

A STUDY OF MODERN DANCE AS A MEANS OF WORSHIP IN THE
UNITED STATES WITH EMPHASIS UPON THE HISTORY,
DEVELOPMENT, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE
SACRED DANCE GUILD AND OF
RHYTHMIC CHOIRS

A THESIS
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We hereby recommend that the **thesis** prepared under

our supervision by **Marilyn Kay Lewis**

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CHAPTER I

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Since the beginning of time dance has served as a universal means of communication between man and God. Long before language evolved as a means of expression, primitive man conveyed his ideas, inspirations, and moods through gestures, pantomime, and large body movements. Dance was life itself--a primal, instinctive expression of needs through the only instrument available to him, his body. Having no words with which to supplicate and praise his Creator, primitive man prayed with his body as well as his soul. Primitive man danced to release his energies, to demonstrate prowess, and to celebrate. He danced because his sexual desires led him to dances of courtship, and he danced in order to make "a magic strong enough to control or propitiate those mysterious and seemingly ungovernable forces of nature which surrounded him."¹ Later, when primitive man came to believe that trees, streams, mountains, and fields were not in themselves Gods, but were inhabited by unseen deities, he developed dances of symbolism which he believed to be pleasing to the spirits. Lastly, primitive man found that the supreme being could live within himself and according to Kinney, "his body became a temple and

¹ Walter Terry, "Dances of Antiquity," The Dance in America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956), p. 42.

place which could be purified through dance so that it would become a fitting home for God."¹

Although verbal communication gradually, in many instances, replaced the use of movement as the primary means of worship, dance has historically been an inextricable phase of practically every religion. One of the most beautiful illustrations of the significance of dance in relation to religion is the Hindu story of the creation of the world. Siva, the Creator-Destroyer of many nations, mounted the back of a demon and with one of his four arms, began to play upon a small hand drum.² It was to the beat of this drum that Siva moved his body, ". . . and with his movement the world took shape; he danced on and on until the creation was completed."³ Coomaraswamy stated with reference to the Dance of Siva that ". . . it became in time the clearest image of the activity of God which an art or religion can boast of."⁴

In contrast to the acceptance of dance as an integral part of life by many religions of the world, Christianity on the whole has tended to negate the role of dance as a means of worship through its promotion of the concept of the separation of mind and body. The traditional

¹ Troy and Margaret Kinney, The Dance, Its Place in America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956), p. 34.

² "Dance and Religion," Time, Vol. LXXI, No. 4 (January, 1959), p. 52.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Amanda Coomaraswamy, The Dance of Siva (New York: Sunwise Turn, Inc., 1924), p. 56.

Christian explanation of creation, based upon the philosophy of Dualism, describes man as composed of both mind and matter:

Man was created and placed on earth for the purpose of achieving salvation and grace. He was given an immortal soul which unites him with God; he was given a mind and conscience and a free will which allow him to discover goodness and which allow him to plot his own course toward God or toward evil; and, he was given a material body which is imperfect, impermanent, weak and corrupt.¹

Individuals who subscribe rigidly to this philosophy believe that the body is less important than the mind in the eyes of God. Only through activities of the mind--contemplation and prayer--is man capable of discovering goodness and achieving salvation or union with God.

Although a few churches in the United States of America have incorporated religious dance into their worship services,² to most individuals the idea of religious dance is inconsistent with his denominational beliefs. While the other arts--music, painting, sculpture, and architecture--have long been associated with the church, dance as well as drama traditionally have not been approved solely because they use the body as their primary instrument of expression.³ This acceptance by many Christians of the philosophy of Dualism has dominated religion as well as education since the time of Plato and Aristotle. Within the past few

¹ Elwood Craig Davis, The Philosophic Process in Physical Education (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1961), p. 43.

² Margaret Fisk Taylor, "Religious Dancing," Dance Observer, Vol. XVII (May, 1951), p. 63.

³ Ibid.

years, however, a strong undercurrent of interest in religious dance in churches in the United States of America has developed.

In this chapter of the thesis the investigator will report briefly the significance of dance as a means of worship to the American Indians and to members of selected religious denominations in the United States. She will describe also the present renaissance of interest in dance as a modern religious art and will discuss the research problem undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of this thesis.

Many of the religious symbolisms and tribal customs indigenous to the American Indian were analogous with primitive man. Dance-prayer or religious dance in Indian life was an intimate and imbued factor. The Indian was truly a religious being.¹ He would have experienced little difficulty in understanding the words of the philosopher Havelock Ellis:

If we are indifferent to the art of dancing, we have failed to understand, not merely the supreme manifestations of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life.²

The Indian viewed the world of nature with reverence, although he recognized the existence of a "power greater than nature, greater than man, and eternally manifest throughout all life."³ No act in the life of

¹ Terry, op. cit., p. 28.

² Havelock Ellis, The Dance of Life (New York: Crosset and Dunlap, 1923), p. 2.

³ Natalie Curtis, The Indians Book (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1923), p. xxix.

the American Indian was too insignificant to be dignified by ritual, no wonder of God or nature too awe-inspiring to be portrayed by dance and influenced by prayer.¹ There were prayers for birth and death, appeal and thanksgiving, prayers connected with the planting and harvesting of crops, the hunt, the journey, the storm, the sun, and especially the rain. Since most members of Indian tribes were farmers, stockmen, or hunters, rain was a necessity for their well-being. In one way or another nearly every dance or prayer of the American Indian was an appeal for rain, for renewal, and for growth.² Fergusson states in this regard:

Prayers for rain often included appeals for all life, animal and human as well as plant, and on this is based the occasional complaint that Indian dances are obscene. To the Indian, human generation is no more obscene than is the fertilization and development of a plant.³

The medicine man, who served as the religious leader of the American Indian, knew the mythology which lay behind the various forms of dances. Since this knowledge was sacred to him, he did not divulge it lightly. The Indian layman, like the Christian layman, knew only that certain things must be done because they had always been done this way. Eggan states with regard to traditional Indian dances: "Unless we

¹ Erna Fergusson, Dancing Gods (New York: Harper and Knopf, 1934), p. xiv.

² Bernard Mason, Dances and Stories of the American Indian (New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1944), p. 13.

³ Ibid., p. xivi.

do it this way, our prayer will not be answered. This is the way of the ancients."¹

An Indian dance was more than simply a dance; it was a ceremonial, a symbolic representation, a prayer.² Of all of the survivals of primitive ritual, the dance of the American Indian was probably the most interesting to be found anywhere in the world.³ Curtis states in this regard:

The Indian religious thought, uttered with the simplicity of childhood, is born of his recognition of spirit in every form of life, and his conception of an omnipotent and all pervading divine power is entirely spiritual and impersonal. The Indian has a message for the seekers after truth who welcome, whatsoever its form, the recognition of God by man.⁴

If there is truth in the theory that the American continent was the first to emerge,⁵ then the Indians are indeed the most ancient of peoples. Their customs and beliefs are of value, historically, to anyone interested in dance and religion. Indian dance is the genuine religious expression of a primitive people which has survived without serious interruption for thousands of years.⁶

¹ Fred Eggan, ed., Social Anthropology of North American Tribes (Chicago: The University Press, 1955), p. 24.

² Laura Thompson, Culture in Crisis (New York: Harper and Brothers Co., 1950), p. xvii.

³ Eggan, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴ Curtis, op. cit., p. xxx.

⁵ Thompson, op. cit., p. xvi.

⁶ Fergusson, op. cit., p. xvi.

Centuries of Christian training, however, have affected the customs and ceremonies of the American Indian. The mingling of faiths experienced by American Indians may be attributed to a quality of mind which made it possible for the Indian to be tolerant of other beliefs and to incorporate them into his own practice.¹ American Indians have always respected the religions of other tribes. When the white man came, they welcomed his religion also, but continued with practices characterizing the old. In the words of Fergusson:

. . . both religions are incorporated into the Indian custom by the use of prayer-meal, by the use of holy water in his church; prayer sticks before the ancient shrines, and rosaries before the saints; and in the age old serpent symbol of a sinuous² course of streams painted on the holy-water vessels in churches.

A description of authentic religious dances performed by the Indians is beyond the scope of the present study. It would seem that the only way to understand the dances in their entirety and to see them performed with authentic reverence would be to go to the pueblos or reservations where they are danced in the way of the ancients. Here, in the villages it is possible to sense the magnificent antiquity behind them and the strength of a people who through four centuries of foreign domination have maintained their ancestral worship.³

In 1620, the Puritans migrated to the New World in order to establish a society based upon a Calvinistic interpretation of the

¹ Curtis, op. cit., p. xxxv.

² Fergusson, op. cit., p. xviii.

³ Eggan, op. cit., p. 140.

Bible.¹ They believed that they were a chosen people and that by coming to a new land and making their own laws and regulations, they could keep their "Bible Religion" pure. The early government of Massachusetts was a theocracy, managed by Puritan ministers, who believed the Bible was the disclosed word of God and that its meaning and intention concerning every subject had been made lucid to those men with proper learning.² The religion of the Puritans was unemotional with a type of preaching uncondusive to revivals and conversion. The Puritan Fathers had held that conversion was solely the work of God, but as the number of individuals who experienced conversion decreased, the idea emerged that there were certain means which might be utilized to place the soul in a more receptive position to receive the influence of the Spirit of God.³ Such means were owning the covenant, attending divine worship, leading a moral life, reading the scriptures, and praying. Increasing reliance upon these means and less upon the miraculous power of God led to a cold and unemotional faith.⁴

Dancing was not entirely in disfavor with the Puritans. Percy A. Scholes, in his book The Puritans and Music in England and New

¹ William Warren Sweet, Religion in Colonial America (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1947), p. 84.

² Ibid., p. 85.

³ Joseph Marks, America Learns to Dance (New York: Exposition Press, 1957)

⁴ Ibid., p. 198.

England, has clarified this point.¹ Dancing was considered paganistic when associated with feasts or public demonstrations. When dancing was justified by the Bible, it was not wrong as long as it was utilized as the Bible stated it should be used.² In 1625, Reverend John Cotton stated in this regard:

Dancing I would not simply condemn. For I see two sorts of dancing in use with God's people in the Old Testament, the one religious, Exed. XV, 20, 21, the other civill, [civil] tending to the praise of conquerors, as the former of God, Sam. XVII, 6, 7. Only lascivious dancing to wanton ditties [deities] and dillances, especially after feasts, I would bear witness against.³

Not all the people who came to New England were Puritans or even members of the church. Roger Williams, who preached against theocracy, was banished from Massachusetts which led to his forming the first Baptist Church in America.⁴

The doctrines of the First Baptist faith were clearly defined in the preface of the "Principles of the Early Baptists of England and America,"⁵

(1) God requireth not an uniformity or religion to be enacted and inforced in any civill state; which inforced uniformity (sooner or later) is the greatest occasion of civill warre, [civil war] ravishing of conscience, persecution of Jesus Christ in his servants, and

¹ Percy A. Scholes, The Puritans and Music in England and New England (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 89.

² Ibid.

³ Marks, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1939), p. 103.

of the hypocrisie and destruction of millions of souls. (2) It is the will and command of God, that . . . a permission of the most Paganists, Jewish, Turkish, or Anti-Christian consciences and worships, bee [be] granted to all men and they are only in soule [soul] matters able to conquer to wit, the Sword of God's spirit, the World of God. (3) True civility and Christianity may both flourish in a state or kingdome, notwithstanding the permission of diverse and contrary consciences, either of Jew or Gentile.¹

The preceding is written in the common vernacular of the eighteenth century.

The investigator, therefore, has elucidated the passage in contemporary terminology: (1) The Baptists believed in separation of church and state, (2) They advocated that church membership was not required for voters, and (3) Every man was to be protected in "The peaceful and quiet enjoyment of lawful right and liberty notwithstanding different beliefs."²

It is a strange anomaly that the first colony in America to be established embodying and enacting practically the principle of religious toleration should have been founded by a Roman Catholic.³ George Calvert founded Maryland upon the principle of religious toleration and prescribed an oath to guide all Governors of Maryland which emphasized his insistence upon maintaing religious toleration in the colony:

I will not myself or any other, directly or indirectly, trouble, molest, or discountenance any persons professing to believe in Jesus Christ for or in respect to religion; I will make no difference of persons in conferring offices or rewards for or in respect of religion; but merely as they shall be found faithful and well deserving, and endued with public unity, and if any person or officer

¹ Marks, op. cit.

² Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, op. cit., p. 105.

³ Marks, op. cit., p. 199.

shall molest any person professing to believe in Jesus Christ on account of his religion, I will protect the person molested, and punish the offender.¹

As the number of Protestants in the colony increased they tended to become more aggressive; antagonisms and trouble followed, eventually placing the Protestant party in complete control of Maryland. In 1673, two Franciscans founded a mission in Maryland and four years later three other Franciscans and three Jesuits arrived. This increase in Catholic forces led to the establishment of a Jesuit school in the colony. These feeble Roman Catholic beginnings gave little indication of the vast expansion of Catholicism in America which followed in the two centuries to come.²

Some religions actively encouraged dance. The Shakers, coming to America from England in 1771, used definite dance patterns as an integral part of their worship.³ At first, the dance movements performed by the Shakers were involuntary in nature and exemplified only an outward sign of a highly charged emotion. Like many of the sinners of the early revivals, when they received the "gift," the Shakers would jerk, shake their hands, and dance.⁴ Marks states that in 1788:

¹ Sweet, The Story of Religion in America, op. cit., p. 121.

² Ibid., p. 120.

³ E. D. Andrews, "The Dance in Shaker Ritual," Dance (1942).

⁴ E. D. Andrews, The People Called Shakers, A Search for the Perfect Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 451.

The square-order shuffle was introduced into the Shaker worship by Father Joseph who was opposed to such involuntary emotions, believing that they were a vast waste of power and purposeless. So in solemn worship the Shakers danced with a forward and backward movement of the ranks, the brethren and sisters in separate groups, shuffling toward and away from each other, three paces each way, with a double step or 'tip-tap' at the turn.¹

In the nineteenth century a great number of clergy believed dancing was worldly and could lead only to hell, but some, like the Shakers, felt that it should be part of the religious service. The Schismatics² was one of these groups. They believed in the voluntary exercise of dancing. Gallbraith states in this regard:

. . . the principal thing that distinguished the Schismatic worship from that of other groups was their taking privilege of exhibiting, by bold faith, what others were moved to by a blind impulse. This, they considered a great advancement in the spirit of the revival; and upon this principle, the voluntary exercise of dancing was introduced as the worship of God. . . .³

The dance of the Schismatic order was much the same as the Shaker ritual with the exception of the patterns followed. The Schismatics were not so confined as to floor space, design of movement, and relationship between man and woman in the execution of their dances of worship.⁴

The term "Holiness Bodies" is used in the wider sense to include all those denominations and associations which in some form owe their origin to the Holiness movement inaugurated shortly after the Civil

¹ Marks, op. cit., p. 81.

² Samuel Miller, Letters on Clerical Manners and Habits (Princeton: Moore Baker, 1935), p. 17.

³ R. C. Gallbraith, The History of the Chillicothe Presbytery from the Organization in 1799-1880 (Chillicothe: By the Presbytery, 1889), p. 22.

⁴ Ibid.

War.¹ Two wings were represented in this movement. The one wing was composed of the "Holiness Bodies," all of those groups who claimed loyalty to the true Wesleyan tradition by denouncing movement of any sort in the actual worship service. They believed that the New Testament Baptism of the Holy Spirit was an act of "entire sanctification" accompanied by instantaneous and total cleansing from sin and an entire and abiding devotion to God.² The other wing was composed of those persons who taught that ordinarily the Baptism with the Holy Ghost was a natural accompaniment of the speaking in other tongues. The latter group was, and still is, given more or less to the ecstatic, sometimes manifesting itself in shouting, dancing, trances, and such strange phenomena as handling snakes and drinking poison.³

Pentecostalism in one form or another has manifested itself throughout the history of the Christian church.⁴ It purports to be a theology in which the holy spirit is said to manifest His presence and immediate operation by the Pentecostal gifts. The Jonathan Edwards Revival of 1734 is frequently listed as the first American manifestation of Pentecostalism.⁵

¹ F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 323.

² Richard R. Mathison, Faiths, Cults and Sects of America (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1960), p. 241.

³ Ibid., p. 242.

⁴ Marcus Bach, Strange and Curious Cults (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1961), p. 200.

⁵ Ibid.

The investigator believes it was to these Holiness Bodies and the Modern Pentecostal Church services that Ted Shawn made reference when he stated: "There are sects in this country like the Holy Rollers, and the jumpers, who move their religion, and I must say I have tremendous respect for that."¹

While certain denominations have always recognized dance as an integral part of their worship services, many religious leaders in the twentieth century remain unaware of the potentiality of dance as a means of religious expression. Only in the last fifty years has the philosophy of Dualism been seriously questioned and in many instances replaced by the concept of man as an integrated totality--an inseparable unity of mind, body, and soul. Individuals who subscribe to the educational philosophy of Peirce, James, and Dewey believe that man should be encouraged to worship God with his whole being, to pray--as primitive man did--with his body as well as his soul.

Such individuals understand the difficulty experienced by primitive tribes, accustomed to dancing as an integral part of their pagan religions, in appreciating Christianity as it has been introduced to them by Protestant missionaries. Such natives criticize Christianity as "a mental, philosophical religion with no movement for the worshipper except to bow the head and kneel."² In South Africa, natives commonly refer to

¹ Ted Shawn, "Religious Use of the Dance," Religious Symbolism by Ernest Johnson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 149.

² Taylor, "Religious Dancing," op. cit., p. 68.

one who has been converted to Christianity as "he who has given up dancing."¹

As an outgrowth of new understandings and appreciations accompanying advances in educational psychology, technological progress, and automation characterizing the present century, many religious leaders have sought to introduce the arts--particularly the dance--into religious worship. Claudia Chapline, quoting Father Hugh Benson, states:

There is nothing in any scripture in the world which says that our vocal chords are more sacred than any other part of our body. On the contrary, our body, our whole body is used simultaneously, as a unit for praise and worship.²

Many contemporary dance artists state that spiritual growth occurs whenever an individual is involved aesthetically either as a participant or as a spectator in any of the arts--painting, sculpture, music, drama, or dance. They believe that modern dance particularly lends itself to religious expression through "walking, kneeling, the use of the hands, focal attention, and movements of fingers extended out and together which give a feeling of reaching beyond to some power--to God."³

Today in the United States remnants of dance ritual are evident in the movements, gestures, and processions of altar boys, priests, and congregations in Catholic and Episcopal masses.⁴ A group of dance

¹ Ibid., p. 144.

² Claudia Chapline, "Dance and Religion," Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, XXVIII (November, 1957), p. 76.

³ Ann Dirkson, "Introduction to Religious Dance," Dance Magazine, XXXVI (March, 1962), pp. 134-135.

⁴ Elizabeth Bowman, "The Dancing Past," Dance Observer, VIII (May, 1941), p. 65.

enthusiasts in Wichita, Kansas, realized the dance inherent in their Mass and proceeded to transpose the entire Catholic worship service into dance. The idea for the presentation was born at a choir rehearsal in February, 1951, as St. Anthony's choir was practicing a revised version of Gounod's "St. Cecilia Mass" for an Easter Sunrise service. After discussing the matter of the mass in dance with members of the Choir, the group approached Father Damien Sanders, Pastor of St. Anthony's church. Father Damien gave immediate consent and support, appointing Father Celestine Baumann to take charge of an ecclesiastical arrangement, in addition to taking the part of the celebrant in the production's dry Mass.

Mildred Moir, Director of the Wichita Dance Guild and modern dance instructor for the Wichita School of Fine Arts, was contacted and provided the dancers. Dancers and leaders met many times with Father Celestine for explanations of the Mass. The singers for the presentation came from various Wichita churches, both Protestant and Catholic.

The theme for the presentation was constructed around the idea of a Priest recalling his first Mass. Father Celestine and two altar boys, all attired in white, were situated on a level five feet above the stage which was enclosed with a filmy scrim. As the curtains opened in September, 1952, at the Wichita University Auditorium, the dancers sat in a circle on the stage floor. As the Kyrie was intoned they lowered themselves to the floor and rose in solemn rhythmic form depicting souls begging their Creator for mercy. For the Credo or the Nicene Creed the dancers first moved in a manner that expressed a firm conviction of faith.

For that part of the creed which told of Christ's passion and death, they formed a lowly, cross-like formation that broke into brilliant and dynamic whirls as the singers told of His resurrection. During the Offertory the dancers formed a procession taking bread and wine to the altar. At the Sanctus the dancers depicted angelic choirs offering praise to God in a jubilant manner. During the Consecration and Elevation of the Host and Chalice the dancers knelt in a V formation raising their heads toward the altar at both elevations. A solo was performed during the Agnus which prepares the congregation to receive the Host. Movement expressed a soul's unworthiness to receive its Creator, a type of lowliness and a beseeching of God to be a merciful Judge. The program closed with a narrator telling of the oneness and redemption powers of the Mass as a renewal and continuation of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary.¹

Not only are twentieth century dancers and religious leaders becoming increasingly aware of the religious dance movement but also television producers are doing their part in bringing religious dance to the public. "Dance began as man's endeavor to express something people couldn't put into words," stated Pamela Illot, Director of Religious Broadcasts for Columbia Broadcasting System.² Miss Illot has been responsible for two Sunday morning programs: "Lamp Unto My Feet" and

¹ Mary Grice, "The Drama of Mass in Dance," Dance Magazine, XXVII (April, 1953), pp. 58-59.

² Arthur Todd, "For the Wonders of God's Universe," Dance Magazine (December, 1962).

"Look Up and Live." According to polls these programs are viewed by 1,400,000 persons each week. On November 14, 1962, "Lamp Unto My Feet" presented a composition entitled Brief Dynasty. The dance composition told the Biblical story of Saul and David. The half-hour dance work featured such notable soloists as Mary Hinkson, Scott Douglas, Glen Fetley, and Buzz Miller. These two television programs have had many such religious presentations. Channel 13, the educational station in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, has much to offer in the area of religious dance. It has presented several programs utilizing such renowned persons as Jose Limon and Lucas Hoving. These programs can be viewed on "A Time to Dance."

Through the centuries the United States has witnessed the growing process of secularization of the dance as an art form, a process that paralleled all other human activities. The dance, too, went the way of all civilization. During the last few decades many attempts have been made to bring the dancer back to the church. Through movement he may again seek the shortest distance from his soul to his Redeemer. These people feel that the free and coordinated rhythmic movement has spiritual reality and may help draw humanity in a mystic union.

In 1956, individuals interested in dance as a religious art form met informally for the purpose of sharing convictions, ideas, and aspirations in the field of religious dance. As a result of this meeting, the Sacred Dance Guild was organized for the specific purpose of fostering interest in dance as a means of worship and providing choir directors,

ministers, religious educators, and lay persons with the knowledges, understandings, and appreciations necessary for incorporating the dance into the worship service.

As a result of her interest in the activities of the Sacred Dance Guild in promoting acceptance of dance as a religious art, the present investigator undertook a study of modern dance as related to religious themes in the United States during the twentieth century; she identified outstanding individuals associated with religious and/or sacred dance in the United States; described their contributions to contemporary religious dance and to the development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir. She further studied the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir and described the contributions of these two movements to the establishment of modern dance as a means of worship.

Definition and/or Explanation of Terms

In order to facilitate a common understanding, the following definitions were established for use throughout the study:

A. Modern Dance--The investigator accepted the definition of Turner who stated:

Modern, or contemporary dance, is an art form that uses movement as a medium of expression. It is the result of intentional ordering of movement by a choreographer. The movement is created in response to the re-experiencing of emotional values, which are thus given new existence. The expressive movement is highly selected, spatially designed and organized through rhythmic

structure; the result¹ is the communication of an idea, feeling, state or situation.

B. Religious Dance or Sacred Dance--For the purposes of this study, the terms "religious" dance and "sacred" dance were used interchangeably. Although many authors have written voluminously upon the subject of religious dance, relatively few individuals have attempted to define the term. Taylor delineated religious dance as ". . . a definite technique for praying with one's body as well as with one's soul."² Storer described sacred dance as "dance in a religious setting which has as its theme the glorification and supplication of God."³ The present investigator defined religious dance as:

1. Modern Dance, based upon religious themes, which is performed in a church setting for the purpose of glorifying and supplicating God.
2. An art form that uses movement as a medium of expressing religious emotion, ideas, convictions, inspirations, and moods for purposes of worship.

C. Church Setting--For purposes of this study, the investigator defined church setting as a place of quiet reverence, either indoors or

¹ Marjery J. Turner, Modern Dance for High School and College (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 1.

² Margaret Fisk Taylor, Look Up and Live (New York: Macelster Publishing Co., 1953), p. 5.

³ Robert A. Storer, The Sacred Dance (Boston; Massachusetts: The Religious Arts Guild, 1947), p. 64.

out-of-doors, where the worship of God is uppermost in the minds of those present.

D. Sacred Dance Guild--In this study, the investigator offered the following explanation of the Sacred Dance Guild: An interdenominational organization in the United States, encompassing the Christian, Unitarian, and Jewish faiths, formed in response to an expressed need for sharing the ideas and convictions of individuals through the medium of dance. The purposes of the Sacred Dance Guild are to stimulate interest in the dance as a religious art form and to provide a means of communication and training for the directors of rhythmic choirs.¹

E. Rhythmic Choir or Motion Choir--In this study, the terms "Rhythmic Choir," "Motion Choir," and "Dance Choir" were used interchangeably. "Rhythmic Choir" was defined as an organized company of singers and dancers which used rhythmic gestures and motion in expressing religiously significant ideas as a means of worship.²

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to a study of religious dance performed in church settings and used as a means of worship by Christian, Unitarian, and Jewish faiths in the United States from 1900 to 1963. This study was

¹

"The Sacred Dance Guild," from the proceedings of the National Section on Dance of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (Minneapolis, Minnesota: 1963).

²

Taylor, "Religious Dancing," op. cit., p. 68.

limited further to a report of the contributions to contemporary religious dance by outstanding individuals who were selected as sources of data in accordance with the established criteria. This study was limited also to the availability of materials through both human and documentary sources.

Purposes of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to describe modern dance as a means of worship in the United States during the twentieth century with special emphasis given to the history, development, and contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir.

Specific purposes underlying the study were: to study modern dance in relation to religious themes from 1900 to 1963 in the United States and to describe the growth, development, and current place of contemporary religious and/or sacred dance in the twentieth century; to identify outstanding individuals associated with religious and/or sacred dance in the United States and to describe their contributions to contemporary religious dance and to the development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir through an analysis of their choreographic works, their writings, and other services rendered; to study the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild, and to prepare a written historical account of the Sacred Dance Guild, 1958-1963; to study the history and development of the Rhythmic Choir Movement, and to prepare a written historical account of the Rhythmic Choir Movement, 1958-1963; and to describe the contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and of the Rhythmic Choir Movement to the establishment of modern dance as a means of worship in the twentieth century.

Survey of Previous Studies

Although a careful survey of the literature related to modern dance in relation to religious themes revealed no study which duplicated the present one, there were many articles in periodicals, in books, and in sections of books concerned with modern dance as a medium for religious expression and worship. The content of these materials was utilized by the investigator in the development of the present study.

Margaret Fisk Taylor,¹ in 1951, published a paper concerning modern dance which stated that "religious dancing" in the twentieth century is being accepted as a modern religious art. She reported further that churches throughout the United States of America sponsor groups of young people who develop simple interpretations of religious ideas through the use of modern dance techniques. They call their groups "Rhythmic Choirs" or "Motion Choirs." For the present the term "dance" is not emphasized because many church members have little conception of the "disciplined simplicity and genuine inner conviction that are characteristic of modern dancers."² Taylor stated that more and more interest in dance as a medium of religious expression is growing in American churches and with it comes an increasing search for leadership in modern dance as a contemporary religious art. She emphasized the point that religious dance has a rich heritage, not only from the history of early civilization

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

and throughout all cultures, but also in the history of the Christian Church. Taylor concluded her article by commending some of the pioneers of religious dance, specifically Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, who have contributed immeasurably to the development of this art.

Margaret Fisk Taylor,¹ in 1950, published a book which gave an insight into the means by which re-creative art deepened religion and expressed moods. Specifically, the author described techniques or organizing and of directing rhythmic choirs. Taylor suggested beginning with simple problems such as processions and pageants. She pointed out that the art of the rhythmic choir is not an art for its own sake, but, as true Christian art, it humbly and joyously offers itself as a way to worship and glorify God. It does not associate itself with a cult or special group, but it is an art form that blends into the life of the local church.

In the final chapters of her book, Taylor traced the history of the Christian Church, cited instances in which religion and the arts approach each other, and listed the accomplishments of contemporary church groups using the art of the rhythmic choir.²

In October, 1941, Erika Thimey,³ a dance artist and educator, reported her work with respect to religious dance in Chicago, Illinois.

¹ Margaret Fisk Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 15.

² Ibid.

³ Erika Thimey, "A New Field for Dance," Dance Observer, Vol. XIX (October, 1941), pp. 105-106.

In 1932, she and several members of the clergy defined modern dance as "the new and absolute art" and discussed the potentially great spiritual qualities of this art. She was given permission by the Minister of the First Unitarian Church in Chicago, Illinois, to present a Christmas pageant in dance form. Thimey intended to use only her own students of dance in the pageant; the students enrolled in the Meadville Theological School at Chicago, Illinois, however, were eager to participate in the project also. A sufficient number of individuals, therefore, participated in the Christmas pageant to take full advantage of the long aisles, steps, chancel, altar place, and side chapels of the church. Only carefully selected Bach Chorales and Preludes were chosen as accompaniment for the dances choreographed and presented. Thimey reported that the church was overcrowded and people were turned away--an indication that the experiment was well-received.

Thimey stated that as a result of this pageant, the students enrolled in the Meadville Theological School became intensely interested in the possibilities of using dance as a means of worship. Their recognition of the necessity of developing techniques in movement led to the establishment of weekly classes in their Parish House. As a result of the Christmas pageant presented, Thimey was invited to assist with religious dances and pageants in a number of other churches in Chicago and neighboring areas.¹

¹ Ibid.

Although no research study was found identical in purpose or content to the present one, several studies were surveyed which were similar to the present investigation in that they reported religion in relation to modern dance. The ensuing studies were of assistance to the investigator in the development of her thesis.

In 1943, Mattie Moss¹ conducted a study in which she traced the relationship between religion and dance from primitive to contemporary times and made suggestions for the use of religious motives in modern dance in education. In the first chapter of the written report of her study, Moss described the use of religious motives in dance in contemporary church rituals through the media of poetry, prose, song, and organ pieces. Moss made a cursory survey of religious dance among concert artists. Finally, Moss offered suggestions for the use of religious motives in modern dance in education. Moss' sources of data were limited to books, periodicals, newspapers, and unpublished materials.

The present study was similar to that of Moss in that both were concerned with the history and development of religious dance. The present study differed from that of Moss in that the present investigation was concerned with the history and development of religious dance as a means of worship with emphasis upon the Sacred Dance Guild and rhythmic choirs, whereas the study by Moss was an historical study tracing religious

¹ Mattie Moss, "An Historical Study of Religion and Dance with Implications for the Use of Religious Motives in Modern Dance in Education" (unpublished Master's thesis, Oklahoma University, 1943).

dance from primitive to contemporary times. The present study differed also from that undertaken by Moss in that her study was completed in 1943, thus precluding a study of important recent movements in the area of religious dance such as the Sacred Dance Guild and rhythmic choirs. The present study differed with respect to scope, the period of time covered, and purpose. Moss' purpose was to develop implications for the use of religious motives in modern dance in education whereas the present study was concerned with the history, development, and contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement to contemporary religious dance. The present study differed also from that conducted by Moss in that the present investigator relied in part upon human sources of data through the use of questionnaires, correspondence, and interviews whereas Moss utilized documentary sources of data only.

In 1960, Smith¹ conducted a study in which she described and classified modern dance compositions based upon literary themes; drew conclusions concerning the use of literature as thematic material for dance, prose, poetry, or drama; reported the choreographic representation of the literary themes; and finally, reported the structural form of the choreography with specific reference to the five categories of dance forms established by Doris Humphrey. Smith's study was limited to dance compositions which used literature as thematic material and which were

¹ Nancy Warren Smith, "Modern Dances Based Upon Literary Themes, 1926-1959" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, 1960).

reviewed in the New York Times, from 1926 to 1959. Historical, philosophical, and descriptive methods of research were utilized. Data were secured through a study of the following documentary sources: the New York Times, Dance Magazine, American Dancer, other dance periodicals, newspapers, theses, dissertations, and other reports of research pertinent to the study. Data were collected also through interviews with selected faculty members of the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation of the Texas Woman's University; with noted dance critics such as John Martin and Walter Terry; and with such recognized authorities in the field of choreography as Ted Shawn and Louis Horst. The data comprising Smith's study were reported according to specific years designated within three established periods: Period I--1926-1939; Period II--1940-1949; and Period III--1950-1959.

Smith found that dance compositions which used literature as thematic material were based primarily upon the works of Shakespeare and the Bible. The drama and poetry of Shakespeare were used in eight compositions during the last two decades: three, in the 1940's and five, in the 1950's. Biblical literature was used as thematic material for four modern dances choreographed during the 1930's; for ten compositions in the 1940's; and for twelve dances during the 1950's. The Bible was the literary source used more frequently than any other source of inspiration for the dance compositions included in Smith's dissertation. The investigator concluded that the reason the Bible was used frequently was

related to the aim of dance "to communicate timeless truths through the medium of movement."¹

The present study was similar to that undertaken by Smith in that it was concerned with religious dance while the study conducted by Smith was only partially concerned with dances based upon Biblical themes. The present study is similar also to that completed by Smith in that many of the same documentary sources of data were utilized and in that both studies relied upon human sources of data for information. The present study differed in subject from that of Smith in that it focused upon modern dance as a means of worship whereas Smith studied modern dances based upon literary themes. The present study was concerned with dance in a religious setting; whereas the study conducted by Smith was concerned with dances performed in concerts and/or reported in periodicals.

Wincie Ann Carruth² investigated the significance and the influence of selected religions upon the form and expression of dance. Carruth's study was undertaken in the hope that it would contribute to an understanding of the values inherent in dance as a means of religious expression. Carruth's data collected through the use of documentary sources were organized into four chapters: (1) The Dance in Animistic Religion, (2) The Dance in Polytheistic Religion, (3) The Dance in Anthropomorphic

¹ Ibid.

² Wincie Ann Carruth, "The Significance of Religion in the Dance" (unpublished Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1937).

Religion, and (4) The Dance in Ethnical Religion. Carruth concluded that, in all stages of the development of religion, the dance has been used as a medium through which individuals might express their devotional feelings.

The present study was similar to that reported by Carruth in that both were concerned with religion and dance and with the history of dance as a medium of worship. The present study differed from that of Carruth in that the present investigator did not report the influence of religions upon the form and expression of dance but described the development of modern dance as a means of worship with special emphasis upon the history, development, and contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement. The present study differed further from that conducted by Carruth in that the present investigator utilized both documentary and human sources of data whereas Carruth relied upon documentary sources of data only.

In 1956, Eloise Smith¹ developed a study in which she choreographed a dance-drama and composed the music to accompany it. The dance-drama had as its thematic material a part of an Episcopal liturgy, Te Deum Laudamus. Smith's purposes were to compose the music for the text to the Te Deum; to choreograph this composition in modern dance idiom; and finally to present the original dance-drama at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in

¹ Eloise Hanna Smith, "A Dance-Drama with Original Music and Choreography of the Te Deum Laudamus" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, 1956).

Denton, Texas. Smith's sources of data were both documentary and human and included the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer and clergy from selected Episcopal churches. In order to obtain subjects for her study, Smith enlisted the cooperation of the members of St. Barnabas Parish; the students of the Denton Dance Art Studio; students enrolled in the School of Music at the North Texas State University in Denton, Texas; and students enrolled in the Art Department, in the Department of Music, and in the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. Smith reported that, upon completion of the musical score, six rehearsals were held and, on May 6, 1956, the dance-drama was presented at St. Barnabas Episcopal church in Denton, Texas. As a means of evaluating her study, Smith prepared a brief questionnaire which was distributed at random to twelve persons in the congregation. This questionnaire was concerned with the appropriateness of the dance-drama as a medium of worship. Nine persons answered the questionnaire and Smith reported that all comments were favorable.

The present study was similar to that of Smith in that both were concerned with religious dance as a medium of worship. The present study was similar also to that of Smith in that it utilized human sources of data. It differed from that undertaken by Smith, however, in that it was concerned only historically with dances performed in a church setting whereas the creative aspect of choreographing and presenting a dance composition in a church was the major purpose of Smith's study.

Summary

In this chapter the investigator reported the significance of dance as a means of worship to primitive man, the American Indian, the Puritans, the Shakers, and the Schismatics. She described also the present renaissance of interest in dance as a modern religious art and discussed the research problems encountered in conjunction with the preparation of this thesis.

Primitive man believed that dance was life itself--an instinctive expression of needs through the only instrument available to him, his body. Primitive man firstly believed that trees, streams, mountains, and fields were inhabited by unseen deities and developed dances of symbolism which he believed to be pleasing to the spirits. Lastly, primitive man found that the supreme ~~being~~ could live within himself and therefore purified his body through dance so that it might become a fitting home for God.

Many of the religious symbolisms and tribal customs indigenous to the American Indian were analogous with primitive man. The Indian viewed the world of nature with reverence. No act of daily life was too insignificant to be dignified by dance ritual. Centuries of Christian training, however, have affected the customs and ceremonies of the American Indian. The mingling of faiths experienced by American Indians may be attributed to a quality of mind which made it possible for the Indian to be tolerant of other beliefs and to incorporate them into his own practices.

Dancing was not entirely in disfavor with the Puritans. Dancing was considered paganistic when associated with feasts or public demonstrations. When dancing was justified by the Bible, it was not wrong as long as it was utilized as the Bible stated it should be used.

The Shakers used definite dance patterns as an integral part of their worship and actively encouraged dance in the worship service as the Schismatic order did. The dance of the Schismatic was much the same as the Shaker ritual with the exception of patterns followed. Whereas the Shakers were confined in definite floor patterns, the Schismatics danced in mass formation and were not relegated to certain designs of movement.

Through the centuries the United States has witnessed a growing interest in dance and religion and dance in the worship service. Exemplary of this interest is the work being done by contemporary dance artists and works presented on television programs such as "Lamp Unto my Feet" and "Look Up and Live."

In 1956 individuals interested in dance as a religious art form met informally for the purpose of sharing ideas, convictions and aspirations in the field of religious dance. As a result of this meeting the Sacred Dance Guild was organized.

In order to facilitate a common understanding of the study the investigator defined the terms: modern dance, religious dance or sacred dance, church setting, Sacred Dance Guild and rhythmic or motion choirs, for use throughout the study.

The study was limited to a study of religious dances performed in church settings and to a report of the contributions to contemporary

religious dance by outstanding individuals who were selected as sources of data. This study was further limited to the availability of materials through both human and documentary sources.

The primary purpose of this study was to describe modern dance as a means of worship in the United States during the twentieth century with special emphasis given to the history, development, and contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir.

Specific purposes underlying the study were: to study modern dance in relation to religious themes from 1900 to 1963 in the United States and to describe the growth, development, and current place of contemporary religious and/or sacred dance in the twentieth century; to identify outstanding individuals associated with religious and/or sacred dance in the United States and to describe their contributions to contemporary religious dance and to the development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the rhythmic choir through an analysis of their choreographic works, their writings, and other services rendered; to study the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild, and to prepare a written historical account of the Sacred Dance Guild, 1958-1963; to study the history and development of the Rhythmic Choir Movement, and to prepare a written historical account of the Rhythmic Choir Movement, 1958-1963; and to describe the contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and of the Rhythmic Choir Movement to the establishment of modern dance as a means of worship in the twentieth century.

A careful survey of the literature related to religion and dance revealed no study which duplicates the present study. There were many

articles in periodicals, in books, and in sections of books that were, however, concerned with modern dance as a medium for religious expression and worship.

In 1951 Margaret Fisk Taylor published a paper concerning modern dance which stated that religious dancing in the twentieth century is being accepted as a modern religious art. She reported that churches throughout the United States of America sponsor groups of young people who develop simple interpretations of religious ideas through the use of modern dance techniques. They call their groups "rhythmic choirs" or "motion choirs." Taylor concluded her article by commending some of the pioneers of religious dance, specifically Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, who have contributed immeasurably to the development of this art.

Margaret Fisk Taylor in 1950 published a book which gave an insight into the means by which re-creative art deepened religion and expressed moods. Specifically, the author described technique of organizing and directing rhythmic choirs. In the final chapters of her book, Taylor traced the history of the Christian church, cited instances in which religion and the arts approach each other, and listed the accomplishments of contemporary church groups using the art of the rhythmic choir.

In 1941 Erika Thimey, a dance artist and educator, reported her work with respect to religious dance in Chicago, Illinois. In 1932 she and several members of the clergy defined modern dance as the "new and absolute art" and discussed the great spiritual qualities of this art;

resulting in Thimey being given permission to present a dance pageant for the Christmas season. She stated that as a result of this pageant, she was invited to assist with religious dances and pageants in a number of churches in Chicago and neighboring areas.

In 1943 Mattie Moss conducted a study in which she traced the relationship between religion and dance from primitive to contemporary times and made suggestions for the use of religious activities in modern dance in education.

In 1960 Nancy Warren Smith conducted a study in which she described and classified modern dance compositions based upon literary themes; drew conclusions concerning the use of literature as thematic material for dance, prose, poetry, or drama; reported the choreographic representation of the literary themes; and, finally, reported the structural form of the choreography with specific reference to the five categories of dance forms established by Doris Humphrey.

Wincie Ann Carruth investigated the significance and the influence of selected religions upon the form and expression of dance. Carruth's study was undertaken in the hope that it would contribute to an understanding of the values inherent in dance as a means of religious expression.

In 1956 Eloise Smith developed a study in which she choreographed a dance-drama and composed the music to accompany it. The dance-drama had as its thematic material a part of an Episcopal liturgy, Te Deum Laudamus. Smith's purposes were to compose the music for the text to the Te Deum; to choreograph this composition in modern dance idiom; and,

finally, to present the original dance-drama at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Denton, Texas.

In the second chapter of this thesis the investigator will describe the procedures followed in the development of the study.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

The present study was developed as a result of the investigator's interest in the contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement to the establishment of modern dance as a means of worship in the United States in the twentieth century. In this chapter the procedures followed in the development of the study are presented: (1) methods of collecting data, (2) preliminary procedures, (3) collection of data from documentary and human sources, (4) organization and presentation of data, and (5) preparation of the final written report. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of its contents.

Methods of Collecting Data

The data utilized in the development of the present study were gathered through the use of the following methods of research: (1) documentary analysis of all available materials pertaining to religious dance, (2) administration of a questionnaire by mail to members of the Sacred Dance Guild, (3) interviews conducted with members and officers of the Sacred Dance Guild and with selected individuals associated with religious dance during a specially arranged trip to Pennsylvania and New

York, and (4) correspondence with individuals not available for personal interviews.

Preliminary Procedures

Prior to undertaking the present study the investigator wrote a letter of introduction to Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild during the year of 1962-1963, in which she expressed her interest in preparing a historical account of the Sacred Dance Guild and sought endorsement of the study by the members of that organization.

Mrs. Wolbers responded enthusiastically to the idea of such a study and offered to cooperate in every way possible. During the ensuing correspondence between Mrs. Wolbers and the investigator, several plans were made with respect to the collection of data. Since the primary sources of data concerning the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement were located on the East Coast of the United States of America, the investigator arranged to visit with Mrs. Wolbers for the purpose of conducting personal interviews with her and recording data from the files of the Sacred Dance Guild. Mrs. Wolbers graciously invited the investigator to stay in her home in Allentown, Pennsylvania, during the visit and suggested the week of February 22 to 29, 1964, as the best time to make the trip. This particular week was recommended in order that the investigator might, in addition to collecting data from documentary sources, attend the annual workshop and the Executive Board Meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild to be held in the City of New York during those dates.

Having received endorsement of the study by the Sacred Dance Guild, the investigator constructed and officially presented her tentative outline for the present thesis in a Graduate Seminar in the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the Texas Woman's University on November 22, 1963. The proposed study was approved by members of her thesis committee and by the staff of the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, and the revised outline was filed as a prospectus in the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

In order to establish a setting for the present study, the investigator collected data concerning modern dance as a means of worship in the United States during the twentieth century. This procedure entailed a review of all available documentary sources describing the significance of dance as a means of worship to the American Indians and to members of selected religious denominations such as the Shakers, Schismatics, and the Roman Catholics. The paucity of written materials on this subject led the investigator to attend the worship services of several churches and to conduct informal interviews with ministers in the proximal area in order to obtain their views concerning dance in relation to religion.

The investigator planned also, as part of her background material, to describe modern dances based upon religious themes performed by lay persons in church settings. To accomplish this goal the writer surveyed such documentary sources of data as Dance Magazine, Dance Observer, Dance, Dance Impulse, Dance Perspectives, and the Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation in order to identify each dance performed, the

choreographer, the date and place of the premiere performance, the choreographic design, and the thematic material.

When the documentary materials concerning contemporary religious dance available in the libraries in the geographical location of the investigator were exhausted, the researcher sought to identify human sources of data. She wrote numerous letters to individuals recommended to her by members of her thesis committee and to persons who had published articles and/or books in the area of religious dance in an effort to obtain further background material for the study. A list of all persons to whom the investigator wrote appears on page 168 of the Appendix of this study. She also requested and subsequently received from Miss Hazel Bailey, membership chairman of the Sacred Dance Guild during the year of 1962-1963, a list of the members of the Sacred Dance Guild.

Because finding information about the relatively new Rhythmic Choir Movement was especially a problem, the investigator constructed a questionnaire to be mailed to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild in an effort to identify directors of rhythmic choirs and also to objectively determine outstanding individuals in the United States in the field of religious dance. The questionnaire, printed on a postcard and accompanied by a letter of introduction by the investigator and a letter of endorsement by the director of the study, contained the following questions:

- (1) Are you associated with a Rhythm Choir?
- (2) If yes, in what capacity?
- (3) For how long have you been associated with a Rhythm Choir?
- (4) With what Church is the Choir affiliated?
- (5) Does your Choir dance in the chancel?

- (6) How many persons comprise the Choir?
- (7) How often does the Choir meet regularly?
- (8) In your opinion who are the three most outstanding individuals associated with religious dance today?

A copy of this instrument as well as the two letters which accompanied it appear on pages 171-173 of the Appendix of this study.

Collection of Data from Documentary and Human Sources

The investigator surveyed, studied, and assimilated all data pertinent to the study which were available in the Dallas Public Library in Dallas, Texas, New York Public Library in the City of New York, New York; and from the libraries of the following universities and colleges: the Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas, the Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois, the North Texas State University in Denton, Texas, and the Arlington State College in Arlington, Texas.

Having constructed a questionnaire to be administered to the members of the Sacred Dance Guild as part of her preliminary procedures, the investigator mailed a questionnaire to each of the 174 persons comprising the total membership of the Sacred Dance Guild for the year 1962-1963 as given in the organization's current mailing list. Of the 174 persons circularized, 108 members of the Sacred Dance Guild returned the questionnaire fully answered. Ten additional questionnaires were returned with the addresses unknown. The investigator tabulated the responses and in part utilized the results to determine outstanding individuals in religious dance and to identify members of the Sacred Dance Guild who are associated with rhythmic choirs to serve as human sources of data.

An analysis of the responses to the questionnaire revealed that seventy-one of the 108 members of the Sacred Dance Guild were associated with a rhythmic choir in one capacity or another. Fifty-three persons indicated that they were directors of rhythmic choirs; eleven stated that they were members; five checked that they served as sponsors; and two respondents marked the category of "Other."

The investigator selected outstanding persons in religious dance in accordance with the criteria: (1) they were mentioned at least ten times by respondents to the questionnaire survey; (2) they were recommended by the investigator's thesis committee; and finally (3) they were authorities in the field of dance who, in the opinion of the investigator, had contributed to religious dance. In Table 1 of this study appears a list of the many persons who were listed by respondents to the questionnaire.

TABLE 1

PERSONS LISTED AS OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS IN RELIGIOUS
DANCE BY RESPONDENTS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Mary Anthony	Jose Limon
Evelyn Broadbent	Rose Lischer
Leda Canino	Virginia Lucke
Mary Craighill	Martha Odom
Ruth St. Denis	Diane Passo
David Figg	Ruth Rayton
Jeanne Fuller	Elyse Robert
Martha Graham	Ted Shawn
Mrs. Robert Hammond	Pat Sonnen
James Henderson	Walter Sorell
Ruby Henderson	Robert Storer
Pat Jewitt	Margaret Fisk Taylor
Joan Johnson	Sister Jean Thompson
Myra Kinch	Mary Jane Wolbers

The investigator selected the following persons for inclusion in the third chapter of this thesis in accordance with the criteria established: Margaret Fisk Taylor, Ruth St. Denis, Reverend William Gutherie, Ted Shawn, Erika Thimey, Reverend Robert A. Storer, and Mary Jane Wolbers. In Chapter III appears biographical data concerning each of these persons with respect to their activities as choreographers, performers, teachers, lecturers, authors, and directors of rhythmic choirs.

In order to obtain information unavailable in her present geographical location, the investigator flew to Pennsylvania and spent nine days collecting data on the East Coast of the United States, specifically, Pennsylvania and New York. She first visited Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild, in her home in Allentown, Pennsylvania, from February 19-21, 1964, where she had access to Mrs. Wolbers' personal and professional correspondence, mimeographed materials otherwise unavailable to the investigator, minutes of the meetings of the Sacred Dance Guild, newsletters published by the Sacred Dance Guild which were out of circulation, and other unavailable written materials pertaining to all aspects of the study.

The investigator then accompanied Mrs. Wolbers to the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop held at the International House in the City of New York, New York, from February 22-24, 1964, where approximately seventy persons were in attendance. While in attendance at the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop the investigator recorded on tape conversations between the officers of the Sacred Dance Guild and herself; these conversations

pertained to the activities of both the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement. She further conducted personal interviews with directors of rhythmic choirs and recorded conversations with clergy active in rhythmic choir work. She also distributed data sheets to the officers of the Sacred Dance Guild. These biographical data sheets supplied the investigator with information concerning the dance background of the officers of the Sacred Dance Guild, their religious education background, their publications, and their personal philosophy of religious dance. A copy of this instrument is included on page 169 of the Appendix of this study. A list also appears in the Appendix of names and addresses of persons who filled out the biographical data sheet.

The investigator requested and received permission to attend the Executive Board Meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild held on Sunday, February 24, 1964, at 325 Lexington Avenue in the City of New York, New York. The investigator was anxious to attend this meeting in order to become acquainted with the leaders of the Sacred Dance Guild.

On February 25, 1964, the investigator worked in the Dance Archives of the New York City Public Library, where she surveyed books, periodicals, and other written materials which were unobtainable to her from other sources.

On February 25, 1964, the investigator visited with the personnel of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches on 475 Riverside Drive in the City of New York, New York, where

she obtained a report entitled, "Religion and the Dance."¹ The investigator was anxious to obtain this report because it contained statements of philosophies concerning the relationship of dance and religion from several renowned persons in the field of dance. She obtained also a list of all publications pertaining to dance and religion.

Organization and Preparation of Data

In order to organize her data the investigator first transcribed all information recorded onto tapes into typewritten notes. She then categorized and analyzed the data collected from both human and documentary sources under subdivisions within the following broad topics: (1) Significance of Dance as a Means of Worship to the American Indians and to Members of Selected Religious Denominations; (2) Modern Dances Based on Religious Themes Performed in Church Settings; (3) Outstanding Individuals Associated with Religious Dance; (4) History and Development of Sacred Dance Guild; and (5) History and Development of Rhythmic Choir Movement.

Preparation of the Written Report

The investigator adhered to the following procedures in writing the report of this study: (1) the preparation of a tentative outline, (2) the preparation of a topical outline, (3) the writing of each chapter, (4) the revision of the chapters, (5) the preparation of a classified

¹
Department of Worship and the Arts, "Religion and the Dance," A Report on the Consultation on the Dance held at the Riverside Church in New York City, New York, November 16, 1960 (New York: National Council of Churches).

bibliography, and (6) the approval of the written report by all members of the thesis committee. A topical outline for every chapter was submitted to the director of the thesis committee, corrected, and approved before the actual development of the chapters. The chapters were written in accordance with the topical outlines, submitted to members of the thesis committee for suggestions and corrections, and revised in keeping with the expressed wishes of the committee members. The final step in writing the report was the development of the classified bibliography.

Summary

In the preceding chapter, the investigator reported the sequence of procedures that directly paralleled the formulation of the present study. The procedures followed by the investigator were: (1) methods of collecting data, (2) preliminary procedures, (3) collection of data from documentary and human sources, (4) organization and presentation of data, and (5) summary of the study.

The investigator utilized the following methods of research in the collection of data: (1) documentary analysis of all available materials pertaining to the subject of this study, (2) administration of a questionnaire, and (3) interviews and correspondence.

The investigator wrote to Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild, expressing her interest in the Sacred Dance Guild as a subject for her graduate thesis.

The investigator arranged with Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, firstly, to visit and interview her, secondly, to participate in the Annual Sacred

Dance Guild Workshop, and finally, to attend the meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild's Executive Board.

A survey of materials including theses, books, periodicals, dissertations, and all other unpublished research papers concerning the subject was made prior to the construction of a tentative outline.

The tentative outline was constructed, revised, and presented in a Graduate Seminar on November 22, 1963.

The final procedures were followed in the development of the study: (1) compilation of a bibliography of all documentary and human sources of data, (2) construction of instruments, (3) establishment of criteria, (4) collection of data from documentary and human sources, (5) organization and preparation of data, and (7) preparation of a written report.

In the third chapter of this thesis, the investigator will describe the contributions of selected outstanding individuals associated with religious dance in the United States.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH RELIGIOUS DANCE IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In this chapter of the thesis the investigator will identify outstanding individuals associated with religious and/or sacred dance in the United States and will describe their contributions to contemporary religious dance and to the development of the Rhythmic Choir Movement and the Sacred Dance Guild. While numerous modern dances based upon religious themes have been performed on the concert stage, this chapter will focus upon dances performed in church settings. "Church setting," as defined in Chapter I of the present study, is any place of quiet reverence where the worship of God is uppermost in the minds of the persons present. The contributions of the following persons to religious dance will be reported: Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Reverend Norman Guthrie, Erika Thimey, Reverend Robert Storer, Margaret Fisk Taylor, and Mary Jane Wolbers.

Ted Shawn

Margaret Fisk Taylor, eminent author of several books and articles concerning religious dance, recognizes Ted Shawn as the innovator of

"church dancing" in the United States.¹ Having studied for the Methodist ministry prior to becoming interested in dance as a vocation, Shawn choreographed dances based upon familiar Christian themes as early as 1915.² The first of these compositions, "The Lord is My Shepherd," appeared on the programs of several vaudeville performances from 1915 to 1916.³ He states with respect to experimentation with the Twenty-third Psalm:

That was to be one of three Dances of David (The Boy, The Shepherd, The King), and in the David costume I also did a dance dramatization of the well-known church solo, The Palms by Faure. My work continuously expanded until, in 1917, I was ready with an entire Christian Church service in dance form.⁴

Doctor Henry Frank, the minister of the First Interdenominational Church of San Francisco, California, invited Shawn to perform a worship service in dance in 1917.⁵ Reverend Frank opened the evening program with a half-hour lecture on the history of the relationship of dance and religion after which without a word spoken or sung, Shawn performed. The string section of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra provided accompaniment for the program.⁶

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 154.

² Ted Shawn, One Thousand and One Night Stands (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 103.

³ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴ Shawn, One Thousand and One Night Stands, op. cit., p. 70.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

Prayer (Music-Kammernoi Ostrow)
 Doxology and Gloria
 The Twenty-third Psalm
 Sermon: 'Ye Shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'
 (Symbolic-Dramatic dance to Rachmaninoff C-Sharp Minor)
 Hymn: Beulah Land
 Benediction: God be with you till we meet again¹

Shawn writes concerning his historical church performance in 1917, "This was the first time anything of this kind had been done, and it is noteworthy that the newspapers treated this startling innovation seriously and with dignity."²

Although Shawn was associated with Ruth St. Denis in their Denishawn School of the Dance during this era, Ruth St. Denis accords her husband full credit in this pioneer undertaking in religious dance. In enumerating her many contributions to the art, St. Denis writes,

To Ted I reluctantly yield the point that he was the first to dance in an Interdenominational Church in San Francisco, but since my intentions were identical, I hastened to follow his example as soon as possible.³

After the end of World War I, Shawn reportedly performed the same church service in thirty or forty cities in the United States.⁴ Only in one city, Shreveport, Louisiana, was serious opposition shown. Shawn describes this dramatic event thusly.

¹ Ibid.

² Ted Shawn, Dance We Must (Pittsfield, Massachusetts: Eagle Printing and Binding Co., 1940), p. 33.

³ Ruth St. Denis, An Unfinished Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 195.

⁴ Shawn, Dance We Must, op. cit.

. . . two hundred preachers and laymen threatened to tar and feather me in Shreveport, but the entire police force protected me by saying that these fanatics would be treated like any other law breakers. When the service was over, the mayor and aldermen came and congratulated me and gave me letters on their official stationery attesting that the service was reverent, and that they recommended it to other cities.¹

Shawn, who was well acquainted with Doctor Norman Guthrie, minister of the St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bouwerie, in the City of New York, enhanced Guthrie's spirited work with religious dance in his church by performing a complete church service to the congregation in March, 1922.² A moving picture was made of Shawn's dance service which is shown today by the Museum of Modern Art.³

In 1946 Shawn wrote that he had lectured in a dozen or more pulpits, among them the Madison Avenue Methodist Church and the Broadway Temple Methodist Church of the City of New York and the First Congregational Church of San Francisco.⁴ Regarding the latter experience, he states that his text was "Let them praise His Name in the dance" [Psalms 149, 3] and that he emphasized that the dance is mentioned seventeen or eighteen times in the Bible with favor and never with disfavor. One of Shawn's favorite anecdotes concerning his work as a lecturer is

¹Ibid.

² Betty Poindexter, "Ted Shawn: His Personal Life, His Professional Career, and His Contributions to the Development of Dance in the United States of America from 1891 to 1963" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Texas Woman's University, 1963), p. 180

³Storer, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴Shawn, Dance We Must, op. cit., p. 34.

I reminded the congregation that in two places in the Bible we are exhorted to praise the Lord in the dance, [Psalms 149,3 and 150,4] and I fixed an eagle eye and shouted: 'Are you doing that? If not you are committing a sin of omission!' And two white haired elders in the front pew yelled, 'Amen, Brother!'¹

Walter Terry reports, ". . . although he [Shawn] was eminently successful in the role of dancer-preacher, he preferred to present his religious dances in the theatre."² Shawn's repertoire of religious dances performed in a concert setting includes "Nobody Knows de Troubles I've Seen," "Invocation to the Thunderbird," "Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring," "Revival Hymn," "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Miriam, Sister of Moses," "O Brother Sun and Mister Moon," "Whirling Dervish," "Dance that Heals," "Job," selections of Passion of St. Matthew, and "The Dreams of Jacob."³

Perhaps the most highly praised of these compositions is "The Dreams of Jacob," presented in August, 1949, in the City of New York. Nancy Smith notes that the choreography is based upon two dreams of Jacob as told in the Bible and offers the following summary of the dance:

The composition includes five sections: the first section reveals Jacob's meeting Rachel at the well; the second, Jacob's first dream in which the touch of the angels communicates his destiny to him; the third section concerns both Jacob's relationship with God and his final acceptance of his personal responsibilities; the fourth section is based on the second dream in which Jacob struggles with the Dark Angel, is smitten on the thigh, and sees his vision of all life; the fifth and final section is a hymn to Israel developed through choral movement.⁴

¹
Ibid.

²
Terry, op. cit., p. 66.

³
Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 156.

⁴
Nancy Warren Smith, op. cit., pp. 92-94.

Shawn, who has written prolifically on the subject of dance and religion, states that there has never been a program in all his forty years of one night stands that has not included some dances based upon religious themes.¹ In a 1960 publication Shawn briefly summarized his contributions to the acceptance of religious dance as a means of worship in the United States:

I gave the first Christian Church service in dance form more than forty years ago, and ever since then religious themes have been recurrent in my choreographic works. Since 1950 I have given a number of religious dance lectures to church groups, and at Boston I taught and conducted round table discussions at a three-day meeting of leaders of rhythmic choirs from all over New England. From that conference grew an organization designed to correlate the activities of groups interested in sacred dance; to stimulate conventions; to provide a clearing house for information, choreography and mutual advice. A rhythmic choir course, first given at the Pillow, in 1958, was attended by leaders of choirs and ministers with their wives and is now an annual pre-season course.²

The meeting to which Shawn alludes was the organizational meeting of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association held at the South Street Methodist Church in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1956. The history and development of this organization, of which Shawn serves as an advisor, is described in detail in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Ruth St. Denis

Although Shawn is recognized for his production of the first church service in dance, many persons believe that the contributions of

¹ Ernest F. Johnson, Religious Symbolism (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955)

² Shawn, A Thousand and One Night Stands, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

Ruth St. Denis to religious dance are even more outstanding than those of her husband. Shawn, himself, describes St. Denis as the earliest pioneer in religious dance in the United States in his statement:

In 1904 Ruth St. Denis, in her dance 'Radha' made the first definite attempt to present the religious aspect of the dance to modern audiences but, probably because she clothed it in Hindu form, the religious content of the work was overlooked. People were inclined to ask: 'How can the fact that those heathen dance in their temples have anything to do with me?'¹

Critics agree that "Radha" remains one of the most significant dance works in the twentieth century.² The composition has been described as a "dance and a hymn, a prayer, a picture, and an epic poem all in one."³ Because of its historical importance as the first modern dance based upon a religious theme, the choreographic work is described in its entirety below:

When the curtain went up a vast temple was shown, incrustated with gold and dim with smoke. On the ground in meditation were the squatting forms of devotees. The wailing music rose as they prostrated themselves before the shrine. Presently, through the incense smoke, the doors of the shrine were seen to open and the impassive form of the goddess was revealed. After a short interval Radha descended from her pedestal and signified to her worshipers that she had taken this human form in order to give them a message. This she would convey through a mystic dance, the meaning of which was that they must not seek permanent happiness in an impermanent world.

The dance was comprised of three figures, the first being performed in five circles, one within the other, each circle representing one

¹ Shawn, Dance We Must, op. cit., p. 32.

² Terry, op. cit., p. 46

³ St. Denis, An Unfinished Life, op. cit., p. 85.

of the five senses. The senses were symbolized by different objects: jewels for sight, bells for hearing, garlands for smell, a bowl of wine for taste, and, for touch, kisses on her own hands.

The second figure was danced on a square, representing, according to Buddhist theology, the fourfold miseries of life, and was done with writhings and twistings of the body to portray the despair of unfulfillment. At the end of this figure Radha sank to the ground in darkness.

After a short interval a light disclosed her in an attitude of prayer and meditation. She now rose and, holding a lotus flower, began the third figure of the dance, which followed the lines of an open lotus flower--the steps leading from the center of the flower to the points of each petal. She danced on the balls of her feet, thus typifying the ecstasy and joy which follow renunciation of the senses and freedom from their illusion. At the close of this figure, which finished the message, Radha slowly danced backward to the shrine, followed by the priests, and the doors of her shrine were closed.¹

In her autobiography Ruth St. Denis reveals the depth of her thinking with respect to religious dance and her sincerity in attempting to provide experiences of a spiritual nature for her audiences. Before each performance of Radha she spent a half an hour in meditation and prayer in her dressing room.² St. Denis writes,

During all these days of excitement and adulation I never forgot that in these performances I was doing something besides entertaining the public. The spiritual levels of my life flowed ever underneath, and supported and gave direction to all that appeared on the surface.³

From 1904 to the present decade Ruth St. Denis has sought to find the spiritual truths in many of the world religions, particularly those

¹ Ibid., p. 70.

² Ibid., p. 86.

³ Ibid.

of the Orient, and to bring them symbolically through her art to American audiences.¹ While most of St. Denis' compositions were based upon oriental motifs, she has choreographed "Psalms 142 and 150," "The Doxology," and "Rhythms of the Resurrection,"² all based upon Christian thought.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Ruth St. Denis to the establishment of dance as a modern religious art lies in her dedicated efforts to synthesize all of the arts and religion through her lectures, publications, and performances.

A thorough study of all available documentary sources reveals that St. Denis was the first person to use the term "rhythmic choir" and to describe in writing the use of dance movements as a means of worship in church services. In describing the year by year events of her life St. Denis writes, [No specific date given, but the quotation below follows a mention of the year 1929 on a previous page.]

I saw [visualized] many churches opening their doors hospitably to this hitherto unrelated art, the dance. My concept of these new forms of worship, which would include rhythmic movements in our church services, demanded a new and vital expression that would bring humanity into a closer and more harmonious relationship with the One who created our bodies as well as our souls.³

Taylor states that in 1931 St. Denis founded the Society of Spiritual Arts.⁴ Although St. Denis did not mention the date of this event in her

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 154.

² Ibid., p. 153.

³ St. Denis, An Unfinished Life, op. cit., p. 339.

⁴ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 153.

autobiography, she describes in detail the initial meetings of "a handful of friends" who convened for "the purpose of speaking one's mind and bringing as offering those spiritual truths which he believed had sustained him and would help us."¹ These informal discussions of religion and dance led to the conduct of actual worship services and to experimentation with movement as a means of communicating with God. The services were held in the large studio of Denishawn House, where long green drapes, a plain gray rug, and an altar decorated with two huge brass vases of flowers and four wrought-iron candlesticks with tall cathedral candles formed the background for dance.² Dancers, "dressed in long simple robes, medieval in feeling, with no ornaments" sat on either side of the gray rug, while Ruth St. Denis characteristically wore a long white gown.³ The early "Temple services" were largely experimental in nature in that St. Denis improvised to spontaneous themes played on the piano by Wells, the accompanist, while the congregation watched. "Later," St. Denis reports, "I experimented before them all with the full rhythmic choir, as these dance celebrants grew to be called."⁴

In her autobiography St. Denis briefly mentions three different studies or rituals which resulted from the improvisations:

¹ St. Denis, An Unfinished Life, op. cit., p. 339.

² Ibid., p. 340.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 341.

One of our most successful ventures was a study of the three planes of prayer reflected in bodily action. . . . This dance or plastique was called Unity. It expressed through the group movements the theme of spiritual confusion and darkness, when the eyes have been turned away from the light and we grope and stumble toward each other but miss constantly those contacts which the heart so desperately seeks. Only in a moment of illumination are the eyes of one of the celebrants opened to see that he is not alone and then he draws the others with him into a conscious circle of harmonious unity.

. . . . My last was a ritual to Mary, in which I impersonated the White Madonna while the girls performed a lovely candle plastique and then, with almost the gay reverence of childhood, brought, like the Tumbler of Our Lady, their individual offerings of youth and dancing.¹

St. Denis reports that the temple services were held regularly for more than two years until her separation from Shawn and various financial difficulties resulted in her changing her residence from the Denishawn House to a small apartment located on Forty-fourth Street of the City of New York.²

A major event of that period [no date given; the investigator believes it to be 1929 or 1930] was the performance of "Gold Madonna" as part of a worship service held at the Episcopal Church, St. Mark's in-the-Bouwerie in the City of New York, upon the invitation of its minister, the Reverend Doctor Norman Guthrie.³ It is interesting to note in this regard that several sources, including Shawn and Taylor, state that St. Denis performed in the Riverside Church of the City of New York in 1939,

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 342.

leaving the erroneous notion that the year 1939 marked St. Denis' first presentation of religious dance within a church setting. The investigator found no reference concerning the performance in Reverend Guthrie's church other than the mention in St. Denis' autobiography.

As early as 1933 Ruth St. Denis stated in writing her beliefs concerning dance as a means of worship and elaborated upon the use of a rhythmic choir in the church service. The resultant paperback booklet, entitled The Divine Dance, remained unpublished for many years until Adelphi College of Garden City, New York, where St. Denis is presently Artist-in-Residence, produced it in mimeographed form. The contents of the work were divided into eight lessons:

- I. Spiritual Understanding and Realization
- II. The Body as Instrument of Spiritual Being
- III. The Divine Dance
- IV. The Solo Dance
- V. The Group Dance
- VI. The Relation of the Divine Dance to Traditional Worship
- VII. The Divine Dance as Future Herald of a Finer Humanity, Manifesting Christ
- VIII. Dance of the Future

In Lesson VI, The Dance in Traditional Worship, St. Denis appears to have originated the term "Rhythmic Choir" in her statement that it was necessary to divide persons who wish to participate in dance as a means of worship into three groups according to skill: "The Altar Choir, The

Rhythmic Choir, and the Dancing Choir."¹ Her definition of each of these groups follows:

The Altar Choir consists of those who have never danced in our meaning of the term, and the more mature persons. Their duties are to arrange the altar properties and to take part in certain simple rhythmic movements connected with the ritual.

The second group, the Rhythmic Choir, has as its members those who have had some dance training and whose physical suitability warranted their use in the dancing of hymns and other phases of the service.

The third group, or Dancing Choir, is composed of well trained dancers who are capable of the more technical expression of the service.²

In Lesson VI, also, St. Denis states that dance may be used as part of the traditional church service in two ways: (1) the interpretation of one or more hymns at the beginning and end of the service by the rhythmic choir, and (2) the presentation of the complete church service by members of the Spiritual Arts Society.³

Inasmuch as the investigator believes that the six pages comprising Lesson VI of The Divine Dance is an extremely important historical document, she includes them on pages 178-185 of the Appendix of the present thesis.

After moving from the Denishawn House to the apartment on Forty-fourth Street in the City of New York in 1931, Ruth St. Denis resumed the

¹ Ruth St. Denis, "The Divine Dance" (New York: Denishawn House, 1934), p. 20 (Mimeographed).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

the conduct of temple services and subsequently formed the organization called the Society of Spiritual Arts.¹ The formation of the organization included the incorporation of the group which met regularly to worship God through dance. During the years following this event St. Denis and her rhythmic choir performed in several churches in the City of New York.

The most outstanding of these appearances occurred in December, 1939, when Ruth St. Denis performed the Masque of Mary, with the rhythmic choir, at Harry Emerson Fosdick's Riverside Church in the City of New York.² She describes the program in these words:

The whole pageant began with an organ prelude, which was followed by the seating of the congregation, and the singing of a hymn and the reading of scripture. The Lord's Prayer was given by the congregation; the offering was made. At last the great chancel of the beautiful Gothic church was empty. Wells was seated at the organ, and after a brief prelude the White Madonna appeared.

The White Madonna is the total being of Woman, passive, waiting, hidden behind the heavy veil of time. She is the being of creative love. As the rhythmic choir moved down the long aisle her white veil slipped from her head and, dropping to her feet, revealed her in soft madonna blue. This was the color of the divine ecstasy of love--luminous, humble, and yet exalted.

After a plastique of the shepherds she assumed the red veils of the nativity. This color symbolized the experience of birth, the descent into the human consciousness of life, and the bringing forth of the Divine Child.

As the wise men and the shepherds fell away from the center of the altar, making a gorgeous grouping of color around the Madonna, the last veil of the series was put upon her by her attendants. She now wore the gold of fulfillment. Robed in this symbolic color, and taking the child in her hands, she held him in front of her while

¹ St. Denis, An Unfinished Life, op. cit., p. 363.

² Ibid., p. 365.

she was borne aloft on the shoulders of the shepherds; and in a last exultant gesture Mary made her supreme presentation to the world in the person of the Divine Child.

The huge congregation here at Riverside Church seemed friendly and appreciative. Many of my close friends had come to see this unusual production--some of them well-known personages, and I believe that Dr. Fosdick and his associates were pleased with this attempt at the incorporation of one of the oldest arts of the world into the service of religion.¹

The service was repeated at Rutgers Church on Seventy-second Street in the City of New York. Then in the spring of 1940 St. Denis gave a rhythmic interpretation of the Psalms before the altar of the Park Avenue Presbyterian Church of the City of New York.²

Published documentary sources give little information concerning the performances of Ruth St. Denis in church settings and the nature of the dance of her rhythmic choir. One passage concerning this topic occurs in an article written by St. Denis for publication in Walter Sorell's book.

During the early beginnings of the Rhythmic Choir and the modest choreographies relating to the dancing of hymns and selected passages from the Psalms, we used only what might be described as free lyric movements. I have previously used certain semi-Greek and running rhythms for considerable work along the lines of music visualization. As we applied this freedom of movement--freedom in the sense of having no specific technique such as ballet or even modern--we discovered that the spirit of joy or grief, ecstasy or anguish which we put out through these movements gave them their significance. I used lyric movements, partly because they were sufficient for us at that time and partly because I had no other form which seemed more to my hand to express spiritual states. At

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 366.

the back of my mind, however, I knew the time would come when a more definite and appropriate language of movement would be evolved.¹

In the same article she credits La Meri, eminent leader in ethnic dance, for teaching the group the symbolic hand gestures of Hindu dance culture. These gestures, St. Denis states, provided the members of the rhythmic choir "a new medium for interpreting the Lord's Prayer, the Doxology and many of the sublime Psalms."²

In the 1940's Ruth St. Denis moved to California, where in 1947 she established the Church of the Divine Dance in Hollywood. The purpose of the church was "to bring about a vital understanding between the church and the arts and to provide a place to experiment with religious dance and symbolic gestures."³

In 1960 Ruth St. Denis became an Artist-in-Residence at Adelphi College in Garden City, Long Island, New York, where she was head of a newly organized department called "The Religious Arts Program." She is assisted there by Barbara Andres. As one of the three advisors of the Sacred Dance Guild, St. Denis during the past decade has conducted numerous workshops in religious dance and the art of working with rhythmic choirs. Typical of her present work was the Ruth St. Denis Rhythmic Choir Seminar, held October through December of 1961. The written program of this Seminar reveals that St. Denis taught six lessons.

¹Walter Sorell (ed), The Dance Has Many Faces (New York: World Publishing Co., 1951), p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 153.

Lesson one--The Religious Dancer Prepares

Lesson two--The Body is a Living Temple

Lesson three--The Dance and the Traditional Arts of the Old and New Testaments

Lesson four--With the Child Begins Everything

Lesson five--Motion Pictures--The Modern Medium of Communication

Lesson six--How Can the Religious Dance Best Serve Freedom?¹

Although the subject of the Seminar was "How to Organize a Rhythmic Choir," St. Denis states in the program, "It is for those interested in helping to bring about not only an artistic religious renaissance but an intimation of a new quality of human living."²

A statement made by Ruth St. Denis at a Conference on Religion and the Dance, sponsored by the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches on November 16, 1960, in the Riverside Church of the City of New York, reveals her concept of her present role in religious dance in the United States.

It is inevitable that within the many groups of rhythm choirs and various titles that are now forming all over America that there will be many possibilities of discord. So I want to state publicly here, while I have this chance, that while I may be, according to my temperament being what it is falling from grace again and again, fundamentally it is my avowed intention to be truly of the greatest help and stimulus to any and all groups that may need what I have to give.³

¹ Program of the Ruth St. Denis Rhythmic Choir Seminar
October-November, 1961.

² Ibid.

³ Department of Worship and the Arts, op. cit., p. 6.

Now in her eighties Ruth St. Denis continues to teach, plan, create, and perform. Called the "First Lady of the American Dance," she has performed professionally for more than sixty-five years.

Reverend William Norman Guthrie

Taylor states that Reverend William Norman Guthrie, the Rector at St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, an Episcopal Church in the City of New York, was the first individual to experiment with rhythmic choirs, although they were not called by that appellation.¹ Using a combination of professional dancers and members of his congregation, Guthrie employed rhythmic movements, called "Eurythmic Rituals" as part of his worship services from 1919 to 1938.² Approximately seven programs of religious dancing were given each year. The first religious dance, performed in 1919, was "The Ritual Office and Dance of the Della Robbia Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin."³ The accompaniment was Wolf Ferrari's "Vita Nuova," and the choreography was by Bird Larsen, a professional dancer and instructor at Teachers College, Columbia University. In describing the presentation to Bishop Manning, who was antagonistic to the idea of dance in the church, Doctor Guthrie wrote,

The lighting was so arranged as to give a sense of impersonality to the representation--one saw almost as in a dream. What followed did not resemble in the least a dance, but the performance of the

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 176.

² Ibid., p. 177.

³ Ibid.

Mass raised to an ideal perfection. . . . Here it was the Virgin who was glorified by assisting angels. The movements of the participants only vaguely suggested flesh beneath the long white silken flowing robes, such as one receives from Fra Angelico angels moving in the fields of God.¹

Both Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis recognized the outstanding work of Reverend Guthrie in their respective publications. Shawn wrote, in 1946,

Dr. Norman Guthrie, a well-known leader and instigator in this field, had religious dancing in his church against a great deal of criticism and in spite of the fact that on this account, his bishop refused him official visits. But when he retired recently the dance services were discontinued.²

Ruth St. Denis praised Guthrie highly for his contributions to dance as a religious art,

He [Guthrie] is a true pioneer, a scholar, and an agitator for beauty. Since the doctor and I are two supreme egotists I doubt if we would have been able to collaborate harmoniously, but I will always remain one of his warmest admirers. I feel strongly that the rich store of enthusiasm and the use of the new liturgical symbolism and the forming of new rituals, all of which were suggested by Dr. Guthrie at Saint-Mark's, should be carried on. He and his daughter Phoebe developed his ideas, with little financial support and a deplorably small personnel, and Phoebe alone produced some lovely things as illustration of her father's radical theories.³

Phoebe Anne Guthrie, who wrote a thesis entitled "The Dynamic Motivation of the Dance" at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1926, planned the choreography for most of the later numbers which

¹ Ibid.

² Shawn, Dance We Must, op. cit., p. 33.

³ St. Denis, An Unfinished Life, op. cit., p. 342.

appeared in her father's church.¹ Among these compositions were "The Prophet," by Kahlil Gibran, and "The Hymn of Jesus," taken from the apocryphal Acts of John and performed to Gustav Holst's Cantate, "The Hymn of Jesus."²

Erika Thimey

Erika Thimey, who came to the United States from the Wigman School in Germany in 1931, has been teaching religious dance to various church groups since 1932. Her first venture in this field was the presentation of a Christmas pageant in dance form to the congregation of the First Unitarian Church in Chicago, Illinois.³ In this production Thimey used both her own pupils and students enrolled in the Meadville Theological School in Chicago. As a result of the success of the Christmas pageant, she was invited to assist with religious dances and pageants in a number of other churches in Chicago and in neighboring areas.

In the spring of 1933 the same group presented "The Easter Story" with an original interpretation. Taylor describes Thimey's program:

After an opening dance of traditional worship and a hymn of praise, a group of Light Figures gave a dance expressive of the search for light on the eternal questions of life. Soon there arose a struggle with darkness, culminating in a triumphal procession of Dark Figures. Amid the gloom of tragedy comes the illumination of spiritual truth.

¹ Phoebe Anne Guthrie, "The Dynamic Motivation of the Dance" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Education, Columbia University, 1926), p. 35.

² Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 177.

³ Thimey, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

The new life within and consequent new contact with fellow human beings are joyfully expressed in a dance of renewed life.¹

In 1933 Thimey presented a "Christmas Dance Service" at the Unitarian Church in Brooklyn, New York. Soon after that she produced a worship service with a rhythmic processional and prayer dance, using the young people in the Unitarian Church in Waltham, Massachusetts.²

From 1931 to 1941 Erika Thimey traveled extensively throughout the United States and worked with church groups--particularly young people --in numerous cities: Chicago, in 1932; New York, in 1933; Boston, in 1934; and Washington, D. C., in 1941.³ Taylor summarizes Thimey's work in this way:

Through the art of the dance, she has interpreted sermons, prayers, scripture readings, anthems, and offerings. . . . In her programs she combines solo work with the motion choir of the church. . . . In most of her programs she presents some dance of inner or social conflict which strengthens a service of devotion in a Christian Church which acknowledges the struggle that is inherent in its ethical concerns.⁴

In 1943 Thimey opened a children's dance theatre in Washington, D. C., where she continues to experiment with Sacred Dance. Since 1944 she has been teaching daily at Howard University in Washington, D. C.

Some of Thimey's religious solo dances are: "Pieta," "Invocation," "Ludus de Anti Christo," "I Corinthians 13," and Whitman's "Who Art Thou,

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 179.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 163.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

O Spirit of Man."¹ Thimey summarizes her philosophy concerning dance as a religious art in the statement: "Because in dance the body is an expressive exterior of the soul, I knew that it would be possible to create worship through bodily form."² Among the many persons who have been greatly influenced in their work by Erika Thimey is Reverend Robert A. Storer, another outstanding pioneer in the field of religious dance.

Reverend Robert A. Storer

Reverend Robert A. Storer, minister of the First Parish Church (Unitarian) in Dorchester, Massachusetts, has presented dance services in his church since 1934, when he completed his Bachelor of Arts thesis entitled "The Dance as Sacred Ritual" at the University of Chicago. He holds a degree in theology from Meadville Theological School in Chicago, Illinois. Reverend Storer works directly with his motion choirs which are comprised of church members and holds regular rehearsals in which they dance to hymns followed by a period of improvisation. Reverend Storer stated that his church has an immobile center pulpit so that most of the dances presented are of the processional type.³ Since 1937 his church has presented annually "A Christmas Masque" in choreographic form.⁴ Storer describes this work in detail:

¹ Ibid., p. 164.

² Ibid.

³ Letter from Reverend Robert A. Storer, Pastor, First Parish Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts, November 28, 1963.

⁴ Ibid.

The angels, carrying candles, make gentle motions with their arms as they proceed up the aisles to the music of Bach's 'Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light.' The shepherds, dressed in forest green and carrying wreaths of laurel, make circular patterns in their processional. As a living curtain the angels and shepherds execute a variety of simple designs with their candles and wreaths as the kings enter. A solo dancer, representing the angel of Mary, enters to the music of Bach's 'Jesu, joy of man's desiring' and a motion choir of young girls in long blue robes give an interpretation of Brahms's 'Lullaby' before the cradle scene. The masque is not a performance. It is a reverent presentation of the familiar story in a new way.¹

Motion choirs, directed by Reverend Storer, have presented an interpretation of "The Lord's Prayer," by Malotte; a dance-drama to the anthem, "The Pharisee and the Publican;" "Easter Processional;" "United Nations Ritual" to music by Sibelius; and a dance-drama, "One God, One World."²

In addition to his work with the rhythmic choir, Storer serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Religious Arts Guild in Boston, Massachusetts. The aim of the organization is "to create interest in the religious application of the fine arts, and to act as an agency for disseminating information concerning architecture, music, drama, and the allied arts as far as they serve religious ends."³ Membership in the Religious Arts Guild is open to "all who hold that religious art is one of the supreme achievements of the human spirit, that there is the holiness of beauty as well as the beauty of holiness."⁴

¹ Storer, op. cit.

² Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir., op. cit., p. 180.

³ Religious Arts Guild, Pamphlet (Boston, Massachusetts: April, 1947).

⁴ Ibid.

Storer states his philosophy concerning religious dance:

It is not my thought that this kind of dancing can or should replace our present forms of worship, or that it should be a regular part of Sunday services. I am convinced that rhythmic work can enrich our present forms of pageantry, that it can be used for processions and occasionally to interpret an anthem. I am likewise convinced that the practice of rhythm is most beneficial to the young people who participate.

In any event let us be open-minded and be willing to experiment in a field that has the sanction of history and the promise of adding beauty to man's worship of God in the future.¹

Margaret Fisk Taylor

Margaret Fisk Taylor, an outstanding pioneer, teacher, and author in the field of religious dance, began her work as "Mrs. Margaret Palmer Fisk," the wife of a Congregational minister, in the South Shore Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. She reports that the use of "Angels" in the Christmas pageant of 1934 led to experimentation with symbolic gestures and eventually to the formation of a rhythmic choir. Taylor believes that she coined the word "rhythmic choir" in Chicago at the same time that Ruth St. Denis began to use it in California and later at the Denishawn House in the City of New York. Taylor states in this regard:

My concern for the last twenty years has been in this matter of simple dance movement as an art involved in the act of worship. Sometimes we have called this the art of rhythmic choirs. I remember that years ago I ran across the fact that Miss Ruth had chosen the term "Rhythmic Choir" when she was in the West and I was in the East and neither of us had known that the other had chosen that term. I chose it because the church was used to singing choirs and speech choirs; I don't know how she chose the title, but

¹Storer, op. cit.

the choice of this term happened simultaneously! It's amazing! Then there are other terms used by various churches: sacred dance, liturgical dance choir, dramatic movement choir, worship choir, interpreting choir, choral movement, creative movement.¹

Taylor was influenced during her earliest experimentation with religious symbolic movement by Marian Van Tuyl, dance instructor at the University of Chicago (1930-1937) and pioneer in college chapel vesper services where the dance group presented religious dances.² Some of Taylor's first numbers, created in 1937 and 1938 for presentation by the rhythmic choir in her husband's church, were "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," by Bach, using a simplified adaptation of its choreography by Marian Van Tuyl; a dance-drama, "The Prodigal Son" to music by Sibelius; "Sanctus," by Gounod; and "Hymn to the Unknown God," by Holst.³ Concerning these early years, Taylor writes:

Fortunately, the church was liberal and the young people enthusiastic. So the work of the rhythmic choir was accepted as a natural and beautiful part of special vesper services and pageants.⁴

When her husband was called to the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, Taylor reminisces that she decided not mention choirs to anyone since the congregation appeared--at least to her --to be hostile to the idea of dance in the church sanctuary.⁵ In the

¹ Department of Worship and the Arts, op. cit., p. 9.

² Taylor, "Religious Dance," op. cit., p. 68.

³ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir., op. cit., p. 181

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 182.

course of events, however, she was requested to give a program on "Religion and the Dance" as one of a series of programs concerning Religion and the Arts. This opportunity motivated her to undertake extensive research on the history of religious dancing which later provided background material for her first book, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, which was published in 1950.¹

In 1942 Taylor produced her first "Choir Festival," a special vesper service in which the singing choir and rhythmic choirs of the church cooperated, at the Church of Christ, at Dartmouth College, in Hanover, New Hampshire. Since that date, the Choir Festival has been an annual event.²

Taylor reported in 1959 that the rhythmic choir of the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College consisted of twenty-five high school girls and occasionally some Dartmouth students. Some of the numbers which the choir has recently presented are "Ruth and Boaz" to the music of "Ruth," by Cezar Frank; "A Candle Dance of Worship" to the music of "The Cherubim Song," by Bortniansky; "Donna Nabis Pacem" (a round interpreted); and "My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me" (Psalm 22) to the traditional music of "Eli, Eli."³

Concerning her work at the Church of Christ of Dartmouth College, Taylor writes,

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 183.

³ Taylor, "Religious Dancing," op. cit., p. 68.

Whenever our rhythmic choir has presented programs people have been universally appreciative, as if they had a great thirst for this art. This is true even of those who have come in a skeptical attitude. The encouragement of our church inspires the young people in the rhythmic choirs to contribute to their spiritual interpretations to the best of their ability.

In 1957 Margaret Palmer Fisk married Walter Taylor, Director at the School of Architecture at Ohio University in Athens, and member of the National Council of Churches' Commission on Worship and the Arts. During the past few years she has been actively involved in the work of the Sacred Dance Guild and in the publication of its Newsletter, from 1957 to 1963. She has also conducted numerous workshops in the art of the rhythmic choir. An item of the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, in September, 1961, shows her busy schedule.

Margaret Fisk Taylor's calendar looks like this: Workshops on Oct. 18-20; Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N. J., Oct. 18; two at Princeton Theological Seminary, Oct. 19 and 20; N. J. Council of Churches Leadership Training held at Princeton Theological Seminary, Oct. 19; Workshop at Springfield College, Springfield, Mass., Oct. 21; Workshop in E. Lansing Mich., (Edgewood Peoples Church), Oct. 27, 28; Workshop at Normandale Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn., Nov. 10-12.

Also she will be teaching July 31 to August 31, 1962, Garrett Graduate School of Theology, Evanston, Ill.

She writes she is preparing 8 filmstrips on children's work which should be available by November through Dr. Ruth Lister, R.F.D. 1, Oberlin, Ohio. Three filmstrips for 5, 6 and 7 years old; two for children 8 and 9 years old; three for the 10, 11 and 12 years old. The resumes, etc., are available through Dr. Lister.²

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir., op. cit., p. 183.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, September, 1961.

In March, 1963, Taylor conducted a workshop with twenty-five students from Princeton Theological Seminary, whom she described as "the freest and most creative of all seminary students I have worked with."¹ Other groups with which Taylor worked in 1963 were Church of the Brethren in West Milton, Ohio, in March; Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, in April and again in October; Plymouth Congregational Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in May; Trinity Episcopal Church in Hamilton, Ohio, in May; Kappa Phi Convention (for Methodist college girls) at Bowling Green, Ohio, in June;² Wesley Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, in October; United Student Fellowship on campus of the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, in October; and the First Congregational Church of Akron, Ohio, in November.³

The contributions of Margaret Fisk Taylor to the acceptance of dance as a modern religious art lie in her extensive work with rhythmic choirs throughout the United States, in her versatile and inspirational teaching, and in the publication of three books, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, in 1950; Look Up and Live, in 1953; and Time for Wonder, in 1962; and many articles in numerous periodicals.

Mary Jane Wolbers

Mary Jane Wolbers became interested in religious dance while studying the Denishawn technique as a teen-ager. Mrs. Wolbers stated:

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, May, 1963.

² Ibid.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, September, 1963.

"One could scarcely come under the influence of this form of the dance without developing great awareness and deep admiration for their [Shawn and St. Denis] devotion to dance as a religious art."¹ During adolescence she began to read and study about world cultures in which dance was an integral part of religious life. She rejoiced to find occasional news items concerning Miss Ruth's work in churches and finally determined to work actively in this field herself.

During her college days at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, New Hampshire, from 1939 through 1943, a happy combination of leadership activities in the student Christian movement and participation in physical education classes in the contemporary dance brought about her first presentations of religious dance.² Townspeople, as well as college students, came to see this new form of worship.

Mary Jane Wolbers became acquainted with the work of Margaret Fisk Taylor (formerly Margaret Palmer Fisk) in Hanover, New Hampshire, in the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College. A variety of sources motivated Wolbers' choreography of religious dances. She experimented with interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, Frances Thompson's Hound of Heaven, and the music of various composers from Beethoven to Satie. Occasionally she gave lecture-demonstrations on the subject of religious dance to small church groups; but it was not until much later that she

¹ Mary Jane Wolbers, "Personal Resume," in the files of the Sacred Dance Guild.

² Ibid.

was accorded the privilege of using the sanctuary of a church as the place for worshipping God through dance.

As a dance major in the graduate school of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin, Wolbers began serious study of the dance under Margaret H'Doubler. Wolbers described this experience as tremendously rewarding. It provided her with valuable tools and knowledge to further her work as both a dancer and a teacher.

After graduation from the University of Wisconsin with a Master of Science degree in dance, Wolbers continued to urge the acceptance of dance as a religious art. Vermont Junior College in Montclair, Vermont, saw the first use of a rhythmic choir in its chancel services when she was Director of Physical Education there. As head of the dance department at Jordan College of Music in Indianapolis, Indiana, she directed the Christmas Program for that city's lighting ceremony in the well-known Monument Circle. The Jordan dancers and the rhythmic choir saluted the season and retold the Nativity story to the accompaniment of the Jordan choral group. In Indianapolis also she frequently gave lecture-demonstrations and participated in panel discussions for a Jewish community center, the Catholic Youth Organization, and other groups. In her regular teaching of dance and recital work, the sacred dance always had a place.¹ Her workshops, dance composition, and choreography classes also included consideration of religious motivation as a springboard to creative work and

¹

Personal interview with Mary Jane Wolbers, February 20, 1964.

as a valid subject about which to make dances. Seldom did she present a program without representation from this aspect of dance.

In 1958 Mrs. Wolbers directed an adult performing group, The Huguenot Dancers in New Paltz, New York, which was dedicated to presenting concerts for children. This group appeared in matinee programs and school assemblies in New Paltz, Kingston, Medina, and Boyceville. Bookings for fall programs took them to many other communities in the New York area during the months of September and October, 1960. Some of the members of this group joined forces to form a dance choir which performed in churches in the local Methodist parish and participated in the Spring Festival of Dance Choir in Buchanan, Connecticut, in 1959, and Fall River, Massachusetts, in 1960. Wolbers was also a special teacher of the church school of the Community Church in the City of New York, where she served as a consultant to the regular teaching staff.

Since 1956 she has been active with the Sacred Dance Guild. This organization brought her into close association with many workers in the field. With the encouragement of this group she undertook the preparation of a bibliography of source materials in sacred dance and a research study designed to survey the present status of dance activity in churches and schools throughout the United States.¹ For this group she danced and taught workshop sessions in Boston, Massachusetts; presented a lecture-demonstration at the Charles Street Church on Beacon Hill in Boston,

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, March, 1962.

Massachusetts; conducted the City of New York religious education training session in February, 1959; devised and performed a service of worship and dance in February, 1960.¹

In 1960 Wolbers became vice-president of the Sacred Dance Guild for a two-year term, and in 1962 she was elected president of the group. In addition to these responsibilities, she served as national publicity chairman from 1958 to 1962.

In 1963 Wolbers and her family moved to East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, where her husband is a professor of physical education at East Stroudsburg State Teachers College. Wolbers teaches physical education also at the same college in the women's division. The move, however, has not hampered her activities in sacred dance. As president of the Guild she wrote the following letter to the members upon her arrival in Pennsylvania:

Dear Members of the S.D.G.

This time I am writing you from Pennsylvania, where I am just getting settled. Let me extend an invitation to everyone to visit me here. Should fate or fancy take you in the direction of the Poconos, don't go by without stopping to visit. I hope my being here will help to stir² up more sacred dance activity in the state of Pennsylvania. . . .

Indeed, her arrival did instigate more interest in the religious dance as evidenced by two articles in the Daily Record of East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, March 2, 1963, and May 4, 1963:

¹ Wolbers, "Resume," op. cit.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, January, 1964. Letter from the President.

March 2, 1963

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At last week's annual meeting in New York City, Mrs. Charles Wolbers of East Stroudsburg, was re-elected to a second term as national president of the Sacred Dance Guild. A newcomer to the Stroudsburg area, Mary Jane is a dance educator and recognized authority in religious dance. The Sacred Dance Guild is a national organization devoted to the promotion of dance as a religious art. It is interdenominational, embracing all faiths and extends its training and experience to dance in religious education as well as to the use of dance in worship.

At its recent annual conclave in New York, Guild members attended meetings, a choir directors clinic, and partook of two days of critical analysis by a panel of theologians and dancers. Mrs. Wolbers presided at the executive board sessions and the general meeting which followed on February 22.

The local dancer, choreographer, and teacher finds her extensive participation and experience in dance as a creative art particularly adaptable to work in the field of sacred dance. Her work includes

.....

The Wolbers reside at 111 South Green Street, East Stroudsburg, with their four children who attend the local schools. Dr. Charles Wolbers is a Professor of Physical Education at the state college. Mrs. Wolbers holds a master's degree in dance from the University of Wisconsin and taught in schools and colleges prior to her marriage.¹

May 4, 1963

Mrs. Wolbers Speaker at National Convention--Mrs. Charles Wolbers, of 111 South Green Street, East Stroudsburg, is leaving today for Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she will address the national convention of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

She will present a lecture-demonstration on the Sacred Dance before the dance section on Monday afternoon. President of the Sacred Dance Guild and a nationally known dance educator, Mrs. Wolbers will summarize contemporary developments in religious dance here and abroad and preview the results of a research project she is completing.

¹ Daily Record, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, March 2, 1963.

Assisting her in demonstrating the work of soloists and dance choirs in services of worship will be former pupil, Judith Robinson. Mrs. Wolbers will present a solo 'Gestures of Prayer' and the Carleton group will present 'The Beatitudes,' choreographed by James Ekberg.

Taking advantage of their president's presence, the members of the Sacred Dance Guild at the Lutheran House of Prayer in Minneapolis have arranged a dinner in her honor on Sunday and will have a three-hour workshop with choir directors from all over Minnesota.¹

Other Outstanding Persons

Although the present writer has limited this chapter to a report of the work of seven outstanding individuals associated with religious dance in the United States, she wishes to recognize that many others are currently making great contributions to the acceptance of dance as a means of worship. Illustrative of the cooperative efforts of these persons was a national gathering--the first of its kind--on "Religion and the Dance" held at The Riverside Church in the City of New York on November 16, 1960. A comprehensive report of this meeting, including the text of all of the speeches and comments made, was prepared from tape recordings and is available upon request from Marvin P. Halverson, Executive Director of the Department of Worship and the Arts, National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.

Sixty-three persons, representing a wide geographical distribution, attended the meeting, participated in the discussions, and viewed the following five performances of religious dance:

¹ Daily Record, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, May 4, 1963.

'Psalm 116' and 'Kathak' - Hadassah.

'By the Waters of Babylon' - Directed by Louise Mattlage and performed by members of the Fairfield County Modern Dance Workshop.

'Eili, Eili' - Based on Psalm 22 with the lines 'My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me.' Directed by Margaret Fisk Taylor, Martha Odom, Ruby Henderson, Meredith Herrick, and students from the Union Theological Seminary.

'Mary Magdalene' - Directed by Sister Jean of the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God and performed by students from the Tuller School, Maycroft, Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York.

'Man's Reaction to Life' - Directed by Helen L. Gray and performed by members of the Boys' Group for Choreographic Worship, South Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut.¹

A list of the twenty-three persons who addressed one or more remarks to the group reveals, in the opinion of the investigator, several outstanding persons in the field of religious dance whose many and varied contributions would easily fill another volume:

PARTICIPANTS IN MORNING AND AFTERNOON SESSIONS²

Statements and Comments

E. Martin Browne - President, The Religious Drama Society of Great Britain, London, England.

Halim El-Dabh - Composer of Clytemnestra and other works for the dance, New York, New York.

Gertrude Fagan - Director, Religious Drama Program, The Riverside Church, New York, New York.

Jeanne Fuller - Director, Dance Choir, First Congregational Church, Darien, Connecticut.

¹ Department of Worship and the Arts, op. cit., p. 2.

² Ibid., p. 11.

Helen L. Gray - Director, Boy's Group for Choreographic Worship, South Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut, and founder of the Oneonta, California Rhythmic Choir, 1949.

Hadasseh - Professional ethnic dancer and teacher, New York, New York.

Marvin P. Halverson - Executive Director, Department of Worship and the Arts, National Council of Churches, New York, New York.

Lucile Hausley - Student, Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York.

Erick Hawkins - Professional dancer and choreographer, New York, New York.

Ruth Winfield Love - Staff member, Boston University, School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts.

Virginia Lucke - Director, Storrs, Connecticut, Congregational Church Rhythmic Choir.

Louise Mattlage - Director, Fairfield County, Connecticut, Modern Dance Workshop, Westtown, Pennsylvania.

Betty Meredith-Jones - Instructor in dance and language movement, New School for Social Research, New York, New York.

Jean Miller - Dance consultant, Wantagh, Long Island, New York.

Larry Mills - Student, Ohio State University, Kent, Ohio.

Martha Odom - Director, Sacred Dance Choir, Springfield College, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Roger Ortmayer - Professor of Christianity and the Arts, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Ruth St. Denis - Teacher, professional dancer, founder of Denishawn Dancers and leading figure in religious dance since her debut in 1906, New York and Hollywood.

Walter Sorell - Author and associate editor of the Dance Observer, New York, New York.

Margaret Fisk Taylor - Author of 'The Art of the Rhythmic Choir,' lecturer, teacher and dancer, Athens, Ohio.

Sister Jean Thompson - Member of the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God, formerly a professional dancer, Maycroft, Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York.

Edward N. West - Canon Sacrist, Cathedral of St. John The Divine, New York, New York.

Mary Jane Wolbers - Director, Huguenot Dance Choir, New Paltz, New York.

Summary

In this chapter of the thesis the investigator identified outstanding individuals associated with religious and/or sacred dance in the United States and described their contributions to contemporary religious dance and to the development of rhythmic choirs and the Sacred Dance Guild. While numerous modern dances based upon religious themes have been performed on the concert stage, the present chapter focused upon dance performed in a church setting. "Church setting," as defined in Chapter I of the present study, is any place of quiet reverence where the worship of God is uppermost in the minds of those present. The contributions of the following persons to religious dance were reported: Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Reverend William Norman Guthrie, Erika Thimey, Reverend Robert Storer, Margaret Fisk Taylor, and Mary Jane Wolbers.

Ted Shawn, eminent dancer, choreographer, author, and advisor to the Sacred Dance Guild, was the first person to dance a complete church service within the sanctuary of a church. Shawn later performed this church service in thirty or forty cities in the United States. Although Shawn was highly successful in the role of dancer-preacher, he preferred to present his religious dances in the theatre.

Although Shawn is recognized for his production of the first church service in dance, many persons believe that the contributions of Ruth St. Denis to religious dance are even more outstanding than those of her husband, Ted Shawn. Ruth St. Denis performed many dances of an oriental religious nature, among which the most prominent was "Radha." Perhaps the greatest contribution of Ruth St. Denis to the establishment of dance as a modern religious art lies in her dedicated efforts to synthesize all of the arts and religion through her lectures, publications, and performances.

Reverend William Norman Guthrie, Rector at St. Mark's in-the-Bowverie, an Episcopal church in the City of New York, was the first individual to experiment with rhythmic choirs, although they were not called by that term. Many of the dances presented in Reverend Guthrie's church were choreographed by his daughter, Phoebe Anne Guthrie, who wrote a thesis entitled "The Dynamic Motivation of the Dance" at Teachers College, Columbia University in 1926, which described religion as the motivating factor in all life.

Erika Thimey, a student of Wigman, has taught religious dance to various church groups since 1932 and has presented numerous programs within church sanctuaries. From 1931 to 1941 Thimey traveled extensively throughout the United States and worked with church groups--particularly young people--in numerous cities: Chicago, New York, Boston, and Washington, D. C.. Among the many persons influenced in their work by Erika Thimey is Reverend Robert A. Storer, another outstanding pioneer in the field of the religious dance.

Reverend Robert A. Storer, minister of the Unitarian Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts, has presented dance services in his church since 1934. In addition to his work with dance in the church, Storer serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Religious Arts Guild in Boston, Massachusetts.

Margaret Fisk Taylor, an outstanding pioneer, teacher, and author in the field of religious dance, began her work as "Mrs. Margaret Palmer Fisk," the wife of a Congregationalist minister in the South Shore Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. In addition to her extensive work with rhythmic choirs, Taylor has written voluminously concerning the art of the dance in religious services. Among her publications are The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, Look Up and Live, and Time for Wonder. At present she serves as editor of the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter.

Mary Jane Wolbers, dance educator and president of the Sacred Dance Guild, has contributed much to religious dance. She has directed religious dance choirs, lectured extensively on the subject of dance and religion, and worked with the Sacred Dance Guild since 1956, when it was organized. Because of her growing recognition in the field of religious dance, Mrs. Wolbers was invited to speak at the meeting of the Dance Section at the National Convention of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation in 1963.

Although the present writer has limited her report to the work of seven outstanding individuals associated with religious dance in the United States, she wishes to recognize that many others are currently

making great contributions to the acceptance of dance as a means of worship. Illustrative of the cooperative efforts of these persons was a national gathering--the first of its kind--on "Religion and the Dance" held at The Riverside Church in the City of New York on November 16, 1960. A comprehensive report of this meeting, including the text of all the speeches and comments made, was prepared from tape recordings and is available upon request from Marvin Halverson, Executive Director of the Department of Worship and the Arts, National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.

In Chapter IV of this study the investigator will present the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SACRED DANCE GUILD AND THE RHYTHMIC CHOIR MOVEMENT

Introduction

In this chapter of the thesis, the investigator will present the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement. The two groups are interrelated since many rhythmic choirs function under the auspices of members of the Sacred Dance Guild.

Prior to the initial meeting of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association in 1956 and the subsequent creation of the Sacred Dance Guild in 1958, hundreds of rhythmic choirs had been developed in the United States. Although rhythmic choirs vary widely in nature, they may be described as organized groups of persons who use rhythmic gestures and motions in expressing ideas of religious significance during the worship service. Taylor states that the purposes of a rhythmic choir are "to facilitate private worship, to lead group worship and to portray and interpret worship experiences in the most beautiful of all art forms--the dance."¹ The rhythmic choir is similar to the traditional choir of singers in that its members perform planned movements in unison to the music of

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 28.

hymns or to the words of a prayer, a scripture reading, or any other verbal part of the church service. These movements may be gestures--using small movements of the hands and arms--or they may be locomotor and axial movements entailing the use of the entire body and resembling the modern dance style employed by concert artists.¹ The work of the rhythmic choir is based upon the conviction that "in man's effort to communicate with the Great Unknown, the whole self--body as well as soul--should be included."²

The Sacred Dance Guild, founded in 1958, grew out of an expressed need for directors of rhythmic choirs and other persons interested in dance as a religious art to share ideas, convictions, and aspirations in the field of religious dance. Although a youthful organization, in 1963 the Guild had 180 members representing twenty-one of the fifty states.³ The purposes of the Sacred Dance Guild, as stated in the By-laws of the organization, are "to stimulate interest in the dance as a religious art form and to provide a means of communication and training for the directors of rhythmic choirs."⁴

Many of the directors of the rhythmic choirs throughout the United States are members of the Sacred Dance Guild. The findings of a questionnaire

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid., p. 41.

³
Results of questionnaire distributed by the investigator to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild.

⁴
By-laws of the Sacred Dance Guild (in the files of the organization).

distributed by the investigator to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild during the fall semester of the academic year of 1963-1964 revealed that fifty-three of the 108 respondents served as directors of rhythmic choirs; five acted as sponsors of such choirs; and eleven participated as members of a dance choir.

Rhythmic choirs are found in churches of all denominations. At present, no complete list of rhythmic choirs in the United States exists. A tabulation of the responses of the aforementioned questionnaire resulted in the following findings: eighteen rhythmic choirs were affiliated with the Congregational Church; nine with the Methodist; five with the Unitarian; five with the Interdenominational; four with the Church of Christ; four with the Universalist; three with the Episcopalian; two with the Lutheran; two with the Presbyterian; two with the Baptist; and one with the Catholic. Twenty-nine respondents reported that their choirs danced in churches of different denominations rather than maintaining affiliation with only one church.¹

One of the major problems confronting rhythmic choir directors is "to find and use those gestures and motions which are intelligible to Christianity in expressing religiously significant ideas, convictions and moods of worship for themselves and others."² Because many of the directors and members of the choirs have no previous dance experience,

¹ Questionnaire, op. cit.

² Letter from Reverend Robert A. Storer, Vice-President, Sacred Dance Guild, Winchester, Massachusetts, November 28, 1963.

leaders of the Sacred Dance Guild perceive one of its responsibilities as the sponsorship of such events as programs, lectures, workshops, and festivals which provide instruction concerning the structure of sacred music, the elements of choreography, and the techniques of modern dance.¹

Four outstanding concert artists in the area of religious dance serve as advisors to the Sacred Dance Guild--Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Forrest Coggan, and Mary Anthony. Through the leadership of these individuals and the officers of the Guild, state and regional workshops are conducted each year as well as the Annual Institute of the Sacred Dance Guild. Each of these workshops and institutes will be described briefly by the investigator in the latter half of this chapter.

Within the organization controversy exists with respect to the nature of the dance to be incorporated into worship service by rhythmic choir members and the degree of skill which should characterize members of the Sacred Dance Guild. A few of the questions which members are presently seeking to answer are: (1) What is religious dance and what makes it a significant experience for the worshipper? (2) What level of skill must be attained by members of rhythmic choirs to enable them to communicate effectively to members of a congregation? (3) What contributions can the Sacred Dance Guild make in promoting dance as a means of worship?

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Fact Sheet (in the files of the organization).

Many beautiful quotations concerning the origin and significance of dance as a means of worship exist, showing the depth and breadth of man's reflection upon the meaning of religious dance. Many writers believe that the words "dance" and "religion" were synonymous in the early stages of civilization. Havelock Ellis, who agrees with Curt Sachs that dance is the oldest of all arts and the matrix out of which all the other arts evolved,¹ states that dance was a highly developed art form used spontaneously by primitive tribes to communicate with the supernatural:

The evolution of dance as a high art belongs to prehistory. At the dawn of civilization, dance had already reached a degree of perfection that no other art or science could match. Societies limited to savage living, primitive sculpture, primitive architecture and as yet no poetry, quite commonly present the astonished ethnologist with a highly developed tradition of difficult beautiful dancing. Their music apart from dance was nothing at all; in the dance it is elaborate. Their worship is dance. They are tribes of dancers.²

Barbara Page suggests that dance is the natural manifestation of religious feeling in contemporary man as well as in primitive societies:

All through the history of developing religious consciousness, dance is found as a manifestation of religious emotion. At all times, and in all ages, deep emotional experiences overpass the capacity of ideas to express them. Religion always has been and probably always will be at root a deep seated feeling about life and the universe. These feelings or experiences burst forth in song and in dance, so that ever since the beginning of civilization the dance has been a persistent form of expressing religious feeling. It has served the purpose of administering to the religious soul in its deepest mood.³

¹ Ellis, op. cit., p. 106.

² Ibid.

³ Barbara Page, "Philosophy of the Dance," Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (May, 1933), p. 17.

Paul Radin, a prominent sociologist, agrees with Page in that he states:

Religious feeling is almost always accompanied by certain muscular responses, the folding of the hands, the bowing of the head, closing of the eyes, and by all external signs of mental and emotional concentration.¹

Many sociologists and psychologists today recognize that a major problem of the twentieth century is the compartmentalization of man inherent in an age of mechanism and specialization. The workman on the assembly line seldom sees his completed product and almost never understands the total process. More and more in the tasks of daily living man uses only his mind and his hands rather than the large body movements which characterized the work of earlier generations.

Members of the Sacred Dance Guild seek to initiate a movement that will help to assist man to become an integrated being--in his worship --if not in his daily work. Taylor believes that incorporating large body movements into the worship service will noticeably increase church membership and fulfill inner drives of persons seeking a closer and more satisfactory relationship with God than that provided in traditional church services. She says:

I believe that until we provide people with a definite technique for praying with their bodies, as well as with their souls, we are not going to be able to bring the world singing and crowding into our churches.²

¹ Paul Radin, Social Anthropology (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1925), p. 243.

² Taylor, Look Up and Live, op. cit., p. 2.

Gray agrees with Taylor in her definition of prayer as it should be offered by man to God: "Prayer in its fullest sense is the act of fitting one's soul into one's body, of lighting up one's body with God."¹

Doctor Howard Thurman's statement perhaps best summarizes the viewpoint of members of the Sacred Dance Guild who describe religious dance as an "integrating experience" for those who participate in it. Thurman heralds the beginning of a dance choir at the Fellowship Church of All Peoples in San Francisco, California, with this statement:

Historically, the act of worship provides a transcendent point of focus for such release. Because the genius of the dance, certainly in its more liturgical aspects, is to effect a creative synthesis of body, mind, and the spirit in a single respiratory beat, the significance of such an experience for the community is not far to seek. Beset by fears and anxieties with the sense of direction for the common life obscured by the deep shadows of heavy forbodings, modern man is desperately in need of experiences that make for wholeness, for synthesis, and therefore, validation. The dance provides that kind of integrating moment which may enable the human spirit to catch its breadth in the struggle to achieve a friendly society of friendly men underneath a friendly sky.²

Ruth St. Denis describes dance as an appropriate means of expressing religious beliefs in her statement:

Dance is the one art where the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of self are employed completely and simultaneously. It is only fitting, therefore, that the high aims of religion come again to be expressed in the art of dance, which is a natural symbol of an integrated life.³

¹ Helen Gray, As We Pray Together (unpublished Pictorial Devotional of Lord's Prayer).

² Dr. Howard Thurman, "The Arc of the Day," Impulse (15-18), 1951.

³ Ruth St. Denis, "Dance as Spiritual Expression," Dance: A Basic Educational Technique, ed. F. R. Rogers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 101

After studying the preceding definitions and/or discussions of religious dance, the investigator developed the following explanation: Religious dance is dance that has developed in the local community and has seeped into religious activities as a means of expressing spiritual experience. It can be performed in churches, in fellowship halls, in summer camps, in school auditoriums, or in the New York theatres. Religious dance can be performed by enthusiastic adolescents, by adults searching for a new way to express the old yet beloved teachings that their grandparents knew so well, and by professional artists on a theatrical stage. Religious dance can be produced in these places by these people for the reason that " . . . if the beauty of the work is Christian, it is because Christ is present in the soul of the artist by love."¹

Mark Ryder, a contemporary dance artist, agrees that sacred dance can be a spiritual experience when performed in a secular setting as well as in a church. Ryder uses the composition, "Primitive Mysteries," as performed by Martha Graham in the theatre, to illustrate his point that dance can provide the observer with a spiritual experience regardless of the setting in which it is presented.

Martha was the Virgin who visited the primitive women. There must be audience participation by each member who identifies himself with one of the primitive women visited by the Virgin, therefore making this dance a sacred experience. The audience must participate and form a spiritual bond with the dancers. A dance is not sacred when the audience 'looks' but does not 'see,' because the spiritual bond is non-existent. This is the same as with verbal symbols of a

¹ Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 32.

sermon. Many members of a congregation listen but do not hear. Thus one could say when this occurs that the sermon is not sacred. To see the spiritual bond in dance is more religious, and sacred than to mouth creeds and to think of something else.¹

Margaret Fisk Taylor agrees with Ryder that the process of communication, not the structure or form of the dance, is the most important factor for consideration by directors of rhythmic choirs:

Because worship may be linked with the art of the dance this is a most creative field and I do not think that sacred dance has to be either ballet or modern. It can be something unique in itself. Men participating in a church group don't need to be dancers. I enjoy using men who are just plain men - who will just plainly express themselves through their grasp of meaning - and gradually get their movements to flow and relate. So I feel that the church can use this new method of communication in a creative way - that it doesn't have to be 1960 modern dance or 1960 ballet - but it must be 1960 communication. The focus is unique. The focus is to communicate meaning through movement with integrity and with both psychological and theological understanding.²

In another source Taylor states that she asks three things of the members of rhythmic choirs with whom she works: "(1) that they have spiritual depth and integrity; (2) that they have a sense of the dramatic, of conflict, and of searching; and (3) that they evolve dynamic movement to communicate."³

Sister Jean Thompson, of the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God, offered this philosophy concerning contemporary religious dance.

¹ Statement by Mark Ryder at National Dance Section Conference on Movement, Woman's College in Greensboro, North Carolina, January, 1960.

² Department of Worship and the Arts, op. cit., p. 10.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, September, 1963, p. 9.

To those of us who are interested in religious dance today there are several things to be remembered. First, when we offer our dance to God we must offer Him something good--a good dance. A religious or sacred dance should be at least as good as secular dances seen on Broadway. Since it is inspired by God, it should be better. The dancers participating should be as good as a dancer on a secular stage, both as far as technique and expression are concerned.

We certainly owe as much to the One God of Our Lord Jesus Christ as to the god of entertainment. Good technique is not an end that is so high it is unachievable and certainly with inspiration may be had through prayer and dedication. Choreography can excel if the basic skills are known. Dance and drama take two things--perspiration and inspiration. Worthwhile sentiment becomes mere sentimentality unless it is backed up with good hard intelligent work.¹

Margaret Fisk Taylor states that the people in a church should not be offered something so complicated or exhibitional that it becomes a spectacle to be viewed. The movements of religious dance must be genuine and simple so that the observer feels involved spiritually and vicariously.²

Controversy exists among the members of the Guild concerning the degree of skill a rhythmic choir performer must exhibit in order to effectively communicate religious feeling to the congregation. Some antagonism on the part of lay persons inexperienced in dance seems to exist toward professional dancers who perform with rhythmic choirs. Professional dancers, in turn, sometimes tend to be overcritical of the works of sincere, but unskilled, members of the choir who cannot achieve the quality of performance to which professionals are accustomed. Certainly a degree of misunderstanding is apparent in the verbal communication.

¹ Interview with Sister Jean by Mary Jane Wolbers.

² Taylor, The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, op. cit., p. 36.

of some persons representing opposing sides of the issue. The investigator presents the following letters to illustrate the diversity of views expressed by Guild members. The investigator has deleted those paragraphs which were not of consequence to the issue. The first letter was written to Margaret Fisk Taylor, editor of the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, and appeared in the June, 1962, issue of the Newsletter with the permission of the correspondent.

June 18, 1962

Dear Margaret:

There are several questions that I have had for some time and I feel strongly the need to discuss them with someone who would understand. I am confused about the Sacred Dance Guild. I am sympathetic to the Guild's desire for professional perfection, but I shall never be able to join the dancers in their dance emphasis.

One problem is this: Much that the dancers find inspirational and get excited about leaves me cold as far as actual worship is concerned. What they do is good dance, no doubt, and moving too, but time and again, I find myself brought into the presence of God not by their work, but rather by the simpler works of groups which thus far seem to receive so much criticism from the professional. For some inexplicable reason the non-professional group is able to project its mood of worship to me more strongly than the group trained by the professional dancer.

.....

Is there a valid place in worship for simpler movements? If it is not dance, I for one shall be perfectly willing to call it something else. Should there be some organization which deals only with the non-professional and his limitations and proceeds on the assumption that, as limited as it is, there is something in it for both the participant and congregation? Does it have to move over into the area of dance? Can't it stay on the simpler level?

In the Sacred Dance Guild it is the dance expert who judges a work. There are no ministers to say 'This is effective or this is not.'

Dance experts certainly should judge dance, but I thought we were concerned primarily with worship. I get the impression that the Guild is more concerned with Sacred Dance as an art form than as a medium of worship.

.....

I owe the Guild a great debt for its original inspiration to me, but the joy and sureness I once felt have given way to a state of confusion. So much of what is important and meaningful to me is under constant fire from the professionals. As the Guild goes forward I become increasingly aware of my inadequacies to be doing anything whatsoever in this field. Can the gap between the professional ever be closed? Can the Guild meet both needs?¹

Sincerely,

'Confused'

The investigator located two letters written and published in answer to the preceding letter in the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, July, 1962. The first letter, written by Ted Shawn, presents the viewpoint of a professional dancer with respect to the questions posed by "Confused." The second letter, written by Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild, illustrates the viewpoint of a choir leader concerning the questions presented by "Confused."

September 29, 1962

Dear Mary Jane:

I had not read (only skimmed) the last Newsletter. Immediately I finished reading your letter and hunted up the letter signed 'Confused.' It is a question of semantics - the use of the word professional meaning different things to different people. To begin with, singing in church services falls into two categories--the hymn singing of the entire congregation and the trained choir or soloist.

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, June, 1962.

Sacred Dance can be used in both ways: congregational dance may ultimately be achieved, in which case we do not expect the entire congregation to have training; however, if we do have a choir or soloist, more is expected of them--and the choir director chooses good voices, well trained voices, if possible, and he himself is presumably sufficiently trained that he knows good music, and how to produce good music with his trained singers. We ask nothing more of sacred dance than this.

If any church is going to have a separate group perform liturgic dance in the church services, then this group must be headed by someone who is himself (herself) sufficiently trained to know how to train others, and we should not be satisfied with inarticulate bodies, wobbling when they walk and making wooden gestures and trying to look holy! I have never asked for anything but simple movement for use in sacred dance, but anyone knows, who has worked in the field of dance as I have for over fifty years, that simple movement is attained with more difficulty than that which she calls 'professional.' The ballerina can achieve 32 fouettes pirouettes, and be mechanically perfect in this technical stunt, and this same ballerina be totally unable to walk simply across the stage emanating a radiant expression of worship and praise of God. This takes more than good intentions--it takes a body that has been dedicated and disciplined.

To me one of the greatest values of sacred dance is that we are challenged to express our concept of God--to Whom are we presenting our dance of praise and worship? How do I say these things in patterned, purposeful expressive rhythmic movement? This calls for a clearer concept within one's self and thus a deepening of one's own religious experience. 'What cannot be spoken, can be sung; what cannot be sung, can be danced' we who are promoting dance in church do so because we truly believe dance is the finest medium of communication of religious feeling and idea. But, seemingly simple movements IF they are to communicate, can only come from DEDICATED, DISCIPLINED AND PREPARED bodies.

Yours,

Shawn¹

September, 1963

Dear Confused:

Thank you for writing. We are sincerely glad you have shared your concerns with us. Your letter should elicit some thoughtful comments and discussion from Guild members.

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, July, 1962.

Since you mentioned the subject, it might be well to quote here the purpose of the Guild, as stated in the By-laws: 'to provide a means of communication and training for directors of dance choirs, and to stimulate interest in the dance as a religious art form.'

Take heart, dear friend, you are not the only one who is confused. Some of us are confused by a persistent notion (expressed or implied) that dancers are incapable of approaching a worship experience with any degree of sincerity or reverence, and that their motives in performing are seldom if every truly 'religious.'

We are confused that a church will seek out the (paid) help of professional people (speakers, teachers, artists, musicians, vocalists) and will turn its back on that of the trained dancer.

We are confused by the rhythmic choir leader who, at the same time rejecting help of professionals would 'lift' the materials of Mary Anthony (or some other professional leader who has served the Guild) and present them in a workshop of her own.

There are those who feel that the Sacred Dance Guild is divided into two camps, with sincerely religious people on one side and the dancers (who, being strictly exhibitionists, couldn't possibly have any spiritual motivation) on the other. I have been with the Guild long enough to see a different picture of things. I see people with widely different backgrounds working together toward a common goal. I see an increasing realization among the members that no matter how sincerely devout we are, religious motivation cannot carry us thru a poor performance. If we are going to sing, we must learn to sing well. To this end, we must train. The untrained are reaching out to the trained. The dancers are anxious to deepen their spirituality, to improve their relationship with church people. The Guild is their meeting place. I go back to work with words of Sister Jean ringing in my ears: 'if we are to dance for God, it must be a good dance!'

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Wolbers, President¹

Mary Jane Wolbers states that in any young organization there is a relative amount of confusion with respect to goals and purposes. As a whole, members of the Sacred Dance Guild are a genuine, enthusiastic,

¹ Ibid.

healthy mixture of professionally trained dancers, persons with a small amount of dance training, and church workers who experiment with dance on the level of a religious art.¹

While attending the Annual Meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild in the City of New York in February, 1963, the investigator interviewed several members of the Guild in order to determine the contributions of the organization to dance as a means of worship and to the members of the Guild.

Mrs. Warren T. Johnson, Sacred Dance Guild member, stated that the Guild offers strength and encouragement:

The Guild has helped encourage directors of motion choirs and shown them the problems in various churches and how to overcome these. It has broadened the understanding of what contributions can be made in this field of worship. As an organization it gives a strength to our work in the individual churches.²

Mrs. Lynn Sherwood, Sacred Dance Guild member, believes the Sacred Dance Guild has been primarily a source of instruction and inspiration for persons interested in religious dance:

I feel dance has a very real place in worship and the Sacred Dance Guild has pointed the way for people who have sort of felt this but weren't sure such a thing existed. It has shown the way, it has been a source of inspiration and instruction, and it has taught people to develop material and how to draw forth creativity.³

¹ Interview with Mary Jane Wolbers, February 19, 1964.

² Interview with Mrs. Warren T. Johnson, February 23, 1964.

³ Interview with Mrs. Lynn Sherwood, February 23, 1964.

Forrest Coggan, dance artist and member of the Sacred Dance Guild, believes the Guild is the matrix for all religious dance activity in the United States:

The Guild has served as a starting point or center where people with such interests can come together. I imagine it has spent quite a bit of time doing this. I don't see any other group or any other Guild attempting to do the same thing.¹

Nels Anderson, minister and Sacred Dance Guild member, believes the Guild has served by providing resources and by instilling an awareness of the use of dance as a worship form:

The Sacred Dance Guild has probably helped most in contributions to dance as a means of worship in helping to provide resources, and more than anything else, an awareness of the use of the dance art form in worship. It has made us more aware of the need for a greater study of technique among many of us. It has helped to bring to us many resources and also provided motivation for us to explore dance and worship as a group at the workshops and institutes.²

In the next section of this chapter, the investigator will describe the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild through a presentation of the year by year chronology of that organization, from 1956 to 1963. She will attempt to weave into her report a description of the contributions of persons responsible for the success of the Sacred Dance Guild during the seven years of its existence.

¹Interview with Forrest Coggan, February 23, 1964.

²Interview with Nels Anderson, February 23, 1964.

Early Beginnings of the Sacred Dance Guild

Events of the Year 1956

On May 3, 1956, a group of rhythmic choir leaders interested in dance as a religious art form met informally at the South Street Methodist Church in Lynn, Massachusetts, for the purpose of sharing convictions, ideas, and aspirations in the field of religious dance. As a result of this gathering the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association (now called the Sacred Dance Guild) was formed.¹ The eminent dance artist, Ted Shawn, is generally given credit for planning and coordinating the efforts of the Boston area choir directors at this initial meeting. The group in attendance was composed of ministers, dance educators, lay persons, dancers, religious educators, and directors and members of several rhythmic choirs.² The denominations and churches which the attending rhythmic choirs represented were:

Congregational Churches

The Hancock Congregational Church Choir
Lexington, Massachusetts

The Congregational Church Choir
Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts

Methodist Churches

The South Street Methodist Church Choir
Lynn, Massachusetts

¹ Chronology of Sacred Dance Guild prepared by Mary Jane Wolbers.

² Ibid.

The First Methodist Church Choir
Lynn, Massachusetts

The Methodist Church Choir
Oxford, Massachusetts

The First Methodist Church Choir
Medford, Massachusetts

Unitarian

The Unitarian Church Choir
Winchester, Massachusetts

Interdenominational

The Marsh Chapel Choir, Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts¹

The Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association, having successfully completed one meeting, planned and conducted a Motion Choir Training Convention which convened from October 11 to 13, 1956, at the Arlington Street Church of Boston, Massachusetts.² This convention, which had as its theme "Cornerstone for Religious Dance," featured Ted Shawn as the key guest artist and lecturer but included also other leaders in the newly emerging field as evidenced by the program below:

Thursday, October 11 --

10:00 A.M.--12:00 P.M. Organization meeting and discussion of
aims

1:30 P.M.--3:30 P.M. Ted Shawn training session

4:00 P.M.--5:30 P.M. Round Table Discussions: 'Objectives of
Religious Dance in Today's Churches.' Leader: Rev. Robert
Storer.

7:00 P.M.--9:00 P.M. Ted Shawn training session

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

Friday, October 12 --

10:00 A.M.--12:00 P.M. Ted Shawn training session
 1:30 P.M.--3:00 P.M. Roundtable discussion: 'Choreographic Techniques.' Leader: Mrs. Paul Paukulis, teacher Modern Dance.
 3:30 P.M.--5:30 P.M. Ted Shawn training session
 7:00 P.M.--9:00 P.M. Movie and discussion with Mr. Shawn on religious dance.

Saturday, October 13 --

10:00 A.M.--11:00 A.M. John Christian 'Lighting and Staging in Church.'
 11:00 A.M.--12:30 P.M. Discussion with Mr. Christian 'Staging and Programing.'
 2:00 P.M.--4:00 P.M. Ted Shawn training session
 4:30 P.M.--5:30 P.M. Reception and tea ¹
 7:00 P.M.--9:00 P.M. Evaluation meeting.

Full time registration for the conference, which cost \$10.00, was limited to thirty-five persons.² Many additional persons, however, attended the training session on a part time basis.

The committee which was responsible for the organizational aspects of the conference were:

General Chairman: Mrs. E. W. Renz, Jr., 5 Robinhood Road,
 Winchester, Massachusetts
 Publicity: Mrs. Bert V. Borngesser, 37 Independence Road,
 Lexington, Massachusetts
 Hospitality: Miss Dorothy Creed, 15 Greenleaf Road,
 Milton, Massachusetts
 Registration: Mrs. Theodore L. Rice, 117 Sewell Woods Road,
 Melrose, Massachusetts
 Secretary: Mrs. David Chamberlain, 130 Bellevue Road,
 Lynn, Massachusetts³

¹ Flyer announcing Motion Choir Training Convention, October 11, 12, 13, 1956.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Events of the Year 1957

A third meeting of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association was held on February 26, 1957, at the Universalist Church of Melrose, Massachusetts. This Mid-Winter Workshop was guided by Reverend Robert Storer, Josephine Rice, and Janet Knight.¹ On May 21, 1957, another Motion Choir Festival and Workshop was held, this time at the Congregational Church of Melrose Highlands. Hazel Bailey, Helen Gray, and Avis Ann Parke served as the leaders of the workshop sessions.² The choirs participating in this festival were:

Congregational Church

The Congregational Church Choir
Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts

Methodist Church

The First Methodist Church Choir
Melrose, Massachusetts

Church of Christ

Hanover, New Hampshire

Unitarian Church

The Unitarian Church Choir
Peterborough, New Hampshire

Universalist Churches

The Universalist Church Choir
Arlington, Massachusetts

¹ Chronology of Sacred Dance Guild Events, op. cit.

² Ibid.

The Universalist Church Choir
Melrose, Massachusetts

Interdenominational Churches

The Old South Church Choir
Boston, Massachusetts

The Marsh Chapel Choir, Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts¹

Perhaps the most outstanding meeting of the 1957 year was the Fall Convention, held at the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston, Massachusetts, on November 10 to 11. At this time the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Guild formally elected its first officers: President, Jane Renz; Vice-President, Avis Ann Parke; Treasurer, Josephine Rice; Recording Secretary, Beatrice Jenkins; Corresponding Secretary, Thelma Atwood; and National Publicity Chairman, Mary Jane Wolbers.² The members of the Executive Committee of the Association, who were listed on the flyer which was distributed to publicize the Fall Convention, were: Mrs. Bert V. Borngesser of Lexington, Massachusetts; Reverend and Mrs. David B. Chamberlain of Bridgeport, Connecticut; Miss Mary Michael Doyle of Wantagh, New York; Mrs. H. D. Gray of Hartford, Connecticut; Mrs. Gordon Knight of Longmeadow, Massachusetts; Mrs. Jean B. Miller of Wantagh, New York; Mrs. David Parke of Peterborough, New Hampshire; Mrs. W. Rayton of Hanover, New Hampshire; Mrs. E. W. Renz of Winchester, Massachusetts; Mrs. Theo Rice of Melrose, Massachusetts; Mr. Ted Shawn of Lee, Massachusetts;

¹ Ibid.

² Telephone conversation with Mrs. Jane Renz, August 26, 1964.

Reverend Robert Storer of Winchester, Massachusetts; and Mrs. Charles Wolbers of New Paltz, New York.¹

Full time registration at the Fall Conference cost members of the Association \$5.00. The program in which they participated included the following events:

Sunday, November 10 --

- 1:30 - 2:30 -- Registration and organization
- 3:00 - 5:00 -- Mrs. Charles Wolbers training session: starting a choir; approach; early training; leader requirements.
- 7:30 - 9:30 -- Solo program by Mrs. Charles Wolbers and selected choirs from the Boston area

Monday, November 11 --

- 9:30 - 10:30 -- Don Miller: Accompaniment for Sacred Dance
- 10:30 - 12:00 -- Round table discussion with Mrs. Wolbers and Mr. Miller
- 1:30 - 3:30 -- Mrs. Charles Wolbers training session: technique and choreography
- 4:00 - 5:30 -- Evaluation Meeting and Election of Officers.²

This year marked the beginning of the publication of the Newsletters. A letter dated May 3, 1957,³ written by Jane Renz and Jane Chamberlain, announced the beginning of a newsletter, described as "pages for a loose-leaf handbook for a dance choir." This letter indicated that the Newsletter would be sent only to members of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association. The proposed content was "stick figure choreography, ideas and helpful hints on robing, lighting, choice of text and

¹ Flyer announcing the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association Fall Convention, November 10, 11, 1957.

² Ibid.

³ Excerpts from old Newsletters (in the files of the organization).

music, bibliography and teaching techniques."¹ A copy of this letter appears on page 189 of the Appendix of this study. The first Newsletter was edited by Jane Renz, who was elected the first president of the Association in November, 1957. The Newsletter, which was distributed, was in stencil form, included only the letter mentioned above and an article by Jane Renz entitled "Dance in the Church."²

The second Newsletter, issued on June 12, 1957, presented an article by Jane B. Miller entitled "Why Have a Religious Dance Choir?" and a page of suggested costumes by Jane Renz.³

Events of the Year 1958

The year 1958 holds particular historical significance for persons interested in religious dance, for it marks the formal change of the name of the Association to its present appellation, Sacred Dance Guild, and the adoption of official by-laws to govern its work. This business was accomplished on February 10, 1958, at a meeting held in the Unitarian Church in Winchester, Massachusetts. Jane Renz, president of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association, presided over the gathering which included a morning workshop, a luncheon program, and an afternoon business session.

The morning workshop consisted mainly of lectures. Persons mentioned in the Newsletter as speaking during the session were Ruby

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Henderson, of Shaw House in Boston, Massachusetts; Barbara Mettler, director of Mettler School of Modern Dance located then in Boston, Massachusetts; and Beatrice Jenkins, a rhythmic choir director from Melrose, Massachusetts.¹ At lunch, the group listened to a record by the Speak Four Trio, and a collection of Bible readings from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, for which Juana De Laban had designed movement.²

During the business meeting the following slate of officers was presented by the nominating committee and elected by the group:

President: Jane Renz
 Vice-President: Avis Ann Parke
 Treasurer: Josephine Rice
 Recording Secretary: Beatrice Jenkins
 Corresponding Secretary: Thelma Atwood
 Directors: Hazel Bailey, Ruby Henderson, Dorothy Creed
 National Publicity Chairman: Mary Jane Wolbers
 Regional Publicity Chairmen: Eltress Mitchell, Helen Gray
 Membership Chairman: Helen Borngesser³

Other items of business included the reading of letters from Mary Jane Wolbers and Jean Miller and the report of the treasurer. The sum of \$87.32 was in the treasury excluding the receipts of the day.⁴

On June 5, 1958, a combined choir festival and workshop convened at Hancock Congregational Church in Lexington, Massachusetts.⁵ The

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Chronology of the Sacred Dance Guild Events, op. cit.

workshop leaders were reported to be Janet Knight and Reverend Robert Storer. The six choirs which participated in the event were the Hancock Congregational Church Choir, Lexington, Massachusetts; the Central Congregational Church Choir, Fall River, Massachusetts; the Center Congregational Church Choir, Manchester, Massachusetts; the Unitarian Church Choir, Winchester, Massachusetts; the Old First Church of Christ, Springfield, Massachusetts; and the Marsh Chapel Church Choir of Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.¹

The First Annual Institute on Religious Dance, sponsored by Ted Shawn for the members of the Sacred Dance Guild and other interested persons, was held at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts, on June 22 to 25, 1958. A fee of \$30.00 for each person included room, board, and instruction.² The leaders of the institute were Ted Shawn, Adolphine Rott, John Christian, and Jess Meeker.

On September 29, 1958, the Fall Workshop was held at the South Street Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut.³ The leaders featured on the program were Virginia Lucke, Betty Simmons, and Barbara Hyland.

The Newsletter, edited by Avis Ann Parke, presented a statement of purposes of Motion Choirs for Teenagers:

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

1. to unite teenage girls in a religious atmosphere for experiences of togetherness and belongingness to each other and to that Infinite Beauty and Wisdom outside of themselves.
2. to develop an awareness of themselves, their inner feelings (joy, anger, frustrations, peace, contentment) in their bodies, a sense of control, grace and freedom.
3. to provide a medium and atmosphere for exploring; the sacred meaning of their bodies (physically and emotionally) their creative imagination (in coordinating their ideas with action), their spirits (in comprehending the Divine Presence and enhancing true religious experience), interpersonal relationships (cooperation, coordination and comprehension).
4. to discover the joy of service (in helping others to understand, to be a minister the vehicle of Infinite Love, to give others pleasure and meaning in the worship experience--to bring light where there is darkness).
5. to provide¹ a wealth of experience and knowledge for mature adulthood.

The Growth and Development of the
Sacred Dance Guild, 1959-1963

Events of the Year 1959

Four meetings and/or workshops were sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild in 1959: a Mid-Winter Workshop in February, a Spring Festival in May, the Second Annual Institute on Religious Dance in June, and the Fall Workshop in October.

The Mid-Winter Workshop was held on February 2 and 3 at the Community Church in the City of New York, New York.² Mary Jane Wolbers

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, May, 1958, p. 1.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Spring, 1959, p. 1.

was chairman of this workshop. The morning sessions were led by Myra Kinch, professional dance artist, who taught techniques which were designed for the purpose of developing body control and balance. She further explored the use of space, the dynamic qualities of movement, and specific choreographic principles to be studied in later lessons. A film entitled "Religion and the Dance," performed by Myra Kinch and her dance company under the choreographic advice of Walter Terry, was shown on February 3. This film is the kinescope of a television program "Frontiers of Faith," originally performed over a national network on February 21, 1955. The film is available from the Reigner Film Library, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.¹ Kinch taught one verse of "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" as a basis for improvisation by the class. Finally, musical forms such as the canon, "Dona Nobis Pacem," were discussed as a basis for religious dance by Kinch and her composer-accompanist husband.²

During the afternoon of February 2, Reverend Robert Storer led a session on the organization of dance choirs in which he discussed some of the problems and rewards in working with a dance choir. Members of the group participated in a master class type of choir rehearsal including warm-up techniques, movement exploration, and improvisation resulting from an interpretation of the poem "Thanks" by Reverend Francis G. Anderson, Jr.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 2.

³ Ibid.

During the same afternoon, Mary Jane Wolbers presented a program concerning "The Use of the Dance in Religious Education." Workshop members served as willing subjects for the lecture-demonstration. The lesson centered on a brotherhood theme culminating in a dance inspired by Wolbers' narrative poem "Loneliness." The choreography was developed cooperatively by the members of the class. As a second example of the use of dance in religious education, selections from Eleanor Farjeon's Prayer for Little Things¹ were used as a basis for improvisation and were recommended as especially appropriate for presentation on Children's Sunday.

Two performing groups danced compositions at the conclusion of the Mid-Winter Workshop. The Aviv Dancers demonstrated a group of Israelite dances in which Frances Rlenikoff, choreographer, danced with Jo Lechay and Oliver Newman, accompanied by singer-accordionist Elizer Plotnik. Lechay was known to the group as a member of the Mary Anthony Dance Company, which performs on the nationwide television program "Look Up and Live."² The Fairfield County Modern Dance Group of Fairfield, Connecticut, presented a lecture-demonstration directed by Louise Mattlage, teacher of modern dance in schools and colleges, Westtown, Pennsylvania. The dancers were young married women with families whose dedication to religious dance and skillful performance won them much acclaim from the Guild as well as many audiences throughout the East.³

¹Eleanor Farjeon, Prayer for Little Things (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1945).

²Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Spring, 1959, p. 2.

³Letter from Louise Mattlage, March 18, 1964.

The annual business meeting followed the program presented by Mattlage. The officers of the 1958-1959 year were re-elected for the ensuing year.

On May 3, 1959, the Sacred Dance Spring Festival was held at the Congregational Church in New Canaan, Connecticut. The choirs participating in this festival were:

Congregational Churches

Old South Congregational Church Choir
Hartford, Connecticut

The Beneficent Congregational Church Choir
Providence, Rhode Island

The Center Congregational Church Choir
Manchester, Connecticut

The Second Congregational Church Choir
Holyoke, Massachusetts

The Congregational Church Choir
New Canaan, Connecticut

Methodist Churches

The First Methodist Church Choir
Hartford, Connecticut

The First Methodist Church Choir
Park Ridge, New Jersey

Interdenominational Church

The Huguenot Dance Choir,¹
New Paltz, New York

Two soloists, Ruby Henderson and Carola Bell Williams, also contributed their talents to the success of the festival.

¹
Ibid.

The Second Annual Institute on Religious Dance was held at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts, on June 22 to 26, 1959.¹ Ted Shawn delivered the opening convocation and introduced the speaker, Margaret Fisk Taylor, author of The Art of the Rhythmic Choir. Taylor reported that rhythmic choirs are a devotional art rather than a dance art.² In describing her own experiences in dance worship she stated that she utilized her whole being--body, mind, and soul.³ She further stated that in research for her book she had established the fact that there has been dance in the Christian Church in every century of civilization. Taylor described her work with men and women of all ages in the development of rhythmic choirs in several cities in the United States which provided the background information for the publication of her second book, Look Up and Live, published in 1953.⁴

Taylor reported also that much creative work was being accomplished in college chapels by such persons as Pat Jewitt and Martha Cornick at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, and Shirley Paukulis at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts.⁵ She concluded her lecture by saying

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, September, 1959, p. 1.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, notes by Margaret Smith, September, 1959, p. 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

that religious dance is not equivalent to modern dance and by discussing the differences between the two media of communication.¹

A second speaker at the Institute was Ruth St. Denis, who began her presentation with the following statement: "Man has both soul and body. It is the task of religion to relate the two. Religion should make us aware of our divine heritage of flesh."² Ruth St. Denis appealed to the churches to express man's dignity through the dance. She emphasized that much which is dead in organized religion today could be revitalized by recognizing the bodies of worshippers as "living temples" and by bringing the dance back into the church. St. Denis appealed to members of the group to increase their spiritual awareness and to express this awareness in terms of the arts. She closed her witty and thought-provoking speech by presenting a Hindu Credo, "I am Brahman," through the use of gestures.

Ted Shawn discussed choreography in the next session of the Institute, beginning with an analysis of his own thought process in the development of the choreography for the "Breath of God" interlude. The thematic source for this composition was the statement, "God gives breath to man, and each breath of an individual goes up again to God and out."³ A description of the composition appears on page 190 of the Appendix of

¹
Ibid.

²
Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, notes by Marilyn Meardon, September, 1959.

³
Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, notes by Josephine Rice, September, 1959.

this study. Shawn's exposition of his own creative process in the development of thematic sources for the dance was reported to have given the participants the background needed for their afternoon work in composition.¹

Jess Meeker, accompanist-composer at Jacob's Pillow, then led the group in a complete analysis of a selected Bach Chorale. Meeker explained that in every composition there is a main motif, usually melodic, which is repeated. The group worked on variations of the themes that Meeker presented to them.² Later the group participated in a session of warm-up exercises conducted by Myra Kinch, who stressed tension and relaxation in their movements. The session concluded with individual interpretations of the theme "I have sinned, but am forgiven," using two motions and adapting them to a brief musical framework by Meeker.³ Mrs. Mirelle Backer, of the Dance Notation Bureau, introduced the participants to Labanotation.

The Second Institute closed with a dance performance presented by Myra Kinch, Ted Shawn, Ethel Thurston, and Ruth St. Denis. The purpose of the dance program was to demonstrate examples of theatrical dance based upon religious themes. The whole experience was reported to be extremely beneficial to all of the participants, and there was a general feeling of deep gratitude to Shawn for the adept organization of the Institute.⁴

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

At an executive session held during the Institute, Mary Jane Wolbers reported that the responses to the questionnaire survey which she had conducted by mail concerning sacred dance activities in schools and churches had been prompt and informative. Prior to the actual tabulation of the results, Wolbers presented the following preliminary overview of the findings:

1. Only a few of the theological schools polled pay any attention to dance either as a matter of historical or cultural interest.
2. Most of the dance departments in the colleges and universities polled include sacred dance in theory courses and recognize sacred subjects as valid subjects for choreography.
3. We have only begun to locate the choirs working in the churches and the persons who incorporate dance into religious education work. We know there are many more to be listed and can only hope for the necessary co-operation in gathering this information.¹

The Fall Workshop of the Sacred Dance Guild was held October 19, 1959, at the Unitarian Church in Petersborough, New Hampshire. Mrs. Avis Ann Parke, wife of the minister and vice-president of the Guild, was hostess. Twenty members and guest attended the workshop.² Mrs. Jane Renz, president, gave a short resume of activities conducted since the last meeting. The leaders of the workshop sessions were Jane Renz, Reverend Robert Storer, and Ruth Rayton.

Events of the Year 1960

The major events sponsored by the Guild in 1960 were: the Mid-Winter Workshop and annual business meeting in February; a choir festival

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., announcement of Fall Workshop.

in May; the Third Annual Training Institute in June; and two regional workshops.

The Mid-Winter Workshop and an annual business meeting was held on February 9 and 10 at the Community Church in the City of New York, New York. The thirty-eight members of the Sacred Dance Guild who attended the convention represented the District of Columbia and the following states: New Jersey, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut. Margaret Fisk Taylor and Mary Anthony were the workshop leaders.¹

In her session, Taylor stated that a well-rounded program of religious dance should include dances of symbolic worship with simple designs that reveal dedication and awareness, dances of interrelationship and creative movement between dances emanating from genuine communication and response, and dances of dramatic intensity showing conflict and contrast in developing growth through reaction to crisis.²

Mary Anthony showed the relationship between technique and expression through her evaluation of axial and locomotor techniques with respect to their emotive, communicative powers. Most of Anthony's compositions were based upon the varied and dramatic use of focus--inward, contact, and transcending.³

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, report of the Mid-Winter Workshop, April, 1960.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

In the absence of president Jane Renz and vice-president Avis Ann Parke, Reverend Robert Storer presided over the annual business meeting. The following officers were elected for 1960-1961:

President: Ruth Rayton
 Vice-President: Mary Jane Wolbers
 Recording Secretary: Elsi Simmons
 Corresponding Secretary: Jane Chamberlain
 Treasurer: Josephine Rice
 Membership Chairman: Hazel Bailey
 Program Chairman: Reverend Robert Storer
 Publicity Chairman: Mary Jane Wolbers¹

A vesper service, incorporating congregational responsive movement, was devised and executed by Mary Jane Wolbers at the conclusion of this workshop.

A Choir Festival convened at the Central Congregational Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, on May 1, 1960. The names of the attending choirs are:

Congregational Churches

The Beneficent Congregational Church Choir
 Providence, Rhode Island

The Central Congregational Church Choir
 Manchester, Connecticut

The First Congregational Church Choir
 Darien, Connecticut

The Congregational Church Choir
 Storrs, Connecticut

The Sheldon Street Congregational Church Choir
 Providence, Rhode Island

¹ Ibid.

The Second Congregational Church Choir
Attleboro, Massachusetts

The South Congregational Church Choir
Hartford, Connecticut

The Central Congregational Church Choir
Fall River, Massachusetts

Church of Christ

The Church of Christ Choir
Hanover, New Hampshire

Unitarian Churches

The Unitarian Church Choir
Winchester, Massachusetts

The Union Parish Church Choir
Presumpscot, Maine

Interdenominational Churches

The Marsh Chapel Church Choir, Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

The Huguenot Dance Choir,¹
New Paltz, New York

The Jacob's Pillow Training Course, held from June 19 to 22 at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts, was the first institute to be sponsored entirely by the Sacred Dance Guild.² The accommodations and execution of the program, however, were conducted by the Shawn staff. The institute had three guiding personalities: Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Jess Meeker, assisted by Sacred Dance Guild leaders, Jean Miller, Julie Lepeschlein, and Dora Sanders.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Correspondence with Mary Jane Wolbers, April, 1965.

Shawn's introductory speech at the opening session was concerned with dance as the language of the spirit.¹ He spoke of the worship experience and the tool of communication which the dance form offers.² He also stressed the importance of creating compositions in which the idea, emotion, or experience will be understood. Shawn stated, "There is nothing worse than an unmotivated movement; we must move beautifully and intelligently to the glory of God."³

Ruth St. Denis led the second session which was a master class situation in which the participants experimented with simple walks, kneels, a sitting position, and standing position. One participant in the session stated,

Every act performed by Ruth St. Denis was suffused with a spiritual quality, a certain religious and reverential dignity; her walk, sitting position, and her₄ arms all presented an unposed picture of almost saintly repose.⁴

Jess Meeker presented an analytical workshop in music. His first lecture was concerned with the scope and history of liturgical and sacred music.⁵ The working sessions were based upon analysis of the structure of musical compositions which might provide appropriate accompaniment for

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Martha Odom, "Reports and Impressions from Jacob's Pillow," June, 1960.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., Ruby Henderson, "Ruth St. Denis."

⁵ Ibid., "Jess Meeker."

religious dance. Meeker stated, "You must know what you want to say and you must be clear as to the way in which you use the music."¹

Two regional workshops were conducted on Saturday, October 15, 1960: the New York State Regional Workshop which was held at the First Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York, and the New England Regional Workshop which was held at the Unitarian Church in Winchester, Massachusetts.

Fifty-one participants shared in the training, fun, and spiritual fellowship of the New York State Regional Workshop which included the following activities: training by Sacred Dance Guild member, Leda Canino; solving a choreographic problem under the direction of another member, Martha Odom; discussion of the spiritual preparation of dance choirs by Shirley Porter; and participation in a vesper service.²

The New England Regional Workshop was led by Jane Benz, Josephine Rice, Helen Borngesser, and Reverend Robert Storer. The workshop was reported to be a helpful and well-attended occasion. The morning was spent sharing ideas and observations. Small groups worked experimentally during the noon hour. The afternoon session was conducted under the direction of Mrs. Shirley Paukulis. The workshop ended in an executive meeting which was held late in the afternoon.³

¹ Ibid.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Report of Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop, Schenectady, New York, March, 1961.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Report on the Regional Workshop at Winchester, March, 1961.

Events of the Year 1961

Four major festivals and workshops were sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild during this year: the Choir Festival and Workshop in May; the Fourth Annual Training Institute, June 25 to 28; the New York Regional Workshop, October 7; and the Boston Area Regional Workshop, October 14. This year the Executive Board decided to dispense with the two-day combination workshop-and-annual meeting. The annual executive and general meetings were held at the John Street Methodist Church in the City of New York on February 21, 1961, and were concerned strictly with organizational business, reports, coming events, election of officers for 1961-1962. The year 1961 was capably guided by officers:

President: Ruth Rayton
 Vice-President: Mary Jane Wolbers
 Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Chenelle
 Corresponding Secretary: Janet Wals
 Treasurer: Josephine Rice
 Membership Chairman: Hazel Bailey
 Program Chairman: Reverend Robert Storer
 National Publicity Chairman: Mary Jane Wolbers
 Regional Publicity Chairmen: Reverend James Buell, Dorothy Creed
 Betty Simpson, Roseanna Smith

The number of Directors was increased to six, and now included: Margaret Fisk Taylor, Helen Borngesser, Jane Renz, Ruby Henderson, Meredith Herrick, and Mabel Hart.¹

From 1961 on, the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter included brief biographical sketches of workshop leaders. The investigator, therefore, will present additional data concerning the workshop leaders in the accounts of the events which follow.

¹ Correspondence with Mary Jane Wolbers, April, 1965.

The Choir Festival and Workshop held at the Second Congregational Church in Holyoke, Massachusetts, on May 6, 1961, was the largest workshop held to date with approximately 160 persons attending the workshop and 400 attending the evening worship service.¹ Concerning this workshop, Smith stated,

Blessed with a high chancel and effective lighting, the ten choirs comprising the workshop service gave their all to instilling the air with the moment of worship and completely captivated all who watched.²

Two soloists, Ruby Henderson and Margaret Fisk Taylor, and the following choirs participated in the festival:

Congregational Churches

Hancock Congregational Church Choir
Lexington, Massachusetts

Beneficent Congregational Church Choir
Providence, Rhode Island

The Congregational Church Choir
Storrs, Connecticut

The First Congregational Church Choir
Holyoke, Massachusetts

The Second Congregational Church Choir
Holyoke, Massachusetts

The Darien Congregational Church Choir
Darien, Connecticut

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Marie L. Smith, "Festival Report from Holyoke," June, 1961.

² Ibid.

Methodist Church

The Faith Methodist Church Choir
Fairview, Massachusetts

Universalist Church

The Church of the Redeemer Choir
West Hartford, Connecticut¹

Margaret Fisk Taylor and Janet Knight shared responsibility for conducting the work sessions. Taylor discussed the use of folk music as a source of accompaniment for religious dance and devoted part of her session to leading the group in moving to folk music. Martha Odom described Taylor as:

. . . a creative prophet in this world of religious art in our time and any of us who has the opportunity to work with her is blessed and changed and stretched by her spirit and her quality of performance and clarity of direction.²

Janet Knight was described by Odom as, "a superbly disciplined, masterful teacher of the art of the dance, who has a wonderful grasp of the meaning of religious dance in worship."³

At the conclusion of the Holyoke Workshop, Margaret Fisk Taylor distributed to the members of the choir and to the directors of the choirs a summary of goals which she urged members to implement through their work. A summary of these goals follows.

¹
Ibid.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Martha Odom, "Further Report on Holyoke Workshop," June, 1961.

³
Ibid.

The art of symbolic movement is alive with the whole being involved. At times it communicates beauty and meaningfulness; at times it stabs us into a new awareness of agony and distortion; at times it reveals the resilience of souls in the midst of confusion, yet relating to ultimate concerns.

The basic requisite of this art is that the participants and leaders are clearly dedicated to use their whole being (body, mind, soul) with integrity as they confront present day issues which become clarified and illuminated as the outgrowth of their deepening understanding.

Sacred Dance has the primary responsibility to be 'sacred' and that means (by definition) that the participants are 'dedicated and set apart in honor of God.' It means that each participant is spiritually undergirded by a vital sense of the power and the presence of God. This 'sacred' quality is communicated to others; its absence is obvious.

The secondary responsibility of sacred dance is 'dance.' The movements should grow creatively out of inner motivation, not geared to any specific dance style or selfconsciously involved body techniques. The dance movements and designs are secondary to the sacred concerns that are being communicated, allowing the clear revelation of the spirit through the body disciplined for this purpose and diffused with the spirit.¹

From June 25 to 28, 1961, the Fourth Annual Training Institute was held at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts. Martha Odom, Helen Borngesser, Mary Anthony, Ruth St. Denis, and Ted Shawn were the main speakers at the Institute.²

Martha Odom opened the first session by inquiring about the particular needs of the members of the Institute. She proceeded to help them achieve an uninhibited idea of freedom in the use of various parts of the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

body and to create patterns of movement. Mrs. Odom was praised particularly as an instructor for the novices because of her insight, humor, and patience.¹

Helen Borngesser, organist and director of music at the Hancock Congregational Church in Lexington, Massachusetts, discussed the essential unity of the two arts, music and adance, at the afternoon session of the Institute. From her extensive experience as a director of five regular singing choirs and a sacred dance choir, Borngesser gave valuable suggestions concerning the breadth of choice of music which is adaptable to the work of the rhythmic choir, ranging from hymns and Negro spirituals to the rigid pattern of a sixteenth century canon. She stated her belief that the use of music with words is the most desirable accompaniment for sacred dance, and she emphasized the affinity existing between the three, quoting "Music, words, dance--the perfect trinity."²

Mary Anthony discussed during her session the need for a disciplined and controlled body in order to move freely to the glory of God without unnatural poses or attitudes. She stressed that choir members should strive for dignity in their dance and should move sincerely from the heart.³

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Esther N. Ellison, "Basic Training Workshop with Martha Odom," September, 1961.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Gertrude L. Wetmore, "Helen Borngesser," September 1961.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Constance Reynolds, "Mary Anthony," September, 1961.

During the first evening session of the Institute, Ruth St. Denis spoke out in ringing tones, "Go forth and preach the gospel," referring to the need to teach persons an understanding and appreciation of the most expressive instrument--the body.¹ St. Denis also pointed out that in referring to prayer, one hears it spoken as praying to God. "Let us pray from God, moving with God and by God."²

The New York Regional Workshop was held at the Methodist Church in New Paltz, New York, on October 7, 1961. The program for this Workshop included the following events:

- 9:30 Registration and fellowship over a cup of coffee
- 10:15 Opening worship
- 10:30 Warm-ups and technique led by Sister Jean
- 11:30 CHORAL SPEAKING WITH MOVEMENT - Sister Jean
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:00 PRAYERS AND PLIE', panel discussion - Jeanne Fuller, moderator

Varied points of view concerning religious dance, its relation to worship, possible creative approaches, etc., will be presented by panel members, with opportunity provided for questioning and evaluating.

- 2:00 CHOREOGRAPHY - Sister Jean

Ideas and results of the two morning sessions will be incorporated in this session, in which a specific creative project will be undertaken.

- 4:00 Free time (to allow rehearsal time for participating groups) which may be spent discussing, evaluating, or simply catching our breath!

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Thelma Atwood, "Ruth St. Denis," September, 1961.

² Ibid.

5:00 Vesper Service - St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Rev. Dudley Bennett, rector

Meditation - Rev. George Johnson
The Methodist Church
Modena, N. Y.

Dance Groups appearing by invitation:

The Cymbals and Dance Group of the Tuller School
Sister Jean, director

The Dance Choir of the First Congregational Church
of Darien, Connecticut, Jeanne Fuller, director

The Huguenot Dance Choir of New Paltz,¹
Mary Jane Wolbers, director

The guest artist was Sister Jean, an Episcopalian nun of the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God. Sister Jean, who studied under Martha Graham, became a professional dancer for whom the Los Angeles Examiner predicted an "outstanding career in dance."² As a choreographer, she was responsible for the dances in Paul Green's pageant, "The Common Glory," which has become a part of American folklore. It was on a visit to her parents' home in California that the young dancer began the work that was to lead her into the sisterhood. Here she was requested to present a concert in dance form to a local church congregation. Thinking that the audience might fail to understand her modern religious dances, she opened the program with a brief explanatory lecture concerning the historical foundations of the dance in religion.³ That performance opened

¹ Flyer announcing the New York Regional Workshop, October 7, 1961, New Paltz, New York.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, "Information on Sister Jean," September, 1961.

³ Ibid.

up a whole new way of thinking, Sister Jean recalled during an interview with Mary Jane Wolbers.¹ She returned to New York approached the Church of the Ascension, where she told of her program in California, asked, and received permission to give a series of similar performances, including one at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.² It was during this period that she came into contact with the Order of the Teachers of the Children of God and became convinced that "God wanted me and not just my dance."³

In 1954, she entered the convent at Maycroft in Sag Harbor, Long Island, where she found that both she and her dancing ability were welcome. In addition to her work there, she presently assists dance and drama students at schools in Tucson, Arizona; the Bronx, New York; Fairfield, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.⁴

The Boston Area Regional Workshop at Shaw House in Boston, Massachusetts, was held on October 14, 1961. Nancy Lob, Stanley Adrenholz, Reverend Robert A. Storer, James William Henderson and Naomi Aleh-Leaf were the guest leaders. A brief description of each leader follows.

Nancy Lob studied modern dance in Bridgewater Teachers College in Bridgewater, Connecticut, and worked with the Barbara Mettler studios for

¹ Interview with Mary Jane Wolbers, February 19, 1963.

² Ibid.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, "Information on Sister Jean," September, 1961.

⁴ Ibid.

five years. At the time of the workshop, she was teaching a class in creative dance at the Newton Women's Christian Association in Newton, Massachusetts.¹ Stanley Arendholz studied modern dance with the Barbara Mettler Studios and with Jean Erdman and ethnic dance under La Meri. Arendholz is beginning his thirteenth year of teaching modern dance at the Robert Gould Shaw House in Boston, Massachusetts.²

James William Henderson is an accomplished actor-dramatist, poet, and specialist in the theatrical arts. He has been active for many years in the community as an actor, teacher, producer, and director. Among his accomplishments is his eminence as a dramatic coach and stage manager of the Rhodes Opera Society in the City of New York, New York. He has been connected with the Shaw House for twenty-seven years as a drama specialist.³

Reverend Robert Storer, program director of the Sacred Dance Guild for the year 1961, is one of the pioneers of the Sacred Dance Guild movement. Additional biographical information concerning Reverend Storer is presented in Chapter III of this thesis.

Nancy Lob and Stanley Arendholz shared responsibility for conducting the basic education periods of the morning session of the Boston Area Workshop. The use of tension and relaxation with respect to dance movements was thoroughly explored.⁴

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, January, 1962.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

In another session of the workshop, Reverend Storer stated that, although a dance group could share in the creation of a composition, each group should have an experienced director who understands music, movement, the use of dynamics, the importance of projection and possesses the ability to adjust movements to the available space in the church.¹ Henderson gave a lecture concerning "Drama as an Element of Sacred Dance."

At the final session of the workshop, Noami Aleh-Leaf, an interpretive dancer from Jerusalem, presented dances based upon the lives of Palestinians, Arabs, Yeminites, and Bedouins. Miss Aleh-Leaf led the entire workshop in a stirring and meaningful interpretation of "Hallelujah," by Pougaclov.²

Events of the Year 1962

During the year 1962 the Guild published a Sacred Dance Guild Institute Survey, started a scholarship fund, and sponsored five workshops: the annual business meeting and Mid-Winter Workshop in February, the New York State Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop in October, the New England Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop in November, the Fifth Annual Institute of the Sacred Dance Guild in June, and the Spring Festival in May.

The Sacred Dance Guild Institute Survey which was constructed by the officers of the Guild, sought to determine the views of Sacred Dance Guild members concerning each of the following items: (1) interest in

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

the Guild, (2) suggestions for leadership, (3) primary concern in seeking training at the Institute, and (4) names, addresses of interested persons.¹

The Henderson Memorial Scholarship was established by the Sacred Dance Guild in September, 1962, as a memorial to Ruby Henderson, a charter member of the Guild who expired on September 21, 1962.² Ruby Henderson, a loved and respected member of the Sacred Dance Guild, was a social worker and a specialist in children's work. She served as Tiny Tots leader at the Robert Gould Shawn House for twenty-one years. Mrs. Henderson studied speech and drama under Mrs. Wallace of Emerson College, Miss Walker of the National Recreation Association, and her husband, James William Henderson, who is an actor-dramatist poet. Mrs. Henderson studied dance also at the Mettler Studios in Boston. Dance she has created include: "Mary Magdalene," "Take My Life and Let it Be," "Balm in Gilead," "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," "Let us Break Bread Together," "I Want to be a Christian," "Kum-Bah-Yah," "The Lord's Prayer," "The Wind Dance," and James Weldon Johnson's poem, "The Creation."³

The purpose of the Henderson Memorial Scholarship was to provide financial assistance to enable selected persons to attend the annual training Institute of the Guild. Although several local scholarships had

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Sacred Dance Guild Institute Survey, January, 1963.

² Stenciled letter from Mary Jane Wolbers to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild, October 31, 1962 (in the files of the organization).

³ A Tribute to Ruby Henderson presented at the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop, Schenectady, New York, October 20, 1962.

been made available to Guild members previous to this date, the Henderson Memorial Scholarship is the only one of national significance.

On February 21 and 22 the annual business meeting and Mid-Winter Workshop was held at the Community Church of the City of New York, New York.¹ The two-day conclave included classes by two outstanding teachers and choreographers, Donald McKayle and Leda Canino, an informative book exhibit, a vesper service by members of the Union Seminary Dance Group, an evaluation session conducted by Walter Sorell, and the election of officers for the forthcoming year.

Donald McKayle, professional dancer, choreographer and teacher, studied with Sophie Maslow, Pearl Primus, and Martha Graham. He has danced with leading contemporary dance companies and in Broadway productions. McKayle led the groups through exercises in contraction and extension, stressing the importance of strong movement originating in the torso and flowing through the arms and legs and of focus when moving through space.²

Leda Canino, dancer, choir director, and choreographer, studied with Hanya Holm, Alwin Nicolais, Jose Limon, Pearl Primus, and Martha Graham. She has taught at colleges and religious conferences, has given lecture-demonstrations on sacred dance, and has directed dance choirs.

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Report on the Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting, February 21-22, 1962, April, 1962.

² Ibid.

Canino worked with basic positions such as standing and then explored these positions for feelings of containment.¹

Walter Sorell, critic, essayist, playwright, poet, associate editor of Dance Observer and author-editor of many books and articles in periodicals, conducted an evaluation session of the workshop. He was assisted by Pauline Koner, contemporary dance artist, and Leda Canino, who is described above. The works evaluated by the trio were:

'Kyrie Eleison,' a Gregorian Chant sung and performed by the Storrs Congregational Church Choir, Storrs, Connecticut.

'The Creation,' performed by Ruby Henderson as her husband, James, recited.

'Prophet and Priest,' performed by the Huguenot Dance Choir, using movement and choral speaking by the dancers. This group is an Interdenominational group from New Paltz, New York.

'Fragments of a Cross,' by the Dance Choir of the First Congregational Church of Darien, Connecticut.

'Woman of Faith,' performed by Judy Babb of New Paltz, New York, to taped organ accompaniment.²

The investigator presents below selected statements and questions offered to the participants of the workshop by the evaluation panel.

Sorell asked "What makes a dance sacred?" and answered his own question thusly:

A sacred dance need not be based upon a Biblical theme. The place where it is performed is irrelevant. It depends upon the spirit of

¹ Ibid.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Virginia Lucke, "A Participants Eye-View of the Mid-Winter Workshop," April, 1962.

the person performing--someone who has an inexplicable need to communicate with his God--a prophet trying to shed earthliness and moved to ecstasy.¹

Sorell quoted from a letter written to him by an unidentified dancer, "All real dancing is a highly religious experience. It gives a person performing the dances a kind of God-like power which can be used constructively or destructively."²

Pauline Koner at one point stated: "All dancers must be motivated by an inner sincerity."³ She continued by explaining that there is an intellectual stage in the construction of every dance. A time during which the idea develops into a clear statement in the choreographer's mind. If the motivation becomes obscured during this process, it is necessary to go back to the original motivating force and find the emotion and spirit which first inspired the dance.⁴

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the annual business meeting was called to order by President Ruth Rayton. Margaret Fisk Taylor, representing the nominating committee, presented the 1962-1963 slate of officers. Esther Ellison moved that the slate be accepted as presented, and Jeanne Miller seconded the motion. The resultant new officers were:

President: Mary Jane Wolbers
Vice-President: Reverend Robert Storer
Recording Secretary: Elizabeth Chenelle

¹
Ibid.

²
Ibid.

³
Ibid.

⁴
Ibid.

Corresponding Secretary: Janet Walz
 Program Chairman: Janet Knight
 Treasurer: Jeanne Saunders
 Membership Chairman: Hazel Bailey
 National Publicity Chairman: Judy Bennett¹

Two months later, on May 5, 1962, the Annual Spring Festival of the Sacred Dance Guild was held at Hartford, Connecticut. No training sessions were included. The day's proceedings were a departure from the usual program. Many choirs and soloists presented works in the morning. Certain works were selected to be reshowed at Vespers.² The program for the morning was

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come Ye Blessed - Scott

LYNN

ADORATION

Praise the Lord - Choral reading
 of a Psalm

HAMDEN

The Sun Shines in Splendor -
 Warner

WEST HARTFORD

PETITION AND CONFESSION

Excerpts from the Psalms

Kyrie

STORRS

The Lord's Prayer - Robertson

PROVIDENCE

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Covenant of Worship

PETERBOROUGH

The Snowy Heron - John Ciardi

HARVARD

BIBLE SEQUENCE: From Alpha to Omega

Man in the Beginning - Bartok

HAMDEN

The Tempted and the Tempter

Ruby Henderson and
 Stanley Arendholz

I Wonder as I Wander - Niles

HANOVER

Calvary - conversation on the
 crosses, and the remorse of
 Judas

HARTFORD

I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked

Don Magner

The Lord's Prayer - Robertson

HAMSTEAD

MANCHESTER

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Report of the Meeting, April, 1962.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Helen Gray, "The Annual Spring Festival," September, 1962.

DEDICATION and a HOPE

A New Heaven and a New Earth, with
 Sanctus - from Gaul's 'Holy City' PROVIDENCE
 Peaceable Kingdom - Randall
 Thompson WINCHESTER¹
 Jean Miller¹

BENEDICTION

The new consensus of opinion expressed after the completion of the festival was that workshops were much more stimulating when the Sacred Dance Guild members had dance personalities from which to glean information and inspiration.²

The Fifth Annual Institute of the Sacred Dance Guild was held from June 19 to 22, 1962, at the Craigville Conference Center in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The Institute faculty was headed by Mary Anthony, dancer, teacher-choreographer, and Jess Meeker, pianist-composer.

Mary Jane Wolbers taught a session using the Shaker Dance as a springboard for movement discovery and as a means of furthering appreciation of the religious folk art of the Shakers.³ Janet Knight, dancer-choreographer and Sacred Dance Guild program chairman, taught a class on contemporary dance techniques with emphasis upon the use of focus and dynamic qualities.⁴ Jess Meeker not only furnished musical accompaniment for all of the classes but also gave a lecture on music for the dance.

¹ Taken from a program of the Annual Spring Festival, May 5, 1962.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Gray, op. cit., September, 1962.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, "A Summary of the Class Taught by Mary Jane Wolbers at the Institute," September, 1962.

⁴ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Jane Knight, "The Fifth Annual Institute," September, 1962, p. 5.

Knight complimented Meeker's contribution to the Institute by stating, "Dancing in a class blessed with Jess' music is truly a great joy."¹

The New York State Sacred Dance Workshop convened at the First Reformed Church in Schenectady, New York, on October 20, 1962. The program included a technique session by Pat Peterson; a session on the creative use of dance technique in Sacred Dance by Mary Jane Wolbers; a coffee discussion entitled "Problems of Public Relations in Sacred Dance;" the choirs' presentations of their dances; a session entitled "Speak Without Words" led by Bess Haile, and a Vesper Service led by Ruth Engell. This service was performed as a memorial to Ruby Henderson whose untimely death one month prior to the meeting of the workshop was met "by a deep shock and a sense of personal loss."²

The featured leaders of the workshop were Pat Peterson, Mary Jane Wolbers, and Elizabeth Haile. Patricia Peterson received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance from Mills College in California, where she held a teaching fellowship in 1950. She has taught at Oklahoma College for Women, The University of New Hampshire, and is currently employed at Emma Willard School in New Jersey.³ Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild and director of the Huguenot Dance Choir in New Paltz, New York, is described in detail in Chapter III of this study. Bess Haile teaches at

¹ Ibid.

² Program of the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop, First Reformed Church, October 20, 1962, Schenectady, New York.

³ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, September, 1962, p. 1.

the Young Women's Christian Association in Schenectady, New York. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from the State University of New York at Oneonta. She has studied with Louis Horst and has attended the¹ Institute at Jacob's Pillow in Lee, Massachusetts.

The New England Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop was held on November 3, 1962, at the Unitarian Church in Peterborough, New Hampshire. The theme of the workshop was "Sacred Dance in Religious Education."

Events of the Year 1963

By 1963 the membership of the Sacred Dance Guild had grown to 180 members, distributed geographically as follows:

Massachusetts	58	Rhode Island	5
Connecticut	17	Texas	5
New York	16	California	4
Pennsylvania	11	Florida	3
New Hampshire	10	Montana	2
New Jersey	10	Iowa	2
Ohio	8	Minnesota	2
Maine	8	Indiana	1
Michigan	6	Oregon	1
Illinois	5	Virginia	1
North Carolina	5		

The Sacred Dance Guild sponsored two events during 1963: the Mid-Winter Workshop and annual business meeting in February and the Pennsylvania Regional Workshop in October.

The Mid-Winter Workshop and annual business meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild was held on February 21 and 22, 1963, at the International

¹ Ibid., p. 3.

House in the City of New York, New York. The featured leaders of this workshop were Leda Canino and Mary Hinkson.

Canino, a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, also studied with Pearl Primus.¹ Canino presented the session on Thursday morning, February 21. Its full impact was evident in the afternoon when, as a choreographic project, the participants produced what the Newsletter described to be "the finest piece of group choreography to evolve from any Guild session."² In the evening Canino performed original dance compositions based on four poems written by Ruth St. Denis, which the Newsletter evaluated as "stirring to the imagination, nourishing to our minds hungering for truth, and beautiful to behold."³

Mary Hinkinson, dancer, teacher, and choreographer, joined the Graham company in 1952, appearing in such Graham classics as "Clytemnestra," "Embattled Garden," and "Samson Agonistes." At present she is a member of the Graham school teaching staff. Miss Hinkson explained to the group that the Graham technique was highly complicated, disciplined, and stylized. It would be impossible to present more than a basic orientation in two hours. After the lecture by Hinkson, the class practiced basic techniques such as pressing the center of the body down toward the floor and maintaining a controlled position while progressing across the floor.⁴ Reverend Storer commented with regard to Hinkson's session:

¹ Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, January, 1963, p. 3a.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, April, 1963, p. 5.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The entire two hours seemed to go rapidly. It convinced this observer that we of the church do not have this kind of time to produce a highly technical instrument. We can make use of this approach, particularly the breathing, the body-control, the energy behind the movement. For the most part we will continue to be amateur dancers in churches making use of movement to enrich what we are trying to 'say'--but not dancing--really dancing. Our congregation is not ready for dance as dance. We should not attempt to kid ourselves. What we do in the sanctuary we regard as an element in a worship service, and not as a concert number.¹

Virginia Lucke commented with regard to Hinkson's session:

Mary Hinkson did a beautiful job--fine planning of progression in difficulty of technique, she herself a perfect dancer with deep inner feeling. I always feel that to see someone like Donald McKayle and Mary Hinkson is good for us to keep us from nestling comfortably in a self-satisfactory rut, but we don't want to scare the very new and those with little technical training. Not an easy dilemma to solve.²

At the conclusion of the working session, the annual business meeting convened. Jeanne Saunders, treasurer, reported a net income of \$182.23 for the year of 1962 and a balance of \$631.00 as of February 1, 1963. The Ruby Henderson Memorial Scholarship fund totaled \$131.00 at the time of the meeting. It was stated that in the administration of this fund, preference would be given to male students enrolled in theological schools.³ The group discussed plans for the Annual June Institute, which was to be held at Cazenovia College in Cazenovia, New York, from June 24 to 26, 1963. This was the first time that the location of the Institute had been planned for the state of New York. At this meeting also, the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

By-laws of the Sacred Dance Guild were amended. A copy of the amended By-laws appears on page 174 of the Appendix of this study.

In the absence of Margaret Fisk Taylor, chairman of the nominating committee, Virginia Lucke read the proposed slate of officers. It was moved and seconded that the slate be accepted as read and that the secretary cast one ballot electing the following officers for the year 1963-1964:

President: Mary Jane Wolbers
 Vice-President: Reverend Robert Storer
 Recording Secretary: Charlotte Wright
 Corresponding Secretary: Janet Walz
 Treasurer: Jeanne Saunders
 Membership Chairman: Hazel Bailey
 Program Chairman: Jeanne Fuller
 National Publicity Chairman: Judy Bennett¹

The 1963 June Institute was cancelled by the planning committee because of insufficient registration. President Mary Jane Wolbers commented with regard to the cancellation of the Institute:

Several members of the Executive Board have questioned the necessity of having an Institute. Our one-day workshops are wonderful, but I personally feel that there is much to be gained from the day-to-day contact with inspiring leadership, such as the Institute provides. To say nothing of those precious after-hour discussions and fellowship which can only come from staying together for a period of days. If you agree that it would be valuable to continue the June Institute, please write to the Newsletter editor, Margaret Fisk Taylor, and to Program Chairman, Jeanne Fuller, expressing your views. There are summer conferences that include a smattering of dance as one of the religious arts, and as one means of religious education. Our Institute offers just about the only existing opportunity to spend a few days concentrated effort and thought on this work which is so dear to us.²

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter, Mary Jane Wolbers, April, 1963.

The Pennsylvania Regional Workshop convened on October 12, 1963, at the Methodist Church in Canadensis, Pennsylvania. The leaders of the workshop were Janet Walz, Linda Smiler, and Rabbi Milton Richman. Janet Walz, wife of Norman Walz, minister of the Methodist Church in Wharton, New Jersey, conducted a session entitled "Spiritual Preparation for Religious dance."¹ Linda Smiler, dance educator and graduate of Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, conducted a session on techniques and creative work geared to the training of beginning choirs.² Rabbi Milton Richman, of the Madison Avenue Temple in Scranton, Pennsylvania, lectured on "Gestures and Rhythms of the Old Testament."³

Summary

In this chapter of the thesis, the investigator presented the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement. The two groups are interrelated since many rhythmic choirs function under the auspices of members of the Sacred Dance Guild. The findings of a questionnaire distributed by the investigator to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild during the fall of 1963, revealed that fifty-three of the 108 respondents served as directors of rhythmic choirs, five acted as sponsors of such choirs, and eleven participated as members of a dance choir.

¹ Flyer on the Pennsylvania Regional Workshop (in the files of the organization).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Questions of primary interest to Sacred Dance Guild members which the investigator discussed in this chapter were: (1) What is religious dance and what makes it a significant experience for the worshipper? (2) What level of skill must be attained by members of rhythmic choirs to enable them to communicate effectively to members of a congregation? (3) What contributions can the Sacred Dance Guild make in promoting dance as a means of worship?

The investigator described the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild through a presentation of a year by year chronology of that organization from 1956 to 1963. The year 1956 witnessed the first two meetings of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association (now called the Sacred Dance Guild). The first gathering was an organizational meeting on May 3, 1956, and the second meeting was a Motion Choir Training Convention which convened from October 11 to 13.

During the year of 1957, a Mid-Winter Workshop was held on February 26, and a Motion Choir Festival and Workshop was held on May 21. The most outstanding meeting was the Fall Convention on November 10 to 11 with the formal election of its first officers of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Guild. This year also earmarked the beginning of the publication of the Newsletter.

Four meetings of the Association were held in 1958: the Workshop and Annual Meeting on February 10; a Choir Festival and Workshop on June 5; the First Annual Institute on Religious Dance, June 22 to 25; and the Fall Workshop on September 29. Of particular significance was the formal

change of the name of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association to the Sacred Dance Guild during the February meeting and the acceptance of by-laws for the organization.

Four meetings and/or workshops were sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild in 1959: the Sacred Dance Guild Mid-Winter Workshop, February 2 to 3; the Sacred Dance Guild Spring Festival on May 3; the Second Annual Institute on Religious Dance, June 22 to 26; and the Fall Workshop on October 19.

Five major events were sponsored by the Guild in the year 1960: the Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting, February 9 to 10; a Choir Festival, May 1, the Third Annual Training Institute on Religious Dance, June 19 to 22; and two regional workshops, October 15--the New York State Regional Workshop and the New England Regional Workshop.

Four major festivals and workshops were sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild during the year 1961: the Choir Festival and Workshop, May 6; the Fourth Annual Training Institute on Religious Dance, June 25 to 28; the New York Regional Workshop, October 7; and the Boston Area Regional Workshop, October 14. This year the Executive Board dispensed with the two-day combination workshop-and-annual meeting. The annual executive and general meetings, therefore, was held on February 21.

During the year 1962 the Sacred Dance Guild sponsored five workshops: The Annual Meeting and Mid-Winter Workshop, February 21-22; the Spring Festival, May 5; the Fifth Annual Institute on Religious Dance, June 19-22; the New York State Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop,

October 20, and the New England Sacred Dance Guild Regional Workshop, November 3.

In 1963 the Sacred Dance Guild sponsored two events: the Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting, February 21 to 22; and the Pennsylvania Regional Workshop, October 12. The 1963 June Institute was cancelled because of insufficient registration.

During the first eight years of its existence from 1956 to 1963, the Sacred Dance Guild has grown and flourished as evidenced by the increase in membership and the number of workshops, festivals, and institutes sponsored. During this period of time the Guild has sponsored twenty-four workshops and five Annual Institutes on Religious Dance. Such eminent persons as Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Walter Sorell, Mary Hinkson, and Pauline Koner have generously donated their time and energy as guest instructors and lecturers for Guild activities.

The rise of membership in the Sacred Dance Guild from a small nucleus of interested rhythmic choir directors in the Boston, Massachusetts, area in 1956 to 180 persons in 1963 substantiates the investigator's belief that dance as a modern religious art is rapidly gaining recognition and acceptance in the United States as well as Canada.

In Chapter V of the thesis the investigator will present a summary of her research, draw conclusions, and make recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Summary of the Study

During the twentieth century an increasing interest in dance research has been manifested in the United States. This interest has paralleled the growing acceptance of modern dance as a youthful and legitimate art form. Curiosity about the interrelationship of the arts --specifically, the influence of religion upon dance themes--has been revealed in both popular and critical literature. Dance has served as a basis for religious expression since the beginning of time. Long before language evolved as a means of expression, primitive man conveyed his ideas, inspirations, and moods through gestures and large body movements.

In Chapter I of this study the investigator described briefly the significance of dance as a means of worship to the American Indians and to members of selected religious denominations in the United States. The American Indian was truly a religious being. Of all of the survivals of primitive rituals, the dance of the American Indian is probably the most interesting to be found anywhere in the world. Through his dance the Indian expressed reverence for the world of nature and his recognition of the existence of a supernatural power.

Some religious denominations of the early settlers of the United States actively encouraged dance. The Shakers, coming to America from England in 1771, used definite dance patterns as an integral part of their worship. The Schismatics also believed that dance should be practiced voluntarily during the church service. Today in the United States remnants of dance ritual are evident in the gestures, movements, and processions of altar boys, priests, and congregations in Catholic, Episcopal, and Lutheran services.

While certain denominations have always recognized dance as an integral part of their worship services, many religious leaders in the twentieth century remain unaware of the potentiality of dance as a means of religious expression. Only in the last fifty years has the philosophy of Dualism been seriously questioned and in many instances replaced by the concept of man as an integrated totality--an inseparable unity of mind, body, and soul. Individuals who subscribe to the philosophy of the "growth and development of the whole person," believe that man should be encouraged to worship God with his whole being, to pray--as primitive man did--with his entire body as well as his soul. As an outgrowth of new understandings and appreciations accompanying advances in educational psychology and technological progress, many religious leaders have sought to introduce the arts--particularly the dance--into religious worship.

In 1956 individuals interested in dance as a religious art form met informally for the purpose of sharing convictions, ideas, and aspirations in the field of religious dance. As a result of this meeting the

Sacred Dance Guild (formerly the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association) was organized for the specific purpose of fostering interest in dance as a means of worship and providing choir directors, ministers, religious educators, and lay persons with the knowledges, understandings, and appreciations necessary for incorporating the dance into the worship service.

As a result of her interest in the activities of the Sacred Dance Guild in promoting the acceptance of dance as a religious art, the investigator undertook a study of modern dance as a means of worship in the United States with emphasis upon the history, development, and contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and of rhythmic choirs.

Both documentary and human sources of data were utilized in the development of this study. The documentary sources were books, periodicals, and other published materials pertaining to all aspects of the study. Further sources were theses, dissertations, and other unpublished materials concerning dance and religion. The human sources of data included authorities in the field of religion and of sacred dance, members of the Sacred Dance Guild, selected members of rhythmic choirs, and other interested persons recommended as resource persons by the Sacred Dance Guild and by members of the thesis committee.

Prior to undertaking the present study the investigator wrote a letter of introduction to Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild, in which she expressed an interest in preparing an historical account of the Sacred Dance Guild and sought the cooperation of members of that organization in the collection of data.

Having received enthusiastic endorsement of the study by Mrs. Wolbers, several plans were made with respect to the collection of data. Since the primary sources of data concerning the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement were located on the East Coast of the United States, the investigator arranged to visit with Mrs. Wolbers for the purpose of conducting personal interviews with her and recording data from the files of the Sacred Dance Guild.

In order to establish a setting for the present study, the investigator collected data concerning modern dance as a means of worship in the United States during the twentieth century. Because the availability of data about the relatively new Rhythmic Choir Movement comprised a major problem, the investigator constructed a questionnaire and mailed it to all members of the Sacred Dance Guild in an effort to identify directors of rhythmic choirs and to determine outstanding individuals in the United States in the field of religious dance.

Tabulations of the responses to the questionnaire resulted in the following findings: seventy-one members of the 108 respondents were associated in some way with a rhythmic choir. Fifty-three served as directors of rhythmic choirs; five served as sponsors; eleven were members; and two served in other capacities.

The investigator selected outstanding persons in religious dance to be included in the study on the basis of these criteria: (1) they were mentioned at least ten times by respondents to the questionnaire survey; (2) they were recommended by the investigator's thesis committee;

and finally (3) they were authorities in the field of dance who in the opinion of the investigator, had contributed to religious dance. The contributions of the following individuals were described in Chapter III of the thesis: Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Erika Thimey, Reverend Robert A. Storer, Reverend William Norman Guthrie, Margaret Fisk Taylor, and Mary Jane Wolbers.

In order to obtain information unavailable in her present geographical location, the investigator flew to Pennsylvania and spent nine days collecting data on the East Coast, specifically in Pennsylvania and New York. She first visited Mary Jane Wolbers in her home in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where she took careful notes from Mrs. Wolbers' personal and professional files.

The investigator then accompanied Mrs. Wolbers to the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop held at the International House in the City of New York. While in attendance at the Sacred Dance Guild Workshop, the investigator recorded on tape conversations between herself and the officers of the Sacred Dance Guild, conducted personal interviews with members of the Sacred Dance Guild, and distributed biographical data sheets which were filled in by the officers of the Guild and other selected persons. The investigator received permission to attend the Executive Board Meeting of the Sacred Dance Guild, where she became better acquainted with the leaders of the Sacred Dance Guild and established a working rapport with them.

The investigator worked in the Dance Archives of the New York City Public Library, where she surveyed books, periodicals, and other written materials which were unavailable to her from other sources.

On February 25, 1964, the investigator visited with the personnel of the Department of Worship and the Arts of the National Council of Churches in the City of New York where she obtained a report entitled Religion and the Dance which yielded valuable data to her.

Upon her return to Texas, the investigator organized the data collected and wrote Chapter III, IV, and V of the thesis. Each chapter of the study was submitted to members of her thesis committee and revised in accordance with their suggestions. A classified bibliography and an appendix were prepared for inclusion in the completed thesis. The chapter concerned with the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement was submitted to Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, president of the Sacred Dance Guild, who read the manuscript for accuracy, offered suggestions, and subsequently approved the chapter for inclusion in the thesis.

In Chapter III of this study the investigator described the contributions of the following persons to religious dance: Ted Shawn, Ruth St. Denis, Reverend Norman Guthrie, Erika Thimey, Reverend Robert A. Storer, Margaret Fisk Taylor, and Mary Jane Wolbers.

Ted Shawn, eminent dancer, choreographer, author, and advisor to the Sacred Dance Guild, was the first person to dance a complete church service within the sanctuary of a church. Shawn later performed this

church service in thirty or forty cities in the United States. Although Shawn was highly successful in the role of dancer-preacher, he preferred to present his religious dances in the theatre.

Although Shawn is recognized for his production of the first church service in dance, many persons believe that the contributions of Ruth St. Denis to religious dance are even more outstanding than those of her husband, Ted Shawn. Ruth St. Denis performed many dances of an oriental religious nature, among which the most prominent was "Radha." Perhaps the greatest contribution of Ruth St. Denis to the establishment of dance as a modern religious art lies in her dedicated efforts to synthesize all of the arts and religion through her lectures, publications, and performances.

Reverend William Norman Guthrie, Rector of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, an Episcopal church in the City of New York, was the first individual to experiment with rhythmic choirs, although they were not called by that term. Many of the dances presented in Reverend Guthrie's church were choreographed by his daughter, Phoebe Anne Guthrie, who wrote an outstanding thesis entitled "The Dynamic Motivation of the Dance" at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1926.

Erika Thimey, a student of Wigman, has taught religious dance to various church groups since 1932 and has presented numerous programs within church sanctuaries. From 1931 to 1941 Thimey traveled extensively throughout the United States and worked with church groups--particularly young people--in numerous cities: Chicago, New York, Boston, and

Washington, D. C.. Among the many persons influenced in their work by Erika Thimey was Reverend Robert A. Storer, another outstanding pioneer in the field of religious dance.

Reverend Robert A. Storer, minister of the Unitarian Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts, has presented dance services in his church since 1934. In addition to his work with dance in the church, Storer serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Religious Arts Guild in Boston, Massachusetts.

Margaret Fisk Taylor, an outstanding pioneer, teacher, and author in the field of religious dance, began her work as "Mrs. Margaret Palmer Fisk," the wife of a Congregationalist minister in the South Shore Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. In addition to her extensive work with rhythmic choirs, Taylor has written voluminously concerning the art of the dance in religious services. Among her publications are The Art of the Rhythmic Choir, Look Up and Live, and Time for Wonder. At present she serves as editor of the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter.

Mary Jane Wolbers, dance educator and president of the Sacred Dance Guild, has contributed much to the field of religious dance. She has directed rhythmic choirs, has lectured extensively on the subject of dance and religion, and has worked with the Sacred Dance Guild since its organization in 1956. Because of her growing reputation as an authority in the field of religious dance, Mrs. Wolbers was invited to speak at the meeting of the Dance Section at the National Convention of the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation in 1963.

Although the writer limited her report to the work of seven outstanding individuals associated with religious dance in the United States, she recognizes that many others are currently making great contributions to the acceptance of dance as a means of worship. Illustrative of the cooperative efforts of these persons was a national gathering--the first of its kind--on "Religion and the Dance" held at The Riverside Church in the City of New York on November 16, 1960. A comprehensive report of this meeting, including the text of all of the speeches and comments made, was prepared from tape recordings.

In Chapter IV of this study the investigator presented the history and development of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Rhythmic Choir Movement. The two organizations are interrelated since the majority of rhythmic choirs function under the auspices of members of the Sacred Dance Guild. The events sponsored by the Sacred Dance Guild from 1956 to 1963, which were described in detail in Chapter IV, are summarized in the table which follows.

TABLE 2

TABLE OF EVENTS SPONSORED BY THE SACRED DANCE GUILD, 1956-1963

Date of Event	Name of	Location	Chairman or Sponsoring Group	Persons and/or
May 3	Organizational Meeting	South Street Methodist Church, Lynn, Massachusetts	Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association	Ted Shawn
October 11-13	Motion Choir Training Convention	Arlington Street Church, Boston, Massachusetts	Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association	Ted Shawn Janet Knight Reverend Robert Storer
<u>1957</u>				
February 26	Mid-Winter Workshop	Universalist Church Melrose, Massachusetts	Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association	Reverend Robert Storer Janet Knight Josephine Rice
May 21	Motion Choir Festival	Congregational Church Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts	Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association	Hazel Bailey Helen Gray Avis Ann Parke
November 10-11	Fall and of Officers	Charles Street Meeting House, Boston, Massachusetts	Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association	Keith Patton Mary Jane Wolbers Donald Miller
<u>1958</u>				
February	Workshop and Annual	Unitarian Church,	Sacred Dance Guild	Jane Renz Jane Wolbers

June 5	Choir Festival and Workshop	Hancock Congregational Church, Lexington,	Sacred Dance Guild	Reverend Robert Storer Janet Knight
June 22-25	First Annual Institute on Religious Dance	Jacob's Pillow, Lee, Massachusetts	Jacob's Pillow	Ted Shawn Adolphine Rott John Christian Jess Meeker
September 29	Fall Workshop	South Street Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut	Sacred Dance Guild	Virginia Lucke Betty Simmons Barbara Hyland
<u>1959</u> February 2-3	Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting	Community Church, New York City, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Mary Jane Wolbars Reverend Robert Storer Myra Kinch
May 3	Spring Festival	Congregational Church, New Canaan, Connecticut	Sacred Dance Guild	Ruby Henderson Carola Bell Williams
June 22-26	Second Annual Institute on Religious Dance	Jacob's Pillow Lee, Massachusetts	Jacob's Pillow	Ted Shawn Ruth St. Denis Margaret Fisk Taylor Jess Meeker Myra Kinch
October 19	Fall Workshop	Unitarian Church, Petersborough, New Hampshire	Sacred Dance Guild	Reverend Robert Storer Jane Rens Ruth Rayton
<u>1960</u> February 9-10	Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting	Community Church, New York City, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Margaret Fisk Taylor Mary Jane Wolbars Mary Anthony

TABLE 2--Continued

Date of Event	Name Event	Location	Chairman or Sponsoring Group	Persons Responsible for and/or Leaders
May 1	Choir Festival	Central Congregational Church, Fall River Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	
June 19-22	Third Annual Training Institute	Jacob's Pillow, Lee, Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	Ted Shawn Ruth St. Denis Jess Meeker
October	New York State Regional Workshop	First Reformed Church Sehenedtady, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Leda Canino Martha Odom Shirley Porter
October 15	New England Regional Workshop	Unitarian Church, Winchester, Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	Jane Renz Josephine Rice Helen Borngesser Reverend Robert Storer
<u>1961</u>				
May 6	Choir Festival and Workshop	Second Congregational Church, Holyoke, Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	Margaret Fisk Taylor Janet Knight Ruby Henderson
June 25-28	Fourth Annual Training Institute	Jacob's Pillow, Lee, Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	Martha Odom Helen Borngesser Mary Anthony Ruth St. Denis Ted Shawn
October 7	New	Methodist Church, New		

October 14	Boston Area Regional Workshop	Shaw House Boston, Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	Nancy Lob Stanley Arendholz Reverend Robert Storer James W. Henderson Naomi Aleh-Leaf
<u>1962</u> February 21-22	Annual Meeting and Mid-Winter Workshop	Community Church, New York City, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Donald McKayle Leda Canino Walter Sorell Pauline Koner
May 5	Annual Spring Festival	Hartford, Connecticut	Sacred Dance Guild	Mary Anthony Jess Meeker Mary Jane Volbers Janet Knight
June 19-22	Fifth Annual Institute on Religious Dance	Craigville Conference Center, Cape Cod Massachusetts	Sacred Dance Guild	
October 20	New York State Regional Workshop	First Reformed Church, Schenectady, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Pat Paterson Mary Jane Volbers Elizabeth Heile
November 3	New England Regional Workshop	Unitarian Church Peterborough, New Hampshire	Sacred Dance Guild	
<u>1963</u> February 21-22	Mid-Winter Workshop and Annual Meeting	International House New York City, New York	Sacred Dance Guild	Mary Hinkson Leda Canino
October 12	Pennsylvania Regional Workshop	Methodist Church, Canadensis, Pennsylvania	Sacred Dance Guild	Janet Balz Linda Sailer Rabbi Milton Richman

Conclusions

The data collected and analyzed in the present investigation warranted the following conclusions concerning dance as a contemporary religious art:

1. The Sacred Dance Guild has contributed to the development of religious dance in the United States in innumerable ways, as described in the foregoing chapters of the thesis.

2. The number of individuals in the United States who believe in the value of sacred dance continues to grow, and many more churches and synagogues avail themselves of the services of such persons than ever before.

3. Members of the Sacred Dance Guild must decide whether the major purpose of religious dance is to express a personal experience in worship or to communicate with an audience or congregation through artistically valid means.

4. Most members of the Sacred Dance Guild realize that in the past decade they have functioned more or less on an artistic level which is modest in scope. They know that most of their work will, for some time to come, remain in the hands of artistically inexperienced persons who will be less concerned with the technical aspect of dance than with the task of uniting the holy service with the concept of devotional movement.

5. There is also full awareness among Guild members that artistic stimulation and new creative concepts are needed to make the Movement grow not only in numbers, but also in depth.

6. Religious dance must be recognized as an art and treated with the respect traditionally accorded the other arts by the church in order to make it sacred in nature.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Several points of interest were brought to the investigator's attention during the research undertaken for the present thesis. The following suggestions are offered, therefore, as recommendations for further studies:

1. A study of the religious dances of the American Indian in the twentieth century.
2. A study of modern dances based upon religious themes and performed by college and/or university contemporary dance groups.
3. A study of ballets based upon religious themes.
4. A study of church denominations in the United States which utilize movement as an integral part of the worship service.
5. A study of the Shakers with respect to religion and dance.
6. A study of rhythmic choirs in the churches of America.
7. A study of organizations promoting the arts in religion.
8. A study of theological schools offering courses in the arts, especially in religious dance.
9. A survey of ministers and members of the congregations of selected churches representing different denominations with regard to their opinions about dance as a means of worship in the church sanctuary.

APPENDIX

PRELIMINARY SOURCES

Martha Odom
Student Christian Movement
in New York State

Dr. Juana de Laban
11746 Goshen Avenue, Apt. 1
Los Angeles 49, California

Mary Jane Wolbers
111 South Green Street
East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

Reverend Robert A. Storer
33 Glen Green
Winchester, Massachusetts

Evelyn Handy Broadbent
221 Monticello Drive
South Syracuse, New York

Erika Thimey
Howard University
Washington, D.C.

Hazel Bailey
74 Sea Avenue
Quincy 69, Massachusetts

Louise Kloepper
University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Bible Department
Northfield School for Girls
East Northfield, Massachusetts

Northern New England School of
Religious Education
Durham, New Hampshire

School of the Apostolate for
Catholic Young Women
Loveland, Ohio

PERSONAL BIOGRAPHY

Name _____ Professional Occupation _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Educational Background:

Junior High School _____ Yrs. _____

City _____

State _____

High School _____ Yrs. _____

City _____

State _____

College _____

City _____

State _____

Degree Obtained _____

Major _____

Master's Degree _____

Major _____

Ph.D. Degree _____

Major _____

Dance Background:

Religious Education Background: i.e. Courses in College

Publications:

On Back of Paper:

- A. Personal philosophy of religious dance
- B. What do you feel the Sacred Dance Guild has contributed to dance as a means of worship
- C. What do you feel the Rhythmic Choir Movement has contributed to dance as a means of worship

PERSONS WHO COMPLETED THE BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

Nels Anderson
412 Hayden Street
Saginaw, Michigan

Hazel Bailey
74 Sea Avenue
Quincy, Massachusetts

Forrest Coggan
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

Mary R. Johnson
Box 177
38 Pine Street
Petersboro, New Hampshire

Virginia Lucke
5 Willowbrook Road
Storrs, Connecticut

Reverend Darin A. Miller
Sussex Methodist Church
Sussex, New Jersey

Jeanne Saunders
15 Ellis Road
Weston, Massachusetts

Lynn Sherwood
5819 Fieldstone Road
New York City, New York

Mary Jane Wolbers
111 South Green Street
East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

POST-CARD QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Are you associated with a Rhythm Choir? Yes..... No.....
2. If yes, in what capacity? Member..... Sponsor..... Director..... Other.....
3. For how long have you been associated with a Rhythm Choir?
4. With what Church is the Choir affiliated? Name.....
 Address..... City, State.....
5. Does your Choir dance in the chancel? Yes..... No..... Sometimes.....
6. How many persons comprise the Choir? 5..... 10..... 20..... 30.....
7. How often does the Choir meet regularly?
8. In your opinion who are the three most outstanding individuals associated with religious dance today?
 1.....
 2.....
 3.....

Signature..... Position.....

MISS MARILYN K. LEWIS
 604 CAUSLEY AVE. #123
 ARLINGTON, TEXAS

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

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DENTON, TEXAS

COLLEGE OF HEALTH,
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION

January 27, 1964

Dear Member of the Sacred Dance Guild:

Miss Marilyn Lewis, graduate student in the College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, has undertaken an exciting study in fulfillment of the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree with a major sequence in Dance and Related Arts. May I take this means of endorsing her study without reservations and adding my solicitation to hers for your cooperation in the collection of a very important part of her data. The title of her subject is "A Study of Modern Dance as a Means of Worship in the United States with Emphasis upon the History, Development, and Contributions of the Sacred Dance Guild and of Rhythmic Choirs."

Miss Lewis is circularizing all individuals who are members of the Sacred Dance Guild by means of the enclosed post card questionnaire. Later she will mail a more lengthy and detailed questionnaire to those of you who express a desire to assist in her study. Please know that your contributions to the study will add immeasurably to the worthwhileness of Miss Lewis' project.

Miss Lewis is currently teaching dance at Arlington State College in Arlington, Texas. She is a conscientious, sincere, and careful research worker. She is deeply interested in religious dance, particularly in the work of the Sacred Dance Guild and of Rhythmic Choirs. With your assistance, I believe she will complete the study which she has undertaken in a highly creditable manner.

With deep appreciation for your cooperation in returning this questionnaire, I am

Sincerely yours,

Claudine Sherrill

Claudine Sherrill
Chairman of Thesis Committee

ph

ARLINGTON STATE COLLEGE
ARLINGTON, TEXAS

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OF
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

January 27, 1964

Dear Member of the Sacred Dance Guild:

I am undertaking a study of religious dance in the United States during the twentieth century with special emphasis upon the development of the Sacred Dance Guild and of Rhythmic Choirs. This study has been approved by my thesis committee and by Mrs. Mary Jane Wolbers, President of the Sacred Dance Guild, with whom I have corresponded regularly during the last year and from whom I have received valuable assistance.

I am hoping, that through the return of this post card, that you -- the members of the Sacred Dance Guild -- will help me to locate Rhythmic Choirs in all parts of the United States and that you will serve as a jury of experts in assisting me in identifying outstanding individuals associated with religious dance from 1900 to 1963.

I shall deeply appreciate your cooperation in this study, since most of my data must be obtained from human sources. Your prompt response is of the utmost importance to me and to the completion of my study.

On February 21 and 22, 1964, I shall be visiting Mrs. Wolbers in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, and I shall attend the Sacred Dance Guild Conference in New York City on February 23 through the 25th. I am looking forward to meeting many of you at that time and to collecting additional data for my study.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Encl.

Marilyn K. Lewis

The By-Laws of the SACRED DANCE GUILD (accepted Feb. 10, 1958)

** see p. 4.

Article I - Name

The name of this organization shall be the SACRED DANCE GUILD.

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this Guild shall be to stimulate interest in the dance as a religious art form, and to provide a means of communication and training for dance choirs.

Article III - Membership

Membership shall be open to all who are interested in this field.

Article IV - Dues

Dues shall be two dollars per year, payable at or before the time of the Annual Meeting.

Amendment - The following categories of membership and fees shall apply:

Regular member - \$2.00 (includes Newsletter)

Student member - \$1.00 (includes Newsletter)

applicable through school and undergraduate college years

Sponsor member - \$5.00 (includes Newsletter)

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

Article V - Officers

The officers shall be a President, a First and Second Vice President, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, a Treasurer, and nine Directors to serve for a term of three years each; three of whom shall retire each year, three new Directors being elected annually to serve three years.

Amendment - There shall be no Second Vice President. Instead, there shall be a Vice President, in charge of the Newsletter, and a Program Chairman (see Article X - Committees).

(accepted Feb. 2, 1959)

Article VI - Executive Board

The Executive Board shall consist of the Officers named in Article V, the Chairmen of Standing Committees, and the Advisors.

Article VII - Duties of Officers

Section 1. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Guild, and of the Executive Board.

Section 2. The First Vice President shall be the editor* of the Newsletter under the guidance of the President, and shall preside in the absence of the President.

* Note Amendment to Article V - "in charge of the Newsletter."

Section 3. The Second Vice President* shall be Chairman of the Program.

* Note Amendment to Article V - "There shall be no Second Vice President. Instead there shall be . . . a Program Chairman."

Section 4. The Recording Secretary shall keep a record of each meeting, and prepare a report for the Newsletter and Publicity Chairman.

Amendment - The prepared report (Article VII, Section 4) shall be sent to all Executive Board Members, as well as to the Newsletter.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

The Corresponding Secretary shall notify members of the time and place of meetings, keep a record of applications for membership, and answer all correspondence.

Amendment - The Corresponding Secretary shall be responsible for keeping the mailing list up to date and for furnishing copies of it to publicity chairmen, and upon request, to Committees responsible for publicizing Guild functions.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

Section 5. The Treasurer shall receive, hold, and pay out the funds, shall keep an itemized account of all receipts, appropriations, and expenditures, and shall submit a statement of finances at the meetings.

Article VIII - Meetings

There shall be three meetings each year: the Annual Meeting in February, the Festival in the Spring, and the Convention in the Fall.

Amendment - There shall be one general meeting of the organization each year, the Annual Meeting in February, held in conjunction with the Mid-Winter Workshop. The Executive Board shall also meet in February, and at such other times in the year as are necessary to carry on the activities of the Guild.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

Article IX - Elections

Section 1. Elections shall be by ballot at the Annual Meeting. Officers shall be elected to serve for one year. Three Directors* shall be elected annually to serve for three years.

* Note - Article V - Officers. Nine Directors in all, three retiring, six remaining, three taking office each year.

The Chairman of Membership, the Chairman of National Publicity, and Regional Publicity Chairman shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by ballot.

Section 2. The Advisors shall be elected by the Executive Board.

Article X - Committees

Section 1. The President shall appoint a Nominating Committee of three members. This committee shall nominate a list of Officers, a Chairman of Membership, a Chairman of National Publicity, and Chairmen of Regional Publicity.

Amendment - The Nominating Committee shall be a rotating one, one member to retire after serving three years (the third year as Chairman), the second member moving up to Chairman for the next year, and the third, new, member being appointed each year by the President.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

Section 2. The Membership Chairman shall receive dues, send out membership cards, give the names of new members to the Recording Secretary, the Corresponding Secretary, and to the President, and give money and names to the Treasurer.

Section 3. The National Publicity Chairman shall act as editor of any member's material, advance notices, and post write-ups of organizational activities for regional publications, send copies to the other regional chairmen, to the National Publicity Chairman, and to the First Vice President for the Newsletter.

Amendment - Section 4. The Program Chairman shall act as coordinator of all Guild program activities, shall assist chairmen in appointing committees for workshops, the Festival, and other functions, assist these committees in the planning of same, and keep a complete record of all Guild-sponsored events.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

Amendment - Article XI - Amendments

The by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present or represented by proxy in writing and voting at the Annual Meeting provided that the proposed amendment is included in the announced agenda for the meeting. Amendments shall be drawn up by the executive board and presented for discussion and vote at the general organization meeting in February.

(accepted Feb. 22, 1963)

** Prior to this date, the organization existed as the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association and had no formal by-laws.

- - - - -

So, now, if you have read these by-laws, remember to pay your dues in February each year or you will be missing the Newsletter.

Save these Newsletters in a notebook so that you can keep them in order and follow the development of the Sacred Dance Guild. A lot of work has gone into the amending of the By-Laws - they are guides as well as factual items.

THE DIVINE DANCE

by Ruth St. Denis

LESSON VI

The Dance in Traditional Worship

The age of preaching is slowly passing, and the age of expression is upon us, the age of revelation by all manner of new means of beauty.

Today we are at the beginning of a great Renaissance of the Dance. The Dance is immortal - it can speak the message of spiritual power and beauty in terms of rhythm, tone and color better than any other means, for as Havelock Ellis says, "The Dance is not only the supreme manifestation of physical life, but the supreme symbol of spiritual life!"

A number of years ago while playing in a small town in the South we had Sunday night free of travel so a friend and I decided to go to church. We entered one of those typical red brick buildings that are found in every town and village. A small congregation straggled in, mostly those of elderly character.

A few lights flickered dimly in the place which was very drab and bare and devoid of any touch of vitality or beauty. The monotonous droning of the minister giving the sermon, the lugubrious hymns, all sung in the same somber key or resignation, completed the atmosphere of gloom.

After an interval of this we were glad to return once more to the beauty of the stars. We walked some blocks toward our hotel and, in turning a corner, we suddenly came upon a moving picture house. It was ablaze with light and the facade of the theatre itself was colorful and attractive.

Pouring forth from its doors was the well-dressed, laughing, chattering Youth of the town.

A great resentment and a kind of righteous indignation welled up in my heart and I was jealous for the church. Suddenly I had a vision of a great beautiful edifice with light and motion and harmony as its expression. Because it was a "Temple of the Living God." It has in all the land the beautiful and sublime architecture, the most attractive decorations and lighting and above all the most vital and beautiful men and women as its ministrants and congregation.

This vision of the House of God was vital and alive and irresistibly attractive to Youth as to maturity. Jesus said, "I came that ye might have Life and that ye might have it more abundantly." And surely this Life means a living realization of the Kingdom of Heaven expressed in terms of highest Beauty.

If the consciousness of our union with God is not a joyous, living experience, surely it is not genuine. If it is such a joyous and exaltant experience we will want to express it by speech, by writing and singing.

But why stop there? Can we not move our whole body, in rhythmic movement that is harmonious and life-enhancing? Is there any reason why we should not dance?

It is useless to say that the dance has been debased and is everywhere performed by immoral and sinful people. Speech has been put to the vilest use, so has song and so have all the other arts been made at times to serve ignoble and futile ends.

But because this is sometimes so we cannot dispense with speech, or song, or line, or color to express the wonder and vitality of our spirituality and realization or to communicate our hours of faith.

I passionately want Religion to have all the principalities and powers, not only the science of the intellect, the sacrifice of the heart, but I want the Church in its highest unsectarian sense Christ's gospel of Life to have the irresistible lure of Beauty with which to heal and inspire the world,

In this transitional period of the Dance it is natural that we should use certain of the beautiful, older forms of ritual to demonstrate the feasibility of introducing rhythm into all manner of religious services.

In response to this idea there came to our services at the Temple Studio many persons of various ages, well trained and those who had never done any classic dancing before. After a few weeks of practice in the simpler forms of movement it became necessary to divide the group before attempting the more complicated rituals.

We divided them into three divisions: The Altar Choir, The Rhythmic Choir, and the Dancing Choir.

The Altar Choir consists of those who have never danced in our meaning of the term, and the more mature persons. Their duties are to arrange the altar properties and to take part in certain simple rhythmic movements connected with the ritual.

The second group, the Rhythmic Choir, has as its members those who have had some dance training and whose physical suitability warranted their use in the dancing of hymns and other phases of the service.

The third group, or Dancing Choir, is composed of well trained dancers who are capable of the more technical expression of the service.

The Rhythmic Choir of the Society took part in a Christmas masque whose symbolic elements are historical and traditional. From this phase there came a very definite service that the dance can offer to the existing rituals of the Church.

Without seeking to disrupt any of its reverent and beautiful functions, but only to increase them are the following suggestions prepared.

Frequently those in charge of the dramatic department of a church have great appreciation of rhythm and are eager to cross the line from drama to dance but traditional authority, is still skeptical. There is conjured up in its mind images of dancing of a light unsuitable character, both in costuming and movement. But we have demonstrated that there are rhythms, meaningful and vital, which, with reverence and taste can be performed in the chancel of the church.

The average space available upon church altars is about fifteen by fifteen feet which gives us a relatively small area in which to dance. Sometimes the choir stalls can be removed to give greater space.

From an artistic point of view of our lack of room and our rather meagre lighting facilities are compensated by the added beauty of the altar screens and other details of church architecture.

Great care has to be exercised in the forms of the dances offered, as little work can be done on the floor levels on the plastiques. An altar unit can be constructed to offset this difficulty.

This unit or set will consist of six well built pieces: two long series of steps two or three treads high with flat backs from four to six feet in length; two separate corner steps; a solidly made box which rises one step higher than the others (sic.) step; and a very severe throne chair consisting of seat, arms and back in a rather massive form.

Other properties would include large portable candlesticks about six feet high, at least four in number and of two different heights. These are useful for both studio and altar and very large white candles should be used. Further equipment would include at least four spotlights placed high up and in front of the altar and obviously the lights over the congregation are lowered during the ritual.

Wherever a permanent Rhythmic Choir is considered and the high altar or crucifix is not to be seen it will be well to have panelled screen painted the exact color of the altar and made high enough to conceal the crucifix.

It must be remembered that for centuries the rhythms of our Christian rituals have always been grave if not solemn, so that our dance offerings should never be dissonant to the prevailing tone of the service. It is however possible by beginning in the general feeling to increase in exhibition and tempo to the point of considerable vigor and exuberance without disturbing the religious mood. Such a climax of music and movement must finally be modulated down to the prevailing key of the rituals at the close.

The interpretation of all church music should be regarded from two angles: the one concerning the rhythmic patterns and lines of the

dance and the other the pantomimic expression in response to the meaning of the words. These should blend in a simple effortless manner devoid of extremes of technical movement or personal eccentricities.

The dancers should be dressed in dignified robes with fitting color schemes and their gestures must be at all times within the bounds of good taste and harmony with the theme of the hymns and atmosphere of the church.

The relationship of bodily action to spiritual states of consciousness will be expressed first by prayer in its three stages of unfoldment; supplication, affirmation and praise. This work gives opportunity for many vital, expressive and beautiful gestures and patterns.

Our second exercises include the less personal response to scriptural readings or mantras. A mantra is a spiritual word or phrase, the understanding repeating of which, brings strength and illumination to the consciousness.

For instance one of the Bhuddist mantras is "Hatred never ceases by hatred only by love." And one of our best loved Christian mantras is "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

These quotations may be illustrated by the solo dancer, by the group in unison or divided to represent the various elements in the progression of thought.

Our next development is in the dancing to well-known hymns. These range from grave but expressive hymns of reverence and meditation

to the exultant moods of praise. There is correspondingly wide range of bodily gesture used, from the subdued themes in which only the upper part of the body moves, to the more vibrant space-covering expressions. For the dancing of anthems and other forms of more complicated church music, the full orchestration is necessary.

As a suggestion, the following hymns have already proved to be effective and beautiful in their dance forms: "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Onward Christian Soldiers," and Beethoven's "Hymn of Joy."

The relating of the Dance to traditional church worship falls under two headings. The first is the cooperating of the Rhythmic Choir with the regular service of the church. This means that the group of six or eight dancers should interpret one or more of the hymns at the beginning and end of the service. One at least of these should be a hymn of praise as that should be the keynote of our rhythmic offering. The other way is the presenting of the complete service by the members of the Spiritual Arts Society, many of which would also be members of the local church. As this organization is Artistic and Spiritual in its motivations, but non-sectarian in character, membership in it does not interfere with either the religious convictions or duties in the regular church. Under the material of the "Society of Spiritual Arts," there will be found more detailed suggestions concerning the carrying out of these complete services.

My concept of the new forms of worship that would include rhythmic movement in the church services asks for no lessening of the natural

dignity and solemn beauty of Spiritual Realization, but I call for a new vital expression which will bring humanity into a closer and more harmonious relationship with the one who created our bodies as well as our souls.

Looking into the future I see thousands of churches pulsing with Life and revealing the Beauty of holiness, I see thousands of altars where the young Miriams and Davids of today are dancing before the Lord!

I see maturity reborn in grace and strength, and the joyous footsteps of the children dancing down the chancels of the world, bringing to the shrine of God their offerings of Praise!

CHURCHES WITH RHYTHMIC CHOIRS AS TABULATED FROM THE
 RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE MAILED TO MEMBERS
 OF THE SACRED DANCE GUILD IN 1963

Baptist

Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York City, New York
 Old South Baptist Church, Boston, Massachusetts

Catholic

Catholic Church, Morgantown, West Virginia

Church of Christ

Church of Christ, Hanover, New Hampshire
 First Church of Christ, Longmeadow, Massachusetts
 First Church of Christ, New Haven, Connecticut
 United Church of Christ, Walpole, Massachusetts

Congregational

Second Congregational Church, Holyoke, Massachusetts
 Center Congregational Church, Manchester, Connecticut
 Watching Presbyterians Congregational Church, Darien, Connecticut
 First Congregational Church, Billings, Montana
 First Congregational Church, Concord, New Hampshire
 First Congregational Church, Saginaw, Michigan
 First Congregational Church, Indianapolis, Indiana
 First Congregational Church, Darien, Connecticut
 First Congregational Church, Charlotte, Michigan
 First Congregational Church, Blue Hill, Maine
 First Congregational Church, Cromwell, Connecticut
 Fellowship Congregational Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Congregational Church, Hampstead, New Hampshire
 Beneficent Congregational Church, Providence, Rhode Island
 Congregational Church, Charleston, New Hampshire
 Melrose Highlands Congregational Church, Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts
 Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut
 South Congregational Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Episcopal

Church of the Good Shepherd, Athens, Ohio
 St. Pauls Episcopal Church, Lubbock, Texas
 St. Albans Episcopal Church, Arlington, Texas

Lutheran

House of Prayer, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Salem Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Methodist

Central Methodist Church, Lansing, Michigan
 Charles Wesley Methodist Church, McLean, Virginia
 First Methodist Church, Lynn, Massachusetts
 First Methodist Church, Wallingford, Connecticut
 Newton Center Methodist Church, Newton Center, Massachusetts
 Sussex Methodist Church, Sussex, New Jersey
 Trinity Methodist Church, Lynn, Massachusetts
 Trinity Methodist Church, Newark, New Jersey
 Washington Parkway Methodist Church, Providence, Rhode Island

Interdenominational

Amherst Community Church, Snyder, New York
 Community Church, Windham, Maine
 First Church Reformed, Schenectady, New York
 First Parish Church, Waltham, Massachusetts
 First Parish Church, Dorchester, Massachusetts
 First Universalist Church, Melrose Highlands, Massachusetts
 Universalist Church, Canton, New Jersey
 Universalist Church, West Hartford, Connecticut
 West Milton Church of the Bretheran, West Milton, Ohio

Presbyterian

Christ United Presbyterian, Canton, Ohio
 Lake Street Presbyterian, Elmira, New York

Unitarian

Unitarian Church, Winchester, Massachusetts

Unitarian Church, Plainsfield, New Jersey

Unitarian Church, Petersboro, New Hampshire

White Plains Unitarian Church, White Plains, New Jersey

First Unitarian Church, Orange, New Jersey

First Letter of the Sacred Dance Guild Newsletter

May 3, 1957

Dear Friend,

With these pages, we are hopefully initiating a looseleaf handbook for dance choir. It will include stick figure choreography, ideas and helpful hints on robing, lighting, choice of texts and music, bibliography, and teaching techniques.

After this issue, the handbook will be sent only to members of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association. If you have not joined the Association, and wish to do so, the membership fee is \$1.00, and should be mailed to Mrs. Theo Rice, 117 Sewell Woods Road, Melrose 76, Massachusetts.

If you would be willing to share the result of your experience in this handbook, please send your contribution to Mrs. E. R. Renz, 5 Robinhood Road, Winchester, Massachusetts. We want this handbook to be a joint effort. Its usefulness and success will depend on you!

Very sincerely yours,

Jane Renz
Jane Chamberlain

P.S. Next issue--lighting and robing

TED SHAWN'S CHOREOGRAPHY

BREATHE ON ME, BREATH OF GOD

Arranged for seven dancers.
One Soloist. Six in ensemble.

Choreography: Ted Shawn
Music: Jess Meeker
Time: 3/4

Four sections: A - B - C - D

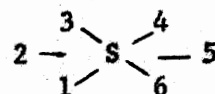
Description of THEME gesture.

Hands by sides. Right hand brought gently up to lips, palm facing mouth: count one, 2, 3. Turn palm outward and gently "lift breath" to over head: count two, 2, 3. Do not pluck breath out of mouth or force breath upward with a push; let it float. Now, lift left arm upward to meet right hand over head: count three, 2, 3. Arms slightly in arc position. On the final count (four, 2, 3) bring both arms back to sides in circle coming down. This theme gesture will be repeated and referred to as "Theme gesture," 4 counts equals 4 measures.

Now starting: Section A - 28 measures

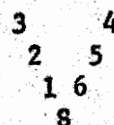
		S (solo)
After processional to the hymn tune "Breathe on Me, Breath of God," dancers are placed on chancel thus:	4	3
	5	2
	6	1
1st 4 measures. Soloist does theme gesture.	4	3
Ensemble remains in place, no movement.	5	2
	6	1
Soloist moves forward on the 4th measure or count.		S
2nd 4 measures. Side people exchange sides with light running movement, 2 measures to cross over. 2 measures to pivot into place.		
3rd 4 measures. Soloist pas de bas backwards, first to right, then to left, using arms in same direction as foot. Both arms low. Now positions are like this (ensemble has changed sides):	3	4
	2	5
	1	6

4th 4 measures and
5th 4 measures. Soloist slowly kneels. Ensemble moves clockwise around soloist tightening the circle: six fast running steps to measure. On final climatic note soloist rises with both arms over head, suddenly. Ensemble down on left side with right knee up, leaning back on left elbow, right arm extending up to center. All this will take 8 measures altogether.



6th 4 measures. Soloist brings hands down, extends left hand to left side, then right hand to right side - turning body slightly, then runs in circle to right (one complete circle) extending both hands and lifting group up with this gesture.

7th 4 measures. Ensemble divides, 1 going to left, 6 going to right. Make circle movement and come back to soloist forming finally a wedge with 1 and 6 close to shoulder of soloist, the others close behind and each couple slightly lower than the couple in front, a descending line backward.



Section B - 28 measures

1st 8 measures. On first 2 measures soloist moves to rear of ensemble going to her right 6 quick steps to the measure (first step, right foot, accented, the remaining 5 a tiptoe step). Ensemble starts on 3rd measure with same foot pattern (Nos. 1, 2, 3 accenting right foot, Nos. 4, 5, 6 accenting left) and moves outward and making circle in his own area and moving slightly inward again to form small group circle, facing in.



2nd 8 measures. Ensemble does modified pas de bas backward not travelling too fast. Measures go like this: 1) pas de bas to right, 2) leap to left and hold, 3) pas de bas to right, 4) leap to left and hold, 5), 6), 7), 8) pas de bas to right and left without holds.

9th measure. Stroke turn. Now it is a large circle, all facing center.

Next 3 measures. "Theme gesture" by all.

Next 8 measures. Grand right and left, Nos. 6, 4, 2 going clockwise and 5, 3, 1 counter-clockwise. This grand right and left is a smooth flowing quick running step, leading with alternate arms and ending finally on 7th count with another stroke turn and on the 8th count a slight surging of the entire circle into center and out. This leaves circle still large and open. During this soloist moves 2 measures into center, does a low spiral like a whirling dervish - rising higher - then returns in 2 measures to original place in circle.

Section C - 16 measures

1st 6 measures. Soloist floats around circle to her right, a "going in and out the window" kind of thing, like a soft wind blowing.

7th and 8th measures. All walk into tight circle again, back toward center, hands joined.

2nd 8 measures. For 4 measures do best step (accented right, 5 tiptoe) a half circle around, heads bowed on 1st and 3rd counts, heads up on 2nd and 4th, ending up with still tight circle, ensemble facing out and soloist now front facing congregation.

On 5th measure circle opens up into a straight line: 6 5 4 8 3 2 1 (6, 5, 4 kneeling on left knee; 3, 2, 1 on right; soloist low). This has to be done very fast.

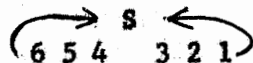
Next 3 measures there is an arm succession starting with outer figures 6 and 1 and moving inward to soloist. Inside arms cross chest from outside; this touches the next person who receives impulse and responds. Figures 4 and 3 touch soloist who has last measure for rising with arms circling over head as if receiving impact of breath.

Section D - 21 measures

1st 8 measures. In 6 measures the kneeling ensemble now reverses direction of arm movement: inside arm goes up over head - 4 and 3 commencing, followed by 5 and 2, then 6 and 1. Head and both arms go to outside and down. In 2 measures ensemble slowly rises, controlled. During all this soloist circles slowly backward (no accented steps).

Next 4 measures. Soloist kneels but rises slowly as ensemble does stately walking step (3 steps to measure) following lead of 6 and 1 to form new straight line beside soloist.

Next 3 measures. "Theme gesture" by all



Next 4 measures. Soloist takes strong step forward on 1st beat of each measure; ensemble takes two short steps on beats 2, 3. (Line up: 4 5 6 S 1 2 3)

Last 2 measures. Ensemble forms two straight lines behind soloist, ready for recessional.

The hymn tune is picked up and group moves out of chancel, soloist going down center aisle, ensemble going down either center or side aisle.

(Notes by Bob Storer)

SACRED DANCE GUILD SPONSORED WORKSHOPS AND FESTIVALS

Guild-sponsored workshops and festivals are held at the invitation of churches, choirs, and other groups. Their interest and hospitality are sincerely appreciated.

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform the President of the Guild of your desire to hold a workshop or festival, stating proposed date and any tentative plans you may have in mind. Regional workshops are held in the Fall, usually in October. The Spring Festival is held either the last weekend in April or the first in May.
2. After sponsorship has been approved by the executive board, submit a tentative budget to the Treasurer for approval. (Any adjustment in figures should be sent in promptly - no later than one month in advance of the event.) Send a copy of the budget and details of the event to the President.
3. It is understood that every effort will be made to have the event self-sustaining. However, Guild sponsorship implies that any profit realized will go to the Guild, and any deficit will be paid by the Guild.
4. Study reports of past events to facilitate planning.
5. Write - to make arrangements and plans early. Keep carbon copies of your correspondence. Be specific about expenses. Phone only if necessary. (A collect call to a correspondent may be necessary if he delays response unduly; you should pay for a call caused by your own last-minute procrastination.)
6. Be reasonable about publicity and other spending. In keeping with the Guild philosophy of service, the chief expenditure for workshops should be for adequate leadership.
7. In publicity, use the most current mailing list from the Corresponding Secretary.
8. Supply the National Publicity Chairman with copies of your fliers and publicity, for release to publications, etc.

9. Following the event, send a full report to the President, including financial statement. This financial statement will be forwarded to the Treasurer. A duplicate of the report should go to the Program Chairman for future reference. This report should be meaningful to those who could not attend the event, with accurate accounts of methods and material presented, committees at work, etc.
10. Special instructions for Festivals: Appearance in the Festival Worship Service should represent our best efforts. Every attempt should be made to maintain standards of excellence. Choirs and soloists selected should provide a variety and balance in mood, expression, and interpretation. The service should be about one hour in duration.

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