

Conferences

The Dance History Scholars Conference will be held February 16 and 17, 1980, New York City. There will be panels on methodology in research and reconstruction of dances; papers on the Romantic period, the American experience, the waltz, the cotillion, Eurhythmics, Jean-Georges Noverre, Michel Fokine, Ned Weyburn and Angna Enters. Plans and arrangements are in the hands of a steering committee: Christena L. Schlundt, Chair, Selma Jeanne Cohen, George Dorris, Millicent Hodson, Elvie Moore, Selma Odom, Jeanette Roosevelt and Emma Lewis Thomas. For further information, write to: Christena L. Schlundt, Professor of Dance, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521 or Emma Lewis Thomas, Professor of Dance, University of California, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. C.L.S.

Modes of Meaning in Western Theater Dance: a conference for people in philosophy, dance, and other arts, May 9–11, 1980 at Temple University. For more information, please contact Dr. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, Dept. of Dance, Reber Hall, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122. M.S.J.

The Institute for Nonverbal Communication Research Inc. will hold its second research conference March 21–22, 1980, 8:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m., Horace Mann Auditorium, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City. The theme of the conference is “Body Politics – how power and status are reflected in nonverbal behavior particularly with respect to gender and ethnic differences.” For information: The Institute for Nonverbal Communication Research Inc., 25 West 86th St., New York, NY 10024. (212) 874-3063. E.B.

Obituaries

Percival Borde (1923–1979)

Percival Borde, who was serving on the CORD Board of Directors, died Friday, August 31, 1979 of a heart attack at the Perry St. Theatre, New York City, during his recently completed Watusi dance *Impinyuza*, Dance of the Crested Crane.

Permission to choose the man who would perform this dance was granted to Pearl Primus by the King of the legendary Watusi Tribe when she was selected as one of the Royal Watusi Dancers. In choosing her husband, she honored him with this, his favorite dance.

In Africa Percival Borde was named *Jangbanolima*, “a man who lives to dance,” by Chief Sondifu Sonni of the Vai people of Liberia. In Nigeria, the spiritual head of the Yoruba people named him *Chief Ifatola Admola*.

A native of Trinidad, in his short life of 56 years, he became a world-renowned personality honored by kings and statesmen for his achievements. Most notable among his honors and awards was the Gold Medal of Liberia which he won for his work in dance. His activities extended from government to art, and he managed on the side to fulfill an assignment as a reporter.

Dancing their way across a hemisphere, Percival Borde and his wife Pearl Primus formed an Afro-Caribbean dance company which made dance history touring Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Their work, along with others such as Katherine Dunham and Albert Opoku, eventually opened black dance to all races in America and around the world.

Percival was, at the time of his death, a professor at the State University of New York in Binghamton where he directed the dance program and drama productions. He managed to blend art, education, and scholarship in his dance and theater work while continuing his performances in New York City with Pearl Primus. Their recent concerts were highly praised by critics.

As a person, he was never dreary, always lusty, happy, and inspiring. He was a leader in his work for CORD. His service taught those around him how to work, how to love, and how to give. He has been described by friends as strong, warm, and charming. Critics have called him tall and graceful. His wife and artistic partner described his dancing as “full of pride.”

Percival and I worked together with others to form the now constituted New York State Dance Association. I knew him then, as we have come to know him in CORD, as a worker and a fighter. He fought poverty of the spirit and poverty of the soul. He was not an abstractionist. He was joyous – like his dancing. He was outspoken. He didn't hold that “anything is a dance,” but he did teach his students that any step taken with courage, feeling, and sincerity is a dance. He taught and lived in good humor and was liked even by those with whom he differed.

His family, friends, students, and fellow artists mingled together to mourn their loss and to celebrate his life at a funeral service in Harlem on Thursday, September 6 followed by a wake at the Perry Street Theater where he had performed and taught so often.

A most fitting tribute was enacted and spoken in the language of the Bavenda people of Zaire by Pearl Primus. She bowed ceremoniously in the African manner to her husband's authority as head of the household, and blessed their two children Cheryl and Onwin Borde after lovingly preparing Percival's plate with his favorite food from the banquet table. *Kabiesi*, the symbolic bow, is a custom throughout West and Central Africa known as bending low in honor. The deepest moment of the ceremony was her complete pronation on the ground, which is the ultimate mark of respect in Africa. This she accomplished after a good humored remark about women's lib.

Caribbean dancer Jean Leon Destiné sang and danced the invocation *Yanvaloo*, calling the divine power to be present at the ceremony as a witness and a blessing. In the final moments, the drums played *Impinyuza*, Dance of the Crested Crane, while we watched what only appeared to be an empty stage. (The spirit dances in the invisible raiments of eternity.) The guests, too numerous to count, imagined *Umusambi*, the warrior, the unsurpassed royal dancer of the giant Watusi forever dancing on the shores of Africa, the strength, grace, and invincibility of his people (Ruanda and Burundi). **Sondra Horton Fraleigh for the CORD Board of Directors**