

ABSTRACT

Rex Nettleford: Choreographer as Cultural Philosopher in Three Classic Works - Pocomania, Kumina and Gerrehbenta

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My research involved the examination of three neo-traditional rituals choreographed over a thirty year period, by Rex Nettleford, for the concert stage. Nettleford's philosophical intent is contextualized in examining these works, as he maintains the integrity of the ritual. By using thick descriptions of these choreographic works, Pocomania (1963), Kumina (1971) and Gerrehbenta (1983), Nettleford's philosophical premises of self-definition, nationalism, the creative imagination, process, ambiguity and African retentions were demonstrated. Nettleford's life experiences as child of the village, child of the yard and man of the gown, shaped and informed his choreography and facilitated his eventual emergence and prominence in the theatre. I examined Jamaica's dance renaissance coupled with Nettleford's formation of the National Dance Theatre Company and the influence of Jamaica/Caribbean dance pioneers in tandem with Nettleford's choreography. This examination gave context to the fifty-year period that this dissertation covers. My methodology included philosophical inquiry and the study of historiography. Movement vocabulary and stylization of traditional Jamaican movements are examined as part of Nettleford's process. Nettleford's connection to the African aesthetic is central to this research, as it informs many of Nettleford's artistic choices and is thematically used frequently in his choreography.

Keywords: Monica Lawrence; Rex Nettleford; Jamaican/Caribbean dance; Pocomania; Kumina; Gerrehbenta; National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica; Kariamu Welsh Asante; Neo-traditional dances; Stella Maris; Concert Dance; Ivy Baxter; Beryl McBurnie; Lavinia Williams.