



### Dancing Joy: Scenic Synopsis

The scene opens. In silence, Beethoven is penning the manuscript of the symphony. As he puts pen to the paper, a drop of ink expands as a chord is heard.

Out of the blackness, a sunrise silhouettes the bare branches of a tree, on an African plain. The scene changes to a rushing river, flowing between wooded hills. In rapid succession, the view shifts to emerald cliffs through which breaking waves are seen, coastlines of various climates, mountains, streams, savannah, tropical fields, volcanic mountains. The beauty of our earth is laid out before us. Then, as the beginning strains of the symphony are heard, something new appears. In each location, dancers are poised, still as statues.

Moving from sky to earth, a glorious Fiji shoreline frames the *VOU* dancers, who perform the *Meke Iri* (Fan dance.) Then, Japan's *Minbuza* dancers, swirl their fans on a white sand beach near a lake. At a traditional Hindu temple, Suhasini Muthukrishnan performs *Bharat Natyam* dance. Before a lotus-filled pond, the *Hyun* Korean dancers gently waft their national flower, the Rose of Sharon. A steep mountainside shelters the *Tablado* Flamenco dancers, with spiraling hands, stamping feet and swirling skirts. Classical Greek dancers, the *Caryatids*, greet the dawn, framed by the beautiful architecture of ancient Greece.

In a sun-drenched Botswana *Kgotla* (gathering space), the *Mophato* dancers emulate the movement of ostriches and peacocks. At the Batik Museum of Indonesia, *Pekalongan Menari* dancers manipulate their unique batik garments as part of their dance, creating symmetrical patterns of fabric and movement. In a sunlit ballroom of a castle in Northern Ireland, elegant couples of *Ballroom Blitz NI* circle the floor. This dissolves to the Clogging footwork of the *Appalachian Ensemble* in West Virginia, weaving circles, squares and lines with rhythmic tapping throughout. Nepal's Bhaktapur Darbur Square appears, with the *Namaste* dancers performing *Kaura* dance from the *Magar* culture. From above, the powwow grounds of the Oneida Nation are seen, with the *Close to the Earth* dancers (*Anishinaabe* or Original People) performing the Jingle Dance, Fancy Dance and the Eagle dance. As the music becomes solemn and ominous, a setting sun over the Fijian landscape ushers in the night, as dancers begin to swing flaming orbs, weaving in and out and creating spark-filled arches radiating out from the dancers. The dizzying play of fire and dancers finish with a glimpse of the night sky lit only by the moon.

As the second movement of the symphony begins, the tempo, of both three-beat and four-beat rhythms, is light and quick. Cascading steps and gardens frame the *Zharava* Bulgarian dancers, who spin and skip in beautiful formations. A green and misty hillside evokes ancient Scotland, as the *West Virginia Highland Dancers*, leap and spin, preserving the ancestral dance of the Hebrides. Under vaulted wooden arches of the Church of the Holy City, *Hope Garden Ballet* youth seem to float in the sunlit space. On a tree-lined path, *Rwandan* dancer *Jacques Nyungura* powerfully advances and whips around.

From above, a circular plaza appears, etched with a map of the Northern and Southern hemispheres of the Americas, The Navy Memorial. Here, the Grupo Folclórico De Raíces Hondureñas dance and twirl in concentric patterns, evoking stunning geometric images. The *Anishinaabe* dancer twirls with shawl extended in the *Fancy Dance*. Hawai'ian dancers, *Maluhia Ke Aloha*, proffer brilliantly colored flowers as they gracefully move in front of the sacred mountains of *Ko'oloau*, where the children of the royal families were sent for spiritual training to inherit leadership.

With the sound of horns piping through the mountains, the *Himalayan Sherpa* dance begins, with waving cloths reminiscent of the prayer flags flying along the mountainous paths. Inside a sunlit brick room, *Irish* step dancers (*Foy's School of Traditional Irish Dance*) weave into lines and circles as their feet keep perfect rhythm. In a forest glade, four Flamenco dancers poise, breaking into the movements of *Sevillanas*. On a wooden veranda, Caribbean dancers (*SpiritWing Ensemble*) fling arms and bodies in the dance form made famous by Katherine Dunham. Back in Botswana, traditional *Tswana* dance, the *Setapa*, matches the complex tempos culminating this movement.

Movement III has a slow and elegant tempo, creating a serene and otherworldly atmosphere. Two Korean dancers circle a young tree, echoing its form in their gentle arm motion. The columns of a Greek temple frame the *Caryatids*, female goddess-like figures brought to life in the dancers' graceful lines and poses. In Indonesia, dancers create beautiful forms with hands and feet in precise and successive patterns. Elegance and emotion combine in the dance of India. Dancers in Indonesia surround a fountain, their hands and arms forming elegant shapes. At Belfast Castle, a courtyard fountain plays as couples circle in an graceful waltz. In Korea, white globes are spun and lifted by dancers, like angels guiding the path of stars and planets. As the music slows to a meditative tempo, we see the prayerful kneeling movement of the Indonesian dancers, followed by the Bulgarian dancers' uplifted arms and slow procession, drawing Movement III to a close.

Movement IV explodes with a rush of aggressive music. The Fiji dancers rush and surround a central figure, face divided into two halves, dark and light. From Japan, a grimacing mask in red and black appears through a mist, holding a sharp sword, jumping and leaping in threatening movement. A Rwandan warrior dance, using spear and shield, seems to intimidate the unseen enemy. A Native American warrior circles and stomps. Fijian warriors swing stone hatchets at each other's heads and feet.

The music slows, and one by one, the weapons are lowered to the ground.

Quietly, a new musical theme is heard. Two opposing Korean dancers take a step towards each other. As the familiar theme is repeated and gains in momentum, each culture, in quick succession, appears. From here on, the dancers begin dancing in uplifting, joyful movement.

Suddenly, the music pauses, and a strong human voice is heard. The *American Sign Language Dance of Gallaudet Dance Company* begins, interpreting the German lyrics in Signing movement. Captions appear to convey the translation of the German lyrics into English, and in closed captions, 10 other languages.

From this point on, the dance, music and subtitles weave swiftly from one culture to the next. New patterns emerge. Eventually, the music culminates, becoming sacred and majestic. From their different cultures, the dance changes to reflect the spirituality and sense of wonder imbued in their tradition. A profound climax is reached in the music, and the dance movement becomes prayerful, evoking honor for the divine source. This is followed by bows and gestures of respect, as each group of dancers honors their distant counterparts. Suddenly, a rapid and celebratory chorus breaks out, and the dance becomes a brilliant moving mosaic. Faces, arms, feet, torsos—become linked. The former distinctions blur and disappear. New similarities emerge, and faces are suffused with joy. As the music peaks, we see the brilliant color, shapes, movement and faces juxtaposed, dancers raising their arms with a triumphant spirit of joy.