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Chapter 12

From Marching Soldier to Dancing Queen

Mama and Papa lyin’ in bed
Papa rolled over and this is what he said
Give me some
PT [Physical Training]
Give me some
PT
Good for you
Good for me
Mmmm good
Real good

—Marine Corps jody call,¹
Parris Island, 1983

The most important feature of dance in the Circuit is the awareness of pulse, the energy imparted to the body that comes at specific points in rhythmic repetition. Awareness of the pulse as a means of unifying people from different backgrounds pre-dates the Circuit, disco, and the United States. It goes back thousands of years to the first military marching formations.

Dancing and warfare are intertwined in history. Men’s dances across the ages and in different cultures are often martial exercises that imitate combat. Several cultures preserve combat dances as part of their traditional folklore, such as the khattak of the Pushtun (Malik 180), the haka of New Zealand’s Maori, Highland fling of Scotland² (Ray

¹ Jody call is a term used in the Marine Corps for a marching chant.
² I have an LP with Scottish marches called “Highland Pageantry.” On the back of the album cover is the following sentence that illustrates the intimate relationship between marching, fighting, and dancing: “Here is military music at its most stirring, played by the Regimental Band and Pipes and Drums of the Black Watch,
Military camp: costumed crew at Halloween’s in New Orleans 1999
Dance can be defined as rhythmic movement to music, and marching as martial dance. Military marching, in fact, is the first global dance craze, and it spread throughout much of the world as a valuable tool in the production of strong armies.

Not everyone agrees that marching is dance, however. DJ Dadt (pseudonym for “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”), a Gay soldier-DJ-Circuiteer currently serving in the U.S. military who wishes to remain anonymous, says:

[I] don’t agree at all here. Putting people together for the sake of unity and discipline is completely separate from a freestyle expression of happiness. Music and marching may be partners of convenience more than they are expressions of joy or sorrow or other emotions that I would equate to dancing. (personal communication, January 2008)

DJ Dadt has a point, especially when marching in formationduring an actual battle. Ever since the use of the phalanx (close formation of soldiers) by the Sumerians over 4000 years ago (Gabriel 25), disciplined communal movement through military drill has been a constant in the history of warfare until the last few hundred years as a battle tactic for adroit application of deadly force, thus may not properly be considered dance. But marching is not limited to the battlefield and battlefield training—it is also used in the military parade. This is a significant difference. When used in parade review, it is ritualized into choreographed and aesthetic movement to music for the purpose of display.

Marching lost its tactical importance in actual combat when modern warfare abandoned the use of regimented formations of soldiers on the battlefield. Nevertheless, it is still invaluable in turning a group of strangers into a unified fighting corps (from the French word for “body”) and instilling the values of esprit de corps (the “spirit of the body” or feeling of solidarity with and loyalty to the group). In

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3. Capoeira is martial art, sport, and dance. Tradition has it that capoeiristas successfully defeated mercenaries who turned against the Brazilian government during the Paraguayan War in the early nineteenth century (Almeida 27–28).

4. The definition of dance is not fixed. Kai Fikentscher gives a more detailed but still vague definition: purposeful, intentionally rhytmical, and culturally patterned sequences of body movements that are not ordinary motor activities, and that have inherent aesthetic value (59). Dance instructor Timothy Miracle defines it tersely: “Dance is moving to music that inspires the movement. Period!” (personal communication, January 2007)
formal presentation of soldiers in dress uniform, marching is still an important part of military and paramilitary traditions around the world.\(^5\)

In *Camp All-American, Hanoi Jane, and the High-and-Tight*, Carol Burke describes marching as highly disciplined dance:

Without uniformity, the highly choreographed dance of the military parade would dissolve into chaos. Drill effectively teaches recruits that each must keep every step, every line of the body, even every gaze in sync with the group. Close-order drill is important figuratively—to train individual soldiers under the orchestration of their leaders to configure an army collectively. (27)\(^6\)

Marching together can be profoundly pleasurable. As the jody call quoted earlier states, “Mmmm good/Real good.” Those of us who have had much experience marching know the profound and subtle ways it allows the individual to physically merge with the group. An anonymous Straight soldier on his way to Fort Hood, Texas\(^7\) told me, “Marching for the people’s eye [in parade review] is like a warrior’s secret dance. If you’re not a part of the secret dance, you’re left out of its mysterious ritual” (interview, January 2008). One is no longer just one person. The magic of military march comes from the experience of uniting with many people into one corporate body. As such, it can be a powerful and pleasurable experience, even when it is physically taxing. Sending soldiers to war is ugly business, so anything that could enliven the spirits of soldiers and ensure their solidarity in the face of war’s brutality would be a plus. This is why armies over the ages marched into battle, equipped with weapons and their own drum corps, melodic musical instruments, and fight songs. Pleasures associated with marching, music, and solidarity would be even more pronounced in the non-combat context of parade review.

\(^5\) Marching is no longer strictly the domain of men. For decades, women in the military have also been trained in it, and there are thousands of non-military marching bands that have plenty of women in them. Many of these bands are associated with sports, especially the extremely combative American football. Although the members of marching bands associated with sports are not soldiers, the music that they play includes fight songs to rouse the spirits of their team (or at least get their fans riled up, even to the point of inspiring actual violence). Marching bands utilized in sports can therefore be considered paramilitary.

\(^6\) Barbara Ehrenreich describes march as “dance, or at least musically-driven motion” (Burke 197).

\(^7\) This young man was on his way to training with artillery, and then on to Iraq. After revealing that I was a U.S. Marine writing a book on popular dance, I asked him if he thought marching was a form of dance. He granted me permission to quote him. Later in the conversation, he told me that Gays in the military made him uncomfortable. I never revealed my sexual orientation to him.
I felt the pleasures of marching when I was in Marine Corps boot camp on Parris Island. Marching is not an inborn skill; moving together with any degree of uniformity is not something people can do without a lot of practice. Initially, we recruits were forced to crowd our bodies together into an unorganized, shuffling mess when we moved as a group. Our drill instructors called it “assholes to belly buttons,” chest to back and crotch to butt. For all of its potential sexual connotations, however, the assholes-to-belly-buttons maneuver was not homoerotic. It was embarrassing, an undesirable exercise that reflected our unsatisfactory communal state, proof of our lack of discipline, and a way to force us to become physically aware of each other. Once my fellow recruits and I learned to move in step shoulder-to-shoulder (there were over sixty of us in our platoon), we felt a palpable sense of pride and solidarity.

The pulse of marching gets tedious if not accompanied with music, and a marching band does not accompany every formation. But bands are not necessary; people produce music with the power of voice. For a platoon of soldiers, it can be one voice, one person who calls cadence, the rhythm by which the group will move as one unit. When chanted by a competent leader, calling cadence is a type of singing and an art form in itself. The best callers of cadence in the Marine Corps can quicken the pulse of the march with the rich variety of jody calls available to them.

Pleasures other than music are invoked in some jody calls to quicken the pulse. Often, the lyrics are full of humorous sexual innuendos, including homoerotic ones, such as in the following:

Casey Jones was a son of a bitch
Wrecked his train in a whorehouse ditch
Lined a hundred whores up against the wall
Swore to Hell he’d fuck ‘em all
Fucked 98 till his balls turned blue
Then backed off jacked off fucked the other two
Casey Jones went to Hell
Fucked the Devil and his wife as well

Crude and suggestive homoerotic language was common in boot camp, but it never once struck me as anything other than purposely-scandalous humor. Here are some examples: when recruits prepare to go naked through the showers as a group, drill instructors might say, “I want to see sixty swinging dicks lined up right now!” Upon seeing a recruit sweating and twitching while in formation because he had to urinate, one drill instructor is reported to have said the recruit was giving him “a hard-on.” In both cases, such language was meant to be funny, even when recruits were forbidden to laugh.

Burke traces the jody call to African American “Joe de Grinder” work songs (30). Jody calls are call-and-response in the manner of African American praise and worship.
Four little demons up against the wall
Said, “Get him out of Hell ‘fore he fucks us all!”

The tendency to inject sex into the march is not limited to the US military. “Quand Madelon” (When Madelon), a marching song popular with French soldiers during World War I, has lyrics full of sexual wordplay about a beautiful barmaid for whom the song is named. For example, Madelon refuses to give her hand in marriage to a love-crazed (fou d’amour) corporal in the last verse. “Why should I take only one man,” she retorts, “When I love a whole regiment?" Compare “Quand Madelon” to the following jody call I learned in boot camp:

Met a pretty gal from a Mississippi town
Marine Corps really brought her down
She said, “You gotta choose ‘tween me and the Corps”
Now I don’t go to Mississippi no more

There is subtle homoerotic tension between the object of sexual pleasure and the brotherhood of soldiers in both marching songs. Although she wants to fornicate with the regiment rather than fight together with them on the battlefield, Madelon’s rejection of marriage and affirmation of allegiance to the combat unit (a humorous parody of what any good soldier should do) parallels the Marine’s rejection of a woman’s love and the sexual pleasure she can provide in favor of his loyalty to the Corps. Burke says that such lyrics “celebrate the displacement of sexual energy from the female left behind to the enemy waiting on the battlefield” (29). I agree with Burke’s analysis, but would add one more function to those lyrics: they reflect the displacement of erotic energy from the female left behind in the civilian world to one’s comrades-in-arms waiting in the barracks. One way to deal with this sexual tension is to obliquely recognize it and defuse it with humor.

10. This version is one I learned while growing up by Fort McClellan Army base near Anniston, Alabama. Variations of “Casey Jones” lyrics can be found in The Erotic Muse by Ed Cray.
11. “Et pourquoi prendrais-je qu’un seul homme/quand j’aime tout un régiment?” My grandfather, Fred Wroten Weems, of Hazelhurst, Mississippi, brought “Quand Madelon” back with him to the United States after learning it from French troops during World War I. He passed it on to my father, Ray (Ramon) Martinez-Weems, who passed it on to me. My father, my husband, and I sang it together in French to honor my late grandfather on Veteran’s Day 2007.
12. Excessive sexual energy appeared to be a very real concern when I was in boot camp. A drill instructor once told me the reason why skivvies (underwear) were shapeless baggy boxers was to keep down sexual tensions that could have been aroused by tight-fitting briefs. There were also rumors that saltpeter (potassium nitrate) was put in our food to prevent us from having erections.
13. DJ Dadt agreed wholeheartedly with this point.
Sex is not the only scandalous topic of marching chants. Several jody calls describe killing others in grotesque ways:

Throw some candy to the children  
Wait till they gather round  
Then you take your M-16 now  
And mow the little fuckers down (Burke 38)

Sexual and sadistic lyrics are undisciplined expressions of the soldiers’ outlaw status as extralegal. Brutality in verse reflects the terrible truths of war in which military personnel find themselves unbound by the morals of civil society. Burke says, “Through such chants, the group asserts itself as the tough ‘bad boy,’ equally ready to slaughter or to screw. For the trainee, these chants transform the horrifying prospect of combat into a humorous, macabre sport” (29).

When I was in boot camp, we never sang any jody calls with scandalous lyrics while in formation within earshot of officers.14 Such lyrics could get our drill instructors in trouble with their superiors. Officers feared that visiting civilians would hear them, be offended, and get the entire Corps in trouble if word reached the media. The result is that scandalous lyrics became ours, not for outsiders. As private, intimate, and shared pleasures, these ribald songs bonded us even more to the group as we march-danced together. Like scandalous/hilarious speech in the production of fierce solidarity in the Circuit, lyrics to officially forbidden jody calls break down the barriers between soldiers and foster the military’s brand of punitive transcendental solidarity, unity based on shared suffering and outlaw identity.

From Marching to Disco to House Music to the Circuit15

The way my fellow recruits and I learned to march in boot camp was to start out on the left foot. This first step is emphasized more than the

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14. Drill instructors are enlisted non-commissioned officers (NCOs); they are never officers. While always respectful to officers to their faces, sometimes a drill instructor will call an officer a “zero,” referring to the different pay grade under which officers are classified (O for officers, E for enlisted).

15. This section may resemble a marching lesson; it is not designed to be one. Rather, it is a description of what happens when people march to the sing-song of a leader calling cadence. For those who have undergone the discipline of marching, the description is meant to evoke the experience. The section also describes the sonic tools available to Circuit DJs and is written primarily (but not exclusively) with marchers, DJs, and Circuiteers in mind. For those who are not DJs, never attended a Circuit party, and/or never marched, it is possible to apply what I write to one’s own moving, listening, and counting body-mind. It is perhaps even desirable for readers unfamiliar with the subject matter to march a few steps and sing the marching chants (or watch somebody else march and listen to them sing the chants) to observe how they work. I also recommend readers listen to a few songs remixed for the Circuit and count out the beat for themselves. If readers dance as they listen, all the better. I did all of these things as I wrote this chapter.
second, so that when we march, it is “Left, right, left, right,” etc. The emphasis on the left foot creates more energy on that step; that extra energy is the pulse of the march. Double the two-count of the left-foot pulse to 4 (two squared) and there is another pulse on the first count of every four steps: “One, two, three, four, one, two, three, four,” etc. Double it yet again to 8 (two to the third power) and there is an even stronger pulse on the first step: “Your left, your left, your left-right-left (done in an 8–count), your left, your left, your left-right-left,” etc. Most marches with which I am familiar double the iteration twice more to 16 (two to the fourth power) and 32 (two to the fifth) beats, a pattern exemplified in The Battle Hymn of the Republic:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord (8 beats)  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored (8+8=16 beats)  
He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword (8 beats, starting a second set of 16)  
His truth is marching on (16+16=32 beats, modified tune repeats itself in chorus with same number of beats)  
Chorus, strong pulse on first beat: Glory, glory, hallelujah  
Glory, glory hallelujah  
Glory, glory hallelujah  
His truth is marching on (32 beats)  

Martial music is designed specifically to facilitate choreographed marching. The consistent iterations of 2, 4, 8, 16, and 32 make marching songs predictable and reliable. The pulse of the march acts as the common heartbeat for the unified body-mind of the marchers. The sound of everyone’s boots hitting the pavement at the same time not only unifies the participants; it also energizes them much as a strong pulse of blood from the heart energizes the body.

The shared experience of walking makes marching useful in molding armies, especially since armies are comprised of people from different backgrounds and levels of coordination. Dance comes in many forms with many rhythms, pulses, and levels of complexity. But unlike dancing, people from different cultures and backgrounds tend to walk the same. Since the major prerequisite for marching is being able to walk, it is readily applicable to a broad range of individuals because the choreography is not elaborate. Its basic moves are easy for most people, a trait it has in common with popular dance today.

But unlike popular dance, the pleasures associated with marching are secondary to larger purposes, such as group cohesion and instant obedience to orders. People in the military do not usually march just because they like to march. Popular dance, however, is its own reward. Although Circuiteers tend to move to the common beat, they are not
regimented in their movements. Unlike marching soldiers, they are institutionally undisciplined.

Disco music utilizes the 8-, 16-, and 32-count pulses already present in martial music. After American R&B musicians began welding dance music to the firm pulse-foundation of the 32-count to create disco in the early 1970s, European disco artists added the strong, constant thump-thump-thump of German martial music. This transformation of rhythmic movement from an instrument of war into a non-militarized form was not a new innovation; war dances such as the Highland fling have been adopted by societies for peaceful expression, and marching bands had already expanded from military reviews and victory parades to non-military holiday parades, sports arenas, and marching competitions.

House music in the 1980s emerged seamlessly from disco with further refinements in pulse that would cause the energy of a song to build up and climax. Most early house music was like disco except that the pulse would shift even more firmly from 16 to 32-count, according to how the song producer “built” the song. A specific genre of house music called progressive would set the 32-pulse in stone, and then double the pulse to the 64- and 128-beat pulses. The music progressively gathers energy with each iteration as it surges forth in precisely measured sonic waves.16

The relationship between the beat and the pulse may be likened to that of particle and wave.17 In terms of empirical observation, beats of a house music song are particular, distinct, and empirically measurable. Pulse, however, is subjective and based on the reaction of the listeners to beats-as-stimulants that behave collectively like a wave. The various pulses going on at 2, 4, 8, 16, and 32-counts combine together to help create a surge of energy that will crest and uplift the dancers. When a Circuit DJ wants to mix one song into another, the first thing the DJ looks for is the first note of the 32-count phrase in both the incoming and outgoing songs so that the greater pulse is not disrupted during the shift from one song to the next.

Circuit DJs go beyond the 32-count when they want to make the crowd climax. During the 1990s, adherence to 64- (two to the sixth power), 128- (two to the seventh power), and even 256- (two to the eighth power) count pulses became part of the structure of Circuit music. In order not to disrupt the larger-count surge-pulse, Circuit DJs

16. Some of my sources indicate that progressive house got its inspiration from Gay DJs who first remixed dance music according to a stricter 32-count format. These pioneers include Jimmy Stuard and Frankie Knuckles.
17. Within Circuit discourse, the particle-wave analogy is most often expressed in the merging of the individual into the “sea of men.”
may go further than simply matching songs up at the 32–count, and opt to synchronize incoming and outgoing songs with the 64, 128, or 256 build up. The predictability of the pulse in Circuit musical format makes it easier for the participant-dancer to synchronize personal performance with a song, even when it is heard for the first time.

It is also important to consider that rather narrow range of beats per minute (bpm) that is found in Circuit music. Most U.S. marches are about 120 bpm, about the pace of an energetic (but not rapid) walk. “Double-time” or jogging is about 145 bpm. Circuit music BPM is between 125–135 bpm, between a walk and a jog. It also approximates the bpm of the average heartbeat when walking at that same pace. 125–135 bpm is energetic enough to keep people alert, but not so fast that it wears them out too quickly.\(^{18}\)

Circuit DJs have found that participants can be whipped into a frenzy when using higher-count iterations (which carry all of the lesser pulses within the longer count). It is up to the person who remixes the song in the Circuit pulse format as to which iterations carry the strongest surge in the song’s sonic build up. If a song was not originally produced with Circuit sensibilities, the remixer will modify it to build up to the 64, 128, and 256 beats per iteration because the original structure of most songs does not assign a strong pulse higher than 32 beats. These higher iterations run the risk of becoming tedious rather than progressively more intense. That is why an undercurrent of syncopation is introduced and then elaborated as the song progresses. In the midst of structure, there is a constant and repeated undercutting of order with repeated patterns of syncopation and the melodic hook, as described by DJ Tony Moran\(^{19}\):

Most people are generally attracted to “hooks.” A hook is a signature musical refrain that is repeated throughout a song. That refrain relaxes the mind and makes the body feel as it were a hand being fitted into the perfect glove. Vocal or instrumental hooks can provide the same feeling of comfortable anticipation to hear it again. (personal communication, January 2008)

People dancing to a song first familiarize themselves with its rhythms, then they strike a balance and express those rhythms in their movements. Over-familiarity with a song and its rhythms, however,

\(^{18}\) DJ Dadt concurs with me on this observation. Raves, which attract a younger crowd than the Circuit, tend to have a much broader range of bpm. Most of Rave music is more rapid than Circuit music, with a range from 135–170 bpm (except in the “chill” or non-dancing areas for relaxation, where the music could be anywhere from 80–115 bpm).

\(^{19}\) Tony Moran is leading DJ/remixer in the Circuit world, as well as a renowned musician, songwriter, singer, and remixer of popular music worldwide.
means the song can no longer stimulate the crowd, hence the reason why DJs must constantly update their musical portfolio.

Higher iterations of Circuit music are accompanied by a sonic build up accomplished by doubling and quadrupling the basic thump-thump-thump measuring the song’s beats per minute in a rapid-fire sonic burst just before a major 128-pulse. It creates a climactic surge that washes over the dance floor, sending participants into higher states of rhythm-induced pleasure that they in turn translate into more vigorous dancing, hands in the air, ear-to-ear smiles, and shouts of joy.

DJ Dadt explains the sonic build-up as a fairly common technique for showmanship that has been around for a long time:

This has been used historically at performances, such as magic shows, where a drum build up climaxes with a single hit of the drum cymbal as the magician completes his [sic] trick. While both are used for separate ends, the concept is similar. (personal communication, January 2008)

Most house music dancing (including Circuit dancing) is from side to side, stepping twice with one foot at a time and completing a full-body movement in four beats. Like marching, this basic step is based on walking and is simple enough for most people from different cultures and different levels of coordination to perform. Once that step is learned, dancers are free to elaborate and perform with individual expression far beyond what is allowable for soldiers in formation. But Circuit dancers tend to have sharper moves than the usual clubgoers because of Circuiteers’ awareness of pulse. Obedience to the four-count and the higher powers of two is especially strong in the Circuit community because of the importance of a clear, regular pulse that the dancers can strike on the 16-, 32-, 64-, and 128-count iterations right as the music peaks. The discipline applied to the multi-layered pulse of Circuit music, much more strict and consistent than house music in general, takes attention away from the DJ and puts it firmly on the participants who, when their level of performance is enhanced by a competent DJ, bond with that DJ even more.

Just as fidelity to the 32-count pulse is what makes martial music ideal for marchers, so do the intricate syncopation plus the larger iterations of 64, 128, and 256 make Circuit music dancer’s music above all else. It also makes Circuit music unfit for marching; all of those additional pulses tend to summon much more motion than simply walking. Hips, arms, shoulders, and head start moving as well, and all that extra movement associated with individual expression would disrupt the streamlined conformity of disciplined military formations. Tony Moran describes the difference between military marching and Circuit dancing:
The marching drum that has evolved into the Circuit tribal drum does not demand submission to a trend. It is a path to expression, and I have seen those who are not necessarily familiar with it pick it up with ease. (personal communication, January 2008)

The Segue

Another important factor in the narrow range of bpm and adherence to the 32-count in Circuit music is manipulation of the segue between songs. Since the basic rhythmic format of songs is similar, it is possible for DJs to do more than simply switch from one song to another seamlessly in the manner of a marching band. DJs may also blend two songs together, creating a temporary composition that only exists for the moments when the songs can comfortably overlap.

Creating an extended segue is extremely difficult to do with songs that are recorded live in their entirety. When a group of musicians performs a piece, the tempo fluctuates according to the rhythms of that group at that moment. Mixing such a song with another live song that has its own petite fluctuations is a real problem.

DJ Abel (Abel Aguilera), an artist whose career goes back to the days of disco, told me that creating a segue with disco music was a nightmare. Most disco songs were recorded live, with only the introductions and perhaps the endings looped (repeating the same recording of a measure several times). A segue was not possible if the riffs of a song were not spliced out and replicated over and over again, a time-consuming process at that time because the only means for doing this was to actually splice together reel-to-reel recording tape by hand. Before electronic music (songs that are precisely measured out through computer-generated sound and/or computer remixing), DJs had to abruptly end one song and immediately begin the next song at exactly the next beat. “You had to karate chop them,” said Abel (interview, February 2008).

Music artists and producers like Giorgio Moroder, Patrick Cowley, Kraftwerk, and New Order led the way in producing the necessary rhythmic precision that would allow DJs to explore the possibilities of the segue. A new genre of music, freestyle, married the clean sounds and discipline of electronica to R&B vocals, ushering in the age of the remixers, artists who would restructure songs specifically for the DJ and tailor them exclusively to the dancers. Music producer/DJs, such as Tony Moran and Ralphi Rosario, pioneered the new technology and are big names in the industry at large as well as Circuit icons.

This technological innovation takes the dynamics of the dance floor even further from those of the parade ground and the sacred space of classical African ritual. These segues can be quite stunning when done adroitly. Circuiteers tend to know their music. When a DJ blends songs,
the result is a musical treat in which the previous song interweaves with the upcoming song, often before the audience knows what the new song is. The blend usually hits the dancers unconsciously before they realize what the DJ is doing, creeping up on their awareness like a rising tide. The new rhythms tease participants as they try to determine the identity of the new song. The surge of recognition renders the familiar (which too easily translates as *boring*) into something fresh and delightful. Like a strong pulse, a good segue energizes the dancers. It is my aesthetic opinion that God lives in the fierceness generated by a well woven segue.

The importance of iterations beyond the 32–count, the double time of beats just before a major pulse, and the magic of a fierce segue in Circuit musical technology reflect the goals of the Circuit experience: energize, unite, and psychologically transport/transform the dancers into one collective body-mind. Military marching can get soldiers from Point A to Point B and/or allow them to display themselves in all of their serious finery as a unified corps. The Circuit is also about display, but it is not limited to the presentation of military *gravitas* and sameness any more than it seeks to evoke the grandeur of the Orixás in a Candomblé festa. All of the intricate beats and surges will bring forth different levels of playfulness and skill from participants, giving everyone the chance to excel or simply have fun. Within this on-the-spot innovative frame, the Circuit is also designed to launch participants as a corps into progressively more intense levels of pleasure for pleasure’s sake as participants perform for the crowd and their own amusement. The build up of energy moves the Circuit corps, not from place to place, but from normalcy to increasingly richer states of ecstasy.
To see an ocean of people on a dance floor in rhythmic sync, as if they all were trained to dance as one, is just a spectacle. Playing in venues around the world allows me to watch infectious rhythms and melodies flow together to translate into a bounce that is beautiful.

My first observation of the startling degree of rhythmic unification was at a bar called Hydrate in Chicago. Hydrate’s relevance as part of Gay history is undisputed. Its name at that time was the Manhole. You had to check your shirt upon entrance to the dance floor.

It was packed that night, and I was lucky enough to have been allowed to use the owner’s bathroom downstairs; the regular bathrooms were pretty insane. People wore shoes or boots more back then, and it really made some noise. The office and bathroom were directly below the dance floor. I would say that there were about 500 guys dancing to the same song at the same time, all stomping to the same song with some people doing slightly fancier variations that fit into that stomping pulse. With those variations, it sounded like a percussion session was going on up there. And the percussionists were an army of dancing queens. I had to pause for awhile after doing my business because I was so fascinated how it thundered with such synchronization. I wish I could have recorded it and sampled it [inserted it into a song]. Equally impressive was how most were marching to that same beat. It sounded as if they had trained to be in sync.

To watch people dance has a different effect because you don’t notice as much about their feet when you are watching their faces and hand movements that give each individual their own personal dance technique. Over the years that I have played at what is now Hydrate, the same pulse of stomping feet continues to resonate in the same way through the evolution of disco music to house music and now my specialties, tribal music and anthems.

When you play music in a city like Rio de Janeiro, you would swear that they all have PhDs in passionate tribal dance. It just does not look that good anywhere else. From my DJ booth, you witness a symphony of sexual tactical maneuvers that make each body part an instrument. To watch a sea of that happening with about 10,000 people dancing in front of me just brought tears to my eyes again and again. They were dancing purely from their hearts and the sheer devotion can be only compared to prayer from my point of view, a prayer of giving thanks.
that they are here and that they can rejoice just to be alive. Wow! That is how the Cariocas [residents of Rio] of Brazil do it.

Of course, as we all dance, we can all be like peacocks, moving to generate interest by one or many in a homoerotic way. That is a given. No matter how shy you may be, there has to be a time when you are looking to get someone’s attention. I can look back to the time of the ancient Greek and Romans to just to give a few examples. That must have looked pretty damn glorious, singing songs that boost their egos and boast of their manhood and conquests. To each other, that is. What better way to go off to battle and sacrifice your life than to be made to feel that your manhood had substance and that you would be willing to die or kill to keep it and chant and dance again with your brothers?

The dance movements have changed as dance music has evolved. The foundation, the pulse, is always there. That pulse is the engine that drives the rest of our musical and rhythmic parts. Our hearts are drawn by it. Our feet tap to it while we eat at the dinner table. It’s just a part of us and I am glad it is. Pulsating tribal rhythm is the foundation of almost all my remixes.

When I play my music, I am not counting the beats. It is an instinctive feeling that happens to go by the rules and guidelines of music. As I mix together variations of tribal and dance music, my mission is to keep that pulse ever pounding. I color the pulse and merge beats into a family of pulses that change and converge in my signature anthemic style [anthemic is when a song becomes an industry standard and people sing along]. Those colors guide me and us through the “journey,” and it is a special journey for me every time. I guess the word “Circuit” must have come about from seeing many of the same faces traveling to different destinations to experience that journey. I see many of the same faces in the most unlikely of places: Thailand, Japan, Sydney, then Fire Island and LA, just to name a few.

The lyrical content and the performances that range from sublime to anthemic have enhanced and spread the finite pulsing march into an extended journey. This has allowed the homoerotic tension to last for more than the average act of dance floor foreplay. There is torso-to-torso action and reaction, amplified and eroticized as it comes out of the speakers and into men’s testosterone banks. I’ve seen it at every party I’ve ever played from Alegria/ NYC to White Party.

Whatever you want to call it, it brings people together to rejoice. We each have our ways to make our climaxes, and I love to climax and build people up to a place where it feels like cool water has been sprayed onto a face sweating in the hot sun. I like to see the smiles as I watch friends and strangers embracing each other when I drop the
drums out and air fills the room (from a psychological standpoint). I am normally in a booth or on a stage where I am experiencing many of the same feelings.