



## **CUBAN DANCE---SEMINAR AND PRACTICUM**

### **SEMINAR**

The Cuban dance seminar includes a discussion of traditional Afro-Cuban dance, Cuban social dance forms and contemporary dance in Cuba. It begins with a film screening of Hedwig Dances' 2012 Touch Cuba Tour. The film shows dance training and professional dance classes, as well as more informal social dancing. The film will be followed by a brief history of Cuba and a discussion of the roots of Cuban dance. The discussion leads to the evolution of dance in Cuba and its manifestation in contemporary Cuba including dance training, practice, and current trends.

Following the discussion, Hedwig Dances offers three master classes: traditional Afro-Cuban dance, Cuban modern dance technique, and Cuban social dance. Each class lasts 1.5 hours.

### **AFRO-CUBAN DANCE**

Afro-Cuban dance has its roots in ancient African religions (especially the Yoruba tradition). The dances, with their associated chants and rhythmic drumming, came to Cuba during colonial times through the African slaves. These dances were mixed with Catholic religious practices to become what we know today as "Regla de Ocha" or "Santería." The dances are very expressive, energetic, and are distinguished by their variety and richness of movement. Often, the dances represent stories from the "Orishas" or deities. These deities are also associated with natural phenomenon and natural elements. Every dance is telling a story of their life known as "patakin." Although Afro-Cuban dance has its origin in religion and many people still practice it, these dances have become a part of the Cuban folkloric culture and are performed in the repertoire of professional dance companies. This workshop explores the movements and rhythms of various traditional Afro-Cuban dances including Orishas.

### **CUBAN MODERN DANCE TECHNIQUE**

Cuban modern dance technique (known as *la técnica cubana*) is an athletic, virtuosic and rhythmic form of dance training that is a hybrid of Afro-Cuban dance (ancestral/traditional), modern technique (contemporary/popular) and ballet (classic). Cuban modern dance technique infuses the experimental explorations of modern dance with Afro-Cuban spirituality and expression. Cuban modern dance was created by Ramiro Guerra ("the father of Cuban modern dance") with government funding following the Cuban Revolution when the Castro government began supporting the arts by creating and centralizing arts institutions. These institutions were created to reflect the rich diversity of modern Cuban culture and to institute the formation of a national cultural expression. Cuban modern dance builds on international modern and postmodern forms by infusing their technique with complex movements of the torso, arms, and hips that lend a distinctive Cuban flair to the dance.

## **CUBAN SOCIAL DANCE**

Cuban social dances such as rumba, danzón, mambo, and cha-cha-cha are integrated into the daily life of Cubans at celebrations, clubs, and parties. Cuban music and dance are integral to one another. The roots of social dance are related to Cuban history, specifically to deep cultural influences from Africa and Europe.

**Rumba** is an overarching term for several musical rhythms and dances that developed in rural Cuba, and later in Cuban cities. Musically, the Cuban rumba begins with a “diana,” a series of improvised sounds sung by a soloist that begins the rumba experience. The “diana” also includes a choral refrain. Rumba is based on the five-stroke rhythmic pattern called clave. This clearly defined rhythm gives structure to the music and the dance. In Rumba, the dancers and musicians have a relationship that swells in dynamics as it develops. The rumba has its influences in the music brought to Cuba primarily by African slaves, but also by Spanish colonizers. Rumba was often suppressed because it was considered bawdy and licentious. There are three forms of Cuban Rumba: Yambu, a slow, flirtatious rumba style danced by women, and sometimes men and women, that simulates frailty; Guaguanco, a fast, rhythmic, and flirtatious (sometimes overtly sexual) dance that has the man and woman in the roles of “rooster” and “hen”; and, Rumba Columbia, a physical, competitive, and martial dance that is danced primarily by men with acrobatic movements that can be traced to Flamenco and African dance.

**Danzón** is the official dance of Cuba that is officially recognized as having been developed by Miguel Faílde in 1879. The danzón evolved from the Cuban Habanera, a contradanza of a specific syncopated rhythm in 2/4 time that was most likely introduced to Cuba in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the invasion of the British, Spanish, and French colonists. In Cuba, these dances were influenced by African rhythms and dance styles, becoming a genuine fusion of European and African influences. Danzón is slower than most contradanzas. It is a figure or sequence dance that takes place in three sections: an introduction, a paseo and a melody. The musical introduction and paseo are not danced. This convention allows people to socialize, and then rejoin the dance at an exact musical cue for the melody which is danced in couples. Originally, arches and flowers were carried as part of the dance.

Danzón later developed into “danzonette.” The distinguishing factor of danzonette is that it was the first time that men and women danced together for the entire song and it included hip movements that gave new meaning to the dance.

**Mambo** is a musical form and dance style that originally developed at the Tropicana night club in Havana, Cuba by musician Perez Prado. Prado, who moved to Mexico, later popularized the mambo in Mexican films and night clubs. "Mambo" means "conversation with the gods" in Kikongo, a tonal language spoken by sub-Saharan Africans who were brought to Cuba as slaves. It bears some similarity to swing in terms of energy and dance concept with complicated dance steps, but also an evident abandon. Dancers from Cuba characterize mambo as “feeling the music.” Cuban mambo is different from the more systematized mambo that is practiced in the United States and elsewhere around the world.

**Cha-cha-cha** is a dynamic and sensual dance that originated in Cuba. It is danced to the music of the same name originally created by Cuban composer and violinist Enrique Jorrín in 1953. The rhythm was developed from the danzón by syncopating the fourth beat. The name cha-cha-cha parallels the rhythm of the music, specifically the sound of the percussive instrument, the guiro (scraper), and also by the shuffling sound of the dancers' feet.



## PROFILES

**HEDWIG DANCES** is a contemporary dance theater ensemble celebrating its 28th year under the artistic direction of its founder, Jan Bartoszek. Named after Ms. Bartoszek's paternal grandmother, Hedwig Dances' bold, interdisciplinary collaborations combine poetic choreography with sculptural artifacts, projected images and haunting original music. The resulting dances resonate with complexity and depth and provoke emotion, connection and wonder.

Hedwig Dances has performed over 1,500 times at venues throughout Chicago, including the Ravinia Festival, the Dance Center of Columbia College and the Athenaeum Theater. The Company has also appeared at noteworthy events in Chicago such as the Grand Openings of Millennium Park and Navy Pier. Hedwig Dances tours to numerous colleges, festivals and theaters, including *Yes, Virginia Dance Invitational* (Richmond) *Spring to Dance Festival* (St. Louis) and *Joyce SoHo* (NYC). The Company has been honored with two Ruth Page Awards and a Chicago Dance Award.

### **JAN BARTOSZEK** *Hedwig Dances' Founder and Artistic Director*

Ms. Bartoszek's artistic credentials include fellowships from the NEA (1) and Illinois Arts Council (8), mentoring of numerous artists and a leadership role in making dance a vital force at the Chicago Cultural Center. She has choreographed over 60 dances in her career that critics have described as "intelligent, accomplished, moving" ([Chicago Tribune](#)) and "poignantly human" ([Chicago Reader](#)). These dances have been presented in national performance venues and internationally in Honduras, Brazil and Canada. Throughout her career, Ms. Bartoszek has fostered a spirit of collaboration with other artists; merging choreography, media, text and music.

Ms. Bartoszek was honored with a Ruth Page Award and included in "100 Women Making a Difference" by [Today's Chicago Woman Magazine](#) in recognition of her artistic contribution to the Chicago cultural community. Her choreography credits include work for Steppenwolf, Northlight, Live Bait and Court theaters, as well as with director Ping Chong. As a performer, she toured nationally and internationally with Ping Chong & Company and the Charlie Vernon Performance Company. Ms. Bartoszek has served on the Advisory Board of the Arts & Business Council of Chicago, the Board of the Chicago Dance Coalition, and dance panels for the Illinois Arts Council and the Oregon Arts Commission. She is the co-founder and co-curator of the annual *Dance for Camera* program at the Chicago Cultural Center and has participated in the development and implementation of *Dance Bridge* and *About Dance*. Jan has taught at Northwestern University as well as at the School of the Art Institute/Chicago; Roosevelt University and the University of Chicago. She choreographed and directed *Arch of Repose*, a poetic dream-like dance film with the film production team Daniel Kullman and Nicolas DeGrazia of Bitter Jester Creative (BJC) as a 2008 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist. Currently, she is working with BJC to create a documentary of Hedwig Dances' 2012 *Touch Cuba* Tour.

**Maray Gutierrez** (*Hedwig Dances' Artistic Associate, Dancer and Teacher*)

Maray Gutierrez is a native of Havana, Cuba where she trained at the National School of Dance. She has danced in Europe, the U.S., and the Caribbean and has performed for British television and the Venice Opera. She was a principal dancer for Danza Contemporanea de Cuba for 10 years and worked with esteemed choreographers Giovanni de Cicco, Donald McKayle, Isidro Rolando, Joaquin Sabaté, Jan Linkens and Marianela Boan, among others. Since moving to the United States, she has danced with Luna Negra, Concert Dance Inc., the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Houston Grand Opera. She was nominated for an Emmy Award in 2008 for her work on the Ruth Page Foundation production of *Billy Sunday*. Maray began dancing with Hedwig Dances in 2002 and became the artistic associate in 2008.

**Victor Alexander** (*Hedwig Dances' Choreographer, Teacher*)

Victor Alexander is a native of Pinar del Rio, Cuba. He trained at the National Dance School (Havana) and was a principal dancer for Danza Contemporanea de Cuba for 10 years. Victor has danced throughout Europe, the U.S. and the Caribbean and has participated in dance festivals such as the American Dance Festival, the Holland Dance Festival in Amsterdam and the International Dance Festival in Germany. He was the first prizewinner of the 4th National Union of Writers and Artists Contest in Cuba in 1992. Victor has danced with Luna Negra Dance Theater; Concert Dance (CDI); the Lyric Opera of Chicago, as a guest with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (2008) and the Houston Grand Opera. He was nominated for an Emmy for his role in the Ruth Page Foundation production of *Billy Sunday*. He toured to China with CDI and taught at the Nanjing Normal University. Victor has been awarded a 2012 Illinois Arts Council grant and is a 2012 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist. He has assisted London choreographer Litza Bixler. Victor has danced with Hedwig Dances since 2002.