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Examination session (May or November)

MAY

Year

2012

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered:

DANCE

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Title of the extended essay:

The Hip Hit That Changed America

"How did the performance of the belly dance group 'Little Egypt' at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, in 1893, change the performance of dance and the arts in America and how has belly dance changed in America through history since then?"

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	2 ✓	2		2	
B introduction	2 ✓	2		2	
C investigation	3 ✓	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	3 ✓	4		4	
E reasoned argument	3 ✓	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	3 ✓	4		4	
G use of subject language	4 ✓	4		4	
H conclusion	1 ✓	2		2	
I formal presentation	3 ✓	4		4	
J abstract	1 ✓	2		2	
K holistic judgment	3 ✓	4		4	
Total out of 36	28 ✓				

Name of examiner 1: _____
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Date: 15/5

The Hip Hit that Changed America
**“How did the performance of the belly dance group ‘Little Egypt’ at the Chicago World's
Columbian Exposition, in 1893, change the performance of dance and the arts in America
and how has belly dance changed in America through history since then?”**

Dance

An Extended Essay

Presented by

To

The International Baccalaureate Organization

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i. Abstract

This Extended Essay examines the role of the belly dance group 'Little Egypt' in the changing and molding of the American entertainment industry following their introduction at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition (1893). Also, it shows how this belly dance has changed drastically over the years prior to the Exposition in 1893. After the introduction of Belly Dance to the American world many entertainment changes occurred. First, many vaudeville house managers began to take interest in the art and incorporated belly dance in to their shows. The introduction of belly dance to these vaudeville houses influenced the cabaret shows and resulted in an introduction of a new performance form in the united states; this being called burlesque. As belly dance grew to become better known, Hollywood became interested in taking a part of this new and exotic form of art. In almost no time belly dance went from being featured in some movies to practically influencing the creation of a whole new oriental themed movie industry. Another way belly dance influenced the entertainment industry was by its influence on music. Because generally belly dance was performed with Middle Eastern instrumentals or music tracks the general public became more familiar with not only belly dance but with a new type of music. With this new introduction oriental music began to be better known and has influenced other forms of music to the present. In the present belly dance has become a very common form of exercise, entertainment, and communal activity. It has influenced many artists such as Shakira, Beyonce, and Britney Spears in their dancing and has worked its way in to music videos. Belly

dance has also become a very common workout method for women. Belly Dance found being performed in festivals, parties, and many other fun family events.

1. Introduction

Often times we, as humans, wonder how greatly our expression through the arts impacts all life as we know it. By analyzing subjects such as, “How did the performance of the belly dance group ‘Little Egypt’ at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, in 1893, change the performance of dance and the arts in America and how has belly dance changed in America through history since then?” we are able to gain knowledge which brings us closer to the truth behind life and our existence. This question requires us to research and understand many different things all at once. First, it asks us for an in- depth history of the art form, belly dance. It also asks us for the transition of belly dance to America. It is asking for the history of the integration of belly dance into other forms of entertainment present in America before belly dance’s introduction and how this introduction has resulted in changes and advancements in entertainment. Lastly, this question asks for an analysis of how belly dance has changed since its arrival in America pertaining to styles, popularity, and status of dancers. The unraveling of this topic is important because the entertainment industry has worked to become a representation of the human race. It helps in the expression of human emotion to an extent in which nothing else has ever done before. Through the arts exhibited in entertainment, we can know more easily the way others think and feel by feeling it ourselves. Because belly dance has influenced the entertainment industry in America so greatly, I believe an in-depth analysis of it is very important.

2. What is Belly Dance?

Belly Dance is a Middle Eastern form of dance, also known as Raqs Sharqi, in Arabic, that is characterized by quick hip hits, isolations of different body parts while dancing, and smooth like butter undulations; featured most of the time in belly dance are the hips. Belly dance has many different styles and costumes depending on the time period, location/culture, and the religion of the area you see it. Generally it is a dance for women but modern day belly dance features men, as well. Belly dance has been thought to originate in many different areas and was used for many different purposes. One theory of the origin of belly dance is that it was used by Grecian, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian women for religious fertility rituals in the early B.C. s. Another theory is that it was used primarily in strengthening the core in women in order to undergo child birth more easily. Also, it was theorized to be from a traditional dance in Egypt. Another theory is the dance was performed by women to each other as a social dance for fun in the harems where they stayed, away from men. One last theory is that it was formed in early Indian times and went all over the Middle East and Europe with Gypsies as they traveled. Belly dance has been changed and molded by the cultures of the many different areas in which it reached when being transported with the gypsies. This can be why many other dances around Europe, such as Roma of Europe, Ghawazee of Egypt and many other forms can be found in the modern world.

3. Before Belly Dance in America

Before belly dance in America while much of the entertainment was wholesome entertainment enjoyed by the general American- Victorian family of the time there was also the introduction of cabarets, and Vaudeville shows. Vaudeville was originally the performance art in the late 19th to early 20th centuries that included acrobatics, musicians, dancers, magicians, animals and many other acts. It was like a three ring circus. Cabarets, another form of entertainment, were a type of New York clubs in which poets, singers and musicians performed at. There were alcoholic beverages served and dance floors were located inside. They were more of night clubs lacking the practices and ideals of the Victorian family. They originated in France in the late 1800s as saloons and then all through Germany and other European areas not long after. Other forms of entertainment for the people of the 1890's were circuses and the very popular, wild west shows. The most popular of these Wild West shows soon became the William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's show. This show was characterized by a parade on horseback, with participants from horse-culture groups that included US and other military, American Indians, and performers from all over the world in their best attire. Visitors would see main events, feats of skill, staged races, and sideshows at the Wild West shows, as well. Another form of entertainment that was just coming out and becoming popular were motion pictures. When they first came out they were commonly seen as novelties in kinoscope viewers, followed by being viewed as their own acts in vaudeville shows. Soon enough motion pictures took off, with their length becoming bigger, and moved in to Nickelodeon and large theatres, for many urban families to view during their leisure time. Lastly, world fairs, which focused on offering "Americans a chance to "tour the world" in one place", came about and become very popular with families interested in traveling and

learning (America at Leisure). The fairs had many different things to enjoy, including exhibits of science and technology, many foreign villages and cultural exhibits, entertainment shows, rides, food, and vendors. These fairs began in 1876 in Philadelphia, which followed by the Chicago's world fair in 1893, in which our belly dancers in 'Little Egypt' were first introduced.

4. Belly Dance Comes to America

Before it was brought to this other world the movements of this dance were seen less as sexual and immoral and more as good exercise and traditional. Soon belly dance would take on a whole new image and 'Belly Dancer' would be the word to describe a whole group of women. Not until recently in Western World society have thoughts of belly dance movements gone back to what they were originally in their original countries.

This change in connotations with belly dance occurred as soon as belly dance was introduced to the North American world. Once this type of dance was brought to the "new world" many deemed it as wrong and too sensual for the liking of the general population. Back in the late 18th century, when belly dance was first introduced to the Chicago World's Fair many thought the dances of the "traditional Middle Eastern and North African women" were seen by the public more as a sexual displays, showing the Orient's strong attention placed on sensuality (Keft-Kennedy). This resulted in belly dancing being deemed wrong and immoral. Along with these feelings of almost disgust by some women there were many people who simply did not want to accept a new form of dance because it was different. They described belly dancers as "not very good dancers" but many scornfully stated that the shocking performance and the outfits or 'lack of' distracted from the moves (Wilson).

The majority of those who took a disliking to the dance, when it was first exposed to the western world at the Chicago World's Fair of 1897, were white, female women of the Victorian and/or urban mind set. These women took family values in to consideration while denying the fact that the performance and observation of belly dance could be both enriching to the mind and entertaining. The souvenir books of the fair had the description "...it was something new in America and something not likely to be acclimatized" (Wilson). The 'Board of Lady Managers' requested the restraint of the dancers within "the limits of stage propriety as recognized in this country."(Wilson). It was said that, "every fiber and every tissue in her entire anatomy shakes like a jar of jelly from your grandmother's thanksgiving dinner..." (.,shira). The dance was disliked mainly because of how the press was distracted by the dancers' contortions and vibrations, and did not focus on the negatives of the dance. While many American were unable to see the good in this dance other men saw this dance as a profit and worked to make its popularity rise. After the first performance in America by the belly dance troupe, 'Little Egypt' at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition or the Chicago World's Fair, many agents became very interested in the 'Little Egypt' dancer and her new and inventive moves. Belly dance began to get a lot of attention from the crowds at the fair and thus it was put in to movies and recognized heavily by Vaudeville house owners (Wilson). Because of the vaudeville houses new interest in belly dancers, as well, the restraints requested by the 'Board of Lady Managers' were ineffective because the vaudeville house managers took over the form of dance which meant it lost all of its restraints when put in to their performances. This takeover ultimately resulted in the introduction of Burlesque. Burlesque was originally, in Europe, a performance that mocked and exhibited many play writes' works and showcased dancing in a comical manner introduced as early as the 17th century. Once in America and searching for the spotlight, with the influence of

belly dance, burlesque turned in to a show of dancing with strip tease and much nudity found mainly in clubs and cabarets. The result of this made a huge impact on Americans and showed just how the fast paced life of the city was and would take control and throw their moral values out of the window. Through this, belly dance was connected with immoral connotations which increased the unpopularity of it by the general population. Although some Americans saw belly dance as the cause for much sin, others saw it as a new art form and relished in its benefits. Soon enough belly dance became a major performance art exhibited in cabarets and many new night clubs and took part in influencing many new performance and entertainment ideas.

5. Belly Dance in the Movies

Going beyond the clubs and the cabarets we can see the Hollywood industry tried to get in on the Belly Dance craze that was sweeping the nation as well. They were to use belly dance to add a sense of exoticism to their movies. 'Dance of the Seven Veils' featured in 'Salome' is a prime example of how the belly dance was changing other forms of performance arts during the time by being introduced in to movies. The entrance of middle eastern performance arts in to the society turned in to a very big thing." A whole film industry developed around the Oriental theme," (Al-Rawi). Many short films came out and there were whole plays attributed to the art. Because of this introduction in to movies belly dance went from "the realm of the sacred to the aesthetic and artistic" then going to the "joyful, sensual and playful instrument for self-discovery" (Al-Rawi). This shows how the dance was not only changing the type of entertainment found but also the style and purpose. Thomas Edison was a pioneer in introducing belly dance to a wider range of people in the western world when he put belly dancers in to three

of his movies which included 'Ella Lola', 'Crissie Sheridan' and 'Princess Rajah Dance'. These movies, although making the dance better known among the people, also gave belly dance even a worse name because of how belly dancers were portrayed in these movies. These movies showed dancers as slaves, background dancers of unimportance and deceitful women who tricked and seduced men. Another movie, in 1916 by D.W.Griffits, was a silent film in which four stories of intolerance in our world throughout time were interwoven. Of the stories one was set in Babylon and shows Belly Dancers performing veil dancing when the gates are opened in the beginning of the scene. ("Oriental...") Other movies throughout the early American movie time that showed and contributed to the further introduction of belly dance to the American public were "Road to Morocco" starring Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour, "Princess of the Nile", and "The Egyptian" of 1954. Although these movies did show belly dance in them they did not use correct technique and usually presented movements of Jerking, Twisting, Shivering and moving sensually in means of seducing others. Although it did show belly dance in the movies the dancing was still not as accurate as the dancers would have liked. The appearance of belly dance in these movies over all hurt and helped the dance. It hurt it by giving it more bad connotations to go with but it helped by making it better known. Overall, we are able to see how the introduction of belly dance to the western world worked to influence and mold the motion picture industry very drastically.

6. Belly Dance and Music

Though Belly dance may not be directly influential on the music of the time, we are able to see a correlation between the rise in belly dance and the rise in traditional Middle Eastern music as an

art form in the United States. As the early 20th century was raging in we were able to see how belly dance, specifically American cabaret, became more prevalent and cherished as entertainment in many of the nightclubs and cabarets of the time. With both the increasing number of immigrants which were coming in to the United States, including those from the middle east, and other eastern European areas, and the increasing desperate want and need to have the new, fresh, and exotic dancers of the middle east in night clubs and cabarets also increased the need for traditional middle eastern music and musicians. Through this we can see how the coming out and popularization of middle eastern music in the United States occurred. Through this, as well, we are able to see how music following this introduction, which was influenced by this music, came about and how it is directly can be attributed to the introduction of belly dance at the Chicago world's fair. Middle Eastern music is still seen as entertainment in the modern world, even when not associated with any belly dance performances or belly dance related activities. The music can be found at festivals, parades, and other activities in which there is a strong Middle Eastern influence. Because of this introduction of Middle Eastern music by the belly dancers which caused its increased popularity we are also able to see how many different genres of music have been created and/or influenced by the styles and sounds of Middle Eastern music. This shows how belly dance worked as a big mold for the entertainment industry in the aspect of music.

7. Belly Dance in Modern America

Belly Dance now is a big part of the western culture in entertainment, community activities and exercise. In entertainment some very big stars have began and/or become famous for their well

done, hypnotic belly dance moves they perform on stage, in videos, and on television. Some common performers that use the methods of belly dance in modern America to wow their audiences are Beyonce, Shakira, and Britney Spears. They have all incorporated belly dance in to the modern day entertainment industry and have helped to make it more popularized. Also, their work with belly dance has given the general public a new image of belly dance which is more likeable and fun than when belly dance was first introduced in to the western world in the 20th century. In entertainment, as well, we have grown new genres of music which have strong Middle Eastern and oriental influences and a fan base for these different forms of music. This said fan base has grown from the increased exposure to the Middle Eastern music which accompanies dancers when they perform their routines.

In the aspect of community, belly dance has been become a common performance for many different events. It is stated that many belly dancers have “performed at church events, festivals, and parties”(King). This shows how belly dance not only changed things already performed in entertainment but it changed what the audience want to see and what the audience enjoys watching.

In the aspect of exercise belly dance has changed the entertainment industry of today because of its exercise benefits that have been popularized. Belly dance classes have been filmed and put on to tapes as exercise types. Also, new forms of exercise incorporate the moves of belly dance in to its curriculum. Zumba, for instance, is a Latin-inspired dance work out that was created in the 90's to exhibit a fun, lively workout that was unlike most during the time. Within Zumba, belly dance accompanies many other forms of dance such as samba, bollywood, salsa, mambo and even martial arts moves. This form of workout has offered a better, healthier, more fun workout for the both genders while contributing to the good name of modern belly dance.

Also, becoming part of belly dance troupes has become very popular in the United States in the last 60 years. Many troupes perform all belly dance types and like to have variety where as other troupes specialize in one type of belly dance. There are many common belly dance styles which have evolved and been created and molded over the years to fit certain styles, cultural beliefs, etc. of the areas they originate and precede in. Common styles of belly dance in the modern world are American Cabaret, Egyptian Folkloric and Ethnic, Gypsy, Persian, Tribal, Tribal Fusion, Egyptian, Goddess, Greek, Gothic, and Turkish. The most common of these styles that can be found in the United States and that are considered the most popular of our time are Gothic, Egyptian, American Tribal, and Cabaret. These different types of belly dance forms have been created in America throughout the last 30 years and popularized by performances by troops, shows on television, movies which reach a wide variety of audiences, and news.

Gothic belly dance was popularized about 10 years ago and has the style of belly dance along with intense drama and many sultry moves. It is said to be "about the expression of your darker self, baring your soul in a theatrical dance performance." (Defined...). Egyptian belly dance characterizes their dancers by stating that, "The Egyptian belly dancer strives for artistic, emotional interpretations of the music and friendly interaction with her audience." ("Egyptian Belly..."). This form of belly dance is much more traditional in its nature compared to the cabaret style of dance. Egyptian belly dance does not use any extra props or moves, excluding the use of candelabras (Raks Assaya) and canes (Raks Shamadan). Tribal belly dance became popular in the mid 1970's in California and was driven by "folkloric" groups performing at Renaissance Fairs then was popularized throughout the rest of America. This dance draws on some of the cultural conventions of the tribal peoples it emulates, and many women find great camaraderie, comfort, trust, and friendship through the dance experience. The dancers of tribal

devote their time to the social and emotional aspects of the dance. American Cabaret, also known as nightclub or oriental, belly dance is the most common belly dance in America and can be attributed to the American cabaret scenes which took many styles from belly dance and incorporated other dances in as well. Cabaret uses many props such as, fans, veils, candelabras, finger cymbals, and floor work. It also has taken many of its moves and styles from other forms of dance such as jazz and even ballet. We can see how so many forms of belly dance influence our lives and our entertainment to this day. One other way in which belly dance has worked to influence our western world to this day is the strong oriental influence it has put on to us. Because of the belly dance becoming very popular in the western world after some years we are able to observe how, because belly dance was one of the first "oriental" things we saw, we have become much more knowledgeable and accepting to Middle Eastern culture. Along with this acceptance in America our lives have become fuller of a variety of cultural experiences.

8. A Conclusion

As we can see Belly Dance has evolved very much over time in America and has changed many times. Belly Dance, as we can observe, was very unpopular among some and by the rest seen as very mysterious, exotic, and even confusing or just unnatural. Throughout its long journey in America we can see how the opinions of this dance have changed from these to praise and enjoyment in belly dance. Some agree that it connects to us, "for its sensual movement vocabulary, its link with a kind of female empowerment, as well as the undeniably appealing costume" (Keft- Kennedy). We are able to observe how belly dance has changed and been molded to fit many different cultural ideals, beliefs, values, and traditions. It is common to see

belly dance as being easily molded and that in America it has become a “colonialized form of belly dance” (Frühauf). Basically belly dance has become an art in America that is Americanized just as it is molded in other cultures to fit their norms. . We are able to see how belly dance has transformed and helped to transform sub culture dance and merge with other things to create gothic belly dance and other types of belly dance and to increase popularity among the different Middle Eastern themes in American entertainment. Also, we are able to see how belly dance has influenced many performers of the 21st century such as Shakira, Beyoncé and Britney Spears. We are also able to see how belly dance has become an object of sport, entertainment, an empowerment tool, and others in our modern world. Belly dance helps women and men of all kind to work out, show strength and confidence, and have fun all at the same time. The teaching of belly dance throughout America helps in education as a subject of history, culture, and the arts. Another attribute to belly dance’s introduction and performance in America is the influence of more Middle Eastern forms of entertainment in society. It can be seen that belly dance helps to introduce and familiarize many people with Middle Eastern music which may not be as commonly listened to by many. It can also be attributed as one of the main reasons why Middle Eastern music has been introduced and listened to in the western world. From its introduction at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, belly dance has flourished in many different aspects and has worked to change the entertainment industry of America while being changed itself. It brings people together and has given inspiration to many different forms of entertainment in the past and in the modern world.

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