omotosho (1978, 131) notes that the coming and influence of Western culture prevented the Arabian culture and dance from having a solid footing in Nigeria; this is why European dance forms are largely embraced by the indigenes over Arabian dances.

The spread of Western dance culture was not singularly achieved by the British; it was more of collaboration between them and the Nigerian educated-middle class citizens who, just returning from Europe demonstrated their love for Western form of concert dance. This imported form of dance with the full support from these Nigerian elite, inspired more indigenous people to imbibe the European culture and dance attitude as a way of life. Different foreign dance styles were introduced by the Europeans and the home-coming Nigerians. The number of Nigerians attracted to this new wave of entertainment increased in number and the need arise for performances to be well arranged, well packaged and structured in order to meet the needs of the increasing number of patrons, and dance enthusiasts, and art lovers in general. The first institution to be inaugurated for the purpose of engaging people

in entertainment was "The Academy" in 1866 (Gbileka, 2005, p. 127). A number of other institutions mainly acting as performing groups were also set up to entertain people for their patronage. Ogunbiyi (1980, p. 18) notes that their programme formats and contents were based on the popular themes and dances in England with, of course, the full support of the colonial masters.

The Church also played a prominent role in influencing social change in Nigeria. The Church was the most powerful tool and ally of the colonial government. The Church special role was to convert as many indigenes as possible to the Christian faith as well as support the colonial administration. The British was able to achieve this mission of conversion with the functions of three main Churches then: the Anglican Church; then called the Church Missionary Society, the Methodist Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Every form of entertainment such as the concerts were fully regulated by these Churches so that performances were strictly based on European themes and dance structure, without any local influence even when the concert dances were performed by Nigerians. Dancing was done in accordance with European mono-rhythmic format which was accepted as an enlightened way of dancing and socialising. Echeruo (1981, p. 359) refer to the holders of such opinion as "well educated and cultured elite of foreign and Nigerian nationalities."

Owing to this development Nigerian indigenes that were already influenced by the emerging British culture had to jump on the bandwagon by appreciating the concert dances and they themselves practiced the European dance steps. Echeruo adds that Lagosians during this Victorian era had to "improve themselves culturally, through imitation, in order to be accepted". A contributor in the *'Lagos Observer'* (1883) laments thus: "native dances and entertainments have deteriorated from what they used to be many years ago".

The British intention to transform the social structure or the Nigerian culture and dance was borne out of the overall objective of expanding the "islands of European civilisation in Africa" (Ogundele, 1999, p. 67). By so doing, indigenes were induced to embrace exotic contemporary life style especially through the introduction of Western formal education. Western education in Nigeria started in 1842 with a curriculum that exposed pupils to



writing, arithmetic, music, concert party and dancing. Traditional dance was completely avoided by the British because they saw it as counterproductive to their programme of civilisation. Rather, the children were introduced to foreign dances such as waltz, fox-trot, tango and quickstep. These dances were extended to the secondary schools and even encouraged at social gatherings.

With time the impact of Western dance forms and education began to be felt among the people so much that some parents began to insist on popular foreign dance forms and education as ideal and superior to Nigerian traditional dance and culture. They saw Western dance and culture as enlightening and refining for their children. Ogundele cites two examples here: first is the case of Chief Eyo Honesty, from the south-eastern part of the country who in 1846 “dismissed centuries of accumulated knowledge” of traditional dances and culture (Ogundele, 1999, p. 69). The second incidence was when parents made a request to the “C. M. S. in Igboland” to forgo the use of the Igbo language, Igbo codes of conduct and traditional dances to instruct their children with English language, Western enlightenment and dance forms.

Education, Western civilisation and the Church were used as powerful instruments against the propagation of Nigerian dance and tradition. Children were encouraged to learn and practice Western dance as a way to express themselves as civilised people. Parents felt delighted watching their children dance and felt a sense of pride about their general conduct fashioned after the European tradition. Apart from learning some of the life styles of the Europeans, parents also learnt from public functions organised by colonial master, and since some of them were working at colonial offices and homes they were able to observe and copy their lifestyles and dance modes. However, perhaps the most effective was from the Nigerian elite who had directly imbibed the European tradition and dance forms from abroad. They were looked up to and regarded as epitome of the ideal values. They sometimes explained and demonstrated to their family members and close associates the nature Western dance and how to politely conduct themselves. Traditional dances, especially by this set of Nigerians mentioned above were increasingly ignored. Herskovits (1954, p. 57) notes that the effect of all these contributed to the attitudinal changes of Nigerians toward their own body of custom and dance.

Christian missionaries were quite aware of the power of traditional dance and indigenous religion as well as the solidarity behind cultural practice. They knew that by allowing the people to freely engage in indigenous cultural affairs may eventually incite them to rise against Western dominance and violation of the indigenous dances and culture. So while the missionaries' discouraged traditional dance among the Christian converts by claiming it to be a sinful act, the colonial administrators equally forbade their Nigerian workers from expressing themselves in their indigenous traditional dances. The colonial administration and the Churches were able to record significant progress with their policy of imperialism especially with Nigerians they had access to in addition to those who worked in government offices and British homes, particularly at the capital headquarters. However, majority of Nigerians who had no direct dealings with the British, mainly those in the rural areas continued to practice traditional religious worship and dances. Those who were occasionally disturbed by the colonial security force had to withdraw from public performances in order not to provoke open confrontation with the security force. So they formed themselves into secret societies where they continued to engage in religious dance and worship.

These Nigerians operating as secret societies as well as others, who still had that undying love for culture, had their strong faith in the indigenous gods and the traditional military machinery. Unfortunately, the combination of the traditional military might, the medicine men and the time honoured gods could not defeat the British and banish them from the lands as expected. The dawn of this reality, Afigbo (1980) reports "shook the people's belief in the superiority of their culture" (p. 424). This period of doubt in the indigenous tradition led to more people turning to Western culture and imbibing their dance forms. Afigbo (1980, 424) commenting on a development in the eastern part of the country states that there was "a widespread drive among the Igbo and their neighbours for transformation of their society" where their religious dances and practices were curbed in order to encourage more of Western dances and civilisation. As more people became converted to the Christian faith, there was a decline in traditional dances and worship of the indigenous deities. They lost faith in the gods, the priests, custom and so abandoned their long revered traditional dances. Masquerade dancing which was (and still)



strongly held as a symbol of ancestral worship and presence partly suffered the same fate of abandonment. Olomola (2000, p. 78) laments that some of the dancing *egungun* or masquerade no longer appear in public. In short, they became extinct.

The British continued to maintain their dominance at the churches and the concerts. They were able to win more converts to Christendom, especially those who felt betrayed by the inactivity of the gods to fight their course. These people came to believe that the Whiteman had special powers which they felt they could equally possess by being converted to the Christian faith. This perception was perfectly in line with the objective of the British who were using the Christian faith, education and Western civilisation to transform the people of Nigeria from indigenous traditional values to new European standards and dance forms. However, since the Nigerian culture is completely different from that of the British, the Europeans could not completely transform Nigerians or prevent them from participating in their indigenous dances. The fact is that the European dance culture is mono-rhythmic while that of Nigeria is poly-rhythmic.

The Europeans disposition to spiritual worship in the church is predominantly based on a single, simple melodic rhythmic pattern which does not accommodate the polyrhythmic and polyphonic pattern of the Nigerian sense of expression where different rhythmic lines are demonstrated simultaneously in dance and music. This rhythmic complexity with occasional syncopation provided the right vitality in the Nigerian dance expression; the absence of this quality often led to a state of lethargy among the worshippers during the colonial days. Unfortunately, the spirit of rhythmic excitement was largely lacking in the Christian religious worship. The absence of this led to a period of great restlessness especially during worship periods. Parishioners or churchgoers started feeling disenchanted in the monotonous rhythmic worship pattern and began to desire for their freedom of expression to dance, clap, ululate and be in direct communication with the preacher. This change could only be possible by unearthing and overlaying the indigenous culture over the imported European and Christian ethics.

Equally disturbed was the educated elite, not mainly because of his zeal for indigenous values, but because of the alienation he

suffered in the hands of the British. His exposure and enlightenment had equipped him well enough to know his rights which he had anticipated to get from the colonial masters in terms of leadership power and control of resources. Unfortunately, the British continued to exercise their dominance in every aspect in spite of the presence of qualified Nigerians to occupy key positions in the civil service. This, the elite regarded as unjust and disappointing. The only option left to be explored was for him reappraise his identity. That is for him to once again realign himself with his ancestral culture as a way of protesting the British absolute dominance.

This reawakening became a period of great culture-conflict for the elite who were always conscious of their dual personality. They were quite aware that they were Nigerians by virtue of their heritage but they felt more convenient at expressing the tenet of Western culture, because, no matter what, they believed it is the only way to show that they were civilised. Their idea of rebirth obviously did not support masquerade dancing or any form of African religious practice. Rather, they held unto the imported European dances which they believed met their elitists' standards. One can observe that in spite of the fact that the indigenous people and the elite were seeking for independence of cultural expression especially during religious Christian worship, the elite had an additional agenda of canvassing for equity in the colonial administration. As for the people, their craving was for them to be allowed to dance freely as Africans. This to them was seen as natural to life instead of copying the synthetic form of worship of the European culture and dance form.

1890 is reported as the year of the major schism (Ogunbiyi, 1980, p. 18) when members of the Church, both priests and laity mainly from the Anglican denomination seceded from the parent Church to form several other churches under the umbrella name of 'African Christian Church'. This revolution marked the preparatory ground for the emergence of a truly indigenous contemporary dance structure where Nigerians began to have conscious influence on the dance mode in the church as well as during public performances. The freedom accomplished by these early breakaway African Churches was highly cherished by the indigenes that saw it as an advantage to express themselves freely in dance during liturgy. Unfortunately, these Churches still held

unto the rhythmic style of the colonial worship which prevented any form of traditional mode of movement. Again, members yearning to Africanise the order of liturgy and reflect more of traditional dance structure embark on another trend of revolution by establishing new churches such as the Pentecostal Church, the Celestial Church, and the Aladura Church. These Churches provided churchgoers ample opportunity to spontaneously react to the homily of the gospel and music rendered. The elements of dance, song and ululation which are regular features of Nigerian traditional dance ended up as major influences for liturgical worship.

Development in these new churches one can say created the required stimulus for the emergence of a true contemporary dance mainly inspired by Nigerian artistes which Hubert Ogunde is reputed for his pioneering role. Imperatively, contemporary dance in the first place began in Nigeria as a result of the admixture of two cultures; British and the Nigerian cultures through colonialism. Nigerian artistes during this preliminary period were greatly controlled by the colonial masters and the Church to adopt European dance structure. This was the case until the revolution by the Afrocentric inspired Churches which gave more control to Nigerians to determine their emerging dance structure which was a mixture of both Nigerian/African and European idioms. This became the hallmark of Ogunde's dance structure.

Hubert Ogunde and his contemporaries such as DuroLadipo, Kola Ogunmola and OyinAdejobi were all primarily under the tutelage and influence of the Church before they became independent. DuroLadipo began his performance career in All Saints Church where he was the choirmaster and lay reader. Ogundeji (1988, p. 101) captured a moment of revolution by Ladipo when he introduced indigenous African dancing and drums during an Easter cantata performance; an experience which introduced African flavour into the usual European form. Kola Ogunmola went to a mission school where he was able to gather experience for his later dance creations. Oyin Adejobi started as an organist and choirmaster of the Ijo Eniyan Oluwa Aladuura Church at Yaba, Lagos. The structure of Ogunde's dance from the beginning of his career followed a regular unchanging pattern starting with the opening glee dance and ending with the closing

glee. These opening and closing glees were done to support his concert and drama performances.



Closing glee of Ogunde's Concert Party dance of 1953  
(Ebun Clark, 1980)

This was the structure until the 1960s when he began to experiment more intentionally with dance. Ogunde's dance which started as simple movement exhibition began to be "complex, highly sophisticated and polished" (Clark, 1980, p. 101). It is at this point Ugolo (2014) commends Ogunde for creating a new "national choreographic style" (p. 30) especially with his Dance Company he formed in 1966. The one and only objective of this Dance Company was to produce dance from Nigerian idioms influenced by contemporaneity. Thus, dance became an independent art form without being inspired by drama.

Two significant points can be observed here: one is that dance began to move out from the confinement of the church and from the elite to the public places. The second observation is the freeing of traditional dance from its conventional ritual or cultic practice. Ritual which used to be the main import of traditional dance began to dissipate its potency. Darah (1981, p. 504) and Okwesa (1988, p. 18) observe the changing mode of some traditional (cultic) dances to a state of deritualisation. The outcome of this can be

tied to the colonial consistent policy of reducing or eradicating the people's interest in African religious worship and their dependence on indigenous deities as sources of existence. Ogunde is generally regarded as the father of contemporary dance because of his ability to recreate traditional dances mainly for capitalist interest. Scholars refer to this period of Ogunde and others such as Kola Ogunmola, ObotundeJimere and DuroLadipo as the folk era where ritual and traditional concepts became secularised (Graft, 1976, 15). Krama (2006) adds that folk entertainment is "... developed from secular rites and thrives more in urban centre; it draws heavily on oral traditions and festivals" (12). The obvious point being stressed here is that Nigerian dance has not moved away from expressing the culture of the people in spite of the arrival of modernism.

Modernism introduced Nigerian dance to modern technology brought by the European civilisation. Nigerian dances have now been adjusted to suite the modern stage especially the proscenium stage or proscenium arrangement. Theatre management and organisation is now considered as important aspects of dance productions. The issue of publicity for instance is expected to be well organised so that the box office can function effectively. Dance performance during contemporary times is largely an indoor experience where lighting technology is employed to create different shades of colours to inspire variant moods in dance interpretations. Modern civilisation has opened up more avenues of dance presentation apart from the stage performances. Dance can also be observed through the medium of television, cinema, video tapes, VCDs, DVDs and even the social media. Apart from achieving dance presentation on these visual modes, there are others which are designed for the auditory. Here dance performances through sounds are captured on radio, audio tapes and discography. Still-pictures of dances can also be appreciated by people. All these have expanded the scope of dance appreciation.

Wole Soyinka with the 1960 Masks in 1960 at the University of Ibadan also influenced contemporary Nigerian dance. The Masks had its membership drawn from Ibadan and Lagos; they include Yemi Lijadu, Ralph Opara, Segun Olusola, Ms.Funlayo Asekun, Olga Adeniyi-Jones, Ms.Tola Soares, Francesca, Periera, Patrick Osie, Femi Euba, Elsie Olusola, Jimmy Johnson, Tunji

Oyelana and Wale Ogunyemi. These personalities under the influence of Soyinka, in addition to other institutions such as the University of Ibadan Dramatic Society, Arts Theatre Performance Group and the Mbari Club promoted and encouraged contemporary dance performances which were admixture of indigenous and Western dance idioms. However, these dance expressions were dependent on drama presentations.

Dance began to receive an independent treatment with the coming on board of Peggy Harper in the early 1960s as a teaching staff in the School of Drama of the University of Ibadan. She was formerly with the University of Legon where she worked in the Music and Dance Department. Peggy Harper came in as a dance specialist and teacher in the University where she began to experiment with different Nigerian dance forms by recreating them with European technique. She had her training in modern American dance where the art of dance is seen more as a kinetic experience and not as a cultural phenomenon. Harper herself remarks that her approach to Nigerian dance study is:

Kinetic and aesthetic rather than anthropological. It is concerned with dancing as dancing: as the formal expressions of the beliefs or aspirations of the dancer in terms of the skills and techniques he employs as a craftsman. The study is made from two aspects. First, an observation of the forms and shapes adopted by the body of the dancer in a series of movements as seen in relation to the ground on which he dances, the surrounding space and his fellow dancers. This includes an analysis of the physical points of motivation and the way they affect the positioning of his body, and it requires some understanding of the dancer's attitude to his physical environment. The second aspect is the dramatic quality of the movement which depend upon the dancer's use of weight, time and spatial direction, and obviously relates to the dramatic intention of the dance.  
(p. 15)

Harper's 'kinetic-aesthetic' requirement is not hinged on core traditional dance expression but on the essentials that fuel tradition and traditional dance. In one of her two cardinal objectives, she emphasises the significance of these essentials of tradition by proposing that the dancer ought to possess certain qualities which help in positioning his body in relation to the



ground, space and his fellow dancers. She also stresses on movement motivation and the effect of such moment on the body. Harper concludes by itemising these essentials (the qualities of the movement, forms of movement, motivation and effects of movement on the body) as being influenced by the dancer's attitude as well as his physical environment—these are cultural elements which Harper believes a dancer should be aware of in order not to be vague in expression. The other cardinal point which she mentions as 'dramatic quality' is dependent on the ability or power of the dancer's sense of expression and interpretation. Harper succeeded in influencing Nigerian born artistes studying performing arts in the academia to develop interest in dance specialisation and contemporary dance expressions. These academic-artistes include: Odukwei Segfyi, Peter Badejo, Felix Begho, Fidelma Okwesa, Folabo Ajayi, Georgina Gore and Emeka Nwabuko, Charles Somade and Patience Kwakasso. Others are Amutu Braide, Chris Ugolo, Chuks Okoye, Arnold Udoka, Ojo Bakare, Zulu Adigwe, Liz Hammond, Bola Eberighas and Moji Bamtefa.

### **Conclusion**

The advent contemporary dance in Nigeria can be attributed majorly to the effect of colonialism which resulted to enculturation where Nigerians had to adopt and allow themselves and indigenous culture to be influenced by exotic cultures. This is the reason contemporary dance in Nigeria usually reflects the admixture of Afrocentric and foreign cultures. The fusion of Afrocentric and foreign cultures was also demonstrated by the Nigerian elites especially through the concert dances and indigenous dance steps exhibited by the Christian faithful during liturgy or worship. Ogunde is regarded as the father on contemporary dance in Nigeria because of his concerted effort geared towards developing the genre to a serious art. While his contributions placed contemporary Nigerian dance on the threshold of high art, the university, particularly through the foundation laid by Peggy Harper made the dance genre high art. The dance ever since has been developing and becoming increasingly complex.

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