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**Borde, Percival** (31 Dec. 1922-31 Aug. 1979), Afro-Caribbean dancer and choreographer, was born Percival Sebastian Borde in Port of Spain, Trinidad, the son of George Paul Borde, a veterinarian, and Augustine Francis Lambie. Borde grew up in Trinidad, where he finished secondary schooling at the Queens Royal College and took an appointment with the Trinidad Railway Company. Around 1942 he began formal research on Afro-Caribbean dance and performed with the Little Carib Dance Theatre. In 1949 he married Joyce Guppy, with whom he had one child. The year of their divorce is unknown.

Borde took easily to dancing and the study of dance as a function of Caribbean culture. In the early 1950s he acted as director of the Little Carib Theatre in Trinidad. In 1953 he met the noted American anthropologist and dancer Pearl Primus, who was conducting field research in Caribbean folklore. Primus convinced Borde to immigrate to the United States as a dancer and teacher of West Indian dance at her New York City school. Borde developed courses in traditional Caribbean dance forms for the Pearl Primus School and began performing with the Pearl Primus Dance Company. Shortly thereafter, he and Primus were married (date unknown). The couple had one child.

Performing success with Primus's modern dance company brought Borde appearances on television and the popular stage. He appeared on Broadway as the African Chief in Joyce Cary's 1956 play *Mr. Johnson*. In 1956 and 1957 he toured with the Primus dance company throughout Europe. Borde brought his own self-named dance troupe to the St. Marks Playhouse in New York City on 23 September 1958. He performed his own works and dances created for him by Primus, who acted as the artistic director of the company. John Martin, dance critic for the *New York Times* and a longtime supporter of Primus's dance anthropology, called the concert an "unusually well unified and atmospheric presentation, unpretentious in manner but with a wealth of knowledge behind it." *Raves* also came from the African-American press, and Borde's arrival as a leading male figure in Afro-dance was confirmed. In 1959 the separate Borde and Primus companies combined to form the Pearl Primus and Percival Borde Dance Company.

Borde's performances always included ethnographic dance characterizations of several Afro-American archetypes. For instance, his four-part 1958 program titled "Earth Magician" included portrayals of an Aztec warrior, a giant Watusi, a Yoruba chief, and a Shango priest. Borde performed sections of this program throughout his career, honing the authenticity of his dance movements through research and study. His performance style was consistently described as dynamic yet elegant, his strong physicality offset by his striking good looks. Martin described him as "light and easy of movement, with strength, admirable control and authority."

In 1959 Borde and Primus toured Africa and performed in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Kenya,

Nigeria, and Liberia, which held special import for the couple. It was in Liberia that Borde was named Jangbanolima, or "a man who lives to dance," by Chief Sondifu Sonni during an official adoption ritual. Also in 1959 Borde and Primus became the directors of the Performing Arts Center of Monrovia, Liberia. They remained in Liberia until November 1961. During this time Borde wrote articles for the *Liberian Age* and was active in the Liberian Chamber of Commerce. He was awarded the Gold Medal of Liberia for his work in the dance of the African diaspora.

After returning to the United States, Borde produced *Talking Drums of Africa*, an education-in-the-schools program sponsored by the New York State Department of Education. He was active in the Congress on Research in Dance, a dance scholars' organization, and served on its board of directors. He also continued to work in the theater, serving as the resident choreographer for the Negro Ensemble Company's 1969 season.

Borde completed a bachelor's degree (1975) and coursework toward a master's degree at the School of the Arts of New York University. He taught movement courses there, at the Columbia University Teachers College, and at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where he was an associate professor of theater arts and black studies. Borde's highly popular courses offered participatory, dance-based studies of Afro-Caribbean culture, which emphasized the connections between dance, ritual, and everyday life. He often reminded his students, "Just as one should prepare oneself to enter a temple, one should prepare to dance" (*Wichita Eagle*, 20 Aug. 1969).

Borde died of a heart attack backstage at the Perry Street Theater in New York City immediately after performing "Impinyuza," the strutting Watusi solo he had danced for more than two decades.

Borde's masculine stage presence and dynamic performance style helped to widen interest in concert Afro-American dance forms. His work continued the efforts of dancer-choreographers Primus and Katherine Dunham in the insertion of ceremonial, anthropologically researched dance on the concert stage. After his death, Primus characterized him as "the outstanding exponent of African influences on Caribbean culture."

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## Bibliography

Slight documentation of Borde's significant dance career exists. The Dance Collection of the New York Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center holds a file of newspaper reviews of his performances. The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture holds listings of materials from the black press. Reviews are also in the *New York Times*, 29 Sept. 1958 and 5 Oct. 1958; *Dance Magazine*, Dec. 1958,

Aug. 1964, and Oct. 1964; and *Dance Observer*, June 1956, Dec. 1958, and Oct. 1959.  
An obituary is in the *New York Times*, 5 Sept. 1979.

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