SIGNIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY DANCE: AN INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF IJODEE REPERTOIRE

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Abstract
For over three decades, contemporary dance in Nigeria, rich as it is in fostering exchange, artistic innovation, and the preservation of traditional heritage, has sadly been misinterpreted by scholars and practitioners. This is against the unfortunate dispositions of some practitioners and scholars, who contend that contemporary dance in Nigeria is either a pure imposition of Western standards or are devoid of any national or African identity. This study challenges that notion by interrogating the cultural elements embedded in Ijodee Dance Company's repertoire, with specific focus on *Possession* and *In Imagination*. Employing Interculturalism as its theoretical framework, the research adopts a qualitative methodology, using content analysis of recorded performances available online in carrying out investigation. Its primary data is drawn from audio-visual recordings of these dances, while secondary data includes interviews, scholarly texts, journal, internet sources, and media articles. Findings reveal that Ijodee's dances are deeply rooted in traditional Nigerian dance forms, enriched by diverse movement vocabularies and influences. As such, elements like costumes, movements, themes, motifs, cultural symbols and philosophies, and stylized improvisation, distinctly assert a Nigerian identity within the contemporary expression. This study concludes that it is crucial we recognize contemporary dance, especially the ones that resonate our African life to reassert and affirm cultural ownership, thereby resisting the appropriation and misrepresentation of African art in Western contexts.
Keywords: Cultural, Intercultural, Signification, Contemporary, Hybridization

Introduction
Contemporary dance is a genre of dance that originated in the United States as a breakaway from the then-modern dance style. It is a dance style that pulls its inspiration from various traditional dance elements, to codify and expand these elements to suit the dance style. By way of development and evolution, it breaks away from its original roots, tapping into several other traditional elements to form its own style, rather than depending on one traditional element. Contemporary dance seeks a deeper expression of multiple cultural elements; therefore, there can be no right or wrong way to perform it. In this sort of dance, there has been increased mutual interaction between cultures worldwide, accelerating cultural hybridization (Tuncer 85).

This increased hybridization in dance, especially contemporary dance on a global scale, along with the impact of technology and communication, has caused significant cultural change in dance across the world. As the concept of contemporary dance is rapidly growing in the global world, countries, in their various cultures, are developing styles and techniques of creating and performing contemporary dance to reflect their cultural and traditional background, thereby encouraging cultural identity. Hence, leading to nomenclatures such as French contemporary dance, British contemporary dance, Chinese contemporary dance, and American contemporary dance. All these are attempts to preserve what is theirs in contemporary dance in this global world, so their culture will not be lost to overgeneralization and refinement caused by hybridization.

Therefore, contemporary dance is distinguished by its boundless, eclectic blend of technologies, which has enabled it to spread globally. By so doing, adapting to diverse cultural contexts, its open nature and flexibility have allowed it to be reinterpreted and reimagined, resulting in a proliferation of styles that blend with local and traditional dance forms (Okoye 52). Also, it is characterized by its limitless approaches driven by the performer's movement capability and sensibility, as well as the choreographer's imagination, courage, and craft, rather than relying on traditional steps or routines. Contemporary dance draws significant movement sequences from human experience. The choreographer's manipulation of these movements shapes the performance, which can be influenced by ancient or current sources. The movement itself becomes the primary means of expression, coloured by the unique character of both the choreographer and performer, and the unencumbered by conventional movement norms.

In Nigeria, contemporary dance has its roots in the experiments of pioneers like Ogunde and his Ososa experiment, Muyiwa Oshinaike, and Felix Okolo who radically distorted cultural elements to create new forms. Unfortunately, it was met with much skepticism by dance professionals, as his works were often dismissed as madness or stunts due to lack of understanding and nomenclature to go with the dance form. It was not until the French Cultural Centre, through choreographers such as Lamarche and Brumachor, that the term contemporary dance gained popularity among Nigerian dance professionals. As a result, professionals began to re-evaluate Muyiwa's work, recognizing the innovative contributions he and his contemporaries had made, despite initial perception that they were corrupting traditional cultural movements. The workshop of the French Cultural Centre in Lagos, which brought Lamarche and Brumachor to teach contemporary dance techniques to Nigerian dancers, was met with a cold face, resistance, and skepticism from Nigerian professional dancers. Dosumu-Lawal confirms 'that the French dance practitioners that introduced contemporary Dance to the Nigerian dance practitioners did so for the imperialistic reasons' (4). Many saw it as an imposition of French cultural dances, or a form of cultural colonialism, threatening their traditional and cultural practices. After being schooled in French contemporary dance techniques, the seven selected Nigerian dancers chose to decolonize the art by diffusing it with Nigerian cultural elements rather than replicating French style. This approach helps to shift the mindset of many dancers, practitioners and critics, moving away from the notion that contemporary dance are inherently Western and instead embracing it as a versatile and inclusive art form that can be shaped by local dance practices. Unfortunately, Isioma Williams amongst many dance practitioners in the industry; spoken to casually, still harbor misconceptions about contemporary dance. He bemoans that 'there is nothing Nigerian or African in contemporary dance'. In his defense, he asserts that 'those who engage in such dance do so to appear sophisticated; are ignorant or naive of their indigenous dance practices, or simply seeking Western patronage and approval, which is why contemporary dance in Nigeria is experiencing a huge decline in practice and appreciation', he concludes. In the same vein, Steve James recalls another layer of critique, this time: from within the academic community. He said 'even my colleagues who are theatre scholars don't believe in contemporary dance, the sight of it irritates them, probably because of its complexity. In fact, one of them referred to it as "rubbish" dance, underscoring lack of appreciation and understanding'. Originating in the USA as an extension of modern dance, it has spread globally, adapting to diverse cultural contexts. Today, we see distinct forms like British, French, and Spanish contemporary dance, each infused with local flavors. As contemporary dance evolves within different cultures, it becomes an integral part of their own artistic heritage, transcending its American roots.

Artistically, the choreographer has the right to conceptualize his dance. However, nothing is created out of vacuum, everything has a root. So it is with contemporary dance. Therefore, it is fitting to give a choreographed work a direction to protect and promote cultural identity. Adewole decries that contemporary dance in Africa should be considered a form of African cultural production as a process of de colonization (3). As such, Okoye appraises the move of creative choreographers that the growth of contemporary dance in Nigeria is hinged on Nigerian dance techniques and socio-cultural realities they present to their audience (58). In essence, contemporary dance would not have gained traction or attracted the Nigerian audience if it had not been rooted in its traditional and cultural significance. By incorporating elements that reflect Nigeria or African tendencies and values, contemporary dance become more relatable and authentic, resonating with local audiences in a way that purely French contemporary dance approaches will fail. It is imperative to note that when contemporary dance is mentioned, it mostly connotes Western. The concept of contemporary dance serves merely to distinguish the present-day production of dance from the co-existing historical or canonical style of dance, originally Western-European Theatre dance (Cvejic 5). In the same vein, Kristina Johnstone posed that contemporary dance perpetuates colonial scripts of dance and dancing bodies. To her, colonial scripts refer to the ways in which the body became the object of Western colonial construction (25), and that a

significant way to reclaim African cultural expression is to engage in intercultural experimentation and infuse as much as possible cultural significance that were marginalized or devalued under colonialism (28).

Judging from the points made earlier above, Isioma's disposition simply imposes a colonial mindset that is said to diminish the cultural significance of African elements in contemporary dance. This research challenges that notion by arguing that African essence and cultural identity are without doubt integral to contemporary dance, refuting the fact that African elements are absent. Hence, a choreographer's contemporary dance piece must be deeply positioned in his cultural background, experience, and tradition to be authentic. Yet, paradoxically, its universality allows it to transcend geographical boundaries, resonating with diverse international audiences across different races, cultures, backgrounds, and artistic perspectives (Feltham 64).

Ijodee Dance Company

Adedayo established Ijodee Dance Company in 1999. Since its inception, the company has participated in numerous international tours and festivals, funded annually by Jant-Bi Senegal. The company seeks to mainstream contemporary African dance, transitioning it from marginal to major dance forms. Under Adedayo's leadership, Idiodi has excelled in:

- Training exceptional performers
- Promoting contemporary dance in Nigeria
- Producing and managing international productions

They contribute significantly to Nigeria's social, cultural, and economic growth, utilizing dance as a powerful means of communication to combat sociopolitical problems and dance illiteracy globally. Dosumu-Lawal in his article "Use of Signs and Symbols as Technique in Liadi Adedayo's Selected Choreographic Creative Works" describes the dance company as a platform for growth, remaining committed to its mission of inspiring young talent through dance workshops, collaborations, seminars, training programs, festivals and performances. Furthermore, Adedayo highlights that the company operates on a distinctive style and technique known as the Idiodi Technique, reflecting his unique artistic vision (21-22). Ijodee Dance Company has contributed immensely to the development of contemporary dance in Nigeria, raising the platform for youth to: Develop themselves in the dance form and appreciate traditional Nigerian dance forms.

Theoretical Framework: Interculturalism

It's a theory, an approach, and practice that refer to the exchange of cultural ideas and practices, the fusion of traditional languages, and dialogue between different styles in the creation and performance of dance. Broadly speaking:

Interculturalism goes beyond simple cohabitation or respecting cultural identities from a distance. The intercultural approach facilitates dialogue between different socio-cultural groups as a way to live and learn together, contributing to the development of society as a whole (Cervantes 20).

In contemporary dance around the world, interculturalism is a new wave of dance creation that includes and represents the groundbreaking movement that fuses Western and other styles from around the world, blending traditional and modern elements. This innovative approach brings together choreographers and dancers from different cultural backgrounds, merging their unique artistic perspectives and training to create something entirely new (Carino 57). Through artistic collaborative journey, interculturalism celebrates the intersection of different cultural expressions, uplifting fresh and dynamic dance creations that go beyond borders. Art, from the perspective of dance, is a highly social and cultural expression of life and, to every extent, death. As this concept addresses the complexity of culture in the context of intersecting cultures, it is therefore fitting that interculturalism sets the ground for collaborative learning of these diverse cultures irrespective of backgrounds race, or cultural identity that are somewhat ambiguous, complicated, and multidimensional in process (Masunah 3). Masunah reiterates that the main ultimate objective of this concept is to study diverse forms in order to gain insight into various cultures, traditions, and individuals who bring dances to life (6).

By gaining insight into other people's cultures, it fosters mutual respect, comprehension, and lasting friendships. With this, contemporary dance widens as a discipline that explores the frequency and diversity of traditional art and style. Through presentation, it illustrates the wealth of both cultures and can go beyond the artistic realm to engage other areas such as tourism, sports, language, science, and technology, as well as promote dialogue and interaction between cultures (Penas & Carmen 15). In this perspective, the main dimensions of interculturalism are:

1. Fusioning of technique, which is the combination of elements from various styles, such as ballet, Bharatanatyam, and hip-hop, etc. (Mitra 7).
2. Cultural exchange, which involves collaboration between dancers and choreographers. Sonja emphasizes that to accurately represent the dance forms of another culture is very challenging, so performances aim to replicate the posture and movement, then interpret them through their own creative dimension(5).
3. Incorporate different genres of music and costume from various cultures to create a unique dance language and reflect a multifaceted cultural identity. And dance background facilitates the construction of interculturalism in meaning (Mabingo 47).
4. Exploration of themes that address universal issues through the dimension of different cultures. Xi reveals that 21st-century choreographers employed this innovative dance skill to achieve meaningful goals by harnessing body movement with technology to evoke audience critical thinking on today's social issues around the world (200). Frankly speaking, interculturalism is an interdisciplinary approach that thrives by combining insights from various fields of studies and their theories.

Analyses of Dances in Ijodee Repertoire
1. *Possession* Synopsis
Possession is a dance piece that draws deep inspiration from Maurice Ravel's Bolero, one of the French composer's works for large orchestras (Orensteins 99). As the title suggests, *Possession* depicts a battle between light and darkness, showcasing how dancers express their innermost feelings through various movements, conveying emotions of joy, frustration, and sadness. This dance piece also highlights the aesthetics of Nigerian dance movements. The presentation of these two entities that possess man (light and darkness) reveal that darkness will only bring forth pain, sorrow, discomfort, and all manner of negative energy, which ultimately affects individuals and their environment. In contrast, light on the other hand dispels darkness and restores serenity: fostering a sense of togetherness, joy, jubilation, and vitality of life.

Descriptive Analysis
Possession is a 19 minutes contemporary dance piece that draws deep inspiration from Maurice Ravel's "Bolero", one of the French composer's works for large orchestra (Orenstein 99). As the title suggests, *Possession* shows dancers expressing their innermost feelings with movement - feelings of joy, frustration, sadness - while showcasing the aesthetics of Nigerian dance movement. The dance piece begins with a solo Dancer1, who embodies joy through expansive contemporary moves, traversing the entire stage with her energy. Next, the second Dancer2 emerges, conveying frustration through erratic movement, covering the entire stage. As she exits, the third dancer, Dancer3 further intensifies an emotional state of confusion. This new emotional layer communicates confusion as she stumbles and falters, as if lost, making abrupt and disjointed gestures which exhibit rapid, frenzied floor work. Pausing, frozen in a state of uncertainty, the movement captures effectively the turmoil and disorientation of confusion, thereby creating an intuitive connection with the audience.

Just as Dancer3, who is fully immersed in expressing her confusion, Dancer4 and Dancer5 enter the scene. Their movement is devoid of sternness as they kneel down, their gaze intensely fixed on Dancer3. They remain still, as if observing her turmoil, their action conveying empathy and strong concern, creating a touching moment of connection. The dynamics between the dancers shift, thereby transforming the state of confusion into a shared experience. Throughout the performance, a striking figure - Dancer8- remains constant, seated down stage center, his eyes fixed intensely on the unfolding narrative. The trance-like state creates an air of mystic, as if witnessing the unfolding emotional turmoil and silently observing her inner struggle. Their stillness provides and heightens the emotional impact of the performance.

As Dancer3 remains entrenched in her confusion, other dancers begin to enter the stage; their movements halt as they freeze. The dancers become attractively arranged like transfixed figures, each suspended in their different emotional states, like a living sculpture. Their stillness captures the complexity of human emotion and interaction. Dancer3, exhausted from expressing her turmoil, now surrenders to her despair. Dancer5 suddenly bursts into a frantic run, cycling the stage. She is immediately joined by Dancer9, but with a striking contrast, they run in opposite directions, creating a dynamic counterpoint. The pace stops as the duo performs joyous, energetic movements, fueling tension and curiosity. Dancer3 folds her hands, lowers her face to the ground, and remains motionless.

Just then, Dancers6 approaches her with gentle, uplifting movements, and with tender gestures, offered Dancer3 a flower.

Picture1. Dancer3 holds flower in his hand

This symbolic act conveyed a sense of hope and renewal, and the power of human connection. As Dancer3 receives the flower, her body language changed, and a hint of hope flickered across her face. Her turmoil yielded, giving way to tranquility and emotional resolution. Just as the dancers converged at center stage, they collectively tapped into the emotion that dancer three had embodied - the hope and resilience symbolized by the flower. Together they celebrate through synchronize leaps, twirling and exuberant gesture as their happiness is contagious, radiating outward. As suddenly as they begin they ceased and with renewed unity they sprinted back to the centre stage depicting the power of reconciliation and shared joy. As they unified in their joyful expression, Dancer1 seamlessly integrated her movement, amplifying the prevalent emotion on stage. Dancer3, with a gentle gesture, handed the flower to dancer one. As dancer one received the symbol of hope and resilience, her movements transformed, proclaiming joy, release, and unshakable optimism. This moment highlighted the transfer of emotional energy and empowerment through connection. As Dancer1 filled the stage with vibrant dance, the other dancers silently exited, leaving her alone in the spotlight. Suddenly, Dancer2 enters, mirroring the same dynamic movement, harmonizing with dancer one's energy. With each step, Dancer2 spread frustration and bad energy around dancer one, who remained unaffected, amplifying her movements instead.

Unable to defeat Dancer1's energy, Dancer2, in a desperate movement, urges Dancer1 out of the stage. Almost immediately, Dancer6, Dancer9, and Dancer10 enter, their movements becoming erratic and disjointed, conveying frustration and confusion. As their emotions seem to peak, Dancer2 reenters, intensifying the turmoil and anguish. The emotional storm rages on, as Dancers6, Dancer2, and Dancer9 exit, leaving Dancer10 alone on stage.
This isolated Dancer10 struggles to cope; his movements become more frantic and despairing, and the weight of his emotions threatens to overwhelm him. He stands transfixed, lost in turmoil.
Just then, Dancer11 bursts onto the stage, radiating joy and happiness through vibrant lips, sparkling gestures, and infectious energy. Meanwhile, dancer ten remains frozen in the corner, locked in struggle. Dancer11 is gradually joined by Dancer6, Dancer8, and Dancer3, as their collective energy fills the stage. Dancer5 bursts into the scene with renewed urgency, racing around the stage with vitality.

The energetic and pulsating radiance envelops Dancer10, who is still transfixed. As his turmoil dissolves, he's replaced by an irresistible urge to join the others. Dancer10 merges with the group. Dancer7 becomes transfixed, lost in his own struggle to break free from turmoil and join the others. Dancer5's radiant dance infects the ensemble with contagious joy, making vibrant lips and gestures. Every dancer is now transfixed as Dancer5 makes her movements. Suddenly, the others surrender to Dancer5's euphoric energy in a unifying jump. The other dancers join Dancer5 in jubilant dance, celebrating freedom, joyful abandon, and collective euphoria. This triumphant moment highlights that joy is infectious and transformative, showcasing the power of dance and happiness in unity. As the group unites with Dancer5, mirroring her joyful movements, they divide into two groups, one on either side. Just then, Dancer1 enters, radiating joy with vibrant gestures and infectious smile. The entire group merges, surrendering to dancer one in a

celebratory atmosphere and triumphant movement. The dance concludes on a high note, with friends united in a tableau of happiness and unity.

Analysis of Movement Vocabulary in *Possession*
The movement vocabulary can be described as the fusion of Western and African traditional movements. The dance combines these two distinct movement vocabularies - more like fifty percent of Western contemporary, that is evident in Dancer1's movement, and it is characterized by fluidity and expressive gestures. There are emphases on emotional expression in the dance; therefore, use of contraction and release, and fall greatly influenced by modern, and ballet technique.
The African traditional dances, mostly Nigerian, are evident in movements of Dancer2 to Dancer11, characterized by dynamic, intricate floor works from Ebeni dance' footwork, Akoto dance, Atilogu dance, and Egwu ukwu's vibrant energetic movement. Mainly, dancers transition between Western contemporary and African traditional forms and styles, blending techniques to create a unique fusion of rich movement vocabulary that showcases cultural diversity and exchange.

Uses of Music/Sound Design in *Possession*
Maurice Ravel's iconic "Bolero" serves as the music for the performance. The sound, played by a live large orchestra, is hypnotic, with a repetitive melody that builds tension and gradually increases in tempo, creating a sense of dramatic tension.
The orchestra complements and enhances the emotional impact of the dance, introducing new actions and punctuating the dancers' movements. As the dance mirrors the melodious progression, the dancers' movements amplify the musical emotion. Therefore, the fusion of the dance and orchestra performance on stage deepens the emotional resonance, tension build-up, and climactic conclusion within the audience

Uses of Costume Design in *Possession*
The costumes of the dancers are every day, simple, modern clothing with neutral colors. The colors of the cloth do not add depth to the overall production; instead, emphasis is placed on comfort and flexibility for body movement. Specific costumes include:
- Dancer1: White flowing gown
- Dancer2: Blue top and black trousers
- Dancer3: White singlet and black leggings
- Dancer4: Blue singlet and black trousers
- Dancer5: White singlet and black trousers
- Dancer6: Orange top and white trousers
- Dancer8: Blue top and navy trousers
- Dancer9: Purple top and black trousers
- Dancer10: Green top and black trousers
- Dancer11: Red singlet and black trousers
Note: The actual colors of the costumes may vary due to lighting equipment and setting used.

Theme of *Possession*
The dance explores the theme of emotional expression and unity, guiding the audience through a poignant journey of struggle and resilience. It emphasizes the importance of empathy towards individuals facing various forms of emotional turmoil.
Thematic implications:
1. Emotional Expression: Validating the depth of human emotions.
2. Empathy and Unity: Connecting with others through shared experiences.
3. Self-Discovery: Unlocking inner strength and resilience.
4. Human Connection: Fostering emotional and intellectual unity.
The dance conveys that by acknowledging and sharing emotions, we can: cultivate compassion and understanding, develop personal growth and happiness, bridge intellectual and emotional divides and thereby unite as a community, strengthened by shared human experiences. The dance also expresses the need for essential human connection and promoting unity, emotionally and intellectually.

2. Synopsis of *In Imagination*

In Imagination is a dance that delves into the dancer's inner world, bringing out his imagination and visionary perspective on life through movement. This captivating solo dance piece explores the unexplainable, venturing into the metaphysical realm and the performer's subconscious mind. By transcending the boundaries of reality and dance, it creates a dream-like atmosphere where the audience is invited to experience the performer's thoughts and emotions. This poignant performance piece offers a unique glimpse into the dancer's innermost thoughts and emotions, crafting a mesmerizing experience that blurs the lines between reality and fantasy.

Descriptive Analysis of *In Imagination*

The dance begins with a solo performer seated on a stool, center stage, lost in thought. His gaze appears more bewildered, as if he's struggling to comprehend his surroundings. Suddenly, he utters incomprehensible phrases, gibberish statements that convey his disorientation.

Picture2. Showing the dancer lost in his imagination

He looks out at the audience, his eyes searching for answers, yet still confused. More nonsensical words escape his mouth. Then, in that instant, he mainly stands to dance. His movements are fluent, expressive, and emotive, as if his body is trying to make sense of the chaos in his mind. This opening sequence effectively sets the tone and draws the audience into the dancer's inner world, priming them for a thought-provoking and emotionally charged performance. The dancer does a back-and-forth movement, conveying hesitation and uncertainty, as if struggling to make a decision or take a step forward. Suddenly, he falls to the ground, suggesting a loss of momentum or courage. His movements suggest placing something on the ground carefully and softly in different directions; this could represent leaving fears behind, doubts, or emotions, or planting seeds of hope or intention.

He stands up and, in a flowing movement, conveys submission or surrender, which could signify acceptance of loss, acceptance of his circumstances, or opening up to other perspectives. The surrender movement could be a moment that makes a shift in the dancer's emotional journey. As he stands up, his hands swing uncontrollably to both sides, conveying confusion, disorientation, and loss of control.

Picture3. Showing the dancer expressing his emotions

After a while, he swings his body to the left, as if searching for a way out or clarity. He moves seamlessly, emphasizing his emotional disorientation, with a surge of energy, he begins struggling, protecting himself from an invisible force, which could represent inner demons, external pressure, or fear of the unknown. He jumps backward to the ground, signaling exhaustion, submission, or helplessness.

With this upper body movement, he suggests liberation from emotional burden. He repeats a back-and-forth movement, transfixed in his gaze with intense focus forward, as if drawn to a new direction. Slowly, with deliberate steps and cautious progression, he breaks away with decisive movement, sliding away constraints, symbolizing gradual freedom.The dancer, exhausted from his emotional struggle, moves slowly, conveying fatigue, and begins planting something in the ground, symbolizing seeds of hope. With increased pace, as momentum builds, the movements become more fluid, indicating growing confidence. He hurts accurately, signaling self-reflection. He takes tentative steps forward and lights on the ground, signifying momentary doubt. He quickly rises and, with renewed conviction, moves with determination, progress, and release of tension. He repeats the movement several times, reinforcing determination and resolve. With energized action, he moves, carries his tool, and repositions it, symbolizing regaining control. He circles the stool with more determined movement, showing reconnection with self and closure of emotional journey. He then sits on his tool in self-reflection, beginning to utter distorted phrases, suggesting lingering confusion, fragmented thoughts, and gradual return to clarity. And the dance concludes with the dancer reflecting on his journey.

Analysis of Movement Vocabulary in *In Imagination*
The contemporary dance piece blends Nigerian influences with modern technique, creating an expressive vocabulary. Key elements include:
- Contemporary dance technique, forming the foundation of the movement vocabulary
- Traditional Nigerian movement

Characteristics of the movement vocabulary:
- Soft, fluid movements contrasted with sharp and assertive gestures
- Directional changes in forward, backward, and side-to-side movements, conveying growth and transformation
- Facial expressions shifting from tension to determination and relief, emphasizing liberation and emotional release
- Movement quality changes conveying emotional shifts from turmoil to release
Style:
- Fusion of Nigerian and modern contemporary dance
- Expressive and emotive movement language

Uses of Costume Design in *In Imagination*
The costume design for the dance piece prioritizes functionality, comfort, and visual simplicity, effectively serving the performer's emotional and aesthetic goals. The costume, consisting of only brown trousers and bear chested, avoids distraction, focusing attention on the dancer's movement. The flowing trousers allow for flexibility and unrestricted movement, enhancing the dancer's emotional expression without visual clutter. The role of the costume is one of comfortability, enabling the dancer to focus on performance rather than restrictive clothing. Additionally, versatility allows for exploration of diverse movement and gestures, as well as character intensification. Simply flowing, the trousers describe the dancer's emotional state visually. The flowing design creates fluid lines, complementing the dancer's movement, conveying vulnerability and introspection.

Uses of sound/Music Design in *In Imagination*
The sound design for this dance performance effectively enhances the emotional narrative, creating a dynamic and immersive experience.
Soundtrack Breakdown:
1. Initial Gibberish: Disorienting, suggesting destruction and chaos.
2. Intense Instrumental Rift: Tension reflects inner turmoil, mirroring emotional struggle.
3. Prolonged Silence: Creates anticipation, emphasizing transition.
4. Jazz Instrumentation: Confused, disjointed rhythm mirrors emotional disorientation.
5. Second Prolonged Silence: Heightens expectation, preparing for contrast.
6. Voice Over (War and Disaster): Abruptly introduces chaos and conflict.
7. Third Prolonged Silence: Emphasizes devastation and stillness.

8. Drum Instrumentation: Uplifting rhythm conveys freedom and release.
9. Final Silence: Reflective, peaceful conclusion.
10. Closing Gibberish: Re-echoes initial chaos.
The sound design masterfully weaves together disparate audio elements, crafting a rich tapestry that complements the dance performance. By leveraging contrast, tension, and release, the sound design heightens the emotional impact, drawing the audience into the dancer's journey.

Theme of *In Imagination*
The dance performance transcends a specific theme, instead showcasing:
1. Artistic ingenuity: Creating expressions and improvisational skills.
2. Aesthetic exploration: Investigating movement, sound, and visual harmony.
3. Emotional serenity: Evoking feelings and connections through abstract narrative.
By avoiding a fixed theme in the performance:
- The dance encourages interpretation from diverse perspectives.
- The audience can connect with the emotion of the dancer, rather than a specific narrative.
- Focus shifts to technique, expression, and creativity.
Thematic Benefits:
- Universal connection through emotional expression
- Encourages diverse interpretations and perspectives
- Highlights artistic skill and creativity
- Evokes emotional resonance and serenity
This approach allows the dance performance to become a dynamic, ever-changing experience, connecting with audiences on a deeper, emotional level.

Intercultural Interpretation of *Possession*
1. Embodied Emotional Universality Across Cultures
From the beginning, the dancers embody core human emotions of joy, frustration, confusion, despair, and hope through a physical vocabulary that appears emotionally expressive and cultural specifics. This suggests a cultural and universal language of movement, which invites intercultural interpretation: joy, for instance, may be expressed differently in various traditions, but here it is stylized in a way that allows diverse cultural audiences to access it. This blending positions the piece as intercultural performance: it may not overtly reference particular traditions, but it communicates across cultures through shared emotional signifiers and symbolic gestures (e.g., offering the flower).

Symbolism and the Interplay of Cultural Ritual
The act of offering a flower to a distressed figure (Dancer3) carries a rich symbolic weight across many cultures: flowers often represent renewal, compassion, or karmic balance; in Western contexts and Eastern traditions, they can symbolize forgiveness or peace. The intercultural reading sees this as a fusion of multiple cultural codes, functioning as a ritual of emotional healing that transcends a single tradition.
3. Movement as a Site of Cultural Negotiation
Possession is a deeply expressive piece of dance that employs interculturalism by blending African traditional dance forms (such as Atilogu, Egwu-Ukwu, Akoto) with Western contemporary techniques (fluidity, contraction and release, expressive gesture). This fusion creates a hybrid movement vocabulary that speaks across cultural boundaries, fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding. The emotional themes of joy, frustration, confusion, despair, and renewal are presented as universal human experiences, enabling cross-cultural resonance.
4. The Role of the Ensemble: Collective Identity
The moments of stillness and group formations for example dancers freezing in emotional states like a living sculpture really reflect themes of community and shared struggle, often explored in intercultural works that interrogate collective as against individual identity. The transformation of one dancer's turmoil into a shared emotional experience parallels intercultural dialogue: the self is shaped and reshaped through interaction with the other.
5. Transference and Transformation of Emotional States
Dancer1's ability to remain unaffected by Dancer2's negativity and instead amplify joy suggests a cultural resilience or spiritual groundedness. This transference of energy can be interpreted through intercultural philosophy embedded in the Ubuntu, Buddhist compassion, or Indigenous community across Africa, where individual well-being is

intimately tied to collective harmony. The dance demonstrates emotional contagion as a metaphor for intercultural exchange, that is, one culture's strengths can uplift another without erasure.

The tableau of joy at the end where all dancers converge acts as a metaphor for intercultural unity, not through sameness, but through co-creative synthesis. Dancers retain their emotional individuality while contributing to a shared aesthetic and symbolic goal. Through the lens of interculturalism, this dance piece serves as a metaphor for cultural interaction and transformation. Emotions become the bridge for dialogue, while movement becomes the vocabulary for expressing a collective, transcultural identity. The narrative of turmoil giving way to connection, and despair transforming into joy, mirrors the intercultural promise: not the erasure of difference, but unity through relational exchange and mutual upliftment.

Intercultural Interpretation of *In Imagination*

In Imagination exemplifies Interculturalism which involves the blending, exchange, and interaction of different cultural elements to create a shared artistic expression through it's: fusion of Nigerian traditional movement and contemporary dance techniques: The choreography merges local cultural dance idioms with global contemporary dance vocabulary. This synthesis respects the dancer's cultural identity while situating it within a broader global context.

Expressive embodiment of universal emotional experiences: While rooted in a specific cultural backdrop, the performance transcends it by exploring human emotions like confusion, struggle, liberation, and self-reflection, inviting global audiences into a shared empathetic experience.

Language and sound: The use of gibberish, instrumental music, and voiceovers (including references to war and disaster) universalizes the performer's internal chaos, making it culturally nonspecific yet emotionally resonant. Thus, the performance becomes a site of intercultural dialogue—where traditional African aesthetics meet Western contemporary forms, and localized identity engages with global sensibilities.

Findings

African contemporary dance constitutes the characteristics of African magic, costumes, themes, mannerism, aesthetics, physicality, eccentricity, cultural symbolism and philosophy, and war. These unique attributes condition the understanding and begin to change the minds of scholars and practitioners, using it as a precursor and evidence based in terms of standard of practice. Phrases and fragments of the art in discourse bubbles on the sophistication of African arts and stride through several genre and forms to incorporate context of both socio-political, socio-cultural, socio-economic, socio-agricultural, and diverse religious possibilities.

Thus, the similarity between "African dance" and "contemporary" will change primarily to illustrate the former and open up fertile discourse to understand the structural layer of perception it shows both at the point of severance and the line of African arts. African contemporary dance portrays and demonstrates Africa's primal energy drawing from sources of cultural, traditional and ancient impulse that have cumulated since the timeless expression of African dance. However, it: '…has an extensive and eclectic, post-colonial reach   with a cosmopolitan footprint that   has resonance   and relevance for most, if not all, people interested   in   dynamic   dancing'.   (John   Hogg) http://www.southafrica.net

Mostly, the working material of this dance is movements and as it nature has been nurtured, does not conform to a fixed or established pattern of movements rather it is in continual creating and recreating of dynamics in movements. This unconventionality, therefore, authorizes the choreographer to adopt and adapt several movement techniques, liquefy them, and in most cases recreate them into codified sequence to have a clarified movement-dialogue aesthetic. The dynamics of this form of dance creates complexity in terms of analysis and understanding in the minds of the audience thereby making it extremely difficult to interpret. It has eluded the mind of practitioners that only the creator of such dance knows what he or she is expressing or trying to pass across. This reaction amongst practitioners and sometimes scholars is debatable. It's typically concerned with story or narrative, but it doesn't have a very thorough line that says, 'This is exactly what it's about.' What makes it interesting is that it deals with things that are complex, ambiguous, and in the grey area of human experience. Every viewer gets to have their own opinion and their own story.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this 21st century the focus of dance should be to strive for creative innovations and improvement to yield socio-cultural and political disruptions and progressive change. African contemporary dance should be viewed as a force of creative destruction of Western contemporary dance style to bring forth an African style with the combination of components thereby rendering the western style obsolete. Suffice it to say that this established form of dance destroys the former for the exposition of new and better ways to express dance. Revitalization of contemporary dance in Nigeria requires a collective effort, including: rebuilding, reenergizing, and revitalizing contemporary dance enthusiasm in Nigeria. To that extent study recommends a conscious effort at:

1. Rebuilding and sustaining audience engagement to inspire another generation of dancers.
2. Developing comprehensive training programs to attract experienced instructors and trainers.
3. Establishing a systematic documentation process for performances.
4. Encouraging academics to research and appreciate contemporary dance.

By implementing these measures, the gap in expertise can be addressed, and Nigeria can reclaim its position as a hub for vibrant, innovative, and technically sound contemporary dance. Prioritizing documentation will preserve dance heritage, enhance academic understanding and appreciation and showcase artistic expression globally. By taking conscious and proactive steps, we can restore contemporary dance to its former glory and ensure its continued relevance in Nigeria's vibrant cultural landscape. Collective effort and strategic investment will revitalize contemporary dance in Nigeria, ensuring its long-term sustainability and cultural significance.

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