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Dance 102

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Bharatanatyam

Bharatanatyam is an old dance that originates from India. It is thought to be the first type of dance in India. It was written about in ancient texts all the way in the 6th century, and really arose as a dance form in the 17th century, and has been evolving ever since. Other Indian dance forms were birthed from Bharatanatyam (“Bharatnatyam: Know All About The Most Popular Dance Form Of South India”). Mostly, only South Indians perform Bharatanatyam; this style of dance is not found too often in North India. This is because the conception of Bharatanatyam occurred in Tamil Nadu, a South Indian state. It was first performed only in South Indian temples, as offerings to the Gods (specifically for Shiva), and then later, performed for royalty. Bharatanatyam is a solo dance done only by women (“Bharatanatyam: The Origination of the Art Form”). Bharatanatyam’s initial execution is very interesting. It wasn’t simply created by people trying to make a new art form. It actually is a form of Natya yoga, and is supposed to be very healthy for both the mind and body. The word “Natyam,” comes from the “Natya Shastra,” an ancient Hindu document written in Sanskrit. This text is about the earliest forms of performing arts, and goes over Bharatanatyam’s very first steps, footwork, and their ties to religion (Hoffman). The three most key elements of Bharatanatyam are the Nrita (beats and tempo), Nritya (emotions), and Natya (the whole dance) (“Bharatnatyam: Know All About The Most Popular Dance Form Of South India”). Emotions are very important in Bharatanatyam. This

dance tells narratives of religious texts, stories of how the Gods came to be and what they do- so facial expressions, gestures, and body language make the dance beautiful and expressive (“Natya, Nritya and Nritta”). In modern day, certain styles of makeup are used to highlight these aspects. Bharatanatyam is still a very popular dance form today, passed down in South Indian families, from mother to daughter.

Works Cited

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