

Once in a while a Dance comes along that's unique to its culture and defines it for many peering in from outside its borders. Brazil has the Samba, the Turkish have their Twirling Dervishes and England; well they have the humble Morris dance. They don't come about often and some certainly overstay their welcome, but no other nation has been so prolific in creating Dance fads in the last 100 years than the Dutch, boasting not one, but three dances that have become synonymous with its nation.

It starts around the same time as the Ford Model T automobile. A dance is brought out of its rural traditions and embraced in fervour by its public. The dance is called the Klompendans and the name infers the most important ingredient to the dance, the clogs. A polka rhythm supplied the beat to this paired group-dance, which saw it gain immense popularity in the early part of the 20th century. The dancers would accent the beat in their wooden footwear, which formed part of their traditional costume. Waning popularity saw the dance disappear into virtual obscurity during the course of the century, bar the odd traditional event or performance. Most significant of these was the Hans Van Manen choreographed ballet simply entitled *Clogs*, in 1987.

Shortly after that date a new craze started hitting dance floors in the industrial town of Rotterdam. Propelled along their timeline in excess of 180 BPM, Gabber, or Hardcore as the music was known at the time, had the nation in uproar. The music was aggressive and the Drugs were strong. The average Gabber evoked a heavy resentment from the conservative middle classes, an assessment that was wholly unfair as these young rebels had a cause, and that cause was the music and friendship that brought them all together. The traditional garb of their clog-dancing forefathers made way for track suites (the more colourful, the better, it appeared) and trainers. Heads were shaved fully or partially and grinding jaws spewed nonsensical remarks about their favourite DJ. But, like many musical movements there was a dance that defined the Gabber. It was one of unbridled energy but controlled execution. The most common dance amongst the Gabber crowd was a variation on the shuffle, a simple heel toe movement exaggerated with the odd high kick. The

upper body too played an important role and throwing shapes was intricate to the execution. But, as hardcore gave way to trance, house and techno, the Gabbers too went the way of the dodo and so did their over-inflated dance moves.

The Klompendans came back briefly in 2006 with 475 pairs of clogs stomping their way into the Guinness book of records to Hans Van Manen's Ballet. But this was to be overshadowed again in the summer of 2010, when another significant dance made it into Dutch history books. The dance was called the rabbit, in reference to the rabbit-like movements the practitioner displays while executing the moves. It was just another variation on the shuffle with a more reserved approach compared to the Gabbers. Accompanying the big-room house and techno that is currently prevalent, the upper body remained mostly motionless except the odd arm movement while the feet rarely move much from their pivot point. It is the latest step in Dutch Dance crazes and like its forbearers it too has come under severe criticism, mostly from the people that can't do it. It follows on from a great tradition of Dutch dancing that looks set to continue and I, for one, can't wait for the next beat.