



Making Movements: Dance and Social Change Featuring Jon Boogz

Wednesday, October 18, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
Gloria Kaufman International Dance Center

ABOUT JON BOOGZ

- Jon Boogz is a movement artist, choreographer, and director who seeks to push the boundaries of dance.
- He has choreographed for dance icons including Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gloria Estefan, and his work has been featured on *So You Think You Can Dance*.
- He has also worked on ad campaigns for Pharrell's Adidas Originals, Apple, Lexus, and others.
- Boogz is interested in exploring social issues through creativity and movement.

COLOR OF REALITY

Color of Reality is a video directed and conceived by Jon Boogz, featuring the visual art of Alexa Meade and dancers Boogz and Lil Buck. It's a hybrid work of art that merges dance, painting, and film. With police brutality and media as subject matter, it's also a hybrid of art and activism.

"I thought about how there are a lot of people who are naïve about some of the problems going on in our society unless it affects them directly. When we see it on TV, it's a shock because we've been living in our own bubble, in our own beautiful fantasy world. We need to unite as one to help stop these senseless acts of violence, and that's really what the whole story is about," Boogz told the *New York Times*.

DANCE AND SOCIETY

Like every other human creation, dance is deeply intertwined with culture and community. Ballet, for instance, was developed in the royal courts of Europe, and evolved rigid traditions befitting its elite status; when modern choreographers like Martha Graham took to the stage bent low and barefoot, or contemporary choreographers like William Forsythe sought a new ballet that could be performed by a diversity of body types, these were transgressive moments that pushed dance, and thus society, forward. Other forms of dance, like jazz and street dance, originated at ground level within communities—often marginalized ones—and were later brought onto formal dance stages. Vogueing may have been brought to mainstream attention because it was in a Madonna video in 1990, but it actually emerged from Harlem's queer black ballroom culture in the 1960s. The repertoire of the renowned Alvin Ailey Dance Company, the premiere African American dance company, brought elements of the black church, honky-tonk bars, social protest, and jazz to the stage.

DANCE AS A FORM OF PROTEST

Dance has been used to advance social change throughout history and all over the world. For example:

- ◉ In the early 20th century, Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan challenged norms about women's bodies and sexuality through their liberated choreography.
- ◉ Toyi-toyi, a dance form that originated in Zimbabwe, has long been used as part of political protests in South Africa.
- ◉ In the mid-20th century, modern dancer Jane Dudley and her collective, the left-wing New Dance Group, offered low-tuition dance education and inexpensive performances of works addressing subject matter like the Depression and the Spanish Civil War.
- ◉ In the last few years in L.A., Black Lives Matter activist Shamell Bell, street dancer Dashawn "Day-Day" Blanks, and friends started teaching social dances like "the jerk" and "the reject" to activists protesting police brutality, because they found it helped to lift activists' spirits even while they were protesting dispiriting realities. Out of this grew The Balance Collective, a group of dancers and artists who protest police brutality and fight racism, sexism, and homophobia.

POP-CULTURE CORNER

There is an entire subgenre of popular films in which dance is used as a means to transgress social boundaries and hierarchies. For instance, *Flashdance*, in which a working-class welder who dances in a strip club at night crosses social borders and makes her way into an elite ballet school. Or *Save the Last Dance*, where love sees no color, but dance cultures clash, as an aspiring ballerina falls for a hip hop dancer. And in *Footloose*, made during the rise of the religious right in the mid-1980s, a group of small-town teens challenge conservative social norms through dance.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ Do you agree with Boogz that a lot of people are naïve about social problems that don't affect them directly? What do you think is the most effective way to address this?
- ◉ Does your community have a tradition of using dance for social change?
- ◉ What qualities or possibilities is dance uniquely suited to bring to social movements?

TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES:

- ◉ Jon Boogz online
jonboogz.com
- ◉ *Color of Reality* on YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq1tm5TqYsg



Color of Reality



Loie Fuller



Shamell Bell



Save the Last Dance

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ANDREW JUSTICE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about the role of dancing in advancing social change. Except where a call number is given, these are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

- Attias, Bernardo, Anna Gavanas, and Hillegonda Rietveld. *DJ Culture in the Mix: Power, Technology, and Social Change in Electronic Dance Music*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.
MUSIC LIBRARY: ML3918.U53 D5 2013 AND ONLINE
- Daniel, Yvonne. *Rumba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
DOHENY: GV1769.R8 D32 1995
- Plageman, Nathan. *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Urban Ghana*.
BLOOMINGTON: INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2012. [ONLINE]

ARTICLES

- Allman-Baldwin, Lysa. "Cirque Du Soleil Brings the Magic and Music of Michael Jackson to Life."
NEW YORK AMSTERDAM NEWS, OCTOBER 29, 2015. [ONLINE]
- Kourlas, Gia. "Lil Buck and Jon Boogz, Wearing Paint as They Tell a Tale."
THE NEW YORK TIMES, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016. [ONLINE]
- Kourlas, Gia. "Mixing Paint and Dance to Comment on Justice and Art."
THE NEW YORK TIMES, SEPTEMBER 20, 2016. [ONLINE]

VIDEO

- Boogz, Jon and Lil Buck. "A dance to honor Mother Earth." *TED Talk*, April 2017.
www.ted.com/talks/jon_boogz_and_lil_buck_a_dance_to_honor_mother_earth
- Boogz, Jon and Jason Yang. "'Moonlight Sonata' cover." *YouTube*, August 20, 2017.
youtu.be/_eDMyzP1Uuk
- Dennis, Charles. "Dance & Social Change—Victoria Marks' 'Not About Iraq'." Charles Dennis Productions, 2008.
Online via Academic Video Online (Alexander Street Press)

