

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT: KATHERINE DUNHAM'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN
DANCE

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

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TITLE: MUSIC AND MOVEMENT: KATHERINE DUNHAM'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN DANCE

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Katherine Dunham's contributions are valuable in understanding the connection between music and movement in Vodou ceremonies. The wax cylinders found in the Morris Library's Special Collections provide valuable insight to understanding the organization, form, and function of Vodou music. In addition to the wax cylinder recordings, Katherine Dunham's writings provide detailed accounts of her experiences doing fieldwork in Haiti. This study will provide a historical and social background of Vodou music, examine the function of music and dance in Vodou ceremonies, and Dunham's choreographic work in Hollywood to see how Haitian influences redefined American dance.

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A strong connection exists between music, dance and religion in Vodou ceremonies. In Haitian culture, the drum is considered a powerful instrument because of its sacred associations and ability to communicate directly to spirits. Dance is also an essential element because it allows participants to become physically active and engaged during the Vodou ceremony. According to Katherine Dunham, Vodou's history is important to understand as a cult because it challenges existing stereotypes.

Dunham's contributions are valuable in understanding the connection between music and movement in Vodou ceremonies. The wax cylinder recordings found in the Morris Library's Special Collections provide valuable insight to the sounds heard during these ceremonies.¹ Dunham's research helped dispel the misconceptions and stereotypes through her written work by shedding light on the context, function and meaning of Vodou as a ritual and spiritual practice. This study will provide a historical and social background of Vodou music by examining the function of music and dance in Vodou ceremonies, and Dunham's choreographic work in Hollywood to see how Haitian influences redefined American dance.

KATHERINE DUNHAM: ARTIST AND SCHOLAR

In 1935, Katherine Dunham, an African-American anthropologist, dancer, choreographer, and educator documented Vodou ceremonies on wax cylinders when she was conducting field research in Haiti while studying the dance movements of participants in Vodou ceremonies. Dunham's field research in Haiti was made possible by a Rosenwald Fellowship to study primitive dance and ritual in the West Indies and Brazil.²

Throughout the course of her research, Dunham strived to assimilate into Haitian culture. Dunham believed that in order to have a thorough scientific field study, it is important to know

¹ The Katherine Dunham wax cylinder recordings consists of excerpts from her field research in Haiti.

² Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), vii.

the “life surrounding the dances.”² During her time in Haiti, Dunham was baptized at the “highest degree of the *Rada-Dahomey* cult,” a baptism reserved for those who have an extensive knowledge of *vodun*.³ When Dunham was allowed to observe Vodou ceremonies, she focused on the body movements of dancers participating in Vodou ceremonies, which later had a profound effect on her choreography. Previously, Dunham was not allowed to participate in Vodou ceremonies because she was labeled as an outsider. It was not until much later did she become better familiarized with Haitian culture as she was accepted as one of their own.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The origins of Vodou date back to prehistoric Africa, becoming more prominent in the seventeenth century with the slave trade. Vodou originated with the arrival of slaves at Saint-Domingue by combining prehistoric African beliefs with elements of Christianity.⁴ In the *Fon* language, Vodou means god or spirit.⁵ Speaking to misconceptions about Vodou, Albert Metraux argued, “Vodou is not, in fact, a hotchpotch of mystic displays and ritual practice borrowed from all parts of Africa.”⁶ Rather, it is an attempt to “understand and explain the universe, control the forces within it, and to influence human thought and behavior.”⁷

² Katherine Dunham. *Dances of Haiti*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1983), 5.

³ The term *vodun* is the same as *vodou*.

⁴ Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe, *Mysteries and Secrets of Voodoo, Santeria, and Obeah*. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), back cover.

⁵ Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 25. Fon is part of the Gbe language, a dialect closely related to the Ewe language and to the Niger-Congo languages.

⁶ *Ibid*, 25.

⁷ Fanthorpe, 96.

In contrast to Metraux, Dunham defined Vodou as a conglomeration of beliefs that focus on “ancestral worship combining animism and religions, extending to the propitiatory and seasonal, ancestral and agricultural.”⁸ She identifies three cult practices that exist in Haiti: *Rada-Dahomey*, *Petro*, and divisions of *Congo*. Which at one time, used to be in “agreement” with another because of its African origins.⁹ Based from Dunham’s observations, *vodun* reaches into the economic, social, and political life in Haiti and is outwardly expressed in dance.¹⁰

Vodou ceremonies are comprised of different categories that include dance divisions, material items, and music. Dance divisions included: sacred and secular, dances that shared sacred and secular characteristics, seasonal and agricultural. In Dunham’s study, she did not find any division between sexes and no known taboo that excludes women from participating in these dances. The materials items included “instruments of accompaniment, insignia, clothing, ritual paraphernalia, song text, and music.”¹¹ Dunham emphasized the importance of these materials because of the function they have in Vodou ceremonies and rituals. The relationship between song and dance is important to understand because both “are indispensable to the concept and execution of movement.”¹²

VODOU DANCE FUNCTION

“You can’t know dances in Haiti without knowing the cult worship, because dance grows out of the demands of the Gods. You hear a certain rhythm without

⁸ Katherine Dunham. *Dances of Haiti*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1983), 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,7.

¹¹ The instruments included “percussion drums, rattles (seeds inside or out, the sacred bell, bamboo tubes, and an iron plate struck with a nail.”

¹² *Ibid.*,21.

seeing what is being danced you know by the rhythm what the dance is and to what god it is being danced.”¹³

Dunham emphasized the “interrelation of form and function” of vodou dance, and the importance of understanding the cult worship a specific function, which is essential to understand how dance functions in Haitian culture.¹⁴ Vodou dance consisted of natural movements that correspond to different rhythms, and tempi. For example, Vodou dance carries both community and social significance. Dunham categorized these functions in three different categories: sacred, secular, and marginal.¹⁵ The sacred consist of group ritualistic dances expressing their beliefs and faith. The secular and marginal include seasonal crowd dances and social small-gathering dances. Understanding these dances in different settings provides valuable insight to how into functions in Haitian culture.

Seasonal crowd dances, viewed as a “recreational activity and play,” illustrate the importance of community in Haitian culture.¹⁶ In addition, social small-gathering dances embody similar socials functions to the seasonal crowd dances, but are more geared towards technical and artistic prowess, exhibitionist tendencies through performer-audience relationship, artistic values and appreciations, and musical development.¹⁷

Religious dance functions differently from the secular forms in a Vodou ceremony and cult. Each dance is different because of how it relates to Vodou. Dunham observed, “Each dance

¹³ James Haskins, *Katherine Dunham*. (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc 1982), 57.

¹⁴ Katherine Dunham, *Dances of Haiti*. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1983), 59.

¹⁵ *Ibid*,42.

¹⁶ *Ibid*,.

¹⁷ *Ibid*,46.

is bound up with usages known only to the initiated, each with a definitive position in relation to the cult itself and to the fulfillment of the ceremony.”¹⁸ Cult worship is classified by divination and ceremony. For example, *Petwo* and some of the *Congo* cults function independently from one another and in specialized dances during the ritual procedure of a ceremony.¹⁹

Within the aforementioned categories, there are subdivisions: representative or symbolic. These subdivisions indicate the “presence of the loa in the individual.”²⁰ Examples of *loa* include the *Asaka* and *Agwe*.²¹ According to Dunham, *Asaka* is the *loa* to the mountain and field in the *Rada-Dahomey* cult and *Agwe* is the loa of sea and water, which perform dances representative of their domains. To distinguish between these closely related loa is to observe the participants’ body movements. Dunham wrote that the participants possessed of *Asaka* bend low, as if they were planting or hoeing, and embracing the ground. Dunham described these movements as “awkward and crude to typify mountain people working in the fields.”²² In contrast to the *Asaka*, the *Agwe* dances are more “flowing, introducing the motions of waves into the dance.”²³ The *Asaka* and *Agwe* are examples of dances that embody specific movement characteristics during a Vodou ceremony.²⁴

¹⁸ Ibid,49.

¹⁹ Ibid,49. *Danse vodun* means Vodou dance.

²⁰ Ibid,51. Dunham describes the “loa” as the thing possessing the individual during the Vodou ceremony, noting, “The person possessed has no recollection of his conduct or motor expression while under possession.” Dunham’s observations stem from the participant’s point of view on their experience, citing that each loa have a behavior characteristic, song, and drum effect.

²¹ Ibid,52.

²² Ibid,.

²³ Dunham further elaborates by stating that these dances are “symbolic enough of water to be recognized.”

²⁴ Ibid,54.

VODOU MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

According to Dunham, Vodou songs were “for the most part in language, a mixture of pure African languages and dialects of the surviving tribal grouping represented in Haiti.”²⁵ Similar to Vodou dance, music is essential to understanding how it functioned in Vodou ceremonies. Instruments commonly used in these ceremonies include drums, rattles, and other assorted instruments.²⁶

Percussion instruments played a vital role in the Vodou ceremony. Melville Herskovits stated, “The drums and irons are the focus of all activity of the dance, especially since those who are possessed dance facing the drums, in whose beat is heard the voice of Gods.”²⁷ Priests and others of high status used rattles. Lois Wilcken suggests a double meaning exists for these instruments physically and symbolically.²⁸ The aforementioned instruments embody specific functions in a Vodou ceremony. The drum’s physical and symbolic meaning depends on which cult it is used in. For example, the *Rada* battery, drums are played for all *Rada* spirits.²⁹ In contrast to the *Rada*, the *Petwo* battery embodies an opposite meaning, exclusively serving the

²⁵ Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 107.

²⁶ Lois Wilcken, *The Drums of Vodou*. (Tempe: White Cliffs Media Company, 1992), 29.

²⁷ Melville Herskovits was an American anthropologist at Northwestern University. He helped advise Dunham on field research.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 32.

²⁹ *Rada* drums can be found in Port-au-Prince. According to Wilcken, *Rada* is a nation of formal, even-tempered spirits of Dahomean origin. Gives its name to one of the two major branches of the Vodou pantheon, including the *Rada* and *Nago* nations. There is a specific set of rhythms and dances to call these spirits.

spirits of the *Petwo* branch.³⁰ The *Petwo* were more exclusive in who their worship than the *Rada* branch.

In addition to the drums used in Vodou ceremonies, sacred rattles were also used. These rattles were exclusively used by members of the priesthood, which include the *ason* and *tchatcha*. In a Vodou ceremony, the priest uses it to set the tempo to the ceremony by pointing the *ason* downward to signal the ensemble to stop playing. Miscellaneous instruments used in a Vodou ceremony include the *lanbi*, *fwèt kach*, and *silflèt*. The *lanbi* is performed at wakes and *rara* processions.³¹ The *fwèt kach* and *silflèt* were used in Vodou ceremonies as symbols of slavery. These instruments served a unique function in transcending oppression by being reminded of their suffering.³²

VODOU MUSIC: RHYTHM

Rhythm is an essential component to understanding Vodou music and dance. According to Wilcken, “African percussion, song, and dance are patterned activities...a fixed temporal unit coordinates them.”³³ African music scholars refer to this temporal unit as the time span.³⁴ In Vodou drumming, the concept of meter does not exist, because it is not part of their vocabulary. No evidence exists whether “they perceive the hierarchy of accented beats inherent in European meter.”³⁵

³² Ibid,35.

³³ Ibid,49.

³⁴ The Time span refers to a segment of time marked off by pulse. Vodou time spans usually consist of two pulses, one marking the beginning of the span and the other marking the midpoint.

³⁵ Ibid, 51.

Rada and *Petwo* rhythms have different tempos. *Rada* tempo is about eighty pulses per minute. In Western notation, the *Rada* tempo would be notated as eighty dotted half notes per minute. When participating in a *Rada* ceremony, the dance movements corresponded and emphasized the dotted half note. The *Petwo* dance is one hundred and fifty pulses per minute.³⁶ In practice, Vodou drummers keep a steady tempo without fluctuation. Understanding tempo in Vodou music provides more insight to the relationship of music and movement in Vodou ceremonies.

VODOU SONG AND DANCE

Similar to musical instruments and rhythm, “Vodou songs have physical and spiritual dimensions.”³⁷ Vodou *Iwa* are the authors of the songs that evoke them.³⁸ According to Wilcken, songs are communicated to humans in two ways: dream state and possession state. The spirits communicate to humans during their dream state. When they awaken, they are expected to communicate the song to the congregation. In this possession state “a spirit teaches the congregants how to sing a new song by having them repeat phrases until they have committed it to memory.”³⁹

Similar to *pwen* songs, dances are considered, “concentrations of spiritual energy that attract the *Iwa* and possessing humans.”⁴⁰ There are two types of dance that have specific

³⁶ Ibid.,

³⁷ Ibid.,

³⁸ *Iwa* are spirits that represent major forces in the universe and all aspects of daily life.

³⁹ When the spirit leaves, the person who was possessed does not recall the song. The person possessed is not considered the owner of the song, but the collective is.

⁴⁰ Ibid,115.

movements. *Rada* and *Petwo* are two dance types found in Vodou ceremonies. *Rada* movements are concentrated in the back and shoulders. *Petwo* movements focus on the footwork. In *Petwo*, the dancers arms are bent at the sides, the back is stiff, and the shoulders tremble. The footstep is right-left-right. The footwork is then reversed. Figure 1 and 2 provide information about dances in the *Rada* and *Petwo* categories.

Figure 1⁴¹

Types	Rada Dance Descriptions
<i>yanvalou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shoulders circle upward and back with the feet parallel and close together ● Hands touch slightly bent knees ● Contraction of torso followed by release ● Head is thrown back
<i>parigol</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Smooth and understated ● Relies on support from left leg ● Right leg rises at first slow pulse followed by a left step and right step in place
<i>zepol</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Similar to <i>yanvalou</i>, except dance is in double time ● Knees and head are straight ● Movements are concentrated in the chest and shoulders ● Chest is thrown forward by backward movement of the shoulders on each pulse ● Dancer places hands on hips with palms bent slightly up
<i>mayi daome</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Same as <i>parigol</i>, except in double time with different footsteps ● Shoulder thrust forward on medium pulses ● Dance pattern is done in reverse ● Dancer's left arm is placed on their hip with right arm is held horizontally in front of chest with the palms flat and facing outward ● Anchored on left foot, dancer bounces on the right foot on medium pulse dipping to the group, circling forward up landing fully on the right foot on the last pulse of the pattern
<i>fla vodou</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arms are held out to the sides ● Elbows are slightly bent, above waist level with palms facing outward ● Shoulders thrust forward on medium pulses
<i>nago</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dancers start with elbows bent and fists nearly touching in front of the chest ● The chest thrusts forward, the fists part, and the dancer takes a step to the right ● The chest contracts, the fists close, and the left foot joins the right ● On the second pulse, the chest bursts forward, the arms snap back and dancer takes a second step to right
<i>djouba</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flirtatious dance honoring the spirits of the Earth ● The dancer's hands are on the hips, rocking side to side ● Segues into <i>arbitan</i>

⁴¹ Ibid,115.

<i>abitan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Faster dance than the <i>djouba</i> ● Involves forward thrusts of the hips, twice to the right, and twice to the left, with arms down at the sides
<i>ibo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conveys ideas of arrogance and slavery ● Spreads arms out and takes two steps: right-left-right ● The head bobs up and down ● The dancer's head is bending low
<i>kongo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The hips rocks their hips in a circular motion ● Both feet are flat on the ground and parallel ● The arms circle inward to a slow pulse

Figure 2

Types	<i>Petwo</i> Dance Descriptions
<i>kita</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fast version of the <i>petwo</i> category
<i>banda</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Erotic Vodou dance performed for or by the Gede spirits ● Movement is concentrated in the hips and the groin which is supposed to mimic human sexual intercourse ● Hip movement would vary with a sudden hip contraction followed by a sharp release

A prominent characteristic of Vodou music is call and response form. In practice, call and response form is a succession of two different musical phrases in interaction with one another. In Haitian culture, the interaction between the *gid* and *pep la* represents the way Haitians believe a society should function, symbolizing “cooperation and solidarity.”⁴² These songs “indicate which nation of spirit servants are propitiating at a given time, and many songs are directed to individual spirits within nations.”⁴³

These dances are symbolic of spiritual and physical meanings that are valuable in understanding Vodou ceremonies and Haitian culture. Dunham’s experience in Haiti had a

⁴² *Gid* and *pep la* is a variant of Haitian call and response.

⁴³ Ibid,115.

profound effect on her choreography and understanding of her ancestry. In her choreography, Dunham incorporated Vodou dances from *Rada* and *Petwo* movements, as evidenced in her work in American cinema. By doing so, Dunham created her own genre of dance referred to as the “Dunham technique,” a continuous polyrhythmic dance combining African dance with European ballet.⁴⁴ The Dunham technique is also described as a combination of classical ballet with African influences.

WAX CYLINDER RECORDINGS

The recordings Dunham collected from her field research include short excerpts of the Vodou ceremonies she observed. Throughout the entire collection, there are forty wax cylinder recordings that currently exist. Unfortunately, no film exists to show what happened during a Vodou ceremony. Dunham had attempted to record a ceremony with her camera, but was stopped by a Shango priest. As a result of this encounter, Dunham did not film any of the Vodou dances and rituals.⁴⁵ Dunham’s collection includes a variety of musical excerpts of drums, *silflèt*, and voice performing together. It is possible to figure out the type of Vodou ceremony or ritual is heard on these recordings. For example, if a *silflèt* is heard, it is likely that it belongs to the *Petwo* genre.

Several recordings were difficult to hear because it was recorded on a wax cylinder recorder. There were several recordings that were inaudible because of additional background noise. In order to transcribe the selected recordings, special equipment was used to amplify the sound. Even though most of the recordings span only several seconds, an educated guess can be

⁴⁴ Dunham technique is referred to a continuous polyrhythmic dance that combines African dance with European ballet.

⁴⁵ James Haskins, *Katherine Dunham*. (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1982), 55. Shango was the god of thunder and lightning worshiped by the Yoruba tribe in West Africa and brought to the New World by Yoruba slaves.

made based on instrumentation, tempo, and rhythm to the type of Vodou dance or ceremony performed. For research purposes, the musical transcriptions provided and described will use Western musical terms.

Dunham labeled the first recording #000 and “unidentified.” A detailed description of this recording does not exist. While listening to the recording, it was difficult to make out the lyrics, but only the sung pitches. The provided transcription outlines the melody being sung by a community of singers.

In this excerpt, someone led the community in song. The community responded back to the leader in a unified fashion with the leader singing something completely different than the community. During this performance, there is a drum accompanying the melody. This type of singing resembles call and response, a musical characteristic commonly associated with African music.

In this transcription, the leader is notated on the first line and the community of singers sings the bottom voice. The first five measures begin with a solo. The pick up eighth note into measure six is when the other singers respond to the leader. Similar to *Rada* dance, the responses heard are similar throughout the course of the excerpt, which is characterized by a dotted eighth note and sixteenth tied to a half note. The drum accompaniment provided a continuing and moving pulse accompaniment for the community to follow.

Call and response is a musical form found in American jazz and blues, a form often associated with African American music. The following excerpt is evidence that call and response also existed in Haitian music.

Figure 3

Based on *Rada* and *Petwo* descriptions, this excerpt could be classified as *Rada*. There is also the possibility that this excerpt may not have been part of a particular Vodou ceremony, but a community activity. It is difficult to determine the origins of this excerpt could be because of the known limited information.

Recording #157 is a drum solo, labeled as “Dreams V.” The beginning of the solo starts out slow. The drum changes between quarter notes and eighth notes. Figure 4 is the first four measures of the solo, which repeat until the drummer transitions into sixteenth notes. From

measure fifteen on, the rhythm becomes more complex. Figure 5 illustrates the change from the duple rhythm to the triplet, which later expands into double dotted rhythms notated in Figure 6.

Towards the end of the solo, the drummer returns to the duple rhythm from the introduction. In Western terms, it would be possible to view this piece in ternary form. In this case, it is more important to understand the intrinsic meaning behind this music, and what it represented to Haitian people. Since drums were prominent in communicating to the spirits, it is possible to assume the drummer was trying to summon the Gods.

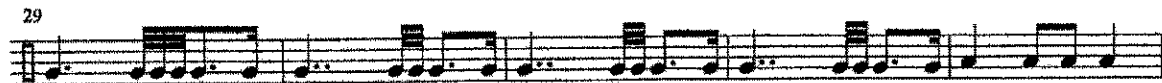
Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



These recordings provide insight to the variety of rhythms and songs in Vodou ceremonies. Dunham's wax cylinder recordings support how rhythm and song are intertwined together with Vodou dance. Even though no physical film footage exists of these ceremonies, elements of Vodou dance are found in Dunham's choreography after 1937.

DUNHAM CHOREOGRAPHY

Early evidence of Haitian influences is found in several of Dunham's early choreography. *L'Ag'Ya* is "a folk ballet based on dances she had seen in the Martinique," which included a

Vodou hypnosis ritual called *Majumba*.⁴⁶ Critics positively received *L'Ag'Ya* because it was something interesting and new.⁴⁷ Dunham also choreographed *Bal negre*, which covered a range of black dance and culture styles. Dunham's choreographic work in *L'Ag'Ya* and *Bal negre* illustrated a new style of dance, combining Haitian dance movements with traditional dance.

Dunham's choreographic work in *Stormy Weather* (1943) is evidence of her combining classical ballet and Vodou dance movements in American cinema.⁴⁸ During the time *Stormy Weather* was filmed, there were "quite a few all-black movie musicals being filmed in Hollywood at the time."⁴⁹ In the movie, the selected scene begins with Dunham walking in the rain with other town people slow dancing in the rain. The sounds of lightning segue into a dance number that starts out slow, with the main character walking out from behind a cloud waving her arms.

The first sign of Vodou influence is found at 0:40 after Dunham's entrance. In the beginning of this scene, Dunham raises her right leg, supported by her left leg. Afterwards, she takes a left step, which is then followed by a right step. Based from Wilcken's description, this part of choreography resembles the *parigol* dance. Throughout the dance scene, a majority of the movements are primarily in the shoulders and the back. For example, at 2:35 the dancers are making circular motions with their shoulders and back that are characteristic of *Rada* movements. The end of the scene shows a combination of movements reminiscent of Vodou dance. At 2:50, the dancers are moving their hips in a circular motion bearing resemblance to the

⁴⁶ Ibid,63.

⁴⁷ Ibid,65.

⁴⁸ "Stormy Weather," Youtube, accessed November 20, 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W23MYjH92co>

⁴⁹ James Haskins. *Katherine Dunham*. (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1982), 63.

kongo. The dancers are seen to be throwing back their heads with their shoulders making an upward and downward motion, similar to *yanvalou*.

Throughout this *Stormy Weather* excerpt, the actors are dancing to jazz music, wherein the call and response form is also prevalent. Hollywood producers chose the music selected to match the choreography. Dunham was hired because of her experience with Vodou dance, with the expectation of providing exotic choreography that would complement the movie's storyline. Although Vodou music is not used in this dance scene, elements of vodou dance are found in their choreography, illustrating Dunham's impact on dance in Hollywood movies.

Similar to the *Stormy Weather* excerpt, Dunham uses a similar combination in the choreography for *Casbah (1948)*.⁵⁰ In this scene, from 0:02 to 0:08 the female dancers are moving quickly, focusing their movements in their shoulders, and arms with their palms slightly bent up. The first movement resembles *Rada* movements. The latter movement is characteristic of the *zepol* dance. Similar to Dunham, their dance movements personify nervous energy, characteristic of *Petwo* dances. The male dancers make their entrance at 0:19. Similar to the female dancers, the male dancers move energetically throughout this scene. At 0:21, Dunham makes her entrance by taking off her shoes. She is making jerking movements with her shoulders, and is seen spinning in place with her right foot leading the spinning motion. Even though Dunham's movements are choreographed, at 0:32 Dunham appears to look as though she does not have control over her movements. This lost of control simulates being "possessed."⁵¹ Similar to Dunham, beginning from 0:38 to 1:38, the male dancers also appear to be moving

⁵⁰ "Casbah," Youtube, accessed November 20, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cceYBILYxzE&feature=related>

⁵¹ Uncontrolled movements that include violent shaking, and jerking are some characteristics of someone being possessed.

uncontrollably, flailing their arms in the air, and shaking violently, as if they were also possessed.

Throughout the *Casbah* excerpt, the dancers are dancing to orchestral music. The music performed illustrates anxiety, characterized by sudden, abrupt musical gestures. These musical characteristics corresponded with Dunham's choreography- sudden, jagged movements. In comparison to *Stormy Weather*, *Casbah* illustrated stronger ideas of in their costumes, music, and dance. Dunham's choreography exemplifies how her experiences in Haiti captured the audience's attention through movement.

Dunham did choreographic work for Hollywood movies because she was "regarded as an expert, something Hollywood producers respected."⁵² Dunham was not particularly fond of the work she did for Hollywood movies because she felt "there was always something phony about the black Africans in them" and there were "few who actually cared about authenticity, only wanting something that was colorful and exciting."⁵³ Dunham's work as a Hollywood choreographer is evidence of her incorporating Haitian influences into American cinema.

CONCLUSION

Dunham's mixing of anthropology and dance was unusual to many people because they did not understand the relationship between these two disciplines. Contrary to this view, Dunham believed that it was her work in anthropology that "led to her success as a dancer and choreographer."⁵⁴ Dunham believed the best dancer would be deemed mediocre if they did not understand the origins of their dance.

⁵² James Haskins, *Katherine Dunham*. (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1982), 71.

⁵³ Ibid, 72.

⁵⁴ Haskins, 78.

The wax cylinder recordings provide evidence of the different musical sounds she was exposed to. Even though limited information exists on these recordings, an educated guess can be made in what the recording represents. It is evident that Dunham's fieldwork had a profound influence on her choreography and identity, which can be found in Dunham's choreographic work for *Stormy Weather* and *Casbah*.

As evidenced in Vodou music, African influenced music and dance are deeply connected in how sound influences movement. Dunham's research and contributions are evidence of her intimate understanding of this relationship. Dunham's versatility as an anthropologist, dancer, choreographer, and educator opened doors for other cultural dance genres. She redefined American dance by incorporating her knowledge of Vodou dance into American choreography.

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