



CCDR Newsletter

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CHOREOMETRICS REVISITED

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Editor's Note: this is an abridged version of a paper presented at the 2003 annual meeting of Southwest Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology, April 12, 2003

ABSTRACT: Alan Lomax invented Choreometrics as the dance equivalent to Cantometrics. Introduced in the 1960s these programs were designed to be analytical tools for ethnomusicologists and ethnochoreologists to show world wide patterns that co-relate cultural expressions and the socio-economic status of selected cultures.

The Choreometrics technique comprises four major steps.

1. assembling a data base of dance performance behavior stylistics from many cultures, drawn from coded evaluations made by trained "raters."
2. comparing the results of the dance performance behavior stylistics with the behavior stylistics used in subsistence activities (economics and social organization) of the pertinent cultures.
3. comparing the relationship of dance behavior stylistics with those of subsistence activities.
4. mapping world stylistic regions based on generalities deduced from the above.

Step number 4, especially, raises the hackles of dance scholars. Lomax's conclusions show clearly that neither he nor his coders knew the anthropological literature nor were otherwise knowledgeable about the pertinent cultures. Nevertheless, some statisticians lauded Cantometrics and Choreometrics; remarkably, so have some ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, who surely cannot have thoroughly investigated Lomax's conclusions.

Lomax's recent death puts his contributions in the spotlight. He is lauded for his work with American folk music, first with his father, John Lomax. Judging by the commemorations he is practically elevated to the status of folk hero himself. However, I feel obligated to address serious flaws in his Choreometric research. His positivist views and assumptions shape his interpretation and explanation of the data. I am always astounded that many otherwise careful scholars tend to overlook the problems with both his research design and the conclusions.

The Lomax system of measuring and comparing song cultures around the world is called Cantometrics. Its spinoff, Choreometrics, is designed to accomplish the same thing for dance. Despite controversy, Lomax defended these systems to the end of his 87 years in July 2002.

Alan Lomax' death was given wide coverage in the press, on the internet, and a three day Alan Lomax Tribute in New York City, April 9,11-12, 2003. The Tribute included panel discussions and concerts with such luminaries as The New Lost City Ramblers, Pete Seeger, and B.B.King .

However, for many dance scholars the name Alan Lomax conjures up Choreometrics rather than folk songs. It has not received a warm welcome among those dance scholars who are trained

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One of the Mayan dancers from Grupo Cultural U'k U'x PopWuj performing the opening ceremony/invocation blessing with burning copal in a handmade ceremonial pot for The Festival:VII, Festival de Danza y Musica Folklorica, 17, 18 of December, 2002, Chichicastenango, El Quiche, Guatemala.

Andrea Seidel, Florida International University, was one of the first non-Mayans to perform in the all-Mayan folkloric festival, where she danced selections from the Isadora Duncan repertory.

In the August CCDR Newsletter Andrea will share her memories of her extraordinary experiences in Guatemala. Her narrative will become your memories as well as hers.

COMMEMORATING
GERTRUDE PROKOSCH
KURATH'S BIRTH CENTENNIAL

This year is the centennial of the birth of Gertrude Prokosch Kurath (1903-1992). You are invited to share a recollection or appreciation of Gertrude for inclusion in a special commemoration of the "Mother of Dance Ethnology," in the August issue of the *CCDR Newsletter*.

Please send your entry of about 200 words, before July 15, by email: gpk@ccdr.org, or post: 518 S. Agassiz St., Flagstaff, AZ 86001-5711.

Date Sent: April 28, 2003
From: Richard Duree
DanceTraditions@msn.com
Subject: FWD:

The Shakespeare Hokey-Pokey...sorry folks, it was just TOOO funny!

The following is from the Washington Post Style Invitational contest that asks readers to submit "instructions" for something (anything), but written in the style of a famous person. The winning entry was The Hokey Pokey (as written by W. Shakespeare).

*O proud left foot, that
ventures quick within
Then soon upon a backward
journey lithe.
Anon, once more the gesture,
then begin:
Command sinistral pedestal to
writhe.
Commence thou then the fervid
Hokey-Poke,
A mad gyration, hips in wanton
swirl.
To spin! A wilde release from
Heavens yoke.
Blessed dervish! Surely canst go,
girl.
The Hoke, the poke -- banish now
thy doubt
Verily, I say, 'tis what it's all
about.
-- by "William Shakespeare"*

CCDR's SYMPOSIUM
with Applied Indigenous Studies Department at NAU
Applying Dance Ethnology and Dance Research in the 21st Century
June 6-8, 2003, Flagstaff, Arizona



*CCDR's first national symposium exploring knowledge and tools
to survive, thrive and satisfy life-long dance careers
as researchers, teachers, performers, authors, entrepreneurs and producers*

The needs of dance scholars, practitioners, entrepreneurs and committed hobbyists in the 21st century are different from those of the past decades. The economic demands, technological resources and opportunities available for dance are greater than ever in history. Neither those with decades-long careers in the arts nor novices can successfully navigate in this new world alone. To enable each of us to flourish, CCDR is proud to announce "Applying Dance Ethnology and Dance Research in the 21st Century," a unique symposium designed to share and develop the skills necessary for successful dance professionalism. This is a unique opportunity to interact both formally and informally with internationally recognized pioneers in their fields, successful dance professionals, and other like-minded dancers.

Presentations include: "Innovative applications of Dance Ethnology"; "Funding your passion: make arts and money allies"; "Uncovering new understandings about Yaqui rituals in Arizona"; "Applying technologies for On-Line dance research"; "Dance photojournalism"; "Dance Heritage Coalition and dance documentation"; "Significance of dance archival holdings"; "Katherine Dunham and Martha Graham Legacy Projects at Library of Congress"

Presenters include:

Allegra Fuller Snyder, Professor Emerita, Dance and Dance Ethnology, University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), keynote speaker, Foundations, evolutions and changes in the field of Dance Ethnology. Octaviana Trujillo, Chair, Applied Indigenous Studies, Northern Arizona University, (NAU) and formerly Chair of the Yaqui New Pascua Village shares information about the Yaqui, and introduces a rare film of the Yaqui Easter. Elsie Dunham, Professor Emerita, Dance Ethnology, UCLA; Vice-President of CCDR applies ethnohistorical research to reveal new information about the Yaqui Easter cycle. Edy Greenblatt, Dance Ethnology UCLA; PhD in Organizational Behavior Harvard School of Business Administration chairs a session: "Funding your passion: make art and money allies." Gina Marie Wright, Director of Magic Curtain in Flagstaff, a successful performing arts organization. Joann Kealifinohomoku, President and a Founding Director of CCDR presents a discussion of archival holdings at CCDR, featuring Eleanor King and her significance in the dance world. Rose Eichenbaum, Los Angeles, photojournalist, discusses and illustrates Portraits of America's Dance Makers. Elizabeth Aldrich, Director, Dance Heritage Coalition (Washington D.C), discusses a future for dance documentation and preservation. Vicky Risner, Library of Congress, discusses the legacy of modern dance giants, Martha Graham and Katherine Dunham. Pegge Viascaro, Arizona State University discusses theory and applications of online dance education. Adriana Cruz, graduate student UCLA World Arts and Cultures, speaks about Performance and ethnicity among Zapotecs in Los Angeles. Colin Quigley, Vice-Chair, UCLA World Arts and Cultures, moderates a panel "Innovative applications of Dance Ethnology, with participants: Deborah Heifetz-Yahav (Tel Aviv, Israel), Roo Lester (Chicago), Miriam Phillips (San Francisco), Margy McClain (Stillwater, OK), Deidre Sklar (Denton, Texas).

Updates about the SYMPOSIUM program and participants are posted on the
web—CCDR.ORG; Listserv—CCDR-NET@LISTS.NAU.EDU; and CCDR Newsletter

CCDR is honored to have Allegra Fuller Snyder present the keynote:
"Foundations, evolutions and changes in the field of Dance Ethnology"



Professor Emerita of Dance and Dance Ethnology, University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Allegra was former Chair of the Department of Dance, and served as founding Coordinator of the World Arts and Cultures Program at UCLA. Her comprehensive perspective of dance provided a backdrop in pioneering a graduate dance ethnology curriculum at UCLA during the 1970s.

She began her career as a performer and choreographer, but her major concern for the relation between dance and media were reflected in a report for the National Endowment for the Arts, 1968 which served as a model for future developments in the field. She co-directed the first "Dance television workshop" held at the American Dance Festival and a conference on "Researching dance through film and video" sponsored by the Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution. She has directed a number of prize-winning films on dance and served as a core consultant for DANCING, an eight-hour series for PBS. In 1990, before retiring from teaching and administrative responsibilities, she developed and taught Dance in the Visual Media, the first time such a class had been offered at UCLA. She currently is working on projects which concern themselves with documentation and preservation of dance through media. In 2002, she was curator of "Early explorations in the fusion of dance and film," for the Dance Camera West series on dance video in Los Angeles.

Her research interests in Dance Ethnology led her to form a national conference "Dance and Anthropology" for the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD), co-directed with Joann Kealiinohomoku, held in Tuscon, Arizona, 1972. This was not only a seminal meeting for the field of dance, but also a significant experience for conferees with at least a partial observation of the annually held Indian Easter cycle dances.

She became the chairperson of CORD, 1973-1976, supporting in this national organization, a case for dance ethnology as a field of study. She was a selected presenter at the Hong Kong International Dance Conference, July 1990. The summers of 1988, 1992 and 2000 took her to Copenhagen, Denmark; Nafplion, Greece; and Korcula, Croatia where she delivered papers at meetings of the Study Group on Ethnochoreology of the International Council for Traditional Music.



SYMPOSIUM, June 6-8, 2003 Applying Dance Ethnology and Dance Research in the 21st Century
Additional symposium information-accommodations, transportation: WWW.CCDDR.ORG or contact by telephone:
(928) 774-8108. Mailing address: CCDDR-Symposium, 518 South Agassiz, Flagstaff, AZ 86001-5711.

REGISTRATION fees:

\$ 90 for CCDDR members (Book or video donation can be arranged as exchange for partial payment)
 \$ 150 for non-members \$ 40 daily rate (please indicate which day(s)) \$25.00 Non-refundable deposit

MEMBERSHIP in CROSS-CULTURAL DANCE RESOURCES:

<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$ 25.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$ 50.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$ 75.00
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anthropologists (Kealiinohomoku 1974, 1979, 1991; Williams 1974).

Ethnomusicologists indicate they skim over or ignore the three chapters on Choreometrics in the Lomax major 1969 book *Folk Song Styles and Culture*. Surely they do not have an investment in dance scholarship. Some confide they have no connection with the dance departments in their universities. (But, to be sure, neither do many dance people have connections with music departments. Why? This is a problem that needs attention. Are you interested?)

Lomax was exceptional in that he saw the relationship of dance with music and the need to give them equal attention. Still, he made no apparent effort to confer or cooperate with dance scholars who were interested in the Choreometrics method but critical of the results (other than Bartenieff and Paulay who developed the program to suit Lomax's purpose).

Instead of trying to address the criticism in my reviews, he asked a mutual friend why I "hated" him. Of course I did not hate him, but his work and his attitude vexed me, because his initial insights were brilliant but his conclusions from the studies were absurd (Kealiinohomoku 1979, 1991).

Lomax was often difficult, as I discovered from reading transcriptions of discussions at meetings dating back to the 1950s in which he participated (not cited here because of space limitations).

Nevertheless, it seems that often there were folks who tried to protect him: loyalty or politics? An editor of *Ethnomusicology* delayed publishing my

1979 review for over a year while he looked for a positive rejoinder, that finally came in a friendly and helpful review by Judith Alter (1979).

Lomax chose or interpreted the Choreometrics data to support his preconceptions. Two problems emerge from the Lomax Choreometrics study. First, there is imperfect equivalence of work technology and cultural expression, especially when only one of several work activities is assessed. Second, the correlation of dance to work is suspect when work and technology patterns change but dance does not.

Recently I reread articles and reviews by and about Lomax and his brainchildren. I was especially interested in Jeff Todd Titon's 1982 review. A few days ago I phoned Titon who described Lomax as "the last of the Great Comparativists." He said, Lomax never moved beyond his faith in his systems, and he "wanted to bring everyone into his camp."

What will happen with Cantometrics and Choreometrics in the future? The scenario I envision includes their revision with correction of data interpretation and explanation, and with the entire system retrofitted for future research and educational purposes.

(selected bibliography on back page)

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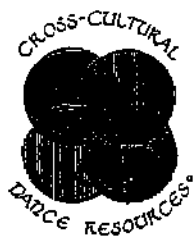
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