THE LINE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE

AND CONTEMPORARY CHOREOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT
The development of Chinese architecture has always been strongly connected to the Chinese philosophy that informs daily life and the relationships between people. This concept parallels dance in regard to the relationship between life and art. This research will focus on the work of Taiwanese choreographer Lin Hwai-Min and explore the connection between traditional Chinese architecture and contemporary modern dance. Centering on the aesthetic links between architecture and dance, the thesis will investigate the historical connections with the support of photos, drawings and written material.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We are surrounded daily by the beauty and line of architecture. Almost without acknowledging its existence or impact, architecture brings its force to human life. In traditional Chinese architecture, focus is on the fine line etched by the artistic relationship of harmony and conflict, unison and variety, simplicity and complexity (Wang, 1993). Seeking to explore the ideas of symmetry, texture, proportion and space, Chinese architecture deliberately reveals the endless variety and challenge of nature's most internal and external secrets. The art form of dance explores nature and human existence in ways (Ping, 1995) that often mimic architectural patterns and choices, especially in the common ideas of line, shape and dimension (Wung, 1993). As with architecture, contemporary dance is an expression of the individual's inner landscape but carries the indelible imprint of the choreographer's cultural identity. The creative processes of dance and architecture have many commonalties beyond the obvious building blocks of spatial design.
The choices made in conceptualizing these two art forms are similar; the underlying rationale linked, with the end result reflective of both the individual and the culture. This study will explore more fully the connections between these two forms as evidenced in the shapes of pure linear design in architecture and dance. Embracing the layers of meaning in the word *line*, the focus will be on exploring the *line*, that relationship that connects the process of choreography with the process of architecture, while examining the concrete and visible spatial *line* common to both traditional Chinese architecture and modern dance.

Architecture is an art form of necessity; it defines living environments. Dance is an art that reflects quality of living, cultural background and the attitudes of a people.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between architecture and contemporary dance. Certain aspects of traditional Chinese architecture will be defined. The choreography of twentieth-century Taiwanese choreographer Lin Hwai-Min will serve as a map for analyzing and comparing the elements these two art forms have in common.
Benefits of the Study

The research into historical, cultural, societal, aesthetic and philosophical aspects of selected elements of traditional Chinese architecture and the subsequent comparison to the choreography of Lin Hwai-Min will be important for many artists in the field of dance, including choreographers, critics and scholars. Choreographers from both the east and the west, for example, will be able to use this information as a point of reference to relate to traditional architecture and ultimately use these architectural ideas to extend their own creative processes in new directions. Critics will gain greater range of understanding with regard to the origins and perspectives of eastern choreographers as they gain means for looking at a larger, more integrated picture of the body of a choreographer's work. So, too, will they be able to utilize these components of a multi-arts approach in their own discussion and analysis of the dance works that they view and critique. Scholars will be able to take this study of the relationships between these two arts forms and develop it.
Statement of the Problem

This research will identify common threads between architecture and dance. The ways of seeing, the methods of working and the technical and conceptual vocabulary have a hidden relationship, which once explored, will enrich each discipline.

Research Questions

1. What elements exist in the process of conceptualizing and creating architectural design and choreography? How are these individual elements similar or dissimilar?

2. What are the influences of culture on the conceptualization and creation of architecture and choreography?

3. What do the components (elements) of design in architecture and movement reveal about the culture and the individual?

4. Is Mr. Lin conscious of his choices in paralleling the architectural lines? Or is this line embedded in the cultural psyche?
Methodology

Using comparative analysis, this research will address an aesthetic and culture perspective. This research will also delve into the history and philosophy of traditional architecture and contemporary dance. Descriptions of architecture and movement will be included in this study. The oral history of dance will be applied in the research.

An exploration of the creative process in the choreographic style of Lin Hwai-Min, who is influenced by western contemporary dance but grounded in Asian forms will be conducted. In exploring these conceptual ideas, the primary interest will be on concrete examples of line, shape and texture in specific works of the choreographers and architects, comparing them with the traditional spatial designs of ancient Chinese art. Through this study, there will be a focus on the common line as evidenced by repeated patterns and linear shapes as well as the line, or common thread, that philosophically bonds the two forms together.
Limitations and Delimitations

1. Limitations

This research is based on information gathered from photographs, videos, and oral histories as the author has neither visited Mainland China, nor seen all of Mr. Lin’s work in live performance.

2. Delimitations

China is an enormous country with a history of more than 5000 years. As might be expected, the traditional architecture has many time and regional differences. In order to concentrate on the comparison of line in architecture and dance, this research will be limited to specific elements most comparable to modern choreography. Lin Hwai-Min, founder and Artistic Director of Taiwan’s Cloud Gate Dance Theater, was the choreographer selected for comparative analysis due to his international reputation and his role as one of Taiwan’s premier choreographers.