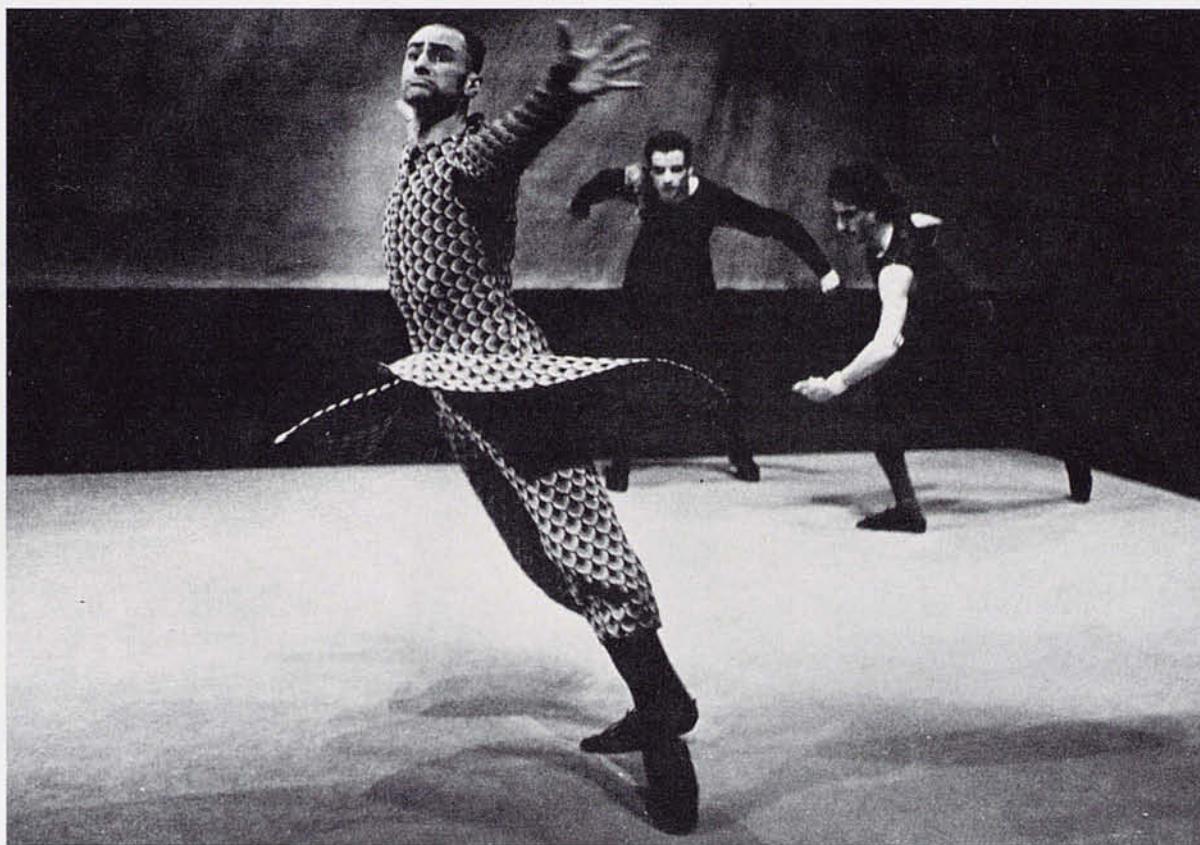


# CONTEMPORARY DANCE

CESC GELABERT AND LYDIA AZZOPARDI HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SOME OF THE MOST PERSONAL AND INTERESTING WORK TO BE ACHIEVED BY THE CATALAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE MOVEMENT.



MIGUEL MONTES DANCE CRITIC

The return of democracy brought with it new ways of thinking and forms of expression that are less restricted by prejudice and convention. At the same time freer attitudes and habits developed with regard to the body. The body began to be viewed in a healthier, more liberated way, as a result of which the number of gymnasiums, dance studios and academies rose sharply. It was around these same studios and academies that the whole contemporary dance movement in Catalonia was to take shape.

The centres set up by Ramon Solé and Anna Maleras were to some extent the

pioneers and as such deserve special mention. Ramon Solé, who had a classical background and considerable professional experience in this field, founded the original **Ballet Contemporáni de Barcelona**. Later the group changed directors and adopted a group management formula, though it always kept the same name. The **BCB** has always been highly eclectical, its repertoire ranging from jazz dancing to theatrical dancing, and it has even branched out occasionally into the neo-classical sphere. It is possibly one of the best established and most professional groups in existence today.

The first attempt to introduce jazz dancing to Barcelona took place in the studio of Anna Maleras. It is thanks to the American teachers who visited it that the famous American schools of dancing, those of Graham, Limón, Humphrey and others, became known in Catalonia. The company founded by Anna Maleras, the **Grup Estudi Anna Maleras**, was almost exclusively devoted to jazz dancing but also displayed a certain fascination for American musicals. Though short-lived, it served to launch many of the members of the present generation of dancers on their careers. The most conspicuous among them is



perhaps Cesc Gelabert. After a brief, but very interesting solo career, and a short stay in the United States, he paired up with Lydia Azzopardi, who came from The Place, in London, where the Graham movement was born, and together they set out to accomplish some of the most personal and interesting work to be achieved by the present Catalan contemporary dance movement. During these same years a permanent Department of Contemporary Dance was set up at the **Institut del Teatre** and various shows were put on in order to introduce new dance companies. This gave new dancers and groups the opportunity to acquire training in technique and stage performance. Particularly worthy of mention is **Heura**, a company initially made up solely of women, which won instant acclaim on account of its refreshingly new and dynamic approach but had a short existence as a group. Out of it came the present group **Mudances**, led by Angels Margarit, which comes close to a real-life form of dancing based on gesture and shunning narrow demarcations, and the **Grup de Dança de Avelina Argüelles** which, using the basic techniques of Li-

món and Humphrey, includes literary elements in its choreographic design and makes the maximum possible use of stage equipment.

**Acord**, a group with a clear jazz orientation which originated around Anna Maleras' studio, and **L'Espantall**, headed by Gerard Collins, which attempted a more experimental form of dancing, have also now disappeared, though all of their productions caused a certain impact.

**Metros**, led by Ramon Oller, and **Lasiti**, under the direction of Francesc Bravo, are two of the newest companies, both of which fall within Cesc Gelabert's

sphere of influence. Their aesthetic approaches are similar and they seek to reflect overwhelming environmental and social pressures in a choreography that is deliberately arid and severe. **Taba** (another exclusively female group, founded in Germany around the **Folkwang Schule** and Pina Bausch, which started out in the field of theatrical dancing) and Empar Rosselló (the only group active in the totally experimental field which also reveals certain orientalizing influences) are two more representatives of the undoubtedly promising contemporary dance scene in Catalonia today.