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The Value of Dance Behind the Voice of Criticism in Trinidad and Tobago!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to God almighty for life, good health, strength, and for who and where I am today.

Thank you to my parents for your continuous support and my fiancé for all your love and assistance throughout my degree. My supervisor and dear coordinator and lecturer, Ms. Deboleena Paul, I am forever grateful for all you have done for me, your presence in every aspect of my degree is well cherished; I thank you.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation reveals the value of Dance that is hidden behind the voice of criticism in Trinidad and Tobago. It revises a dominant and traditional misconception of Dance being less than the average area of performance, study or career in society. It also elucidates 'norm' and 'value', that makes a contribution for respectability and professionalism within the dance field, towards its wider implications to the domain of Art and its appreciation. This research investigates these critical voices through questionnaires/interview questions that focuses on both locals in and out of the dance field, and experienced/qualified local practitioners in the arts. The study reveals dance in Trinidad to be underappreciated. There is a level of illiteracy that is the root cause of this underappreciation for dance. Due to this lack of knowledge, this study seeks to expose the significance of dance to all. It reveals why dance should not be viewed as 'less than', but should be considered as equal when compared to the world of works, by giving it the respect that it rightfully deserves, and understanding that it is more than just movement.

Keywords: Arts, Dance, Value, Appreciation, Function, Trinidad and Tobago

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Value of Dance Behind the Voice of Criticism in Trinidad and Tobago!

Art is a word that can be defined in numerous ways, reliant on the individual's experience and inclination of the form. According to Dutta, a subject of constant contention in books and journal articles is the definition of art. Besides other variations and concepts of art, such as “craft” or “applied art”, it usually indicates to convey or communicate an idea (Dutta). Tolstoy, with the perspective of beauty being subjective, refuses to view art as an “activity that is productive of beauty”, but rather begs the question, “What noble purpose are painting, sculpture, music, literature, and the other arts fit to serve in the life of man?”. Dance is a key component within the arts and it has an important role in the life of man. ‘Can we dance’, a socio-cultural narrative of the contribution of Dance to the development of Trinidad and Tobago people.

Narrowing on the Caribbean specifically, dance is one form that is purposed to educate people of their past, connect them to their roots and actively represent their culture. Sloat in her book “Caribbean Dance from Abakuá to Zouk: How Movement Shapes Identity”, states that the “complex, fused and layered cultures” is what “gave birth” to Dance (Sloat). The authors in this book, from notable cultural leaders to pioneering choreographers, reveal how dance shapes personal, communal and national identity (Sloat). Aspects that contribute to identity are social history, tradition, ritual and performance (Sloat).

The arts have an important role in education. Dance education, though it may sound simple on the surface, is indeed complex and isn't just simply combining dance and education (*Defining dance education*). It is educating the learner through dance media, dance making and dance appreciation (*Defining dance education*).

Many dance practitioners around the world have protested their beliefs about dance, stating that it is underappreciated. Dorfman states that dancers are looked at as having nothing tangible to sell, and this may be so because many believe that we are “body-based creators”, giving the impression that enjoyment and gratitude should be enough for our hard work. According to Tolstoy and Maude, “people dedicate a vast amount of time, labour and money to the creation, exhibition, performance, appreciation and criticism of paintings, statues, dramas, operas, dances, music and poetry.” According to Greene, “Those who are not associated with dance often fail to realize the powerful impacts of dance on a person’s life.”

The arts, as a unit, has been viewed as ‘less than’ in the eyes of many for years around the world, although it holds much value. Criticism is ever-present, whether it be about race, religion, ethnicity, or any other aspect of humanity. It even dwells in the arts. Due to this common visible thread, this dissertation views criticism through the lens of underappreciation. It aims to combat these assumptions through focusing mainly on Dance. However, it begs these questions, “Is Dance underappreciated in Trinidad and Tobago, and are Trinbagonians knowledgeable about this art form? Do we as a Republic, know the value of Dance in our nation?” Dance contributes in so many to our culture, and is an integral part of who we are. The study reveals the significance of Dance and examines the appreciation/respect for the art form in Trinidad and Tobago’s culture.

B. Rationale

This study, evaluating the value of dance in Trinidad, seeks to:

- Revise a dominant and traditional misconception of Dance being less than the average area of performance, study or career in society.

- Elucidate ‘norm’ and ‘value’, that makes a contribution for respectability and professionalism within the dance field, towards its wider implications to the domain of Art and its appreciation.

C. Thesis Statement

‘Can we dance’, a socio-cultural narrative of the contribution of Dance to the development of Trinidad and Tobago people.

D. Parameters

The research focuses on the most recent part of history as it looks at the underappreciation of dance in the 21st century. The dissertation assesses the twin island of Trinidad and Tobago, focusing mainly on Trinidad, looking at the North, South, East, West and Central regions of the nation. The social impacts of the underappreciation at hand will be examined to gain authentic information from both the locals in and out of the field of dance, and experienced/qualified local practitioners in the arts. Gathering as much information as possible from locals of all kinds is one of the aims for this study.

E. Objectives

This work is intended to:

- Outline and examine the significance of Dance in Trinidad and Tobago culture.
- Outline and discuss three local dance expressions’ history and meaning.
- Examine the appreciation/respect for the art form of dance in Trinidad and Tobago’s culture.

F. Objective Questions

- What is the essential function of Dance in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago?

- What are three local dance expressions, history and meaning?
- Why isn't dance appreciated within the Republic's culture aesthetics?

G. Research Aim

This dissertation aims to reveal the significance of Dance and examine the appreciation/respect of the art from in Trinidad and Tobago's culture.

H. Methodology

This is a socio-cultural study on locals, outlining the importance of dance and examining the appreciation for the field in Trinidad and Tobago. It follows a qualitative approach as the research requires scribal comments to determine its data about the criticism given by locals and received by people within the dance field. This information will be accessed through primary and secondary sources such as surveys, and for the sourcing of information on dance, online sources such as webpages, newspaper and other articles will be used, as well as scholarly articles on this topic.

I. Chapter Outline

This dissertation consists of four key chapters. Chapter one presents a literature review of the significance of dance, three local dance expressions' history and meaning, and it outlines the underappreciation of dance. It examines some general misconceptions of dance in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, citing academic concentrations in the field. Chapter two initiates the use of methodological tools used in this study. Focusing on data collection from qualitative sources, using various diagrams and relevant literature review considerations. Chapter three further elaborates on the analysis of data collection designs in chapter two. This analysis would validate from the field if the research objective was proven or disproven. Chapter four discusses the findings of the data

and also includes sources that show dance to be significant. The conclusion, however, speaks on the findings of the entire research through a summary.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Literature Review – Introduction

What is art? Art is a word that can be defined in numerous ways, reliant on the individual's experience and inclination of the form. According to Dutta, a subject of constant contention in books and journal articles is the definition of art. Besides other variations and concepts of art, such as “craft” or “applied art”, it usually indicates to convey or communicate an idea (Dutta). C.L.R. James, a Trinidadian historian, journalist and Marxist, in his book, “Beyond a Boundary”, broadens the scope of art when he revealed that it is much greater than just artistic expression but it is indeed a skill and takes great courage and endurance. Tolstoy, however, states that, “sacrifices of labour, of human life, and even of goodness” must be made, and he asks, “is it true that art is so important that such sacrifices should be made for its sake?” (14). Danticat supports this question with her book “Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work”, where she reveals the importance or value of art through sharing the various stories of artists, including herself, who create despite of, or due to the horrors that drove them from their homelands and that continue to haunt them, making sacrifices for the sake of art. Tolstoy, with the perspective of beauty being subjective, refuses to view art as an “activity that is productive of beauty”, but rather begs the question, “What noble purpose are painting, sculpture, music, literature, and the other arts fit to serve in the life of man?”. Dance is a key component within the arts and it has an important role in the life of man. ‘Can we dance’, a socio-cultural narrative of the contribution of Dance to the development of Trinidad and Tobago people.

1.1 Essential aspects and functions of Dance.

As everything else in the world, Dance once had a beginning. Some of the earliest historical records who show the origins of dance are cave paintings in India dating to 8000 BCE, along with Egyptian tomb paintings, depicting dance in 3300 BCE (*History of dance: Universal elements and types of dance* - 2023). History have been preserved by people through the help of art ever since the birth of civilizations (*Dance styles and history*). Traditional pasts are communicated to people through events, sculptures and created paintings (*Dance styles and history*). Many historians believe that the social celebratory and ritual dances were essential for the early people to grow (*Dance styles and history*). This shows everyone that dance tracks history in each time period, and it mirrors the social anthropology. It plays the role of a vehicle for history and takes us back to when we didn't even exist yet. Dance has a key role in culture as it is a reflection of our past and what makes us who we are. Narrowing on the Caribbean specifically, dance is one form that is purposed to educate people of their past, connect them to their roots and actively represent their culture. Sloat in her book "Caribbean Dance from Abakuá to Zouk: How Movement Shapes Identity", displays dance serving as one of the roots in these regions' major islands. She states that the "complex, fused and layered cultures" is what "gave birth" to Dance (Sloat). Culture and history are the engines for dance; this fact not only applies to Abakuá and Zouk, but to all Caribbean islands and the world in extension (Sloat). The authors in this book, from notable cultural leaders to pioneering choreographers, reveal how dance shapes personal, communal and national identity (Sloat). Aspects that contribute to identity are social history, tradition, ritual and performance (Sloat).

Sloat also has another book entitled, "Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Islands Culture", where she further "connects the dance of the islands with their rich multicultural histories and complex identities". Her work focuses on the Caribbean and our culture, proving that

our history, when colonization, slavery and migration took place, is embedded in our dances as it reflects and connects us to our past and to each other (Sloat). Music is also a key component in our Caribbean culture and important aspect of dance, the same as dance is an important aspect of music. They flow together when music flows through the people of the Caribbean islands and comes out in dance (Sloat). In unity, they not only create or hold the storyline of culture, but they display the his and her stories of a people. Either through representing societal norms and values, festivals, religion and entertainment that codifies that society.

The arts have an important role in education. It increases student engagement, encourages children to learn positive behaviours, attitudes and habits, enhances creativity, sharpens students' critical intellectual skills, teach methods for learning language skills, mathematics and other subjects, provides an opportunity for aesthetic learning and teamwork, and lastly, increases capacity for leadership (Drive). Dance education, though it may sound simple on the surface, is indeed complex and isn't just simply combining dance and education (*Defining dance education*). It is educating the learner through dance media, dance making and dance appreciation (*Defining dance education*). A definition of dance is only the foundation to build an understanding of dance education (*Defining dance education*). Dance education covers a wide scope on history, choreography, movement analysis, anatomy and physiology, culture, heritage, various styles of costuming and dance festivals worldwide. It also educates you on different forms/styles of dances and techniques around the world, how dance can be used to integrate other subject areas within the school curriculum and so much more than what meets the eye.

In Trinidad and Tobago, many of our dances derived from our pasts due to colonization, slavery and migration (Simon). This would have caused a wide variety of people from different cultures, races and backgrounds, most of who came on the Fatel Razack, to assemble in one accord (Simon).

With them, they brought their own music and dances, that are now performed in local festivals as both rituals and stage performances (Simon). Some of these festivals include, Ramleela, Emancipation Festival, Phagwa, Hosay, Tobago Heritage Festival, First People – Santa Rosa Festival and Carnival (Simon). One of the most legendary people in Trinidad’s dance history would be Beryl McBurnie, the founder of the first folk dance company and theatre in Trinidad, entitled Little Carib Theatre (Ahye). This theatre was founded in the year 1948 and is still in great use today (Ahye). Another pioneer would be Julia Edwards. She was a dancer, choreographer and “The Queen of Limbo” (*Julia Edwards- Trinidad and Tobago*). Edwards was responsible for popularizing limbo dance in the 1950s and invented a lot of the variations that come with it (*Julia Edwards- Trinidad and Tobago*). Trinidad and Tobago is rooted in dance, as dance is rooted in Trinidad and Tobago.

1.2 Local dance expressions’ history and meaning.

McBurnie outlines the dances of Trinidad in her book, “Dance Trinidad Dance”. One dance would be Limbo. Limbo originates in West Africa, where it was used to ready the young initiates of the tribe in physical fitness (McBurnie). It was brought to Trinidad by slaves who practiced the feat at wakes during the bongo session (McBurnie). Limbo can be found in Trinidad in fishing villages like Carenage, Blanchisseuse, Mayaro, Toco and Cumana (McBurnie). These are where expert limbo dancers bring mime and laughter to a performance (McBurnie).

Another local dance is the Bele. According to McBurnie, “This is a dance that speaks with a flounce and flare of the grand days of the French in the Lesser Antilles, who boast with pride of an African heritage. The Bele goes back to the age of the French court and minuet, mincing step turn, point, and bow. Peasants copied steps from their masters, with less subtlety, but greater

flourish of movement expressing a refreshing naivete. Underlying the dance was a provoking sensuality, this ‘primitive minuet’ as it might have been named.”

Lastly, the Calinda/Kalinda was a dance to the drum and shack-shack in the plantations during colonial times, but in Trinidad it is not significant as a dance but for the fact it has become connected to a form of stick-fighting (Meyer). The rhythm of the old Calindas is overpowered by stick fighting and carries the same name (Meyer). Stick fight was a part of the emancipation celebrations such as Canboulay, where the Negre Jardin masquerade was adopted by African stick fighters after 1838 (Meyer). To protect their heads, bands of stickmen wearing coloured shirts and ‘fulas’ would take the streets on Carnival Monday and fight rival bands with bois/bwas (Meyer). There was a change of costume, in which they then wore “tight fitting satin pants, embroidered shirts decorated with swansdown, rhinestones and mirrors” on Carnival Tuesday (Meyer). In present time, the Negre Jardin costume can only be seen during traditional mass and at the national stick fighting finals where stickmen wear the decorated shirts to fight for the ultimate title of King (Meyer).

1.3 Dance appreciation culture aesthetics.

The question of abstraction and expression, mostly in theatre dance have been argued by critics, along with the assumption that dance is a serious art form (“Dance | Definition, Characteristics, Types, History, People, and Facts”). This assumption was not always held in recent history, and places like Europe, outside Russia and Denmark, in the late 19th century, viewed dance with little aesthetic value and as mere entertainment (“Dance | Definition, Characteristics, Types, History, People, and Facts”). There were a lot of changes in attitude towards dance as both as an art form and a social activity, that varied dramatically throughout history (“Dance | Definition, Characteristics, Types, History, People, and Facts”). In the 21st century, however, the

misconceptions of dance are the same, despite how much the art form of dance would have grown throughout the years.

Many dance practitioners around the world have protested their beliefs about dance, stating that it is underappreciated. Dorfman agrees with this statement and speaks about it. He asks the question, “How did Dance get stuck with this devalued image?” (Dorfman). He voices his opinion about dance practitioners always having to ask for money, are constantly begging for morsel of sustenance and are seen as “the poor step children of the arts” (Dorfman). He states that dancers are looked at as having nothing tangible to sell, and this may be so because many believe that we are “body-based creators”, giving the impression that enjoyment and gratitude should be enough for our hard work (Dorfman). Greene, a seasoned dancer, is in agreement with Dorfman and makes the statement, “dance rarely earns the respect that other sports do”, further shining light on how people do not acknowledge dance as a sport. He gives examples of some of the common criticising comments he may have encountered about dance, such as it being called a “silly hobby”, “a waste of time” and “an excuse to get attention” (Greene). According to Tolstoy and Maude, “people dedicate a vast amount of time, labour and money to the creation, exhibition, performance, appreciation and criticism of paintings, statues, dramas, operas, dances, music and poetry.” According to Greene, “Those who are not associated with dance often fail to realize the powerful impacts of dance on a person’s life.”

1.4 Summary

Introduction

What is art? C.L.R. James broadens the scope of art when he revealed that it is much greater than just artistic expression but it is indeed a skill and takes great courage and endurance. Tolstoy, with the perspective of beauty being subjective, refuses to view art as an “activity that is productive of beauty”, but rather begs the question, “What noble purpose are painting, sculpture, music, literature, and the other arts fit to serve in the life of man?”. Dance is a key component within the arts and it has an important role in the life of man. ‘Can we dance’, a socio-cultural narrative of the contribution of Dance to the development of Trinidad and Tobago people.

Essential aspects and functions of Dance.

History have been preserved by people through the help of art ever since the birth of civilizations (*Dance styles and history*). This shows everyone that dance tracks history in each time period, and it mirrors the social anthropology. It plays the role of a vehicle for history and takes us back to when we didn’t even exist yet. Sloat states in her book, “Caribbean Dance from Abakuá to Zouk: How Movement Shapes Identity”, that the “complex, fused and layered cultures” is what “gave birth” to Dance (Sloat). Culture and history are the engines for dance; this fact not only applies to Abakuá and Zouk, but to all Caribbean islands and the world in extension (Sloat). Sloat also has another book entitled, “Making Caribbean Dance: Continuity and Creativity in Islands Culture”. This focuses on the Caribbean and our culture, proving that our history, when colonization, slavery and migration took place, is embedded in our dances as it reflects and connects us to our past and to each other (Sloat). The arts have an important role in education. Dance education, though it may sound simple on the surface, is indeed complex and isn’t just simply combining dance and

education (*Defining dance education*). It is educating the learner through dance media, dance making and dance appreciation (*Defining dance education*). One of the most legendary people in Trinidad's dance history would be Beryl McBurnie, the founder of the first folk dance company and theatre in Trinidad, entitled Little Carib Theatre (Ahye). This theatre was founded in the year 1948 and is still in great use today (Ahye). Another pioneer would be Julia Edwards. She was a dancer, choreographer and "The Queen of Limbo" (*Julia Edwards- Trinidad and Tobago*). Edwards was responsible for popularizing limbo dance in the 1950s and invented a lot of the variations that come with it (*Julia Edwards- Trinidad and Tobago*). Trinidad and Tobago is rooted in dance, as dance is rooted in Trinidad and Tobago.

Local dance expressions' history and meaning.

Limbo originates in West Africa, where it was used to ready the young initiates of the tribe in physical fitness (McBurnie). It was brought to Trinidad by slaves who practiced the feat at wakes during the bongo session (McBurnie). Another local dance is the Bele. According to McBurnie, "This is a dance that speaks with a flounce and flare of the grand days of the French in the Lesser Antilles, who boast with pride of an African heritage. The Bele goes back to the age of the French court and minuet, mincing step turn, point, and bow." Lastly, the Calinda/Kalinda was a dance to the drum and shack-shack in the plantations during colonial times, but in Trinidad it is not significant as a dance but for the fact it has become connected to a form of stick-fighting (Meyer). The rhythm of the old Calindas is overpowered by stick fighting and carries the same name (Meyer).

Dance appreciation culture aesthetics

In the 21st century, however, the misconceptions of dance are the same, despite how much the art form of dance would have grown throughout the years. Many dance practitioners around the world have protested their beliefs about dance, stating that it is underappreciated. Dorfman agrees with this statement and speaks about it. He asks the question, “How did Dance get stuck with this devalued image?” (Dorfman). Tolstoy and Maude, “people dedicate a vast amount of time, labour and money to the creation, exhibition, performance, appreciation and criticism of paintings, statues, dramas, operas, dances, music and poetry.” According to Greene, “Those who are not associated with dance often fail to realize the powerful impacts of dance on a person’s life.”

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Presentation of Data

This chapter displays the presentation of all data collected from the questionnaire/interview questions. The questions were shared using Google Forms, an online form creator, for a much easier method for data collection.

2.1 Questionnaire description.

The given title of this questionnaire is “DANCE in Trinidad? Is it known and appreciated?” It seeks to reveal how knowledgeable Trinidadians are on the field of Dance and if we appreciate this art form as a nation. The questionnaire was presented in two (2) sections. Section one (1) specifically targeted locals from Trinidad for the sake of the research focus, but also welcomed responses from those from Tobago and other parts of the Caribbean in extension. Section two (2) targeted experienced or qualified practitioners in the arts from Trinidad mainly, and the Caribbean in extension. Section one (1) consists of seventeen (17) questions; six (6) of which has sub questions in the form of alphabetical order, seventeen (17) single choice, three (3) multiple choice, three (3) linear scales and three (3) interview questions. Section two (2) has nine (9) questions in total; four (4) of which has sub headings in alphabetical order, eight (8) single choice and five (5) interview questions.

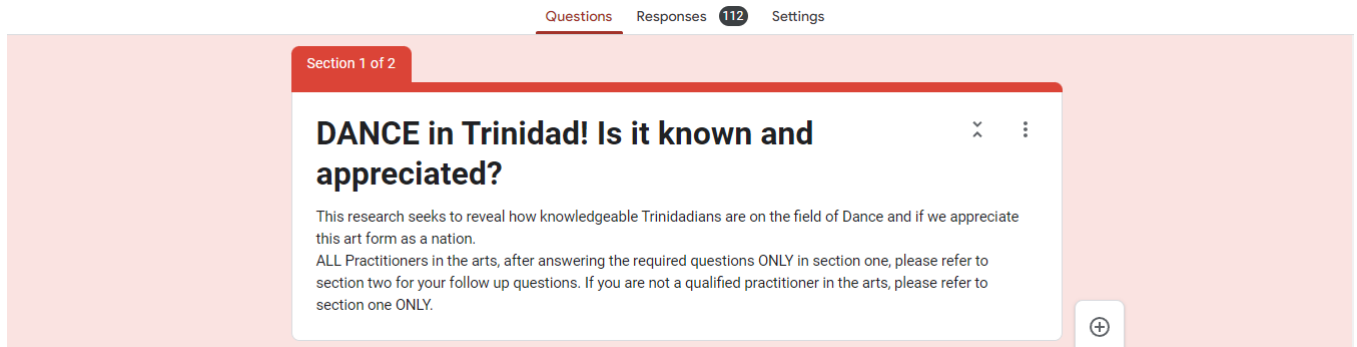
2.2 Data presentation

There is a total of one hundred and twelve (112) respondents for this questionnaire on the knowledge and appreciation of dance.

Section one (1)

Approximately one hundred and nine (109) respondents answered this section.

The image below shows the title, a brief explanation of what the research is about and basic instructions to follow for clarity for all respondents.



A picture of different dance styles found in Trinidad and Tobago was added to the questionnaire to beautify and bring visual support.

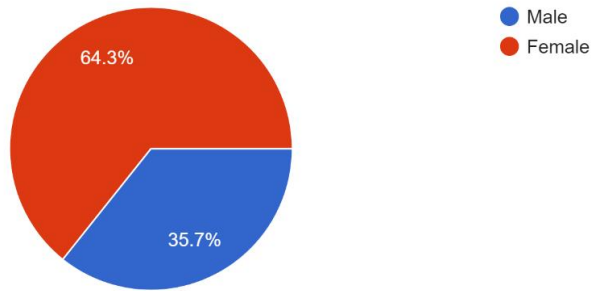


The following presents the questions used for section one (1) of the questionnaire, the number of responses and the statistics for each. Three (3) images will be presented for the viewing of the interview question responses.

Below are the required/foundation questions for all respondents.

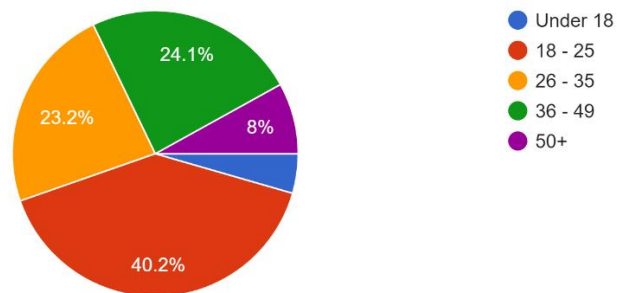
1) What is your gender?

112 responses



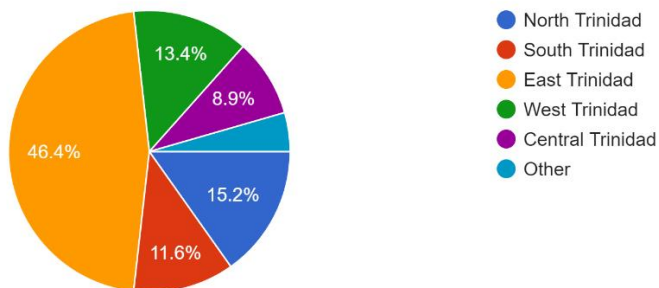
2) What age category do you belong to?

112 responses



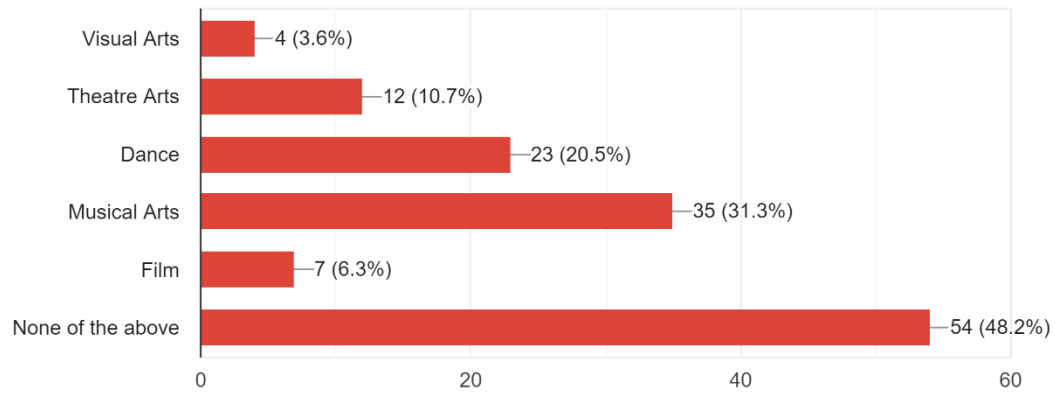
3) What is your geographic location?

112 responses



4) Which of the following fields are you involved in?

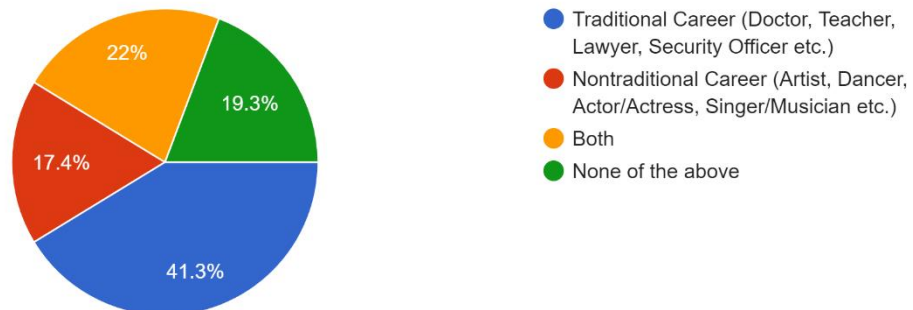
112 responses



Below are the follow up questions.

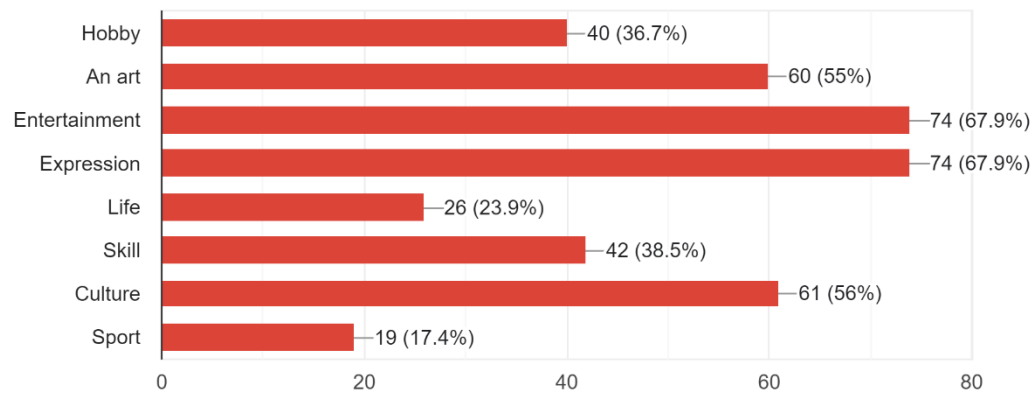
5) Which category best describes you?

109 responses



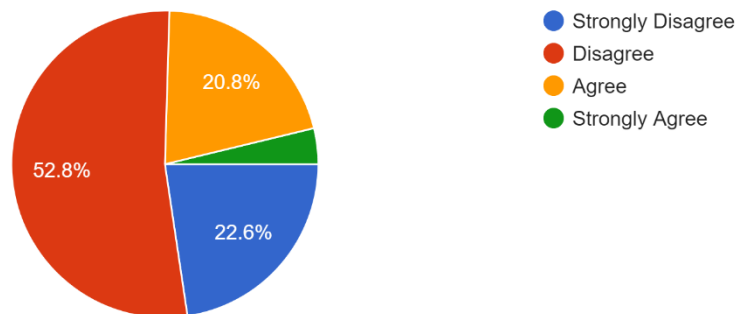
6) Which category(s) below best illustrates Dance to you?

109 responses



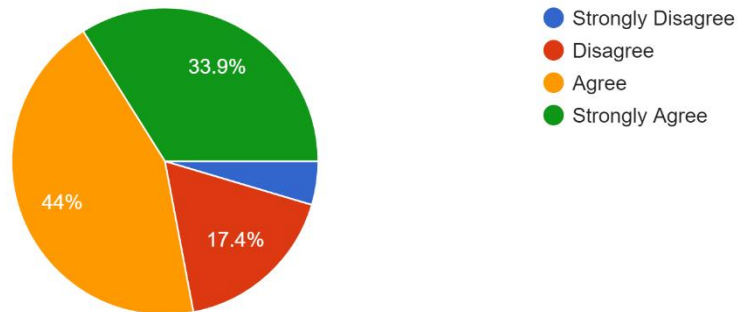
7) Kindly read the following two statements and chose how closely you agree. (a) Dance is a practical form only.

106 responses



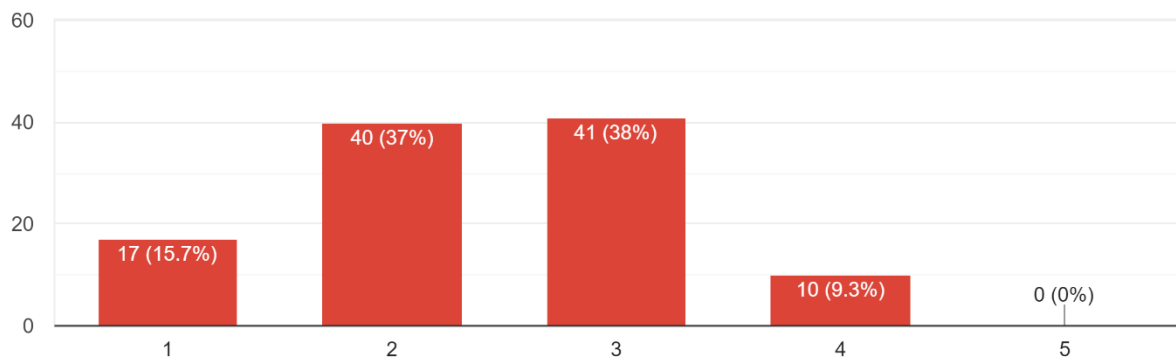
7) (b) Dance Education is just as valuable as other areas such as Medical, Engineering and Law.

109 responses



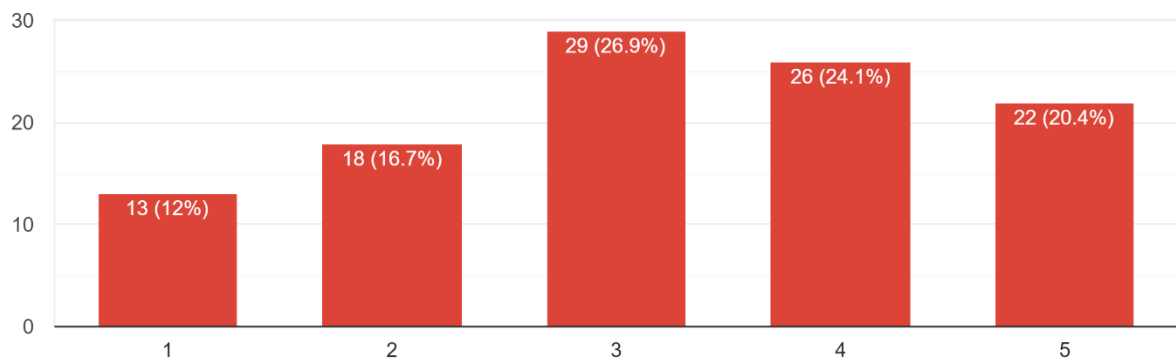
8) How much do you think you know about the art form of Dance in Trinidad?

108 responses



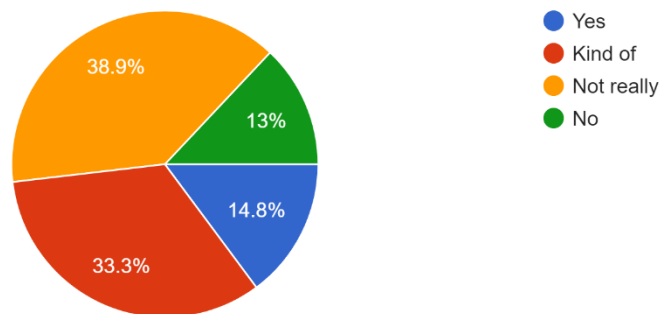
9) (a) How important is Dance in the Secondary School system?

108 responses



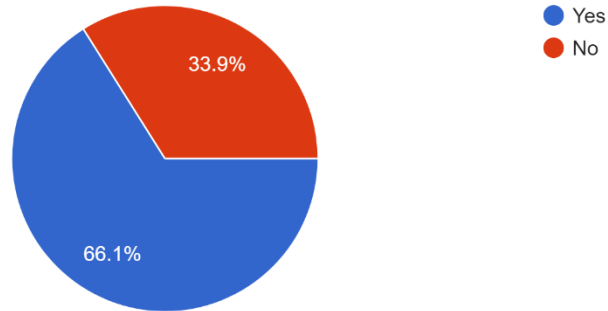
9) (b) Does VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) involve or incorporate Dance well in the Secondary School system?

108 responses



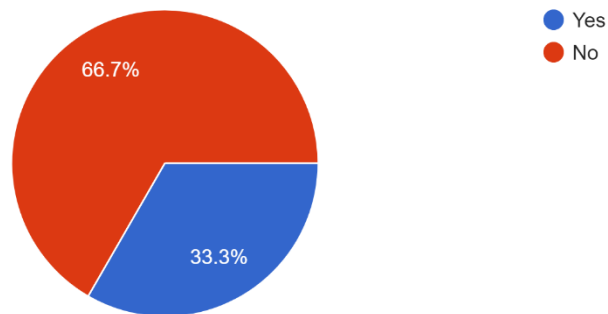
10) Certificate and Bachelor of Arts Degree in Dance! Are you aware of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts Dance programme within the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus?

109 responses



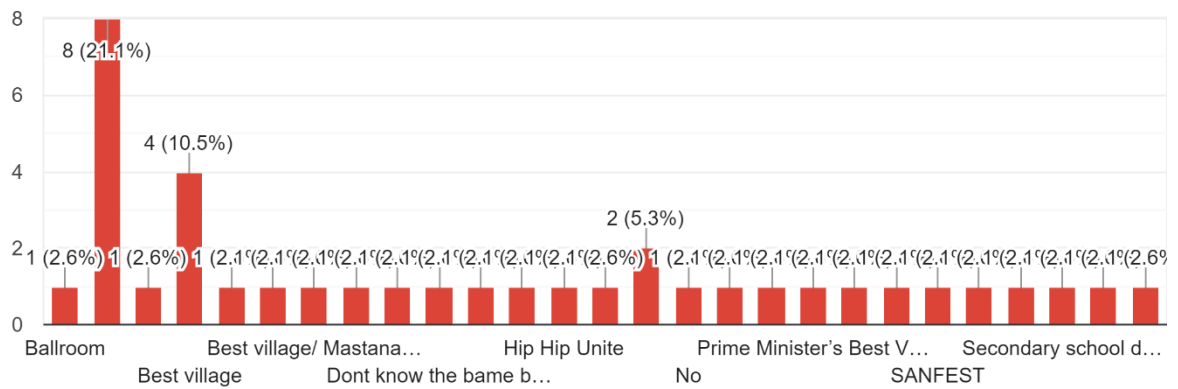
11) (a) Do you know of any dance competitions in Trinidad?

108 responses



11) (b) If yes, name one.

38 responses



12) What would you define Folk Dance as?

99 responses

Cultural

Cultural

Fun

African dance

Traditional dance

A dance developed by people that reflect the life of the people of a certain country or region.

A dance that is an expression of a people within a specific area

Not too such

A dance that is part of the tradition of a specific people

12) What would you define Folk Dance as?

99 responses

I will folk dance is traditional dancing.

Dance to keep tradition alive.

Dance associated with historical activities

African and Indigenous expressions of movement performed to traditional indigenous music.

Folk dance is traditional movements dating all the way back to slavery and what our ancestors did spontaneously in their everyday lives, moments of celebration and traditions

Dancing to drums and incorporating african culture

An expression of culture

Folk dance more falls along the lines of african culture.

Traditional dance of a people or place telling stories of it's people and culture

12) What would you define Folk Dance as?

99 responses

Preservation of Culture

An old people Dance

A traditional dance of a specific group of people

Part of our culture....

Folk dance to me is developed by a particular culture or people to showcase their lives.

A dance that is considered to be a part of the tradition/culture of a particular people, area or region.

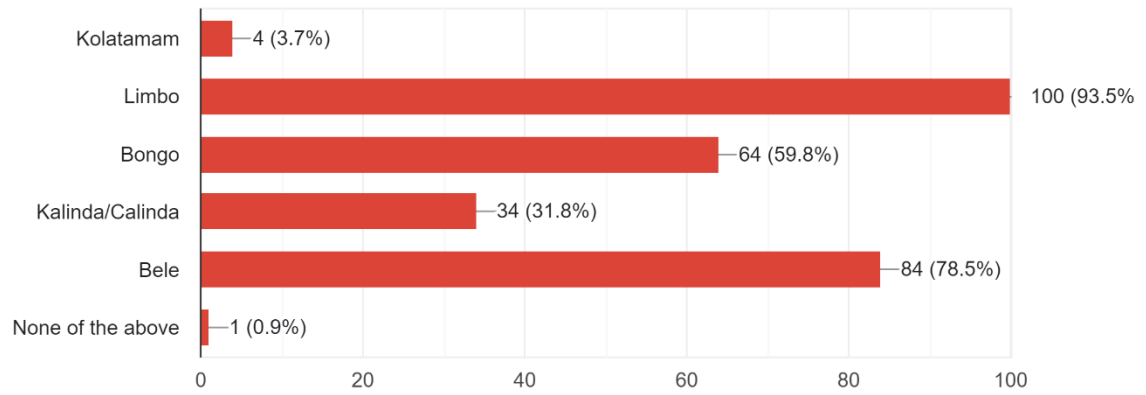
Limbo

Dancing which incorporate historical & cultural movements

Cultural art form linked to African heritage

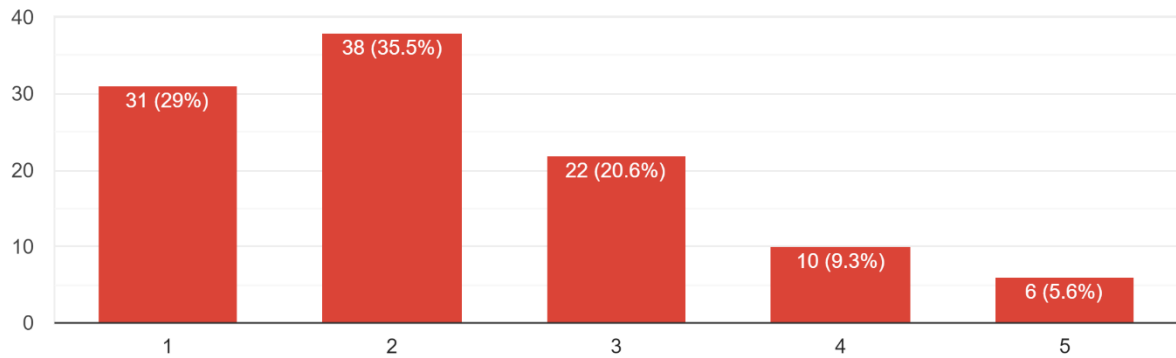
13) (a) Which folk dance term(s) have you heard of?

107 responses



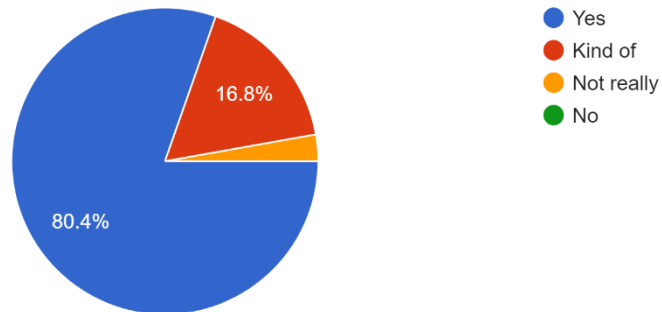
13) (b) How much do you know about the history and meaning of Limbo or Bele as mentioned above in Trinidad and Tobago culture?

107 responses



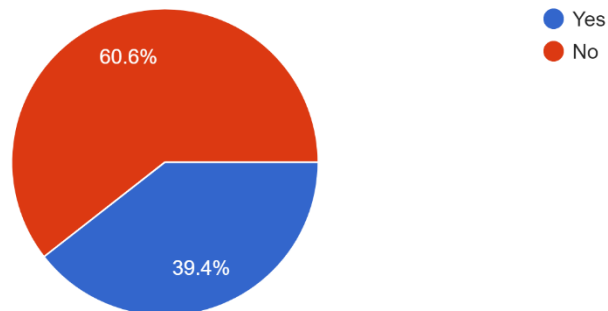
14) Do you agree that Folk Dance influences the Best Village competition?

107 responses



15) (a) Do you think Dance is appreciated in Trinidad?

109 responses



15) (b) Why?

94 responses

Most people attribute dance as a hobby not a career

I guess they're more focused on promoting other things that 'they see' as more important.

I think the arts in general gets sidelined in Trinidad

I see it being portrayed

It is rarely depicted outside of carnival or best village

I said no because other than best village, we don't really hear anything about dance in the country.

It's not promoted enough.

There are alot of dance schools around the nation for people of all ages

It is not well funded and limited programs available to encourage performances. Dance education is treated as an extracurricular rather than a career. So people tend to have little respect for the discipline and

15) (b) Why?

94 responses

It is not well funded and limited programs available to encourage performances. Dance education is treated as an extracurricular rather than a career. So people tend to have little respect for the discipline and benefits of dance to the human body and mind.

Because it is still seen as something that can easily be done and the skill and time taken to master it is undervalued

It is appreciated for entertaining but frowned upon for career

Evident by public attendance at shows

Yes it is noticed... but it isn't that much appreciated as how you could mostly find shows in small corners of trinidad.

Generally it is treated as a source of entertainment. Plus dancers are undervalued and underpaid, so it's not like anyone can make a career out of just dance. Few people have used dance as their alsole source of income locally.

15) (b) Why?

94 responses

Because you hardly hear about any dance competition in Trinidad

Because it not that marketable

I don't think it is appreciated a lot due to the lack of proper education.

You don't see it often and people don't speak about it ...

Because it forms a heavy part of our culture whether Indian, Africa or classical.

Because it is expressed in everything we do as a people.

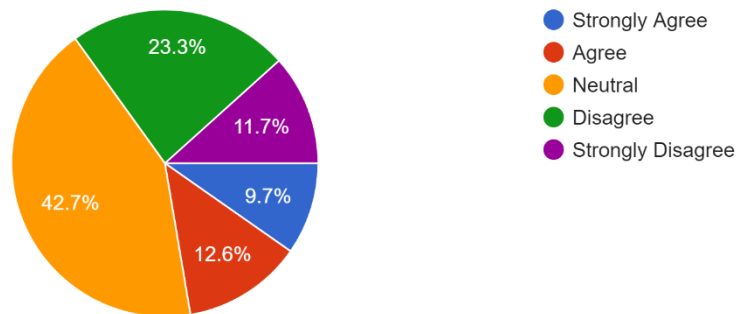
Trinidadians uses dance to express freedom

Not much exposure in our culture

It is not as valued or seen as important when compared to other art forms and fields of study

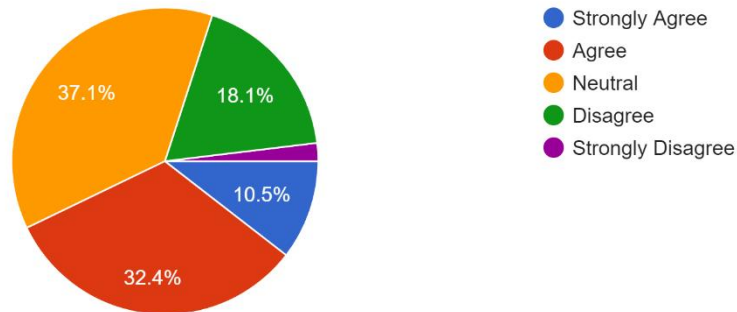
16) Kindly, read the following statements and chose how closely you agree based on the 5 options for each. (a) I feel well supported by my family in choosing Dance as my career path.

103 responses



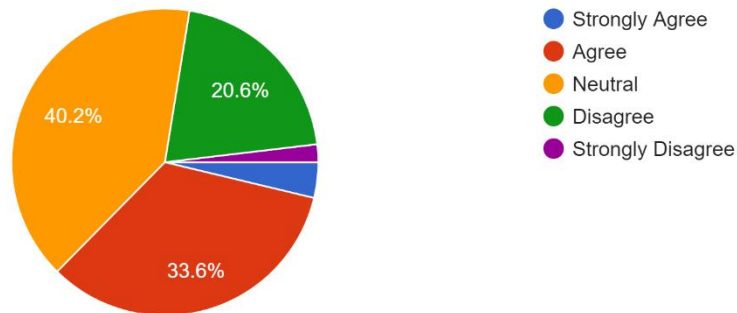
(b) I feel as though my friends and community support the art form of Dance.

105 responses



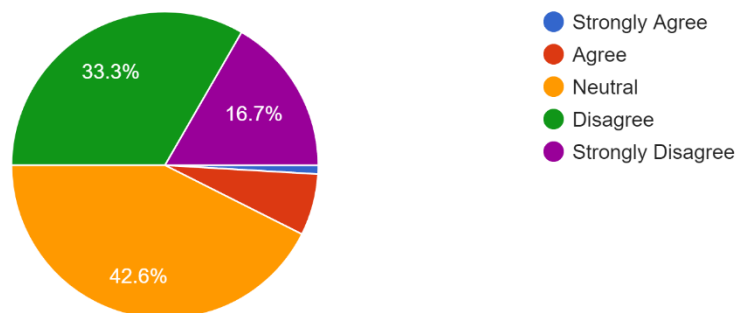
(c) Many in society find expression in Dance performances and highly respects it.

107 responses



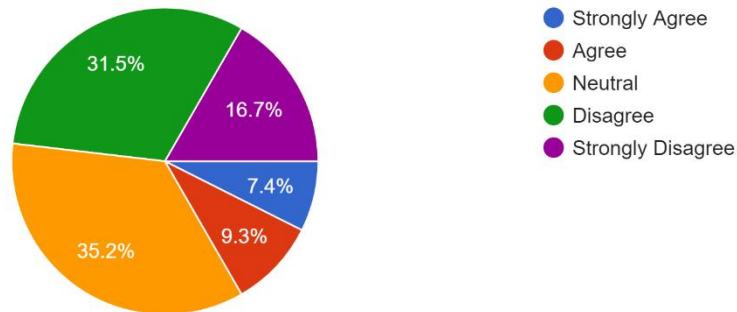
(d) Places of work give the same time off for performers of Dance as any other person within the field of public service.

108 responses



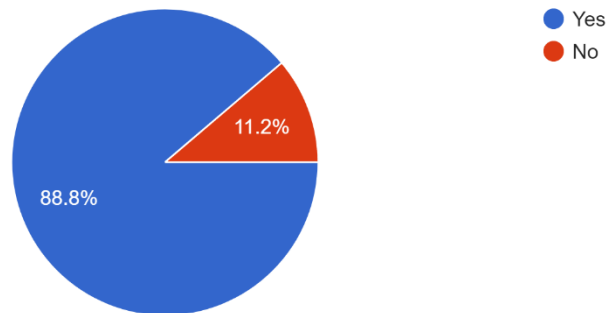
(e) Financial reward is as balanced for Dance as any area within the Cultural Industries.

108 responses



17) Did this survey impact you for the good?

107 responses



Section two (2)

Approximately forty-eight (48) respondents answered this section.

The image below shows the title of the section, a brief explanation of what the research in this section is about, and one instruction to ensure that there is fluidity in the questionnaire so its aim can be met.

Section 2 of 2

Practitioners in the Arts! What is your take on this?

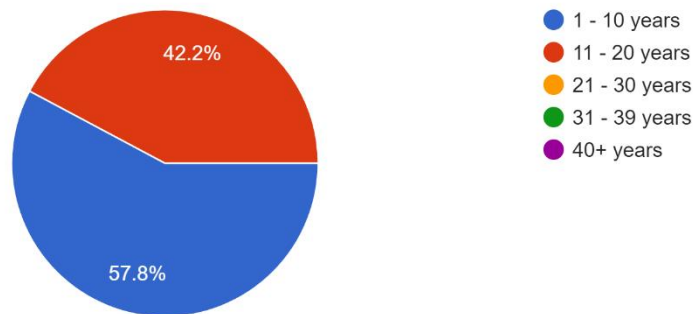


This research seeks to reveal our fellow Trinbagonian art practitioners' perspective on the level of appreciation for the art form of Dance in the Republic of Trinidad.
This section is for practitioners ONLY.

The following presents the questions used for section two (2) of the questionnaire, the number of responses and the statistics for each. Three (3) images will be presented for the viewing of the interview question responses.

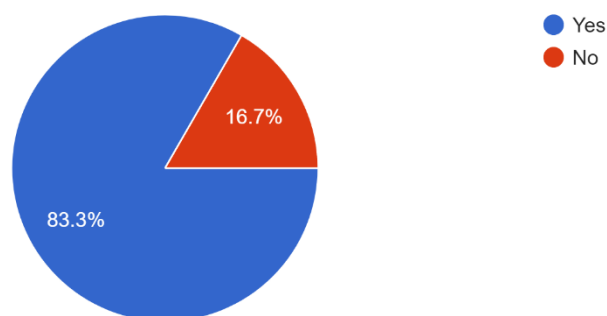
1) How long have you been a practitioner in the arts?

45 responses



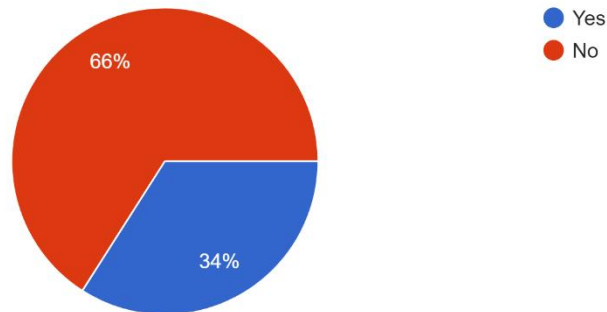
2) Do you believe that a lack of appreciation towards the arts as a unit is evident in Trinidad?

48 responses



3) (a) Have you personally experienced criticism directly in Trinidad?

47 responses



3) (b) If yes, briefly state one experience you would have had of criticism from Trinidadians.

15 responses

Lack of industry so no real money to be made

Always being asked what kind of job I am going to do with my degree

Elements such as popularity, colourism, sexism, racism and willingness to be underpaid often impacts who is hired for jobs as opposed to actual TALENT.

I'm too fat

People always discriminate male dancers, saying stuff like dancing is for women.. Even while performing all different slurs they shout out to you as a male dancer.

When you cannot perform well in traditional subjects, you study the arts

As a person with an impairment, they tend to put limits in me, when I know the sky is my limit.

Texturism and colourism

3) (b) If yes, briefly state one experience you would have had of criticism from Trinidadians.

15 responses

Texturism and colourism

While executing a theatrical piece with young people in their community which involved dance there were utterances by community members that what we were doing was a waste of time.

I'm the form of being in the arts means nothing, it's no money it's no career in trinidad

Many would have said to me "dance??? that's what you gone UWI to do?? why you didn't do something else??"

People feel pan is noise.

Because you and experience a lot of things

It makes no sense to put so much focus on a hobby that doesn't have any benefit.

Not being accepted by others

4) How does the lack of appreciation for the arts affect you as a practitioner?

32 responses

N/A

Difficulty in fostering support and serious academic participation

It affects me as a practitioner in terms of continuing my craft and it

Lack of general knowledge and more career options

I have stepped away from the artform

It doesnt

It doesn't, but I have seen it not being held at a high standard in a lot settings. It is appreciated, but not much.

Makes me wonder sometimes if I chose the right path but I was born to dance and love what I do it's my passion that keeps me going

4) How does the lack of appreciation for the arts affect you as a practitioner?

32 responses

It doesn't because I highly believe that everyone has their own preferences and interests within different fields whether it be sporting activities or the fundamentals of dance.

Neither here nor there. Bit saddening though

It sometimes demotivates me

Alot

Negatively

Due to the economic climate it's hard to just live off the arts, it usually goes along with a steady job

The inability to balance a job and still attend rehearsals

The lack of appreciation impacts the motivation to share the knowledge or keep engaged in the arts at times.

4) How does the lack of appreciation for the arts affect you as a practitioner?

32 responses

If there's lack of appreciation for the arts it means there won't be any opportunities for us to be employed

I don't get to go see dance as often as I would like

When it come to pay as someone that depends on this as a source of income as well as they way dancers are treated like our bodies and indestructible.

It discourages me... makes me wonder what can I really do with my degree.... there is not much opportunities available when people don't appreciate the form.

No financial support

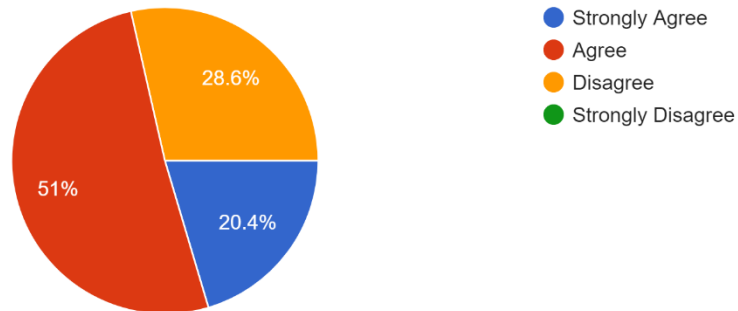
No motivation

Not a practitioner

It makes you feel good

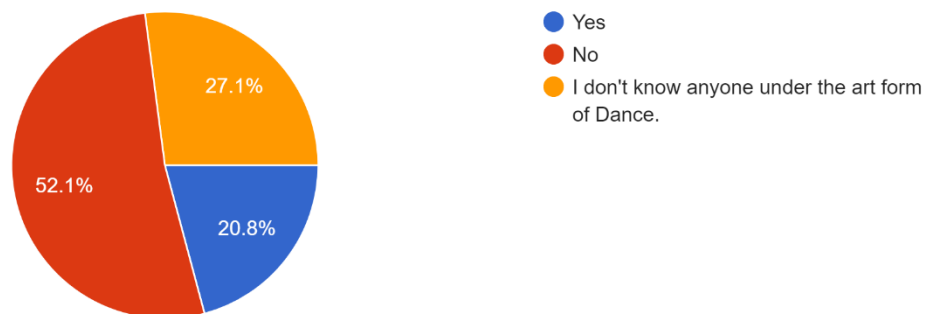
5) Do you agree that Dance, in particular, is NOT appreciated by the citizens of Trinidad as it should be?

49 responses



6) (a) Have you witnessed/ heard of other Dance practitioners receiving unfair treatment of any kind?

48 responses



6) (b) If yes, briefly explain what occurred.

9 responses

Most often, dancers are not paid their worth. People want to pay for a show... But not for training, the time spent on rehearsals and transportation costs.

Don't want to go into details.

Name calling. Males dancers are viewed as gays.

Being paid differently bc of who you know and not by your talent.

Not wanting to wear skimpy clothing , stealing of choreography by a manager

One individual was told that the cost they stated for their talent was too high and that they weren't a soca star or anything important in the society.

Such as the way they are being trained, a disregard to time of rehearsal and safety, a lack of understanding for unavailability and the lack of opportunities given to them or turned down by leaders.

they said they were underpaid for the dance they would have done as a back up dancer

6) (b) If yes, briefly explain what occurred.

9 responses

Don't want to go into details.

Name calling. Males dancers are viewed as gays.

Being paid differently bc of who you know and not by your talent.

Not wanting to wear skimpy clothing , stealing of choreography by a manager

One individual was told that the cost they stated for their talent was too high and that they weren't a soca star or anything important in the society.

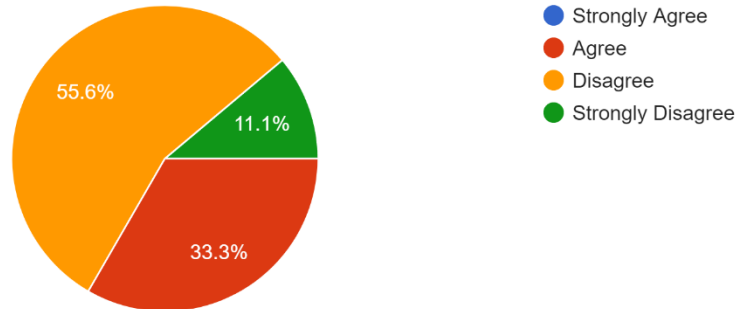
Such as the way they are being trained, a disregard to time of rehearsal and safety, a lack of understanding for unavailability and the lack of opportunities given to them or turned down by leaders.

they said they were underpaid for the dance they would have done as a back up dancer.

People does cheat

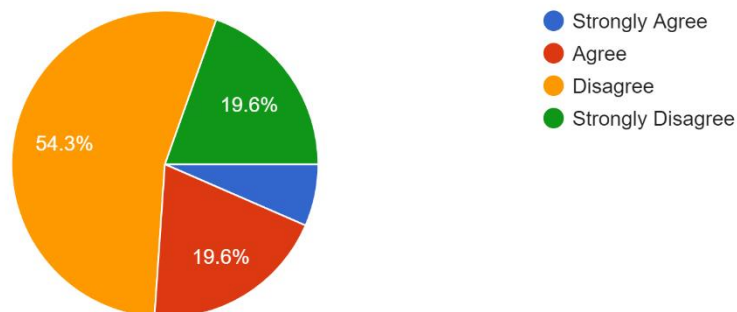
7) Kindly, read the following statements and chose how closely you agree with them. (a) Places of work give the same time off for performers of Dance ...ny other person within the field of public service.

45 responses



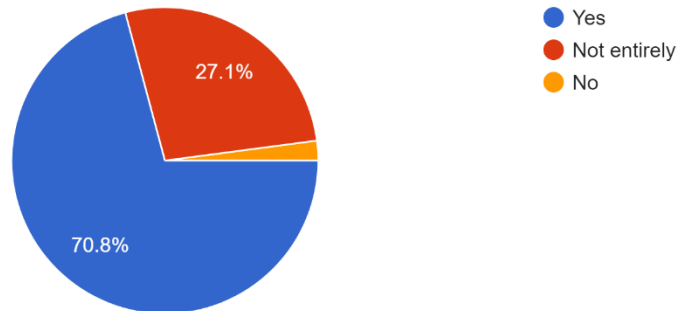
(b) Financial reward is as balanced for Dance as any area within the Cultural Industries.

46 responses



8) (a) Do you agree that the lack of appreciation for the art form of Dance, stems from the illiteracy of the people about the field?

48 responses



8) (b) If you would have chosen "No" or "Not entirely" in the previous question, briefly state what else do you think contributes to the lack of appreciation.

8 responses

Education system based on a colonial outdated curriculum. Lack of schools of art, dance and music in country. Dance and music is viewed as unimportant within the government and private sector.

Non dancers have no idea what it takes to be a dancer. How gruelling the process can be. They see the performance and not the work that goes into it even if they do.... It is undervalued still compared to traditional academic study.

Some dancers unwillingness to upgrade their art

The fact that we live within an island surrounded by different races and people of power yet still where some of us may need the financial aid because not all of us was born with parents who can fully supply us with the tools needed to move forward is done challenging enough already then there is those sitting in a position not only governmental wise but overall to help yet still they won't so basically most of us are at a disadvantage then there are those of us who can be able to move on forward but find ourselves in situations that revoke us from elevating.

Traditionally there is a bias against the arts and they are not seen as serious pursuits or occupations.

. "

8) (b) If you would have chosen "No" or "Not entirely" in the previous question, briefly state what else do you think contributes to the lack of appreciation.

8 responses

traditional academic study.
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Traditionally there is a bias against the arts and they are not seen as serious pursuits or occupations.
Idk
Not high on the priority list of importance
Lace of concern

9) What is ONE thing you think can be done to encourage national respect towards the art form of Dance?

39 responses

Greater education and access to support
Funding of regular performances and competitions, robust dance, music and art curriculum from primary and secondary school, public education on the importance of dance and music to the human body and mind.
More knowledge and insight on the process, skill and hard work it takes to master these dance forms and perform them
Education, involve them in workshops
A public outreach program can be launched educating people about dancers. Who they are.. what they do. The process involved. The ministry of arts and Multiculturalism should aid in drafting up legislation that dictates that dancers be paid PROPERLY. Elements such a as paid dance internships and scholarships could be offered by the ministry of multiculturalism or the ministry of education. Monetary dance awards and government grants being implemented with chance the public's view of the art.
Show case culture more often

9) What is ONE thing you think can be done to encourage national respect towards the art form of Dance?

39 responses

People need to speak about it more because all you does hear or really see any dance is Carnival morning...

Make it a mandatory subject area in all schools.

I strongly believe that is an artist work. To create so fiercely that their demands respect.

Creating a form for dancers to actually make a career in it.

Those in high places showing more interest and support within their own people or kind.

Continue building awareness, continue training and educating

Educate yourself before casting judgements.

Research on the topic

Education

9) What is ONE thing you think can be done to encourage national respect towards the art form of Dance?

39 responses

Tourism

Union amongst the dancers , discontinuing of participation in big carnival events when there's past disrespect. All money isn't good money .

There can be a greater effort to teach the arts at an earlier age and keep it as part of the formal school curriculum.

Show interest in schools

By having it incorporated in the secondary schools or even primary schools so that we can learn about it

Teach of its benefits more

A national day of dance where traditional and non traditional dance is highlighted in Trinidad and more competition that reflect on show casing the talent in all ages and companies.

Introduction of the artform at primary level or earlier

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Data Analysis

This questionnaire/interview questions, entitled “DANCE in Trinidad! Is it known and appreciated?”, seeks to reveal how knowledgeable Trinidadians are on the field of Dance and if we appreciate this art form as a nation. It was created to collect data in two (2) sections; section one (1) specifically targeted locals from Trinidad for the sake of the research focus, but also welcomed responses from other people from Tobago and various parts of the Caribbean in extension. Section two (2) targeted experienced or qualified practitioners in the arts from Trinidad mainly, and Tobago and the Caribbean in extension.

3.1 General observations

At the beginning of the questionnaire, there were general questions that would have been made a requirement for the submission of responses. These questions and their statistics in their correct order asked, are;

- 1) “What is your gender?” – Respondents are 64.3% female and 35.7% male, with women’s voice being more prominent in this study.
- 2) “What age category do you belong to?” – Ages 18-25 takes the lead with 40.2%, 36-49 is in second place with 24.1% and 26-35 has a close 23. 2%. This questionnaire varies from ages 18 to 49.
- 3) “What is your geographic location?” – Majority of the respondents live in East Trinidad with 46.4%, North Trinidad is a far 15.2%, West Trinidad with 13.4%, South Trinidad at 11.6% and Central Trinidad at 8.9%. 4.5% of the responds were not from Trinidad, but maybe Tobago or the Caribbean in Extension.

- 4) “Which of the following fields are you involved in?” – 48.2% of the respondents are not involved in any of the arts. This is a plus for this research, as it will assist in determining how knowledgeable Trinidadian’s are about the field of dance, as majority of them aren’t involved in the arts. If most of the information gathered proves that they are not so knowledgeable about the art form, then it indicates that little information is being spread about dance throughout Trinidad. The other art forms include; Musical arts with 31.3%, Dance 20.5%, Theatre arts with 10.7%, Film with 6.3% and lastly Visual arts with 3.6%.

3.2 Key Observations – Section one (1)

In comparison with question number four, “Which of the following fields are you involved in?”, 41.3% of the respondents said that they have traditional jobs, such as a doctor, teacher, lawyer and others. This seconds the fact that most of the respondents are not involved in the arts, leaving hope for the truth of their knowledge to be made visible.

Survey question numbers six (6) to eleven B (11) (b) was constructed to reveal the function of Dance in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, in the locals’ point of view. Some of the questions I asked were, “How do they view dance? How much do they know about it? How well do they think Dance functions in this society?” After examining the statistics, these questions are answered as follows;

- 1) “How do they view dance?”

Locals view dance as entertainment and expression equally with 67.9%, along with an art and culture, almost tied for second place, with 55% and 56%. Although the other three are great selections for dance, entertainment being tied for number one is questionable, as it can also be

looked at in a negative perspective where locals may view it as just entertainment and nothing more.

Two (2) statements were presented for locals to choose how closely they agree. These statements are, “Dance is a practical form only” and “Dance Education is just as valuable as other areas such as Medical, Engineering and Law”. 75.4% of strongly disagreed and disagreed dance being a practical form only, demonstrating that they believe it is indeed more. A rising 77.9%, however, strongly agrees and agrees to dance being just as valuable as other subject areas, proving that they view dance as equal.

When asked how important is Dance in the secondary school system rating it from 1 - 5, with one (1) being “not important” and five (5) being “very important”, the top three highest percentages fall in the category of numbers three (3), four (4), and five (5). This shows that they do view dance as important, but its according to what situation or position dance is placed in for them to determine if they are standing strong with it, or not so strong.

2) How much do they know about dance?

Rating their answer from one (1) to five (5), with 1 as the lowest, they were asked, “How much do you think you know about the art form of Dance in Trinidad?”. With the percentages of 38% and 37%, numbers three (3) and two (2) were selected. This reveals that they know a little about the field.

To confirm this statement, a question about Trinidad’s competitions was asked. This was done to see if they are knowledgeable about the dance events that takes place in their nation. 66.7% said no and have named one dance competition. This confirms their knowledge to be poor.

3) How well do they think Dance functions in this society?”

In the perspective of dance education and the functions of dance in secondary schools, locals were asked if VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) incorporate or involves Dance well in the secondary school system. 38.9% being the highest percentage said “Not really” and 33.3% being the second highest, said “Kind of”. This shows that majority of the respondents weren’t really in agreement with it being incorporated well in the school system.

Survey questions number twelve (12) to fourteen (14) were constructed to reveal how knowledgeable locals are about Trinidad and Tobago’s folk dances, along with their history and meaning.

1) Do they know what is folk dance?

When asked to define “Folk dance” as one of the interview questions, approximately half had answers that were close to the definition, but the other half doesn’t know much about the topic. This shows that not much attention is paid to Trinidad’s folk dances or folk dances in general. It reveals a lack of interest for Trinidad’s history and culture through the form of dance, as folk dances are directly connected to both.

2) Are they aware of the folk-dance names, history and meaning?

100% knows Limbo, 78.5% knows Bele and 59.8% knows Bongo as the top three (3), when the question “Which folk dance term(s) have you heard of?”, was asked. Although, the respondents would have heard the names before, they were unaware of the history and meaning as 35.5%, the highest percentage, said number 2, and 29% said number 1, when rating from one (1) to five (5) with one (1) being the lowest rating, on how much they know about the history and meaning of Limbo and Bele. The overall result, reveals that their knowledge on Dance is based on what they have seen or heard, but not what they would have learnt.

Survey numbers fifteen A (15) (a) to seventeen (17), focuses on examining the appreciation of dance in Trinidad. Questions were constructed to reveal if locals believe that dance is appreciated in Trinidad on a general scale.

1) Do they believe that dance is appreciated in Trinidad?

When asked, straight forwardly, if they think dance is appreciated in Trinidad, 60.6% said no. They were later asked “Why?” as an interview question, and majority of the responses spoke on dance being viewed as an extra-curricular activity and not a career. Another would be the lack of attention/promotion given to it outside of Carnival and the Prime Minister’s Best Village Competition.

2) Do they feel as though their family, friends and community supports Dance as a career?

Locals were given the opportunity to state whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree or strongly agree with the five statements presented. These statements and their responses are as follows:

- “I feel well supported by my family in choosing Dance as my career path.” – A total of 42.7% stated neutral and 35% stated disagree and strongly disagree.
- “I feel as though my friends and community support the art form of Dance.” – A total of 37.1% stated neutral and 42.9% stated agree and strongly agree.
- “Many in society find expression in Dance performances and highly respects it.” – A total of 40.2% stated neutral and 37.3% stated agree and strongly agree.
- “Places of work give the same time off for performers of Dance as any other person within the field of public service.” – A total of 42.6% stated neutral, and 50% said disagree and strongly disagree.

- “Financial reward is as balanced for Dance as any area within the Cultural Industries.” – A total of 35,2% stated neutral and 48.2% stated disagree and strongly disagree.

The results for these statements reveal that respondents don't feel like their family supports a career in dance, but they are sure that their friends and community finds dance to be intriguing. On the other hand, locals feel as though dance isn't respected as a career, because the financial aspect, along with receiving time off in places of work, were mostly shown to be in disagreement with the statements. As a result, dance isn't appreciated/respected in places of work and in personal family matters, but it is appreciated in communities as a unit.

3.3 Key Observations – Section two (2)

This section reveals local practitioners in the arts to be in agreement with Dance being underappreciated in Trinidad with a large percentage of 83.3%. A percentage of 66% admitted that they have been personally criticised in their art. Many voiced their opinion saying that they would have been told that the reason they chose the arts in the first place, is because they are not capable of doing traditional subjects, others said that they were told that they were wasting their time in the field they're in and their art form has no benefits. They mentioned in other interview questions that the lack of appreciation for the arts, affects them negatively financially and academically. Some also said that it's difficult to be placed in stable jobs and they're demotivated by it. Dance in particular is said to not be appreciated in Trinidad with a percentage of 71.4% of practitioners in and out of the field of Dance in agreement. 66.7% of the practitioners are in disagreement with dancers receiving the same time off as other persons within the field of public service. 73.9% is also in disagreement with Dance having a balanced financial reward as other fields within the cultural industries. A total of 78.8% says that the lack of appreciation for dance stems from a place of illiteracy about the field. The other 21.2% have their own opinion of why there is a lack of

appreciation for dance. These include, biases against the arts and dance being viewed as unimportant when compared to other areas of study. Many also gave their opinions on what they think should be done to encourage national appreciation. Some of these are to have more educational workshops on dance, to promote dance even in day-to-day conversations and launching a public outreach programme.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 Discussion of Findings.

4.1 Essential function of Dance in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dance plays the role of a vehicle for Trinidad's history and takes us back to when we haven't existed yet. Sloat states in her book, "Caribbean Dance from Abakuá to Zouk: How Movement Shapes Identity", that the "complex, fused and layered cultures" is what "gave birth" to Dance (Sloat). However, according to the data collected from the questionnaire, local respondents view dance as important, but that is only according to what situation or position dance is placed in for them to determine if they are standing strong with it, or not so strong. Their knowledge towards the art form of dance is poor, and they don't think that dance is being incorporated or promoted properly in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

4.2 Local dance expressions' history and meaning.

Although the history and meaning of the Limbo, Bele and Kalinda was explained, many local respondents only knew the name of these dances, but don't know the history and meaning behind them.

4.3 Dance appreciation within the Republic's culture.

Many dance practitioners around the world have protested their beliefs about dance, stating that it is underappreciated. Dorfman agrees with this statement and speaks about it. He asks the question, "How did Dance get stuck with this devalued image?" (Dorfman). According to the questionnaire/interview questions, local practitioners also agree with dance being underappreciated in the Republic's culture. Most of the local respondents are in agreement with

the matter. According to Greene, “Those who are not associated with dance often fail to realize the powerful impacts of dance on a person’s life.” Local respondents have shown themselves to lack knowledge about dance in Trinidad and Tobago, and most local practitioners are in agreement with the lack of appreciation for the art form stems from a place of illiteracy.

CONCLUSION

Although the art form of dance is indeed important to Trinbagonians and the world in extension, for its timeline of history, culture and experiences, but many citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are missing out on this wealth of knowledge, as there is a lack of interest and appreciation visible in the nation. Although dance is something they enjoy due to their love for parties, grand events and festivals, such as Carnival, many view dance as an extra-curricular activity and nothing more. It is true that there is a handful of Trinbagonians that truly appreciate dance and all it has to offer, but it is also statistically visible that many don't see it for what it truly is. Practitioners and other locals who appreciate this art form have agreed that this underappreciation stems from a place of illiteracy about the field, therefore a stand must be taken for the art forms' sake.

LIMITATIONS

It was difficult to separate my genuine emotional feelings as a practitioner to this topic and academic concentration. Due to not wanting to alienate those doing the questionnaire/interview questions, I had to gently guide them to what my research topic was trying to prove. Not sure if this balancing act may have caused interpretive issues, but the questionnaire format allowed me to seek the inner story affecting dancers at various levels, experience and training. I thought to myself “Did my feelings overpower my questions?”. It was hard not to develop interview bias, so constantly rechecking the questions to get composite and pure elements from the field was the approach I took.

RECOMMENDATION

More educational workshops on dance, promotion of dance in day-to-day conversations and the launching of a public outreach programme should be taken under consideration to fill the gap of illiteracy toward the dance field.

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