

MOVEMENT AESTHETICS IN THE NEW DANCE STAGE: A STUDY OF DANCE SKIT MAKERS ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

The new dance stage has become a footstall her the development of dance art, thereby uplifting users to the spotlight of attaining a polished height of professionalism. Armed with this, aesthetics in movement/dance has become the magic that holds the audience spellbound, and the rate with which the audience appreciate these dances on this stage determines the trend of the entertainment industry. Therefore aesthetics in movement/dance herein has become a priority to capture and retain the audience attention, and hence keep them coming back for more appealing dances. This study identifies and examines popular dance movements that are appealing and appreciable to the audience; and are used by Instagram dance Skit Makers for making their dances. This study adopts content analysis (internet material) of the qualitative research method for collection of data and analysis. Therefore, this research concludes that the new dance stage has come to stay, hence, dancers should embrace the opportunity to upload their dance art; making sure that they are aesthetical enough to attract the audience attention.

Introduction

The beauty of dance is greatly dependent on the quality of movements, and the manner with which the movements are expressed. Movement in dance possesses the qualities of communication, education, entertainment, and information, as well as the ignition of emotional excitement. This fast growing stage which is the social media platform serves dancers; professionals and non-professionals alike as the avenue to showcase their dance and a wide range of audience waiting to be entertained.

Anyone can entertain a wide range of audience anytime of the day, choosing any locale around his vicinity, and would trend, and thus become famous, as against the conventional dance Theatre that demands rigorous planning, rehearsals, publicity, production and the rest. Irrespective of the platform, dance must be characterized by Space: in which the dance can be performed, Time: in which the dance can exist, Body: which serve as a potent component through which dance can come alive, Energy: the required amount of force applied, Movement: which is the symbolic language of dance.

It is often difficult to talk more about movement outside the content of dance, perhaps because, movements rarely have emotional appeal if not arranged sequentially and repeatedly done in a rhythmic fashion; which in turn becomes dance. However, movements in dance come alive through certain features such as jumping, leaping, hopping, gesture, swing, collapse, glide and a host of other features. This study randomly selects three Instagram dance skits makers who have over the years mastered the dance movements with which they have been known for. Aesthetics of these movements will be examined.

Discourse on Aesthetics

Aesthetics is that branch of philosophy that really deals with the way a work of art is appropriated and, or the nature of such art piece; whether characterized with beauty, ugliness, or taste, good or bad. Whenever aesthetics is mentioned what comes to play is beyond the ordinary, it is like two pathways to one direction, much critical manifestation on a work of art, culture and nature. This manifestation is not mainly based on what the eyes see, process and transmitted: thus Kofoworola (2004, pg2), highlights that "the ability is not dependent mainly of the physical manifestation of the eyesight, the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes, sense of eyesight. Perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or mind, and are capable of generating some feeling". That is to say, to really appreciate the true nature of art, a third eye (the mind) is required to see beyond the ordinary appearance, and tap into the very essential qualities that characterize the true nature of an art in order to enjoy the required emotion. Emotion per say, is the true goal of aesthetics.

Aesthetics is generally believed to mean "sensual perception" and is concerned with feelings. Sensual perception as we know is connected to the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object, symbol, sign, language, character, spectacles, costume, etcetera. Once the insight of something has been tapped into, it generates emotion, that probably can be more than one or less. The genesis of the word aesthetics was piloted by a German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in the 18th century who coined the word from the Greek word "aisthetikos" which means a sense to perceive things. Since the inception of this philosophical principle used for the underlying an artistic work, many expressions have been made to elevate the understanding of art. Adewuyiwa deduced aesthetics to be "an abstract word which can serve dual purpose of negative or positive" (2015, pg3). By abstract, it simply connotes the existence in thoughts or idea, and not necessarily having a concrete or physical existence. And this abstraction presents side by side the opposite of everything perceived, whether good, bad is attached, beauty carries ugliness in itself, whichever way it is appreciated aesthetics is derived.

Movement Aesthetics

Having discussed aesthetics above, we shall further discuss the aesthetic appreciation of movement in dance. Movement Aesthetics can be seen as the philosophical appreciation of dance movement in any dance piece as an art form, using the various aesthetic sagacity such as grace, beauty, fineness, subtle, lively, sluggish, powerful, weak, interesting,

boring, rich, etc, which at the end determines how one feels or perceives the dance. Graham says that "ones response gives a possible direction for one's thought about dance" (1998, Pg 1), simply put, the reaction one shows while seeing a dance piece gives an insight of his or her thought and feeling about the dance. Aesthetics in dance simply indicates the reception to dance and of course, as it is concerned with beauty. A good incite of the dancer's ability to deliver or express carefully the intended purpose of the movement by the choreographer which also helps in understanding and perceiving the right emotion.

That is, when a Dancer does not put in the right energy and expression needed to express a particular dance, the beauty of such movement is definitely lost, the intended reaction to be received lost, and the audience may end up losing the emotional purge as well.

Dance is contagious, therefore, the aesthetic experience, sensation and direct perception play primary role in our appreciation of the dance which is considered immediate, autonomous and non-conceptual (Beauquel, 2016, Pg 20). All these movements are created so as to yield a satisfying aesthetic experience. In some cases, aesthetics in movement/dance serve the very purpose for which it is created, that is, if a movement's intent is to wow the audience through pop, glide, or stunt, it has to glide, pop, and stunt rightly to derive the right aesthetics, and until that is achieved aesthetic result will be denied. Cohen (1962, Pg 19) postulates further that:

Aesthetics is equally concerned with all kind of dancing.
The ritual, which is designed to ask for favor gods and the social dance, which provides enjoyment for its participants, may accidentally give aesthetic pleasure. But this is not their purpose, nor is it the test of their success. The rain dance succeeds when the rain falls...

By Cohen's postulation, some dances do not give aesthetic pleasure until the real purpose is achieved. In ritual dances for instance, it will be folly to express contentment to a rain dance when it has not rained. Therefore, it is the coming of rains and the amount of rainfall that will determine the extent of pleasure, joy, satisfaction or dissatisfaction derived from the ritual. The expression above really serves as an eye opener that there are dances that do not carry immediate enjoyment, and until the intension is achieved purgation of emotion is not feasible. However, there are dances that are created specifically for aesthetical purposes: these dances such as theatrical dances, secular dances and some other forms of dance carry with them their end product which is the appropriation of the dance by the spectators.

Social Media: The New Dance Stage

That form of electronic communication that includes the use of websites for social networking through which a common interest community is created, and users of this network share, upload, download, send and receive information, ideas, messages, videos, pictures, documents, and files: either amongst themselves in the same network or across other networks. These social networks have made people of different locations to keep in touch, to interact with people of different cultures, to expand their reach and

connect with others beyond their wildest imagination. It is said that the world is a small place: as ambiguous as the statement sounds, the introduction, evolution and the widespread of this growing network called social media has indeed made the world to literally shrink into a global village. It has made communication, networking and business faster and accessible through mobile phones or other communications devices. Social media serves everyone's purpose anytime, anywhere, so long as you are connected, Dollarhide affirms that "social media platforms can be categorized according to the interest of their users and their purposes. There are platform that appeals to video game players, social gamers, video sharers, professional business networks, virtual world, review platform and beyond. (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp>).

Social media serves everybody's purpose irrespective of age, race, class, or education; it has created a space that suits everyone's taste, desire, pleasure, and fantasy. In terms of business networking: whether small scale business or multimillion company, the best way to get your business and products across a large number of people is through the use of social media. It has opened ways to connect with costumers and lay the foundation for the establishment of a long lasting communication and partnership, and no better way to keep communication alive, increase sales awareness and maintain direct link with old and new costumers than through the social media platforms. Small scale business owners have moved their products and services to these networking platforms as their offices, connecting with costumers and bring awareness to people about their products and services, taking orders and making delivery and expanding their connection. When it comes to entertainment, social media has become the new stage, in fact, a Theatre where people turn to, to get entertained.

Everyone has access to to these platforms and that makes it easy to connect to any kind of entertainment you feel like seeing. It's flexible- to switch from one platform to another, or from one form of entertainment to another; fun-filled - that is, apart from being entertained, there are other features on the platform to get one directly engaged with the performers and others who are also streaming in the comment section, people can express themselves by way of feedback, criticize or just read through other's comments. The social media platforms have made entertainment quite easy and cheap for the artists: rather than go through the rigors of the entertainment industry to get famous and rich, social media can do that with less stress, cheaper amounts, and all people need to have is many followers. MacMilan (2022,Pg 3) says "follower growth is still important, but ensuring users are entertained is now essential to capturing and retaining their attention. The best way to do that? Videos. Users are looking to be constantly engaged and entertained by long-and-short-form videos that capitalize on trend, give users a peek behind the curtain, and most importantly, create a fun and interactive experience for everyone involved (<http://www.dashhudson.com.blog>). Most importantly videos are what keep people glued to their devices enjoying different forms of entertainment; and dancers, especially young talented dancers have seized this platform to elevate themselves and their dances, in other to capture followers and keep them coming to their

page at every given opportunity. Making dance pieces for the new dance stage is not as rigorous as the conventional Theatre process, in fact, so long as you can operate a phone camera; you can upload on your profile as many videos as you can on your account. One does not necessarily need a conventional stage, any locale will do, no assistance from anybody will be necessary: it's just the dancer, his dance, and the device. Because it is cost effective, it has become the most versatile, elaborate and systematic plan of action that consume less financial resources for starters: it has been explored to reach the intended audience, as well as promote dancers and the art, even other forms of entertainment.

The new dance stage has provided the users with a wide range of audience that cut across all the continents of the world, therefore it is left for the user to obtain for himself followers who will be his audience, who are itching constantly to see new performances from the trends of the industry. The benefits that come with having many of followers is the popularity that artists can be as famous as television and other conventional media celebrities as much as you have followers to enjoy and promote your entertainment. Having many followers makes one an influencer and that means a lot of money. Wildwood on bloggingwizard recounts that "survey found out that influencers earn \$2,970/month on average. Influencers with followers between 1,000 and 10,000 followers earn \$1,420/month on average while influencers with over a million followers earn \$15,356/month (<http://www.bloggingwizard.com>). Deducting from Wildwood statement, the new dance stage does not just offer a platform for the showcasing of entertainment, with already available audience, it also makes their users rich. With all these benefits that are attached to the new dance stage, one may conclude that it stands to threaten the survival of conventional Theatre practices, and that artists may have abandoned the Theatre house for the new dance stage: in light of this, a careful study by Adebisi & Oresanya (2021, Pg 53) reveals that

It is important to mention that some Theatre houses in Nigeria still enjoy substantial patronage from audience and have been identified to be successful in audience gathering, sustaining audience loyalty, while maximising profit.

One can be forgiven for thinking that the new dance stage poses a menacing threat to the conventional Theatre that has survived for centuries, considering the benefits that come with it, rather, conventional Theatre artists have seized the opportunity too to increase their statuses and become a driving force in the trendings of the society. More so, social media influencers are constantly pushing themselves into the conventional space to intensify their relevance in the Theatre.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This theory has to do with the motivation and determination that propel people to make certain decisions without external interference and distractions. This theory became famous and draws the attention of researchers in the area of psychology by two Researchers: Edward L. Deci and Richard Ryan in their book titled *Intrinsic Motivation and Self - Determination in Human Behavior* in the mid-1980's. The theory explains that people are motivated to

make decisions when they are determined to do something and the effect of that which is done will be a reflection of their determination. The theory also states that there are two determining factors that motivates a person to do something which are: Intrinsic Motivation and the Extrinsic Motivation. According to Deci (1971: as sited in Wikipedia.Com) "Intrinsic Motivation refers to initiating an activity because it is interesting and satisfying in itself to do so, as external goal (extrinsic motivation)". By the concept of Intrinsic Motivation, to further buttress, it simply means the self-compulsion and impulsion to do something for solely self-gratifying reward. While the extrinsic motivation involves taking action and making decision when one thinks that such decision and action will attract external gain. People are often motivated by the constant need to develop themselves by way of putting up new challenges that surmount their former challenges; this gives them a feeling/sense of control over their lives. They tend to believe in their innate sensitivity, giving them consciousness that their lives are not controlled by individuals or organizations.

Given by the Self-Determination Theory, the way people tend to behave and a considerable amount of their well-being are influenced by three innate desires; Gabriel (2023,Pg 1) dissects them plainly as follows: Autonomy, the need to be in control of one's actions and choices; Competence, effective and master task; and Relatedness, the need to have meaningful relationships and feel connected with others". Suffice it to say that, Autonomy is ones capacity to have the full knowledge of the decision and the action he takes independently. Competence can be referred to the acquired skill, training and experience, and also the knowledge gathered over a period of time for effective performance. And lastly, Relatedness, simply put, the relationship between two or more individuals in groups such as club, association, organization, religious groups, etc. Therefore, let it be noted that "satisfaction of these basic needs promotes the optimal motivational traits and states of autonomous motivation and Intrinsic aspiration, which facilitates psychological health and effective engagement with the world" Deci & Ryan (2015, Pg 486). Basically, this paper adopts THE Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to help understand the behind why are the young (dancers) constantly driven by the proclivity to be on the new dance stage. Deducting from the theory it is significant to stress that young dancers always feel the Intrinsic need to prove the uniqueness of their talent and thus, experience in other to acquire the inner satisfaction for a job well done and consequently, the fame, riches and influences and affluence that come with it.

Instagram: Development And Its Position In Social Networking

The Instagram is a free social media platform that initially was for online photo/video sharing, users are to upload photos and videos of any sort. To reach a wide range of other users, the user can edit the photos and videos for more aesthetics, add captions to them, use the hashtags and share location which allows other user on the platform to access the post easily and almost immediately. There is also provision for users to comment, like or make an expression through the use of emorji, or direct message (DM) which is a private mode of communication between user. Such post can also be shared on other platforms

that are directly connected to it such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter etc. Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger are the launchers of Instagram in 2010 and it rapidly gain popularity with one-million registered users in two months, and in two years the number of active registered users have skyrocketed to more than 40millions(McLaughlin 2017: from (<http://www.techtarget.com/searchio/definition/Instagram>). That was when they got the attention of Facebook Inc. Who acquired the platform in 2012, and by 2018 they have attained one billion active users worldwide. According to McLaughlin(2017), originally :

Only photos could be posted on Instagram, but the company expanded to 15 seconds videos in 2013. In 2016, Instagram upped the maximum. Video length to 60seconds. Until 2015, all photos posted to Instagram were confined to a square aspect ratio. The company changed this to allow users to upload photos and videos at full length.

This new face-lift expanded the platform's flexibility to make it much more valuable marketing tool for businesses, and entertainment worldwide. In terms of entertainment, Instagram is an excellent platform because of the visual features it provides the users "this is not to say that other social media platforms do not use visuals, but for Instagram, you must have a photo or video to create content"(Bressett, 2023, <http://techdayhq.com.com/community/articles/the-way-instagram-marketing-and-why-it-works-so-well>). It satisfies the curiosity why people are always trooping to the platform for more quality entertainment and entertainers on the other side are constantly in search of new content to upload.

Skit

A Skit is a funny or informative short play. As written by Ojomo & Sodeinde (2021, Pg. 1) it is a short comedy sketch that is often delivered in video formats. Through the peculiarities of the social media, the audience are now opened to a range of Skits which provides entertainment that are beyond the physical boarder, mobile and available at the time they decide to view them. The meaning of Skit also informs that it has been explored on social media to express the different forms of Arts for entertainment; and now the definition and usage has become flexible to express the user's idea. Here, for this study, we would define skit to be a short of dance that entertaining, informative and educative, that is targeted towards giving a bit of enjoyment to the audience.

Case Study

This study is based on movement Aesthetics used by Instagram dance Skit Makers. Therefore, three popular dance Skit Makers will be selected randomly and their dances will be examined. They are as follows:

1. Iweh Pascal Odinaka (Poco-lee) was born in 1996, he hails from Orlu L. G. A in Imo State. He attended Nigerian Navy Primarily School, okokomaiko, in Ojo, and proceeded for his secondary education at the Command Day Secondary, Ojo Barracks in Lagos state. Poco-lee as he's fondly called, studied microbiology at the University of Lagos and graduated in 2019. He has been dancing for a long time on the social media before he

became famous, when his dance video on a particular dance style called 'Zanku' on Instagram went viral. Afterwards, he's dance attracted various music artists such as Zlatan Ibile, Burna Boy, Olamide, Davido, and a host of others. In 2019, Poco-lee won the Best Dancer award at the Naija Hype Award (http://everipedia.org/wiki/lang_en/poco-lee). He has over 5.7million followers and has posted about four thousand, hundred and thirty-nine posts on Instagram.

2. Arah Victor hails from Anambra State Onitsha precisely. He was born on the 25 October 2002. He started his dance career in 2018 on Instagram and Facebook and then has developed himself more on afro-pop dances. Amidst other popular dances styles known to be making the waves on social media, he has developed a style for himself which is always associated with him, it's known as the 'Slow-mo'. He has more than two thousand followers and more than a hundred and sixty posts on Instagram.

3. Usiwo Orezinema Jane was born in Lagos state in 1993, but grew up in her state of origin Delta state. Where becomes a graduate of Mass Communication at the Delta State University Abraka. Apart from being a social media influencers, in 2017 she won a dancing competition hosted by the Nigerian singer Kcee for being the best 'twerker'; and afterwards, several videos on twerking have since been the core of her dance career. She is currently married to Mr. Andre Plies with a child. Consequently, she has about four million followers and up to two thousand, one hundred and twenty nine posts on Instagram.

Evaluation

The dance movements making the waves in and around the entertainment industry is the afro-pop

1. Legwork: This movement has been widely appreciated by the Instagram viewers and other dance space on the internet as a reigning dance style. This particular movement style is concentrated on the movement of the legs, the faster the moves the more aesthetical it get; and the ability to turn, squat, jump, hop and stunt and still arrive in the same legwork is more appealing and a show mastery. Poco-lee among other dance artists was the first to have distinguished himself with his energetic legwork. It was his legwork that brought him to the spotlight of the industry and today, he's been looked up to for variety of the movement to trend. However, over the years the legwork style has evolved to establish more variety such as:

1. Zanku- this legwork which can be arguably seen as a modification of 'shaku-shaku' dance was popularized by the Nigerian famous singer Zlatan Ibile. It is done by tilting the upper body backwards a bit, or forward as it suits the Dancer, while stomping the ground with the feet rhythmically and continuously. This stomping creates a rhythmic delight and crossing the hands while doing the dance adds beauty. 2. Happy feet or the butterfly legwork- this movement involves hopping on one leg, and twisting the heel of the other leg continuously as fast as possible, while the hands are spread. This movement creates a

style that allows the Dancer to swing the arms naturally, and the head can be turning gracefully to whichever direction the legs begin the movement. The feeling of confidence in performing this movement is the ability to swing back and forth in different variations and align the body weight smoothly with the heel and toes harmoniously. 3. Tesumole- this dance movement was popularize by the Nigerian singer Naira Marley in his song 'tesumole' the song encourages all to "step on" the devil, therefore the movement is the step on- to the left, right, forward and backwards. It is done by jumping to the side while bending your legs together a little and back to your position, then same thing to the other side again and back to your position. Then hop to the front while splitting the legs and back to your position, and backwards too, and back to your position. The movement is more graceful and poised when it is squatting althrough.

2. Slow-Motion (slow-Mo) - this dance style is like a dance through a very reduced speed. This dance style requires alot of energy and grace: it reduces the normal speed of a movement thereby paying attention to every detail in a movement from start to finish. This dance style requires the following: Attitude- in making the Slow-Mo, it is very important to radiate the prevalent feeling and disposition of the movement. It creates a chilling effect and delight. Concentration - the Dancer pays complete attention to every activity involved in the movement, which requires a lot of mental effort and denseness. Expression- the Dancer communicates the thought, idea, feelings, gesture, and it can also be the look on the dancer's face that conveys the particular emotion. In fact, the whole idea of the slow motion is to express, emphasize detail or idea, since dance does not require verbal communication: using Slow-Mo draws attention either to the dance, a particular lyrics in the music or to the dancer's flexibility and ability to perform. Energy- this is referred to as the force required to the movement. The physical energy demands force, effort and dynamic to be in making the slow motion movement. It explores the dancer's kinetic, static, and elastic energy. The mental energy refers to the dancer's state of mind, which also can affect the effort and dynamic the Dancer puts into the dance. Grace- with grace, it is easy to marvel at the amount of skill involved to create that illusion of effortlessness amidst all the physical and mental energy required in making the dance. Dancers can glide slowly, seamlessly and beautifully through a movement and everything just seems magical. It is the grace in making the illusion the slow motion that gives the dance style the true meaning of the illusion it creates in the minds of the audience.

3. Twerking- this style of dance over the years has developed to be the delight of social media users across the world, it "is a provocative dance performance that involves squatting down with the legs widely spread and the butt popped out, and then frantically shaking the butts back and forth, and at intervals, staccatorically, in various styles and different locations" (Ajaegbu & Akas, 2023, Pg 135). The goal of twerking has always

been to arouse sexual desire and the use of social media has made the dance style the order of all time. Twerking is performed mainly by women because it is characterized by moving the hips rapidly and the delight has health advantages which includes: according to Adekanye (2019) tones the muscle of the leg and butt, thereby making them firm; builds and boosts confidence; boosts sex life; add mental development; and relief stress by way of having fun, as well as well as improve balance and flexibility (<http://guardian.ng/life/some-benefit-of-twerking-you-might-not-be-aware-of/>). However, women do this dance style to draw the attention of men to themselves, the jerking of the butt which seem to be provocative sexual appeal, and delight male audience especially. Apart from attracting attention shaking butts for women make them feel good. It is a physical activity that makes them more alive and happy, and conscious of their body. This dance style has also appeared in several videos not just in Nigeria but on the international stage, as well, it has become a generally accepted dance style for women to express themselves and appeal their audience.

Findings

It is plausible to say that the new dance stage has become a platform for the recreation of dance, where dancers can learn more movement, develop their skills and showcase their talent to the world to appreciate. Dances that trend today in our society are being first: popularized, developed and appreciated on these social networks audience before they are adopted into the trends of the industry. Dance movement such as Legwork, Slow-Mo, twerking and other, are the major trends in dance mainstream that are appealing to the medium's audience. Hence, upcoming dancers are equipping themselves with these trends so as to level up and have their own audience in no distance time. The platform has pushed the boundaries of audience engineering because of the ability to go viral and become the trend of social diacuss which the conventional theatre lacks.

Conclusion/Recommendation

It is glaring from the above discourse that the new dance stage has become a platform for recreation; creation, elevation, and development of every form of entertainment especially dance. By elevation, it possesses the capacity to change the status of a Dancer, so long as they remain consistent and hardworking to their skill and talent. By development, it serve as a source point for sharpening dancers talent and skill, and it will be profitable for dancers to always follow up and work on trendings dances on social media. However, social media elevation is not the goal, but a stepping stone to an elevated pedestal of professionalism. When talent and skill through the new dance stage takes a Dancer to the very height of social media achievement, it will demand more hardwork, intensed creativity and a high level of professional experience will be demanded for real life performance to keep the Dancer aloof.

Consequently, amidst the finer things that this social media platforms guarantee its dedicated users, there are many disadvantages that these as well pose to the users, ranging from fraud, fake lifestyle, addiction, blackmail and a host of other vices. Therefore, users are strongly advised to be very careful with what they do and how they do them on the media. This study hereby recommends that individuals, groups, dance troupes and other social dance clubs to sieze these platforms offered by the networks to showcase

themselves and their dances to the world.

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