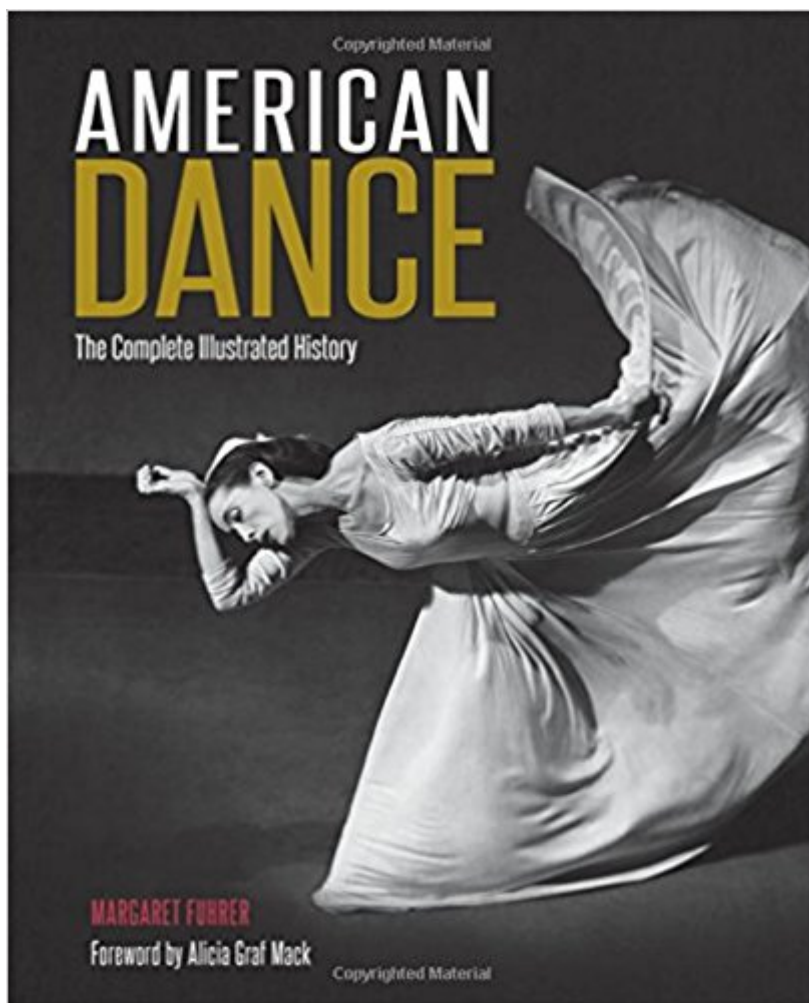




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# American Dance: The Complete Illustrated History



## Synopsis

The most comprehensive, beautiful book ever to be published on dance in America. "We look at the dance to impart the sensation of living in an affirmation of life, to energize the spectator into keener awareness of the vigor, the mystery, the humor, the variety, and the wonder of life. This is the function of the American dance." Groundbreaking choreographer Martha Graham deeply understood the power and complexity of dance--particularly as it evolved in her home country. American Dance, by critic and journalist Margaret Fuhrer, traces that richly complex evolution. From Native American dance rituals to dance in the digital age, American Dance explores centuries of innovation, individual genius and collaborative exploration. Some of its stories - such as Fred Astaire dancing on the ceiling or Alvin Ailey founding the trailblazing company that bears his name - will be familiar to anyone who loves dance. The complex origins of tap, for instance, or the Puritan outrage against "profane and promiscuous dancing" during the early years of the United States, are as full of mystery and humor as Graham describes. These various developments have never before been presented in a single book, making American Dance the most comprehensive work on the subject to date. Breakdancing, musical-theater dance, disco, ballet, jazz, ballroom, modern, hula, the Charleston, the Texas two-step, swing--these are just some of the forms celebrated in this riveting volume. Hundreds of photographs accompany the text, making American Dance as visually captivating as the works it depicts.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Voyageur Press; ILL edition (December 9, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0760345996

ISBN-13: 978-0760345993

Product Dimensions: 10.2 x 1.2 x 12.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #421,724 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Performing Arts > Dance > Reference #113 in Books > Arts & Photography >

Performing Arts > Dance > Classical #18114 in Books > History > Americas > United States

## Customer Reviews

"Ms. Fuhrer offers a fresh, exciting perspective on the richly varied - and ever-evolving - history of

dance in America."--Larry Keigwin, artistic director of Keigwin + Company and choreographer of *If/Then*"American Dance celebrates the rich history and diversity of the way our nation communicates through movement."--Alicia Graf Mack, internationally acclaimed dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, from the foreword"

In this engaging, far-reaching survey, Ms. Fuhrer brings together what are too often presented as unrelated chapters in the history of American dance. A rich resource for students, teachers, and anyone curious about the many linages, past and present, of dance in the United States."--Siobhan Burke, New York Times dance critic

"I love this book - it's like a treasure trove that you can either dip into and savour in small bites or curl up under a blanket and make your way through an enthralling chapter of history." - the House

Fuhrer (editor in chief, *Dance Spirit* magazine) provides a historic overview of American dance illustrated by photos. The compendium begins with Native American dance (sun dance, ghost dance), continues to American social dance (fox-trot, Lindy Hop), and proceeds to tap (Master Juba, Gregory Hines). Ballet (George Balanchine, Alvin Ailey) and modern (Martha Graham, Isadora Duncan) are featured along with musical theater (Fred Astaire, Jerome Robbins). The final chapter covers urban and commercial dance that includes voguing, b-boying, and krumping. Many dancers/choreographers are featured throughout and the photos provide a chance to view different choreographic forms together in one work, supported by brief background information. The evolution of dance within America is followed but not always given sufficient context. One problematic section uses the term pickaninnies with a photo in citing tap history. This jarring reference is out of place and fails to address the offensiveness of this term.

**VERDICT** A dance sampler that should prompt readers to further explore the multifaceted history of dance and maybe take a class!"--Library Journal

"Written with insight and clarity, *American Dance* is an invaluable tool for understanding the history - and current state - of dance in America. Ms. Fuhrer takes readers on a graceful journey through time, in a style that is intelligent, accessible, and engaging. A wonderful achievement!"--Julie Diana, former principal dancer, San Francisco Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet

"This was a most fascinating look at the history of American dance in all its forms. Not only does it help us to better understand the dance forms we have yet to discover, but it also reminds us of the endless exchange of inspiration and the continuous dialogue that has formed between each of these vastly different styles of dance over time. One of the many gifts dance can offer is a deeper reflection of us back to ourselves - gently reminding us, among other things, of the power of our spirit as a nation and as a people when we work together creatively and collaboratively, with open hearts and minds."--Wendy Whelan, principal dancer, New York City Ballet

Margaret Fuhrer, editor in chief of Dance Spirit magazine, is an arts writer living in New York City. A longtime dancer and choreographer, she has a bachelor's degree in history from Princeton and a master's degree in journalism from New York University.

exactly what I was looking for. Am teaching American dance history and this hit the mark exceptionally well

great information with great visual appeal. I personally feel the author should have had a separate category for Jazz dance. I think Musical Theater does cross-over with Jazz and Tap but I feel Jazz deserves it's own recognition.

What a comprehensive and beautiful book for any lover of dance

I'm not a fan of dancing myself, but I loved this book. It portrays dancing styles as a way of studying the history of the USA, from the Colonial era to present. If you look at all the different styles, you'll see that they reflect the norms and mores of the time, along with class distinctions and the nation's economy. The book starts with Native American dancing, which probably resembles the Jewish ones than European. The men and women danced separately, and it was usually ceremonial or religious in nature. The idea of men and women dancing together is something that originated in Europe, and came to the continent with European settlers. However the European dances would become a source of trouble, though humorous at the same time. When the Louisiana Purchase was made in 1804, it brought French settlers under Anglo-American control, and the dances became a source of conflict. The French wanted the Quadrille, and the English-speakers wanted English country dances. The communities had to pass ordinances regarding dancing in public places, including one that limited English dances to 12 couples. They didn't want to start a fight with the French by crowding the dance floor! The book progresses with constant-changing styles that became common after the Civil War. New York City was home to the country's best-known dancing school, owned by Edward Ferrero, who created the styles on his own. You could say he set the standards regarding dances, but he also was responsible for thousands of deaths. During the Civil War, Ferrero was put in charge of the New York troops, on the basis of his choreographing parade drills. He was drunk during the battle of Petersburg, and sent his men running into a crater, where they found themselves trapped and massacred by the Confederates. Ferrero's incompetence in battle didn't kill his career though; he

made a fortune as a dance instructor after the war. The dancing styles of the nation reflect the changing immigrations and attitudes towards others. Tap dancing came from the Irish jig, and thanks to Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, became popular with movie audiences. Swing dancing became popular in the Great Depression, as dance hall owners were under pressure to fill the space while charging as little as possible. Disco was imported from Europe, break dancing began as a non-combat competition between gangs, and MTV helped popularize hip-hop moves. Perhaps you could say that movies and TV were a major influence on styles in the USA? I'm not going to give away anything else from this book, because it's a pleasure to read and I wouldn't want to ruin the experience. Biographies, photos, and all kinds of historical background are included.

Wow. I'm not a dance expert, but we've have been avid attendees at fine dance company performances for 30 years"everything from classic ballet to folk dance. This book is such a fine companion for anybody who enjoys any type of performance dance" virtually everything I might expect to find is here, and it's already a standing feature on my coffee table. And I've just purchased a second copy to give to friends of ours who are also dance buffs. I can't recommend this highly enough. It's utterly comprehensive, and exhaustively illustrated. A fine, fine book.

This book is stunning. Each chapter has been meticulously researched and reflects the authors incredible knowledge of the subject matter and deep love and reverence for dance. Well done!

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