

nordic forum for dance research
NOFOD

Society of Dance History Scholars
SDHS
Advancing the Field of Dance Studies

Proceedings

Dance ACTIONs — Traditions and Transformations

Thirty-sixth Annual International Conference
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Trondheim, Norway
June 8–11, 2013

Nordic Forum for Dance Research
Society of Dance History Scholars

Proceedings

**Dance ACTions — Traditions and
Transformations**

Thirty-sixth Annual International Conference
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) Trondheim, Norway
June 8—11, 2013

The 2013 joint NOFOD/SDHS conference, Dance ACTions — Traditions and Transformations, was held June 8–11, 2013 at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim, Norway. Each presenter at the conference was invited to contribute to the Proceedings. Those who chose to contribute did so by submitting pdf files, which are assembled here. There was minimal editorial intervention — little more than the addition of page numbers and headers. Authors undertook to adhere to a standard format for fonts, margins, titles, figures or illustrations, order of sections, and so on, but there may be minor differences in format from one paper to another.

Individual authors hold the copyrights to their papers. Neither the Nordic Forum for Dance Research nor the Society of Dance History Scholars is legally responsible for any violation of copyright; authors are solely responsible.

Published by the Society of Dance History Scholars, 2013.

Contents

1. Acharya, Rohini	1
2. Adams, Megan Ashley	9
3. Aymami Reñe, Eva	21
4. Ballantyne, Patricia H.	31
5. Banerjee, Suparna	39
6. Benthaus, Elena Natalie	55
7. Bork Petersen, Franziska	63
8. Briand, Michel	73
9. Chatterjee, Sandra	89
10. Colombi, Erika	99
11. Farrugia, Kathrina	105
12. Fisher-Stitt, Norma Sue	113
13. Guan, Jingqiu	119
14. Harlig, Alexandra	131
15. Heller, David F.	139
16. Helmersson, Linnea	145
17. Holt, Kathryn	153
18. Hoshino, Yukiyo	161
19. Huskey, Sybil	165
20. Ivanova-Nyberg, Daniela	171
21. Järvinen, Hanna	179
22. Jimenez, Pablo	187
23. Johnson, Michelle	193
24. Karin, Vesna	203
25. Klein, Kelly	207
26. Laakkonen, Johanna	213
27. Lenart, Camelia	219
28. Maxwell, Adeline	233
29. Milazzo, Kathy M.	241
30. Oatley, Diane	249
31. Oberzaucher-Schueller, Gunhild	257
32. Passion, Maxx	267
33. Payne, Ursula O.	273
34. Polimene, Andrea	279
35. Robinson, Laura	285
36. Rottenberg, Henia	295

37. Rouhiainen, Leena	299
38. Schjønsby, Turid Nøkleberg	309
39. Scott, Gregory	317
40. Setenta, Jussara Sobreira	327
41. Seye, Elina	335
42. Smith, Amy C.	341
43. Speer, Kate	347
44. Tahko, Tuuli	353
45. Vaghi, Katja	363
46. Walsdorf, Hanna	373
47. Wawrejko, Diane	381
48. Wells, Christopher J.	391
49. Whittier, Cadence	399
50. Wildschut, Liesbeth	407
51. Wu, I-Ying	417
52. Wu, Yi-chen	421
53. Yagishita, Emi	427
54. Yushkova, Elena	435

The Reconstruction of “Authenticity” and “Tradition”: Practicing Bharata Natyam in Honolulu, Hawaii

Rohini Acharya

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Abstract

This paper will look at the classical Indian dance form of Bharata Natyam through three areas of practice: performance, pedagogy, and choreography. To contextualize my research in Honolulu, I first examine the emergence of Bharata Natyam as a globalized dance form and the practice of “traditional” and “authentic” Bharata Natyam within Indian diasporic communities in the U.S. Critically examining the terms “traditional” and “authentic,” I then want to situate the contestations and redefinitions of these terms in the diverse cultural climate of Honolulu and examine how location informs and impacts the reconstruction of a “traditional” South Indian dance practice. Employing the methodology of practice as research, I hope to critically question the validity of “authentic” and “tradition” in describing Bharata Natyam in Honolulu. I also hope to explore in these three areas of Bharata Natyam practice, a site of cultural negotiation, where identities are performed and transformed.

Introduction

“The dance experience at UHM is particularly rich because of its ethnic, geographic, and cultural environment, which enables students to work in the dance traditions of Asia and the Pacific as well as those of Europe and the United States.” The main reason I chose the University of Hawaii at Manoa for my graduate studies in dance is articulated in the statement above from the UHM Dance Department’s website. Trained in the South Indian classical dance form, Bharata Natyam¹, I felt the “ethnic, geographic, and cultural environment of Honolulu” would provide me ample opportunities to further enrich my understanding of Bharata Natyam by engaging with the Asia and Pacific art forms situated in Honolulu. Over the past two years of my graduate studies at UHM, I have been provided opportunities to explore the main objectives of the UHM dance department as a Bharata Natyam practitioner through three areas of practice: performance, pedagogy, and choreography. To articulate key questions and issues that have emerged in my positionality as a Bharata Natyam practitioner in Honolulu, I will analyze a recent piece that encompassed these three areas of my practice.

To begin my analysis, I pose this question from the concert guide of the 2011 Asia-Pacific Dance Festival written by noted dance scholar, Judy Van Zile: “Can the blending of Bharata Natyam from South India with taiko drumming of Japan create a valid and meaningful art?” This question was in reference to a piece in the 2011 Asia-Pacific Dance Festival that blended Bharata Natyam with Taiko drumming. This piece, titled *Sosen* (meaning ancestors), first premiered in 2009 as a collaboration between Bharata Natyam practitioner, Sonja Sironen, and famed Taiko drummer and composer, Kenny Endo. Sironen and Endo then re-staged this piece for the 2011 Asia-Pacific Dance

Festival. Situated within a concert that was a visual representation of the complex issues that choreographers and dancers face today in bringing dance traditions from the past into the present, *Sosen* highlighted how two different dance forms address these issues in collaboration with each another. In 2013, *Sosen* would be re-staged again for the UHM Dance Department's Mainstage Concert, *Taiko Drum and Dance*, which was to feature collaborations between the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble and other contemporary and traditional dance forms. Because the original choreographer was not available to set the piece initially, I was given the opportunity to re-stage and perform in *Sosen*.

The opportunity to set *Sosen* for the 2013 concert was an exciting opportunity for me in many ways yet it was an experience where I confronted some key issues in my practice of Bharata Natyam. These issues stem from my critical analysis of the dance form I teach, perform, and choreograph transform and adapt to various global contexts in whichever context it is practiced in. Employing a practice as research methodology, I first create a framework for my critical analysis in articulating the process of *Sosen*, by looking at the re-staging of the piece for the 2011 Asia Pacific Dance Festival. From this festival, key issues were raised for choreographers working with traditional dance forms that will serve as a springboard for my process in re-staging and reconstructing *Sosen*. In discussing the specificities of the three areas of my practice this piece encompassed, I hope to look at the process of staging *Sosen* as a microcosm for my understanding of the broader issues of reconstruction and collaboration as dance forms from differing contexts blend and merge in the global setting. I also hope to look at the contestations and contradictions of my positionality embedded within these broader issues. Yet from my process of re-staging *Sosen*, I continue to further my understanding of the hybridization of forms as a site of cultural negotiation, where identities are performed and transformed.

***Sosen* in the 2011 Asia-Pacific Festival: The Crossroads of Contemporary and Traditional Dance, UH Manoa**

To understand the nature of the original collaboration between Endo and Sironen, I reference the 16-page concert guide from the 2011 Asia-Pacific Dance Festival authored by Judy Van Zile:

With support from the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts, in 2009 the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble embarked on a collaboration with bharata natyam dancer Sonja Sironen. Based on the structure and rhythm focus of many bharata natyam pieces and the Japanese tradition of classical taiko drumming found in noh music (music of a traditional Japanese theatre form), they created *Sosen*. Meaning "ancestors," *Sosen* blends not only dance and music forms from two different Asian countries, but performers initially trained in only one of the other of these forms who have embarked on new ways of using their bodies and rhythms (Van Zile 11)

The program description of *Sosen* is not limited to the above quote. Van Zile also writes about the musical composition and Sironen's process for choreographing the piece, which is as follows:

Because of the music's strong rhythmic patterns, choreographer Sonja Sironen drew movement vocabulary from the abstract rather than narrative components of a traditional bharata natyam performance, and used this vocabulary to allow the performers to both mirror and contribute to the rhythm... Since some of the dancers were new to bharata natyam technique, she focused on several key movement sequences and hand gestures, creating variations on them to construct the dance. She also adjusted some of the footwork to allow the dancers to travel through space more than is common in bharata natyam (Van Zile 11)

This piece reflects the broader framework of the concert evident in the title "The Crossroads of Contemporary and Traditional Dance." As Judy Van Zile writes in the concert guide, this program features dances of many kinds: "dances considered "traditional" in their countries of origin, dances that blend old and new forms from a single geographic region, works inspired by dances from multiple geographic areas, choreography that blends music from one with dance from another" (Van Zile 10). As a program that "...was designed to be both an engaging performance and a provocative visual presentation on complex issues confronting choreographers and dancers today, issues that reflect what might be described as either a past-present divide or overlap, Van Zile proposed these questions among others to engage the choreographers, performers, and audience members in a dialogue about the performance content. Some of these questions were "how can we reconcile tradition and modernity" and "is it appropriate to transform older kinds of dance – either in form, content, or context?" (Van Zile 13). Further questions looked at this crossroads between tradition and modernity, which were a means of making both the audience and choreographer aware of these issues, not answering them. These questions, along with the pertinent "Can the blending of bharata natyam from South India with taiko drumming of Japan create a valid and meaningful art," provide a framework for analysis in looking at how I re-staged and reconstructed *Sosen* for the 2013 concert.

Choreography, Pedagogy and Performance in Honolulu, Hawaii – The Re-Staging of *Sosen*

Choreography

In Helen Thomas' book *The Body, Dance, and Cultural Theory*, she writes, "Here we have two different views of reconstruction, the one "authentic" to the original work, the other interpretive of the spirit of the work." I begin with this theoretical statement as I look at the specificities of my approach to reconstructing the choreography for *Sosen*. When I first sat down with Sironen to look at the two videos of the piece, one from the 2009 premiere and the other from the 2011 Festival, rather than see these videos through Sironen's approach to collaborating with Endo and what drove and inspired her choreography, I viewed it through the lens of my training in Bharata Natyam and consciously began to "change" certain areas of the choreography. To understand why I viewed the choreography through this "lens," I will briefly explain my training in Bharata Natyam, contextualizing it within the global perception of Bharata Natyam.

My training in Bharata Natyam began at the age of 7 from my guru, Viji Prakash, in Los Angeles, California. Though removed from its "original" context, there were key aspects of the dance form that were highlighted and emphasized. In Avanthi Meduri's

“Bharata Natyam- What are you?” she recounts hearing from her guru that Bharata Natyam traces its origins to the *Natyashastra*, an ancient text on Indian dramaturgy, which was corrupted by *devadasis* or “temple dancers” who were considered to be prostitutes. The dance form was then saved from extinction by individuals from highly respectable backgrounds and “revived” to be seen as the ancient practice it is seen as today (Meduri 1). These explanations grounded my training in Bharata Natyam in Los Angeles and subsequent training in Chennai. What emerged from these explanations were two prominent terms: “tradition” and “authenticity.” In addition to Meduri, these terms are widely contested by dance scholars Janet O’Shea and Suparna Banerjee (to name a few) in the global circulation of Bharata Natyam as a “traditional” and “authentic” dance form. Eventually, I too began to understand the contestations of these terms as I started to explore the history of it and see the issues embedded deep within the practice and preservation of it. When learning this dance form, I never questioned its history because I loved that I had a great opportunity to stay connected to India through an “ancient, traditional practice.” In viewing *Sosen* for the first time and desiring to change some of the technique in the piece, is perhaps a result of how these terms “traditional” and “authentic” are constructed and reconstructed in the practice of Bharata Natyam outside of India and my embodied understanding of “traditional” Bharata Natyam as I learned it.

I highlight this first part of staging *Sosen* as it was a collaboration between two different styles of Bharata Natyam within the broader collaboration between two Asian art forms. In the fifth chapter of her book, titled “Reconstructing the Dance: In Search of Authenticity,” Helen Thomas looks at the range of theoretical and practical issues surrounding the concepts, processes, and products of dance reconstruction. She writes, “the debates surrounding reconstruction in dance studies began to raise questions about authenticity and interpretation, reproducibility and the aura of the work of art, [and] tradition and the relation between past and present” (Thomas 130). In analyzing this chapter in Thomas’ book on authenticity and interpretation, my interpretation of the choreography for *Sosen* was “authentic” to my training in Bharata Natyam, not to maintaining an “authentic” reproduction of Sironen’s original choreography. This interpretation of the choreography informed the way I would teach this piece.

Pedagogy

Through my embodied knowledge of Bharata Natyam, once I had interpreted and reconstructed the choreography, I then had to teach *Sosen* in a three-week intensive course to beginner students. Due to the students’ limited exposure to Bharata Natyam, not only was I teaching the choreography but building a foundation for them to learn this dance form. Tasked with what I felt was a challenge, I developed the course using, as Susan Leigh Foster theorizes on, “kinesthetic empathy.” Using this kinesthetic empathy, I spent the first two weeks of the course building a foundation, drilling exercise designed to develop “proper” technique, which is exactly how I learnt Bharata Natyam. The last week of the course I spent teaching them the choreography of *Sosen* as I had reconstructed it to be re-staged. Teaching technique and the choreography for *Sosen* highlighted the issues in this collaboration of two different styles of Bharata Natyam. As the terms “authenticity” and “tradition” are widely contested in Bharata Natyam scholarship, it was contradicted in my teaching of *Sosen* as I emphasized a “proper” technique as I had studied it to become a proficient dancer, which would enable the

students to perform Bharata Natyam “correctly.” This adherence to “my” tradition and the preservation of authenticity distorted the lens through which I taught *Sosen* as I didn’t teach it the way Sironen had envisioned and choreographed it. The piece transformed from Sironen’s original choreography to my reconstructed “original” choreography and I want to highlight this as problematic in analyzing this issue of “authenticity” prevalent in teaching Bharata Natyam particularly outside of India.

At the root of this performance though, is the collaboration between taiko drumming and Bharata Natyam and as I negotiated differences in Bharata Natyam vocabulary, I also sought spaces of negotiation within the piece for the Bharata Natyam and taiko drumming to merge. To answer Judy Van Zile’s question in the affirmative, the blending of Bharata Natyam and taiko drumming can create a meaningful art. In the hybridization of these two dance forms, “authenticity” in how I approached and taught the choreography is both contested and highlighted. In Suparna Banerjee’s “Quest for Authenticity in Indian Classical Dance: Innovations and Hybridization of Bhartanatyam on Global Stage”, she writes, “...authenticity in Bharatanatyam is becoming ‘a living art form’ which does not remain static, but is continually renewed over the years” (Banerjee). The staging of *Sosen* in certain elements reflects this contestation. Yet within this staging, a place of cultural negotiation, this “authenticity” can be highlighted particularly when it comes to issues of representation and identity.

Performance

I have discussed *Sosen* in the context of the 2011 Asia-Pacific Dance Festival, I will now discuss the 2013 performance of it. Most of the pieces in this concert were collaborations between taiko drumming and modern dance, addressing as Van Zile put it, how we reconcile tradition and modernity. Within this show, *Sosen* addressed the reconciliation between tradition and modernity as it did in 2009 and 2011.

As in the case of the choreography and teaching, the performance of *Sosen* highlighted a site of cultural negotiation in what was produced yet it continued in accordance to how the piece was being staged and reconstructed by “my” understanding of Bharata Natyam. The decisions in costuming and placement of dancers and musicians on stage reflected the aesthetic I was pursuing and not what the original choreography produced. The costuming in Bharata Natyam serves as a marker of the identity of the dance form, showcasing this “maintained tradition” of a *devadasi*. How would this be negotiated or changed in staging *Sosen*? In 2009 and 2011, the costuming reflected the hybridization of both dance styles. Dancers wore black pants that Taiko dancers wear (*momohiki*) and black tops. Around their heads, they wore a *hachimaki* (headband). What represented the Bharata Natyam identity of the piece in the costuming were the colorful *dhavanis* or sashes of blue, pink, and yellow. In 2013, there were more markers of Bharata Natyam costuming evident. In place of the *hachimaki*, dancers wore *nettichuttis*, a jeweled ornamentation that goes along the center part of the hair. The *dhavanis* were made of sari silks. The colors reflected prominent taiko costume colors of red and yellow and were reconstructed in a way that was interpretive of the *dhavani* and side fan of a Bharata Natyam costume. In terms of how the musicians and dancers interacted, in the 2009 performance, they were placed behind the dancers, in 2011 they were downstage right of the dancers, and in 2013 they were stage left of the dancers. In a conventional

Bharata Natyam performance, the musicians sit on stage right of the dancers. I thought in having the taiko drummers sit on the opposite side that it negotiated this convention by mirroring it.

These staging elements heightened the choreography and the nature of the collaboration yet for me it also highlights how elements are selected in a collaborative piece to represent the aesthetics of the dance style. When I sat down with the costume designer for this performance, it was her idea to have the fabric of the sash made from sari material and my idea to have them wear a *nettichutti* in place of the *hachimaki* as I felt that I wanted more aspects of the costuming to highlight the Bharata Natyam vocabulary. In looking back, I question this decision as I ask why I desired these elements of the costuming be added to make the identity of the movement vocabulary more evident? Was it for the dancers, to give them an accurate representation of what it is like to perform Bharata Natyam? Was it for the Honolulu audience, who may not have ever or rarely seen Bharata Natyam, therefore wanting to present something that was new but also identifiable as classical Indian dance and not Bollywood?

These questions again highlight reconstructing a piece in the spirit of how I learned and trained in Bharata Natyam and neglecting the spirit of the original collaboration and choreography, to create something new in accordance to how I saw it. The collaboration of *Sosen* and the opportunity to reconstruct and re-stage it presented an opportunity to work with Bharata Natyam in a way I hadn't done so before yet this opportunity highlighted a contradiction, of reconstructing the Bharata Natyam movement to represent the "tradition" of something I have embodied and performed for many years.

Conclusion

During my training, if somebody had asked me "Is it appropriate to transform older styles of dance – either in form, content, or context? I would have answered no because of my discomfort in doing so. In my pursuit of dance within the academic realm, my answer to the question of whether it is appropriate to transform older styles of dance is continuing to change as I pursue opportunities to create individual work and collaborative pieces, such as *Sosen*. As Van Zile further states in the concert guide, "Choreographers throughout time have typically drawn on their entire array of experiences as they both continue and enliven the art they pursue." I reflect on this statement as I draw upon my experiences of practicing Bharata Natyam in Los Angeles and Chennai and continue to enliven the art in my current experience, practicing Bharata Natyam in Honolulu. I have been practicing Bharata Natyam for the last two years in Honolulu and I am still discovering the possibilities of how this location will possibly influence my practice. Yet I have had opportunities where I have been both gratified and challenged particularly with *Sosen*, and with these opportunities I am developing an awareness of my positionality and in this continued critical analysis, opening up the possibilities of new and different ways of continuing my trajectory as a Bharata Natyam practitioner in the diverse multicultural environments of today.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the UHM Dance Faculty, Sonja Sironen, and the UHM Norway Grad Student Group for all of their help and support.

Endnotes

1 There are few different spellings of Bharata Natyam. Some spell it as one word Bharatanatyam or as two, Bharata or Bharatha Natyam. When citing an author, I will spell it how they do but when I'm not, I will spell it as *Bharata Natyam*.

Bibliography

- Banerjee, Suparna. "Quest for Authenticity in Indian Classical Dance: Innovations and Hybridization of Bharatanatyam on Global Stage." *The Global Studies Journal* 2.3 (2009): 75-86. Print.
- Foster, Susan Leigh "Movement's contagion: the kinesthetic impact of performance *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2008. Print.
- Meduri, Avanthi. "Bharatha Natyam - What Are You?" *Asian Theatre Journal* 5.1 (1988): 1-22. Print.
- Thomas, Helen *The Body, Dance, and Cultural Theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print.
- Van Zile, Judy "The Past and the Present: The Crossroads of Contemporary and Traditional Dance" *Asia-Pacific Dance Festival: Concert Guide* (2011): 1-16. Print
- "Department of Theatre and Dance—UH Manoa." *Department of Theatre and Dance—UH Manoa*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Sept. 2013.

Rohini Acharya
 918 Wiliwili St. Honolulu, HI 96826
 racharya@hawaii.edu

Dance versus the City

Megan Veatrice Ashley Adams

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Abstract

The stage art of cabaret has long been a place of provocation and social commentary where comedic and queer aspects allow issues to be raised in a comfortable yet expressive atmosphere. Studying cabaret is unique for a few reasons: every show has its own purpose for existing, its own duty to dances' past, and its own desire to meet audience expectations. This paper discusses and theorizes these reasons for the performance pieces created by a group of students from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and professional dancers in the community for an eclectic revue cabaret show titled The Great Flood which occurred the 22nd and 23rd of March 2013 at The Loading Zone, an arts venue in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The show's theme dealt with worship, the body, creation, the spirit, and our experiences in the city. Performance pieces included satire, recitation, song, adult content, and social commentary all with pervasive dance. This paper is influenced by concepts from urban planning studies. What is the importance of experimental revue style dancing in the context of this city? What is the relationship of the dancer to the city of Honolulu, and might the dancer be influencing the city?

Introduction

Dance is a tool which can be used to maximize a city's potential for community and prosperity. In order to discover the ways in which people maximize social and urban environments, people might begin to look at working definitions of dance as one possible way of understanding urban livability.

There is currently a popular focus of urban planning studies in the United States working on community based learning, listening, and growth. One challenge both dance and urban planning struggle with is the task of definition. Who defines dance in the urban environment? How do we define dance in our cities? How we define ourselves tells us who we are, and when we know who we are we define our communities; we define our cities; and we define our future.

Cabaret-revue dance in Honolulu is one case study I researched to explore how this style of dance performance is defined as a part of the city. Many cabaret-revues are peculiar to define because they bring together eclectic dance styles from different communities. For the purposes of this paper, *cabaret* is dancing with outlandish style; and *revues*¹ are contrasting dance performances or episodes. Defined by Merriam-Webster, *outlandish* is "strikingly out of the ordinary: bizarre" and "exceeding proper limits or standards".² Using the term *outlandish* to explain cabaret makes sense because cabaret is dynamic and changing. In the past, cabaret was distinguished by the location – usually a venue at which the guests sat at dinner tables and partook in food and drinks served to

them. However, more recently, it is increasingly common for shows under the name “cabaret” to be held at venues which are not solely for the purposes of entertaining guests with performances, dinner, and drinks served to them. I will soon reveal some of my practice-as-research discoveries from a show titled *The Great Flood*. But first,...

Figure 1 is a panoramic view of Honolulu, Hawai‘i atop Pu‘u ‘Ualaka‘a State Park. On the left side of the photo, there is the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM), Diamond Head Crater, and the famous Waikīkī tourist zone. On the right side, one can see the Downtown area which consists of Chinatown. In Chinatown there is an arts venue called The Loading Zone. The Loading Zone arts venue was the location for the show I participated in for this research. Prior to the arts venue, the area’s potential for economic growth was not optimized. After the Loading Zone opened, the corner was painted, there are now pretty lights in the windows, and more people are visiting with the intention of participating in the local economy than in the recent times before arts venues moved in. Chinatown in Honolulu has the potential to be revitalized by arts venues. Honolulu is much more than beaches and tourism.

The Loading Zone arts venue is a place for alternative economies; it is a place where one may encounter community, expression, reflection, sharing, exploration, peace and sharable memory, listening, dance, and performance.

In urban planning studies, places such as The Loading Zone are places of community infrastructure and are considered part of “alternative economies”.³ The term “alternative economies” includes non-traditional monetary generating activities at places such as farmers’ markets, street performances, internet shopping, and arts venues. In the past decade, economic geographers’ interests in alternative economies has increased⁴ as these spaces have become very important and will continue to be important as people and businesses try to compensate for the recent economic downturns and create innovative ways to interact within the city. The base of these economies is rooted in empowering the redistribution of wealth and power.⁵

The Show

The stage art of cabaret has long been a place of social commentary where issues are raised in an expressive atmosphere. My cabaret-revue research discusses and theorizes a dance show using concepts from urban planning studies. It offers a general view, in relation to the city, of a show which occurred on the 22nd and 23rd of March 2013 under the title *The Great Flood*, presented by Giinko Marischino – an experimental dance and theatre group in Hawai‘i. Giinko Marischino specializes in performances utilizing butoh, drag, improv, art, and couture. The show also incorporated dancers from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and other professional performers from Honolulu. Figure 2 is the flier for *The Great Flood* show.

The show was part of an alternative economy centered on dance. It was also a dynamic expressive show made by people who work to define their world and themselves by creating innovative material.

The show’s theme was based on body worship, idol worship, creation, the spirit, and our experiences in the city. From this show’s line-up (Table 1), it is clear that many different groups and styles joined together. Some of the performances in the show

incorporated Bharata Natyam, modern dance, story telling, recitation, contemporary dance, sword dancing, tribal fusion belly dance, neo-burlesque, feather fan dancing, drag, acting, break dancing, bible ripping, confetti throwing, heart stealing, and apple pie eating – in all seriousness of life.

Table 1: *The Great Flood* show line-up

Act 1	Act 2
No.) Style: <i>Title</i> - Dancers	— Intermission —
1) Bharata Natyam: <i>Sosen</i> - UHM Dancers led by Rohini Acharya	9) Contemporary, Butoh: <i>Bridal Fair</i> - Giinko Marischino
2) Improv: <i>Love Heart</i> - Liz Solo	10) Butoh, Drag: <i>Christmas Santa</i> - Giinko Marischino
3) Contemporary, Butoh, Improv: <i>Lost Love</i> - Summer and Liz	11) Tribal Fusion Bellydance: <i>Sisters</i> - Kalae Kaina
4) Contemporary: <i>The Gathering</i> - Giinko Marischino	12) Feather Fan, Belly Fusion, and Breakdance: <i>Skyline</i> - Megan Adams and David Heller
5) Butoh: <i>Wild Hair Jabong</i> - Giinko Marischino	13) Contemporary: <i>Revelations</i> - Giinko Marischino
6) Drag: <i>Adam and Eve</i> - Giinko Marischino	14) Drag: <i>In Your Arms</i> - Giinko Marischino
7) Collaborative Theatre: <i>My Long Voice</i> - Wai Company	15) Bhangra, Bollywood, Odissi Fusion - Shakti Dance Movement
8) Modern and Neo-burlesque: <i>Crack the Egg</i> - led by Megan Adams	16) Audience Dancing! Followed by a Drag Performance by Miss Cocoa Chandelier

These shows are forming solidarity among artists who would otherwise not necessarily communicate. In shows such as this, artists are brought together who would not have traditionally come together. Cabaret-revues are also encouraging new ways of thinking about how we experience and live in the city by offering commentary in provocative ways.

What is the importance of experimental revue style dancing in the context of this city? What is the relationship of the dancer to the city of Honolulu, and might the dancer be influencing the city?

The producer of this show, Sami L.A. Akuna, collaborated with multiple performers

of diverse dance forms in order to offer a space for experimental dance⁶ theatre where he could introduce his piece and share the space with other performers simultaneously. Many of the dancers involved in this show have been involved in Hawai'i performing arts culture for decades. In order to solidify a show with great meaning (at least to the performers), these dancers came together with dancers who have more recently moved to Honolulu. About half of the performers had not met each other prior to the night of the show.

Experimental dance shows such as this are places where different communities meet in shared spaces to form one community. These transitory communities are formed and broken repeatedly over time; but in the breaking, each community is left with pieces of the other: remnants in the form of new ideas, changed perceptions, and networks. Arts venues are increasing in popularity as spaces of community infrastructure and creative placemaking where people meet, converse, and define themselves, their communities, and their cities. Economic development is spurred by creative placemaking.⁷

Judith Hamera, in her book written in 2007 titled *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*, describes dance as a vehicle for sharable community memory, identity, and solidarity not just by way of community formation but by way of social force, cultural poesis, and communication infrastructure. Even though *The Great Flood* show was a revue, there existed a shared space which was created by Sami Akuna, in a way that entrusted the show to all members of the performance. There were separate identities in each piece, and they came together to form solidarity because each piece held great meaning to the performers thus creating and projecting sharable community memory. Hamera also reminds us, "*Projection is the ongoing, affective identification we observers have with another body, enmeshed with our desires, fraught with the fetishes and fantasies by which we make our own identities*".⁸ We are bodies which both dance and observe, which perform in order to construct ourselves – define ourselves.

Next, I will introduce three lenses which we may use to view *The Great Flood* show: purpose for existing, duty to dances' past, and desire to meet audience expectations.

Purpose for Existing

Experimental dance is contributing to the definition of thinking outside the box. Giinko Marischino performer, Sequoia D. Carr-Brown, described her experimental art forms as theatre and dance which grows from an underground scene full of innovative expressions and said it holds the power to inspire the communities where the works and artists develop.

In the second half, the women of Shakti Dance performed a fusion belly dance inspired by the Indian dances of Odissi, Bollywood, and Bhangra. They perform often, and the leader, Kalae Kaina, teaches regularly in Honolulu. The accumulation of transactions where dance technique and aesthetics connect people to communities, forms relational infrastructure.⁹ Mrs. Kaina is forming relational infrastructure through dance in turn forming communities. She has been an enormous (if not the most important) influence in forming the tribal fusion belly dance scene in Hawai'i. She is uniting many dancers under a vision of sharable community memory through defining dance by

performing in shared space and place – very similar to Sami L.A. Akuna’s work.

Hamera says, “*The social work of aesthetics is especially central to performance... arts’ norms and pleasures are... embraced or resisted by particular bodies in specific places and times*”.¹⁰ Aesthetics are not transcendent and are molded in and by time, exclusion, power, and repression. The aesthetics also keep performers together.

Dance can be defined as something which reveals positive and negative aspects of the city through its discourse. The thirteenth act was titled *Revelations*. Mr. Akuna said *Revelations* expresses the iconic nature of the Catholic church. He explained that the church influences society with their magnificence and size and uses tools to attract people for worship and other reasons. The beacon nature of it all is a type of connection.

In cities, architecture is used to attract people who will engage in the economy. On a deeper level, imagery and archetypes are used to attract people to participate in our ideals. In forming our communities, sometimes we fight against the city’s structure and sometimes we try to work with it. Some dancers feel driven to confront the city by using their choreography to bring issues to the audiences’ attention. They confront the city and create commentary about beacons and archetypes; whether negatively or positively, the city’s imagery helps us define who we are.

Giinko Marischino shares their ideology and inspirations using social network sites. They define their place in society through dance and imagery. One such photo is of a dancer in slacks and a hat dancing on a wood floor under the sun. The caption says, “*Do Your Dance and ALL is Coming...*”. Through shows at arts venues, Giinko Marischino attracts the community to social network sites and continues to spread their cultural poesis.¹¹

A portion of my methodology for studying experimental revues includes a practice as research approach from my own artistic work. As part of the show I created a dance piece titled *Skyline* in which I make an aesthetic comment on the fact that city skylines take over the view of the sky. The purpose of this piece is to translate – contemplating the value of the sky within the city scape (return to Figure 1 showing the plethora of concrete in Honolulu) – and to remember that we are not creatures of colorless concrete but creators of nature and light. David Heller danced in this piece and said the city is a vital piece of inspiration. My artistry seeks to define not only how I feel about some urban environments but also to express how when I dance, as the sky goddess for example, I feel released from the confines of a physical existence within the city and society walls. The dance sets me free.

Arts venues as alternative spaces are social forces and allow society cultural poesies when dancing with purpose. The alternative economies of performance spaces are our sacred grounds. They are our places of worship. We can join at these places to understand each other on deeper levels and respect each others’ works as pieces which contribute to our definitions of dance in the city.

Duty to Dances’ Past

In the book, *Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body* by Sherry Shapiro, the reader can understand how the illumination of cultural contradictions is revealed through inquiry into how dancers view their own work. Shapiro says, “*Dance...struggles with...its*

position as a peripheral, isolated, and alienated set of experiences".¹² However, by bringing together these sets of experiences and documenting the understandings of the performers, cultural contradictions are revealed. These cultural contradictions often create rifts in the communities of the city, and revealing them is one step towards mediating urban issues.

Sequoia D. Carr-Brown said she fused techniques from butoh and modern inspired by Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey. She was inspired by Giinco's installation of apple fruits allowing her to channel historic women and protests against patriarchal dogma. Sequoia is using her technique and aesthetics to show cultural contradiction around patriarchal dogmatism. Cultural contradictions are revealed when we research how dancers view their own work. Researching how dancers exist and create in their communities can yield qualitative information about city juxtapositions helping planners to understand the dynamic definitions of the cities they work with.

Dancers utilize dances of the past in order to pay homage and to liberate. Jerome Santos, performer in *The Great Flood* show, said dance doesn't exist in a vacuum. He believes we need the supporting structure of the past to build the free form freedom of tomorrow. In America, the existence and transformation of dance has been centered on dancers defining themselves. The liberation of dance in this context comes from releasing the way we feel to our community. We define ourselves when we show how we feel and what we are thinking. This should be encouraged more in cities where we have lost community solidarity and where we are trying to encourage cultural poesis.

Crack the Egg, the eighth dance, was based on worship of a giant papier mâché egg. The dancers danced their clothes off as sacrifices praying to the egg. The dancers eventually cracked the egg through their worship. Out of the egg, glitter and confetti went everywhere. Everywhere. This dance has a diversity of meanings ranging from the obsession of burlesque performers with glitter and rhinestones to the laden mysteries behind the great symbol of the egg to humanity and the primal nature which is nakedness. By revealing ourselves, we cracked the egg and were free. Hamera says,

"metaphorical performatives are rhetorically powerful tools of community building¹³... Such metaphysical performatives create a discursive zone marked by the simultaneity of seemingly incompatible vocabularies marshaled on behalf of explaining the creative process. These include love and labor, discipline and freedom, self-awareness and self-abandon".¹⁴

The alternative economies of art, such as spaces for dance revues, allow space where creative processes seem to be explained through incompatible vocabularies.

So, from duty to dances' past it is shown that dance as a set of alienated experiences, using choreographic structures of the past to understand issues we feel today, and using seemingly incompatible vocabularies to create zones of discussion, dance in cabaret is defining itself as a desired outcast which allows us to form communities of support which often lead to positive changes in cities such as alternative economies.

Desire To Meet Audience Expectations

Connecting the larger issues of being human to the issues within the city can be vital to

change and innovation. Sami L.A. Akuna said *The Gathering* [the fourth dance] was created to show the religious outcome of practice. The goal was to embody the feeling of when too much of anything becomes bad. When we can loosen up routine, we can cherish life's purpose. This is wisdom through performing arts where the performers are simultaneously making connections by reminding the audience and themselves about life's important issues.

Dance scholars Betty Block and Judith Kissell say, "*dance captures an essential element of embodiment that profoundly involves community*"; dancers are well attuned to community.¹⁵ They also say that movement's essence has to be understood beginning at dance's essence.¹⁶ The essence of the city may be understood starting from the essence of its dancers. Dancers are therefore prime to show the audience what they desire, what they fear, and what they didn't know was there.

If in fact (as Shapiro says), "*personal liberation is inseparable from political liberation*"¹⁷, and this dialogue we are creating is research into the greater realm of life, then the audience is a necessity. The dancers in the show embody¹⁸ the emotions and influences which come out of a globalized city life. To know what the audience sees in watching the dances, the dancers become a little closer to their understanding of each other, their place, their city, their definition(s). Through social media, the dancers and the audience can converse and continue forming community infrastructure. Hamera eloquently discusses engagements reminding us of the necessity for

*"interpersonal conversations in the work of both performance and community building. Through looking, talking, touching, over the course of months and years audiences, performers, consumers, and teachers generate productive, even intimate connections out of seemingly ordinary ones."*¹⁹

Jerome Santos²⁰ said cabaret is special and unique because there is audience interaction encouraged by the performers. The audience is like a singing bowl. The dancers are the mallets. When the dancers hit the audience, there are reverberations that reach beyond the walls of the arts venues by way of the audience. I believe audiences expect to be affected. Allison Winters writes, "*Specifically, the literature increasingly states that perceived bodily states in others produces similar bodily states in the perceiver...*"²¹, and *felt bodily states produce affective experiences in others.*"²² A show would not happen if people were not being affected. Kissell's article *Embodiment: An Introduction*²³ states,

"...we might better understand our embodied-way-of-being-in-the-world by considering the meaning of dance – as movement, as human agency, as human expression, and finally as means of healing. Further, dance incorporates the fullest connotations of embodiment, which includes also being embedded within a family, a society, a language group".²⁴

Dancing is important to, and I will argue inseparable from, our city. In this context, dance can heal the pains created by city life. It allows a space to explore our place in the city. This is vital because it opens an area for contemplation and action to form better cities. The city is a collection of entities which act as super highways like the connections in the brain. These entities affect our connections and our embodied experiences. Our

cities affect who we are just as dance affects who we are.

Dance versus the City

Dance versus the City is not a title to explain a fight between Dance and City. The city is a wonderful place due to its novelties: a place full of juxtapositions. The juxtapositions in a city are reasons why some alternative economies are formed. Hamera states, "... [aesthetics] exposes questions of who gets to create, to consume, and the social contingencies undergirding all these privileges".²⁵ "Dancing communities in the global city rely on the most abstract and the most concrete of these juxtapositions..."²⁶

Juxtapositions, according to urban planning scholar Richard Florida, often lead to "diversity and creativity as basic drivers of innovation and regional and national growth" which suggests the need for a conceptual framework which can account for the newly understood creative class as a powerful influence on city growth²⁷ and which urban planners may use to induce innovation.

Famous geographers and social scientists John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Steve Pile (in their book "City Worlds"), show how the city is an expansive collection of vibrating space-times. "One of the most significant advantages of 'thinking spatially' is that it enables us to see these different narratives as genuinely co-existing".²⁸ Kalae Kaina, said the show complimented Honolulu city life because it was so diverse like the city is diverse. Block and Kissell wrote that dance leads as a path or passage from different stages of life "through the embodied expression of a people".²⁹ Researching dance in the city is not a cosmetic venture. It is a very deep analysis of what is happening inside the hearts and minds of communities. The city is a place of structures. These structures confine us in ways that make it most difficult to acknowledge and change societal issues. Experimental dance is a unique way of grappling with, mediating, and even a path toward healing varying degrees of city issues.

A full answer to my original questions is far from solidified. What is the importance of experimental revue style shows in the context of this city? What is the relationship of the dancer to the city of Honolulu, and might the dancer be influencing the city?

For experimental cabaret-revue shows such as *The Great Flood*, where anything is possible, this is where, as said by Mistress Cocoa Chandelier, the stage gives us a disorder where our clothes just fall off.

These shows at these venues are provocative in multiple ways. The artists are daring and responsive with different communities. By ensuring a space and place in the city for cabaret dance creations to be shown and researched, the performances can be analyzed in relation to city space-times in order to understand the positive ways dance provokes a city.



Figure 1: Honolulu atop Pu‘u ‘Ualaka‘a State Park (courtesy of Jerome Santos)



Figure 2: *The Great Flood* show flyer (courtesy of Giinko Marischino)

Copyright 2013, Megan Veatrice Ashley Adams

Acknowledgements

This paper was made possible through funding contributions from the Student Activity Program Fee Board, the Department of Theatre and Dance, and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

Notes

1. *revues*- “stringing together a series of discrete, contrasting dance episodes – often with a short pause for applause and costume changes – such as one might have seen in the Ziegfeld Follies” (Monten 2008, 52)

2. *outlandish*- taken June 7, 2013 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/outlandish>
3. *alternative economies*- for further information on this topic relevant to this paper see Gibson-Graham 2008 as well as Erin Sickler 2012
4. Healy 2009
5. Sickler 2012
6. *experimental dance*, for this paper, is dance which is not completely codified
7. Markusen & Gadwa 2010, 4
8. Hamera 2007, 41
9. Ibid. 4–9, 59
10. Ibid. 3
11. The terms *social forces* and *cultural poesis* are used by Hamera (2007). She describes performance as a form of the city (community) being danced into being.
12. Shapiro 1998, 105
13. Hamera 2007, 191
14. Ibid. 192
15. Block & Kissell 2001, 8
16. Ibid. 14 (as quoted from David Levin)
17. Shapiro 1998, 120
18. *embody*- Block & Kissell 2001, 6: “Embodied knowing is the ability to interact with a thought or an experience holistically that involves the integrated power network of the total person.”
19. Hamera 2007, 58
20. Jerome Santos danced in *Crack the Egg*
21. Winters 2008, 89. The author references: Bavelas, Black, Lemery, & Mullet, 1986 ; Gallese, 2005 ; Iacoboni, 2008 ; Keysers et al., 2003 ; Rizzolatti, Fogassi, & Gallese, 2001.
22. Ibid. The author references: Duclos et al., 1989 ; Riskind, 1984 ; Riskind & Gotay, 1982
23. Research which came out of her work with Betty Block (Kissell 2001)
24. Kissell 2001, 2
25. Hamera 2007, 3
26. Ibid. 58
27. Florida 2003, 3
28. Allen, Massey, Pile 1998, 167
29. Block & Kissell 2001, 13
30. “Clothes fall off” quote said by Cocoa Chandelier as MC (emcee) for *The Great Flood*

Bibliography

- Allen, John. Massey, Doreen. Pile, John., eds., “City Worlds”. London & New York: Routledge 1999.
- Block, Betty. Kissell, Judith Lee. *The Dance: Essence of Embodiment*. “Theoretical Medicine”. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, 22: 5–15.
- Florida, Richard. *Cities and the Creative Class*. “Cities and Community”. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association, 2003, 2:1, 3–19.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K. *Diverse Economies: Performative Practices for ‘Other Worlds’*. “Progress in Human Geography”. Sage Publications, published online October 2008, 32: 613–632.
- Hamera, Judith. *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*, New York: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2007.
- Healy, S. *Alternative Economies*. Thrift, N. and Kitchin, R., eds, “The International Encyclopedia of Human Geography”, Oxford: Elsevier, 2009, 338–344.

- Kissell, Judith Lee. *Embodiment: An Introduction*. "Theoretical Medicine". Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, 22: 1–4.
- Markusen, Ann. Gawda, Anne. "Creative Placemaking". Washington, DC: Markusen Economic Research Services and Metris Arts Consulting, 2012.
- Monten, Joshua. *Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed: Eclecticism in Postmodern Dance*. "The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training". Bales, M. and Nettle-Fiol, R., eds, The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2008.
- Shapiro, Sherry. "Pedagogy and the Politics of the Body: A Critical Praxis". Chapter referenced: *The Dancer's Life: Existence and Transformation*. Routledge, 1998.
- Sickler, Erin. *Alternative Art Economies: A Primer*. "Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society". Routledge, published online 15 March 2012, 24:2, 240–251.
- Winters, Allison F. *Emotion, Embodiment, and Mirror Neurons in Dance/Movement Therapy: A Connection Across Disciplines*. "American Journal of Dance Therapy". American Dance Therapy Association, published online 21 October 2008, 30: 84–105.

Address for correspondence:

MeganVeatriceAdams@gmail.com

Dancing for democracy in Spain

Eva Aymami Reñe

University of Surrey, School of Arts

Abstract

During Franco's dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975) popular and folk dances were empowered to construct a unified Spanish Culture. Francoism opposed the ideas of modern dance in direct contradiction with the traditional gender values the regime aimed to impose. Therefore, modern dance only entered into Spain during the last years of dictatorship with Anna Maleras opening her dance school in 1967. During the transition to democracy (1975-1982) Spain's way to align with its repressive past has been characterized as a deliberate but largely tacit agreement to "forget" the past. Based upon a collective amnesia, Pacto del Silencio suggests an implied agreement between political class, media and society to avoid confrontation with the Francoist past. The new vocabulary of modern dance served as a driving force to modernization, but simultaneously reflected the silent commitment to forget history. With a feminist ethnographic approach, besides an analysis of silence and memory based on Foucault and Derrida's theories, this paper establishes a critical reconstruction of modern dance as an emerging art expressing the democratic anxieties of Spanish society. Modern dance appeared as a practice of political activism to break the pact of silence.

Introduction

In 1977, two years after the dictator Franco died in Spain the *Grup Estudi Anna Maleras* (Study Group Anna Maleras) presented, among other choreographies, *Guernika'37* at the first contemporary dance festival celebrated in Spain, *I Mostra de Dansa*. Using the name and year of the Basque city that the fascist side bombed during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), this short piece brought the memories and horror of civil war to Spanish audiences in a period of time during which civil society and politicians had agreed to forget the recent past¹. As an anonymous dance critic wrote in the Spanish dance magazine *Dansa* 79²

‘This choreography that we have seen several times, always touches the audience for its emotional baggage. One hears the words of Neruda's poems and in our minds there is the memory of the terrible massacre, but the ones that will perform the liveliest emotion are the dancers, with their torn and desperate movements. At the same time they will bring hope to our hearts’ (1982, p.79).³

The choreography by Guillermo Palomares is among the few pieces of that time that tackles directly the horrors of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and consequently, of the later dictatorship (1939-75). The other pieces presented in the *Mostra*, for example, did not deal with the memories of the recent history of Spain: ‘*Amb Jazz*’ choreography of

Anna Maleras, '*Espirituals*' choreography of Viola Maristany, '*Floating*' choreography of Gerard Collins among others. Since modern dance at that time was enough of a modernization force, all of these choreographies were taken as innovative and challenging to the previous conservative values in dance preeminent during Francoism. Franco's regime enhanced traditional dance forms such as folklore and flamenco, over theatrical genres, like ballet and modern dance, with pioneers such as Aurea de Sarra, Josefina Cirera and Tórtola Valencia, who with her own singular Asian style toured internationally on the first half of the 20th Century.⁴

During most of Franco's dictatorship there was hardly any influence of modern dance in Spain. The ideas of modern dance were in direct contradiction with the traditional values Franco's regime imposed. Although the fascist regime did not directly oppose the values of modern dance⁵, its own ideology was antithetical to what this modern art form represented⁶. A woman annexed to the domestic sphere did not fit with the image of the modernist women⁷, who had revolutionized the dance scene, claiming a new space for women on stage in other ways than the delicate ballerina. Individual creativity, individual expression and the search for new forms of movement were modern dancers' tools of work, and were in direct opposition with the values supported by the regime⁸.

Only during the last years of the regime did any openness to modern dance emerge. The progressive decomposition of the regime combined with the economic growth of the country, allowed a little more contact with the foreign aesthetic styles that burst into the country after the dictator's death. Modern dance entered into Spain in 1967 when Anna Maleras opened her dance school in Barcelona. She had studied in Cannes at the school of Rosella Hightower⁹, with jazz teachers such as Walter Nich and Vayon Aikens. Maleras created her school '*Estudi de Dansa Anna Maleras*' in Barcelona, with the objective of bringing to Spain the new tendencies in dance that the country had previously ignored. Later on Carmen Serna, a Spanish dancer trained in U.S., with the help of Carl Paris opened a school in Madrid. Modern dance was thus introduced into Spain gradually, by individuals that opened schools and brought international teachers. During the transition to democracy in Spain (1975-1982) the lack of contact with modern dance in the previous regime made modern and post/modern dance an excellent driving force for society's democratic anxieties.

This paper is an ethnographic approach to the introduction of modern dance in Spain. Drawing from genealogies of Foucault and construction of narratives, it is my aim to convey intertwines between the modern dance history in Spain and Spanish political history. Within a structure of three acts (Act 1, Embodying New Techniques/ Act 2, In Theory/ Act 3, Why Do We Dance) this ethnography intends to perform the development of modern dance in the first years of democratic Spain.

This ethnography tries on the one hand to record the history of the introduction and evolution of modern dance in Spain, as a way of historicizing a dance archive. On the other hand, with the aim of clarifying the motivations of those women choreographers, I would like to consider why and how modern dance was capable of expressing the democratic anxieties of these choreographers.

Act 1, Embodying New Techniques

Wednesday 12 of September 2012, Anna Maleras is at the front desk of her dance school, *Estudi de Dansa Anna Maleras*. It is 11:30 in the morning, a sunny and humid day in Barcelona. She has set the interview at the school, for she must be there during business hours and there is relatively little noise coming from the only active studio in the school. It is time for intermediate ballet class. A petit woman in her 60s, Maleras welcomes me in sweat pants and shirt. She has short white hair and vivid eyes that stare at me when I arrive.

When Anna Maleras was young, during 1950s and 60s, she studied dance in Barcelona at the *Institut del Teatre* (the dance conservatory of Catalonia, Spain) under the direction of Joan Magriñà. Ballet and Spanish dance were the only dance disciplines taught in the conservatories of dance in Spain.

AM. It is not that I was studying with Magriñà; rather, there was nothing else if you wanted to dance. I was studying ballet and Spanish dance (...) So I went outside the country to study ballet. The first trip was to Cannes, because one of my relatives had known the school of Rosella Hightower.

Deciding to pursue other ways to learn ballet Anna Maleras decides to go to France to improve her ballet technique. At the school of Rosella Hightower in Cannes, for the first time she finds other ways to dance.

AM. Always thinking of ballet, there I discover there are more things. I discover Lin McMurray and I fall in love with jazz. I discover a class of Graham (technique) that for me is a very unusual thing.

Both Lin McMurray and the Graham instructor, whose name is not mentioned, strongly influenced her decision of opening a dance school in Barcelona to bring these new dance techniques. In 1967 she opens *Estudi de Dansa Anna Maleras*. With the school, for the first time Maleras brings the new tendencies in dance concurrent in Europe and the United States to Barcelona and Spain. The school becomes a platform for contacting and learning these new 'modern' techniques that Spanish choreographers and dancers were not able to learn before. Through the guest teachers coming from Cannes, Maleras and her group of students become acquainted with modern dance techniques, and a new world for choreography.

AM. And all of these people that I have connected (at the school of Cannes), come to Barcelona since opening the school. And then this is a never-ending flow. (...) Gradually, I discovered that there are more things than classic dance (ballet). I opened the studio, which is the centre of this effervescence. Young dancers come to the school and are influenced by all of these new tendencies. During the summers we go outside to attend workshops, or I bring guest teachers. Thus, in the shortest of time, in three or four years only, we construct this 'bubble' of openness in contemporary dance. After that, contemporary dance companies start to appear in Barcelona and Spain. Everybody was eager to see new things, we see new

things and I bring new things. I continue going outside to do stages and workshops, always with other dancers. And then I create the *Study Group Anna Maleras* (her dance company), which is a show window of all of this that is cooking, right? This is the beginning, and from this on it gets developed in many ways, for young people that look for new things. And from here, Cesc Gelabert, *La Gran Companyia*, and Avelina Arguelles, etc, can get their way out.

EA. I am interested in knowing or understanding how this happened, why do you think there was this explosion of new techniques, suddenly, when you started bringing guest teachers here in Barcelona?

AM. Everybody wanted to get free, but we did not know how, for we did not have anything. And suddenly when attending the workshops, we start to see new material. When I had seen a good master teacher I tried to 'seduce' him to bring him to Barcelona for him to transfer the knowledge to us.

Ten years later, in 1977 Anna Maleras and Herman Bonnin (as head of the *Institut del Teatre -Conservatoire of Dance of Catalonia, -*) organize the *I Mostra de Dansa Independent*, a first independent contemporary dance festival in Barcelona. Being the first platform to show contemporary pieces to Catalan audiences, this festival helps to consolidate new dance groups to create and present their pieces: Anexa, La Gran Compañía, Acord, Empar Roselló, Estudi Anna Maleras, Cesc and Toni Gelabert, the Ballet Contemporani de Barcelona and the seven women collective of Heura. A year after the *Generalitat of Catalunya* (the autonomous government of Catalonia) and the *IT* took the lead in organizing the annual *Mostres de Dansa* (1978-82). In this period, approximately 26 new groups and creators performed around 173 choreographies.



Anna Maleras
Anna Maleras Archive



Estudi Grup Anna Maleras
Anna Maleras Archive

Act 2, In Theory

In writing fieldnotes, ethnographers have the specific purpose to record a slice of life on a page. In ethnographic notes, description and analysis may belong to the same kind of writing. In that sense, writing fieldnotes is a process of ‘analysis-in-description’ (Emerson et al. 2011). Indeed all descriptions are selective, partial, angled, and intentional for they are written by somebody, and therefore they carry one’s subjectivity into the research. An ethnographer uses language conventions to create an envisioned scene. Even straightforward descriptive writing is a product of social construction. Through the choice of words and scenes, a writer presents ‘her’ version of the reality. In the words of Emerson et al. ‘All writing, by definition is an abstracting and ordering process’. In this sense the author must acknowledge herself and her background in order to acknowledge at the same time the possible bias she may bring.

The term ‘genealogy’ coined by Foucault (1998) provides the critical frame for looking at the reconstruction of modern dance history in Spain. ‘Genealogy is gray, meticulous and patiently documentary’ (Foucault 1998:369). In the 1975-76 lectures ‘*Society Must Be Defended*’, Foucault defines genealogy of knowledges’ in contrast to a linear history, which focus on causes and effects that might explain the logical progression of history. Genealogy exposes the development of discursive formation which raises certain kinds of power relations and knowledge related to them. A genealogical analysis shows how a given system of thought is the result of cultural and social accidents/mechanism, rather than a rational progressive succession of facts. This enables a study of how power operates in constructing official discourses (knowledges) of history.

Despite the lack of academic studies in the field, Anna Maleras is considered by most Spanish dancers a pioneer who brought the first influences of contemporary and modern dance through her school in the late 60s. In this regard, a few recently articles have noted some parts of the history of contemporary dance in Spain (Monés et al. 2000; Vendrell 2008; Xosé Aviñoa et al. 2012). However, today there is still an absence of official narrativity on the events that framed the appearance of contemporary dance in Spain.

The absence of dance and performance studies at the university level caused the Spanish dance scene to remain anonymous. Therefore it lacks a historical archive and theoretical base that can generate critical debate. The history of those pioneers and subsequent developers of modern dance remains in newspaper archives only. The dance conservatory of Barcelona, the *Institut del Teatre* (which was the first and only conservatory in Spain to offer a degree in contemporary dance) does not have archived history of modern dance in Spain. Moreover, the lack of planned infrastructure threatens their presence in the library of the IT, the only performing arts based library in Barcelona: as the video-recordings of some of the dance festivals are getting old and broken, and the website of the institution does not offer a digital archive.

When reconstructing historical events, the critical historian should raise questions about what and how is the process of constructing historical narratives. How do we create from sources and what can we make of them. Lena Hammergren in ‘Many sources, many voices’ (Hammergren in Carter: 2004) introduces the problematic of creating a dance

history narrative. Choosing from historical sources, Hammergren proposes the distinction between primary sources: material that is close in time to the object of study (e.g. diaries and dance performances programs); and secondary sources, produced farther away in time, and based on interpretation (e.g. performance reviews, history books). In working with these sources, within equal importance of both kinds, Hammergren explores how narratives are products adjusted to generic and time-specific conventions. Not only on texts, but also on telling those texts (e.g. interviews), the critical historian can expose the construction of these time-specific narratives.

Questioning the nature of narrativity, in terms of the problem of how to report the way things happened, how to transfer 'knowing' into 'telling', Hayden White (1980) analyses narrative theory as a means by which we can comprehend how subjectivities impose order on our experiences and actions by giving them a narrative form. According to White, the historian begins his work by constituting a chronicle of events which afterwards will be organized into a coherent story.

Tracing the genealogy of contemporary dance in Spain, there are many events which can be recorded in a chronology. From the opening of Anna Maleras dance school (1967) -marking the beginning of contemporary dance in Spanish territory-, or the return of Concha and Jose Lainez (1969) emigrated dancers during the dictatorship – that marks the first contemporary dance company; these events can be considered the beginnings of contemporary dance in Spain. However, also one can go back as far as Aurea Sarrà and Tortola Valencia in 1930 to find the pioneers of free dance in the first half of the twentieth Century. Indeed, constructing an historical narrative brings into debate the question who-where and why.

In his early method, *archaeology* of knowledge, Foucault discusses how systems of thoughts and knowledge (episteme and discursive formations) are governed by rules that operate beneath the consciousness of the individual, limited by the boundaries of a historical and social period. Subsequently in *genealogy* of knowledge, Foucault's critical philosophy exposes how universal scientific truths are just the outcome of provisional historical forces and are not at the end scientifically grounded truths. Hence, the construction of history is the result of social and cultural given mechanisms, and not a linear progressive succession of facts. The history of Spain, either in dance or in politics is full of absences and silences. With this genealogy I would like to subvert the actual historiography of this period and create a space where to listen these silences, these subjugated knowledges that will allow the Spanish dance scene to finally come clear with its past.

Act 3, Why Do We Dance?

EA. How would you describe the themes of your choreographies?

AM. Do you mean the inspiration?

EM. Yes. Considering the historical time that you lived in the 70s and 80s, during the transition to democracy, what would you consider your main influences and inspirations?

(AM interrupts my question)

AM. No, no, no, it is not exactly this; do you know what always inspires me? Music. Music for me it is basic. For example this (she shows me a picture of a previous choreography) was something very funny, you see, we had guts, in the 70's we were wearing these leotards with red and green stripes (goes on the description of the costumes). And the music inspired this story. I always went for music.

EA. I was thinking of the piece 'Guernika' presented at the *Mostra de Dansa in 1979* and how this piece expresses the horrors of the civil war and the following dictatorship years.

A.M. The Guernica was choreographed by Guillermo Palomares. He was a dancer of Jose Limón Company. I brought him to one of my stages in Mallorca, then I brought him to Barcelona -and we became very good friends-. Here in Barcelona, he created Guernica, a very nice piece. I think it is recorded, but I am not sure. As I just told you, I have to make a bit of order in my archives.

EA. Did Guernica win any award?

AM. No.

Mentioning her own choreographies and awards, Anna Maleras changes subject, she stands and walks towards a closet bringing more pictures of her pieces or her dancers, which leads to her commenting in particular dances and costumes. Maleras silences and turns back, she remembers her pieces. In the same way as Benjamin's Angel of History (2009), which is facing the present, going to the future but at the same time turning towards the past, Maleras turns to look back to the past. But which past is she observing? Perhaps the silence in her body may become an acknowledgement of the recent historical past, the tragedy brought by a dictatorship. Likewise Benjamin's angel 'would like to pause for a moment so fair to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed' Anna Maleras may observe what has been repressed in the historical period of democracy, the silence of those bodies forgotten and the memories in them. Nevertheless, the storm of progress takes the angel and Maleras to the future. She would focus on the modernity of the bodies, in her choreographies, the fashion of the costumes and the strident colours, instead of what were those bodies writing about silence.

In this historic re-construction I would like to underpin the silent inspirations, and democratic anxieties underlying those events. Walking with Anna Maleras into the past, re-visiting the *flâneuse* strategy of walking through history (Hammergren 1996) allows me to re-envision those dancing bodies. In these choreographies, bodies become blank canvases printed by the devices of power of an historical period, 'The body is not outside of history, for it is produced through and in history. Relations of force, of power, produce the body through the use of distinct techniques (the feeding, the training, supervision, and education of children in any given culture) and harness the energies and potential for subversion that power itself has constructed' (Grosz 1994:148). In this sense, the body which is inscribed by mechanisms and techniques of power- knowledge is also enabled by these techniques to articulate resistance. The body has become a possibility for subversion as well. In her pieces Anna Maleras does not present a direct political statement. Maleras neither wishes to talk about politics, the circumstances of the civil war (like the piece 'Guernica'36' does), and the dictatorial past in Spain, nor wants to explore how the transition to democracy is conducted. Instead, her choreographies show a different body on stage, a body which neither conveys the traditional roles of gender at that time, nor conforms the traditional stereotypes of the classical ballet bodies. The bodies in her choreographies are not the same than the Francoist official bodies, but they introduce new gender values for a woman that can recover her rights and freedoms (see chapter 2, for a description of the gender values during Francoism). It is a body that moves free on stage, a feminine body that appears strong, in trousers and even masculine outfit. Maleras bodies are inscribed in the history of Spanish democracy. In a dialogic relationship with its time, these contemporary bodies talk about new identities constructed during democracy, but simultaneously let the amnesia emerge from their silence about the recent past. To the same extent that Derrida's Ghost of communism in haunting Europe, the Francoist past haunts the democratic bodies and will struggle to come to the present until it will be faced, performed or written about. The next generation of choreographers will deal with the ghost of the past, showing in their choreographies the struggles to come to terms with the silenced history.

Anna Maleras proposes modern dance as an innovation of the form of dance: a rupture with the codified vocabulary of ballet, but what does this contemporary dance really bring in terms of expression? How did these choreographers express their democratic anxieties through this new modern dance form? Maleras offers a new language that enables the performative utterance to contravene the pact of silence to occur. At my questions about the political implications in the dance pieces, Maleras changed subject and refused to answer in one way or the other. Nevertheless Maleras does not reject the possibility of some pieces enacting politics, such as *Guernica*. Even though she did not intend directly to articulate politics in her pieces, she does notice the historical frame of the piece *Guernica*. And Maleras chooses not to comment on it; in her choreographies the bodies articulate a long-term silence that allowed Spanish society to reach a pacific democracy. Nonetheless Maleras introduced a new language in choreography, which would not bring real political statement in her choreographies, but will allow different interesting contestations from her disciples. What is political in Maleras is the new freedom to express, which enables the possibility of learning to move in a different way. Concordant with the country's transition to democracy, this freedom to express, materialized in modern dance, will convey the repressions and lack of freedom that

Spanish society lived under the dictatorship. All of these democratic concerns will find a channel into the fresh techniques that Anna Maleras imports into Barcelona. While Maleras physically enacts the Pact of Silence, by refusing to directly comment on any circumstances of the historical time, she enables at the same time the next generation of dancers with the language upon which they can talk about it. As I argue in the next chapters, Maleras disciples would use contemporary dance to contest in different ways the collective amnesia imposed in the transition.

Copyright 2013, Eva Aymami Reñe

Notes

1. The Pact of Silence or Pact of Oblivion is the Spanish political agreement of avoiding having the country deal with the legacy of Francoism -the fascist regime that governed Spain from 1936 to 1975-. The pact framed the transition to democracy and ensured political amnesty to those responsible of civil crimes under the dictatorship for fear of endangering the national reconciliation.
2. In Vendrell 2007.
3. Free translation of the original text in Spanish ‘Esta coreografía que hemos visto en repetidas ocasiones, siempre capta al público por la carga emocional que entraña. Oímos las palabras de los poemas de Neruda, en las mentes de todos está el recuerdo de la terrible masacre, pero quien nos transmitirá la emoción de forma más viva serán los bailarines, con sus movimientos desgarrados y desesperados, al igual que después lograran, que en todos nosotros, renazca el sentimiento de la esperanza. Idóneo resultó el detalle del pañuelo negro que llevaban en sus cabezas las bailarinas, pues subrayó la identidad con el pueblo’.
4. For more information on Sarra, Cirera and Valencia see Murga Castro (2009); Solrac (1982) and Vendrell (2008).
5. The Spanish pioneers on modern dance had previously gone to exile or died during Civil War.
6. The term modern dance in this text is used in regards of the early 20th century dance form that emerged in the United States as an expression of rebellion against classical ballet, with pioneers like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham. This term refers as well to the theories of human movement and expression that led to European modern and expressionist dance, with pioneers such as German choreographers Mary Wigman and Rudolf von Laban. For more information on modernism and modern dance see Franko (1995).
7. Modernist woman, such as Martha Graham, is defined in Franko *Dancing Modernism/ Performing Politics* (1995).
8. As it was clear in some of the common speeches that Pilar Primo de Rivera gave, ‘women were devoid of any creativity’. Pilar Primo de Rivera (1983), explain who was she.
9. Rosella Hightower was an American dancer that became popular in Europe and created a school in Cannes, France.

Bibliography

- Anonimous, 1982. *Dansa 79.* , 24, pp.11–12.
- Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I. & Shaw, L.L., 2011. *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*, University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M., 1998. Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, aesthetics*. Penguin.
- Foucault, M., Rainbow, P. & Faubion, J., 1998. *Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984. Vol. 2, Aesthetics, method and epistemology*, Penguin.
- Franko, M., 1995. *Dancing modernism/performing politics*, Indiana Univ Pr.
- Grosz, E., 1994. *Volatile bodies : toward a corporeal feminism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Monés, N. et al., 2000. Between tradition and innovation: two ways of understanding the history of dance in Spain. In *Europe Dancing: Perspectives on Theatre Dance and Cultural Identity*. p. 144.
- Murga Castro, I., 2009. Escenografía y figurinismo de los bailarines españoles de principios del siglo XX. In *Congreso Internacional Imagen Apariencia. Noviembre 19, 2008-noviembre 21, 2008*. p. 118.
- Solrac, O., 1982. *Tortola Valencia and Her Times*, Vantage Press. Available at:
- Vendrell, E., 2008. 1975-2000. Construcció d'una realitat coreogràfica. *Assaig de Teatre: Revista de l'associació d'investigació i experimentació teatral*, 66-67(Journal Article), pp.95–117.
- Vendrell, E., 2007. *La Dansa a Catalunya 1975-2000. Polítiques i Identitat*. Barcelona, Spain: Universtitat de Barcelona.
- Xosé Aviñoa et al., 2012. *Arts of Movement, Dance in Catalonia (1966-2012)*, LiquidDocs and Arts Santa Mònica.

Address for correspondence:

Eva Aymami Reñe:
E.aymamirene@surry.ac.uk

Cosmo Mitchell: Fashionable Dancing in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Scotland

Patricia H. Ballantyne

The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen

Abstract

A recurring question: how is dance tradition affected by social trends, regulatory bodies and the innovations of influential individuals? Cosmo Mitchell was the leading dancing teacher in Aberdeen, in the North East of Scotland, from 1881 until 1922. As a founder member and early Vice President of the London-based Imperial Society of Dance Teachers, he shaped the dancing of generations of Aberdonians. His archive collection of newspaper cuttings and ephemera is important, for not only does it detail his own career, it also tracks his teachers and competitors and the popular dance styles throughout this period. Mitchell introduced the latest dance fashions ('Fashionable Dancing') and steps to his students, whilst continuing to teach traditional Scottish dances. Cosmo Mitchell's archive gives a fascinating insight into the interplay between traditions and fashionable trends leading up to the 1920s, a particularly important period in the context of Scottish traditional dance and music. Scotland's dance and music today is strongly influenced by regulatory bodies who can trace their roots to the early 20th century. This archive sheds new light on the way these regulatory bodies developed, and shows that the complex inter-relationship between tradition, fashion and innovation that characterises 'traditional' dance is nothing new.

Introduction

Today I shall consider an unusual question: What does doing the Argentinian Tango in a kilt say about the influence of market forces and regulatory bodies on dance teaching and practice?

As a researcher and dancer, I am fascinated by the connections and disconnections between Scottish dance and music and its cultural and social contexts. Looking at the history of Scottish dance gives important insights into the way dance culture evolves and is shaped by its context.

The career of Scottish dancing master Cosmo Mitchell shows important connections between market forces, the development of dance regulatory societies, and the teaching and practice of dance in Scotland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mitchell's collection of ephemera-filled scrapbooks, held in Aberdeen Central Library, provide a unique perspective on what it was like to be a dancing master in a provincial town in the north of Scotland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹

In this talk I will look at Cosmo Mitchell's career and demonstrate that certain themes keep occurring. These include the theme of authority, important because of the implication of a 'correct' form of teaching dances; the theme of the formation of dance Societies, important because the societies were to licence teachers to teach 'correctly'; and finally, the theme of the influence of market forces.

Biographical Background

Adam 'Cosmo' Mitchell was born in 1860, at Kennethmont, about thirty miles north west of the city of Aberdeen, in the north east of Scotland. The son of a crofter, or small-holder, he was teaching dance in and around Aberdeen by the age of twenty.² His reputation and practice grew, and in addition to providing after school, evening and weekend classes for young people and adults, by the 1890s, he was providing weekly dance classes for all pupils in each of the School Board schools in the city and employed two teaching assistants to help him. During this period of rapid business growth, he attended many professional development dance classes in London, which brought him into contact with some of the most influential teachers in Britain.

In 1896, he joined the German Society of Dancing Masters. In 1901, he married Edith Willey, one of his assistants.³ He was a founder member of the Imperial Society of Dancing Teachers, and was elected one of its first Vice Presidents in 1905.⁴ Around 1914, he published a *Guide to Ballroom Dancing*, which he described as 'An Authentic Description of all dances in General Use.' He then published a supplement which included descriptions of fashionable dances as taught by ISDT teachers, such as the Foxtrot.⁵ He retired from teaching in schools in 1919, when his wife, who was an important part of his business, died, and had retired from teaching altogether by 1924. He died in 1932 and bequeathed his entire professional library to Aberdeen Free Library. Mitchell was clearly an important and influential character in the development of dance in Scotland during his lifetime.

I shall look in more detail at Cosmo Mitchell's career, with particular reference to the themes I mentioned earlier.

Authority

Mitchell appears to have started teaching in Aberdeen in November 1881. His promotional material from this time states that he had 'visited Paris and London,' as if to suggest that he had acquired the dances he was proposing to teach that term there. There is no evidence dating from before 1881 to corroborate this statement, but it is clear that within a relatively short time after this, he was indeed to travel far afield to learn new dances and techniques.

By the following year, he was providing more detail about the reasons for his travels. Stating that he had recently returned from London and Paris, he says that in Paris, 'as is well known, are the best Teachers of Dancing in the world; as a consequence, Dancing is there brought to the highest state of perfection' and that he was, 'acquainted

with one of the best teachers there.’ He does not name the teacher: there is no reason to. It was enough to suggest that he had this acquaintance. He is more likely to have met this teacher in London. However, it is an illuminating statement as it casts some light on his business thinking and even more so, on what he expected prospective pupils to take from it.⁶

Market Influences: New Dances - A Unique Selling Point

The fashion, particularly in the more rural northern areas of Scotland, was for the popular Highland dances, such as the Highland Fling, for Quadrilles, Schottisches and Waltzes. Mitchell, with his business sense, was keen to introduce new dances, and by emphasising the concept of the French being the best dancers, which was not a new concept in Aberdeen, his implied visit to Paris meant that he had returned with the best dances which only he would perform and teach correctly. This concept of *correctly* was to assume more importance as his career progressed.

1890 was the year that Scotland’s Forth Railway Bridge opened, cutting train travel times between Aberdeen and London by more than five hours. In this year, the first real evidence of Mitchell’s visits to London appears. This evidence is in the form of a certificate that I found in Cosmo’s archive, licensing him to teach the dance, Chorolistha, and signed by its composer, the London teacher, Edward Scott. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Scott published dances, books and articles on dance. Mitchell owned most of them – they are still in his collection. The certificate states that Scott had personally taught him the dance and was now ‘giving him permission to impart it.’⁷ Over the next decades, Mitchell continued to develop his skills, and attended many professional summer dance courses in London. By 1897 he had become a full member of the German Society of Dancing Masters, and this coincides with the first indications in his marketing material, of being ‘authorised’ to teach.

Authority; the formation of Societies for (i) standards and (ii) restricting teachers

This concept of authority: of being licensed to teach correctly, was one that had concerned teachers for some time. There was a certain amount of unease amongst members of the profession about charlatans [as they were often referred to in letters to the press] who had other day jobs, or were not properly trained, or who provided false evidence of training and undercut bona-fide teachers.⁸ Some teachers, such as Robert Morris Crompton, had long mooted the idea of forming a society. He reiterated this theme constantly in his publication, *Dancing*, a monthly journal for the dancing profession which he published between 1891 and 1893. Mitchell kept every copy, and had them bound into a single volume.⁹

In 1891 Crompton stated: ‘Unless a Society can be established, the members of which consist only of thoroughly qualified teachers and the most distinguished exponents of our art in this country, neither the respect of the profession, nor the confidence of the public can be vouchsafed.’¹⁰ In January 1892 he decried the existence of: ‘the vast army

of unqualified exponents of the art, whose miserable methods –have flooded our ball-rooms with hosts of bad dancers, and so brought discredit upon the whole profession.’¹¹ These so-called ‘unqualified exponents of the art,’ were even operating and upsetting certificated members of the profession in Aberdeenshire. Mitchell was not alone in writing letters of complaint to the local press.

Like the majority of teachers in Scotland, Mitchell taught Highland Dancing as well as fashionable dances. However, many other teachers also emphasised the provision of Highland Dancing in their promotional material, such as George Pressly, active in the northeast corner of Scotland, and whose geographic reach coincided with that of Mitchell and others, making him a direct competitor. Pressly, who taught a similar mixture of dances, styled himself ‘LPC’ in his promotional material, and proudly announced he was the only teacher in the land licensed to teach by the Lords Privy Council. As furious letters of complaint to the local press pointed out, the Lords Privy Council had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with dance. These complaints could be interpreted as attempts by Mitchell and other teachers to prevent their market from becoming too crowded.

Peter Rothnie was another teacher active in the north east of Scotland who was classed as an usurper. His dancing class posters left space at the bottom for adverts for his garage, where he dealt in bicycles and motor-cars. Complaints were made about teachers such as Rothnie who had other business interests and who were unlicensed.

So the concept of a need for teachers to be qualified and dedicated dance professionals became established in the minds of both the profession and prospective pupils through very public decrials of unlicensed teachers. By the first decades of the twentieth century, the dance societies had an increasingly powerful hold over how dance ought to be taught. The societies strongly encouraged pupils to use only licensed teachers. This was ostensibly to maintain consistency and quality, but I would argue that it was also an astute business practice because it limited the number of regulated teachers and what and how they could teach.

Market Influences: Branding

In October 1897, the *Dancing Times* had suggested that teachers’ advertisements, circulars and prospectuses, were all the same, that is, dull, and that teachers should endeavour to create more inventive publicity materials.¹² Mitchell had been guilty of this, as, in common with other teachers, he produced florid, four-page pamphlets. As a result of the suggestion made in the *Dancing Times*, he altered the style of his promotional material, and replaced pamphlets with a simpler form of double-sided card to get his message across. He was to continue to adapt his marketing materials to the times until the end of his career. Here we have another example of good business sense – an attention to branding. Cosmo Mitchell himself was a brand. Not only was he only ever seen wearing the kilt, but he had renamed himself ‘Cosmo’ at the beginning of his teaching career. His birth name was Adam Mitchell. Somehow Cosmo has more of a ring to it.

By 1905, he had condensed his prospectus and ceased to announce which dances he would teach that session. Instead, he stressed his continuing professional development visits to London and Europe, along with his membership of both the Imperial Society of Dance Teachers and the Society of German Dance Teachers. He clearly intended to

demonstrate to the public that they could have confidence in him and in his teaching, for by this time, as a Vice President of the ISDT, he was in contact with the highest levels of influence in his profession.

Conclusion

I've looked at the connections between Authority, the role of Societies, business practices, and the way dance was taught in Scotland in the late 19th and early 20th century. I will conclude by looking at one example that I feel highlights each of these connections.

The power that the newly formed Societies held over what should be taught and how, can perhaps be demonstrated with reference to the Argentine Tango, which many dance teachers were offering by 1912. By this time, Mitchell was on the Technical Committee of the ISDT. This committee decided exactly what its members could teach and how they were to teach it.

A newspaper article, dating from 1912, which appeared in the Aberdeen press, states that Mitchell was bringing the Tango to Aberdeen.¹³ But the article, which appears to have been dictated by Mitchell, stated that this was not to be the version of the dance as seen on the music hall stage, for, 'all the vulgar, crude movements have been eliminated, and the results make it a more graceful dance than the varieties danced in Aberdeen last season'. The article notes that it was thanks to the labours of the technical section of the ISDT that a 'Tango fit for the ballroom' had evolved.'



Figure 1: The Donalds in BATD Tango Pose

This is a superb illustration of this new, chaste dance, which the ISDT Technical Committee had stripped of its sensuality to accede to the middle class social mores of the

time. Mr and Mrs Donald, of the Gondolier Academy in Aberdeen, and standing at a discreet distance from each other, illustrate, in 1913, a pose from the BATD version.¹⁴ The BATD – the British Association of Teachers of Dance is still in existence, and even I am a member. This image of the male tango dancer, in full Highland Dress, complete with plaid and sporran, says it all. The sensual Argentine Tango has been rebranded here as a chaste and Scottish themed dance, entirely in context with the culture, morality and fashions of early 20th Century Scotland.

This is an entertaining photograph, but it also raises a contentious question: were dances with a traditional cultural background, such as the Argentinian Tango, being subverted to suit fashionable trends? The concepts of Authority and Regulation and the many regulatory societies formed throughout the twentieth century to propagate these concepts, played a hugely important role in the development of traditional dance and music in Scotland. But that's the subject of another paper.

Copyright 2013, Patricia H Ballantyne

Notes

1. Mitchell, who died on 7th March 1932, bequeathed his entire library of books on dancing to Aberdeen Free Library, now known as Aberdeen Central library.
2. His birth certificate shows him to have been born at Kennethmont on May 16th 1860, to George Mitchell, crofter and Barbara Mitchell. His birth name is given as Adam.
3. They married on July 2nd 1901. Edith's profession was given as 'Pianist'. She was born in Wakefield, Yorkshire on 1st October 1866, although her marriage certificate suggests that her birth year was 1871.
4. The Imperial Society of Dance Teachers was founded on 25th July 1904. See *100 Years of Dance, A History of the ISTD Dance Examinations Board*, ISTD London, 2004.
5. Both the Guide and its supplement were privately published.
6. Mitchell kept examples of almost all of his promotional material and pasted examples into scrapbooks which are part of the collection.
7. For a comprehensive treatment of the career of Edward Scott, see, Buckland, T. J, 'Edward Scott: The Last of the English Dancing Masters,' *Dance Research*, 2003, 21, 2:3-35.
8. A number of such letters are preserved in Mitchell's scrapbooks. George Rose Wood, well known throughout the north of Scotland as a fiddler and dance teacher, and member of the Scottish Association of Teachers of Dancing, wrote many letters of complaint to the press.
9. For further information about Crompton and his role in the formation of the ISTD, see Buckland, T. J, 'Crompton's Campaign: The Professionalisation of Dance Pedagogy in Late Victorian England,' *Dance Research*, 2007, 25, 1:1-34. See also Buckland, T. J, *Society Dancing, Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
10. *Dancing*, August 1891 Editorial, 3:3
11. *Dancing*, January 1892, Editorial 8:3
12. *Dancing Times*, October 1897, 2
13. Mitchell neglected to date or reference newspaper clippings
14. The British Association of Teachers of Dancing was formed in 1892. See Isaac, B, *A Brief Review of One Hundred Years*, The British Association of Teachers of Dancing, 1992.

Address for correspondence:

Patricia H Ballantyne

50 Cordiner Avenue

Aberdeen

Scotland

AB24 4SA

phballantyne@abdn.ac.uk

I and digi-I: reading the ‘digital double’ in the contemporary Bharatanatyam choreographies

Suparna Banerjee

University of Roehampton, United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper investigates the ‘digital double’ in the contemporary Bharatanatyam choreographies by largely drawing upon media and performance academic, Steve Dixon’s (2007) conceptualisations. Although scholarly studies have been conducted in the realm of western contemporary digital performances to interpret the digital double (Causey, 1999; Dixon, 2007; Ploeger, 2011), there exists hardly any research literature that analyses the digital double in contemporary Bharatanatyam dance practice. This demands scholarly attention about how to read the digital double from practice. Questions that guided my analysis include: why do these choreographers project their doubles virtually? What do these digital doubles represent? Are these doubles twins, mirror images or imagined selves? The following video recordings of the performances are examined in this paper: Last One Standing (2009) by Seeta Patel and Kamala Devam and Many More Me (2011) by Shamita Ray. Drawing upon ethnographic interviews, personal observations, readings of the dances and other archival sources, I argue that these choreographers have featured their digital doubles as ‘reflection’/‘alter-ego’ to exhibit narcissism, split selves and the post-modern subjectivities. This paper is expected to demonstrate how these choreographers are shaping and expanding the aesthetic landscape of contemporary digital Bharatanatyam performance in Britain.

Introduction, context and rationale

At the turn of the new millennium, there have been numerous studies on performance practices that actively utilise digital technology (Broadhurst, 2007; Birringer, 1999, Birringer, 2006; Broadhurst and Machon, 2006; Causey, 2006; Dixon, 2007; Giannachi, 2004, to name a few).¹ These new experimentations, juxtaposing live dancers with their digital projected images have definitely challenged the traditional ways of presenting dancing bodies on the stage. Performance and media academic, Steve Dixon recognises playwright and theatre director, Antonin Artaud’s *The Theatre and its Double* (1938) as a primary inspiration in the development of this concept of ‘digital double’ (2007: 241). He explains that a digital double is the replication of a performer’s body using digital technology which is juxtaposed with the live body in a ‘digital performance’.² Although there is a rising interest amongst scholars to understand the digital double in Western digital performances (Causey, 1999; Dixon, 2007; Ploeger, 2011 etc.), there exists scarcely any research literature to date which analyses the problematisations of the digital double in the context of ‘South Asian dance’.³ This demands scholarly attention about how to read the digital double from choreographic practice.⁴ For the purpose of this paper, I examine the following contemporary choreographies: *Last One Standing* by

Seeta Patel and Kamala Devam (2009, full length: 20 minutes) and *Many More Me* (2011, full length: 12 minutes) by Shamita Ray. Drawing on Dixon's (2007) conceptualisations and through critical appraisal of the above-mentioned choreographies, this paper is expected to demonstrate how the contemporary choreographers are shaping and expanding the aesthetic landscape of digital performance using Bharatanatyam idioms in Britain.

The urban city landscape and architecture have been projected in dance films using Bharatanatyam idioms since the 1990s in Britain. For example, the actual space of dancing bodies and architectural sites are explored to suggest new emerging realities in choreographer Shobana Jeyasingh's *Duets with Automobiles* (1993) - a 'dance for the camera'.⁵ *Duets* relies on the rhythmic syllables in which the bodies are seen to perform a set of Bharatanatyam unitary movements to energise a city corporate office in London.⁶ Undeniably, Jeyasingh's *Duets* was a site of technological experimentation, although it did not juxtapose live and digital bodies.

My interest in this research study lies in explorations of various digital tools for my choreographies as a practitioner of Bharatanatyam dance in the past decade.⁷ In the autumn of 2010, I began my ethnographic fieldwork in London, and since then I have observed and recorded the choreographic practices that projected digital doubles of the choreographers who happen also to be the subject of my doctoral research. I have perceived how the unitary movements of Bharatanatyam dance, which are conceived in terms of geometric shapes,⁸ interacted with the virtual screen to redefine a new contour for performative space. In all the choreographies that I witnessed, I observed that the movements between real and projected space continuously overlap, which in turn have provoked me to study the connections between the organic body and techno-body and more precisely, to evaluate how virtual bodily movement influences live moving behaviours or produces meanings on stage. For example, while watching *Quick!* (2006) by Nina Rajarani, I was intrigued to note how the digital doubles of corporate professionals connoted to the capital flow and urban culture of a fast paced urban city.

On another occasion, while viewing a live performance of Divya Kasturi's *NowHere* (2011), I observed how Kasturi utilised the digital double to portray her migratory histories and 'in-betweenness'. As a viewer, depending on my position in the auditorium, I was required to shift my eyes between the downstage and upstage to follow the dancer's movements.⁹ All these experiences have problematised my understanding of space, time, and body. While conducting the archival research, I was drawn towards further choreographies that have projected the doubles of the performers. In *Bend it...* (2008), Rajarani incorporates the doubles mainly as a tool for externalising egos, zeal, jealousy and other subtle emotions of the players in a football match. Contrastingly, Rajarani's *Quiet, Please!* (2007) evokes traces of the memories, love relationship and nostalgia of the protagonists' through digital projections. On the whole, doubles in *Quiet, Please!* are explicitly structured according to binary oppositions – past/present, virtual/real, now/then, and here/there. All these works created by these choreographers in Britain demonstrate how the digital culture is getting appropriated in current practices.

As my research methodology chiefly draws on ethnography, I interviewed contemporary choreographers who are experimenting with digital technology. While interviewing Shamita Ray, a dancer-choreographer trained in Bharatanatyam and Western contemporary dance techniques, I was informed how Ray had engaged with her

double as an integral part of the performance process in her *Many More Me*. I will argue later how Ray's double in this piece represents charm, abundance, aspiration to grow and desire to split for action. Contrastingly, the doubles by Devam and Patel act as a psychoanalytic lens, uncovering the lives of the urban city dwellers in *Last One Standing*. Although the digital doubles have the same human qualities as the actual live performers in the choreographies mentioned above, I realised that they are used to address a great range of artistic subjectivities which demands qualitative inquiry.

For this purpose, the following research questions are examined: why do these choreographers project their doubles? What do these doubles represent? Are these doubles twins, real-timed mirror images, or imagined selves? How do these choreographers explicate their experiences of seeing the digital doubles? In the next section I go on to examine the concept of 'digital double' and analyse the selected two choreographies. I will contend that Dixon's theorisations (2007) on the digital double could be an apt analytical lens as it addresses a wide variety of themes and techniques. Drawing on field interviews, personal observations, and my readings of the dances, I will compare and contrast how these choreographic experimentations contest representations of the doubles. Finally, I will argue that the digital doubles actualise the choreographers' fragmented self, narcissism and post-modern subjectivities, whilst expanding the performative and aesthetic landscape of Bharatanatyam dance in Britain.

Conceptualisations of the digital double

The concept of double has been exploited as a motif in literary works.¹⁰ Performing with the digital double is a conceit that offers the possibility to enact the age-old desire of a human being to create and control life through another medium. An early example of digital double can be traced in theatre artist, Robert Whitman's video projection in *Prune Flat* (1965).¹¹ Artaud's biographer, Stephen Barber suggests that, 'For Artaud, the enduringly provocative idea of the 'double' was always both that of a force which threatened to supplant and destroy his identity and also that of a counterforce with which he could combatively reassert and transform his identity' (1999: 59). Dixon's engagement with the concept of Artaud's 'double' is rather exploratory. For instance, in Artaud's notion of the double, the 'reality' of double is actually not present. On the contrary, Dixon's double remains present in the performance and can be perceived by the audience.

Dixon categorises four incarnations of the digital double: i) double as 'reflection' that refers to the double which replicates the actions of its live counterpart; ii) double as 'alter-ego' that resembles the *doppelgänger* or the shadow-self of the performer, a splitting of the analogue self into multiple selves; iii) double as 'spiritual emanation', a manifestation of the performer's astral body or soul, drawing on mystical and shamanic traditions; and iv) double as 'manipulable mannequin' that is borrowed from traditional puppetry, which produces online avatars and animated characters created by imitating those of their live counterparts via motion capture technology (2007: 244). Dixon's own work with *The Chameleons Group* relates to the first and second incarnations of the digital double in which an actor in the physical theatre space is seen to interact with the digital projection (2007: 251-253). He discusses many other choreographies that adopted other instances of digital double, such as Igloo's *Viking Shoppers* (2000), Troika Ranch's

The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz (2001), and David Saltz's adaptation of Shakespeare's play, *Tempest 2000* (2000).¹² However, in this paper, I will discuss the categories of digital double as reflection and alter-ego which are principally applicable to the selected dances.

Dixon defines the 'digital double as reflection' 'as a digital figure which mirrors the identical visual form and real time movement of the performer or interactive user' (2004: 13). He also mentions about psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's fragmented body while discussing the 'mirror stage'. The mirror-image plays a significant role in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, where an infant, looking for the first time at a mirror, recognises him/herself as an individuated subject:

We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image-whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago* (Lacan, 1977 [1949]: 2).

The mirror stage is also 'the site where the subject becomes alienated from himself' (Evans, 1996: 116). Therefore what becomes central to the mirror stage is that there exists a simultaneous sense of identification and 'misrecognition', and this is something we will see later in relationships with the digital doubles as exemplified in the two choreographies under examination.

Dixon draws parallels between the 'mirror stage' of the subject's double and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's notion of 'uncanny'¹³ to suggest a double reality where 'the familiar becomes frighteningly unfamiliar' (2007: 242). Roland Barthes, a philosopher, describes this uncanny splitting and doubling of the self when he looks at his photographic image as 'the cunning advent of myself as other' (1993: 12). In a similar vein, Matthew Causey, a performance academic, situates the digital double within the concept of the uncanny, informed by a psychoanalytical Lacanian position that proposes the double as the dissociation of self and presents a visual metaphor of split subjectivity (1999: 394). Causey argues that, '[t]he screens of mediated technologies, now ubiquitous in live performance...construct the space wherein we double ourselves and perform a witnessing of ourselves as other' (1999: 385). Dixon complicates this discussion further by relating it to the myth of Narcissus¹⁴ where a viewer's gaze is held seductively, which is ultimately destructive. American art critic, Rosalind Krauss posits narcissism as the defining feature of early video art and video installations in her article, 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism' (1986). Marshall McLuhan, a media theorist, commented that the key theme of the Narcissus myth is 'men at once become fascinated by any extension of themselves in any material other than themselves' (1967: 51). In the light of the above statements, I will argue later how the contemporary choreographers have exploited their doubles to explicate narcissism.

When discussing the theme of alter-ego, Dixon draws on paranormal researcher-writer Hans Holzer who states that, 'every human being is accompanied through life by two extensions of his personality, the one good and the other evil; the former luminous and the latter dark and menacing' (Holzer quoted in Dixon 2007: 250). Dixon argues that alter-ego 'is likewise an alternate, and invariably darker embodiment' (2007: 250). According to Dixon, '[t]he alter-ego double is the dark *doppelgänger*¹⁵ representing the

Id, split consciousness and the schizophrenic self' (2007: 268). The above description implies that alter-ego is a splitting of the analogue self into multiple selves and is likely to evoke a sense of uncanny. Although Dixon believes that the digital double is a 'darker embodiment' (2007: 250), however, the dances examined here do not characteristically feature the choreographers' dark spaces in the same way about which I will discuss later in this paper.

Before going into more critical discussion of how these doubles underline the common conceit of self-reproduction, darker embodiment and fragmented subjectivities, the following section centres on the dance analyses from their videos collated from the archival sources.

Last One Standing (2009)

Last One Standing, a game-within-a-game, is a duet created by Devam and Patel which was performed in the Hat Factory in Luton, situated in North of London. It features film sequences by Maria Åkesson and most of its musical score was from composer, Jason Sweeney. A renowned performance venue in London advertised it as follows: 'It is a sensitive and humorous take on [the] game playing used as metaphor for life, explored through a physical and theatrical use of contemporary South Asian dance'.¹⁶ Devam and Patel include gesture and facial expressions from Bharatanatyam tradition and movements such as throw away swings, sharp curves, angled hip and long leg stretches from the Western contemporary dance technique. The action on stage is often a corollary to what has been shown suggestively with hands on the screen. The entire choreography underscores the concept of the game - its challenges, failures, competitiveness, jealousy, fear of losing and aspiration of winning the game as observed in real life and the postmodern world. The narrative is developed around the players' encounters as opponents (Figure 1), their attempts to safeguard vulnerabilities and insecurities, and also their tactics for survival in a post-modern city.

The metaphor of 'playing a game' has been associated since ages with theatrical performances. Patel interpreted *Last One Standing* on her personal website as: 'To some it is just a game. To others, the game is everything. Who will be the last one standing?'¹⁷ These words clearly prepare audiences to witness a game which is full of challenges and uncertainty. The choreography opens with the dancers' digital images appearing on the screen at the backstage and Patel as a solo dancer is seen to walk away from the virtual screen. The set is designed with a pair of chairs posited either side of a table on which the tower of wooden blocks is arranged. The audience hears a male voice announcing the rule of this game: 'The game is played with 54 wooden blocks. The blocks are stacked in a tower formation...The game ends when the tower falls in any significant way. The loser is the person who makes the tower fall'. There is a continuous interplay between the two players who are working up in tension to win by not disturbing the wooden blocks in stacks. The camera pans back to show how the player concentrate on the game by fixing their gaze on the table. Since the dancers are constantly trying hard to keep balance while alternating positions, tension rises and the audience is often left in the dark to predict what will follow next. The jump-cutting scenes, for example, superimposition of fast

movements of hands and gyrations mark a transition in time and space to make audience wonder where the narrative of the game will lead them in the following scene.



Figure 1: Two players (Seeta Patel and Kamala Devam) are competing behind the tower. A still photo from *Last One Standing* by Seeta Patel and Kamala Devam, 2009, London. (Photo by Maria Åkesson). Used with permission.

As the virtual game begins, the choreographic plot delineates the lines of conflict and sharpens the ambiguities of the game playing. Patel and Devam pay extra importance to the act of balancing the wooden blocks. Devam is seen to adjust Patel's body in different postures to make her stand on the ground. There is an intended parallelism between the wooden blocks and the dancer's body that need to be balanced on the table to win the game. Then they both start balancing their bodies by stretching the feet straight and Patel suddenly pushes Devam to make her fall on the ground which echoes what has been shown on screen suggestively with hands. Both the players express their intention to win by balancing the wooden tower without making it fall, yet they act as ludicrous manipulators who are unfairly trying to control the game's result.

Straightforward pity is never encouraged even when Devam's body falls back, failing to resist the impetus given by her opponent. Rather, the audience members are drawn towards subtle levels of human complexity when the male voice informs the audience: 'This game actually teaches the reality of life'. The dancers are seen to rise from the ground and walk towards the table to begin the game once more after the screen displays

the following words to console and boost the performers morally: 'It's just a game!' Violent push and quick turns are rendered to prevent resistance. The opponent's face is turned forcefully and as a response to such stimuli, Patel reciprocates with an equal thrust to bring her face to the front, suggesting her innate determination to continue the battle. The towering block is projected many times on screen to remind the audience that there is no escape from this game.

I interpret the end as tragic where the protagonists undergo complete annihilation; and there is no further sign of rejuvenation. The music fades away to leave behind the wisdom of the invisible voice: 'It is just a game and there is no real winner!' Throughout the game, I observed how the performers-players were careful not to shatter the illusion of the audience that they were watching just a game. I argue that the playing of a game is clearly evocative of the post-modern version of the world in which covert subtleties are transposed into a blatant expression of competition and unequal distribution of power.

Many More Me (2011)

Many More Me is a solo piece choreographed by Shamita Ray and commissioned by the *International Festival of a Necessarily Lonely You (I.F.O.N.L.Y.)* and *Legitimate Bodies Dance Company*, Ireland. Its music is composed by Mukul Patel and the film is made by Thomas Tracey. In this piece Ray projects her identity and subjectivity in this digital world by continuously playing with image size: her digital self equals her size and sometimes is shown larger than her real self. The use of monochrome highlights the theme of mirror-image reflection. This piece juxtaposes Indian sculptural elements with the sharp bends, rolling, and jumps of the Western contemporary dance moves. Ray neglects this element completely by stating that lack of scenic settings, bare minimum lighting and the use of monochrome for her costume are intended to avoid any theatrical element (personal interview, March 1, 2013).

The piece opens up with the reflection of virtual image through an LCD projector at the backstage. The dancer grabs, throws, flows, catches, slips, slides, stretches throughout the piece. The musical score becomes dense as the piece progresses. The camera at times is seen zooming on the hand, redefining gravity of the space. This piece portrays an exact real-time mirror image of Ray in many places (Figure 2). Her recorded movements are playing duets in consonance with the real-life movements.



Figure 2: Shamita Ray's *Many More Me* (2011) exemplifies her double as real-time mirror-image reflection. Eden Court Theatre, Inverness Scotland, 11 September, 2012. (Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon). Used with permission.

The mirror-holding posture from ancient iconography suggests this piece to be a self-reflective piece. The metaphor of the mirror¹⁸ is underpinned as it can serve to bring self-enlightenment and clarity. Unlike the mirror image, which is directly controlled in real time, the digital image as reflection allows a temporal dislocation. Other prominent movements of this choreography are: quick body bends, angularity of limbs, fluid movements, floor rotations, balancing the body by keeping the head on the ground, leg extensions, abrupt lifting of hands; these are contrasted with gentle swaying movements and innumerable gyrations. Towards the end, Ray's live body begins to move and the projected ones are frozen suggesting the contrast between motion and motionlessness. The projection towards the end reduces her size and gradually her miniature digital image disperses. At the end, Ray's body lies on the ground quietly immovable where her multiple digital images play with each other on the screen (Figure 3). Her four images composing a rhombus together justify the title *Many More Me* by this act of splitting the self into many. The screen gradually fades away, the digital self disintegrates and her body remains still on the floor in supine position.



Figure 3: Shamita Ray is lying on the ground while her multiple digital selves play with each other on the screen. *Many More Me* (2011) by Shamita Ray. Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, Scotland, 11 September, 2012. (Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon). Used with permission.

Seeing the self in a techno-mirror

In the choreographies examined above, the boundary of the stage is pushed by creation of parallel projection of moving bodies, yet the engagements and interactions of the choreographers with their doubles have remained strikingly different. Keeping the research question in mind, I first analyse why Devam, Patel and Ray have chosen to play out and negotiate their identities through their doubles by primarily relying on the interview transcripts. Patel asserts that her aim to adopt digital technology was ‘to expand the work on stage and use it to show the subtext’ and the double has been just her twin (e-mail communication, March 1, 2013). Devam also resonates the theme of subtext as follows:

The concept of the film was using humour as a way to show this game as a metaphor [...] British culture has lots of subtexts which they don’t want to mention and the presence of subtext is always there in our communication that happens in our daily life. So we wanted to have this as a subtext (Skype interview, March 3, 2013).

Whilst acknowledging the darker elements associated with the concept of uncanny, I however relate Devam’s above statement to the literal meaning of the Freudian term ‘*Unheimliche*’ which means ‘unhomely’. Devam, being an American, is feeling out of place and her feeling of uncertainty associated with post-modernism becomes conspicuous throughout this piece.

Interestingly, Ray expresses that the digital filming has offered her more ‘freedom to manipulate the choreography’ (personal interview, March 3, 2012) as expressed below:

Basically in the film I am dancing and the live performer has to dance a duet with the projected image on the screen. Sometimes the live performer and the video are dancing the same steps that are in unison, and sometimes in contrast. Sometimes the video image is the same size as the performer; it appears as if two people are standing next to each other; sometimes, the video image is huge as compared to the live performer (personal interview, December 17, 2012).

Ray’s above quote clearly indicates that she has empowered her double to determine her present movement. I argue that the digital images of Ray which are seen moving independent of her real self on the stage clearly engender the superiority and flexibility of her double.

Reading the digital double as reflection/alter-ego

The doubles exemplified in these choreographies would fit most comfortably under the categories of double as reflection and alter-ego. The doubles in *Last One Standing* and *Many More Me* are dressed identically and hence remain ‘indistinguishable from its human counterpart’ (Dixon, 2007: 268). A more conceptual approach to the use of digital double as reflection is found in the work of Ray’s *Many More Me*. Woman as a narcissistic figure is a common motif in Indian dance poses and sculptures and Ray’s narcissism is expressed through her playing with her digital double through the symbol of mirror. Ray takes a sense of delight of being doubled by repeatedly taking the mirror holding posture that denotes self-reflexiveness. Her images projected from different angles act as mirrors enabling her to play shifting roles in life. Giannachi argues that: ‘The interplay of the real and the virtual is schizophrenic in nature’ (2004: 104) and Ray’s piece often takes this literally with a split identity of the subject being played out over the digital medium. In Ray’s words:

Many More Me features one of me on stage, another of me on film, and many of me in total. Sound egotistical? Never felt there are many of you - you at work, you at play, you at home...? This piece is like looking into a mirror and seeing our myriad identities in action, often in harmony, sometimes in conflict. Featuring a unique blend of contemporary dance and bharatanatyam, an original electronic score, and a breathtaking film, this piece is for anyone who has ever juggled their selves, and marvelled at the delicate balancing act!¹⁹

The mirror image inaugurates a profound splitting of the self into two as the physical ‘self’ becomes a mediated visual as ‘other’ with which Ray is seen to interact in various ways. Ray performs a dance duet with her life-sized/large-sized digital double and underlines her narcissism by performing a duet with her digitised self. In fact, Ray gives her audience licence for subjective interpretation as she informs below:

In this piece I did not want to use any gestures at all. When on the screen you will find three images of me dancing plus the live, obviously there is going to be a message which people will read into it. When the image on the screen is much, much bigger, obviously there is a scale change and that's going to affect the audience (personal interview, December 17, 2012).

Although Ray in the above quote alleges that she has refrained from using gestures to suggest anything specific, I argue that the mimetic representation activated by the mirror stage and the digital projections of her multiple selves in virtual space take the form of a drama. However, unlike Ray, Patel and Devam hardly perform any real-time duet in *Last One Standing*, although their doubles affect their real time action because they are playing a game and it is all about life. Drawing on Dixon's explication of the digital double and Lacanian 'mirror stage', I argue that the digital doubles of Patel, Devam, and Ray embrace their identical techno-images as 'twin'/'me'/'egotistical self' in order to construct and empower their technological identity which I designate as 'digi-I'.

The alter-ego as alternate/darker sides (Dixon, 2007) of personality is demonstrated in *Last One Standing* which characteristically features the dark spaces by maintaining the subtext and their role as the game players, expressing their 'frustration' (Devam, Skype interview, March 3, 2013) of surviving in such a competitive environment where 'there is no real winner' (from the text of the choreography). The uncanny is a subjective experience, and my experience of witnessing a set of fast moving animated hands evokes a sense of something diabolic. It generates a feeling of unease, a wary mistrust in me when these animated hands attempt to blindfold the opponent. Freud argues that:

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves – all of these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove able to move themselves in addition' (Freud, 1990 [1919]: 243).

Although the moving and fragmented hands of the players are recognisable; yet they evoke a sense of horror and mystery. I read these animated superimposed digital images of hands as suppressed angst, symbolising the avenging instinct of a player to vanquish the opponent.

Interestingly, Devam and Patel exploit several theatrical elements explicitly to indicate the state of alienation from the self that is charged with uncertain feelings. In fact, as an 'outsider of this game', the dramaturgic role of a male narrator reminds me of the presence of the 'other,' dominating and ruling the lives of Devam and Patel. In this piece, the doubles play the game as trifle, yet the audiences are made aware of the underpinnings of issues related to their survival game and are rendered utterly helpless-pawns in the hands of life. I argue that Devam and Patel authorise their doubles to articulate the imagined selves who intend to play the game of life which is full of humour. Withstanding all the challenges, they wish to see themselves as the potential survivors who seem not to be affected by such rivalry and contestations posed by this ruthless world.

Conclusion

The digital doubles in general have redefined the role of self and digital body in these above examined choreographies. Through exhibitions of digital doubles, the choreographers, Devam, Patel and Ray play an important role in helping scholars interrogate and experience the different ontologies of such replications. The doubles in these pieces are recognised as doubles, as ‘reflection’ and ‘alter-ego’ (Dixon, 2007) that can be read effectively in conjunction with Lacan’s ‘mirror-stage theory’, Freud’s notion of ‘uncanny’ and myth of narcissism. The doubles reflect on several intangible feelings or fragmented realities, such as self-love, ego, pride, rivalry, jealousy, angst, pathos, frustration, etc. and therefore allow the choreographers to connect the audience with their inner psyche. I argue that the doubles in *Last One Standing* act as the darker and alternate reflections of Devam and Patel which are unfolded to reveal the complexities of the urban city life through the metaphor of game. Contrastingly, *Many More Me* underlines the artist’s narcissism in a techno-mirror to reflect Ray’s ‘egotistical’ self without incorporating any subtext or alternate self in it. An effective and ambiguous interplay between hiding/revealing, simulation/flesh and real/unreal run through these artistic practices. The triumph of the digital double lies in the ability of the choreographer to dissolve the line between the organic and the digital; each choreographer creates an overpowering identity of ‘digi-I’ on stage in order to extend the dancer’s imagined self beyond physical existence. From the above discussion one thing is clear: in contemporary Bharatanatyam performance the expressions of the human body are becoming increasingly autonomous and digitally responsive - the interactions between ‘I’ and ‘digi-I’ will become even more complex and in turn, will expand the scope of this research.

In addition to these insights regarding the digital double, this research has also uncovered other important themes that might be of equal interest to scholars. For example, since all the choreographers examined here are females, the question of the body in such performances is also linked to questions of gender politics which could be an interesting realm of exploration for future studies. The ‘male’ digital self from the choreographies, *Quick!*, *Bend it...* and *Quiet, Please!* could be a further interesting subject of inquiry. Very little is known about how the audiences have perceived the digital doubles when these choreographies were performed live. Thus a further examination of the digital double through audiences’ reflections will broaden the spectrum of this research.

Copyright 2013, Suparna Banerjee

Acknowledgment

This is part of a chapter of my PhD thesis and I am thankful to my supervisory committee (Andrée Grau, Ann David and Avanthi Meduri) for their guidance. I am extremely humbled and grateful to have received the “Selma Jeanne Cohen Award”, 2013 and express my earnest gratitude to the *Society of Dance History Scholars* for recognising this

research. Thanks are also due to my research participants, Shamita Ray, Seeta Patel, and Kamala Devam for sharing their thoughts and *Akademi* for supporting me with various archival resources.

Notes

1. I will discuss some of the authors later in this paper.
2. Recent academic research has termed such practices as ‘digital practices’ (Broadhurst, 2007), ‘mediated performance’ (Auslander, 2008) or ‘performance and technology’ (Birringer, 2006; Popat and Palmer, 2005). Terminologies such as ‘digital theatre’, ‘mediated performance’, ‘cyborg theatre’, ‘cyber theatre’, ‘digitally mediated performance’, ‘intermediality’, ‘virtual theatre’ etc exist in literature to denote experimentations with live and video projected bodies. Throughout this chapter, the term ‘digital performance’ is used to maintain consistency.
3. In Britain, the term ‘South Asian’ is widely used in academia as a hegemonic category and is used to refer to the dances, literatures, theatres, folk forms, cultures, cuisines, film, and music coming from India as argued by dance scholar, Avanthi Meduri (2008: 224). This term has also gained currency in dance practices and Bharatanatyam as a form of Indian Classical dance form is performed often introduced under this umbrella.
4. In fact, digital technology has attracted many other contemporary choreographers who are trained in other forms of Indian dances to expand their practices in Britain. However, in this paper, I aim to limit my study to the choreographers who are primarily trained in Bharatanatyam dance.
5. Researchers have used various terms such as ‘dance for the camera’, ‘videodance’, ‘dance-film’, ‘choreography for the camera’, ‘cinedance’, and ‘screen dance’ to suggest choreographies that deals with camera for their makings. I use the term ‘dance for the camera’ to denote a dance which is videotaped and shown on screen. See Sheril Dodd’s book, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art* (2005).
6. However, it is important to note that the projection of temples or the images of Hindu gods or goddesses on stage is not new in the realm of Indian dance. The Indian legendary dancer and choreographer, Uday Shankar, in the early 20th Century, had experimented with urban life in his choreography, resulting in a new invention named the ‘Shankarscope’ which is described as ‘a novel marriage between the stage and the screen’ (Misra, 1992: 38). He created *Kalpana* (1948) which portrays the mechanisation of Indian urban society. See Purakayastha (2012) for more details.
7. Some of my practice-as-research choreographies that utilised digital technology are: *Raga Expression* (2006), *Osmosis* (2009) and *Ankitāsmi: Digital I/Eye?* (2013).
8. All Indian dance positions can be classified and analysed in terms of position of head, hand, fingers and the incline of the body, the torso and the deflection of the hip (Vatsyayan, 1977 [1968]). The basic posture of a Bharatanatyam dance is the integration of many triangles (Vatsyayan, 1992 [1974]: 25) and while performing, the dancers are constantly trying to achieve the ‘perfect pose’- ‘a moment of arrested time- in limited space’ (Vatsyayan, 1967: 233).
9. Media academic, Philip Auslander discussed about the privileging of one form of media over another by theorising that when a video image is projected on screen next to a live performer then the audience’s attention would be directed towards the video projection because of issues such as size, brightness, novelty and the privileged status of video (Auslander, 1999). However, this debate is beyond the scope of the current paper.
10. For example, novelist Fyodor Dostoyevskv in his novella, *The Double* (1846) explores the concept of double through the motif of *doppelgänger*. Otto Rank, a psychoanalyst, in his *The*

- Double* (1925) provides an overview of the history of the double in literature and anthropology and offers insights into some of the superstitions and beliefs surrounding the double.
11. See 'Expanded Cinema, Video and Virtual Environments' (2003) by Peter Weibel in *Future Cinema: the Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, edited by Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel.
 12. See Dixon (2007: 241-261).
 13. Freud in his essay *The Uncanny [Das Unheimliche]* (1990 [1919]) discusses the wide array of different phenomena that evokes a sense of the uncanny. As a figure, Freud argued that the uncanny is double and ambivalent. See also *The Uncanny in New Media Art* (2008) by Ragnhild Tronstad for more details.
 14. Narcissus is an archetypal mythological figure, who falls in love with his own image when he views his reflection in a pool. Narcissus symbolises self-love and much of this character is exploited in literature, drama and paintings. German artists, Monika Fleischmann, Wolfgang Strauss and Christian A. Bohn created the archetypal myth of Narcissus as an interactive installation entitled, *Liquid Views: the virtual mirror of Narcissus* (1993). See Bauko (2011) for more details.
 15. *Doppelgänger* is a concept found in German folklore, denoting a ghost or an apparition of a living person, and is described by Freud as a 'ghastly harbinger of death' (Freud, 1990 [1919]: 141).
 16. Available at: <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/find/dance-performance/tickets/aakash-odedra-sanjukta-sinha-seeta-patel-kamala-devam-heta-patel-51675>, (accessed: 27/10/2012)
 17. Available at: <http://www.seetapatel.co.uk/>, (accessed: 27/10/2012)
 18. The word *darpanam* (which means 'mirror') featured prominently in ancient Sanskrit treatises on dance and music (for instance, *Abhinayadarpanam*, *Natyadarpanam*, etc.). It is interesting to note that woman dancers taking a narcissistic pose in Bharatanatyam is directly inspired from sculptural niches found in Indian iconography of *salabhanjika*-s (a decorative feminine figure in Indian sculpture holding various poses) (Roy, 1979) and the Hindu deities (Khanna, 2001: 18-19).
 19. Available at: <http://shamitaray.webs.com/choreography.htm>, (accessed: 30/10/2012)

Bibliography

- Barber, S., (1999) *Artaud: The Screaming Body*, London: Creation Books
- Barthes, R., (1993) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, London: Vintage
- Birringer, J., (1999) 'Contemporary performance/technology', *Theatre Journal*, 51 (4) 361-381
- Birringer, J., (2006) 'Digital performance', *Performance Research*, 11 (3) 42-45
- Briginshaw, V. A., (2001) 'Hybridity and Nomadic Subjectivity in Shobana Jeyasingh's *Duets with automobiles*', in Briginshaw, V.A, (ed.) *Dance, Space and Subjectivity*, New York: Palgrave
- Broadhurst, S., (2007) *Digital Practices: Aesthetic and Neuroaesthetic Approaches to Performance and Technology*, UK & USA: Palgrave Macmillan
- Broadhurst, S., and J. Machon, (eds.) (2006) *Performance and Technology: Practices of Virtual Embodiment and Interactivity*, UK & USA: Palgrave Macmillan
- Causey, M., (1999) 'Screen test of the double: the uncanny performer in the space of technology', *Theatre Journal*, 51 (4) 383-394
- Causey, M., (2006) *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From Simulation to Embeddedness*, London and New York: Routledge

- Dixon, S., (2007) *Digital performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press
- Dixon, S., (2004) 'The Digital Double', in Carver, G. and C. Beardon, (eds.) *New visions in Performance: the impact of digital technologies*, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger B.V., Lisse
- Evans, D., (1996) *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge
- Freud, S., (1990 [1919]) 'The Uncanny', in Dickson, A., (ed.) *Sigmund Freud, 14 Art and Literature*, New York, NY: Penguin Books
- Giannachi, G., (2004) *Virtual Theatres: An introduction*, London and New York: Routledge
- Krauss, R., (1986) 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism', in Hanhardt, J., (ed.) *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, Layton, Utah: G.M. Smith Peregrine Smith Books in association with Visual Studies Workshop Press
- Lacan, J., (1977 [1949]) *Écrits: A Selection*, London: Tavistock Publications
- McLuhan, M., (1967) *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, London: Sphere Books
- Ploeger, D., (2011) 'Digital parts/modular doubles: fragmenting the 'digital double'', *Body, Space & Technology Journal*, 10 (1), Available at: <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol1001/danielploeger/home.html> (assessed: 30/12/2012)

List of Videos

- Last One Standing*, (2009) Choreographed by Patel, S. and K. Devam. [Performance video] United Kingdom
- Many More Me*, (2011) Choreographed by Ray, S. [Performance video] United Kingdom

Address for correspondence

Email address: banerjes@roehampton.ac.uk; supban@gmail.com

**"We are not here to make avant-garde choreography!"
So You Think You Can Dance and popular screen dance aesthetics**

Elena Natalie Benthaus

School of Culture and Communication
University of Melbourne

Abstract

In this paper I argue that the American television series So You Think You Can Dance is located within the broader aesthetics of popular screen dance rather than in the aesthetic realm of reality television as dance has been featured and has been an active part on popular screen media – big and small – since the birth of the moving picture medium. Taking into consideration, the aesthetics, structure and star personas from the backstage Hollywood musical of the studio era, I am going to show how So You Think You Can Dance draws on and transforms this earlier contribution to popular screen dance, among others, thus creating a “haunted” space as a result. The start of the new millennium has seen another upsurge in the production of dance for popular moving picture mediums, and as such an increasing presence of dance in the mass mediascape. As So You Think You Can Dance is simultaneously located at the beginning and in the middle of this “new popular dance craze”, it actively contributes to the re-configuration of traditions from popular screen dance aesthetics.

Introduction

“Almost since the inception of moving pictures, those pictures have often featured dance. The obvious reason for this is that the natural subject of moving pictures is movement.”¹ Indeed, as far as the dance on screen narrative goes, it usually starts with the birth of the moving picture medium and its relation to and moreover featuring of dance and dancers from its early stages.² As Erin Brannigan notes in her book *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*, there are numerous examples of short dance films from the early days of the moving picture medium, which display dancers from vaudeville, burlesque and the music hall tradition, tracing a direct link to popular dance performances.³ However, Brannigan takes this observation as a starting point to analyse Louie Fuller’s influence on theatrical modern dance and Fuller’s general association with the cinematic medium. In contrast, I want to go back to precisely this link between the cinematic medium and popular dance performances by locating the television program *So You Think You Can Dance* in the wider aesthetics of popular screen dance and especially the Hollywood Musicals of the 1930s to the 1950s. I will argue that the aesthetics of *SYTYCD* are to be found in the realm of popular screen dance rather than in the realm of Reality TV. This can be preliminarily understood through the observation that the show uses narrative devices, which are also found in the popular screen dance area and moreover, references figures like Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse,

and Bob Fosse, among others, all of whom can be said to ‘haunt’ the space of the program. The notion of the ‘haunted’ space refers to the way that dance technique, dance styles, dance performances – both on screen and off – and of course, individual performers of times gone by can be said to ‘loom’ in the background of today’s dancers. As Judith Hamera remarked in the introduction to her book *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*, technical dancing archives are haunted spaces, or “hauntopias”⁴, because dance techniques are situated within a historical context, to which previous generations of dancers have contributed sometimes by memorable performances, sometimes by creating and/or adding to a specific dance technique. Going back to *SYTYCD* then, I want to argue that its televisual space is haunted by two features of the Hollywood musical of the studio era: the narrative strategy of the “backstage” musical and its star dance personas, particularly Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse and Ginger Rogers, traces of whom and which can be found throughout the program. By trace I mean what the OED lists as a) “the track made by the passage of any person or thing, whether beaten by feet or indicated in any other way”⁵, or b) “a non-material indication or evidence of the presence or existence of something, or of a former event or condition; a sign, mark.”⁶ But how does this work?

The Hollywood Musical – Narrative and Structural Devices

In trying to categorize the narrative structures of the variety of Hollywood musicals that were produced in the studio era, scholars Rick Altman, Jane Feuer, John Delamater, and Steven Cohan, among others, point to the most frequent use of the backstage formula within these movies, which Altman categorized as “Show Musicals”. The plot of the Show Musical, for Altman, revolves around “putting on a show” in the broadest sense. As he notes: “The standard is not whether the film takes place backstage, but whether it is primarily concerned with putting on a show.”⁷ As every display of song and dance in the film musical can be said to be the performance of a show, any film musical would be simultaneously a show musical. My concern here however is the proper backstage musical, which is set in a theatre environment and follows the protagonists’ efforts of putting together a show, which is then to be performed on stage. This backstage thematic can be said to be the dominant narrative mode of the film musical, because of its integration of the different performance modalities: singing, dancing, and acting. As Jane Feuer argues in her essay “The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment”, “Whatever the explanation for its origins, the backstage pattern was always central to the genre. Incorporated into the structure of the art musical was the very type of popular entertainment represented by the musical film itself.”⁸ The backstage musical does more than that though, it creates two separate yet linked spaces within which performers can be performers: the backstage scenes and the on-stage performance scenes. The backstage scenes situate the off-screen spectator in close proximity to the “private” persona of the actor/dancer/performer within the film. It seemingly demystifies the labour of artistic creation behind the scenes of a show and creates the illusion of an off-stage persona of the on-screen performer. Yet, this demystification and off-stage illusion is a paradox, because the “private” persona of the performer is merely another character, or persona the actor/dancer/performer takes on during the film. In this sense, he or she occupies three different performative spaces. Space number one is the ‘actual’ actor/dancer/performer

who plays an actor/dancer/performer in the film (space number two), who – meaning the character the actor plays in the film – plays a specific character/role in the stage performance within the film (space number three). It gets even more layered when considering that performers like Gene Kelly, Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, and Ginger Rogers were hired because of their performance skills, which places their off-stage and off-screen personas in close proximity to the roles they were supposed to play. Moreover, as I will discuss below, because of their unique, individual styles, the off-screen spectators recognise and remember them precisely for their specific performance modalities, which can be traced through their movies and transcend the screen.

Apart from these backstage scenes, the backstage musical additionally displays on-stage performance scenes. These are at the start filmed from a point in between the on-screen theatre audience.⁹ This strategy situates the off-screen spectator within the filmic theatre audience, contributing to a certain “live” effect that the medium otherwise seems to lack. As Jane Feuer argues with regards to this strategy: “Through a dialectic of presence and absence, inclusion and replacement, we may come to feel that we are at a live performance.”¹⁰ The notion of a lack of corporeal presence of the performer due to the lack of a “live” presence of the performer on a stage in the corporeal co-presence of the spectator is compensated for by filmic strategies. The off-screen spectator’s gaze is being directed in a different way during the on-stage performance scenes, as the use of different camera angles, for example high angle, top shot, travelling crane, and the close-up, results in an adjustment of the off-screen spectator’s gaze, because these camera angles go beyond the conventional frame of the proscenium stage.¹¹ The combination of different camera angles and the editing process, which create a sense of close spatial proximity of off-screen spectator and on-screen performer are used as a mechanism to overcome the lack of “live” presence of performer and spectator in the same spatial arrangement and a different means to transmit the kinetic energy of the on-screen performer.

Another structural and narrative layer within the backstage musical is the aspect of a male-female romantic coupling. Altman calls this feature the “dual-focus structure”¹², which consequently inspires a paradigmatic instead of a chronological reading of the scenes. As Altman noted, a scene, which features the male lead, is usually followed by a scene with the female lead, which is constructed in a similar fashion to the one before and sets the male and the female characters in a comparative relation with each other.¹³ This comparative relation is based on difference rather than similarity, the first differentiating quality being that of gender. The second duality that distinguishes the main characters from each other is, for example, a seemingly mutually exclusive social or dance-related background, or different values or beliefs, which usually accompany the overlaying male/female duality. In the course of the film’s plot these issues will be resolved and negotiated. In the course of his analysis, Altman neglected that dance in this scenario is an important tool in the negotiation process, because by learning to dance with each other, the characters learn to overcome their differences – in dance and other aspects of their life. Thus, explosive solo dance routines, which exhibit the unique style of each individual performer, are combined with duets. In each succeeding duet, both partners

learn to adapt their style to their partners to create a harmonic whole within the dance routine.

Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire

The notion of adapting unique and individual dance styles to their respective partners brings me to the star dance personas of the Hollywood musical, of which I will focus on Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, both of whom have cinematically contributed to the creation, set-up, and filming of dance scenes for the Hollywood film musical. More importantly however, both performers were and still are immediately recognizable due to their specific performance modalities. These performance modalities are a combination of merging social, vernacular, popular, and theatre dance styles to create a specific movement modality, which results in what Erin Brannigan calls a specific “gestural idiolect”¹⁴, which can be understood as a signature way of moving, or a specific movement dialect. With regards to André Balzin’s analysis of Charlie Chaplin’s corporeal aesthetic and physical appearance, which render him familiar with the audience, Brannigan further observes, that the performances in the Hollywood musical are tightly linked to the specific dancing body of the performer and can hardly be performed by someone else. “Such attention to the moving figure highlights the particular style of a featured artist and provides space for the audience to either become acquainted with a new dancer or refamiliarize themselves with a known performer.”¹⁵ In this sense, Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly provide the corporeal unifying link in their performances within, as well as across all of their films. Their specific corporeal dialect, or gestural idiolect can be traced through their screen performances and is what connects them with the off-screen spectator.

But there is another aspect, which seems to be an intrinsic part of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly’s star personas. This aspect relates to the notion that dancing/performing is not only what they do but inextricably linked to who they are. In this sense, there is no real differentiation between the “public” and “private” persona of these performers as both are very much associated with being performers, hence the public and private aspects are merged. Whereas in the Hollywood musical this feature is playfully and joyfully attached to its protagonists, in *The Red Shoes* – a British, dance-only backstage film from 1948 – this feature is related to an almost spiritual practice, that requires dedication and devotion on the part of the dancer – pointing to the narrative trope of the haunted and suffering artist. What is interesting in both scenarios, the Hollywood musical and its star performers as well as in the more sinister version of this narrative trope, is that the chosen art form is always a more or less organic part of the performer. Just taking dance as an example, dancers never just dance, but dance is part of who they are. In *A Chorus Line* (to jump a few decades forward), which is only situated within the backstage realm of the audition process for a new stage production, the dancers/performers are encouraged to tell their personal stories. The first question that is asked is: “Why did you start dancing?” This movie actually traces the auditioning dancers’ thoughts, ideas, dreams in relation to their lives and their careers. As such, every dancer’s stories discloses the hardships of the profession, but also the dedication, devotion, and above all, love for dancing and the stage. This culminates in Cassie’s performance, the opening lyrics of which are: “I ... ah

Zach, I am a dancer. That's who I am, what I do."¹⁶ These lines establish that dance is something that is inseparable and intrinsic to the persona of the dancer, something that is inscribed into the body. For these individuals, being without either dance or the possibility to perform is being without oneself.

The Hollywood Musical and *SYTYCD* – Narrative and Structural Traces

After considering these different features of the backstage formula and the Hollywood musical star personas, the question is how can they be related to *SYTYCD*. Or rather, which traces can be found in its televisual space. I want to distinguish between implicit and explicit traces when it comes to these features. The implicit traces are linked to the backstage formula as a narrative structure. *SYTYCD* can be said to be a 'stripped down' version of a Hollywood musical, or backstage dance films. 'Stripped down' in this sense means that the program contains no other narrative elements apart from the concern of 'putting on a show' and finding a new star dance persona at the end of the show. The competitive element of the program, rather than being a contrasting narrative element, is a means to highlight the audition process and the theatrical mechanisms of producing a show. It creates another opportunity to establish the dancer as a performer as well as a private persona and further increases the proximity of the dancer and the spectator-at-home. This is achieved by the variety of backstage scenes, which are part of the program from the start of the open audition process. These backstage scenes consist of interviews with the individual dancers, who are asked to tell the producers about themselves (name, age, hometown), their preferred dance style and other information that are relevant to their personas. In the later stage of the program (the Top 20 "live shows") there is always the explicit question of why the individual contestant started dancing. Dancing is always depicted as an intrinsic part of these dancers. The personalized interview is at that stage intersected with rehearsal scenes for the live show and little interviews regarding this rehearsal process. Similar to the Hollywood musical, the backstage scenes seemingly function to de-mystify the creative productive processes. The live performance scenes that follow on the other hand, aim at transmitting the kinetic energy of the performance for the spectator-at-home via the screen and the effective use of camera angles and other filming devices, result in a 'dancing camera', which creates the impression of depth and widths and a heightened sense of the kinetic energy of the dancers, despite the flatness of the screen.

Another feature of the backstage formula, which I mentioned before, concerns the notion of the romantic/coupling subplot. In *SYTYCD* the coupling subplot is related to dance partnerships. These partnerships still emphasize the male/female couple – though in later episodes and later seasons of the show there are also male/male and female/female partners, and the second duality relates to the different dance styles of the dancers that are partnered with each other. The dancers have to negotiate their different styles and different levels of training, especially when they are asked to perform in a style different from both of their own styles. Additionally though they are able to learn from each other when they are asked to perform in a style with which one of them is familiar. Because they are evaluated and voted for as a team until the number of dancers is down to ten, they face a double task, negotiating their differences in movement vocabularies and

abilities to successfully dance as a unit and setting themselves up as recognisable, individual dancers due to their unique performative modes.

***SYTYCD* as a Haunted Space – Traces of Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire**

After considering the implicit, more structural narrative traces, I am now moving on to the explicit traces, which directly relate to the star personas of the Hollywood musical, particularly Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly and Cyd Charisse. In each season, with no exception, there are references to these personas. They are explicit because they consist of verbal references from the choreographers with regards to certain dance styles, and verbal references from the judges when judging certain dance routines. Additionally there are visual references when it comes to the costumes the contestants are wearing for the routines, which are reminiscent of Ginger Rogers' flowing dresses and Fred Astaire's frock and tails. Indeed, Foxtrot routines almost always inspire a remark about the famous Fred and Ginger partnership. In *SYTYCD* season 2, episode 14, for example, ballroom choreographer Jean-Marc Généreux created a Foxtrot routine for contestants Travis Wall and Martha Nichols. In the pre-performance rehearsal clip he describes his aim for the dance routine: "I think we are gonna bring back alive those two guys Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers."¹⁷ When evaluating the performance of that Foxtrot, executive producer and permanent judge Nigel Lythgoe picked up Généreux's comment about Astaire and Rogers and actually elaborated on Astaire's gestural idiolect: "Especially Jean Marc was talking about Fred and Ginger. He had a wonderful thing were if he cut it was a bend arm cut and it was quite sharp, but when he expanded, the chest rose, the arms went out. It never stopped."¹⁸ Season 5 actually had a Top 20 contestant, who was a contemporary version of a Hollywood musical performer, Evan Kasprzak. In a publicity shot for the *SYTYCD* homepage Kasprzak was shot in a jumping pose and style similar to a Gene Kelly publicity shot. The difference between these shots were Kasprzak's colour versus Kelly's black and white shot; Kasprzak's more contemporary styling with sneakers and jeans instead of Kelly's slacks and moccasins; and Kasprzak's rather more diagonally straight and more angular positioned jumping body versus Kelly's more twisted body. The last example I want to include in this presentation is a Gene Kelly tribute group routine from *SYTYCD* season 9, episode 11. In this routine some of Gene Kelly's most iconic dance sequences are referenced: the GI trio dustbin lid routine from *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955); Gene Kelly's and Jerry Mouse's duet from *Anchors Aweigh* (1945); and Kelly's "Singing in the Rain" solo and the Kelly/Charisse "Broadway Melody" duet from *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). The references are found in the costumes the contestants are wearing, the props they are using and in some of the movement vocabularies, which are suggestive of the dance movements and choreography that Kelly created for these film dance sequences.

Concluding Remarks

Considering this, the aesthetics of the popular screen dance legacy of the Hollywood musical that are traceable throughout *SYTYCD* are actively utilized and transformed in *SYTYCD* to provide a link to this legacy. As a result, a bygone era and its stars, which linger, ghostlike, in the background, actively haunt the televisual space.

Copyright 2013, Elena Natalie Benthaus

Notes

1. Carroll, Noel. "Towards a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance." In: *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (Summer 2001), p. 46
2. See Erin Brannigan. *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; Sherril Dodds. *Dance On Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004, among others
3. cf. Brannigan, p. 19
4. Hamera, Judith. *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, p. 9
5. OED
6. OED
7. Altman, Rick. *The American Film Musical*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 200
8. Jane Feuer. "The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment." In: *Genre: The Musical*. London: Routledge, 1981, p. 160
9. cf. Lauren Pattullo. "Narrative and Spectacle in the Hollywood Musical: Contrasting the Choreography of Busby Berkeley and Gene Kelly." In: *Research in Dance Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, April 2007, p. 75
10. Feuer (1993), p. 29
11. cf. Altman, p. 361
12. Altman, p. 21
13. cf. Altman, p. 19
14. Brannigan, p. 142
15. Brannigan, p. 146
16. *A Chorus Line*. Screenplay by Arnold Schulman. Dir. Richard Attenborough. With: Michael Douglas, Alyson Reed. Columbia Pictures, 1985
17. Jean-Marc Généreux. *So You Think You Can Dance*. Season 2, Episode 14. Broadcasted on FOX on July 12, 2006.
18. Nigel Lythgoe. *So You Think You Can Dance*. Season 2, Episode 14. Broadcasted on FOX on July 12, 2006.

Bibliography

- A Chorus Line. Screenplay by Arnold Schulman. Dir. Richard Attenborough. With: Michael Douglas, Alyson Reed. Columbia Pictures, 1985.
- Altman, Rick. *The American Film Musical*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Anchors Aweigh. Screenplay by Natalie Marcin and Isobel Lennart. Dir. George Sidney. With: Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra. MGM, 1945.
- Brannigan, Erin. *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Carroll, Noel. "Towards a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance." In: *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (Summer 2001), pp. 46-61.
- Dodds, Sherril. *Dance On Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.
- Feuer, Jane. "The Self-Reflective Musical and the Myth of Entertainment." In: Rick Altman (Ed.). *Genre: The Musical*. London: Routledge, 1981, pp. 159-174.
- Hamera, Judith. *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- It's Always Fair Weather. Screenplay by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. Dir. Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen. With: Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse, Michael Kidd. MGM, 1955.
- Pattullo, Lauren. "Narrative and Spectacle in the Hollywood Musical: Contrasting the Choreography of Busby Berkeley and Gene Kelly." In: *Research in Dance Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, April 2007, pp. 73-85.
- Singin' in the Rain. Screenplay by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. Dir. Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen. With: Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds. MGM, 1952.
- So You Think You Can Dance (US), Seasons 1-9. Television Program. FOX. Broadcasted from 2005-2012.
- The Red Shoes. Screenplay by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. Dir. Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. With: Moira Shearer. Eagle-Lion Films, 1948.

The Authentic Body Transforming *Franziska Bork Petersen*

Stockholms universitet/Freie Universität Berlin

Abstract

In the programme leaflet for his piece Brilliant Corners (2011) the in-demand contemporary choreographer Emmanuel Gat argues that “[m]ovement can be the most revealing, spontaneous and truthful rendering of the human essence. Its immediacy makes it the echo of personality and it holds revelatory powers of the innermost human intuitions and sensitivities.” The notion of an authentic dancing body grew popular with the ballet d’action in the eighteenth century. It has since reappeared throughout dance history and featured in the seminal work of choreographers such as Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham or Pina Bausch. Gat’s statement suggests that authenticity is still a sought value today. However, bodily authenticity has been codified differently by the choreographers above – depending on the period in which they were active. If the revelation of something ‘inner’ on the body’s surface is idealised as authentic throughout dance history, what this inner consists of and how it can be brought to the fore is by no means fixed.

My paper outlines this historical context and examines how bodily authenticity is defined, performed and evaluated. As a counterpoint, I also demonstrate that some strands of contemporary dance refuse to confirm the ideal of bodily authenticity, but instead challenge exactly this notion. I especially detect a critical attitude in the contemporary choreographic work of Édouard Lock and Guilherme Botelho’s company Alias. These artists, respectively, propose hyperbolic, multiple and non-human bodies which undermine the belief that a true and beautiful inner can become visible on the surface of the dancing body.

Introduction

In this presentation I want to summarise some of the key findings of my PhD thesis. I have investigated an ideal which – after and in spite of the impact of postmodernism – we might be surprised to still find flourishing widely in contemporary culture: the ideal of an authentic body that represents an inner self. My research focuses – on the one hand – on what authenticity *means* today, what *techniques* are used to make it appear on bodies and – on the other hand – on how contemporary dance *challenges* the ideal of an authentic body. This means that both my thesis and this presentation are organised into two parts: the first one tackles the question ‘*How is bodily authenticity defined and how is it staged in contemporary media?*’. The second part investigates: ‘*How is this authentic ideal challenged in contemporary dance?*’



Figure 1. “No beauty without truth”

I meet this message most times I leave my house. It is a cosmetics ad that suggests there is no beautiful appearance without it revealing something about a person’s inside: Simply following beauty trends is not enough – women should stage their individuality. But is having to be one’s true self all the time really so liberating? Art critic and theoretician Isabelle Graw answers the question in the negative and points out that the claim for authenticity is hugely invasive: “It can’t be stressed enough – compared to the dictates of being skinny which models are subject to and for which they make many sacrifices, the ideal of the authentic woman is considerably more pervasive and perfidious.” (2010: 73)¹ The call for self-revelation lets products enter deeper into more potential consumers’ lives. And the fact that advertising with ‘real women’ is a successful sales strategy has been exploited by the cosmetics brand *Dove* in their ‘Real Beauty’ campaign, which many of you will be familiar with. Casting and makeover shows that have been popular on tv since the millennium subscribe to the same logic, although that might seem counter-intuitive: the reasoning is that these shows reveal the truth about who the participants ‘really’ are.

On body makeover shows participants often indicate a disturbed relation between their inner self and outer appearance as the reason for their unhappiness; the notion that their beautiful, young self is trapped in an ugly, aging body. The shows feature interventions such as dental surgery, different forms of fat-removal, lifting the body and surgically changing the facial features, dieting, work-outs, and psycho-coaching as means of transformation. After her makeover in the first season of the popular show *The Swan*, participant Beth nods eagerly when asked by the presenter if she feels like “the outside finally matches the inside” (episode 04). In the course of the shows the participants are shaped into physical visualisations of their impeccable inner; and – according to the logic of the shows – thus made semiotically ‘intelligible’. Similarly, on the casting show

Germany's Next Topmodel, the jury commonly instructs the contestants to 'show their personality' when walking and posing on the catwalk.²

During my research, I have analysed these shows in order to study on what basis their respective 'experts' attribute 'bodily authenticity'. *What staging techniques are used to display participants as physically representing their true inner selves; or aspiring models as being authentic in a fashion shoot?* I want to elaborate on one primary technique.

Hard work

On *The Swan*, although it is really the 'experts' who decide what modification each participant 'needs' ("This nose has gotta go", "This nose is a problem", plastic surgeon in S 01, E 01), the participants work out in the gym, undergo extensive surgery and stay motivated – all of which the camera follows. This transformation work is presented to the tv audience as hard and demanding. As producer and Swan Coach Nely Galán says: "This process is not easy, as we know. It's painful, its hard work." (S 01, E 08) The proceedings in the operating theatre are bloody, the participants look battered after the surgery and frequently complain about pains. On top of the physical struggle, almost all participants face emotional hardship, often inflicted by unsupportive partners over the telephone. So that at the end of each transformation, the participants' bodies have become an expression of individual determination.³

Although post-transformation, the makeover subjects frequently thank the 'experts' – as the 'authors' of their made-over bodies – the host then points out their own authorship (she might, for instance, say "You've got yourself to thank." on S 01, E 06).⁴ On *The Swan*, the participants are active agents in modifying their outer to match their inner. I argue that this active role in the transformation adds to the participants' authentication. The display of 'hard work' that every one of the women invests in their transformation is one of the necessary techniques to be judged not only beautiful but 'in balance with oneself' – as authentic – by the judges, the beauty experts and by themselves at the end of the show. The transformations on *The Swan* are not staged as a mere reworking of the surface, but as a revelation coming from the participants' deserving inner. On *Germany's Next Topmodel*, the message is communicated that the right attitude will let the participants appear their best. So that the one with the best work ethic also has the best chances for ultimate success on the show.

The authenticating images of hard-working participants appear as flashbacks or they are conjured up by verbal commentary when the bodies are conspicuously staged as 'results'. *The Swan's* first pageant is disrupted by footage that brings the struggle from 'old' body to 'new' back into the picture.



Figure 2. A typical display of participants on *The Swan*: the ‘old’ bodies, implying the work and the hardship in connection to the deserving makeover bodies

Before the women walk the pageant’s catwalk and pose in evening gowns (S1, E9), the host reminds the viewer of the endured hardship: “It has been an incredible challenge for all of these women just to get through *The Swan* programme.” When they later parade in bikinis, the host refers to their ‘former selves’ by providing comments, such as: “The contestant who called herself the ultimate plain Jane: Sarina.”; or “The woman who never used to think she’d be more than just average: Rachel.” Importantly, it is always pointed out that the ‘hard work’ is one of *revealing* a beautiful inner – and not a performative act in which appearance is staged and charged with a rhetorics of interiority. The notion of a deserving inner disrupts the staged bodies and adds a notion of ‘depth’ to the polished images.⁵

This claimed self-authorship is in line with the meaning of the Greek word *authentēs* from which authenticity derives: I won’t take much time to go into etymological details, but the first syllable ‘*autos-*’ is Greek for “self, meaning *of* or *by* oneself, independently” (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1966: 63). The origin of the word’s second part is less certain, but dictionaries often refer to *hentes* – someone who does or creates. So an *authentēs* is “someone who does something with his own hand, also by his own power, thus also an author” –unquote- (Röttgers and Fabian 1971: 691, my translation).

But I don’t want to give the impression that this desire to represent interiority on the visible body is limited to popular formats. And the notion of a true inner that comes to the fore on the body is probably not entirely unfamiliar to a dance audience like you: in the Enlightenment, dance was believed “to convey [...] with uncanny accuracy the individual’s true feelings” (Foster 1996: 15). Subsequently, Isadora Duncan or Martha Graham created dances to make a deeper, truer inner self visible; Pina Bausch has famously said that she is “not interested in how people move, but what moves them.” In

my abstract for this paper I quoted the contemporary choreographer Emanuel Gat whose company has in the last few years performed at, for instance, the Théâtre de la Ville, Tanz im August or Sadler's Wells. Gat writes that:

[m]ovement can be the most revealing, spontaneous and truthful rendering of the human essence. Its immediacy makes it the echo of personality and it holds revelatory powers of the innermost human intuitions and sensitivities.

The notion of an 'inner' is, of course, defined differently throughout dance history, and different techniques are accepted of bringing it to the fore – even if the *principle* of an outer representing an inner is the same. I don't want to go into detail with the history of the authentic body in dance: Instead, and I think in keeping with the theme of this conference, I have chosen to contextualise contemporary dance with body stagings in popular culture – to show that dance does not only reflect and react on its own history, but makes relevant contributions on a larger scale.

Because where there is a tendency (such as that in contemporary culture to idealise an authentic body), there is probably also an anti-tendency. And it is the second focus of my PhD research to analyse what techniques have been developed in dance to *undermine* contemporary notions of bodily authenticity. I want to use the rest of my time to show you two examples that I look at as challenging the notion that I outlined: displaying hard work to ensure self-authorship

Amélia

In his 2002 work *Amélia*, Édouard Lock makes use of the medium – dance film – to draw attention to the artificiality of the staged bodies. Lock uses ballet – already a dance technique that is comparatively disinterested in displaying the dancers' inner reality. But the performances in *Amélia* emphasise that in ballet “[t]he dancer's self exists to facilitate the craftlike acquisition of skills: it serves the choreographer and, ultimately, the tradition by ordering the body to practice and then to perform ideals of movement.” (Foster 1992: 486) Very different from *The Swan* – where interspersed images of *imperfection* ensure the participants' authenticity – the bodies in *Amélia* emphasise their staging.

The aesthetic code of ballet is quoted in *Amélia*, but exaggerated. One characteristic feature of the classical ballet body is its **elongation** – especially the elongation of the female dancer's leg. In *Amélia* erectness, uprightness and long limbs are choreographically emphasised with the use of *pointe* technique, and especially in a reoccurring pose where one leg is in a deep *plié* and the other one extends backwards on the floor. The camera adds to this elongated appearance: a slightly low-angle shot makes the women's legs look even longer. Another technique to create elongated figures is Locke's use of shadows. The dancers are lit so that they cast long images of themselves on the floor. These are then filmed from above.

Furthermore, *Amélia* emphasises a **spatial organisation** that is typical for the classical ballet: space is organised hierarchically with the (solo) dancer as a clear focus point in the centre. The dancers' framing in the centre of top shots or wide angle shots makes this ordering of space explicit.

And perhaps most notably – the spectacularity of ballet technique is quoted in the **excessive speed** of the piece. Lock refers to speed in his choreographies as a form of interference; as something that interferes with the spectators observation like loud sound or darkness would (at the *Tanz im August* festival 26 August 2011). The use of gestures (moving the hands to the face to cover the eyes with them, licking the flat hands or making a ‘shushing’ gesture) occasionally creates the illusion of readability in Lock’s choreography, with the speed seemingly obscuring that.⁶

Lock takes a dance form in which the body already appears as obviously staged, and exaggerates that appearance. This exaggeration does not generate a ‘better ballet body’ but a *different* aesthetics: I argue that *Amélia* is characterised by an **aesthetic of impenetrability**. The images appear polished with no suggested depth. This overall perfectly calibrated appearance marks the dancing bodies as meticulously staged: no implication of an inner regulator detracts from this perfection. Every movement is executed with control and the viewer is thus made aware that if something had gone wrong in the dancers’ performance, such a sequence would have been retaken or edited out.

The staccato quality of the movements emphasises their artificiality. The movements are not flowing into each other, - there is no sense of one movement ‘naturally’ following the next - ⁷ force of gravity isn’t made use of but worked against, which heightens the effort needed for each movement. In line with ballet technique, this hard work is not visible on the bodies in *Amélia*: the effortlessness with which they dance the excessively fast *pointe* sequences, and their keeping up with the pace set by the music, rather, reminds the viewer of a machine’s functionality.

And it is not only the dancers’ movement that features this aesthetics of impenetrability: The scenery appears as a light, even surface. It consists of a light wooden box with rounded edges in which the dance happens. The white surface on the floor seems to generate light. Similarly, the exact lighting and use of shadows, and the minimalist black and white costumes add to this aesthetics of sleek perfection. Furthermore, Lock uses no ‘reality effects’ in filming, such as a hand-held camera.

Sideways Rain

The history of dance holds many examples that dissociate the human body from an appearance that reveals inner being: In Oskar Schlemmer’s work for the Bauhaus stage in the 1920s, bodies followed the laws of the surrounding cubical space, of the body’s functional shapes or of the dancer’s own laws of motion. These ‘laws’, as Schlemmer called them, were superimposed on the dancers by means of a mask, that covered their bodies’ entirety. In Busby Berkeley’s choreographies, dancing bodies turned into abstract, kaleidoscopic patterns. Furthermore, there is a long tradition of dancers assuming animal features in their dance – both in social dances, but also in stage choreographies (see Brandstetter 2010). Graw argues that while the ideal of bodily authenticity targets “a complete revelation of the individual who has to expose herself entirely” (2010: 73)⁸, “an existence as abstract institution can indeed offer protection from being accessed as individual” (ibid.)⁹

In the company Alias' piece *Sideways Rain* from 2010, the dancers perform something radically 'other' than themselves. They don't bring a supposed inner to the fore, but appear animated by a foreign system. Throughout the piece, movements are carried out in (more or less) straight lines from the left side of the stage to the right. Dancers move on these paths as isolated figures with almost no interaction between them.

Sometimes, the dancers appear to turn into animals. They walk on all fours in a very skilled way and take on a movement quality and posture that is 'un-human'. However, they don't imitate a *specific* animal.¹⁰ And it is not just *animals* that are evoked, there are also movements that are simply atypical for human bodies. The dancers perform those unfamiliar movements smoothly and obviously – and through *that*, their bodies become themselves unfamiliar. The bodies 'adopt a different system' that is clearly imposed from the outside; nothing suggests that they express an inside. I want to argue that this can be seen as a resistant and liberating gesture in the current cultural climate in which self-initiative, self-revelation and self-exploitation is expected.

To conclude, I don't think the two pieces explicitly 'react' on the current tendency to idealise authentic bodies: I have established that connection in my analysis. In addressing one of the conference questions: "How is dance a relevant mode of performing otherness?" I want to suggest that it isn't only actions of dance, but also our academic field that equips us to analyse culturally influential practices in a way that is highly relevant. If today, influential body images are no longer displayed at court balls, being well-versed in dance analysis does prove helpful in grasping and naming the poses, gestures, movements etc carried out on red carpets, in celebrity magazines or in popular reality tv programmes.

Copyright 2013, Franziska Bork Petersen

Notes

¹ "Man kann es gar nicht oft genug betonen – im Vergleich zum Diktat des Dünnsseins, dem Models unterstellt sind und für das sie zahlreiche Opfer bringen, ist das Ideal der authentischen Frau um einiges tiefgreifender und perfider."

² For those who aren't familiar with those two tv shows: *The Swan* was broadcast by the American tv channel Fox in 2004 and shown in adapted versions in other European countries. *Germany's Next Topmodel*, is the German version of the topmodel format that is popular in many countries. I use these shows as influential, 'trendsetting' media which have an impact on both recording, but also shaping the notion of bodily authenticity that is at work in contemporary culture

³ Jones, similarly, observes that makeover programmes "frame cosmetic surgery as tough. It becomes something that only the most motivated consider: it becomes an act of courage and bravery." (2008: 13); see also 54.

⁴ "Whether achieved in one's own right or with the support of experts, the self appears more individual the more it can be claimed as the result of one's own production and active self-discipline. Individuality is thus no longer a question of results only, but especially of modalities of production." (Seier/Surma 2008: 178, my translation). „Ob aus eigener Kraft oder mit der Unterstützung von Experten/innen, das Selbst erscheint umso individueller, je mehr es als das Ergebnis der eigenen Herstellungsleistung und aktiven Selbstkontrolle reklamiert werden kann.

Individualität wird somit nicht mehr nur zu einer Frage von Ergebnissen, sondern vor allem von Produktionsmodalitäten.” (Seier/Surma 2008: 178)

⁵ I use ‘staging’ to refer to ‘being prepared specifically to appear in front of a certain audience’. See Brandstetter (2003) and Fischer-Lichte (2000b).

⁶ Gestures are commonly used to reveal inner emotion and character. See Brannigan 2011: 62-99.

⁷ Although ballet technique doesn’t usually rely on ‘natural’ movements, there is still a strongly established logic of what movement can follow another. Comp. Brandstetter 1998: 45.

⁸ “eine vollständige Preisgabe des Individuums [...], das sich mit Haut und Haaren zu exponieren hat”

⁹ “eine Existenz als abstrakte Institution durchaus Schutz vor dem Zugriff auf das Individuum bieten kann”

¹⁰ They don’t even refer to an animal in the loose way Merce Cunningham does in his piece *Beach Birds* (1991).

Bibliography

- Brandstetter, Gabriele (2003) “Staging Gender. Körperkonzepte in Kunst und Wissenschaft“ in F. Frei Gerlach, A. Kreis-Schnick, C. Opitz and B. Ziegler (eds) *Körperkonzepte/Concepts de corps. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschlechterforschung*, Münster et al.: Waxman, pp. 25-45.
- Brandstetter, Gabriele et al (2012) „Posing Problems. Eine Einleitung“, in: Brandl-Risi, Bettina et al (eds.) *Hold it! Zur Pose zwischen Bild und Performance*, Berlin: Verlag Theater der Zeit, pp. 7-21.
- Butler, Judith (2007) *Gender Trouble* [1990], New York and London: Routledge.
- Cohen, Sarah R. (2000) *Art, Dance, and the Body in French Culture of the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika (2000a) *Theater im Prozess der Zivilisation*, Tübingen und Basel: Francke Verlag.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika (2000b) „Theatralität und Inszenierung“, in: E. Fischer-Lichte and I. Pflug (eds.) *Inszenierung von Authentizität*, Tübingen/Basel: A. Francke Verlag, pp. 11-27
- Foster, Susan Leigh (1992) “Dancing Bodies”, in J. Crary and S. Kwinter (eds) *Incorporations* no. 6, New York: Zone.
- Foster, Susan Leigh (1996) *Choreography and Narrative. Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Franko, Mark (1993) *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*, Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press.
- Gilmore, James H./Pine, B. Joseph (2007) *Authenticity. What Consumers Really Want*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Goffman, Erving (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Graw, Isabelle (2010) “Mode und Lebendigkeit. Ein Kommentar zur modelfreien ‘Brigitte’”, *Texte zur Kunst* 78: 66-77.
- Heeg, Günther (2000) *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestal. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a.M./Basel: Stroemfeld Verlag.
- Martin, John (1983) “Dance as a Means of Communication”, pp. 22-23 in R. Copeland and M. Cohen (eds.) *What is Dance?*, Oxford/London et. al.: Oxford University Press.
- Noverre, Jean-Georges (2004) *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* [1760], Hampshire: Dance Books.
- Rose, Nikolas (1998) *Inventing Our Selves. Psychology, Power and Personhood*, Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

- Rousseau, Jean-Jaques (1960) *Politics and the Arts. Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre* [1758], Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Seier, Andrea and Surma, Hanna (2008) "Schnitt-Stellen – Mediale Subjektivierungsprozesse in *The Swan*", in P.-I. Villa (ed.) *Schön normal. Manipulationen am Körper als Technologien des Selbst*, Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 173-98.
- Turner, Christina (2009) *Beredte Körper- Bewegte Seelen*, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Trilling, Lionel (1972) *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Address for correspondence:

Franziska Bork Petersen
franziska.bork.petersen@teater.su.se

Gestures of grieving and mourning : a transhistoric dance-scheme.

Michel Briand

Université de Poitiers (France)

Abstract

This short analysis refers to cultural anthropology and aesthetics of dance, and intends to present a few remarkable steps in the long history of a special kind of danced gestures : expressions of feelings and representations of activities related to grieving and mourning, like lifting up hands in the air or upon one's head and dramatically waving long hair. The focus is set on some universals and similarities as well as on contextualized variations and differences, in a series of six examples : ancient Greek iconography of danced mourning rituals and tragic griefs ; expressionist death ceremonies, like in Mary Wigman's Totenmal ; the post-expressionist / neo-baroque synthesis in Pina Bausch's works ; and the popular re-enactment and re-interpretation of grieving expressions and gestures in some voguing rituals and heavy-metal rock scenographies. The history of precise gestures and actions may be a useful instrument for the study of dance traditions, renewals, and innovations.

Historical and cultural anthropology dialoguing with aesthetics and phenomenology of dance

The focus of this analysis will be set on some universals and similarities as well as on contextualized variations and differences. The first part is more epistemological and abstract (a brief attempt to synthesize some questions about the history of dance-gestures) and the second more concrete (a short walk through a series of significative images and pictures of danced gestures) : from ancient Greek iconography of danced mourning rituals and tragic griefs to “popular” re-enactments and re-interpretations of grieving expressions and gestures in some voguing rituals and heavy-metal rock scenographies, via expressionist representations of death ceremonies, like in Mary Wigman's *Totenmal* and Martha Graham's *Lamentation*, and the post-expressionist / neo-baroque synthesis in Pina Bausch's *Orpheus und Eurydike* and *Café Müller*. Along this demonstration, I make the hypothesis that the history of precise gestures and actions may be a useful instrument for the study of dance traditions, renewals, and innovations, as well as of the cultural history of the body in movement and action (Briand : 2013). This way of historicizing the dancing body refers also to “embodied cognition” and cognitive poetics (Johnson : 2007).

By referring to cultural anthropology and aesthetics of dance, I intend to identify and compare a few steps in the long history of a special kind of danced gestures, used as a specific example : expressions of feelings and representations of activities related to grieving and mourning, like lifting up hands in the air, alone or in choral groups, while sitting or standing, or upon one's head, and dramatically waving or banging one's head, especially with long hair. My general purpose is the study of the distinction and relation

of anthropological universals and historical varieties, performed and represented, with a special focus on Greek antiquity and the way this reference evolves, consciously or not, in some moments of modern and contemporary dances (Suquet : 2012).

Methodological references : from Marcel Mauss and Aby Warburg to the “figures of danced gesture”

In this kind of analyses, dance history scholars follow a long tradition of anthropologists and historians of art, whose preminent and significative figures could be Marcel Mauss (and his “corporeal techniques”, Mauss : 1936 and Grau : 2005) and Aby Warburg (and his historical / aesthetical collections of “images in motion”, Warburg : 2000). For the first (Mauss), gestures, in every culture, are the primary constituents of a code which might be viewed, at least metaphorically, as a linguistic and cultural system : dance, as a bodily technique, has something to do with medicine, political and religious rituals, collective and individual celebrations, and the construction of ethical and aesthetical norms and values as performed by what is supposed to be a good, beautiful or efficient body, with considerable variations from a culture to another, and crucial determinations based upon age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

For the second (Warburg), the perspective is mostly aesthetical (Didi-Huberman : 2002, Michaud : 2004). His trans-historical method is based upon typologized and synthetical collections of images, put together in visual groups which organize the cultural memory (*mnemosyne* in ancient Greek) of what is traditionally called art. Dance gestures, then, are a fundamental component of the history of perception and subjectivity, *pathos* and *ethos*, and, eventually, arts (both performing and plastic, and space and time arts ...) and constitutively human culture(s).

Following this double reference to Mauss and Warburg, this association of synchronic anthropology and diachronic iconology refers to some principles of a transdisciplinary approach, rich with ever new perspectives. The method is altogether experimental, dialectical, and political. As it will be shown with some boards in Warburg’s Atlas, this comparative method joins different experimental devices, like a moderated use of anachronism as well as a transhistorical and transcultural comparative trend. It also stages and questions the dialectics of contextualization and un- or de-contextualization of dancing or danced gestures and their semantical, pragmatival, ethical, or ethical features. And these experimental dialectics have strong political undertones, since these dance gestures, as they are no bare movements but parts of both spectacular and ritual performances, have much to do with identification and active subjectivation.

The polyphonic study directed by Marie Glon and Isabelle Launay (Gilon & Launay : 2012) easily exemplifies this perspective : dance studies, historical, aesthetical and political, have much to benefit from specific monographies about gestures in different cultures and choreographic works, like, as the list which organizes their last publication about the « history of gestures » : standing, falling, walking, running, jumping, sitting down, turning around, coming and going, taking by the hand, carrying, hitting, watching, etc¹. And the influence of Warburgian iconology, cross-fertilized with cultural anthropology, is here obvious and hopefully practical for instance in two collection-pictures from Warburg’s *Mnemosyne-Atlas* (« memory-album », Warburg : 2000, and Didi-Huberman : 2011). The titles of the images collected here are clearly

related to the kind of gestural (mythical and ritual) modalities of grieving and mourning I would like to focus on here. As Warburg puts it, the figure 1 (Mnemosyne picture # 5) is about : *Magna Mater, Cybele, Dispossessed mother (Niobe, flight and fright), Destructive mother, Furious (offended) woman (Maenad, Orpheus, Pentheus), Lamentation over the daed (son!). Transition : representation of the underworld (the rape of Proserpina). Head between hands (Maenad, Cassandra, priestess).* And the figure 2 (Mnemosyne picture # 42) is about : *Energetic inversion of pain-pathos (Pentheus, Maenad near the cross). Bourgeois funereal lamentation, heroized. Religious funereal lamentation. Death of the Redeemer. Entombment. Funereal meditation.*



Figure 1: A. Warburg, Mnemosyne picture # 5



Figure 2 : Mnemosyne picture # 42

And by imitating this way to represent the history of gestures in visual and performing arts, it might be possible to build up a new “Mnemosyne picture” including ancient images with more modern or contemporary ones : one example of this intuitional method could be the figure n° 3, with, on the left and upper side, ancient Greek examples, on the right and down side, pictures from Pina Bausch’s dances, and, in the middle, Mary Wigman death-ritual, voguing and, in the centre of the whole picture, a metal-rock headbanging sample. I shall try now to go beyond this first tabular effect and observe each of these images linearly.



Figure 3: (Post-) Modern “Mnemosyne Picture” about Grieving and Mourning.

Ancient Greek iconography of danced mourning rituals and tragic griefs

About grieving and mourning gestures, the first examples come from Greek antiquity, just like in Warburgian boards. And first with ritual representations :

- in figure 4, one of a *prothesis* (exposition of a celebrated dead corpse), on a geometric style funeral crater : on the sides of the bed, the performers of the rite are represented as integrated in a cultural frame (here the agents of the spectacle are members of the community, and there is no radical difference between amateurs and professionals), and, amplified by the system of choral or processionnal series, the typical gestures like putting hands on the foreheads or the heads, while sitting or standing near the funeral centre of the rite, as a lamentation, celebration, and prayer adressed to the ritual community, which the dance constitutes as a pragmatic whole, and to the gods. The imagination and memory of the watchers of this vase scene (for example in a *symposion* or ‘banquet’, since this a *crater* or “wine mingler”) activates then, on a synaesthetical mode, other senses like

kinaesthesia, audition (songs, instrumental music, ritual poetry ...), or even smelling (incense, the flavor of sacrifices or the smoke of the coming funeral *pyre*).

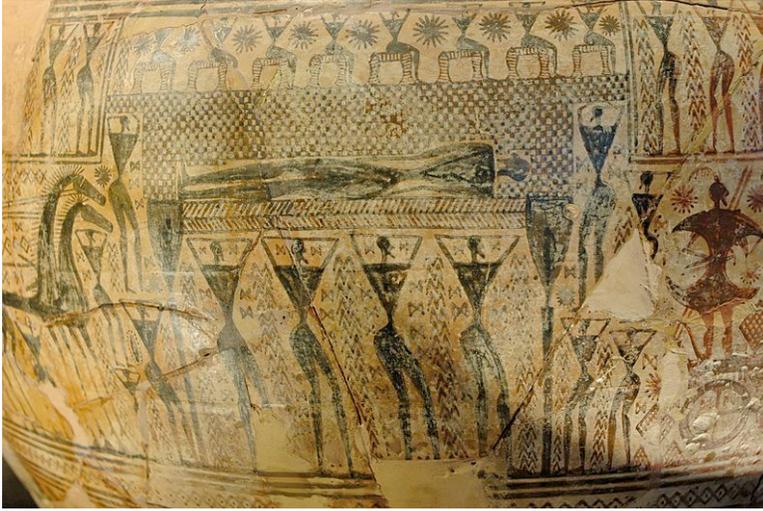


Figure 4: Scene of *prothesis* (corpse-exposition).
Geometric attic crater, ca. 760-750 b.c.
(Musée du Louvre, Paris)

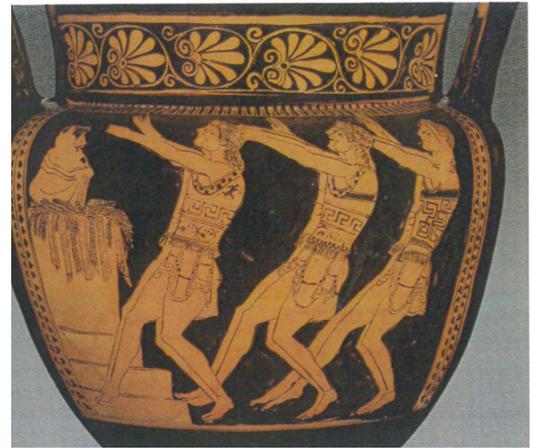


Figure 5 : (Prototragic) chorus,
dancing at a tomb, Athenian
red-figure column crater, ca. 480
(Basel, Antikenmuseum)

- in figure 5, one of a tragic chorus, performed by (young military) *ephebs*, as a decisive link between ritual and spectacle, with the typical uplifting of hands, in celebration of the gods (here Dionysos) and dead heroes of the tragedyⁱⁱ.

- and, most important for the modern history of dance and dance philosophy, three glimpses of so-called dionysiac rituals (although the nietzschean dichotomy between apollinian and dionysiac, famously anachronic, is not well accepted by the historians of ancient Greek practices and representations, but crucial for performers and composers like Nijinsky or Isadora Duncan). The first (figure 6), from a funeral oil vase, represents Dionysos dancing with two Maenads, literally “crazy-ones”, expressively bending their heads, waving their long hairs forward, and shaking their arms and legs in different directions, like in extatic trance. The second one (figure 7) is an archaic bronzo of a dancing Maenad in her specific side-walk, arms uplifting, and face looking backward. And the last one (figure 8) is a marble sculpture of another Maenad, with the typical torsion and twisting of the whole body and the falling back of the head (the so-called dionysiac neck-breaking). These representations are strongly enthusiastic and might as well feel joyful as grieving, but these gestures compose a general body grammar with obvious kathartic and vivid qualities. And expressions of grieving and mourning might be as ambiguous and dynamic as the complicated relations of vigorous laughter with passionate tears : this has to do with a firstly musical, asymmetrical and disruptive conception of dance.



Figure 6: Dionysos and two Maenads, Lecythos (funeral oil vase), Palermo, 4th c. b. c



Figure 7: Dancing Maenad, bronze, Skopje (Macedonia), 6th century b. c.



Figure 8 : Maenad, ca., 370-330 b.c., copy of a Greek original by Scopas, marble, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.

Expressionist representations of death ceremonies

The second series of examples associates ancient, medieval and modern references. The expressionistic turn of dance history, in the 1920's and 1930's, not only in Germany, is partly a reaction to classical formalism and romantic sublimation : it works on forces (like bodily energies or kinaesthetic empathy) more than on forms, but, at the same time, it takes its inspiration from gestural forms and images of ancient or distant (esp. non

European) cultures. Those pictured gestures, like on ancient Greek vases for Nijinsky's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, are traces of performances which expressionist choreographers intend to re-enact or re-create, both in order to integrate themselves in a long tradition and to de-construct the academic dances of their times.

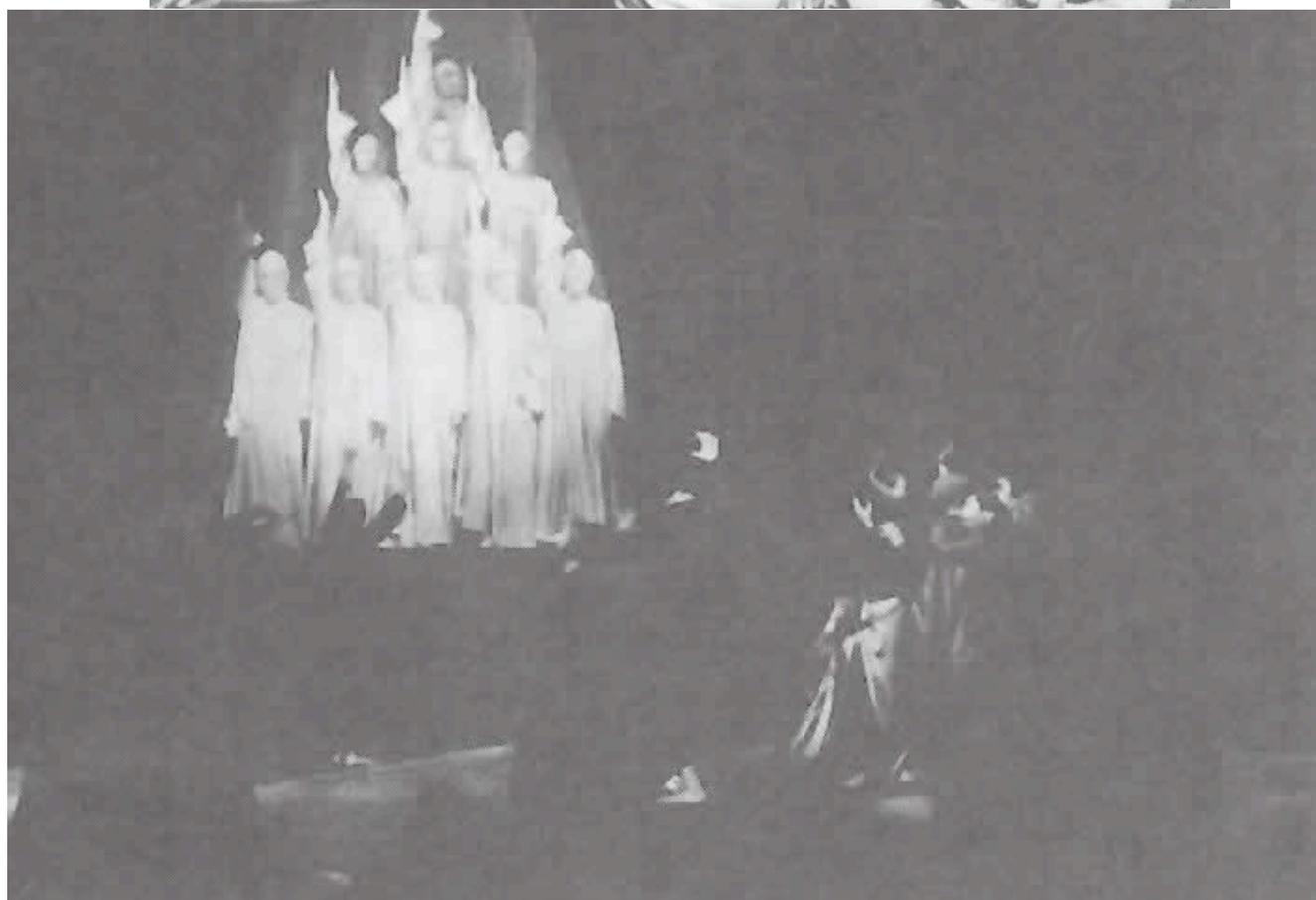
This is typical for Mary Wigman (Manning : 2006, Nouveau : 2011), in the following collection of photographs (figure 9), and her uses of hair, arms and head movements, masks and costumes, solo and chorus structures, straight and twisted tensions, etc : *Götzendienst (Idolatry)*, 1919 ; *Hexentanz (Witch Dance)*, 1926 ; *Totentanz (Dance of Death)*, 1928 ; and especially *Totenmal (Monument to the dead)*, 1930, with the typically gendered female and male chorus, or *Schicksalslied (Song of Fate)*, 1935. The last picture, from *Totenmal*, shows a duet between the Demon and Mary Wigman herself, who exemplifies here many physical and psychological features of a Maenad.



Figure 9 : Mary Wigman
9a : *Götzendienst (Idolatry)*, 1919.



9b : *Hexentanz (Witch Dance)*, 1926.



9d : *Totenmal (Monument to the Dead)*, 1930. The female and male chorus.



Figure 9 : Mary Wigman and the Demon,
Totenmal, 1930.

In a different cultural and political context, we might compare with Martha Graham's *Lamentation* (1930) and *Letter to the world* (1940), as a good example of the dialectics of tradition and innovation of both similar and transformed figures of grieving and mourning (figure 10).



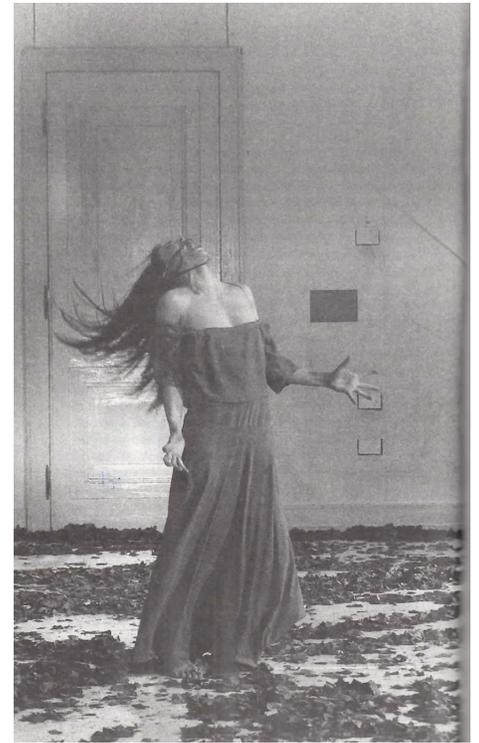
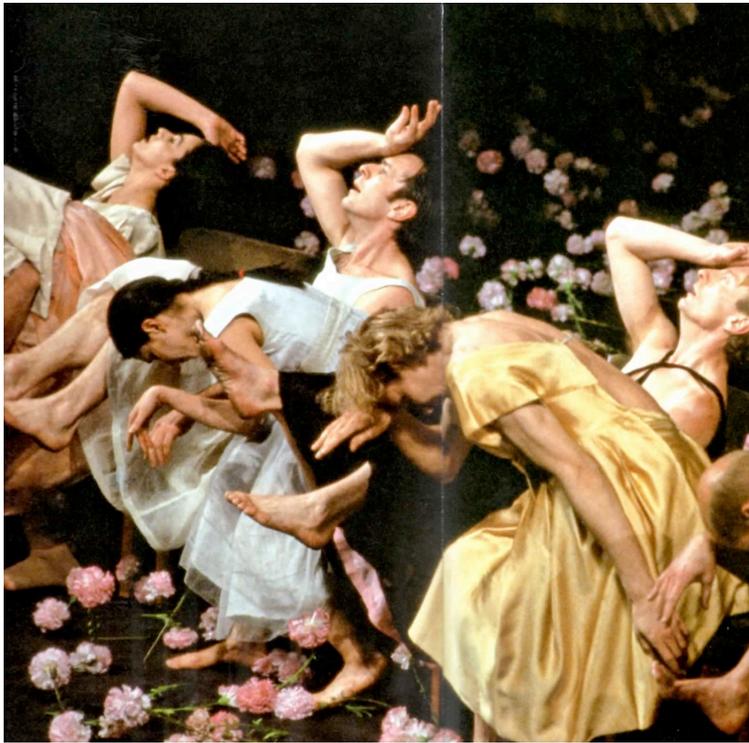
Figure 10 : Martha Graham, *Lamentation*,
1930 (left) and *Letter to the world*, 1940.

A post-expressionist / neo-baroque synthesis

I also take Pina Bausch's choreographic pieces as another fine example of these moving relations of gestural universals with artistic and historical variations (figures 11). Pina Bausch both refers to post-expressionism and neo-baroque / neo-romanticism, but she is also aware of post-modernity and the originally hybrid genre of *Tanztheater* implies that, in these various dance-pieces, ritual and spectacle, narration and expression, as well as nostalgia and rebellion, are intricately cooperating and tensely dialoguing (Servos : 2001, Delahaye : 2008, Nouveau : 2011). Some examples of this situation, and other figures of neck-breaking, hair and arms-waving, torso-twisting, hands on the head, aso, as well as ethical and physical re-negotiations of memory, sorrow, anxiety or tension, might be some pictures from the following *opera* : *Orpheus und Eurydike* (1975), the first part of it (about the arrival of Orpheus in the realm of Death) is called *Trauer* (*Mourning*) ; *Nelken* (*Carnations*), 1982 ; *Café Müller*, 1978 ; *Für die Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen* (*For the children of yesterday, today and tomorrow*), 2002. In such a large work as Bausch's, these figures of grieving and mourning create a sophisticated web of intertextual relations, quite similar to what we noticed from ancient Greece to contemporary times : the German choreographer has produced a world in itself, structured by gestural universals and variations.



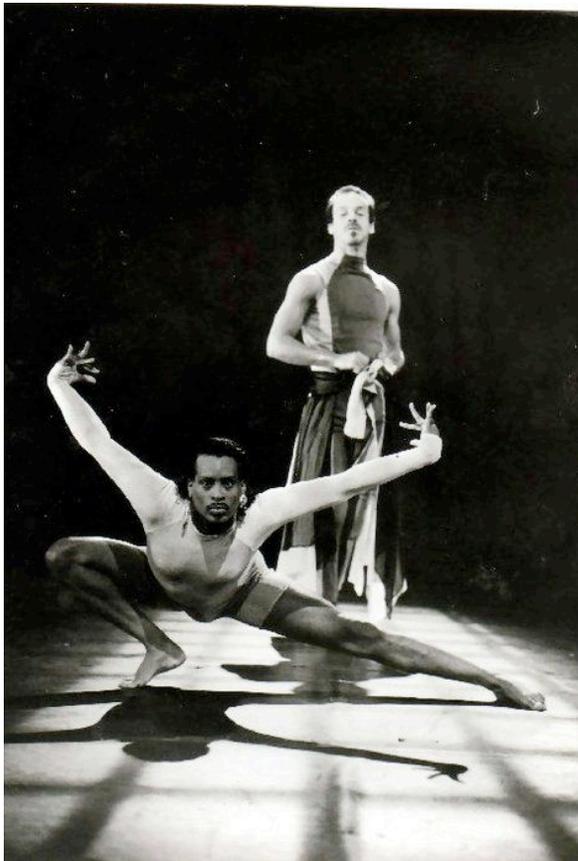
Figure 11a : Pina Bausch, *Orpheus und Eurydike*, 1975



Figures 11b-e : Pina Bausch (from upper left to right)
 11b : *Nelken (Carnations)*, 1982, 11c : *Blaubart (Bluebeard)*, 1977, 11d : *Café Müller*, 1978, 11e : *Für di Kinder von gestern, heute und morgen (For the children of yesterday, today and tomorrow)*, 2002

Popular re-enactments and re-interpretations of grieving expressions and gestures.

By very similar processes, the so-called popular cultures create ethical and aesthetical values (even sometimes norms) which refer at the same time to human universals and originally transgressive identities, and specific gestures embody these values. A fine example of this evolution might be voguing rituals (from presentation to performance and ‘vogue’, and from old way to new way and “vogue femmes”, figure 12). As examples follow a few pictures of Willi Ninja, who died at 45 (1961-2006), some from the 1990 documentary film “Paris is burning”. The photographic inspiration of these gestural systems make it at first apolinian (and visually formal), but the agonistic and energetic atmosphere of New-York ballrooms, as well as the both empowered and choral organisation of the “houses” (family-like collectives of LGBTQ afro-american and latino-american dancers and performers), make it more dionysiac. I hope at least some ancient, expressionistic or baroque undertones appear here, especially in the nervous tension of gestural combinations. However, the grieving or mourning theme might be not obvious in every picture, but it definitely appears in the performances, where the dancers not only dance, but vigorously and concretely, in their shows (more ritual actions than just spectacular) resist to oppressive norms and struggle for life and identity (Briand : 2012)ⁱⁱⁱ.



Figures 12 : Voguing, Pictures of Willi Ninja (1961-2006)

The last part of this study is about heavy-metal rock scenographies, which one might compare to ancient Greek dionysiac rituals (esp. in tragedy), like in a conceptual and historical final loop. The main common point between these two extremely distant cultural activities is just that they both deal with a basic issue in human condition : the relation to terror and death and the necessarily mediated katharsis art and culture provide. I refer here, among other, to Tom Pyszczynski's "terror management theory", where self-esteem and cultural representations play a fundamental role (Pyszczynski *et al.* : 2003).

The best analogy, in a gestural perspective, could be drawn from a comparison of the so-called "headbanging" (figure 13), typical of long-haired metal-rock community members (performers and spectators), to the Maenad's crazy torsions and distortions. This activity, both ritual and spectacular, is precisely categorized in mostly formal terms, like the following ones. The real performances (by the members of this cultural community, spectators as well as musicians on the stage), however, are much more embodied and energetical than these designations could show, and their common point is a vivid system of ruptures in the rhythm, with alternative slowness and heaviness preparing explosive crises. The names of those gestural figures and styles are mostly decriptive : *up and down, circular swing, drunk style, half-circle, figure eight, side to side, whiplash, two up two down, all-out, tandem, thrust, hammer, breakdown, low-profile, full body, half body, we're-all-friends-here, windmill, swingshake, nod...*



Figure 13 : a moderate example of headbanging

Another type of action, also famous on the hardcore punk scene, is the moshing or circle pit, also called pogo or trashing, popularized by Nirvana's "Smells like teen spirit", and this kathartic gestural activity also has sub-categories, with formal designations : floorpunch / pickin'up, circle-pit, two-step, wind-mill, side to side, kick moshing, gorilla stomp ...

As a last example about these notions of tradition, renewal and innovation in the long history of dance gestures, actions and activities, I eventually refer to a video of “In Mourning”, a progressive death metal band from Sweden (Falun), whose last albums, in their titles, refer to aesthetic, ethical, cosmic and “spiritual” issues : *Shrouded Divine* (2008), *Monolith* (2010), *The Weight of Oceans* (2012). The tune is called “A vow to conquer the ocean” and the video typically shows gestures which may refigure ancient / universal interrogations and activities, in an alternative contemporary culture^{iv}.

And that is too what this presentation intended to do, being more altermodern than just postmodern, that is strongly relating archaic forms and forces and modern ones. The gestures of our times are not new, but constantly renewed.

Copyright 2013, Michel Briand

Notes

ⁱ This post-maussian and warburgian method refers, AMONG OTHERS, to a research-seminar in Paris « Figures du geste dansé : mythes, identités, interprétations » (Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art). The study of Glon & Launay is about the following (french) verbs : *être debout*, *tomber*, *marcher*, *courir*, *sauter*, *s’asseoir*, *tourner*, *arriver / partir*, *prendre par la main*, *porter*, *frapper*, *regarder*.

ⁱⁱ I studied this figure in a previous participation to the Proceedings of a SDHS conference : " Interplays between Politics and Amateurism : Ritual and Spectacle in Ancient Greece and some Post-modern Experiments (Castellucci, Bagouet, Duboc, Halprin)" (SDHS 2010 Conference, *Dance and Spectacle*, 8-11 July, Univ. of Surrey, Guilford & The Place, London, UK), on line : <http://sdhs.scripts.mit.edu/proceedings/2010/#papers>, p. 33-48.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0En-tj0BhvY>. In Briand : 2012, I studied a specific trend in contemporary dance, which renews or “queers” itself by working / exploring voguing or other non-academic aesthetics, ethics, and politics. The tension of apolinian and dionysiac “esth-ethics” is crucial here.

^{iv} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EXD-uWAoN0> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdsIzmZSzmC>

Bibliography

BRIAND, Michel (2012), « Les contraintes et l’envol. Notes brèves sur Cecilia Bengolea, François Chaignaud, la danse, le genre et la poésie », in *Le Pan poétique des muses / Revue internationale de poésie entre théories & pratiques* : « Poésie, Danse & Genre » [En ligne], n° 11 Printemps 2012, URL. <http://www.pandesmuses.fr/article-contraintes-102659955.html> ou <http://0z.fr/cYWf6>.

BRIAND, Michel (2013), "Danse - récit (et action) / danse matière (et création) : pour une esthétique comparée de l'antique et du contemporain, d'Homère et Lucien à Gallotta, Chopinot, Duboc, et retour", in Rémy Poignault (éd.), *Présence de la danse dans l'antiquité - Présence de l'Antiquité dans la danse*, Caesarodunum, XLII - XLIII, Clermont-Ferrand, p. 409-423.

DELAHAYE, Guy (2007), *Pina Bausch*, Actes Sud, Arles, 2007.

DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges (2002), *L'Image survivante : histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg*, Éd. de Minuit, Paris.

- DIDI-HUBERMAN, Georges (2011), *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet - L'œil de l'Histoire*, 3, Minuit, Paris.
- GAUTHIER, Brigitte (2008), *Le langage chorégraphique de Pina Bausch*, L'Arche, Paris.
- GLON, Marie & LAUNAY, Isabelle (dir.) (2012), *Histoire de gestes*, Actes Sud, Arles.
- GRAU, Andrée (dir.) (2005), *Anthropologie de la danse : genèse et construction d'une discipline*, Centre national de la danse, Pantin.
- JOHNSON, Mark (2007), *The Meaning of the Body : Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, University of Chicago Press.
- MANNING, Susan (2006), *Ecstasy and the Demon. The dances of Mary Wigman*, University of Minnesota Press.
- MAUSS, Marcel (1936), "Les techniques du corps", *Journal de Psychologie*, XXXII, ne. 3-4.
- MICHAUD, Pierre-Alain (2004), *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. Zone Books, Cambridge Ma.
- NOUVEAU, Sarah (2011), *Le corps wigmanien d'après Adieu et Merci (1942)*, L'Harmattan, Paris.
- PYSZCZYNSKI, Tom, SOLOMON, Sheldon, & GREENBERG, Jeff (2003), *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.
- SERVOS, Norbert (2001), *Pina Bausch ou l'Art de dresser un poisson rouge*, L'Arche, Paris.
- SUQUET, Annie (2012), *L'Éveil des modernités. Une histoire culturelle de la danse (1870-1945)*, Centre National de la Danse, Pantin.
- WARBURG, Aby (2000). *Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE* (Hrsg. von Marfred Warnke & Claudia Brink), Berlin.

Address for correspondance

michel.briand@univ-poitiers.fr
Michel Briand
Université de Poitiers
UFR lettres et langues
1 rue Raymond Cantel
68022 Poitiers Cedex
France

Entangled Histories and Kinesthetic Connections: Memory, Heritage and Performance in Rani Nair's *Future Memory*

Sandra Chatterjee

Paris-Lodron University, Salzburg

Abstract

Future Memory (2012) by Swedish-Indian choreographer Rani Nair is a performance piece about the choreography *Dixit Dominus* (1975), created by Kurt Jooss for the Indian dancer Lilavati and reconstructed by Nair (2003). *Future Memory* contains text, vocalization, audience interaction, video, as well as movement, and deals with memory and the responsibility of inheritance: Nair's relationship to Jooss' choreography, to the stories told around the piece, and to Lilavati, whose dance, costumes, dance-bells, and other personal items she inherited from Lilavati's husband Bengt Häger.

Nair's piece will be analyzed as "performance" rather than a piece of choreography. I will draw on the approach of excavating entangled/"shared" histories and look at Future Memory in terms of intercultural interdependencies and border-crossing continuities and discontinuities between Indian and European dance: What is the relationship between the dance Dixit Dominus, the Indian dancer Lilavati, the German choreographer Jooss, and Indian-Swedish contemporary choreographer Nair? What kinds of new questions can tracing the "kinesthetic connections"¹ between Lilavati, Jooss and Nair open up for thinking about entangled histories? How does Future Memory reflect these kinesthetic connections performatively? What kind of lineage is established? What responsibilities come with inheriting a dance/archive and approaching it in terms other than those of a faithful reconstruction?

A woman is sitting on a chair in a white cube. She has dark, curly hair that does not reach beyond her earlobes and she is wearing a bright, shiny blue blouse, which is open like a jacket, bright red sneakers and an overall with a dark base and a red flowery pattern. Underneath the overall the top of a yellow, neon colored sleeveless shirt, is showing at the top. Holding a small white device with both hands, she is looking into it with a single-minded focus. Her head is nodding slightly in a steady rhythm, as though she is counting. She is humming almost inaudibly. "Vam!"-- Suddenly she utters a louder sound. Pause. "Zhum!" Pause. "Zha-zha-zhaa---!" She holds a sudden breath in. Pause. "Trum- Zha!" Pause. "Da, da, da, da--" the pitch of her voice is going down a note on a scale, with each "da" – she repeats with the same changes in pitch: "da, da, da, da—" ending with "Da da Zhum!"

Subtle changes in the carriage of her body and almost imperceptible movements in her shoulders, sternum and chin point larger movements playing in her mind. One can see her counting what seems to be the rhythm of a waltz, silently. Her head and torso gently and minutely move along with her counting and the sounds she utters. Over time, the sounds get louder, more involved, at times more guttural, only to switch to a light,

melodious hum. Her body movements reflect the changing intensity of her sounds: they get bigger, more intense, more accented and more involved.²

This is the beginning of *Future Memory*, a 2012 performance by Swedish-Indian contemporary choreographer Rani Nair. For almost the first 10 minutes of the piece, Nair is sitting on a chair center stage, watching a small media player, vocalizing and physicalizing in reaction to that which she sees (but the audience does not). As an audience member who knows that *Future Memory* is a performance about *Dixit Dominus*, created in 1975 by the eminent German choreographer Kurt Jooss for the Sweden-based Indian dancer Lilavati, I assume that Nair is watching Jooss choreography *Dixit Dominus*.

Nair's vocalizations and supporting physicalizations of the dramatic arc, accentuations, and dynamics of *Dixit Dominus* communicate a sense of immersion in the piece that does not merely reflect what she is watching. The reactions that she allows to percolate out of her body in front of this audience also refer to a movement memory of dancing and performing the piece Jooss created for Lilavati: Nair reconstructed *Dixit Dominus* in 2003, and toured extensively with it. She therefore, from the very beginning of the performance, allows the audience to witness the physical memory of her intimate engagement with the piece during the process of reconstruction of Jooss' piece, but without performing *Dixit Dominus* for them. The quality of the vocalizations and physicalizations performed by Nair here reflects the memory of performing her reconstruction of Jooss' choreography, which according to Kate Elswit, dramaturge of *Future Memory*, was "relatively faithful to the shapes and timing of the older movement with controlled doses of intentional and unintentional anachronism"³. This opening sequence therefore does not perform Jooss' piece, but Nair's memory of "feeling" certain movements so as to bring out a specific quality, maybe being uncomfortable or struggling with another movement of *Dixit Dominus*. Via her vocal and bodily reactions that are not the dance she viscerally invokes her memory of rehearsing, perfecting and performing Jooss' work.

As *Future Memory* unfolds, Nair continues to use various sources of sound, a variety of modes of text, audience interaction, video, as well as movement, to bring forth her engagement with Lilavati and *Dixit Dominus*, grappling with questions of memory and the responsibility of inheritance, delving into Nair's relationship to Jooss' choreography, to the stories surrounding the piece, and to Lilavati, whose dance, costumes, dance-bells, and other personal items she inherited from Lilavati's husband Bengt Häger.

Being given as a gift is also an integral part of this choreography's history. *Dixit Dominus* was made as a gift from Jooss, who was a very close friend of Häger and also worked in Sweden after his retirement from Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, Germany. As such the piece entered Lilavati's personal repertoire, rather than Jooss' body of work.⁴ Elswit writes in her program note for the premiere of *Future Memory*:

Dixit Dominus's first reconstruction in 2003 by the Swedish-born, Indian- and contemporary dance-trained choreographer Rani Nair was also a gift, this one from Lilavati Häger's husband, Bengt, who knew that she had always wanted to pass on the work and that, after meeting Nair shortly before her death, Häger mentioned she had found the dancer for *Dixit Dominus*. These multiple gifts were

mirrored in the message around which Jooss themed the choreography: "What you take, shall be lost to you - what you give, will remain yours forever." [...] Bengt Häger had told her "when you inherit the piece, you inherit everything [to do with the piece, *addition by Elswit*]," and yet, wearing Lilavati's costumes, hearing stories about her, and attempting to do her movement felt at times farther from, rather than closer to *Dixit Dominus* and its original creators.⁵

Bridging this perceived distance, Nair returned to engaging with *Dixit Dominus* a few years later, in 2009, by embarking on a process, which led to *Future Memory*,

this time focusing not on the choreography but on the stories around it (and grappling with) the very personal responsibilities of inheritance and legacy that come out of the work itself, but which also surpass it.⁶

In her recent article "Engagements with the Past in Contemporary Dance," the German dance scholar Yvonne Hardt addresses a recent "focus on history and memory"⁷ where artists working in contemporary European concert dance "have discovered the past as a playground for the present."⁸ Hardt posits this as a departure from the long time tendency to equate the "avant-garde" with the "new" and thereby affirming a distancing "from those dance forms considered traditional, historical, or marked by ethnic inheritance".⁹ In her discussion of "what working with the past in contemporary performance can entail"¹⁰ Hardt states that her

essay traces how contemporary dance performances and dance historical writing have challenged these demarcations as one detects a remarkable trend toward evoking the past in contemporary dance. Numerous artists and festivals increasingly feature works that address the past, having discovered the potential for a self-reflexivity of dance in conversation with its history.¹¹

Based on the examples of four choreographers, Jerome Bel, Xavier Le Roy and Ester Salamon, and Martin Nachbar, she discusses "different modes of 'taking up the past,' making a primary distinction between "quoting" and "re/construction and archiving."¹² What these modes of taking up the past have in common is that they "all engage a concept of history understood as a construction based on the needs of the present".¹³ While she clearly separates these practices in her essay (discussing quoting in part one, and re/constructing/archiving in part two), she nevertheless aims to show that these practices are intertwined "and all contribute to a performative understanding of history and the archive."¹⁴

"Quoting", so Hardt "has become an omnipresent term with regard to describing choreographic strategies of contemporary dance."¹⁵ Acknowledging the act of translation required in the transfer of the idea of "quoting" from a text-based context to dance, she emphasizes that in the context of dance the "framing" of a quote in contemporary choreography is particularly important.

Future Memory repeatedly quotes *Dixit Dominus* on multiple registers. In the opening scene the memory of the piece, and in particular dancing it, is invoked in a way that a dancer will recognize as a kinesthetic recollection based on watching a video tape

of an old performance of oneself. At another moment in the piece, Lilavati is dancing *Dixit Dominus* on videotape, played back on an old TV with Rani Nair sitting on top of the TV. Without being able to see the video, but being able to hear the sound, she comments on the piece, thereby again emphasizing not only her memories that are activated, but also the fact that she has indeed memorized the piece. At another point in the piece, Kurt Jooss appears on the TV screen. Nair sits next to the TV, wearing headphones that are connected to it. The audience hears Nair speaking Jooss' words, and miming gestures from his body language and articulations. Here, what is invoked is not the same kind of memory: this section to me speaks of the process of memorization. With each citation therefore, Nair re-frames *Dixit Dominus* differently, highlighting multiple aspects of her connection to the piece, to Lilavati, and also to Kurt Jooss.

Future Memory accesses and activates a personal archive, which is tied to the idea of an inheritance, thereby also affirming a lineage. This personal archive, that Nair has inherited, however, bridges two separate archives that reflect our way of thinking about, and classifying dance: the Dance Art archive and the archive of dancing. These two archives, that shape our study and understanding of dance correspond to a disciplinary distinction in dance scholarship, which Marta Savigliano describes in her critical discussion of the concept and category of world dance, in terms of a "a fracture established by the archival location of its chosen object of study."¹⁶ She writes

[t]he fracture does not necessarily follow the objects' sites of 'origin' (claimed belonging) in geopolitical terms such as West and non-West; First and Third World; or North and South. Two different 'archives,' as it were, have housed collections of movement practice, following different paths as they identified, categorized, and analyzed their findings: One is 'the' Dance archive in the Arts; the other the archive of 'dancing' (socially structured and meaningful movements) in Anthropology.¹⁷

Savigliano here points out the exclusion of "other dancing" from the archive of the "Arts." She defines her main point of discussion, "world dance," as "a symptom of Dance under globalization"¹⁸, which constitutes an additional archive: "collection of other(ed) artistic dancing."¹⁹ Savigliano further illuminates when she specifies that

[s]cholars at the Dance-Arts archive primordially have documented, historicized, and critiqued professional artists and performers, their work, schools, and lives, most but not all stemming from hegemonic centers of art production with noticeable international impact.²⁰

In contrast,

Anthropology has served as an archive for 'other' dancing, dances outside Dance or loosely connected to Dance mainly as a source for inspiration.²¹

The personal archive that is activated in *Future Memory* straddles the two conceptual archives: it includes Lilavati's dancing bells, as well as a rehearsal tape with Georg Friedrich Händel's music and Jooss' counting voice. It also contains Lilavati's Indian

dance jewelry as well as the simple costumes designed for *Dixit Dominus*. *Future Memory* brings this archive on stage and allows the audience to witness it and even interact with it: at one moment in the piece, selected audience members, who have been given sheets of paper beforehand, read letters that Nair wrote to Lilavati (after Lilavati's death). Nair, now wearing a long-haired wig, walks through the audience showing pieces from the archive, allowing the audience to touch it, explaining details such as: this used to be Lilavati's dance jewelry. I argue, therefore, that *Future Memory* plays with an ambiguous status between these two separate archives, which also aligns with *Dixit Dominus*' history of being a gift. As Elswit points out

Jooss scholar Patricia Stöckemann dismisses *Dixit Dominus* as initially having been created "out of friendship," resulting in "a 1976 dance with a breath of Indianness [that] remained in its unadorned innocence nothing more than marginalia in Jooss's creations."²²

Using the mode of contemporary performance to grapple with this ambiguous position, *Future Memory* facilitates the excavation of entangled/"shared" histories and hybrid personal archives connecting Indian and Northern European dance. It highlights interconnections and "jointed articulations"²³, rather than upholding archival separations. The archival separations are undone in *Future Memory* by tracing staging a personal archive that straddles the Dance-Arts archive and the archive of dancing, and by foregrounding "kinesthetic connections"²⁴ between artists that contradict the separation of the dances. In her article, "The Bodies beneath the Smoke," Priya Srinivasan traces the "kinesthetic legacies"²⁵ of laboring Indian dancers, male and female, at the Coney Island exhibition (summer 1904) in the work of American modern dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis, which thereby are not only crucial for St. Denis's work, but also "haunt[] American dance histories through the very basic dance principles of movement; spiral turns and whirls."²⁶ Srinivasan is concerned with an analysis of laboring and bourgeois bodies -- acknowledging the invisible cultural labor of dancers of color, contributing to the pioneering success of the bourgeois dancer. I would like to translate her concept of haunting kinesthetic legacies and connections into my analysis of Nair's work, even though I am aware that there is no emphasis on a discussion of class in my example. The emphasis here is on other kinds of invisibilized connections between dancers that, as a result, only impact our understanding of dance and dance history marginally. In this particular case I am particularly concerned about the separation of the histories of Indian dance and European dance, where in the European imagination "Indian" dance often remains static and relegated to the past and the realm of tradition.

Future Memory principally traces the kinesthetic connections between Rani Nair, a contemporary choreographer based in Stockholm, who studied contemporary dance, the South Indian classical form of Bharatanatyam and the Indian martial art form Kalarippayat and Lilavati Häger, who passed away in June 2002, and, hailing from a prominent Bengali family, had spent most of her childhood in England where she was inspired to study Indian arts. Lilavati trained in the North Indian classical dance form Kathak and the South Indian classical form of Bharatanatyam and danced with the famous Ram Gopal's dance company. As Ashish Mohan Khokar writes

With Ramgopal, Lilavati travelled the globe and danced her way into many hearts

including that of Europe's most important impresario, Bengt Hager, who was also Ram's manager abroad. Ram's influence on Lilavati and her art was immense and there was no turning back. For good measure, Bengt fell in love with Lilavati and she stayed back in Europe to marry him.²⁷

Through her husband, Lilavati stepped into a world of connections in the art world, and according to Indian dance historian Ashish Mohan Khokar, throughout her life in Sweden remained a cultural ambassador for Indian arts and artists, being involved in organizing and hosting festivals and concerts, while also being active in initiatives such as the founding of the world's first dance museum in Stockholm.²⁸ Via Lilavati, *Future Memory* further traces a kinesthetic connection from Nair to Kurt Jooss and to Ram Gopal, who too was considered an ambassador of Indian dance, touring in Europe as early as the 1930s, presenting India to a European audience. While Ram Gopal presented in particular the newly reconstructed classical dances, he catered to his European audiences by presenting his dance in „exotic costumes, [that were] in all probability designed by Western garment experts.”²⁹ Tracing criss – crossing connections between Nair, Lilavati, Jooss and Ram Gopal *Future Memory* claims a dual lineage and calls into question archival and disciplinary separations and emphasizes aesthetic, historical and personal entanglements.

But even tracing one (cultural) side of the lineage does not facilitate the assumption of a shared cultural origin. Situating the Ram Gopal, Lilavati, and Rani Nair, three dancers of different generations and historical situations, in terms of a lineage of Indian dancers in Europe, Lena Hammergren distinguishes their relationships to and representations of India: “Ram Gopal’s, Lilavati’s and Rani Nair’s artistic work can only with great difficulty be classified as belonging to the same category of Indian dance.”³⁰ Paying particular attention to their different cultural, historical and racial contexts, Lena Hammergren compares the performances of *Dixit Dominus* by Lilavati and Nair in terms of differences in their interpretations of Kurt Jooss’ choreography.³¹

While more archival research needs to be conducted to work through and really write such an entangled history, *Future Memory* is an important example as one particular contemporary work that engages with the past in multiple ways: Nair's position as a Swedish-Indian choreographer,³² her history meeting Lilavati and Bengt Häger and inheriting *Dixit Dominus*, as well as her personal history with Jooss' choreography. All of these engagements expose the entanglements emerging out of the “archivally,” conceptually and culturally separated lineages tracing back to protagonists of Indian and European dance histories, Jooss and Ram Gopal. By re-tracing histories *Future Memory*, so Elswit,

embraces the possibility of an alternative history, one where a “minor” dance takes ten years of an artist's life, and where insider and outsider are much more complicated than we might think. It is a piece in which tradition is configured in a more hybrid way; not Indian versus Western European, but multiple traditions that fix and release ideas of Indianness/Swedishness/Germanness through both real and imagined archives that are deeply unstable. In this way, future memory is based on a past that is not fixed, but rather one with which we constantly negotiate, and through those relationships open potential that builds into the future.³³

Acknowledgements

This article is based on initial research conducted as part of the research project *Traversing the Contemporary (pl.): Choreographic Articulations between European and Indian Dance* (Austrian Science Fund (FWF): P24190; 2012-2015; project director Prof. Dr. Claudia Jeschke), conducted at the Department of Music and Dance Studies at Paris-Lodron University.

Copyright 2013, Sandra Chatterjee

Notes

1. Here I am referring to the concept of “kinesthetic connections” as articulated by Priya Srinivasan in “TheBodies beneath the Smoke, or, What’s behind the Cigarette Poster: Unearthing Kinesthetic Connections in American Dance History,” in *Discourses in Dance* 4.1 (November 2007): 7-47.
2. This description is based on the performances of *Future Memory* at Dansstationen in Malmö, Sweden, on December 4th and 5th 2012, which I attended (http://dansstationen.nu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=254%3Afuture-mamory&catid=54&Itemid=28&lang=en, [accessed 3 September 2013]), and the video documentation of *Future Memory* shared with me by the choreographer via YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSqkErIGnIg>, [accessed 3 September 2013]).
3. Elswit, Kate. Program note for the performances on 4th and 5th December 2012 in Malmö, Sweden. See also introductory text of the performance documentation (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSqkErIGnIg>, [accessed 3 September 2013]).
4. Elswit, Kate. Program note for the performances on 4th and 5th December 2012 in Malmö, Sweden.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Hardt 2012: 217.
8. Hardt 2012: 218.
9. Hardt 2012: 217.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Hardt 2012: 218.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Savigliano 2009: 170.
17. Ibid.
18. Savigliano 2009: 169.
19. Savigliano 2009: 174.
20. Savigliano 2009: 171.
21. Ibid.
22. Elswit, Kate. Program note for the performances on 4th and 5th December 2012 in Malmö, Sweden. The quote by Patricia Stöckemann that is mentioned in Elswit’s program note reads

as follows:

Jooss fühlt sich wohl in Schweden. Wenn er dort ist, verbringt er viel Zeit mit Häger und dessen Frau, der indischen Tänzerin Lilavati. Aus Freundschaft zu ihr läßt er sich überreden, ein Solo für sie zu choreographieren: *Dixit Dominus* zu Musik von Händel. Die Aussage des zugrundeliegenden Textes spricht ihn an: „Was du für dich selbst nimmst, wird von dir genommen, und was du gibst, wird dir für immer bleiben.“ Das Ergebnis aber, ein 1976 entstandener indisch angehauchter Tanz, bleibt in seiner schlichten Einfalt nicht mehr als eine Marginalie in Jooss' Schaffen. (Stöckemann, 2001: 397)

Margareta Sörenson too highlights the intercultural aspects of *Dixit Dominus*: "Kurt Jooss's piece *Dixit Dominus* was created as a solo for Lilavati. Clearly her Indian based technique inspired Jooss, and the rapid foot stamping is associated with Kathak. But the red overall costume and the expressive attack has German expressionist roots, obvious to discover in Rani Nairs young and powerful interpretation" (Sörenson 2010).

23. Foster 2009: 10.
24. Srinivasan 2007.
25. Srinivasan 2007: 8.
26. Ibid.
27. Khokar 2002.
28. Ibid.
29. Venkatraman 2003.
30. Hammergren 2009: 129.
31. Ibid.
32. Margareta Sörenson emphasizes in particular Nair's Swedish-Indian identity as one of the reasons for her receiving the inheritance: "My conclusion is, that Lilavati, herself with a part of her childhood in England, saw the quickly changing world and the fact that a population in any country in Europe, like Sweden, has around the millenium [sic] shift some 20% immigrants. Someone that have [sic] double root systems can not possibly be accused of cultural tourism, it is just as natural to have access to two cultures as it might look strange to only refer to one. (Sörenson 2010).
33. Elswit, Kate. Program note for the performances on 4th and 5th December 2012 in Malmö, Sweden.

Bibliography

- Foster, S. L. "Introduction" in Susan Leigh Foster, ed., *Worlding Dance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009: 1-13.
- Hammergren, L. "The Power of Classification" in Susan Leigh Foster (ed.). *Worlding Dance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009: 14-31.
- Hardt, Y. "Engagements with the Past in Contemporary Dance" in Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, eds., *New German Dance Studies*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012: 217-231.
- Khokar, A. M. "Lilavati Hager" (Obit/Tribute). 2002. Web.
<http://www.narthaki.com/info/profiles/profil16.html> [accessed 3 September 2013].
- Savigliano, M. "Worlding Dance and Dancing Out There in the World" in Susan Leigh Foster

(ed.) *Worlding Dance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009: 163-190.

Sörenson, Margareta.. "From Orientalism to Globalization: Indian and other Asian art in Sweden." <http://www.teaterkritiker.se/page2.aspx>. January 2010 [accessed 9 June 2010].

Srinivasan, P. "The Bodies beneath the Smoke, or, What's behind the Cigarette Poster: Unearthing Kinesthetic Connections in American Dance History," in *Discourses in Dance* 4.1, November 2007: 7-47.

Stöckemann, P. *Etwas ganz Neues muss nun entstehen: Kurt Jooss und das Tanztheater*. München: Kieser, 2001.

Venkatraman, Leela. "Ambassador of Indian dance" in *The Hindu daily newspaper*. 24.10.2003. <http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/fr/2003/10/24/stories/2003102401720500.htm> [accessed 9 June 2010].

Address for correspondence:

Sandra Chatterjee
Sandra.Chatterjee@sbg.ac.at

The Fragmented Nature of the Modern Self

Erika Colombi

University of Arizona, School of Dance

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to create a pedagogical model for a large lecture class that can be an effective teaching tool to enhance student learning and that the use of live audience polling can assess student comprehension in this setting. This model incorporates course content, dance and technology. It was created to address different learning styles and intelligences in one lecture environment while engaging students with the use of cell phone technology. One standing paradigm is that dance is presented primarily for stage performances. Dance is more generous, and can be used to aid research in all subject matters. The use of dance as a teaching tool might benefit students in an academic setting by creatively presenting new ideas that span several disciplines. Moreover, student involvement may increase through the use of live audience polling technology, creating a safe environment in which students can participate. Thus, the pedagogical model presented in this paper promotes a deeper understanding of the presented lecture.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to create a pedagogical model for a large lecture class that can be an effective teaching tool to enhance student learning and that the use of live audience polling can assess student comprehension in this setting. This model incorporates course content, dance and technology. It was created to address different learning styles and intelligences in one lecture environment while engaging students with the use of cell phone technology. One standing paradigm is that dance is presented primarily for stage performances. Dance is more generous, and can be used to aid research in all subject matters. The use of dance as a teaching tool might benefit students in an academic setting by creatively presenting new ideas that span several disciplines. Moreover, student involvement may increase through the use of live audience polling technology, creating a safe environment in which students can participate. Thus, the pedagogical model presented in this paper promotes a deeper understanding of the presented lecture.

Research Questions and Definitions of Terms

This paper asks the research questions as follows: (1) How might one create this pedagogical model? (2) How is this model an effective teaching tool? (3) How might this model enhance student learning? (4) How might live audience polling be a useful method in student learning? Furthermore, for the purpose of this paper, I will define course content as the primary directives the instructor is looking to promote or teach in the classroom. Large lecture classes will be defined as any non-movement course containing more than 40 students, in which content is traditionally delivered verbally, in a teacher

centered manner. The term dance in this context is defined as purposeful, choreographed movement with the classroom directives and concepts as the motivation and inspiration. Live Audience Polling is defined as the cellular technology used in the large lecture classroom that provides immediate, anonymous feedback. Live Audience polling is a method that allows the students to engage with the teacher instantaneously in an anonymous setting by displaying the students' comments via text messaging.

The Pedagogical Model.

The model was created to present the course content traditionally through classroom lecture, and then exemplify the main concepts of the lecture material through dance. The teacher then incorporates live audience polling through the use of cellular phones to promote interaction and understanding among students. For example, I use the concept of the "monomyth," created in Joseph Campbell's (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, to facilitate a prescribed set of movements, exemplifying what Campbell phrases as, "the hero's journey." Campbell believed that numerous myths from disparate time periods and regions share fundamental structures and beliefs in their religious stories, which he summarizes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* as a hero that ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: "fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell 1949:23).

I chose five main stages of the hero's journey that Campbell describes in his literary work to portray for a large lecture classroom through dance. The five stages for the hero are: (1) the call to action; (2) refusal of the call; (3) crossing the threshold into adventure; (4) acquiring new knowledge, skills, friendships; and, (5) the return to life utilizing such skills. To reinforce the central themes in Campbell's work, I then layered the movement with an interview of Joseph Campbell talking about the central themes to his research. The layering of text reinforces the content of the lecture and marries the ideas with both movement and music. The editing of the text and music was completed with the software, Apple Garage Band.

After presenting the course content, followed by demonstrating the dance and incorporating music layered with a live interview of Joseph Campbell, I assessed student involvement and comprehension of the material by utilizing live audience polling. The three questions I asked during the lecture via the live polling were:

- (1) How did you feel about the use of text layered with the movement?
- (2) Did the movement effectively demonstrate the essence of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey?
- (3) Can interactive polling bring forth more student/audience discussion in a field, such as the fine arts, that typically is more intimidating to personally interact?

Audience responses to the first question ranged from "this is a good way to tell a story" to "very cool", to "increases the amount of information or meaning that can be conveyed while, simultaneously, drawing more understanding." Most of the responses were engaging and prompted discussion. The second question had 40 responses, and 37 of those texted "Yes! This is a great tool for instructors" to the poll, while three respondents texted, "No. This does not help make art more accessible."

Art Integration across Disciplines

Integrating dance into other subject areas has been explored successfully for the past 25 years and is utilized in primary and secondary education settings. Nevertheless, art integration is underutilized, comprising roughly 7.5% percent of K-12 educational instruction, although less in terms of dance integration. Arts integration and, specifically, dance integration, is determinedly less in higher education, however, researchers and educators agree that:

“If dance academic achievement were the main goal, it would seem obvious that arts and dance should play a significant role in schools because they have been found to be a powerful means of developing students higher order thinking through exploration, creative problem solving and making connections. Educators and researchers view dance as an immensely powerful means of cultivating critical thinking skills, symbolic understanding, and conditional reasoning in education” (Gadsden 29:2008).

Art integration depends on the commitment of the instructor to the implementation of art in other academic disciplines. However, successful arts integration learning promotes a clearer understanding and provides a safer atmosphere for risk taking as well as a pleasurable and more meaningful learning experience (Moore and Linder 2012). According to the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) the definition of arts integration is, “teaching and learning in which arts learning and other academic learning are connected in ways in which the arts learning and other academic learning are both deepened”(CAPE 2013).

Two great psychologists of the 20th century have provided educators with the invaluable information on how humans learn. They are: Howard Gardner, with his introduction on the eight different multiple intelligences theory, and Carl Jung with his introduction of the four learning styles. Pairing both the multiple intelligences with the learning styles brings us the integrated learning theory. The integrated learning experience described in this model deepens both the student’s understanding of art’s ability to reflect culture and ideas, as well as deepens the understanding of the subject matter (Silver et al. 2000).

The model described in this paper addresses many of the multiple intelligences (verbal, logical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal) as well as some of the learning styles (feeling, thinking, intuitive, and sensory). Traditional lecture format addresses the verbal, logical and intrapersonal intelligences by supplying linguistic support verbally and written through the use of lecture and power points. Those with great interpersonal skills have the opportunity for social interaction and reinforcement through the expected raising of hands for questions and discussion. Traditional lecture based classroom environment only benefit those with feeling and thinking learning styles.

On the contrary, the pedagogical model I propose in this paper allows for inclusion of the learning styles of sensing and intuition by exposing the learner to movement and music. This model addresses more of the multiple intelligences by including learners whose intelligences are more spatial, musical, and kinesthetic. The live audience polling allows for the implementation of the interpersonal intelligence by allowing student learners to process information anonymously, with self-containment and interpersonal reflection.

For example, over the course of two semesters, I applied this model to two semesters of large lectures of approximately 250 university students each semester, in the General Educational class, entitled *Looking at Dance* (Clouser, 2008). The class explores various genres of dance (i.e. ballet, modern, jazz, and world dance) with a brief history into each discipline. For the ballet section, students were initially exposed to the history of ballet through the use of traditional lecture coupled with visual cues (i.e. power point). The traditional lecture is the first step in the pedagogical model I describe in this paper. The students were then asked to watch various examples of dance that represented the different historical phases of ballet covering the past 150 years (step 2 in the model). Finally, the students were prompted to answer questions, via live polling, regarding the differences of each historical era.

The students were able to express their ideas, whether they were correct or incorrect and, subsequently, the instructor was able to discuss any shortcomings or misconceptions as well as good ideas and connections. The live audience polling proved, again, to be an effective teaching tool, as both the teacher and students were able to engage in a discussion about the different historical eras. The students were asked their perception of the usefulness of live audience polling. In every section, 96%-98% of the student population that day thought that the instruction coupled with watching dance and live polling was a useful and effective teaching method.

Live Audience Polling Efficacy

Live audience polling (LAP) has been used initially in the form of clickers, and was called Audience Response System (ARS). ARS was first implemented in classroom settings in the early 1990s and pedagogical studies to increase student participation through ARS methods began to appear in teaching literature as early as 1994 (Heward 1994). In this initial study, which used response cards as a “low tech” option for student response systems, it was determined that the card usage resulted in increased student participation and improved academic performance (Gardner, Heward, and Grossi 1994).

More recent student response methods incorporate technology that allows students to send their responses electronically to the computer, then display those on the projection screen with presentation strategies, such as Microsoft Power Point. As noted by Stowell and Nelson (2007), the main difference between clickers and cellular phone technologies, and other “low tech” options for student response systems is that the technologically more advanced methods’ (i.e. clickers and cellular devices) allowance for anonymous responding.

Furthermore, live audience polling with cellular devices in contrast allows students to text message their responses. Whether the responses are a narrative or a quantitative vote depends on the structure of the poll, however, the student responses are anonymous and immediately displayed on the screen in which the teacher can then address and interact with the participants. According to Stowell and Nelson (2007:253), “This allows for students who have tendencies toward introversion to be more willing to participate and might experience less negative academic emotions (anxiety, shame) when using an anonymous responding method. Thus, another advantage of [audience response systems] is that they create an avenue for interaction with students who might be too shy to speak or even raise their hands.”

Art can be an intimidating subject to engage with in a large lecture environment. The anonymous polling allows timid students to participate in a vulnerable classroom experience. Live audience polling allows for immediate feedback to instructors and the display of graphic polls. Few empirical studies examine whether or not the use of live polling directly increases student learning. However, there may be a strong correlation student responding accurately and honestly, and to the general enjoyment of the material. In sum, live polling suggests a more effective and engaged learning experience.

With the widespread use of internet and cellular technology, most students find text message voting or responding both familiar and enjoyable. Perhaps the most common, non-academic use for cellular voting is evident in the widely viewed television shows, such as “Dancing with the Stars” and “American Idol.” While neither of these shows can replace, or even attempt to belong in an academic lecture environment, my belief of incorporating such familiar technologies will serve as a useful tool to keep engagement levels high during large lecture classes. Live polling not only reinforces ideas of this model presented above, it allows for anonymous student responses and also ensures student usage of cellular devices during lecture in a productive manner.

Conclusion

The pedagogical model of complete learning integration can be used as an interdisciplinary tool for large lectures or presentations. Dance is a wonderful way to demonstrate ideas and research, rather than traditional practices of only speaking and reading one’s topic; dance provides visual and musical aspects. The learner will gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter by utilizing and addressing different types of learning and multiple intelligences that Gardner and Jung developed. To conclude, the model presented, here, promotes creative research articulation and coupled with the live audience polling, is an effective tool in learner centered, integrated teaching methods.

Copyright 2013, Erika Colombi

Bibliography

- Campbell, Joseph. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Gadsden, V.L. 2008. The Arts and Education: Knowledge generation, pedagogy, and the discourse of learning. *Review of Research in Education* 32(29):29-61.
- Gardner, R., Heward, W.L., & Grossi, T.A. (1994). Effects of response cards on student participation and academic achievement: A systematic replication with inner city students during whole class science instruction. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 63-71.
- Heward, W.L. (1994). Three “low-tech” strategies for increasing the frequency of active student response during group instruction. *Behavior analysis in education: Focus on measurably superior instruction* (pp. 283-320). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Moore, C., Linder, S.M. (2012). Using Dance to Deepen Student Understanding of Geometry. *Journal of Dance Education*. 12:104-108.
- Schunk, D. (2008). *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective*. New York: Pearson.
- Silver, H.F., Strong, R.W., Perini, M.J. (2000). *So Each May Learn*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Stowell, J., Nelson, J. (2007). Benefits of Electronic Audience Response Systems on Student Participation. *Teaching of Psychology*. 43(4):253-258.

Internet/Technology Resources:

Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE)

www.capeweb.org

Garage Band, Apple Software

The Joseph Campbell Foundation

www.jcf.org

“Dance your PhD” Ted Talks lecture with John Bohanon

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIDWRZ7IYqw

Live Polling Services. A website that allows people to use live interaction and polling with the use of cellular phones. www.polleverywhere.com

Erika Colombi

646 N Stewart

Tucson AZ 85716

ecolombi@email.arizona.edu

Angelin Preljocaj, transmodern dance practices and the impACT of writing recent dance histories

Kathrina Farrugia

Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance, London

Abstract

This paper explores the impact of French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj. On close analysis, Preljocaj's choreographic influences and the 'shards' of performance histories embedded within his work suggest a complex set of recent dance histories. This paper boldly proposes ways through which a new theoretical framework, notably transmodernism (Lewis 2011), may transfer effectively from the field of literature studies to that of dance studies. As I make a case through examples from Preljocaj's Empty Moves (2007), transmodern dance practices (Farrugia 2012) illustrate the impact of and response to the values from the interstitial transference of migrated practices and find ways of reconnecting through composite, non-linear scaffolded acts and actions.

Introduction

Mindful of the parameters of this paper and equally aware of the implications of my proposition of a new theoretical framework for dance, I will briefly consider the negotiations that occur, reside and fluctuate across the tensions between the role of the writer/historian and recent performances histories. In this light, my aim is to explore the impact of new approaches in theorising recent dance histories. I also attempt to bridge selected issues surrounding the histories of an important dance/choreographic 'activist' who has radically shaped recent dance traditions within a French and European context. Through this two-fold attempt, I will explore the impact of the French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj and propose a rethinking of the postmodern genre in recent times. Through this, I will subsequently address the following questions:

- How do 'complex' performances reside with the concept of a "transmodern" framework?
- How do the negotiated theories transfer effectively from one field to another and how can dance histories be considered through constructs such as 'transmodernism'?

As a dance historian, I actively negotiate and construct my theoretical contribution through a web of sources of histories. The tensions are palpable; I journey through memories of watching a live performance, fragments of written documents, recollections through oral histories, as well as capturing extracts from recordings of performances (retracing and charting the elements of the performance). Preljocaj's work offers me several opportunities to explore uncharted performance/dance histories. The field of study is an open one and provides exciting tensions as a result of multiple layering of sources including a seminal choreographic work titled *Empty Moves* (2007).

Empty Moves (Parts I & II) (2007)

Co-commissioned by the *Biennale nationale de danse du Val-de-Marne* in 2004 and by the Dance Festival of Montpellier in 2007, [*Empty Moves \(Parts I & II\)*](#) (2007) is a choreographic work for four dancers dressed in everyday shorts and t-shirts. The work is performed to a digital arrangement by Preljocaj's frequent collaborator Goran Vejvoda and includes a recording of John Cage's performance of *Empty Words* (1977). Cage's infamous recital, based on the quasi-nonsensical reading of journal writings of Henry David Thoreau (1817 – 1862), is layered with the feisty Milanese audience's reaction to his two-hour performance at *Teatro Lirico* in Milan on 02nd December 1977. I observed *Empty Moves* at the Dublin Dance Festival in April 2008. The programme note for this performance characterises the work as “free from narrative”. My understanding of *Empty Moves* proposes that the work parallels a co-existence of multiple dimensions of performativity. As observed in the short extract, the four dancers move in and out of highly structured phrases that emphasize shapely combinations in unison, parallel symmetry, etc. In addition, the co-existence of aural and corporeal dimensions resonate the Cunningham/Cage postmodern concern of the aural and movement elements.

Thus, Preljocaj's *Empty Moves* offers a set of performances that chart complex shards and fragments of performance histories. The “live” dancers showcase Preljocaj's precise and calculated choreographic scape and the recording of Cage's chaotic soundscape offers additional levels of historicized performances. *Empty Moves* suggests the complexity of Preljocaj's work as well as elements of intertwining and co-existing narrativity: the soundscape and the dance suggest the dissimilar nature of the two theatrical components that reside in what may apparently seem to be unrelated performative moments. The interplay between a live (“passive”) and a recorded (“reactive”) audience denotes the heritage of pastiche, collage and challenge to the boundaries of theatricality in dance. In *Empty Moves*, the shards of postmodernism alongside modern/structuralist features elicit recent choreographic concerns. How do the two choreographic dimensions co-exist? Do such practices imply a shift in performance making/thinking?

‘Shards’ and complex reconfiguration of dance histories in Preljocaj's heritage

To answer such questions I shall now offer some insights into Preljocaj's education and training in dance, stemming back to his upbringing in south-eastern suburbs of Paris in the 1960s. Born in 1957, Preljocaj studied with Karin Waehner (1926 – 1999), a German dancer associated with Alwin Nikolais (1910 - 1993) and Viola Farber in France. Waehner's *Scuola Cantorum* was the platform through which Preljocaj encountered a binary of modern principles from German expressionist dance (associated with the performative legacies of Mary Wigman) to the fall and recovery techniques of American modern dance, including those of Doris Humphrey. Preljocaj attributes Waehner's creative, improvisatory contribution to his understanding of what he describes of his early creations as “emotional objects comprised of bodies” (Preljocaj 1987, online posting).

In a televised documentary celebrating the life of Merce Cunningham (Plouchard, 2009), Preljocaj stressed the cultural and artistic impact of the 1979 Paris tour by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Pompidou Centre and describes

Cunningham's choreography, including works such as *Channel/Inserts* (1981), as "a semantic approach to choreography...something completely new" (Preljocaj in Plouchard 2009, TV broadcast). Preljocaj's year of study spent in New York at the Cunningham studios in the 1980s, and his further study with Farber back in France, presented a period of consolidation of vocabularies, particularly the interplay of linear and angular shapes crafted with a clear use of planar treatment.

During the season of 1982 -1983, Preljocaj performed with the company of French New Dance choreographer Dominique Bagouet (1951 – 1992). As Georgiana Gore suggests in Andre Grau and Stephanie Jordan's *Europe Dancing*, Bagouet's experience of the Maurice Béjart's Mudra School and his early choreographic endeavours in Montpellier denote the heritage of the avant garde associated with Bagouet's contribution to French New dance in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Gore in Grau & Jordan 1998). Consequently, Preljocaj's heritage crosses over from early 20th century German expressionist dance to American postmodern dance, alongside the American influences on French contemporary dance in the early 1980s.

These composite connections in Preljocaj's choreographic endeavours illicit Preljocaj's interest in drawing upon linear organization and orientation of body parts alongside a pastiche of performance texts and choreographic histories. More specifically, the co-existence of shards of the performativity in *Empty Moves*, together with the displacement of the narrativity, suggest a shift between the construction of presences and absences of performance and choreographic histories and influences. As I undertook further investigation into his work, I began to consider Preljocaj's intricate reconfiguration of his artistic influences. His work offers insights into what arguably could be considered as a new artistic practice; a practice that suggests complex interconnections and trajectories between past and present performance/choreographic histories. Preljocaj's work points toward both modern and postmodern practices but neither exclusively one nor the other. Problematically, *Empty Moves* raises many questions on how Preljocaj's concerns as a performance maker align themselves to past and recently formed theoretical markers. In such a case, can Preljocaj's work be considered against new theories?

Applications of a 'transmodern' theoretical framework

In pursuit of a theoretical paradigm that could provide a robust framework for understanding the work of Preljocaj, I delved into the reconsideration of practices labelled as 'postmodern'. The parameters of postmodernism and postmodern dance indicate a largely-expanded spectrum of theories and a wide-ranging set of performance practices (Daly 1992). Borrowing from Terry Eagleton's "illusions of postmodernism", the established features of postmodernism include the rejection and deconstruction of hierarchy and grand narratives, plurality of histories and the body as object. Moreover, as Eagleton suggests: "it (*postmodernism*) has brought low the intimidating austerity of high modernism with its playful, parodic, populist spirit" (Eagleton 1996, p.28). As a theoretical marker, postmodernism facilitates different conceptions of history. And, herein lie some of the questions about postmodernism in the twenty-first century: what

types of theoretical shifts occur when certain artistic practices include references to but are not exclusively consumed by postmodernism?

My search for an understanding of recent practices and shifts in theoretical paradigms stumbled across the conceptual framework of ‘transmodern’. In his seminal *Twenty Theses on Politics* (2006), Enrique Dussel conceived the idea of a new, *transmodern* civilisation and argues that: “new theses should situate these levels with an even greater degree of complexity and concreteness” (Dussel 2006, p.xvii). Stemming from a neoliberal model that was formulated during the last decades of the twentieth century, Dussel argues that a new paradigm, or a transmodern framework, will be a one that eliminates the monopoly of the “political class” and demarcates a praxis of liberation where the political activities prompt “a tension pressing toward a point of arrival” (Dussel 2006, p.137). Applications of Dussel’s theories have recently transferred within film, literary and, through my own endeavours, dance studies.

My first encounter with an application of theories of transmodernism resulted through an article in the *Belgian Journal of English Language and Literatures*, written by Yale graduate student Jeremi Szaniawski (2004). In his comparative between ‘postmodern’ and ‘transmodern’ cinematic practices, Szaniawski offered an unstable but forward-thinking attempt to make sense of recent film makers’ approaches. A more thorough and robust application of such early theories on transmodernism is offered by Harvard University graduate Christopher Taggart Lewis (2011). In his thesis titled *When the glass slips: Building bridges to transmodern identity in the novels of Santiago Nazarian and Chico Buarque*, Lewis defines transmodernism as “attempts to recover the centers of modernism and repudiate postmodernism’s dismissal of meaning in a kind of “transversal unification” that effect a convergence *without coincidence*” (Lewis 2011, p.20). Analysing Brazilian literature through the novels of Chico Buarque (b.1944) and Santiago Nazarian (b.1977), Lewis depicts transmodern thinking as a “shifting, ever-changing organism ... that bridges the gaps between the shards (of postmodernism), anchoring identity between multiplicity and (global) interconnectivity” (Lewis 2011, p.iii). In summary, Lewis outlines the following ‘transmodern’ features. They include:

- Dimensions of ‘otherness’ as diversity and defence of cultural difference
- Weaving and twisting of shards of texts or sources
- Pluralistic possibilities, eliminating monopolies and hierarchy
- Potentially, pluralistic possibilities of postmodernism against new emergences of modernism.

The transference of this theoretical framework into dance appeared to be one that could elicit new paradigmatic offerings for understanding recent choreographic practices, including those by Preljocaj. In *Empty Moves* the distinctly emotive use of the breath as a mechanism for driving the movement, together with the linear and angular trajectories of the choreography, is superimposed with a kaleidoscopic treatment of “texts” that reflect the postmodern condition. Here, each characteristic present in the performance retains its identity whilst colliding and interweaving with other performance histories. The condition of transmodernism in works such as *Empty Moves* suggests the manifestation

of a fabricated and complex network of performance and choreographic histories, the layering of narratives and the treatment of historical influences.

The transmodern features in Preljocaj's signature treatment denote a complex fabrication of modern and postmodern genres. As demonstrated in *Empty Moves*, Preljocaj's *oeuvre* highlights the meticulous attention to the structural organisation of the dancers and the movement material within the performance space. The cumulative organisation of the phrases, combinations and larger sequences resonate the presence of structured thinking across the identification of motif, development and reorganisation. Moreover, the relationships between the organisation of the choreography and the engagement with the props and the musical score offer a fabricated approach that also references the postmodern concerns of corporeality. The performative dimensions in Preljocaj's work thus resemble a plethora of malleable landscapes that outline a complex set of contexts, locations and occurrences. His work offers dimensions of 'otherness', drawing upon the diversity of German, American and French forms of modern and postmodern dance and embracing cultural difference through weaving and twisting of shards of texts or sources. As demonstrated in *Empty Moves*, pluralistic possibilities including the elimination of monopolies and hierarchies in performance histories suggest the possibilities of postmodernism against new emergences of modernism.

Conclusion: Writing recent dance histories

I anticipate that this conclusion will develop into the start of a new theoretical paradigm in dance history. My application of transmodernism in dance (Farrugia 2012) offers a model that is timely and necessary, and outlines the impact of recent choreographic work on ways in which we can make sense of dance. As I made a case through examples from Preljocaj's *Empty Moves*, transmodern dance practices illustrate the impact of and response to the values from the interstitial transference of migrated practices that find ways of reconnecting through composite, non-linear scaffolded acts and actions. In this paper, I have proposed a way through which shards of these new theories transfer may effectively from the field of literature studies to that of dance studies. Indeed, similar to Sally Banes' proposal of a post-modern period in twentieth century dance, my theoretical offering allows the dance history and studies community to rethink the parameters of postmodernism. Sixty years after its rise, postmodernism as a theoretical concern is now in a state of transition. The proposition that the postmodern period in art, notably literature and dance, characterises a transitional era parallels "one in which the metaphysical, like an unquiet ghost, can neither resuscitate itself nor decently die" (Eagleton 1996, p.134). The rise of transmodernism is brought about through the remnants of its 'ghostly' postmodern traits together with a re-emergence of some features of modernism and other dimensions that I outlined earlier in this paper. In the field of dance, the absence of theorising and the application of a construct of transmodernism offers stimulating pathways that should be, and must be, explored with timely consequences.

Copyright 2013, Kathrina Farrugia

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lilliana Capuccino, Theatre Archivist at the Romolo Valli Theatre, Reggio Emilia (Italy) and the Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance (UK) for their support in the preparation for this paper.

Bibliography

- Daly, A. (ed.) (1992) What has become of Postmodern Dance? *TDR*, 36 (1), pp.48–69.
- Farrugia, K. (2012) *Transmodern Dance Practices: Mauro Bigonzetti, Angelin Preljocaj and revisions of Les Noces (1923)*. PhD thesis submitted at London Metropolitan University
- Farrugia, K. (2011) *Crossing Boundaries, Negotiating Physicalities in Angelin Preljocaj's Haka (2007)*. *Confluences 6: Physicality and Performance* (2011), School of Dance BiAnnual Conference, 21 July 2011, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- Gore, G., Louppe, L. and Piollet, W. France: effervescence and tradition in French dance, in Grau, A. and Jordan, S. (eds.) (2000) *Europe Dancing: perspectives on theatre dance and cultural identity*. London; New York: Routledge, pp.28–54.
- Guatterini, M. (2004) Preljocaj, the original eclectic, *Ballet2000*, September 2004, pp.30–31.
- Lawton M. (2000) Karin Waehner: How American Modern Dance and German Absolute Dance met in France in *Dancing in the Millennium*, Society of Dance History Scholars, Conference Proceedings, pp.298–301.
- Lewis, C. T. (2011) 'When the glass slips: Building bridges to transmodern identity in the novels of Santiago Nazarian and Chico Buarque'. PhD thesis: Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
- Ottolini, G. (2007) *Indentita e memoria: la generazione di mezzo (Bigonzetti, Cosimi, Horta, Maliphant, Preljocaj, Waltz)*. Reggio Emilia: Fondazione I Teatri di Reggio Emilia.
- On the traces of Merce Cunningham* (2009) [TV broadcast] Dir. Plouchard, J. M., with Angelin Preljocaj, Jean-Claude Gallotta and recorded interviews with Cunningham; televised on Mezzo TV (Malta) on 21 December 2009.
- Preljocaj, A. and Robinson, J. (1997) *In Conversation with Angelin Preljocaj* (Ballet Preljocaj: *Annonciation, Noces*), post-performance talk at Joyce Theater, New York on 16 April 1997.
- Preljocaj, A. and McGlone, J. (2012) *In conversation with Angelin Preljocaj*, Post-performance talk as part of Edinburgh International Festival on 18 August 2012.
- Szaniawski, J. (2004) Transmodernism or the resurgence of modernism in contemporary cinema and popular culture, *Belgian Journal of English Language and Literatures*, 2004, pp.167–183.

Address for correspondence

Email: kfarrugia@rad.org.uk

Bridging Historiography and Ethnography: Nurturing Embodied Understanding Amongst Undergraduate Dance Students

Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt

York University, Canada

Abstract

In this paper, I explore the interactions of ethnography and historiography in the education of dance majors in a university setting. Several years ago, I taught a group of undergraduate dance majors in two different venues: in the studio for ballet technique and in the lecture hall for pre-20th century western dance history. This situation presented a unique opportunity through which to introduce the evolution of ballet technique as well as various historical approaches to the teaching of dance. Our daily learning and doing of technique in the dance studio explored and reinforced the content that was viewed and discussed in the lecture hall. For undergraduate dance majors, embodied learning of earlier western dance forms is similar to conducting ethnographic research. Experiencing movements from other eras is reminiscent of exploring dances of other cultures; the difference lies in the research methodology. Instead of entering another culture as participant observers, the students explore other eras as participant historians, examining, translating and embodying the information gleaned from dance manuals, texts, and artifacts. Theoretically, they are introduced to the co-existence of ethnographic, historical, and intertextual approaches that support the research, writing, and experience of dance from previous eras.

Introduction

In this paper, I explore the intersections and interactions of ethnography and historiography as they pertain to the education of undergraduate dance majors in a university setting. My initial steps on this journey took place several years ago, when I had the pleasure of teaching one group of second year dance majors in two different venues and courses: in the dance studio for their ballet technique class and in the lecture hall for their pre-20th century western dance history course. I soon realised that this situation presented a unique opportunity to intertwine their studio and studies experiences by exposing the students to the evolution of ballet technique in the familiar setting of their regularly scheduled class. Over the course of several months, our daily learning and doing of technique in the dance studio explored and reinforced the content that was read, viewed and discussed in the twice-weekly history class. The opportunity to physically experience dance vocabulary and performance from other eras was popular with the students and proved to be an effective avenue to deeper understanding of the historically oriented textual and visual materials.

Pedagogical and Theoretical Influences

When I teach pre-twentieth century dance history courses, my goal is for my students to increase their understanding and awareness of the experience of dancers, teachers and audience members from past eras. Employing movement provides an additional route of access toward exploration and discovery. I have a long history of including movement in my dance history courses, but it was only after we launched our PhD program in 2008 that I began to contemplate theoretical paradigms through which to examine various aspects of this embodied learning of historical practices, and to forge more deliberate links between history and ethnography. Our doctoral program features two fields of study: History and Heritage Studies is one, the other is Ethnography and Cultural Research. Students in our doctoral program are required to declare one of these fields as their area of major focus but they write comprehensive exams in both areas. In some cases, the choice of field is obvious, but many find the separation of history and ethnography to be arbitrary and problematic. Several students have commented that they have difficulty selecting one field over the other as their major; their own experiences while conducting historical and ethnographic research have led them to conclude that the two research methodologies have much in common. I am increasingly sympathetic to this position.

As a dance historian, I often employ ethnographic research methodologies such as interviews and I often require the status of an insider in order to gain access to certain sites and individuals. While ethnographic research privileges the present and history by definition examines the past, dance ethnography frequently involves historical contextualization and dance history can include data gathered from as recently as a moment ago. Consequently, there is substantial intellectual and temporal space where the two overlap. The power of learning via embodied experience also cannot be denied; words are not always sufficient for full understanding. In her text, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor makes the following statement: “Embodied performances have always played a central role in conserving memory and consolidating identities in literate, semiliterate, and digital societies. Not everyone comes to ‘culture’ or modernity through writing. I believe it is imperative to keep re-examining the relationships between embodied performance and the production of knowledge” (xviii-xvix). Deidre Sklar echoes Taylor’s position. She advocates for “an approach that considers movement performance [as] not just a visual spectacle but a kinesthetic, conceptual, and emotional experience that depends upon cultural learning. Since we all inevitably embody our own very particular cultural perspectives, we must do more than look at movement when we write about dance” (32). I propose a slight revision of her text to read: “We must do more than look at and read about movement when we teach and learn about dance.”

Of course, I am not the first to contemplate the connection between history and ethnography. In 1992, John and Jean Comaroff featured the following quote from Claude Levi-Strauss, originally published in 1963, in their text, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*:

Both history and ethnography are concerned with societies *other* than the one in which we live. Whether this *otherness* is due to remoteness in time ... or to remoteness in space, or even to cultural heterogeneity, is of secondary

importance.... In both cases we are dealing with systems of representations which differ for each member of the group and which, on the whole, differ from the representations of the investigator. The best ethnographic study will never make the reader a native. ...All that the historian or ethnographer can do, and all that we can expect of them, is to enlarge a specific experience to the dimension of a more general one. (Levi-Strauss 16-17; in Comaroff 7)

The words of Levi-Strauss speak directly to me in my teaching role. As my own familiarity with certain ethnographic sources has expanded, I have constructed a new lens through which to discuss the effectiveness of employing studio sessions in my dance history courses: as Levi-Strauss states, for undergraduate dance majors, embodied learning of earlier western dance forms is similar to conducting ethnographic research. Experiencing movements from other eras is reminiscent of exploring dances of other cultures; the difference lies in the experiential context. Instead of entering another culture as participant observers, the students explore other eras as participant historians, examining, translating and embodying the information gleaned from dance manuals, texts and artifacts. Theoretically, they are introduced to the co-existence of ethnographic, historical and intertextual approaches that support the research, writing, and experience of dance from previous eras.

Reflecting on my own training background, I can identify the moment when I first became aware of the importance for dancers to understand historical dance styles. I was about fifteen years of age and a student in a ballet conservatory, taking a repertory course titled *Choreographic Styles*. The teacher, a former soloist with the school's affiliated company, had learned the importance of historical awareness the hard way. When she was first cast in the role of the sylph in *La Sylphide*, she had no concept of how Taglioni and others of her time might have moved or how they looked. This particular dancer had been trained at the School of American Ballet and later performed with the New York City Ballet. In her first rehearsal of *La Sylphide*, when Erik Bruhn requested that she perform a Romantic arabesque, she executed the movement as she always had: with an extension higher than ninety degrees. Bruhn immediately halted the rehearsal and told the dancer to go to a library (this was long before the age of the Internet!) and to come back when she understood what he meant when he spoke of a Romantic arabesque. The dancer was mortified, but she took that lesson and later applied it to her own teaching. In her class, we learned excerpts from various ballets, each introducing us to the performance traditions associated with its time; these included solos from the Bournonville version of *La Sylphide*, fairy variations from *The Sleeping Beauty*, and excerpts from Balanchine's *Serenade*. This course did more than teach us repertory; it taught us that dance vocabulary and its execution is neither absolute nor static. This awareness is what I aspire to impart to my undergraduate dance students when I teach the course on pre-twentieth century western social and theatrical dance forms. How I go about doing this is informed by my understandings as a dancer and historian, augmented by my personal penchant for embodied learning.

Many dance/performance studies scholars, including Diana Taylor, Tomi Hahn, Cynthia Novack and Deidre Sklar, have eloquently described the centrality of corporeal knowledge in developing the level of cultural understanding that is associated with ethnographic research. However, scholars in other fields also have acknowledged the

effectiveness of embodied understanding. A most striking example is provided by Loïc Wacquant, a sociologist and co-founder of the interdisciplinary journal, *Ethnography*. Wacquant has devoted much of his professional career to examining issues related to urban poverty, violence, ethnicity and crime. As a doctoral student, in order to gain access to inhabitants of Chicago's impoverished South Side, he entered the world of a gym. His research eventually culminated in the text, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. In a subsequent article titled "Habitus as Topic and Tool: Reflections on becoming a Prizefighter," he describes the body as "a target, receptacle, and fount of asymmetric power relations" (138). During the course of his doctoral research, Wacquant's methodological process shifted from participant observation to what he describes as *observant participation* (145). Basically, he learned how to box. In his study, the central character is not an individual, but the gym itself (146). His doctoral research ultimately examined the question: "How is the *pugilistic habitus* fabricated and deployed?" (141) Specifically:

What is it that thrills boxers? Why do they commit themselves to this harshest and most destructive of all trades? How do they acquire the desire and the skills necessary to last in it? What is the role of the gym ... of self-interest and pleasure, and of the collective belief in personal transcendence in all this? How does one create a social competency that is an embodied competency? (141)

The similarities between dancers and boxers, between the gym and the *salle* or studio are striking. (In fact, when I first entered the title of his book in a bibliography, I made the Freudian slip of typing *Notebooks of an Apprentice Dancer* instead of *Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*!). Wacquant employed his own learning of a physical skill as a means through which to increase his understanding of a defined culture. What he describes as "the potency of carnal knowledge" (137) also can be applied to using dance as a means of exploring concepts related to gender, class, power relations and social competency from other time periods.

In her article "Tracing the Past: Writing History through the Body" dance historian Ann Cooper Albright shares her experience of exploring the works of Loie Fuller through movement. Her research methodology involved "an intellectual approach to the past that not only recognize[d] the corporeal effects of the historian's vantage point, but also mobilize[d] her body within the process of research and writing" (102). Her understanding of Fuller and her works was amplified by recreating some of her dances. In particular, certain misconceptions surrounding Fuller's own physicality and dancing skills were quickly dispelled. While she was recreating Fuller's *Le Lys* (1895), Cooper Albright learned the true physical demands required of the dance:

I am awed by the upper body strength and aerobic stamina Fuller must have had to keep the fabric aloft for upwards to 45 minutes a night... Clearly she had a trained body and specific movement techniques in her body. In order to make a mere 12-minute solo with much less fabric than she used, I had to train my upper body intensively for several months. (105)

Reflecting on the process, Cooper Albright describes her body as a “method of transportation into history” (107).

Application and Conclusion

In my dance history classes, I also seek to have my students experience their bodies as the means of transportation into another time. While studying the Renaissance, I introduce the class to basic Italian dance vocabulary, bring various Italian dance manuals into class, and teach part of a couple dance documented by Fabritio Caroso in his text, *Nobiltà di dame*. While studying the Baroque era, my students experience the power dynamics and individual restrictions experienced by nobles in the French court by coming down the *salle* two by two, executing rudimentary seventeenth-century dance steps and comporting themselves as instructed by Pierre Rameau in *Le Maître à danser*. Part of their experience includes role-playing; the students are encouraged to imagine that they are in court and performing for “the presence,” a role assumed by myself! Reminiscent of Cooper Albright’s revelation about the strength required of Fuller to perform her works, any misconceptions my students might have about the evolution of ballet technique (the usual assumption is that expectations have become greater/more advanced with the passage of time) are quickly banished with their introduction to a nineteenth century Blasis ballet class as described by Adice. These embodied experiences all serve to complement the readings, visual materials and discussions associated with the course, and the feedback I have received from students has consistently been positive.

Averting the potential for students to engage in these embodied experiences with diminished academic rigour is achieved through distinctly articulated intentions. The historical nature of our movement sessions is made clear and there is purposeful linking between the physical and the intellectual, between the doing and the thinking/reflecting. I actively resist what Ann Cooper Albright refers to as the “conventional separation of scholarship and the studio” (103). The desired and attainable end result is perhaps best stated by Cynthia Novack in her article, “Movement as Culture.”

By looking at different dance forms, sport, theatre or everyday movement patterns as cultural realities whose kinaesthetic and structural properties have meaning, possibilities emerge for articulating and clarifying our experiences of who we, and others, are. (179)

In this instance, “the others” are not those from other cultures participating in various life, movement and performance activities; rather, “the others” are the dancers, teachers and audience members from time periods outside our own. My hope is that the interaction of historical and ethnographic methodologies, incorporating embodied learning, will enhance my students’ understanding not only of their own movement experiences and culture, but also enable them to reflect on the movement experiences and cultures inhabited by dancers from other time periods.

Bibliography

- Adice, Léopold. "An Account of the Principles of Our Traditions." In Cohen, S.J. *Dance as a Theatre Art*. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book Co., 1992, 71-77.
- Comaroff, John and Jean. *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992.
- Cooper Albright, Ann. "Tracing the Past: Writing History through the Body." In Carter, A. and O'Shea, J. (eds). *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2010, 101-110.
- Hahn, Tomie. *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- Novack, Cynthia. "Looking at Movement as Culture." In Carter, A. and O'Shea, J. (eds). *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2010, 168-180.
- Novack, Cynthia. *Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Sklar, Deidre. *Dancing with the Virgin: Body and Faith in the Fiesta of Tortugas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Sklar, Deidre. "Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance." In *Moving History/Dancing Cultures*. 30-32.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Cultural Memory and Performance in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Wacquant, Loïc. *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Wacquant, Loïc. "Habitus as Topic and Tool: Reflections on becoming a Prizefighter." In Puddephatt, A.J. et al. (eds). *Ethnographies Revisited: Constructing Theory in the Field*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Address for correspondence:

Norma Sue Fisher-Stitt
Department of Dance, York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto, ON
Canada M3J 1P3
normasue@yorku.ca

The Protesting Arabesque

Jingqiu Guan

The University of Iowa

Abstract

*Dance, utilized by leaders of China during Mao's era as an effective tool to shape and centralize the country's ideology, exerted immeasurable power to enact instead of solely reflect the social order. In this study, I examine Chinese revolutionary ballet through the specific angle of body politics and gender relations. In the light of the special political and cultural context, I contend that Chinese revolutionary ballet participated in the disruption of traditional social order concerning gender relations and transformed females into social agents who took part in the revolution through their corporeal manifestation on stage. The study elaborates that the use of ballet itself to exhibit corporeality was a direct-nonviolent protest against the suffocating history of Chinese females. The study uses Revolutionary Model Opera *The White Haired Girl* as an example to further illustrate how Chinese revolutionary ballet impacted Chinese females' roles in the society through changing the plots of the story, creating an androgynous utopia, and demonstrating empowered female images and recalcitrant female bodies on the stage. Finally, the study points out that the ballet was able to achieve its performative efficacy through state propaganda that arbitrarily made it mass media.*

Introduction

Imagine yourself as a female born in the 1950s in China. Your grandmother had bound feet that severely limited her mobility. She took care of the family at home and was not educated. Your mother was the first generation that did not have to bind her feet.¹ She was raised during the storms of revolution and upheavals with civil wars and anti-Japanese wars that flipped the country upside down.² Then you arrived, born during the time of "peace," in a so-called communist new China established in 1949, but also during a time of continuous radical cultural changes. This revolution of culture again flipped the country upside down and installed new ideology that rejected Confucius' philosophy, centralized thoughts and expressions, and promoted the communist way of living.³ The arts and culture was heavily controlled by the state. Only a few artistic productions were available and able to reach almost every single Chinese person, conveying the same messages to glorify the state leadership and promote its ideology.⁴ The state nominated eight Revolutionary Model Operas, including two Chinese Ballets, *The White Haired Girl* and *The Red Detachment of Women*, which you have watched uncountable times growing up. This is in fact my family's story, a story that is emblematic of most Chinese women's lineage.

In this context, dance, utilized by leaders of the state as an effective tool to shape and centralize the country's ideology, exerts immeasurable power to enact instead of solely reflect the social order. The dancing bodies demonstrate political actions, which shapes

the society with clear and explicit intentions. Under the umbrella of using arts as propaganda, Chinese ballet during Mao's rule, especially during the ten-year Cultural Revolution, drastically reorganized the power structure of the society, including the class relations and gender relations. In this paper, I am intrigued to examine Chinese revolutionary ballet through the specific angle of body politics and gender relations. In the light of the special political and cultural context, I contend that Chinese revolutionary ballet participated in the disruption of traditional social order concerning gender relations and transformed females into social agents who took part in the revolution through their corporeal manifestation on stage. I start by presenting existing literature on kinesthetic protest and Chinese ballet. Then I detail how *The White Haired Girl*, as a typical and one of the most important Chinese ballet productions during this time, was performed as a nonviolent protest against the traditional power structure of gender relations. Finally, I discuss the effectiveness of the body politics presented through Chinese ballet as mass entertainment.

Dance Protests

Dance scholars have long recognized the power of movement in conducting progressive social and cultural changes. A large amount of research has been conducted examining body politics in demonstrations and theatrical productions including modern dance and ballet during various stages of social movements. Existing research has also looked at dance engaging in social movement within a wide span of geographic regions and social context, including analyses on dance in Europe, the United States, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Mexico, etc.

Considering the social movement and theatrical works produced during AIDS epidemics as kinesthetic protest, Román (1998) argues that performance achieves the effect of intervention by simply gathering people into the space of performance so it can demystify and denaturalize the discourse that circulates on the seemingly unnatural. Kowal (2010) and Foster (2003) analyze sit-in protesters during the civil rights movement in the United States through the lens of dance study and find that physicality plays the role of constructing social agency. Martin (1994) examines theatric performances in socialist countries and believes that theater constitutes an ensemble of both performers and audience for political participation. Gilman (2009) studies women's political dancing in Malawi and notes that "subordinated women have often capitalized on performance forms as avenues through which to resist domination" (17). He believes that dancing bodies provide the space and vehicle to voice the unvoiced weaker and bestow on them strength. The understanding of "how" might be different among theorists but all of them seem to consistently agree upon the view that moving bodies are powerful sources of social agency.

Among the vast amount of existing theoretical work on protesting bodies and dances, only a few have taken a look at Chinese dance through the perspective of dance studies. Existing studies on Chinese dance are usually based on the approach of social and cultural studies and elaborate how Chinese state produces a self-legitimizing myth through repeated political propaganda using arts as a tool (Kim, 2005; Wilkinson, 2012; & Gerdes, 2008). Very few articulate the moving bodies and their roles in constructing

social order and the feminist paradigm in great detail from the perspective of dance theories.

Through the lens of dance studies and gender theories, we can access this part of the history and this dance form from a new angle. This new perspective raises the following questions: Does existing theories of body politics also apply to the context in contemporary China, a country ruled under the communist regime and in which the art is under the state control? If so, how do Chinese revolutionary ballet state and bring about changes on women's power struggle in contemporary Chinese society? How is body politics manifested through corporeality? How does Chinese ballet achieve its "performative efficacy" of protesting? In the following paper, I will endeavor to explore these issues by analyzing politicized bodies in Chinese ballet, especially in *The White Haired Girl* to uncover how they protest and take actions to lift up the traditionally subordinate female social status.

State, Individual, and Arts

If arts reveal the social hierarchy of power, in a society where female's subordinating role is deeply rooted in its thousands of years of history, Chinese dance usually reinforces this social structure by exaggerating the feminine movement, graceful, curvy, and soft. However, feminine elements were nearly completely eliminated in revolutionary model ballet. How would this radical change be possible? In fact, Chinese revolutionary ballet still reflects the social dynamic of the time but was able to reconstruct the gender relationships as a result of its specific social context.

Prior to the Cultural Revolution and immediately after the establishment of the new China, the government started to initiate centralized state control. The land reform and the Great Leap Forward in the 1950s had already started to promote the liberation of females and encouraged them to participate in the labor force to contribute the social economy. The campaign of "the Iron Girls" during the Cultural Revolution and the propagated slogan stating that "women hold up half the sky" further mobilized females to reject the traditional gender roles (Honig, 2000).

Mao, as a supporter of art, had long recognized its power in forming the state ideology. Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and a feminist, took on the role of the executive producer of Chinese arts and culture. She wielded her power to bring Chinese ballet into the river of revolutionary, departing from Western romantic ballet. Diamant (2000) argues "modern state-led social change can actually be facilitated by 'traditional' inequality between the sexes, as a fairly rigid division between the sexes can make it easier for women to forge identities and communities based on common experiences and grievances" (314). Indeed, the irrational rejection of all Chinese traditions including the tradition of gender inequality was heavily propagated and practiced in the country, which eased the process of promoting the strong female images. King and Walls (2010) also argues that Jiang Qing's dedicated promotion of strong public images of females who participate in the revolution as their male counterparts in the model ballet was intended to serve her personal objective of empowering herself as a legitimate leader of the Cultural Revolution. These particular social circumstances set the stage for the revolutionary ballet to execute its impact.

Ballet Enacts

Jane Cowan (1990) effectively illustrates that “dance events can be sites for both reinforcing and contesting dominant ideologies, especially those having to do with gender” (as cited in Gilman, 2009). *The White Haired Girl*, along with the other revolutionary Chinese ballet, *The Red Detachment of Women*, effectively contested the traditional ideology of female’s subordinate roles and reinforced the state propagated ideology of elevating female social status through a number of interesting dichotomies and even the paradox of coexistence. The use of ballet as the art form to exhibit corporeality was a direct and non-violent protest against the suffocating history of Chinese females.

The most paradoxical aspect of the revolutionary ballet is the use of the dance genre – ballet – itself. During Mao’s era, China was mostly a closed country with little exchange and communication with other countries, except its communist friend, Soviet Russia, from where ballet was “imported”.⁵ Normally, everything foreign was considered negative and corruptive. The so-called Western bourgeois cultural form that promotes grace and beauty was used to manifest empowered female bodies during the era of revolution in China. Why did the Chinese government choose to use this dance style instead of other traditional Chinese dance forms?

Kim (2005) acknowledges “the dual stance towards the West” shown in model theatrical works and believes that the influence of the Western art forms during the Cultural Revolution actually helped to promote model theatrical works and (227). Indeed, the distinct feature of ballet, the pointe shoes, embodied a brand new concept in Chinese model ballet and served the ideology of gender equality during the Cultural Revolution. In the context of China, pointe shoes, though still marking the gender difference, were not sexualized in revolutionary ballet productions. Instead, they erected the female body to an upright position that made them seem strong and filled with energy. Supported by the narrow tips of the pointe shoes that resembled sharp weapons, female dancers seemed to stand firmly at a higher position over their enemies. Ballet represents the similar paradox and coexistence of beauty and strength just as the seemingly contradictory body politics reflected in revolutionary theatrical works that present both traditional female beauty and women’s empowered strength. Exploiting this paradox in ballet satisfied Mao’s revolutionary principle, which was to “make foreign things serve China”.

Moreover, ballet school itself executes the “subject of power” (Foucault, 1977). By executing this power, bodies were not just tamed to certain technique but also to the concept of female’s liberation in the revolutionary Chinese society. By disciplining the body, it also protested against the traditional female role by rendering power to the docile female bodies and their feet that were instilled with agency and reflected the corporeal strength. Román (1998) believes that one reason why a performance can be an act of intervention is that the performance is part of the production process, involving myriad people. The selection and training of Chinese ballet dancers was not a one-day business but took years of engagement. Through the disciplinary approach, female bodies being able to perform expansive movement flying across the stage contested the traditional connotation that perceived females as national weakness and backwardness (Kim, 2005). Thus, the ideological reconstruction of the female’s societal role was inscribed in female bodies, enabling their political actions.

Reorganization of the Gendered Ballet: *The White Haired Girl*

In the following section, I will use the ballet production *The White Haired Girl* as an example to illustrate how revolutionary ballet enacts the new gender dynamic, highlighting women's power and strength. The reorganization of the gendered ballet was achieved from the reinvention of the plots from the original play, the arrangement of dancers' roles to depict an androgynous utopia, and the recalcitrant female bodies to manifest their power from their striking and sharp movement. These intentional displays of desexualized female bodies redirected the viewers' gaze, thus reorganizing their conceptual understanding of females.

Plot Changes

The model theatrical work *The White Haired Girl* was adapted from many versions of a similar story told across different theatrical genres, from drama, musical film to dance.⁶ Its Cultural Revolution version debuted in Beijing in 1966, followed by continuous revisions directed by Jiang Qing until it was "acclaimed as a model theatrical work for revolutionizing the foreign art form of ballet" (Di, 2010, 195). During these revisions, its plot was rearranged to adapt to the need of displaying the nonsexualized healthy female bodies. The ballet depicts the transformation of a peasant's daughter Xi'er whose dad is beaten to death by the landlord's henchmen and who is taken by the landlord as a servant to pay off the debt. She manages to escape and lives in a cave alone for a few years. Due to the lack of the contact with sunshine and the lack of salt in her diet, her hair completely turns white. With the help of the Eighth Route Army, she is able to take her revenge and her village is liberated from the control of the landlord.

Compared to the original story, characters in the ballet version were significantly abstracted in order to blur all romanticism between the male and female protagonists and wipe out the sexualized gender roles. In the original drama and musical film version, the main character Xi'er was raped by the evil landlord and was pregnant with a child when she finally was able to escape. She was a sexualized woman and then a mother. In contrast, in its revolutionary ballet version, all of these plots that sexualized the protagonist were intentionally taken out (Di, 2010). Xi'er was portrayed as a daughter, an oppressed and rebellious servant who managed to escape, and a strong woman who joined the revolution and took her revenge. By taking out the sexual appeal of the female characters, females were able to truly liberate themselves from the overwhelming history of gendered division of labor and societal participation and were viewed through the lens of class instead of gender.

An Androgynous Utopia

The ballet production of *The White Haired Girl* eliminated all sex appeal and presented an androgynous fusion of male and female characteristics in a communist society. The curtain opens with men and women of peasant class working on the field carrying heavy bags of crops under the supervision of the landlord's overseers. Both men and women are assigned the same workload, struggling across the stage with their backs bending forward

as a result of the heavy labor. In sharp contrast, during a group dance in the fifth scene, expressing anger towards the landlord class and the determination of carrying out the revenge, more than a dozen male and female dancers stand up straight with outward gaze towards the same direction, clenching their teeth and holding their fists. The still images of the fists melt into contraction towards the left side of their bodies revealing that their anger lies in the injustice. Immediately following this gesture is a sharp turn to the right with their hands tightening again into solid fists from a flat cutting board hand position borrowed from Chinese opera. Such movement is performed by both males and females in unison and is repeated numerous times with some variation.

It is noticeable that in all group dance scenes, such as the one described above, both male and female dancers require equal attention. In *The White Haired Girl*, instead of often having a large group of female dancers being in the background as “d cor,” a common practice in Western classical ballet, this ballet always uses the same number of male and female dancers to emphasize the concept of gender equality. Sometimes, they dance in a group; other times, a group dance of all females will be immediately followed by a group dance of all males, or vice versa. Through repetitive appearance of the ensembled bodies of both genders, the ballet erases the difference between the societal roles of both genders and explicitly portrays that the hope of the society is built upon the new familial ideal of living together with class brothers and sisters.

Recalcitrant Female Bodies

Through the lens of the migration of dance styles, Desmond (1997) discusses the ballet form in the specific historic and political context of China. She notices that female ballet vocabulary is “extended to showcase women who were as strong and active as men, literalizing the emphasis on equal legal rights for women that the government supported” (45). Indeed, throughout the whole ballet, with a few exceptions, female dancers’ movements tend to be sharp instead of smooth, strong instead of gentle, powerful instead of graceful. The subtlety is observed from the quick change of facings at each step, sharp nodding of the heads, and consecutive rapid pauses.

The kinesthetic features of these ballerinas apparently convey a strong message on the female’s roles in the revolutionary China. Kim (2005) believes that “promoting a strong image of women was part of an attempt to mobilize women as labor force by creating an illusion of women’s liberation without addressing gender equality in both social and domestic areas. This was a call for women as a productive force to participate in the reconstruction of the nation” (205). However, Desmond (1997) cautions that it would be misleading to “posit a simple correspondence between the new status for women in cultural revolution and the martial movements of ballerina in these works” (45). Without rejecting this statement, I agree with Hewitt’s (2005) view on choreography that it presents ideology through movement and that all physical embodiment plays out determinant social discourses. *The White Haired Girl*, along with *The Red Detachment of Women*, clearly presents the social discourse related to gender through movement, which unavoidable elicited certain effects on viewers.

Disagreeing with Sharp’s distinction between symbolic action and physical intervention, Susan Foster (2003) argues that body acts as “a vast reservoir of signs and symbols” and is “capable of both persuasion and obstinate recalcitrance” (395). The

meanings of the symbols in *The White Haired Girl* are revealed through constant repetition of several iconic poses, among which arabesque with tightened fists is the most repeated movement, signifying corporeal protest and arousing the audience's strong reaction.

The fourth scene of the ballet starts with a solo of Xi'er embodying her transformation from a beautiful young woman to a strong and intrepid white-haired "Goddess". Dressed in the red blouse, Xi'er, who just successfully escaped the control of the landlord, entered the stage performing consecutive pirouettes and grand jété en avant facing various directions. The uncertainty of the directions reveals her internal struggle and hesitation. A basket that she finds on the ground seems to point to her how she can survive live on her own. Xi'er goes off the stage holding the basket and immediately enters from stage right in a completely different costume. Her hair is all white and reaches her waist. She dresses in a white blouse and torn pants that further blur her femininity. Her gaze is intensely focused, and her movement is steady, direct and sharp, following a linear pattern. Hearing a sound from the wild, Xi'er demonstrates her bravery by holding her fist and performing multiple arabesques facing the origin of the sound. The stereotypical fearful female reaction to the ghostly sound from the wild is replaced by the new image of woman who dares to stand against it. The powerful gestures and punctuations of movement bestow revolutionary qualities onto female bodies. Her transformation demonstrates that the empowered female body represents the new female beauty which outscores the traditional notion of female beauty. The concept of protesting against the weak domesticated female bodies is shown through the direct contrast of this dichotomy.

The scene that follows reaches the climax of the whole ballet, during which Xi'er manages to revenge herself. The scene starts with Xi'er standing on the top of the mountain opening her arms expansively with her gaze fixed on the stormy sky. Seeing the landlord's "dog legs," she performs three consecutive piqué arabesques holding strong fists. Each of the following movement sequences also ends with a strong arabesque with the center of the weight shifting towards the direction of the enemy, revealing the bursting anger. Gunde (2002) observes that the arabesques used repetitively in the production, "where the body is bent forward from the hip on one leg with the other leg and one arm extended backward and the other arm extended forward, were perfect for conveying strength and determination, especially when the hand at the end of the outstretched arm held a pistol or hand grenade, or was at least clenched in a fist" (108). These moving and still body images demonstrate the recalcitrant physicality that refuses to comply with the bodies of those in positions of authority.

Susan Manning's case study on the dancer-spectator relationship regards early modern dance "as a kinesthetic dismantling of voyeuristic gaze projecting essentialized notion of identity" (as cited in Kim, 2005, 243). Similarly, the relationship between the subject and the object of gaze in *The White Haired Girl* shows the hierarchal and semiotic network of power and defines the gender identity. By presenting the dramatic transformation of the female bodies that demonstrate power, the revolutionary ballet productions shift female characters "from passive objects of the gaze to active holders of the gaze" (Kim, 245). The filmed version of the ballet production even exaggerates how female characters become the holder of controlling gaze. The film closely displays the protagonist's fierce eyes projecting onto her enemies. It presents what was being watched

by the producer, who was able to manipulate the gaze to further serve the purpose of subjectifying the female characters. Through redirecting the gaze, Chinese model ballets such as *The White Haired Girl* achieved the effect of renormalizing the female roles in the society and redefines their social responsibilities as something other than the traditional roles of bearing children and taking care of the family.

Ballet as a Mass Entertainment

Contrary to western women in earlier decades, oppressed by expectations of female bodies, who used illness, such as hysteria, agoraphobia, and anorexia to protest in a “counterproductive, tragically self-defeating (indeed, self-deconstructing) nature” (Bordo, 1993, 176), the protests of female bodies in Chinese model ballet are strong, explicit, and self-elevating. Using Kowal’s (2008) concept of “performative efficacy,” the ballet productions, with the combined effects of other art production and state propaganda, revolutionized the female roles in a short amount of time and enacted a new era for females in contemporary China. The repetitive showing of the ballet and the broad reach of audience contributed to its high performative efficacy.

The protest against women’s traditionally low status was widely disseminated and strengthened by the state’s political agenda. The government promoted the production through multiple forms of arts and social media. Utilized as a form of propaganda, the state intentionally promoted the images of female protagonists Xi’er in *The White Haired Girl* and Qionghua in *The Red Detachment of Women* in expansive arabesque position with strong gaze projecting forward, a most repeated pose.⁷ The iconic images of these two heroines were printed on book covers, paintings, posters, stamps, and even porcelains in such a ways that they could be mass-produced and circulated even more widely. Although the images were presented cross the boundaries of various art forms, they remained consistent with the purpose of “establishing complete authority of these fictional characters... as if they were real life characters” (Kim, 2005, 34-35).

Moreover, in order to truly reach the mass audience, the model ballet productions were filmed and edited in ways that further highlighted the female protagonists’ identity. The filmed version contains many enlarged images of the protagonists’ face that show clearly her emotions, especially her anger and determination. The filmed angle also made the class enemies appear weak and short while the female protagonists seem strong and powerful, flying over and standing at a higher position over the enemies. Susan Foster argues that “the media functions not as pure documentation but as a social force that sways public opinion, and hence, must be manipulated;” and that it is “an extension of corporate and governmental operations” (Foster, 2003, 405). Through this manipulation, the model theatre works were promulgated during the Cultural Revolution to almost every Chinese individual, both literate and illiterate. Its broad reach significantly contributed to its performative efficacy in realizing the corporal politics.

Butler (1988) points out that “If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style” (as cited in Kowal, 2010, 8). The revolutionary model dramas “were the only features on the program and hence became mass entertainment by default” (Gunde,

2002). By arbitrarily making Chinese revolutionary ballet mass entertainment, the subversive repetition normalized the strong female character as part of every day life in order to reconstruct the gender relationships and perpetuate women's liberation.

Conclusion

Model ballet productions thrived during a paradoxical and tragic period of Chinese history. During the time when class struggles were the main concerns of the state, a venue was opened for oppressed female bodies to demonstrate its agent and seek their long-desired liberation (Di, 2010). Kim (2005) states that "though the play does not suggest an immediate solution to the dilemma of women caught in between the traditional family and social life, it raised a debate about women's choice and its impact" (199). The portraits of females in revolutionary ballet productions exaggerated their defeminized roles and recalcitrant corporeality and depict an androgynous utopia ruled by the Communist Party. These propagated images of strong female bodies performing arabesques with clenched fists led to a disruption of traditional Chinese gender construction.

Copyright 2013, Jingqiu Guan

Notes

¹ The establishment of the Republic of China (1912-1949) made significant steps towards women's liberation. The government abolished foot binding and granted women certain rights. See Zhou (2003)'s article "Keys to Women's Liberation in Communist China: An Historical Overview."

² This part of the history was important to mention as Clark (2010) mentions in his article that the two revolutionary ballets "were set in the 1930s and 1940s, during the war against Japan or the Chinese Civil War. Wartime settings offered a degree of excitement that more contemporary stories could not." He also states that "Modern wartime heroics could serve this purpose as much as the more ancient stories in conventional opera" (173).

³ In King and Walls (2010)'s article, the authors discuss in details about the arts during the Cultural Revolution and the intertwined nature of politics and arts in Mao's China. The Cultural Revolution destroyed anything traditional, including Confucius philosophy. In some of his teachings, women were considered as inferior to men, which was greatly dismantled during this period.

⁴ In Andrew (2010)'s article, he points out that during the Cultural Revolution, the state destroyed all arts reflecting Chinese tradition. Arts were greatly censored, and artists who practiced traditional arts were demoralized. All old art was substituted by arts that portrayed socialist images and told revolutionary stories.

⁵ The first Chinese ballet school-staffed by outstanding Russian teachers in 1954. Many famous ballet masters in Russia came to China to teach ballet. However, the friendship between China and Soviet Union collapsed in 1959, and Russian teachers departed.

⁶ According to Wilkinson (2012), the original work of *The White Haired Girl* was in the drama form produced in 1945. It was then made into a musical film in 1951. The first ballet version of this theatrical production was choreographed by a Japanese ballet troupe in 1957.

⁷ In Kim (2005)'s article, he mentions that Qionghua from *The Red Detachment of Women* "became an integral part of the mass parades commemorating most important national holidays," and that "during the National Day celebration on October 1st in the early 1970s, a ballerina dressed as Qionghua displayed her mastery of the technique 'attitude' on a tank parading through the streets of Beijing via Tiananmen Square" (159).

Bibliography

- Kim, Suk-Young. (2005). *Revolutionizing the Family: A Comparative Study on the Filmed Propaganda Performances of the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 1966-1976*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.
- Bordo, Susan. (1993). *The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity. Unbearable Weight: Feminism Western Culture and the Body*. University of California Press.
- Clark, Paul. (2010). Model Theatrical Works and the Remodeling of the Cultural Revolution. In Richard King (Ed.), *Art in Turmoil: the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76* (167-187). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Desmond, Jane. C. (1997). *Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies*. In Jane Desmond (Ed.), *Meaning and Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance* (30-54). NC: Duke University Press.
- Di, Bai. (2010). Feminism in the Revolutionary Model Ballets: The White-Haired Girl and The Red Detachment of Women. In Richard King (Ed.), *Art in Turmoil: the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76* (88-202). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Diamant, N. J. (2000). *Revolutionizing the Family: Politics, Love, and Divorce in Urban and Rural China 1949-1968*. CA: University of California Press.
- Foucault, Michel. ([1977] 1995). "Docile Bodies" in *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan (Vintage Books/Random House).
- Foster, Susan L. (2003). The Choreographies of Protest. *Theatre Journal* 55, 395-412.
- Gerdes, Ellen V. P. (2008). Contemporary Yangge: The Moving History of a Chinese Folk Dance Form. *Asian Theatre Journal* 25 (1), 138-147.
- Gilman, Lisa. (2009). *The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance, and Demonstration in Malawi*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Gunde, Richard. (2002). *Culture and Customs of China*. Greenwood.
- Hewitt, Andrew. (2005). *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Honig, Emily. (2000). Iron Girls Revisited: Gender and the Politics of Work in the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76. In B. Entwisle and G. E. Henderson (Eds.), *Re-drawing Boundaries: Work, House, and Gender in China (97-110)*. University of California Press.
- King, R. & Wall, J. (2010). Introduction: Vibrant Images of a Turbulent Decade. In Richard King (Ed.), *Art in Turmoil: the Chinese Cultural Revolution, 1966-76* (3-24). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Kowal, Rebekah J. (2010). *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Martin, Randy. (1994). *Socialist Ensembles: Theater and State in Cuba and Nicaragua*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Román, David. (1998). *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

- Wilkinson, J. N. (1974). The White-haired Girl: From “Yangko” to Revolutionary Modern Ballet. *Educational Theatre Journal* 26 (2), 164-174.
- Zhou, Jinghao. (2003). Keys to Women’s Liberation in Communist China: A Historical Overview. *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 5 (1), 67-77.

Address for correspondence:

Name: Jingqiu Guan

Full postal address: W115 Halsey Hall, the University of Iowa

E-mail address: jguan030@gmail.com

The Madison Rises Again: History and Community at Columbus Ohio's 1960s Dance Party

Alexandra Harlig

The Ohio State University Department of Dance

Abstract

Like many dances of the last century, the Madison, popular in the 1960s, has a rich and contested history. Some place the famous line dance's inception in Detroit, in Cleveland, or in Baltimore on The Buddy Deane Show. Some even claim it for Columbus, OH where, more than fifty years later, it has recently become an integral part of the monthly "Heatwave" 60s dance party. Every first Saturday of the month, around midnight, the DJs drop the Ray Bryant Trio's 1959 "Madison Time" and dancers fill the stage waiting for the cue — "hit it" and begin, in unison, following the called steps. In this paper I consider the journey the Madison, a non-repeating one-wall group line dance, has taken from the record hops of the 1960s to the all-vinyl hipster gatherings of the 2010s. The version practiced at Heatwave, re-constructed and taught by Glaviano, is both the next transformation in a long line of revivals and recreations and an index to the popular culture and kinesthetics of the moment of its inception. Pieced together from articles, kinescopes, movie clips, and live performances available on the Internet, and made coherent through Glaviano's choreographic innovations and intuitions, the Madison is back in Columbus.

Introduction

This paper is part of a larger project about Heatwave, a monthly all-vinyl dance party in Columbus, Ohio, characterized by the founders as "spinning Motown / Garage Rock / Mod / R&B / Soul / Oldies," with the promotional tagline "skinny ties and bouffants welcome, but above all come ready to dance."¹ This project investigates the slippage between the specificities of the sartorial and kinetic expressions of the long 1960s and how they manifest in this, no less specific but very different time and place. Following "Dance ACTions—Traditions and Transformations's" invitation to consider the processes of revival and reconstruction, in this paper I focus on the Madison, a 1960s line dance reconstructed by Heatwave DJ and founder Ann Glaviano and done every month at Heatwave, and in particular, the role of media in its historical and current development. I gathered my data through participant observation, interviews with Glaviano about her process, discussions with participants, and through reconsideration of Glaviano's source material. In this paper I consider the roles of media and memory in the process and experience of Heatwave, the Madison, and their intersection.

In her chapter "Remembering Kinesthesia: An Inquiry into Embodied Knowledge," dance scholar Deidre Sklar reviews, critiques, and pushes forward conceptions of bodily movement as a store house for memory, both personal and historical. One of the issues she discusses is whether dance should be considered a visual or a kinesthetic form, and she troubles this dichotomy, arguing that dance is primarily visual for the watcher, but

kinesthetic for the doer. In the case of Glaviano's reconstruction I take this one step further and argue here that, particularly in the case of social dance as circulated through media and memory, dance is simultaneously visual and kinesthetic for each practitioner. Recognizing the multidirectionality of information sources, both formal and informal, in the case of Heatwave can help us consider deeply how attendees have learned about or learned to imagine the dances, dress, and politics of the 1960s.

Heatwave: A Little Bit of Rhythm and a lot of Soul

Started in the fall of 2011 by New Orleans native Ann Glaviano, now an MFA graduate in Fiction from The Ohio State University, Heatwave has quickly become a staple social event for a portion of Columbus's young adult community, attracting up to 500 attendees throughout the evening of the first Saturday of each month, with a base community of about 1000 attendees. Heatwave was founded after Glaviano was disappointed by the options for dancing during her first year in Columbus and inspired by the long running Mod Dance Party in New Orleans run by some of her friends. While she has a strong background in and continued engagement with dance practice, both formal and informal, she had never DJed, or run a party like this, but she decided to try and put one together herself. Through friends and other connections she met fellow Heatwave DJs and organizers Chris Johnson and Adam Scoppa, each with their own collection of 1960s vinyl comparable to Glaviano's, and the first Heatwave took place in September 2011.

Heatwave's participants are singles and couples, with a range of self-identified and expressed sexualities and ethnicities—mostly grad students or young professionals—who typically fall between 25 and 35 years old. Initially the majority of the attendees were friends of the DJs, but as the event's second anniversary approaches, the base has steadily grown through word of mouth, local media coverage, and Facebook recommendations. The demographic has broadened over the past year; there is a larger base of people who attend, including more undergraduate students, more young professionals not affiliated with the university, and a small but constant group of middle-aged attendees, who either watch from the balcony area or stand mostly on the sides.

As these demographics show, with only a handful of exceptions, attendees at Heatwave never lived or embodied, the era of the music played; all their experience and knowledge of the 1960s is necessarily mediated, whether through family histories, academics, or other media representations. Nonetheless there is a continued connection with this era in the dress, attitude, and movement of Heatwave's attendees, and I am particularly interested in the influence of mediated histories of the era which inform these practices. Many of the sources are recent productions, such as AMC's *Mad Men*, while others, like YouTube clips of the 1960s television appearances of performers from the era, are the same visual tools which circulated and disseminated popular music, fashion, and dance for the original innovators and practitioners of the Madison.

Framing Memory

Just as the dresses found at a vintage store might not fit the 2013 body, the music of the 1960s cannot sound the same to Heatwave attendees, nor bear the same meanings, as it

did at the time it was released. Similarly, the dance movements of the time period cannot be replicated exactly, due to changes in the body since the movement's creation, whether through nutrition, physical education, or social dance developments. And yet, though the bodies at Heatwave can never precisely inhabit the movements of bodies of another era, they do a kind of historical work remembering and recollecting.

Working with philosopher Edward Casey's terms, Deidre Sklar proposes a nuanced discussion of the body's relationship to the past, which she splits between *remembering*, or 'body memory,' and *recollecting*, or 'memory of the body.' In this distinction body memory is a memory of actual lived experience, or the feelings of the body, whereas memory of the body is formed through the experience of representations. This has a correlation in how the body is engaging with the past. Sklar writes, "in recollection [memory of the body], we peer back toward a past that seems to have independent being from the present; in body memory, the past is enacted in the present."² In the dancing seen at Heatwave, various engagements with the past are carried forward through the embodiment of the dance movement, such that there is a blurring or alternating between these acts being reiterative, preservationist, and being lived, body memory. Regardless of how the movement was originally procured—through physical instruction or experience or through media, once they are danced at Heatwave the dances of the period like the Madison, the Twist, or the Pony become body memory, attached to the live and present event that is Heatwave.

Heatwave, and many other similar dance parties taking place internationally whether they are focused on the 1960s, the Swing Era or other time periods, make a kind of preservationist move grounded in present experience. In her chapter on civil war reenactments, performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider poses some important questions about what she calls *reiterative acts*, that is, acts and gestures that recur through time. She asks, "What is the time of a live act when a live act is reiterative? To what degree is a live act *then* as well as *now*? Might a live act 'document' a precedent live act, rendering it, in some way, ongoing, even preserved?"³ So, through the reiteration of an act, in this case dancing the Madison, a temporality is created which is then-but-also-now or, now-AND-also-then. What is interesting is what contextual information may or may not be readily considered in this temporality, for better or for worse. In considering the cultural production of the 1960s, this context is specifically the racial politics and the racialization of the innovating bodies of this time period, an element which is not actively preserved but which is brought forward nonetheless in the nostalgia for a time period and through the consumption of popular music and dance of that period.

“And Back to the Madison”

I have observed roughly three categories of dancing at Heatwave. The first I have labeled *thematic dancing*. Thematic dancing sticks closely to the movement vocabulary of the late 1950s through early 1970s both in shape and in movement quality (i.e. degrees of bounciness, whether the movement is weighted or light.). The movement is appropriate to the given song, and tends to be done to more even-metered, rhythm-focused music which may in fact name the move which is supposed to accompany the lyric, such as the Twist, the Swim, the Hully Gully, and many others. Distance from the original material results in an approximation which defines the second category which I call *thematic freestyle*.

People attempting thematic dancing are usually trying to draw from the list in the back of their mind of moves they have seen at weddings, on screens, and at previous Heatwaves that go with the music playing. There may or may not be a desire for actual replication, and the failure to replicate, usually due to quality issues or an incomplete understanding of the mechanics of a given movement, does not seem to hinder the dancer's enjoyment. But there are also those for whom no strictures on expression or movement vocabulary seem to be in place, and this fits the third category of *freestyle*. In many ways it closely approximates the movement done in the late 1960s and early 1970s to psychedelic music.

These variations in dancing are not mutually exclusive; within the same song or evening a given person may go between them, but certain people tend towards one or the other, and their choices are related to the genre and lyric of the music. Perhaps in these different modes of dancing there are different types of engagement with the past and images of it, as Sklar discusses in her work on embodied memory mentioned above.

The Madison, a line dance with a basic step and additional called steps, is the only dance that happens every Heatwave and which involves a group coming together. In addition to being fun to participate in, the steps of the Madison reveal important information about movement stylistics, musicality, and important popular culture icons of the late 1950s and early 1960s when it began. The version practiced at Heatwave, reconstructed and taught by Glaviano, is unique; it is the next transformation in a long line of revivals and recreations of the dance while simultaneously providing an index to the popular culture and kinesthetics of the moment of its inception.

“A Big Strong Line”

So, how did the Madison become Heatwave tradition? When Glaviano was homesick for Mod Dance Party, she started looking up and watching videos of 1960s dances, and learned of the Madison from a friend. Since Glaviano hadn't heard of it, they watched it together in John Waters's 1988 film *Hairspray*, and the dance really caught Glaviano's attention. As she reported, “Because I have to know everything, I was like, I want to learn that one because it looks hard and crazy and interesting.”⁵ But in addition to its attraction as an oddity—it has a 6/4 meter, faces one direction, and has non-repeating steps—Glaviano was drawn to the Madison for its connection to Columbus itself.

The Madison has a complicated history and historiography. The established history is that it started on Baltimore's televised dance party *The Buddy Deane Show* in 1960. But Detroit and Cleveland also lay claim to the Madison, and photographic and journalistic evidence indicates some version of it was practiced by members of Columbus's young black community as early as 1957.⁶ Like most dances popular in the 1960s, the Madison developed in mostly black youth communities, grew in popularity, and was eventually picked up by and spread through white television.

It is difficult to pinpoint what aspects of the dance may have come from what area, but the general consensus is that the base step was developed first—it is similar to the earlier group dance the Stroll—and could be done to any song, and that social clubs in different cities competed with new steps, called live by a DJ or participant. By the time it reached *The Buddy Deane Show*, two recorded songs, released seven days apart from each other, had standardized the music and the called steps, although slightly differently. The version used at Heatwave, in *Hairspray* and by all similar groups with evidence on

YouTube, is by the Ray Bryant Trio, with steps called by famous Baltimore black radio DJ Eddie Morrison, while *Buddy Deane* used Al Brown and His Tunetoppers, a very tame, sung version by a cross-over artist. So, while in its established history of the Madison is coded as white and televised, its original form was practiced live in black communities. The intersections between communities and live versus mediated transmission has continued through the history of the Madison in clubs and on screen.

“Hit it!” The Reconstruction Process

In order to come to the version of the Madison practiced at Heatwave, Glaviano used many of the same processes found in stage or folk dance reconstructions, going both “back” and “sideways” to come to the final version. Indeed this points to a kind of multi-dimensional adaptation and indexing of the past rather than or in addition to a focus on a linear “tradition.” She consulted many different resources to gather information about the dance, including text resources for context about the era broadly and the Madison in particular, in combination with audio-visual research of the canonical Madison representations, its appearance on *The Buddy Deane Show* (1960) and in *Hairspray* (1988). In addition she consulted videos of community-based practice at swing clubs and other 1960s parties, many of which seem to have made their own adaptations and reconstructions, but form here a part of the history to draw on. Cross-referencing these with each other, the Ray Bryant record, and smoothing it all out with her choreographic intuition, Glaviano arrived at the version taught and practiced at Heatwave.

Once she reconstructed it, Glaviano started teaching and disseminating it. Glaviano’s reconstruction has been conveyed through pre-Heatwave gatherings where it is taught as in a dance class, delineating steps, directions, weight shifting, and focus among other things. Her descriptions of the music are accompanied by information about the movement in its original context, information about her reconstruction process, other representations and versions, and sometimes even the personal preferences of local Madison participants. Her teaching style is informed by her own dance training in dance studios, but adapted for the setting. It is difficult to say exactly how or through what instructions the Madison was learned in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but it can be guessed that some of those things which require extra explanation now—like the weight shifting, the 6/4 meter, the timing, and the cultural references—would have required much less description when they were being actively used and circulated.

The teaching is different from what might be the case for a concert dance piece because the end goal is different; it is a participatory dance and as such does not need to be precise or accurate in the same way, especially given that in this instance very few people watching would know the difference. It is also different in tone from a rehearsal or more formal learning environment; Glaviano will give interesting value judgments when she is teaching: saying a weight shift is stupid, or such and such is her favorite part.

Embodied Popular Culture

When I began looking at Glaviano’s source material⁷ I noticed that within circulating versions of the Madison there are a few analytic categories of steps despite differences in

how individual steps look; steps that are basically standard between versions, those that yield great individual variation, and those that embody a particular popular culture reference. In determining what the Heatwave version would look like, Glaviano had to pick and choose from amongst the variations, and arrived at a unique product. Steps with very little variation across performances include the basic Madison step, described in more detail below, the step-together shuffling of the ‘two up two back’ on an axis perpendicular to the front facing and the forward moving crossing step ‘double cross.’ The ‘Cleveland Box’ when done, is mostly standard, with the arms rotating like punching a speed bag, and the legs traveling in a square. Interestingly, while the move is called on the Ray Bryant record used in *Hairspray*, the film version omits it, presumably because of the Baltimore setting, and the name of the step, the ‘Cleveland Box’ helps place at least the inspiration for that movement squarely in Ohio.

The next category includes those moves which serve as a very clear and direct instance of embodied popular culture, showing the impact of the national (mediated) imaginary. The first references Wilt Chamberlain, the NBA Center who played 1959-73, in a call which asks for “the nice strong basketball with a Wilt Chamberlain Hook” while the dancers dribble, shoot, and with the recording say, “two points!” The second refers to Jackie Gleason; the comedian and variety show host from the 1940s-60s is remembered with a version of his famous pose and tagline, also said aloud with the recording: “and away we go!” Finally, ABC’s Western *The Rifleman*, which aired from 1958-1963 on ABC is remembered through a variety of gun-related poses.

Although it is a unison group dance, there is room for individuality in all of the elements of the Madison. However, none of the calls seems to elicit as many different interpretations as “when I say hit it, it will be T time,” which manifests as drinking from a teacup (tea), golfing (tee), or making the shape of a T with legs together and arms outstretched; in the *Hairspray* version and people inspired by it, this looks like an X.

The called step that Glaviano had to do the most work to reconstruct in a manner she felt lived up to the historical version and fit the aesthetics of the rest of her version of the Madison was the Birdland. In most available contemporary recordings of the Madison, when the call for the Birdland comes, everyone in the room begins to leave their place in line and walk around like a chicken.

Not only does this not fit the format of the other called moves, or the general attitude of the piece, but Glaviano was tipped off by the encouraging ‘how bout a little stiff leg there’ in the narration of “Madison Time,” as well comments on various videos referring anyone who wanted to know the proper Birdland step to the *Buddy Deane* version. The Birdland is referred to in Ray Charles’s 1958 song “What’d I Say,” and might have been named for the NYC jazz club, but unlike many other dances of the time period, there seems to be no (available) extant visual record of what the Birdland looked like in anything but the recording of the Madison on *The Buddy Deane Show* to the Al Brown and His Tunetoppers version. So Glaviano took what was visible in that recording, a cool low kick which alternates legs and turns on the Madison axis perpendicular to the front facing, and fit it into the spacing, tempo, and time of the Ray Bryant Version.

Slippage

In an interesting example of slippage through changes over time and through mediated delivery, when I returned to the sources used by Glaviano to learn and construct the Madison, I found one fundamental discrepancy between every other recorded version and the one done at Heatwave; everyone else leads with the left foot. Whereas in early drafts of this paper my embodied knowledge lead me to describe the basic Madison step as [R step forward, L tap behind R with clap, L step back, R tap crossed over L, uncross, cross], every other video I found, both historical and contemporary, is reversed, with the left foot crossing in front of the right, and leading on all the steps.

In addition to checking video of the Madison at Heatwave against other videos, the most important corroborating evidence is the “M” in which the feet sliding step-together with focus changes trace the shape of an M, prompted through the call “I want a big strong M, erase it, and back to the Madison.” As you can see in Figure 1 below, if you are leading with your left foot (1), you go forward and then to the right, tracing a capital “M” on the floor in the way of the English writing system, left to right. But because the Heatwave Madison leads with the right foot, the M is written backwards (2) and then when ‘erased’ is traced in the opposite direction. Glaviano has had difficulty teaching this M until she explained that “it’s a backwards M” to people learning it. But for most other groups, who lead with the left foot for the duration of the dance, it is not backwards.

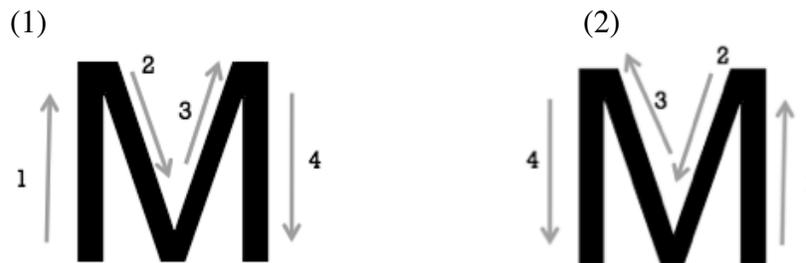


Figure 1: Pathways of standard vs. Heatwave “M” step

This is a fundamental base step difference, not just a variation. So are the dancers at Heatwave still doing the Madison? Of course. And yet interestingly, this means the knowledge is very specialized and not in fact transferrable to other Madison-ing communities, as it would have been in its role and time as a popular youth experience. On the other hand, there have always been regional differences in the doing of the Madison.

So, why or how did this happen? Is it from learning off of the screen, processing the images as mirrored like in a dance class, where the teacher prompts your right foot with her left? Could it be because of the cinematography, which particularly in the *Hairspray* version, the canonical version for current practitioners, is filming with different cuts and camera angles, with no spatial referent? Was it a conscious choice of footedness, as right footedness is most common? Or could it be purely a mistake? It is especially interesting given how meticulous Glaviano was otherwise to recreate and pass on the Madison’s movement and context. This kind of slippage exemplifies the other side of embodied memory—forgetting, or more precisely, mis-remembering. This is the present tense of practice, now-but/and-never-quite-then, connected to the past but as the nexus of its own cycle of remembering and recollection for its practitioners.

Conclusion: “And Hold it Right There”

This investigation of the Madison asserts the utility of the frames of reiterative acts, revival, and reconstruction, all of which work to make clear not only the intent of choreographers or participants to be connected to the past, but also the historicity of the present. However, as can be seen in this case of Ann Glaviano’s ‘staging’ of the Madison, a frame of adaptation can highlight the myriad representations, memories, and mediations that add up to approximate a past event never in fact attainable. However close in style, intent, and affect to an original, the ‘revival’ is always necessarily shaped by everything that has come since, and by the individuals who encounter it. What makes Heatwave and its Madison fascinating is the way they, like so many cultural trends of the moment, bring the past into the present, sometimes obscuring the past, and always re-fashioning, blurring or alternating between these acts as reiterative and preservationist, and lived, body memory. Whether the experience of dancing the Madison is a memory of a mediated past or of an embodied one, dancers, listeners, and loungers at Heatwave are invested in a present, pleasurable, kinesthetic experience with their community.

Copyright 2013, Alexandra Harlig

Notes

1. “Heatwave: Columbus” Facebook Page
2. Sklar, 89.
3. Schneider, 37.
4. Section headings in quotes are lyrics from The Ray Bryant Trio’s “Madison Time”
5. Glaviano interview
6. See Lee, Tracy
7. In particular I analyzed MarylandPublicTV’s posting of *The Buddy Deane Show*, John Waters’s *Hairspray*, and YouTube user amonly’s video of a swing club doing the Madison.

Bibliography

- amonly. “The Madison SONH style 2006 with Mariel Adams.” *youtube.com/amonly*. 13 Sept 2006. Web Video. 1 Sept 2013.
- Glaviano, Ann. Personal interview. 23 April 2012.
- “Heatwave: Columbus” *facebook.com/heatwavecolumbus*. Sept. 2011. Web. 1 Sept. 2013.
- Lee, Lucius. “Madison Dance Started in Columbus.” From *The Ohio Sentinel*. 18 June 1960. *Columbusmusichistory.com*. Web. 1 Sept 2013.
- MarylandPublicTV. “Dancin’ the Madison on ‘The Buddy Deane Show’.” *youtube.com/MarylandPublicTV*. 30 Apr 2008. Web Video. 1 Sept 2013.
- Ray Bryant Trio. “Madison Time.” Columbia, 1960. LP.
- Schneider, Rebecca. “Reenactment and Relative Pain.” *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. New York: Routledge, 2011. 32-60.
- Sklar, Deidre. “Remembering Kinesthesia: An Inquiry into Embodied Cultural Knowledge.” *Migrations of Gesture*. Eds. Carrie Noland, Sally Ann Ness. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. 85-112.
- Tracy, Doug. “It’s Madison Time!: Another Columbus First?” *Columbusmusichistory.com*. 2004.
- Waters, John. *Hairspray*. New Line Cinema. 1988. DVD.

Rave-On! The Codification of Dance Styles in Rave Culture

David Heller

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Abstract

For the last quarter century an underground music culture has spawned generations of dancers. Within the last ten years, this scene has exploded into a worldwide phenomenon. Simply put, the world of the RAVE: Renegade Alternative Venue Event, is no longer underground.

As I examine this issue, my combined background in journalism, my graduate studies in dance ethnography, and my spiritual and physical embodied practices within Rave culture help shape my insights. And in the context of my paper, this differently valued knowledge is represented by my understanding as an artist in my practice as research in Rave Culture and my academic and journalistic experiences outside the culture. In order to bring more clarity of Rave Culture to the public's eye, codification is one way to help facilitate change in which the way the culture is presented, so that it is not recycled in commercialization, or used to sell products, or cast aside as primitive.

Spread by social media and filtered by mainstream media outlets, elements of this once taboo culture now grace the presence of cell phone and car commercials. Like Hip Hop, too often the stereotypes of Rave culture are exploited in the media and consequently confuse the mainstream public. When music and dance styles from Rave culture reaches the mainstream, the culture is transformed into a product.

Introduction

My method of approach involves a close reading of the late Dwight Conquergood, a dance philosopher and ethnographer who states that: "The constitutive liminality of performance studies lies in its capacity to bridge segregated and differently valued knowledge, drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry."¹

Conquergood's quote resonates with me because he believes in differently valued knowledge. And in the context of my paper, this differently valued knowledge is represented by my understanding as an artist in my practice as research in Rave Culture and my academic and journalistic experiences outside the culture. In order to bring more clarity of Rave Culture to the public's eye, *codification* is one way to help facilitate change in which the way the culture is presented. To be clear, codification is not an end. It is simply the beginning of a conversation.

For too long dance styles associated with electronic dance music such as liquid, tutting, house dancing and B-boying (breakdancing) have been ignored or cast aside as primitive within the realm of academia. Meanwhile, these same dance styles are recycled, commercialized, and used to sell products.

Rave Culture, Reality Television and MTV

Within Rave culture, there is an underlying philosophy for a raver known as PLUR: which stands for peace, love, unity and respect. As a raver, it is important to live by this philosophy, even outside the scene. Ideally, a Rave represents is a place for those who desire to express themselves in a stress-free environment. In other words, whatever problems you have in life do not follow you. Instead, through the power of electronic music you dance and stretch into a higher state of consciousness.

In contrast, mainstream television programs exploit specific elements of Rave culture to sell as a commodity. For example, in 2010, the hit reality series *Jersey Shore* remained the number one show on television among 12 to 34-year-olds. The characters on the show coined the “fist pump,” a trendy dance gesture derived from the cast’s nightlife, particularly involving electronic dance music at the nightclubs.

Rave culture represents a place of spiritual dance practice, and mainstream media turns it into a product. *Jersey Shore* is a prime example of using the unity of Rave culture to attract consumers. As *Jersey Shore*’s DJ Pauly D spins electronic dance music, similar to what one might hear at a Rave, the audience experiences manipulations of specific images of sex appeal, alcohol consumption, large crowds, and fist pumps.

The images presented from this reality television show remain a performance in itself. In other words, it is difficult to see that the characters of *Jersey Shore* are not representing Rave culture. They are a marketed, polished product produced from manipulated images designed to attract consumers.

Consumers perpetuate the ideals of underground dance music culture through the consumption of a mass-media product, which consequently reduces the quality of the culture it came from.

There is a serious tension between the purity of Rave culture and its commercialized adaptations. Each seeks the attraction of people, but for two dramatically different reasons. Rave culture welcomes the diversity and new ideas from people who desire to venture into this world of electronic music and dance. In contrast, the mainstream media wants to sell you a product.

Rave Culture and Television Commercials

Another area of mainstream media that exploits elements of Rave culture is television commercials. Often the music used in these commercials resemble hybrid examples of the original genre, specifically, electronic music sounds that create loud, energetic feelings to get the consumers attention.

In, 2012 Absolut Greyhound Vodka released a commercial that references *Burning Man*, one of the largest annual outdoor music and dance events in the United States. The commercial begins with partygoers dressed in Raver attire, about to witness a futuristic dog race across the desert sands of Nevada, powered by the melodies of electronic dance music. An amazing display of technology, music and fashion, stripped from Rave culture, used to sell vodka.

The Local Effects

The commercialization has reached Honolulu Hawaii as well. Since 2006, the word RAVE has been replaced with the acronym EDMF: *electronic dance music festival*, in order to advertise these events to a larger number of people. This has boosted attendance from a few dozen dedicated practitioners to tens of thousands. Conquergood says: “It is no longer easy to sort out the local from the global: transnational circulations of images get reworked on the ground and redeployed for local, tactical struggles.”²

Because of the recent increase in attendance, corporate sponsorship has slipped their fingers into the culture. For the last decade, *Love Fest* has remained the largest (and one of the only) annual outdoor music festivals in Hawaii. And because of its reach and appeal to a mass audience, local representatives of mainstream alcohol venders and energy drink companies have found clever ways of selling their products to the young adults who attend.

In his article entitled *Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research*, Conquergood states: “Our understanding of ‘local context’ expands to encompass the historical, dynamic, often traumatic, movements of people, ideas, images, commodities, and capital.”³ When this idea is applied to the local electronic music scene in Hawai’i, local companies set up tents at the park where people can easily walk up and buy a beer or an energy drink, which consequently fosters a “party” atmosphere to sell their products, not a place of spiritual dance practice.

In the last year, nearly a dozen outdoor music events have been held at Kakaako Park (located on the beach near downtown Honolulu, Hawai’i) under the umbrella of EDMF. Once again, the event was full of tents selling products, local DJs playing mainstream top-40 music, and the promoters of these events have the audacity to call this event a Rave.

The attitudes associated with PLUR have been replaced by a corporate slogan, which I affectionately entitle: SUCK: Seduction Under Concealed Knowledge. We, the consumer, are *seduced* by manipulated images, *under* the umbrella of a name associated with hipness while the motivations remain *concealed* by the corporations that possess the *knowledge* to attract us consumers.

The Pros and Cons of Codification

Dance ethnographer Lynette Hunter states that: “Art that searches and constitutes things through the process of articulating is research.”⁴ My hope is to articulate my experiences in academia, which will hopefully add much awaited valid representation. One possible solution to this mainstream corporate and media epidemic is the codification of electronic music and dance styles. Some may argue that by codifying dance styles I may pigeonhole or limit the very dance styles I wish to bring value to in academia. However, I want to make it clear that I do not believe codification is an end, but is rather the beginning of academic discussion. I am only one researcher and practitioner of Rave culture, but I am coming from a place of genuine love and embodied practice. And furthermore, I hope that more practitioners such as myself bring forth their ideas in the future.

Admittedly, it has only been until recently that views from inside Rave culture have remained *ephemeral*: there one moment and gone the next. However, thanks to new cellphone video capabilities, Rave culture is now documented online, usually through social media sites like Facebook and YouTube.

And, until recently, for many dancers who immersed themselves in the underground electronic music scene, the practice remains confined to the time and place it is expressed. Therefore, very little discussion occurs among scholars in academia who remain outsiders from the culture. Furthermore, this demonstrates that if you were not a part of the culture, you may never hear about it. For far too long, relevant testimonies from dancers who embody RAVE dance and culture have been completely ignored.

Dance ethnographer Theresa Buckland states that: “The aims of ethnography are to analyze and interpret the perspectives and evaluative concerns of insiders; it is not to impose judgments, explicit or implicit, that are derived from the researcher’s own cultural position.”⁵ To reiterate, I am an insider of Rave Culture approaching this topic from a dance ethnographer’s perspective. Over the last decade I have seen the culture progress and shift into what it is today. And most recently, I have begun to put into perspective the reasons behind mainstream media manipulation, which often leads to the general public’s confusion.

Rave Culture and YouTube

For instance, it is important to distinguish between the stereotypes of a dance and music culture and the codified terminology associated with that culture. For example, *Dubstep* is a genre of electronic music combining syncopated beats, deep gritty bass lines, and various electronically produced melodies (at its most basic foundations).

In the last five years, DubStep has reached the ears of millions, largely thanks to videos from YouTube. In these videos, talented young dancers display various elements of popping, tutting and liquid dancing. Yet, because these styles of dance are often blended together they are often thrown into the category of “DubStep Dance.” This is a common misconception among viewers who do not possess the knowledge of these dance and music origins.

When someone comes up to me and asks if I “DubStep Dance,” I tell them that there is no such thing. Instead, I explain to them that “New-school” or up and coming dancers have taken “old-school” or original elements of Hip Hop dances, specifically breakdancing, popping, tutting, and Rave dances (liquid) to create their own personal flow.

In 2011, a young dancer named Marquese Scott released his dance video entitled *Pumped Up Kicks*. In the video Scott freestyle dances to a DubStep track for several minutes. His unique blend of embodying liquid, popping and tutting has captured global attention. Currently, the video has over 93 million views. For seventeen years, Marquese Scott’s first passion has remained dance. He possesses a strong desire to educate people on music and dance through embodied practice. Unfortunately, many viewers of the video associate Scott’s dance style under the umbrella of “DubStep Dance,” when in fact this dancer is embodying and blending several distinct dance styles that originated in different genres of electronic music and Hip Hop over time. In other words, the roots of

the dance styles presented in this YouTube video are not fully understood by the average viewer.

Conclusions

The saving grace of mass media exposure lies within dance tutorials on YouTube. After a viewer watches Marquese Scott's performance online, those who desire to learn dance skills in a neutral setting (usually from home) can do so, largely thanks to dancers who love to teach others. For example, liquid, tutting, popping, shuffling, house dancing and breaking, the dance styles commonly found within Rave culture, are presented in a format that is untainted. This is a direct reflection of Conquergood's theory of harnessing the power of differently valued knowledge. Through YouTube the teacher of the dance comes from a place of genuine physical and spiritual embodiment of the culture it came from, and is able to break down dance styles step by step, as well as provide commentary to where it came from. And the viewer has access to this knowledge, as well as the genuine interest to learn dances that come from Rave culture. I believe that Rave music and dance styles should be passed on to the next generation. Through codification I hope not only preserve my culture's integrity, but to start real conversations with those who desire to learn more about it.

Copyright 2013, David F. Heller, MA Candidate University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Notes

1 Dwight Conquergood, *Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research*. New York. New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002, 151.

2 Conquergood, Dwight, 145.

3 Conquergood, Dwight, 145

4 Lynette Hunter, *Theory/Practice as Research: Explorations, Questions and Suggestions*. Palgrave Connect. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009, 230.

5 Theresa Buckland, *Dancing from Past to Present*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2007, 9.

Bibliography

Buckland, Theresa. *Dancing from Past to Present*. University of Wisconsin Press. 2007.

Conquergood, Dwight. *Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research*. New York. New York University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002.

Hunter, Lynette. *Theory/Practice as Research: Explorations, Questions and Suggestions*. Palgrave Connect. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2009.

YouTube: *DJ Pauly D Spinning at The Colony*. Last modified April 19, 2012. Last accessed August 30, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=im557LUk4>

YouTube. *Absolut Greyhound: Official Music Video*. Last modified March 12, 2012. Last accessed August 20, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmlRK8Da6GE>

YouTube. *Pumped Up Kicks*. Last modified September 23, 2011. Last accessed August 30, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXO-jKksQkM>

Address for correspondence

David Heller
3065 Numana Road
Honolulu, HI 96819
hellerd@hawaii.edu

The enthusiasts and the dance heritage – about the revival of traditional dances in Sweden

Linnea Helmersson

Abstract

Today's vibrant Swedish folk dance scene is, to a great extent, a result of the works of non-professional researchers and enthusiasts in the 20th century. Through their work traditional dances from all over Sweden were documented, reconstructed and revitalised. Until now, very little first-hand information has been available on their work and folk dancers of today have many conceptions regarding tradition and authenticity. Many dancers are even unaware of the fact that the traditional dances have been revitalised. Furthermore, there has been little academic discussion concerning the processes of revitalisation and reconstruction of traditional dances in Sweden.

*In the recently published anthology *Eldsjälarna och dansarvet* I have brought together articles on the processes of revival. The enthusiasts write about and reflect upon their own research, while other articles are written by myself and others based on interviews and source material. In a discussing chapter, the work and methods presented in the texts are analysed in relation to theories on tradition, authenticity and gender. Several different approaches to traditional dancing and research can be distinguished. The varying backgrounds, perspectives and motivations of the enthusiasts have influenced their interpretation of the material and the way the documented dances are presented and transferred.*

In this presentation I draw upon the recently published anthology *Eldsjälarna och dansarvet* (*The enthusiasts and the dance heritage*),¹ of which I was the editor. In this book non-scholar researchers write about and reflect upon their work with traditional dances in Sweden.

Today, there is a vibrant folk dance scene in Sweden. Several different dance forms, with old roots, are being danced and transmitted in many different contexts. However, most of the dances have been revitalised or reconstructed. Thanks to enthusiasts and non-scholar researchers, traditional dances that were about to disappear, were documented, researched and brought back to life. Through numerous courses – and informal transmission – the dances have been spread to many persons, particularly during the folk music vogue in the 1970's and 80's. These enthusiasts, most of them were dancers themselves, did an immense work and have contributed greatly to the knowledge of traditional dances and dancing in Sweden. Without their work, folk dancing would hardly exist in Sweden today.

Let me give you a historical background: In the beginning of the 20th century, the oldest dances in Sweden, such as the polska and the minuet, were disappearing from the dance floor. New dances and other forms of entertainment took their place. At the same time, the so-called folk dance movement in Sweden was starting to establish. However,

this movement hardly had anything on its repertoire that could be regarded as traditional folk dancing. The core of the early folk dance movement consisted of scenic dances constructed by ballet masters and their students, who brought in their own aesthetics and movement ideals and added a touch of genuine folk dance to it. These constructed dances were referred to as “folk dances” within the movement though. With time, the background of these dances became more or less forgotten and practitioners in the folk dance movement regarded the dances as folk dances in the terms of traditional and genuine. With a few exceptions, it was not until in the 1950’s and 60’s, that some dancers in the folk dance movement started to ponder on the authenticity of the dances referred to as folk dances within the movement. Could it really be that common people had been dancing these regulated, strict and complicated dances throughout the centuries? Out of curiosity some enthusiasts started to search for knowledge and investigate what the traditional folk dance material really looked like.

As opposed to the dance tradition, the folk music tradition in Sweden had lived on by its own means through the years and the music was still being played and transmitted in a living tradition. For many years, no one danced to the tunes the musicians played. The understanding of this and the eagerness to find ways of dancing that fit the music played by the folk musicians, was an important motive for many of the enthusiasts. Especially during the folk music vogue, the will to bring dance and music together again was explicit.

Some of the enthusiasts had their eyes opened only by coincidence – suddenly seeing an unknown dance or hearing old people tell about dancing in the old days caught their interest and spurred them to investigations and research, which in many cases developed into a lifelong mission and passion.

From different perspectives, with different backgrounds and with different motives, enthusiasts from all over Sweden have engaged in the work of safeguarding and revitalising traditional dances. Research has been conducted with different methods and many dances and dance variants have been documented, reconstructed and revitalised.

Most of the work was carried out in the end of the 1960’s and during the 70’s and 80’s. Yet, some research, and especially reconstruction projects, have been carried out later – some of them are even still ongoing. During the folk music vogue, there was a growing interest in searching for roots of traditional dance and music, and quite a few people got engaged in investigations of older dance traditions, especially in their local regions. In some districts, there were even local research committees established. However, it appears to be only a few persons who made a more thorough effort and made a contribution to the knowledge of dance and to the safeguarding of traditional dances. My approximation is that there are some 40 persons who have contributed extensively. Several of the enthusiasts were active in research for many years, whereas others worked intensely during shorter periods.

Participating on the dance floor as well as doing research on folk dance, I have found that contemporary folk dancers have many conceptions regarding tradition and authenticity.² Interestingly enough, many folk dancers are even unaware of the fact that the traditional dances they practise have been revitalised or reconstructed. In part, this is due to the lack of available first-hand sources. Until the publication of this anthology on non-scholar research, very little source material has been available on the revival of traditional dances in Sweden. The material published by the enthusiasts themselves

mainly consists of written descriptions of the dances they have documented.³ Not much at all has been written *about* the research. Furthermore, these processes have not drawn much attention among scholars either. In general, popular dancing has had, and still has, little place in academia in Sweden.

Together with dance pedagogue Maria Värendh, I initiated the project of collecting the knowledge of the folk dance enthusiasts and turning it into an anthology. We wanted to provide first-hand material on the processes of revival and make it accessible for dancers and dance pedagogues, as well as scholars. We considered this necessary for a serious academic discussion and analysis of traditional dance forms in Sweden, and we wanted to open for a deepened discussion on dance research and tradition. We also considered it important for practitioners to have the possibility to decide on the historical sources themselves, instead of being forced to rely on second-hand information and opinions. Only by providing first-hand information on the processes of revival, the dance forms as they are carried out today can be discussed and analysed. Not to be forgotten is the fact that we also wanted to highlight the enthusiasts and their work. Even if there are methods and approaches in their work that could be discussed, the fact is that without the enthusiasts, the traditional dances of Sweden would have been lost in oblivion.

In the articles produced for the anthology, we wanted the enthusiasts and non-scholar researchers to tell the stories of their work from their point of view. We wanted them to focus on the methodology used in their work and to add an analytic perspective. For many of the contributors, the writing of articles for the anthology was a challenging task, since many years had passed since their research or documentation was carried out. In a way, the contributors faced a similar problem in the writing process as they did themselves when active in research – that of bringing out and processing knowledge that has not been used or activated in a long time.

Who were they then, these enthusiasts? Most of them were, or are, social dancers with a great interest in old dances and a passion for dancing. Some of them also shared an interest in old traditions and vernacular cultural expressions in general. Many, but not all of them, have a background in the folk dance movement. There are also a few that primarily were musicians, but found their way into dance research or combined researching music traditions with searching for knowledge of dance traditions.

Some of the enthusiasts had a prior academic education in the humanities, which was useful to them, but common for basically all of them is that they have been researching dance in their spare time. Considering this, the outcome of these persons' work is extraordinary. Almost every part of Sweden has been examined and there is now a great variety of revitalised or reconstructed dances in everyday use on dancefloors throughout the country.

Most of the enthusiasts were engaged in this work for their own pleasure and out of sheer curiosity. In their articles different approaches to traditional dancing and research can be distinguished. Methods as well as reasons for documentation and revival differ. In some cases, dances have been documented for safeguarding primarily, and the enthusiasts have been intent on not to bring about changes in the performance of the dances, as compared to their source material. In other cases, dances have been revitalised or reconstructed to be reintroduced for free improvisation on the dance floor.

Yet, one thing that is common for almost all of the work that is presented in the anthology is that the research concentrated on achieving knowledge and results that could

be turned into practise. The diverse work aimed not only to document the dance traditions for their own sake, but to make it possible to embody the dances and once again put them to use on the dance floor.

It is of great importance that these enthusiasts were dancers. Dance is a silent and embodied knowledge. To be able to use your own body as an analytic tool is a great advantage when researching dance, especially if the purpose is to bring the dance back to life on the dancefloor once more. I agree with ethnologist Wigdis Espeland, who claims that you have to possess some practical knowledge and experience in advance, to be able to conduct research on a subject that is practical and embodied.⁴ The conditions to understand a physical movement are different if you are able to analyse it through your own body. Regarding the different reconstruction processes conducted by the enthusiasts, it is obvious that the use of their own bodies as analytic tools – combined with knowledge of both dance and music – has been an important part of the process. Many of the enthusiasts also gathered other dancers to help them analyse and interpret their source material, physically as well as theoretically.

The majority of the enthusiasts have primarily interviewed and documented old people who could tell about the old dance traditions and in many cases also show how they danced. The enthusiasts often tried to learn the dance *in situ* with their informants, so that they could be able to correct and confirm the enthusiasts' interpretation of the dance. The information given by the informants was often supplemented with archival studies. Some enthusiasts, however, focused on archive material in their aim to reconstruct dances. In these projects, music had an particularly important role, both in terms of old tune books and contemporary folk music.

One thing which is both fascinating and important to be aware of considering the revival of folk dances in Sweden, is that the enthusiasts were interested in various time periods. The majority of them focused on the dance knowledge they could obtain from living people, and thus on dance forms that were in use during the 19th century and perhaps in the beginning of the 20th century. However, some of the enthusiasts wanted to re-create dance forms from earlier times. The implication of this is that on the dance floor today, there are dance forms from different centuries being practised side by side. To analyse the revitalised and reconstructed dance forms it is important to be aware of the fact that they are built upon different kinds of source material, which originate from different time periods. For instance, the dance polska, which in many ways is emblematic for the folk dance revival in Sweden, today exist on the dance floor both in reconstructed forms that originate from the 18th century and in revitalised forms that were commonly used less than a century ago.

Like many early folklore researchers and ethnologists, most of the enthusiasts regarded the oldest dances as the most interesting and valuable. The older it was, the more fascinating. Very few took an interest in documenting modern dances such as the charleston and the tango. Common for almost all of the enthusiasts is that they searched for dance traditions in the rural communities. Few persons made for the cities and the urban communities.

When analysing the enthusiasts' work it is clear that many of them were influenced by contemporary discourses. I see that some of them were influenced by common paradigms present in early research in the humanities, such as evolutionism, devolutionism and positivism. It is characteristic for much of the early folklore research

to regard the people as a collective with common cultural expressions, meanings and experiences, and to disregard individual differences. Single informants were often regarded as passive keepers of supposed common knowledge and traditions of a certain area. This way of overlooking individuality is obvious with some of the enthusiasts, especially those who were active earliest in the 20th century. In many cases when the enthusiasts were documenting dance, there were only one or two persons in a village who could give any information on the dance tradition. Yet, the enthusiasts considered that information valid and representative for a whole village or community. They seem to have disregarded individual style and variation. The information the enthusiasts got was carefully described in words and later presented as *the* dance from that certain place.

I believe that this way of looking at dance traditions have had the result that several dances have been described as representative for a certain village or a region, although the characteristics of the documented dance might as well have been only the characteristics of a single dancer.

Though, I would like to emphasize that, among the enthusiasts there are also many persons that had completely different points of view. Some of them rather put it: “this is a dance from this person”, thereby highlighting the individual characteristics as well as the difficulty to regard poor information on a dance as something representative for a certain region or a whole community.

Inger and Leif Stinnerbom, two of the enthusiasts, reconstructed a polska variant through extensive work with documentation, archive studies and dance research, in combination with folk music research. They prefer to call their reconstructed dance form “polska from Inger and Leif”, to emphasize the fact that no matter how thorough their research and convincing their deduction, the reconstructed dance will remain a product of them, marked by their personal expressions and interpretation of the source material. Alas, very few practitioners consider this and the reconstructed dance nevertheless is very often given a geographic name.⁵

Another particular trait of early folkloristic research, and which originates from the nationalism of the 19th century, is the emphasis on geographical differences, national as well as regional and local. This too, could be found in the enthusiasts’ approach to the dance material. Some of them seem to have been presupposing that the dance forms should differ from village to village, and thereby probably concentrating on the possible differences they discovered rather than similarities in the dance forms.

As implied, the enthusiasts’ views upon tradition differ. Some of them seem to have regarded tradition as something stable and unchangeable, something that is passed on throughout the years without individuals bringing about changes. That made them very particular about the transmission of the dances. They sought to keep the revitalised dance forms as close to the source as possible and seem to have regarded themselves as passive keepers of the dances they found. The majority of the enthusiasts though, were perfectly aware of the fact that tradition also involves change. Some of them accentuate the dynamics in tradition and find it obvious that the individual influences the dance and that all of us change the dance in one way or another by using it. They have therefore been less strict regarding the (second-hand) transmission of the dances. For instance, some of them have refused to do written descriptions on the dances, which has been common practise among the enthusiasts, for fear of settling a precise performance and fixing the

dances. They wanted to make it possible for other practitioners to interpret the source material themselves and to let the revived dances live their own life on the dance floor.

It is clear that the varying backgrounds, perspectives and motivations of the enthusiasts have influenced their interpretation of the dance traditions and the way the documented dances are presented and transmitted. One of the biggest differences among the enthusiasts is how they regarded the dance material in terms of dances or dance variations. Some have regarded local differences in the performance of a dance as variations upon the same fundamental dance form, whereas others have regarded every dance performed somewhat different from the other as a completely different dance. From some regions there are 40 various polska dances described and from some regions there are only one polska, or even none, described and revitalised. This makes it difficult to get a good general view on the dance traditions in Sweden as a whole. My hope is that the anthology on the enthusiasts' work will make it easier to get a good survey on the traditional dance forms in Sweden.

I also hope that the anthology will spur to further research on dance traditions and on the processes of revival in Sweden.

Copyright 2013, Linnea Helmersson

Notes

- 1 Helmersson 2012a.
- 2 Helmersson 2006.
- 3 See for example Karlholm 1974.
- 4 Espeland 1988.
- 5 Helmersson 2012b.

Bibliography

- Espeland, Wigdis. "Den tause kunnskapen. Ein gloymd dimensjon i etnologisk forskning?" in *Människans yttre – kulturens spegel*, NEFA-Nordens 15 fältseminarium 1987, Åbo, 1988.
- Handler, Richard & Linnekin, Jocelyn. "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious" in *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 97, nr 385, 1984.
- Helmersson, Linnea, ed. *Eldsjälarna och dansarvet. Om forskning och arbetet med att levandegöra äldre dansformer*. Rättvik: Folkmusikens hus, 2012a.
- Helmersson, Linnea. *Föreställningar om tradition. En etnologisk analys av talet om folkdans och hur det skapar mening*. D-uppsats i etnologi, Umeå universitet, 2006.
- Helmersson, Linnea. "Polska efter Inger och Leif" in Linnea Helmersson, ed., *Eldsjälarna och dansarvet. Om forskning och arbetet med att levandegöra äldre dansformer*. Rättvik: Folkmusikens hus, 2012b.
- Karlholm, Inger & Göran. *Gamla danser från Härjedalen, Jämtland, Ångermanland*, 1974.
- Lilja, Agneta. "Kollektiva beskrivningar och individuella berättelser" in Magnus Bergquist & Birgitta Svensson, eds., *Metod och minne. Etnologiska tolkningar och rekonstruktioner*. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1999.
- Omholt, Per Åsmund. "Tradisjonsområder – Konstruksjon eller realitet?" in Hans-Hinrich Thedens ed., *Musikk og dans som virkelighet og forestilling*. Norsk Folkemusikkklags skrifter nr 20, 2006. Norsk folkemusikklag, Oslo, 2007.

Ronström, Owe. "Inledning" in Owe Ronström & Gunnar Ternhag, ed., *Texter om svensk folkmusik. Från Haeffner till Ling*. Stockholm: Kungliga musikaliska akademien, 1994.

Adress for correspondence:

Linnea Helmersson
Övägen 31
904 26 Umeå
linneahelmersson@yahoo.se

“Order and Dynamism”: The Paradox of the Irish Dancing Body

Kathryn Holt

University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Abstract

One of the most recognizable aspects of Irish step dance technique is the posture. While the dancer often performs fast, intricate, and difficult footwork in the lower body, the upper body remains rigid, with the arms never leaving the sides. This posture remains most common in the competitive form of Irish dance. While the theatrical and social versions of the dance tend to be a bit more lenient – allowing the use of the arms, for example – the posture still remains upright with very little movement in the upper part of the body. By looking at the posture through the lense of the theories of poststructuralism and Michel Foucault's work on discipline and punishment, this paper will explore the ways in which the posture of Irish dance acts both as an embodiment of the discipline and control of bodies, and an embodied social action used by the nationalist movement in Ireland in response to colonization and the postcolonial, diasporic nature of modern Irish identity.

One of the most recognizable aspects of Irish step dance is the posture. While the dancer often performs fast, intricate, footwork in the lower body, the upper body remains rigid, with the arms never leaving the sides. This posture remains most common in the competitive form of Irish dance. While the theatrical and social versions of the dance tend to be a bit more lenient, the posture still remains upright with very little movement in the upper part of the body. As Frank Hall notes, this feature of Irish dance is often a source of questions for spectators and dancers alike, as the posture appears paradoxical to the fast footwork that also characterizes the dance form (13-14). This paper will explore the ways in which the posture of Irish dance acts both as an embodiment of the discipline and control of bodies, and a reaction to colonization and the postcolonial, diasporic nature of modern Irish identity.

If you ask an Irish dancer where the still upper body of their dance form originated, it is likely that you will get an explanation in the form of a story. The most common story is that the Irish were not allowed to practice their dances during the time of British rule in Ireland, and so they would dance only from the hips down so that passing soldiers would not be able to see them dancing through the window. Other similar explanations have been that the dancing restriction came from the church, and the passing authority figure was the priest. Yet another explanation is that girls had to hold their dresses down when dancing outside in the wind (Hall 16). I recall my grandmother telling me once that the arms were not used to avoid the appearance of flirting with members of the opposite sex while dancing.

As Hall notes, these stories, while in some ways plausible, are also much more likely to be mythic explanations than actual reasons for the rigid upper body. He states, “These stories attempt to account for the posture in terms of social relations of authority, subordination and, in some cases, resistance. Like myths, these stories and explanations,

if unsatisfactory in themselves, contain themes that resonate with historical and contemporary concerns with authority, control, and the morality of expressive body movement” (15). The stories about the Irish dance posture exist to help understand what seems unnatural: the dancing lower body and the appearance of a non-dancing upper body occurring simultaneously. Therefore, these stories are in some ways equally important to the posture itself. They provide insight into the political climate from which this style of movement was born and draw attention to the Irish concern with subordination and oppression in both current and past times.

The birth of what is currently known as “Irish dance” can be traced to the formation of the Gaelic League in 1893, which sought to preserve Irish culture through the promotion and regulation of Irish arts, language, and sports (Foley 35). At this time, Ireland was in a state of political uncertainty and in the midst of the continuing struggle of the Irish as a colonized people, a movement towards cultural nationalism emerged in an attempt to create a more Irish Ireland. The Gaelic League and other similar organizations were formed to meet this need (Jackson 86).

The League later formed the Irish Dancing Commission in 1929 to regulate the teaching and practice of Irish dance (Foley 36). Both organizations essentially took aspects of traditional dance which already existed and structured them into what they considered to be the “most Irish” representation of Irish dance. Prior to this, there were many regional variations in the style of Irish dance, but throughout the years, the Gaelic League, and later An Coimisiun, chose which of these variations were the most acceptable, and these became the standard. At some point, the strictly regimented upper body we see in Irish dance today was not the norm everywhere. There is documentation of the Cork style of dance which used the hands on the hips, and even today in sean nos dance (or “the old style”) the arms are allowed to move freely (Hall 18). Mary Friel’s work on social dance in Southeast Ireland in the 19th century also notes the use of hands on the hips in some areas (39-40). So, it seems that the Gaelic League and An Coimisiun chose to enforce a more extreme stillness in the upper body than was common in some parts of Ireland.

By looking at Irish dance through the lens of poststructuralism, we can see the posture of the dance as the signifier, “Irish dance” as the signified, and “Irishness” as the sign. The reason for the choice of the rigid posture as a signifier of Irishness, and other stylistic choices made throughout the codification process, is not known. While certain dances were later excluded by An Coimisiun because they were believed to have roots outside of Ireland, there does not seem to be evidence that the reasoning for stylistic choices was similar. The practice of Irish dance from the time of the Gaelic League until the present has primarily occurred in the context of competition, so many stylistic aspects emerged simply due to the competitive process. Therefore, part of what became accepted as Irish dance had much to do with the personal preferences of judges and other arbitrary factors.

Despite the fact that there is no record of specific political reasons for the choice of the rigid posture and exclusion of the arms, the fact that the choice was made as part of the push for nationalism in 19th and 20th century colonial and post-colonial Ireland suggests that it was indeed a reflection of the political ideals of the time. As Jacques Ranciere argues, “there is an intrinsic knot between aesthetic practices...and politics”

(qtd. in Caspao 124). Consequently, all choices made in regards to Irish dance as a physical representation of Irishness are intrinsically and unavoidably political.

There are several ways in which the upper body as a signifier for Irishness can be addressed. The first is by looking at it in terms of discipline. Michel Foucault suggests that control of the body produces subjected, docile bodies that can be controlled by those in power (138). The strict control of the upper body in Irish dance can certainly be seen as a means of controlling the body, and so the choice to include this style of dance rather than the more relaxed forms that existed may be considered a means of those in power attempting to control the population and cause them to portray an image of themselves that was docile and well-mannered.

However, a paradox exists in this reading of Irish dance in two ways. The first is that this regimented look was not created by those who were in power at the time, meaning the British who still ruled Ireland in 1893, but rather by members of the oppressed and colonized class: the Irish themselves. As previously noted, the still upper body had existed in Irish dance for years, and was only codified when the Gaelic League began using dance as part of their fight to define Irishness as distinct from Britishness (Foley 34). Therefore, this imposition of control on the Irish body was part of a rebellion against the hegemony, rather than a way to oppress the colonized.

Significantly, Foucault's description of a soldier in *Discipline and Punishment* is similar to the description of the posture of an Irish dancer:

“His body was the blazon of his strength and valour... ‘holding their heads high and erect; to standing upright without bending the back...throwing out the chest and throwing back the shoulders’” (135).

Given that the formation of the Gaelic League was a precursor to the war for Irish independence, it is significant that the way they chose to present Irish identity was by using a posture that so closely resembles that of a soldier. As historian Jason Knirck notes, Ireland at this time sought to establish an Irish identity in direct contrast to English identity, and also in direct contrast to England's negative view of the Irish (40-41). Therefore, in using Irish dance as a representation of Irish identity, the soldier-like control over the upper body represented an Ireland that was strong, civilized, and proud. In other words, a direct contrast to the weak, backwards, uncivilized nation England thought them to be.

Once again, however, the Irish dancer as soldier is something of a contradiction. At this time, dance was seen as the feminine representation of Irishness. Given that soldiers were exclusively male, it is strange that the feminine representation included a posture which was so linked with masculinity. This may be explained in part by the fact that, according to Knirck, during the rise of nationalism, Ireland was commonly represented in literature as a woman, and the Irish men were her sons who sacrificed themselves for her freedom (34-35). Therefore, even though women were not soldiers physically fighting for independence, they remained an important part of the nationalist movement.

The other major paradox of the Irish dance posture is the way in which it is juxtaposed with the liveliness of the lower body. This juxtaposition is brought to the forefront in the myths discussed previously. In particular, the stories of hiding the dancing feet from the oppressors by using a still upper body both acknowledge the control being imposed on the body by outside forces and reject that control by continuing

the movement in the lower half of the body. In this way, the erect posture can be read as a response to colonization and oppression. As the stories suggest, the Irish present themselves to the colonizers as complying with the regulations imposed upon their bodies, but in reality, they continue to express themselves through the dancing lower body. Thus the Irish dancing body is a binary in and of itself – embodying both subordination and insubordination at once. The still upper body can be seen as an imposition of discipline and control on the docile body, but that control exists to allow for the freedom of the lower body. The appearance of subordination exists only to allow rebellion to flourish.

If, then, the juxtaposition of control and insubordination in the body of the Irish dancer emerged as a response to the political climate of pre-revolution Ireland, one wonders why the rigid body remained and became more prominent after the emergence of the Irish Free State in 1922 (Jackson 369). This can largely be attributed to the continued push for Irish nationalism by what was now the Irish government. When An Coimisiun was formed in 1929, nationalists were still responding to the Anglicization of Ireland that occurred under British rule (Foley 34-35). Their aim was to return Ireland to a pre-colonized Irishness, and so those values which had been adopted during the cultural nationalist movement of the late 19th century continued to be promoted in order to further support an Irish identity that was distinct and opposite of Englishness. Therefore, the political goals of postcolonial Ireland remained much the same as they had been for several decades.

While this rigid upper body and contrasting dynamic footwork remains a unique feature of Irish dance, in the past two decades, there has been a shift towards using the upper body in performance. As previously noted, competitive dancers must still adhere to the “no arms” rule, but this is not the case for professional dancers. While the torso still tends to remain quite still, shows like *Riverdance* reintroduced the use of the arms and a more relaxed upper body. Just as the still upper body emerged as a reflection of the political climate of 19th century Ireland, the current move towards integrating the upper body, in a way that is admittedly still quite limited, is a reflection of modern Irish identity, which is largely a product of postcolonial Ireland and the experience of the millions of members of the Irish diaspora.

This change in Irish dance coincided with major changes in the Irish economy in the late 20th century (Seaver 4-15; Foley 38). Beginning in the 1990s, Ireland experienced an economic boom and consequently, became more a part of modern Europe than they had been previously. It makes sense that these changes would be reflected in Irish dance, which had at this point been an established representation of Irish identity for about a century. Today there are many Irish dance groups and choreographers who have incorporated the upper body into their performances. For the remainder of this paper, I will focus on the work of Colin Dunne as an example of the use of the upper body in contemporary Irish dance.

Colin Dunne has been a prominent figure in Irish dance for many years. A member of the diaspora, born to Irish parents in Birmingham, England, he won his first World Championship at the age of nine, and went on to win eight more World titles (“Biography” par 2). He took over the lead male role in *Riverdance* in 1995, and contributed a new piece of choreography to the show, entitled “Trading Taps.” The piece features three Irish dancers and two tap dancers, depicting life of Irish immigrants in America through their interaction with Americans. This was the beginning of his notable

choreographic contributions in contemporary Irish dance choreography. In the piece, the Irish dancers retain their upright posture for the most part, but as they increase their interaction with the tap dancers, they allow their arms to be loose and react to the movements of their bodies (Dunne). This choreographic choice reflects the influence of immigration on Irish identity. Due to the massive waves of emigration that occurred in Ireland during and following the Great Famine, there are over 60 million people worldwide who claim Irish heritage (Wulff 33). Therefore, depicting a scene where Irish dancers interact with and are directly influenced by American tap dancers reflects the nature of Irish diasporic identity, which has been inevitably influenced by the countries where Irish immigrants settled.

In 1999, Dunne created *Dancing on Dangerous Ground* with Jean Butler. *Dancing on Dangerous Ground* aimed to use Irish dance in a new way by telling a story through the movement. The show told the story of Diarmuid and Grainne, an ancient Irish myth about star-crossed lovers. By using traditional dance in a modern way to tell an old Irish legend, the choreographers, whether intentionally or not, reflected the new Irish identity, which, through globalization and the influence of the diaspora, became a combination of the new and the old.

Dancing on Dangerous Ground also brought attention to the rigid upper body of the Irish dance posture by including a scene where dancers literally have their arms tied to their sides. Within the context of the story, the dancers are playing members of an army who have been drugged and tied up. When they wake, they stumble around and dance, seemingly alarmed that they cannot move their upper bodies. As the piece ends, the dancers break free from the restraints, and are able to move their arms and upper bodies. At this point in Irish history, the Celtic Tiger economic boom was in full swing, Ireland was no longer so staunchly controlled by the Church, and the Troubles in Northern Ireland had died down with the IRA declaring a cease fire in 1998 (Jackson 378). This portrayal of the forceful breaking free in the upper body then is significant in terms of the link between Irish dance and Irish political issues. At the same time that Irish dancers were in the midst of “breaking free” from the tradition of the previous century, the country itself was doing the same.

In 2001, Dunne attended the MA program in contemporary dance at the University of Limerick. He has said, “At that time, I was bored with myself, and frustrated with the performance models that were available. I just wanted to spend time investigating... what more was in me” (qtd. in Long par 13). Since his involvement in the program at UL, Dunne has continued to combine traditional Irish dance and contemporary dance, by performing traditional dance in contemporary contexts, and exploring the use of his upper body. Currently, he is touring the world with a solo work entitled *Out of Time*, which includes Irish dance vocabulary, contemporary movement, and media. Dunne says about the show:

“Even though *Out of Time* has a contemporary aesthetic, the idea of ‘going back’ was really driving it. I projected archival film footage of sean nos dancers from the 1930s through the ‘70s. The way they moved was weightier than what we see in Irish dance today; they had that release in the joints, particularly through the pelvis, with impulses up through the chest and arms, moving very naturally. And I’ve found a connection between what I’m doing now and what they were doing” (“Quick Q&A” 15).

This description of Dunne's work illuminates a theme in the post-*Riverdance* era of Irish dance. There has been a revival of sean nos dance in recent years, and the number of choreographers who, like Dunne, are experimenting with the upper body and other elements of Irish dance is increasing. In a way, this is a response to the regulation that has been imposed on the Irish dancing body by An Coimisiun since the late 1920s. As Dunne notes, he is "going back" to the way the body moved before competition and regulation homogenized the dance form into what it is today. In a way, dancers are doing what the Gaelic League once aimed to do: find a way to express their identities through dance in a way that opposes the governing forces.

Throughout the past 120 years since the formation of the Gaelic League, Irish dance has been a constant reflection of Irish identity and response to political oppression. While the politics of the country have changed significantly, the dance remains an expression of the constant struggle between control and rebellion. In contemporary Irish dance, a limited use of the upper body while still using traditional footwork reflects the struggle to form a new Irish identity both in postcolonial Ireland and the diaspora. The authority figures that the Irish dancing body was constructed to defy no longer exist, so there is no longer a need for the control of the upper body to allow for the rebellion of the lower. As a result, dancers have started to allow their movement to flow through their whole bodies. Rigid upper body remains in competitive dance, because it is still strictly regulated. However, in theatrical dance, Irish dancers are finding ways to express the new Irish identity. It is an identity that is as paradoxical as it has always been: it both embraces and challenges the system within which it operates. And perhaps, by "going back" to a form of Irish dance that is not so concerned with direct political statement, dancers are embodying the old goal of returning to a pre-colonized Ireland.

Copyright 2013, Kathryn Holt

Bibliography

- "Biography." Colin Dunne. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.colindunne.com/biog.php>>.
- Butler, Jean and Colin Dunne, chor. *Dancing on Dangerous Ground*. 1999. Kultur Video, 2004. DVD.
- Caspao, Paula. "Stroboscopic Stutter: On the Not-Yet-Captured Ontological Condition of Limit-Attractions." *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory, and the Global*. Ed. Andre Lepecki and Jenn Joy. Calcutta, India: Seagull Books, 2009. 123-159. Print.
- Dunne, Colin, chor. "Trading Taps." *Riverdance - Live From New York City*. 1997. Sony Pictures, 1998. DVD.
- Foley, Catherine. "Perceptions of Irish Step Dance: National, Global, and Local." *Dance Research Journal*. 33.1 (Summer 2001): 34-45. Web. 15 Sept. 2011.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. Print.
- Friel, Mary. *Dancing as a Social Pastime in the South-east of Ireland, 1800-1897*. Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2004. Print.
- Hall, Frank. *Competitive Irish Dance: Art, Sport, Duty*. Madison: Macater Press, 2009. Print.
- Jackson, Alvin. *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. Print.

- Knirck, Jason. *Women of the Dail: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006. Print.
- Long, Siobhan. "Finding a Place in the Tradition." *Irish Times* 5 July 2006. Web. 30 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.colindunne.com/irishtimes.php>>.
- Seaver, Michael. "Stepping Into Footprints: Tradition and the Globalization of Irish Dance." *Dance in a World of Change: Reflections on Globalization and Cultural Difference*. Ed. Sherry B. Shapiro. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2008. 3-15. Print.
- Wulff, Helena. *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. Print.

Address for Correspondence:

Kathryn Holt
2814 Lowrey Ave. Unit B
Honolulu, HI 96822
Kholt4@hawaii.edu

The Influence of Madame Mao on Revolutionary Ballet in China

Yukiyo Hoshino
Nagoya University

Abstract

In general, Jiang Qing, infamously known as Madame Mao, held absolute control over the National Ballet of China during the Cultural Revolution, despite her lack of knowledge regarding ballet. She transformed various elements of the repertoire that she regarded as representative of a decadent bourgeoisie and sent many dancers to concentration camps. Particularly in the ballet, the Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army(1964), she gave orders about the details related to the music, scenes, choreography, costumes, characters, and casting. Therefore, this paper examines the changes in the Chinese ballet as a result of Madame Mao's influence.

Introduction

Recent books on Chinese modern dance published in mainland China have eliminated any references to Jiang Qing, infamously known as Madame Mao, given her arrest and history of brutality. However, as known by the Chinese people of any generation, Jiang Qing exercised considerable power over the Chinese ballet. For example, most of the dancers who appeared on the television program *Testimony: Ballet* reported that they had been accused by Jiang Qing¹. However, this does not necessarily indicate that the influence of Jiang Qing on the Chinese ballet was purely negative. Therefore, this paper examines both her positive and negative influences on the ballet *Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army* (1964).

Jiang Qing's Educational Background in Her Youth

Jiang Qing was born into poverty and attended the free elementary school for peasant children, which does not imply that she did not have an opportunity to pursue higher education. She was accepted into the Shandong Drama School and then into the Qingdao University, (now known as Shandong University), having been recommended by Zhao Taimou, as renowned playwright and professor at Qingdao University. The faculties of both the Shandong Drama School and Qingdao University comprised highly professional individuals who had studied at Columbia University or the University of Cambridge. Jiang Qing herself described this period as a "highly sophisticated time," Ironically, during the 1970s, she had Zhao Taimou removed from his position and persecuted to death.

After joining the Communist party in the latter half of the 1930s, Jiang Qing participated in a proletarian troupe belonging to the *Shan-hai* proletarian children's school. This school had been established based on the educational philosophy of Xingzhi

Tao, a famous educator, who had served as the schoolmaster of a free school for war orphans, and had studied under John Dewey at Columbia University. He was highly respected by Jiang Qing until the 1970s.²

In addition, Tao had invited Aileen Dai—who had studied academic classical ballet in England and eventually became the first ballet mistress in the Chinese National ballet company—to teach the dance class at the Yucai School. During the 1940s, Tao also collaborated with Dai to present some ballet concerts in Chongqing to raise contributions for war orphans. In my opinion, Jiang Qing was jealous of Dai’s collaboration with Tao, which prompted her to have Dai removed from her position and sent to a labor camp in the 1960s.

Influence of Jiang Qing on Modern Chinese Ballet

To understand the influence of Jiang Qing on modern Chinese ballet, it is important to consider her political position during the Cultural Revolution. After her marriage to Mao Zedong, Jiang Qing had merely served as Mao’s wife. However, at the onset of the Cultural Revolution, Mao permitted her to take part in certain political affairs and she eventually gained significant power as the head of the Ministry of Culture. At that point, the National Ballet of China and other ballet companies were under her complete control.

Recently, the majority of dance scholars in mainland China have posited that Jiang Qing prevented the development of the Chinese ballet. However, in my opinion, this was not the case. Apparently, she did send many ballet dancers and choreographers of whom she regarded as anti-revolutionary to the labor camps, but she appears to have applied the term “anti-revolutionary person” only to those she envied.

Even if they were not sent to the notorious camps, the dancers were forced to work in factories, to experience the life of the working class. Moreover, they were required to travel to the countryside and dance for the peasants. In one instance, Ruheng Chao, a prima ballerina and later the headmistress of the Chinese National Ballet, was injured while dancing on the rough and uneven ground and she was unable to dance again.



Figure1: Although the actual costume of Li is basically black, Jiang Qing changed its costume into red and pink.

100 pictures of Li ethnic costume, 129 (on the left), *Director’s book of Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army*, 555 (on the right).

Nevertheless, Jiang Qing did contribute to several improvements in the program. One example involved her instructions for the ballet *Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army*. In this production, she eliminated characters which were unnecessary to the plot, thereby accentuating the extraordinary personalities of the other characters. In regard to costuming, she insisted on changing the color of several costumes and adding more contrast, particularly emphasizing the color red.

Most important, however, was her suggestion to the students of the Beijing Dance Academy: “Master all of the technique both of the West and China, and we will be naturally able to create something new.” For example, she advised that dance of Li, one of ethnic minority, should not contain too many arabesques, but should instead incorporate more elements of ethnic dance. Moreover, she called for the elimination of the makeup that imitated the masks of the Beijing Opera, she felt that excessive makeup prevented dancers from expressing their passion on stage. In my opinion, these measures were quite appropriate and were likely to have been influenced by the education she had received during her “highly sophisticated time”.

In sum, Jiang Qing was undeniably engaged in a serious quest for original Chinese programming. Although many of her suggestions were deemed inappropriate (some of which she eventually cancelled, much to the confusion of the dancers and staff), some of them were suitable for production.

Modern Chinese Ballet Today

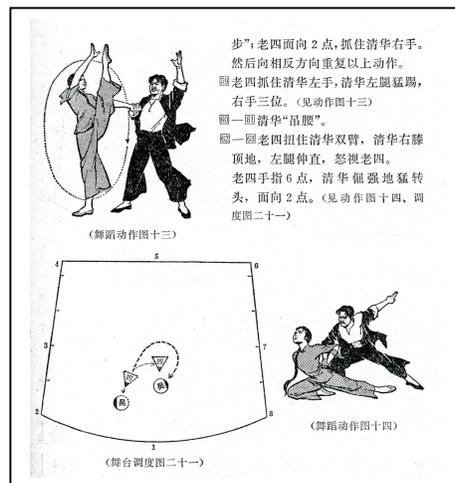


Figure 2: Dance notation for the *Red Detachment of Women*. The upper-left picture is the “diao-yao,” which is a movement of the Beijing Opera (*Director’s book of Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army*, 145).

Finally, this paper examines the influences of Jiang Qing on Chinese ballet today. Contemporary dance critics speak highly of the original Chinese ballet works that contain some elements of so-called Revolutionary ballet (e.g., *Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army*) and praise them as a wonderful mixture of classical ballet and Chinese traditional dance. For example, the costumes in *The Red Lantern* are noted for the highly contrasting colors, and the choreography of the *pas du deux* between the heroine and

master appears to alternate between classical ballets' steps and specific movements taken from the Beijing Opera.

Conclusion

Despite her difficult bringing, Jiang Qing did have several opportunities to study the liberal arts. She exercised considerable influence on modern Chinese ballet and these influences can still be observed today. In addition, the suggestions made by Jiang Qing might have been appropriate, based on the education she received from her bourgeois instructors during her "highly sophisticated time" to explain the level of severity she eventually used on the same professors.

Despite the current tendency in mainland China to eliminate any references to Jiang Qing in the history of modern Chinese ballet, this paper argues that the criticism of her influence is in need of revision.

Copyright 2013, Yukiyo Hoshino

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was supported in part by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. The author would also like to thank Enago (www.enago.jp) for its English language review.

Notes

1. Documentary television series made by Chinese Central Television, 2011.
2. Witke, Roxane. *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing*. (London, 1977. Weidenfeld and Nicolson), 152.

Bibliography

- Troupe Group of China. ed. *Director's book of Red Detachment of Women, Chinese Red Army*, Peking, Renmin Press, 1970.
- Guo, Qiqi. *The Chinese Elements of Contemporary Chinese Ballet: The Structure and Reception of the Ballet "Raise the Red Lantern"*. Nagoya. Nagoya University, 2013
- Harris, Kristine. "Remarks/remodels: The Red Detachment of Women between Stage and Screen" *Opera Quarterly; Spring/Summer 2010*, Vol. 26 Issue 2/3, p316
- Dai, Ailian. *An Oral Autobiography of Dai Ailian*. Peking, Renmin Yinyue Press, 2006
- Witke, Roxane. *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing*. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977.

Address for correspondence:

Yukiyo Hoshino
hoshino@lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp

Changing the Gestalt with Gizmos and Code: Amplifying Dance with Interactive Technology

Sybil Huskey

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Abstract:

Real-time sensing technology, connecting the movements of dancers to the motions of projected visualizations, enlarges the kinetics of the proscenium space from the traditional horizontality of the stage floor to the enlivened verticality of the cyclorama. In addition to the kinetics, the size of the visualizations relative to the dancers commands attention in the upstage space while the dancers' athletic and nuanced movements engage focus in the downstage area. This interaction of human dancing and digital projections extends the dimensions of traditional staged dance by creating multiple focal points of activity that complement, compete and connect with each other. As the visualizations "act" in simultaneous reaction to the dancers' movements and spatial positions, a bonded kinetic gestalt stimulates visual perception, thus challenging choreographers, technologists, dancers and audiences to see and experience staged dance in new ways. This paper will examine a three-year (2009-12) collaboration supported by a National Science Foundation CreativeIT grant, in which computer scientists, choreographers and dancers created seven original pieces. Using various devices and specially coded software to investigate dancer/visualization interaction, the research relied on audience surveys, targeted focus groups and general feedback sessions to better understand the creation, performance and reception of the technology-infused choreography. "Changing the Gestalt with Gizmos and Code" will situate these research findings in current and historical dance technology practices posing questions such as "Does the use of integrative technology enhance or diminish the experience of seeing traditional staged dance or does it create a completely new genre?"

Introduction:

Real-time sensing technology, connecting the movements of dancers to the motions of projected visualizations extends the dimensions of traditional staged dance by enlarging the viewing space and creating multiple focal points of activity that complement, compete and connect with each other. The kinetic gestalt challenges visual perception, thus requiring choreographers, technologists, dancers and audiences to see and experience staged dance in new ways. As theatre director, Peter Sellars, says, "the performative possibilities of the high-tech interface continue to take us into more and more dizzying levels of inherent contradiction, again tending towards a more democratic play of multiple perspectives and the yin-and-yang dynamic of the universe itself" [6].

The Dance.Draw Project

This paper results from the three-year (2009-12) Dance.Draw research project supported by a National Science Foundation CreativeIT grant (#IIS-0855882), in which computer scientists, choreographers and dancers collaboratively created seven interactive works using different low-cost, portable devices and specially developed code to investigate real-time interaction between dancers and projected visualizations. The pieces were presented on the University of North Carolina at Charlotte dance department concerts where audience members are accustomed to seeing traditional choreographic works and where none reported having ever experienced real-time interactivity on the concert stage. In addition to making interactive pieces, the Dance.Draw research incorporated audience surveys, targeted focus groups and general feedback sessions to better understand the creation, performance and reception of technology-infused choreography.

As Co-PI on the grant, I will discuss how the gizmos coupled with code connected the kinetics of movement and visualizations, thereby amplifying the performance space and changing the gestalt. I will examine how the use of this real-time interactive technology in staged dance supports a unique dance genre with its own set of expectations, standards, and ways of perceiving. I've selected three Dance.Draw pieces in which the imagery played an increasing role in augmenting and supporting the concept and where the coupling of the dancer and visualizations was progressively tighter. I will report how audience responded and offer what I think are deterrents and enhancements for audience engagement within the new gestalt presented through these interactive dance pieces.

“A Mischief of Mus musculus”

The first staged Dance.Draw work used 3 pairs of gyroscopic wireless mice that were hand-held by the six dancers and exchanged during the piece. The dancers' movements controlled the abstract digital designs, created by an artist in conjunction with the choreographic development of the piece. Experimenting with the mice in relationship to choreographic movement and visualizations that were complemented by the music became the intent of the pure movement piece. Here is an excerpt of “A Mischief of Mus musculus.”

Audience reactions were mixed with some viewers feeling that the interactive projections detracted from the dancing and others enjoying the technological connections, something Robert Wechsler, artistic director of the interactive performance group, Palindrome, refers to as the “how'd-they-do-it” factor [2]. Some audience members were challenged by the split focus, wanting to zoom in on the dancers but being drawn to the equally kinetic, larger and more colorful cyclorama. The “either or” competition made some feel that they forfeited part of the total experience with each choice. Clearly, immersion in the total gestalt of the work was not possible for most audience members.

Philip Auslander, who teaches Performance Studies at the Georgia Institute of Technology notes, “Performance occurs in a cultural context in which the projection is more closely related to the dominant media than is the live body. Audience perception may inevitably be drawn to a screen even when there are human beings present, a fact that has implications for how the audience perceives the whole performance” [2]



Figure 1: "A Mischief of *Mus musculus*"

"Bodies/Antibodies"

Another Dance.Draw piece embedded the wireless gyroscopic mice along with wireless 3D accelerometers in small plastic boxes into the costumes, freeing the dancers' hands. In addition, an overhead surveillance camera, much like those in convenience stores, provided additional data tracking for the interactive visualizations. Tighter coupling of dancers and images was used from the beginning of the piece, helping the audience better relate to the total gestalt. Here are excerpts from the piece.

"Bodies/Antibodies, a conceptually-based piece dealing with activity of the internal body, had been choreographed in advance of the Dance.Draw project so as the technologists created the designs and coded the interactivity, the original choreography and score were lengthened and more fully developed. Both the resulting screen images and the dancers represented the antibodies and the pathogen with the cellular-like movements of the dancers replicated in real-time by the visualizations. Dancers were costumed in footed unitards with hoods and specialized make-up. For the audience, the camouflage of pedestrian form through the costuming, completely unique movement vocabulary and computer enhanced sound score contributed to a cohesive gestalt.



Figure 2: Bodies/Antibodies”

“Heavy Recursion”

“Heavy Recursion,” reflected an environment much like our own that is increasingly shaped and dominated by technology, recursively demanding and creating dependency. The use of an overhead camera as the sole sensing device with which to track activity and position freed the dancers from the discomfort or restrictions. By projecting the video feed from the camera onto the cyclorama, the audience was able to see the dancer movement in real time from a top down perspective. Further, a type of “choreographed coding” allowed for the duplication and calibrated fading of images. Additionally, the abstract visuals that were activated by capturing sounds made by dancers and props via a theater microphone further extended the technologically mediated gestalt. Troika Ranch director, Mark Coniglio’s contention that “technologically advanced visual imagery (especially shown in a large scale) is inherently seductive”[2] was echoed in the reaction to “Heavy Recursion.”

The projection of the dancer images positively resonated with audience members in a way that seemed to eliminate the competition between stage and cyclorama. The audience enthusiastically engaged with both live and overhead views of the dancers as well as the tightly coupled interplay between the sound production and resultant visualizations. They commented that the visual and aural perspectives created a totally “interactive” experience for them as their eyes went between the onstage dancers and their altered screen forms while their ears connected pre-recorded and live sound in the real-time creation of kinetic designs. Here are two excerpts of “Heavy Recursion.”



Figure 3: “Heavy Recursion”

Perception, Gestalt and Genre

Since Merce Cunningham first negated the idea of a single focal point in staged dance, multiple and simultaneous points have been expected and accepted. As viewers fixate and scan, they become even more active participants in the dance experience. And that activity level is accentuated with the addition of real-time interaction of dancers with resultant kinetic visualizations. The audience must navigate a complex visual and kinetic gestalt as screen action and embodied motion complement and compete, connect and juxtapose—with an interplay that amplifies the traditional dance experience.

The balance of variables that create this interplay is the lynchpin in linking the two action sites. These variables include:

1. Degree of image representation or abstraction
2. Number of images, frequency of image changes and speed of image action
3. Relationship of images to the choreographic concept
4. Coupling or recognizable relationships between the kinetics of the images and the dancers

In the Dance.Draw project, the audience had the most frustration viewing the total gestalt when the images were very abstract, moved rapidly and were not tightly connected to the dancers’ movements, as in “A Mischief of *Mus musculus*.” Audiences reported more satisfaction with the interactivity of “Bodies/Antibodies” where the screen imagery reflected the physiological cellular activity being depicted by the dancers. In “Heavy Recursion” the imagery and action reflected the technological concept of the choreography and there was tight coupling of the two action palettes. Further, the human forms revealed through the overhead camera feed of the live dancers, helped to connect the audience with the extended gestalt.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that two kinetic palettes operating with real-time interactive technology challenge the viewer's field of vision. By zooming in or out, the dancers and visualizations can be simultaneously perceived or the focus can be exclusively on the human movement or the kinetic action. Most viewers will navigate among the three choices, cultivating new observation techniques suitable for the enlarged gestalt. Johannes Birringer, choreographer and media artist, contends that "gradually scientific and artistic images create a new spectator who learns a new form of attention"[1].

Copyright 2013, Sybil Huskey

Acknowledgements

National Science Foundation/CreativeIT grant (#IIS-0855882), PI, Celine Latulipe, Co-PI, David Wilson with Melissa Word, Erin Carroll, Alberto Gonzalez, Vikash Singh, Jordan Stevens and Danielle Lottridge.

Bibliography

1. Birringer, Johannes. *Performance, Technology and Science*. PAJ Publications, 2008.
2. Broadhurst, Susan and Machon, Josephine (Eds). *Performance and Technology: Practices of Virtual Embodiment and Interactivity*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
3. Dixon, Steve. *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation*. MIT Press, 2007.
4. Berto Gonzalez, Erin Carroll, and Celine Latulipe. 2012. Dance-inspired technology, technology-inspired dance. In Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction: Making Sense Through Design (NordiCHI '12). ACM, New York, NY, USA, 398-407.
5. Latulipe, C., Huskey, S., Wilson, D, Word, M., Carroll, A., Carroll, E., Gonzalez, B., Singh, V., Wirth, M. and Lottridge, D. Exploring the design space in technology-augmented dance. In ACM CHI 2010 Extended Abstracts, ACM (2010)
6. Slater, Chris. *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance*. MIT Press, 2010.

Address for Correspondence

Professor Sybil Huskey
9201 University City Boulevard
Department of Dance Robinson Hall 374
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Charlotte, NC 28223

sdhuskey@uncc.edu

<http://dancedraw.uncc.edu/DanceDraw>

Choreographer as a Culture Hero?

Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg

Abstract

This paper discusses the role of the Bulgarian folk dance choreographer in creation and dissemination of cultural knowledge. The overview of the period 1944-1989 (with the foundation and development of folk choreography institutions and folk dance ensemble activities) is followed by remarks regarding the folk dance activities in the post-socialist era. Attention is drawn to teaching methodology and the general impact of professional choreography training on both stage ensemble and recreational folk dance activities. As either an ensemble leader or recreational folk dance instructor the choreographer became the figure responsible for introduction of traditional dances (old “texts”) and choreographies based on folklore. These became new texts for cultural memorization.

Introduction

In order to underline the importance of the choreographer’s work I have adopted the concept “culture hero,” used here metaphorically and even poetically.¹ By providing a personal note at the beginning, I intend to more precisely clarify what I mean by this title, where I stand in my research, and what my thesis and perspectives are.

About thirty years ago, when I was a Bulgarian folk choreography student at the Institute for Music and Choreography in Sofia, I was introduced to a book entitled “Ballet Over the Centuries,” written by Bulgarian ballet specialist Ana Alexandrova. This book included a quotation from the second century A.D. writer, Λουκιανὸς ὁ Σαμοσατεύς [Lucian of Samosata], related to dance. In Bulgarian the term ὄρχησις [orchēsis], used by Λογκιαν, was translated as dance-chain leader [“vodach na horovoda”], (Alexandrova 1983: 24). In English, as I discovered later, it was translated as “pantomime” (a dance or pantomime performer, associated later with the ballet-dancer).² Lucian states:

You will find that his is no easy profession, nor lightly to be undertaken; requiring as it does, the highest standard of culture in all its branches, and involving a knowledge not of music only, but of rhythm and metre...³

One who creates steps and figures, according to Lucian, must have universal knowledge: must know geometry in order to construct figures, philosophy and rhetoric in order to depict characters and to arouse passions, the art of painting and of sculpture in order to compose groups and ensembles. As far as mythology is concerned, he/she is obliged to know perfectly well the events from antiquity to the present days.

I won’t go as far as claiming that this description set the standard that I have faithfully pursued in my own choreographic work. It stood up, however, as a strong reminder that a dance-creating person is indeed a world-creating one. This is especially true when one works on a

grand scale by involving many people and consequently, steadily disseminates one's own knowledge and interpretation of the past, with one's ideas, sense of beauty and proportion, dance mastery, style and more. Every choreographer, as we named this profession centuries later (and I will skip the history of the term), is responsible for transmitting specific cultural messages; he/she is, in a sense, a culture hero.

We may recall many philosophers and thinkers from antiquity to the present who discuss the influence of music one listens to in one's youth, paintings which surround us, books one reads, and arts in general (from the 20th century philosophers Susan Langer comes to mind right away⁴). To this series I will add later, with a bit of underlining, "the dances we grew up with."

Returning to my example, Lucian's thoughts caught my realization that knowledge of steps, figures and choreographic principles is only the first step of a long journey, one which I was already eager to undertake. Another realization of my twenties was that, due to the 1950s and later Bulgarian urbanization, learning traditional Bulgarian dances in their traditional contexts was not part of the 1980s reality. If a city child wanted to learn folk dance his parents would send the child to one of the city's folk dance ensembles. Here the child met the choreographer, was introduced to the Bulgarian character exercise (adopted from the Soviet Union ensemble model, although with Bulgarian character elements), and learned the repertoire. As a result, a child with several years of dance ensemble experience would have in its body and mind dozens and dozens of dance combinations but would not be able to name or dance more than a few traditional dances. These early realizations coalesced and sent me on the path toward my future studies and professional work.

In my paper I want to discuss the impact of the folk professional training along with showing a few 2013 video examples that I find illustrative. One of them is a YouTube recording of a men's dance during a Bulgarian wedding. This post probably broke all records of visiting somebody's' private wedding, ever. I will also share some examples from this year's large Bulgarian Festival in Chicago.

The possibility to conduct fieldwork in the States since 2003 now provides ground for comparative studies of Bulgarian dance both inside and outside the homeland and offers a whole new array of research opportunities. But before introducing my examples let me first provide few brief contextual notes.

Establishment and development of the Bulgarian folk choreography profession

Although one may find the emerging figure of the folk dance teacher in the first half of the 20th century,⁵ it wasn't until the early 1960s that Bulgaria sent several of the State's most prominent folk dance talents to the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in Moscow to receive professional choreography training.⁶ At that time, building a network of amateur folk dance groups all over the country was one of the acts illustrating the Bulgarian communist government's strategy to use this activity as a means for propaganda and control.⁷ From its very early stages both professional and amateur folk dance ensembles became part of a phenomenon of great complexity: the child of the cultural politics of the time but at the same time, a thoroughly apolitical human expression, one that unified people of different interests and professions, lovers of Bulgarian music and dance, eager to learn, to dance with others and to perform.

What was the role of the choreographer? From the above perspective choreographers were meant to be the workers who would help in building the image of a prosperous, happy state and

society—co-creators of an art that was socialistic in form and national by its content. The government’s needs met the talent of the first folk dance masters and, in 1960s, the so called “First Generation” of professional choreographers became the creators of a new genre—“Bulgarian Stage Dance Art Based on Folklore.” The First Generation set the standards in choreographing suites from different Bulgarian folklore regions and this became a model for the next generations of choreographers.⁸ In the 1960s and 1970s many good dancers, faithful to the Party or apolitical, undertook professional choreography training. The most talented choreographers produced a number of folk dance ensemble masterpieces, introduced folk dancing to thousands of people, toured all over the world with their troupes, and lived productive professional lives.

As a result of building strong professional choreographic institutions, in the 1980s one could no longer find a dance ensemble led by someone not professionally trained.⁹ Every choreographer, usually personally involved in a performance group since childhood, studied principles of stage arts, folk dance arrangements and dance genres; everyone, in order to build a high level performance’s skills, incorporated into one’s own practice the Bulgarian character exercise. Every professional had also studied folk dance methodology.

The democratic shift in Bulgaria led to an inevitable transition in the folk dance scene due to the politico-economic severity of the period. Despite closures of many ensembles in the 1990s, at the threshold of the 21st century, small Bulgaria had two state and two private universities that offered bachelor degrees in folk choreography.

The recreational folk dance movement became a new 21st century phenomenon in Bulgaria. Initiated and directed by professional choreographers seeking work, although oriented toward recreational dancing, folk dance clubs inherited, to varying degrees, the state folk dance ensemble model. Today professional choreographers produce DVDs and online tutorials and these serve as a conduit for folk dance learning. Enabled by new technology and internet access, these resources are widely used by the growing Bulgarian folk dance community in the United States.

Excerpts of interviews with Bulgarian choreographers

In my many interviews with Bulgarian folk choreographers, my question, “What do you mean by the concept “choreographer,” was often answered: “The choreographer is a person who creates his/her own dances.” Or:

The choreographer is a person for everything - he/she must be universal. As you like it—as an organizer and as everything, from alpha to omega...

For me a choreographer is a person who creates dances that are planted on solid ground with respect to the ethnographic regions. But today things are blurred—everybody proclaims to be a choreographer...¹⁰

In spite of the differentiation between the choreographer-dance composer and choreographer-dance coach, which is informally made, in practice the term “choreographer” (quote) *combines both*, including pedagogic skills and more.¹¹

A few things I want to outline from these excerpts, besides the self-confidence of Bulgarians as professionals:

- emphasis on creativity
- the wish that new creations will have genuine Bulgarian roots
- pedagogic work

Teaching methodology: the “syllabus method” in practice

The so called “syllabus method” has been practiced for decades by the most prominent dance educators working with children. In this method the elements of the Bulgarian character exercise are associated with the alphabet; it is informally named “The Dance Alphabet of a Child Studying Bulgarian dance.”¹² Dance elements are combined in sentences and sentences into dance phrases. In this methodology children not only imitate the movement of the dance teacher, they in fact learn repertoire as one learns a new language.

The rhyme-speech, narrated according to the meter of the melody (verse, song, recitative) enables the rhythm-melody-steps unit to penetrate and to be remembered at a deeper level. “If the culture is a sum total of uninherited information, then the question, how has this information been introduced to man and community, make sense”, states Lotman (1990: 273). According to him, learning of one or another human language could be conducted in two ways: by learning one’s own native language at an early age or by learning another language. In the first case, there is no introduction of rules in the learners’ consciousness; they are replaced by the texts one adopts. The second case is when there are rules that are set in the learners’ consciousness on whose base the learner can create his/her own texts. (Lotman 1990: 273, translated by the author, D.I.N.)

One may recognize similar processes (introduction of rules in the learners’ consciousness) in Bulgarian folk dance choreography training. This is a key point for understanding and analyzing choreographic processes. It also serves as the core for improvisations by experienced folk dancers.

Professionals who are producing YouTube Bulgarian dance tutorials today also use terminology established in the profession for decades.¹³ A dance scholar who is familiar with Adrienne Kaeppler’s dance anthropological writings will probably recognize this “broken-down” movements as kinemes and morphokines (Kaeppler, 1993: 112-113). Kaeppler’s work (with her analogues of phonemes and morphemes) is not well-known in Bulgaria. Every Bulgarian choreographer, however, is familiar with the concept of “dance text” [tanzov text], as it was introduced by Georgy Abrashev, the first theoretician of the Bulgarian choreographic genre. During his study in Moscow’s GITIS in the 1970s, Abrashev embraced Yuri Lotman’s theory of the structure of a literary text. He developed the concept that choreography as an art can be described as a secondary language, and dance—as the text of that language¹⁴; this concept serves today as the main methodological tool in Bulgarian folk choreography education.

Video examples

My first video-example—a wedding in Bulgaria in 2013—shows a dance performed by young men who graduated a few years before the wedding from the Bulgarian National Choreography School.¹⁵ The surprise for the bride, groom and guests was a dance that they learned as students.

The dance named “Men from Thrace” was a choreography of one of the most prominent Bulgarian choreographers, Todor Bekirski. Bekirski, with whom I conducted a long interview in 2001, stated:

Everything in the world in the life of man undergoes development. Once we had turned folklore dance into a profession, we had to develop it. In the past there was the plough and now, it is again the plough... It just cannot be like that; the plough is no more.”¹⁶

People who have been involved in professional or amateur folk dance ensemble activities have absorbed their own ensembles’ repertoire. Repertoire becomes a cultural memory and is often brought to life from current or former ensemble dancers for private parties and celebrations.

From my attendance and observation of the 2013 Vereia Bulgarian Festival in Chicago¹⁷ I want to mention two things:

- A. Almost all choreographers leading a Bulgarian group in the States were people with professional training in Bulgaria
- B. By watching the repertoire of the performances one may well recognize manifestations of previous ensemble experience, including bringing back choreographies from the 1970s and 1980s that they learned as students.

Conclusion

The choreographer reflects the cultural environment that created him/her, but choreographer also creates a new cultural environment. Therefore it is natural—in fact, mandatory—to account for the past and current political, economic and cultural climate, as well as for the effects of the changes on the choreographic profession as a whole. Regarding creation of a new environment, Todor Bekirski, mentioned above, stated: “Similarity gives rise to similarity,” i.e., the choreographer teaches, (moulds), and educates dancers while taking himself as a model”.

So, is a choreographer a culture hero?

Copyright 2013, Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the invitation and hospitality of the 2013 Vereia Bulgarian Festival (Chicago) and the opportunity to observe and record the performances of Bulgarian groups across the US and Canada.

Notes

1. In the 1980s, as an undergraduate student at the Sofia University Slavic Department, I was first introduced to this concept by Eleazar Meletinsky’s “The Poetics of Myth” (for the English version see Meletinsky 1998).

2. The H.W. Fowler & F.G. Fowler translation note states: 'Pantomime' has been chosen as the most natural translation of ὄρχησις, which in this dialogue has reference for the most part to the ballet-dancer (*pantomimus*) of imperial times. On the other hand, Lycinus, in order to establish the antiquity and the universality of an art that for all practical purposes dates only from the Augustan era, and (despite the Greek artists) is Roman in origin, avails himself of the wider meaning of ὄρχησις to give us the historic and prehistoric associations of *dance* in Greece and elsewhere; and in such passages it seemed advisable to sacrifice consistency, and to translate ὄρχησις dance (The Works of Lucian of Samosata, 2012:276).
3. See Langer on Cultural Significance of the Art, 1993.
4. Ibid. p. 281.
5. In his *Bulgarska Narodna Choreographia* Bulgarian musicologist Stoyan Dzhudzev provided data about several groups that started recreational dance outside the traditional village context and also performed before an audience and on a stage. Some of these groups were affiliated to the city's sports union; others – to community or factory unions (See Dzhudzhev, 1945). In 1955 the noted musicologist Rayna Katzarova, in her book on Bulgarian dance folklore, pointed out the processes of disappearance of many traditional dances, outlining also a few trends in dance teaching styles and folk dance arrangements that she observed on the emerging urban folk dance scene (See Katzarova, 1955).
6. Among them was Margarita Dikova, the first choreographer of the National Music and Dance Folklore Ensemble, founded by maestro Philip Koutev in 1951.
7. See for examples Lectures, 1947.
8. Ivanova-Nyberg, 2011.
9. This is quite different from the situation in former Yugoslavia, for example, as noted by Elsie Dunin, (See Dunin 1995:8).
10. See Ivanova-Nyberg 2011: 105-116.
11. Ibid.
12. It was described to me as such by Latchezaria Pavlova who is a noted Bulgarian dance specialist and with who I worked closely in the period 1992-2000. Pavlova is also an author of methodological literature that is used at public schools with choreography education and children ensembles.
13. The professional jargon was already developed in the 1960s (See Haralampiev and Dzhenev, 1967).
14. See Abrashev, 1989, 2001.
15. See Festival Vereia 2013 video link.
16. See Ivanova, 2001.
17. See Bulgarian Wedding link, 2013.

Bibliography

- Abrashev, Georgi. *Vaprosi na Choreografskata Theoria* [Questions of the Choreography's Theory]. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1989.
- . *Kompositsia i Formi na Tantsa* [Composition and Forms of Dance]. Sofia: Helikon, 2001.
- Alexandrova, Ana. *Baletat Prez Vekovete*. [Ballet Over the Centuries] Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1983.
- Dunin, Elsie and Stanimir Vishinski. *Ensemble Tanec: Dances of Macedonia*. Skopje, 1995.
- Dzhudzhev, Stoyan. *Bulgarska Narodna Choreographia* [Bulgarian Folk Choreography]. Sofia, 1945.
- Ivanova-Nyberg, Daniela. *Sustavut za Narodni Tantzi Kato Kulturno Yavlenie v Bulgaria* [Bulgarian Folk Dance Ensemble as a Cultural Phenomenon]. Sofia: Mars 09, 2011.
- Ivanova, Daniela. "Choreographut i Folklorното Tantzovo Nasledstvo" [Choreographer and Folk Dance Heritage]. *Bulgarian Folklore*, 2001: 2–3, 110–119.

- Haralampiev, Kyril and Kyril Dzhenev. *Universalen Tantzopis* [Universal Dance Notation]. Tantzovo Izkustvo, 1967: 11-12.
- Katzarova, Rayna. *Bulgarski Tantzov Folklor* [Bulgarian Dance Folklore]. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1955.
- Kaeppler, Adriane L. *Poetry in Motion: Studies of Tongan Dance*. Tonga, Vava'u Press Ltd., 1993.
- Langer, Susanne. "Kulturnoto Znachenie na Izkustvoto" [Cultural Significance of the Art] in Ivan Stefanov and Dimitar Ginev (eds.) *Idei v Kulturologiata*, Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1993, 2: 160–172.
- Lektzii: Kulturno-Hudozhestvena Rabota Sred Rabotnitsite i Sluzhitelite. Samodeyno Izkustvo i Samodeyni Kolektivi* [Culture-Artistic Work Among Factory and Office Workers. Amateur Art and Amateurs Groups]. Certificate No 1550/14 VIII 1947 of the Ministry of Information and Arts, Sofia, 1947.
- Lotman, Yuri. *Poetika. Tipologia na Kulturata* [Poetics. Typology of Culture]. Sofia: Narodna Kultura, 1990.
- Meletinsky, Eleazar. *The Poetics of Myth*. Lanoue, Guy and Alexandre Sadetsky (transl.) New York and London: Routledge, 1998.
- The Works of Lucian of Samosata*. Fowler, H.W. and F.G. Fowler (transl.) Digireads.com Publishing, 2012.

List of Videos referred

- Bulgarian Wedding. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfsXoQS-AaM> – accessed on April 25, 2013.
- Festival Vereia 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvFtQ8TBmSE> – accessed on May, 2013.

Address for correspondence

Daniela Ivanova-Nyberg

114 Community Dr.

Silver Lake, WA 98645

U.S.A.

E-mail address: daniela.nyberg@yahoo.com

Some Steps Towards a New Pedagogy of Dance History

Hanna Järvinen

The Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki

Abstract

In this paper, I will focus on the challenges to a historian's identity in a practical pedagogical environment of an arts university. I argue that in dance, which is often begun at an early age and where practitioners rely on their teachers for an "oral history" of the past of the art form, the obligatory history classes should integrate the practical interests of the students (their sense of agency) beyond the often expensive practice of reconstruction. This requires a redefinition of dance history as a discourse constantly constructed anew and re-evaluated, a discourse which is corporeal and embodied as well as written. The pedagogical principle of this history – or rather, genealogy in the Foucauldian sense – should be in assisting the student to learn to unlearn: to question beliefs and aspects of their practice they have thus far taken for granted. For the teacher, this principle requires openness about our (institutional) positions of power, both restrictions imposed by curricular demands and our cherished canons of art. I address some of the methodological and practical insights that artistic research in dance offers for historiography and the pedagogy of history.

Introduction

In this paper, I am first going to give some methodological pointers and principles and then connect those to one practical example, a class on the Judson group for first-year MA students in Dance at the Theatre Academy (TeaK) in Helsinki. This was supposed to be a case study for a project I was directing for the Finnish Cultural Foundation (FCF), in which my colleague Anne Makkonen and I thought of ways in which to teach dance history to dance students. This project sought to provoke discussion on dance history and its pedagogy in this institution and to seek out new, practical means of teaching and doing historiography.¹ I will return to it in the end.

Methodological Principles

By training, I am a historian, but what I do as history is strongly defined through Michel Foucault's ideas and the methods of the so-called New History or cultural history, which is – in more ways than one – a minority pursuit in History as an academic discipline.² Yet, my interest in Foucault's genealogy and later, Hayden White's metahistory,³ came about from a political concern over what is the purpose of historiography – I basically had to justify to myself why I was writing on some long dead dancer (possibly) of not that much interest to anybody else (at least that's what my colleagues told me which is why I am no longer at a history department).

Foucault was particularly useful because he was interested in questions of discursive power. He proposed that instead of history, what he pursued was genealogy:

Genealogy is grey, it is meticulous and patiently documentary. It works on parchments that are confused, scratched, several times rewritten. Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound view of the philosopher would compare to the scholar's mole-like perspective; on the contrary, it opposes the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origin'.⁴

More importantly, in an interview published as *Remarks on Marx*, Foucault pointed out that:

[I]t is evident that in order to have [- a transformative experience -] through a book like *The History of Madness*, it is necessary that what it asserts is somehow 'true', in terms of historically verifiable truth. But what is essential is not found in series of historically verifiable proofs; it lies rather in the experience which the book permits us to have. And an experience is neither true nor false: it is always a fiction, something constructed, which exists only after it has been made, not before; it isn't something that is 'true', but it has been a reality.⁵

So, a good historian writes something that, whilst based on the patient documentation of confused and much used parchments nonetheless allows the reader to have a fictional experience that changes something in how they perceive their world. I certainly know several people who get a very strong experience out of the beginning of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, but for my purposes, what he does is not quite enough. So, I turned to Hayden White's use of metahistory from the eponymous book. Like Foucault, White starts from the point that any history is always written in the present and for the future, so in *Metahistory*, he wrote on how the "founding fathers" of History defined the discipline and why that was relevant to current debates within that discipline. That is, White was writing the history of History, questioning the history of the discipline *at the time of writing*.⁶ Taking this to my context, I wanted to question what was the dance in Dance.

Canonicity

Coming to the practical pedagogical environment of an arts school posed new issues for me. The direction of the studies is strongly *towards the future*, towards the creation of the new – however that is defined. Yet, the questions of power involved both on the institutional level of who wields power and in the definitions of canonicity and aesthetic evaluation that are integral to decision-making in an arts institution, tend not to be openly discussed with the students or become visible in the curriculum. In other words, there is no "metahistory": we do not ask "but is it art?" Rather, we instigate that "what is done here is art".

In other words, in the arts, we always relate to the current, local and historically changing ideal called the canon.⁷ Even if we do not focus on art dance, the power of this artistic canon is very strong – in funding decisions, for example. A relationship does not mean that we accept the canon or that what we do is part of the canon, but the power of the institution in which we teach assures that what we do invariably partakes in canonization, the process of creating canons.

In dance, which is a practice often begun at an early age and where practitioners rely on the "oral history" of their teachers' also in constructing an idea of the past of the art form – often, the canon – it is usually the job of the academic historian to argue against these received views, at least on the postgraduate level. However, opening up the power-relationships that canonicity entails is very difficult because the experience (the importance of which Foucault so eloquently praises), is not rational – it is always emotional and in dance, specifically corporeal. This means rational argumentation can never counteract it, and that every experience we produce for the students – such as a re-enactment of past events or a canonized piece – produces these experiences about the past. Unfortunately, these experiences are also easily confused with history, leaving out precisely what distinguishes history as a discipline from a general understanding of the past. In other words, the experience overrules both the historically verifiable proofs and the patient work of the scholar that should be emphasized if something is discussed as history.

As a teacher, I therefore have a responsibility to help the students distinguish between what remains as evidence of the past, what is deduced from these materials, and how and why such deductions are made at a given time. Often, it is very useful to pose some kind of opposition between two interpretations of the same material, which is what I planned to do for the Judson class.

No Plans Survives First Contact...

My assignment was to teach four sessions, three of which would precede and prepare for a workshop the students would do on release technique and the fourth one would act as a critical conclusion. I was assigned Ramsay Burt's *Judson Dance Theater*⁸ as the teaching material, and actually assumed the students would have read Sally Banes's *Terpsichore in Sneakers*,⁹ which this book criticizes. The students (eight girls and one boy) were supposed to read the book independently and I was supposed to contextualize it in class.

These are not my regular students – my lectureship is at the Performing Arts Research Centre, which is a centre for doctoral studies and research.¹⁰ This meant I was a stranger talking on a strange topic. Moreover, thanks to my previous experience at both BA and MA level in other universities in Finland, I knew the students would not read the book. For one, it was a whole book in academic English: this meant it was too long and too difficult for most of them. Hence, I was prepared to answer a lot of questions about what does this or that word mean, because I also knew that at least some of the students would have tried to read the text. Again, not all: I also knew they would not have bought the book and there were only three copies in the library.

What I did not expect was that most of the students had not read Sally Banes's book – something I fortunately asked about right at the beginning. Since Burt's book is a kind of a counter-argument, this meant the students did not know the original argument, which would have contributed to a feeling of not understanding what Burt is on about. Basically, it meant I could not use the text without losing the students. I had to recreate both of the books for them.

In addition, I quickly found that these students were all over the place when it came to their general understanding of the part of history we call the twentieth century, let alone the bit of it we call the 1960s. Two of them were really up to date and, of course,

keen to share all that they knew. The rest were visibly uncomfortable about not being able to answer and being overwhelmed by these two students. My first task was to facilitate between students' different levels of knowledge.

Our Professor of Dance later told me that these unexpected issues reflected the manner in which students were selected into the MA program. Some of them came from the BA program at Teak, some from other BA-level dance programs in polytechnics and the Ballet School. They also came from different parts of the country, which is significant because both the "best" and the "worst" primary and secondary schools are in large cities. If you grow up in the countryside, you are disenfranchised in terms of available teaching (non-obligatory curriculum).¹¹

Nowadays, the history taught at school is no longer following a chronological plan of grand events as it did when I went to school in the 1980s. I knew this was the case but did not quite fathom that it meant students with no sense of chronology, historical cause and effect: although they may know a lot about a particular topic (something on which they had done project), they lack understanding in how that topic connects with everything else. In addition, there is the major step from what is taught as history at school and the academic discipline of History, which is about building arguments rather than about taking them as facts.

Improvisation

On MA level, I certainly did not want to teach a chronology of the Judson group, particularly as it is a historical construct built for the purposes of canonization and to the exclusion of other things happening at the same time – the kinds of things Burt discusses in his book. I improvised: I asked the students to give me pointers as to what kinds of general things they knew happened during their grandparents' generation. As with not assuming school history classes stayed the same, it is crucial to remember that your students do not remember the same things you do – they have a different horizon of expectations¹².

With a bit of a struggle – they did not know me, after all – I got out words like feminism, and went to give them an outline on what happened after the Second World War, happily using movies and television series to help them recall what they may have heard in a history class years ago – so, *A Band of Brothers* for Second World War. At this stage, somebody remembered the Black Panthers (having seen *Malcolm X*) and somebody else brought up the Vietnam war (*Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket*). I had some pictures prepared and brought them up on the screen. I also showed them a clip on the moon landing and reminded them of the Cold War and the Soviet Union, which collapsed about the time they were born. In Finland, with over 1,300 kilometers of shared border, this evoked responses about what their parents had told them – which I thought was very good – and then some discussion on how the Finnish situation would have been very different from the American one, which enabled me to point to Anne Makkonen's research on Finnish dance in the 1980s,¹³ which is when release, for example, first arrived to Finland. This created a nice lead-in to Judson and the workshop they were about to do.

It also pointed to how America is not lived experience for these students. I wanted to give them a sense of time and place, of temporal and local specificity that would also enable them to question why they were required to sit on a class in Helsinki about this

group in New York fifty years ago. Having myself studied at the Tisch School of the Arts and knowing it was very unlikely more than two of them had been to New York (I asked), I took up Google Maps and we searched for New York and Washington Square Park and the Judson Church. We looked at some images of the place and then of some of the dancers in that space, meaning I showed what little remains in terms of some videos of Judson performances. I am immensely grateful to Ramsay Burt for sharing these videos with me when I told him I would be teaching his book.

The scarcity of the material and its poor quality enabled a discussion of how little remains of performance practice. It also allowed me to point at where Burt uses these videos – just in case some of them would actually read the book later. At the end of the first class, I collected from them a list of the key figures in the Judson group on the whiteboard and then asked them to find out more by looking for these people and for Judson in YouTube. Their assignment was to share and introduce to the class a piece that they had found intriguing, and to explicate what in the movement they found familiar, strange, interesting or disturbing. I have to say they did this extremely well, although two of the shyest girls teamed up.

The second session was spent going through movement material. In terms of the FCF research project, this was hugely interesting. Several times, I had to emphasize there was no "right answer", here. Because the students knew I was not a dancer, I could ask "stupid questions" and demand clarifications. I refused to take "well, you know" or "like this" as an explanation. At the same time, the assignment turned the tables, made the students the experts. It allowed for a sharing of aesthetic and practical considerations: the students could point to their particular interests in class and also disagree about their findings based on the kinds of dance traditions that they came from.

Somehow, I managed to steer them to talking about the movement and composition qualities that create a sense of group within these excerpts. Again, these students had next to no idea as to what American modern dance *prior to* Judson looked like. The connections they created arose from their specific experiences in the Finnish context, which was precisely the kind of genealogy I was looking to get to, an articulation of the "oral history" of their teachers, looking from the present perspective towards the past rather than vice versa. Some of them were quite critical about terms like "pedestrian movement", others missed virtuosity – and interestingly, one of these was the person with a street dance background. Because the videos were from various re-enactments, revivals and re-makings, we also talked a little about how dance becomes repertory, what is a 'work' and about dance documentation and (theatrical) space – for example, I tend to find it annoying that on film someone else decides where I should look at a given moment.

At the end of the class, I quickly recapped, did a sort of "traditional" history of how the Judson group came about from people meeting and sharing their interests and on how the group included and became canonized through the involvement of non-dancers (artists like Robert Rauschenberg). I emphasized that canonization also rests on what these people went to do later and on academic research on them. We watched a clip from a TV-documentary and I pointed to how the narrator framed the group, creating fame and a kind of permanence for performing art, also pointing to the YouTube assignment. Their second assignment was to look for this legacy. As an assignment, it proved badly worded and the students really struggled with it – also, I suspect their schedules were so full that some of them simply forgot about it and then panicked at the last minute. (This is

definitely something I will have to reconsider and rephrase when I am teaching this course this coming year).

Without the students providing me material for discussion, for the third session I had to again improvise. I focused on canonization and the Judson dancers as middle-class, well-to-do white people (*Malcolm X*, again). I briefed the students on the key critical points in Ramsay Burt's book, contesting the notion of post-modern dance. This led into a vivid discussion on definition of dance styles in general when one of the students complained how dance definitions "make no sense" when you read art history. In effect, we ended up leaping right into my conclusions about how dance history creates canons through ideas about authors and works and styles. We watched clips from *Making Dances*¹⁴ and I spoke more on Grand Union and on how contact improvisation and release came to Finland in the 1980s¹⁵ and the formation of the Dance department of TeaK¹⁶. I focused on Trisha Brown, specifically, showing a clip to encourage discussion on issues like repetition and task-based choreography. For example, I asked the students how they saw these in their own practice and what kinds of qualities they imagined these kinds of choreographers would look for in a dancer. This enabled them to again relate – or, in some cases, *not* relate – to Judson (one student pointed to having been taught release technique already in the TeaK BA program but not really understanding its connection to Judson and "the whole pedestrian movement thing" before this). It turned out that some of them really disliked what they called "vague instructions" by choreographers.

Some Conclusions

Due to time, I will skip the post-workshop session. To end this paper, I want to say that the FCF project failed – Anne and I were not able to do the kinds of things we wanted to do, principally because neither one of us was Dance faculty, and as such we have no say in the program. However, the Judson course succeeded in teaching me a lot about improvisation, my own assumptions and how to engage with students I barely knew. I still need to work on giving more space to students, especially the quiet ones, and to be more patient with silence. I am not at all a typical Finn and with a lot of material to cover, I have a tendency to take over.

Having said this, despite some reservations about how visiting teachers figure in the Dance program, etc., I had a very positive experience and based on later feedback, so did the students. I probably would not have been asked to redo the course if this weren't the case. The students particularly seemed to like discussion on movement qualities and said it helped with the workshop. In the final session, they demonstrated far more confidence in speaking about the dance technique and of their own experiences.¹⁷ However, the conclusion is also something I need to rework for next year, if only in the hopes that someday some of them might actually want to read a book.

Copyright 2013, Hanna Järvinen

Notes

1. see e.g. Järvinen & Makkonen 2012.
2. Foucault 2001, esp. 1004-1024 ("Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire", 1971); Burke 2001; Hunt 1989.
3. White 1979.
4. "La généalogie est grise; elle est méticuleuse et patiemment documentaire. Elle travaille sur des parchemins embrouillés, grattes, plusieurs fois récrits. [--] La généalogie ne s'oppose pas à l'histoire comme la vue altière et profonde du philosophe au regard de taupe du savant; elle s'oppose au contraire au déploiement métahistorique des significations idéales et des indéfinies téléologies. Elle s'oppose à la recherche de l'origine'." Foucault 2001, 1004-1005. My translation.
5. Foucault 1991, 33, 36.
6. White 1979, esp. 2: "My own analysis of the deep structure of the historical imagination of Nineteenth century Europe is intended to provide a new perspective on the current debate over the nature and function of historical knowledge."
7. e.g. Citron 1995, esp. 19-22; Moxey 1994, esp. 111-147; Dodds 2011, esp. 2-3.
8. Burt 2006.
9. Banes 1987.
10. see The Performing Arts Research Centre [2013] webpages.
11. Internationally, Finland is known for great PISA results (outlined at Finnish National Board of Education [2013]), but at the same time, children are depressed and unhappy at school, suffering from massive cutbacks in the system: see e.g. Tikkanen 2012; and Simola, Kangasvieri, Kinnunen, Kolbe & Pitkälä 2013 reporting on their research project.
12. Koselleck 2004, esp. 255-275.
13. Makkonen [2013].
14. Blackwood 2001.
15. I had recently done a lecture-demonstration on this with Anne Makkonen and Jaana Turunen, one of the first choreographers to teach somatic techniques in Finland in the 1980s: Järvinen, Makkonen & Turunen 2010.
16. This was mostly based on hearsay from older colleagues regarding the decisions made not to teach specific "named techniques" to students. In practice, it has resulted in graduates speaking of the programme as "that mixed technique".
17. Obviously, this was not due to me but to the manner in which they had grown as dancers in the intervening months. However, it certainly helped they knew me when walking into class, eager to share their thoughts on the studio work.

Bibliography

- Blackwood, Michael. *Making Dances: Seven Post-Modern Choreographers*. 89 min, colour. Michael Blackwood Productions, 1980, re-release 2001.
- Banes, Sally. *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987 (1980).
- Burke, Peter. "Ouverture – The New History: Its Past and Its Future." In Peter Burke, ed., *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, 1-24.
- Burt, Ramsay. *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Citron, Marcia J. *Gender and the Musical Canon*. Cambridge, New York and Melbourne:

- Cambridge University Press, 1995 (1993).
- Dodds, Sherril. *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Finnish National Board of Education. "Pisa Programme for International Students Assessment" http://www.oph.fi/english/sources_of_information/international_assessments/pisa [28 June 2013].
- Foucault, Michel. *Remarks on Marx*. Interview with Duccio Trombadori, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito. New York: Semiotexte, 1991 (Italian 1978).
- Foucault, Michel. *Dits et écrits 1954-1988, tome I: 1954-1975*. Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001 (1994).
- Hunt, Lynn (ed.). *The New Cultural History*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989.
- Järvinen, Hanna & Makkonen Anne. "Speaking, moving, dance: Incorporated language in practice and research." In Liisa Ikonen, Hanna Järvinen & Maiju Loukola (ed.), *Näyttämöltä tutkimukseksi: Esittävien taiteiden metodologiset haasteet – From the Stage to Research: Methodological Challenges in Performing Arts*. Näyttämö ja tutkimus 4. Helsinki: Teatterintutkimuksen seura 2012, 68-81. www.teats.fi/julkaisut
- Järvinen, Hanna & Makkonen Anne & Turunen, Jaana. "Performing, remembering, researching dance: a trio." Shift presentation at Camillo 2.0, Performance Studies international (PSi) conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands, 26 May 2011.
- Koselleck, Reinhardt. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Transl. by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004 (German 1979).
- Makkonen, Anne. Personal webpages. <http://www.wwwmakkonen.kotisivukone.com>. [28. June 2013].
- Moxey, Keith. *The Practice of Theory: Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics and Art History*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Simola, Hannu & Kangasvieri, Anneli & Kinnunen, Kari & Kolbe, Laura & Pitkälä, Aulis. "Puheenaihe: Peruskoulu on vaarassa." *Aamulehti* 1 June 2013.
- The Performing Arts Research Centre. <http://www.teak.fi/Research> [28 June 2013]
- Tikkanen, Tiina. "Ei integroitavissa." *Opettaja* 11 January 2013. http://www.opettaja.fi/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/OPETTAJALEHTI_EPAPER_PG/2013_01/174007.htm [28 June 2013]
- White, Hayden V. *Metahistory: Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*. Baltimore, ML and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975 (1973).

Address for correspondence:

Name: Hanna Järvinen

E-mail address: gekko@iki.fi

Transforming the Dance Researcher: Maud Robart and Haitian Yanvalou

Pablo Jimenez

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Abstract

Yanvalou is a dance that belongs to the voodoo Rada rite of Haiti. Maud Robart is a Haitian artist and researcher, who extracted yanvalou from its ritual environment to explore the relationship among creation, tradition and modernity. Robart turns our awareness from the external manifestations of such an art to an exploration of and study of inner impulses that produce them. In the summer of 2012, I conducted fieldwork for my investigation on the Yanvalou dance within the context of Robart's work. In Maude's philosophy, it is only after the performer has refined an observation and awareness of the dynamics between the body's impulses and the mind that an understanding of the external manifestation in the form of a dance can become clear. This paper investigates how dance research may include the processes of transformation of agency and identity of the performer and the researcher. In order to understand Robart's propositions, my attitude as a researcher had to be shaped by my ability to adapt and transform my notion and quality of observation.



Figure 1: Maud Robart

Maud Robart is a Haitian artist and researcher. She was born in Port au Prince, Haiti. Currently, she lives in southern France where she conducts her research. The core of her work are ritual chants and dances from the voodoo tradition, through which she explores the problematic between the modern and archaic approaches to creativity and

art. Central to her research is the Yanvalou dance, which, in its simplest form, is a two-step structure of movement, as we can see in the film.

The yanvalou dance belongs to the voodoo Rada rite in Haiti. Voodoo is a syncretic religion that integrates elements of religions from Africa, as well as Catholicism, and the religion of the Taino, the indigenous people the European colonizers found when they first arrived in Haiti.

The Rada rite is the main ceremony of the voodoo religion. It is also called the rite of the snake or Dambalah, the highest god in the voodoo pantheon who represents the source of life.

I have followed the work of Robart since 1987. However, my academic research on it began about three years ago, as I integrated it into my studies in the dance program at the University of Hawaii.

This paper is part of a larger research, which eventually will become my master's thesis and it focuses on the role of yanvalou, as practiced in Robart's work, in the transformation of the dancer. My thesis is that if by learning a dance the dancer develops a new perception of his own body and self, such learning becomes a process of transformation of his identity, the way he relates to his body, as well as the quality and intent of his kinesthetic actions.

At the beginning of my research, I saw the yanvalou dance as a form that could be learned through imitation and repetition, as a form that could be described on the basis of its external appearance. I also had the naive believe that in my research I could apply the notions of dance embodiment and participant observation I learned in college. But it did not take long for me to realize that in order to understand Robart's propositions, I needed to set aside my preconceived beliefs about learning, observing, research, and knowledge. It was crucial for me to shift from a detached and purely intellectual attitude to a predominantly practical work, which challenged me to develop an acute kinesthetic perception, in addition to trying to find a new approach to my body, no longer based on the body image I had constructed with the help of the culture I live in.

When I worked with Robart, she showed me her yanvalou, but in order for me to embody what I was observing, imitation was not enough. I had to bring most of my attention into my body in order to organize the motor impulses that produced the dance. Throughout this process Robart gave me simple and practical advices that helped me to discover new ways to handle the mechanical impulses of my body. She also encouraged me to find the source of the dance within myself. All this work provoked a radical shift in my understanding of the yanvalou dance. I went from viewing yanvalou as an external physical and cultural form, to perceiving it as a complex of relationships between the mechanics of my body and my psyche.

In this paper I will address Robart's pedagogy is an instance of *situated knowledge*; a concept introduced by the scholar Donna Haraway and applied to performance studies by professor Lynette Hunter¹. I will also contextualize Robart's ideas about impulse in the phenomenology of the German philosopher Alvin Hermann Schmitz, particularly his thoughts about the *felt body*, and what he calls the *vital drive*².

Learning yanvalou with Robart is an experience which requires leaving behind the attitude of a detached observer or a dancer who wants to learn a new pattern of movement, and instead, entering into a process which demands a careful observation of body actions and impulses, characterized by a highly focused awareness.

In Robart's work, embodying a dance becomes a process of acquiring what Donna Haraway and Lynette Hunter call *situated knowledge*. This category of knowledge is constructed through practice, and through a dynamic relationship between the knowing subject and the known object³.

In *situated knowledge* both the knowing subject and the known object are mutually transforming agents⁴. In the context of Robart's work, dance is constructed and practiced through a process of apprenticeship that goes beyond learning a movement pattern, because it transforms the agency and identity of the practitioner⁵.

Robart's quest is unique, because by means of the simple scheme of movement of yanvalou, she helps the dancer to turn his attention towards the embodiment of dance and experience it as a process in which he cultivates a new internal perception of his own self. In this process, the dancer is continuously involved with and affected by what he is doing. Such involvement is both realized and facilitated by corporeal feelings. This mode of experiencing the body relates to what Alvin Hermann Schmitz calls *the felt body*.

For Schmitz *the felt body* is a feeling body, the carrier of corporeal feelings and impulses, it exists by becoming manifest to the conscious subject through specific corporeal impulses the subject feels as belonging to himself in the vicinity of or within his material body. But such manifestation is not based on the five senses input, or what in psychology or analytical philosophy of mind is referred to as 'bodily impulses'. According to Schmitz, the felt body becomes manifest in holistic corporeal stirrings such as vigour and languidness, in one's being corporeally gripped by emotions and room-filling atmospheres, and equally in one's corporeal orientation in the world in contexts of perception, action and spatial navigation⁶.

In Robart's research the experience, and the awareness of the experience, play a critical role in understanding her propositions. The chant and the dance are not arbitrary actions; they develop and are manifest through corporeal feelings and impulses of the *felt body*. They are neither the product of ideas nor intentions to communicate with an external audience. They are the perceptible codified form of inner corporeal feelings. In Robart's research, the dancer is engaged in a creative process of acquisition of *situated knowledge* in which he is both the practitioner who does and the audience who witnesses.

On one occasion, as Robart was observing me dancing yanvalou, she asked me to look for what she called *élan* (French for word for: momentum, impetus, impulse, drive, burst). For Robart, *Élan* is a point in the movement scheme, which awakens and gives life to the dance⁷.

Finding *élan* for me was difficult because it implied a very delicate control of my efforts, attention to the smallest mechanical impulses of my body and an insistence on going forwards in the space. Gradually, I sensed kinesthetically that *élan* included two elements: an impulse, which develops momentum, and a subtle counteraction (or restrain) to it, which holds and concentrates energy. Robart explained that the reciprocal action of those elements is what animates the dance. She also told me that thinking of that *élan* only as a mechanical phenomenon, originating somewhere in the physical body, could be misleading because it can induce the dancer to move mechanically⁸.

Élan breaks the mechanical quality of the dance and permeates it with life. Despite the repetitive quality of the yanvalou structure, *élan* introduces unexpected or not-premeditated nuances that infuse the movement with sparks of spontaneity and grace, at the same time the dance is simple and dignifies the body. Thus, in the proficient

yanvalou dancer the iterations of yanvalou become creative actions. When his profound nature and his lucidity are engaged, he and his body return to the origin of movement; the non-historical, archaic source of the dance

Élan can be considered as an instance of what Alvin Hermann Schmitz calls the *vital drive*, which is a dynamic intertwinement of paired physiological or psychological tendencies, an oscillation between expansion and contraction tendencies running counter to one another. Such oscillations can be rhythmical or segmented. An example of rhythmic oscillation is the process of respiration. A segmented oscillation happens when a contraction is suspended, as in severe fright, in which the *vital drive* is frozen or paralyzed; if expansion is suspended, as in falling asleep, the *vital drive* is lax⁹.

Élan and the *vital drive* are manifest as pulsating rhythms in the *felt body*. In Robart's *Élan*, the interplay of opposite tendencies (the impulse and its counteraction) is parallel to the relationship between the *vital drive's* expansion and contraction tendencies. Gradually, the dancer becomes sensible to the pulsations and expresses them with movement. In yanvalou the body gradually expands and contracts, or rises and falls in a double movement, like a wave. But such wave is only the form of something happening within the dancer.

Experienced phenomena are built by discrete factors. Each individual event is not the product of a unique cause, but a manifold conjuncture of multiple determinants. In Robart's work, schemes of movement, such as yanvalou are constructed through kinesthetic awareness and, what Schmitz calls, corporeal feelings or impulses" of the *felt body*. During yanvalou the awareness has specific objects; such as the precision of the execution of movement, weight control, maintaining a consistent rhythm, as well as observing the traffic of inner creative impulses. In this state, the dancer has neither time to look for an external beauty of the dance, nor intellectualize it, nor snare it in a rigid form, nor allow him self to get caught by self-judgments.

In yanvalou, *élan* is like a gush of energy, a joyful pulsation that organizes the dance. Although such pulsation is connected with the physicality and motor impulses of the dancer, it transcends them. According to Robart, "*Élan* issues from the being. It is a conjunction, a re-encounter with the profound self of a person."¹⁰

When yanvalou emerges from a steady kinesthetic awareness unified with the corporeal impulses of the *felt body*, its pattern of movement ceases to be an automatic series of repetitions, and becomes a creative action. In this particular situation, there is tension in between the *élan* elements because they are connected by active forces, as if they were two hands puling a rubber band. The tension between the hands is not fixed; it changes in time and space, as when someone plays with the rubber band by alternatively separating his hands -stretching it- and approaching them -loosening it. In order to stretch and loosen the rubber band, sensitivity to its strength and perception of its shape or length are needed. Similarly, during yanvalou we have to maintain a continuous attention towards the tension between opposites, such as impulses and restraints, the pull of gravity and our efforts to overcome it, our mental inertia and our will to stay lucid or awake, etc.

Conclusion

In Robart's research, dance embodiment is a continuous and complex interaction between the individual's consciousness and what he perceives within and outside his body. The dance is articulated by perception, and the individuality of the dancer is

modified by his practice. In this framework, the dancer also makes of the process of learning an object of inquiry into the construction and meaning of the dance itself.

The hardest idea for me to embody in practice was, and still is, Robart's notion of *Élan*. But gradually I began to recognize that *élan* is rendered perceivable through corporeal feelings and impulses. Thus, the path towards its understanding is a consistent practice, consciously following the observable impulses it leaves as traces.

Élan is not an intellectual figure or theory; it is a practical knowledge we cannot find in books. That is its nature as situated *knowledge*, a knowledge constructed or discovered through practice. *Situated knowledge*, as an object, is itself an agent that directly affects the subject. Furthermore, the journey towards situated knowledge questions the dialectics of subject and object, because it tends to close the gap in between them.

After practicing yanvalou for a few years I realized that, instead of being just a sequence of external gestures, it is a process that has unfolded through my life; it has grown within and transformed me. Now, I don't understand it anymore in merely physical terms, as if it was only a sensual experience, because through yanvalou, my body, senses, and mind reach a point of convergence where they merge, there I can glimpse that the impulses that sustain the dance originate deep within myself.

Copyright 2013, Pablo Jimenez

Notes

¹ See Hunter 151 and Haraway 593

² See Schmitz 5-17 for an insight into his notions of felt *body* and *vital drive*.

³ According to Hunter, situated *knowledge* includes "centuries-old training systems in dance, and performance media, as well as indigenous people's traditional knowledge." Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.151.

⁴ Haraway, *op. cit.*, p.151.

⁵ In *Art as Experience* Dewey underlines the relationship between individual's action and transformation. See Dewey 275.

⁶ Schmitz, *op. cit.*, p.5.

⁷ Robart stated this in a recorded interview. Robart 17 Jun. 2012

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Schmitz, *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹⁰ Recorded interview. Robart 21 Jun. 2012.

Bibliography

- Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005. Print.
- Haraway, Donna. "Situated knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective", *Feminist Studies Online Journal*, 14/3 (1988), 575–99. Web. 11 Feb. 2013.
- Jimenez, Pablo. "Il Corpo Che Ascolta. In La Ricerca De Maud Robart. L'Orizzonte Arcaico E Atemporale Del Canto Integrato." *Biblioteca Teatrale*. Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Ricerche sullo Spettacolo January-March 2006. Print
- Riley, Shannon Rose, and Lynette Hunter. *Mapping landscapes for performance as research:*

- scholarly acts and creative cartographies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- Robart, Maud. Personal Interview. 17 Jun. 2012
- . Personal Interview. 21 Jun. 2012
- Schmitz, Hermann A. et al. "Emotions Outside the Box. The new phenomenology of Feeling and Corporeality." Springer. Web. 1 Dec. 2012.
<<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11097-011-9195-1#>>.
- Zahavi, D. *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press. 2006

Address for correspondence:
Pablo Jimenez
1630 Makiki St. Apt. A103
Honolulu, HI 96822-5213
Email pablojimenezt@gmail.com

Dude Looks Like a Lady: The Otokoyaku's Transformation in Japan's Takarazuka Revue

Michelle Johnson

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Abstract

The Takarazuka Revue is a Japanese all-female musical theatre troupe that delivers a wide array of performances, including Broadway musicals, traditional Japanese plays, and flashy Vegas-style revues. Performers are assigned a stage gender that, with rare exception, they stick to and perform as throughout their time with the company. Women who play female roles on stage are referred to as musumeyaku, while those who portray men are called otokoyaku.

When comparing images of otokoyaku over time there is a palpable shift in appearance, from a look that seeks to completely portray a convincing male to a more "androgynous" aesthetic. This paper sets out to explore how the tradition of male portrayal in the Takarazuka Revue has developed over time. While the otokoyaku's shift in appearance from "classically" male to more androgynous and almost feminine may have been instigated by the male authorities of the Takarazuka Revue, this different way of presenting themselves as "male" can in fact be seen as liberating and offering new opportunities for expression to the performers. Particular attention is paid to the reconstruction of the iconic The Rose of Versailles over time, and how male portrayal has evolved since its first performance in the 1970s.

Introduction

The Takarazuka Revue is a Japanese all-female musical theatre troupe active primarily in Takarazuka, Japan, with a second theatre in Tokyo. Founded in 1913 with a staged performance of a traditional Japanese fairy tale, today the company's most common performances are Broadway-style musicals and flashy Vegas-style revues. Performers are assigned a stage gender that, with rare exception, they stick to and perform as throughout their time with the company. Women who play female roles on stage are referred to as *musumeyaku*, while those who portray men are called *otokoyaku*. *Otokoyaku* tend to possess traits that would be classified in their society as "masculine," such as greater height and a lower voice, with *musumeyaku* acting as foils possessing contrasting traits: shorter stature, higher voice. While these basic traits remain an integral part in the characterization of an *otokoyaku*, certain aspects of the male role-players have shifted over time, creating the image of a "man" on stage that appears to be intentionally somewhat androgynous in gender, rather than one that strives to create the illusion of being entirely male.

As I began to research existing scholarly literature and performance documentation of the Takarazuka Revue, several questions emerged. In a performance company, and on a

larger scale a society, where women tend to be controlled by men, was the change to a more androgynous appearance for the *otokoyaku* just another way for that control to be exercised? Or does it offer these women a greater chance to express themselves outside of a gender dichotomy? While the *otokoyaku*'s shift in appearance from "classically" male to more androgynous and almost feminine may have been instigated by the male authorities of the Takarazuka Revue, I believe that this relatively new way of presenting themselves as "male," along with other changes in the *otokoyaku*'s presentation, can in fact be seen as liberating and offering new opportunities for expression to the performers.

In examining the projected masculinity of the *otokoyaku* in the Takarazuka Revue and its shift over time, a key factor in my research is the concept of "androgyny," and specifically its place in Japanese society. Therefore I would like to begin by explaining androgyny and putting it in a cultural context. In English, the single term "androgynous" can be defined in any of the following ways: 1. "having the characteristics or nature of both male and female," 2. "neither specifically masculine or feminine," 3. "having traditional male and female roles obscured or reversed."¹ In the Japanese language, two separate terms for androgyny exist: *ryousei* (両性) and *chuusei* (中性), with the character for *-sei* in both terms referring to the idea of "sex" or "gender." The difference in meaning lies in the first character, with *ryou-* meaning "both" and indicating a combination of male and female characteristics, whereas *chuu-* means "middle" or "between," thus identifying something as neither male nor female.² As theorist Judith Butler posits, sex, gender, and sexual desire are not bound to each other in a causal relationship as society so often believes. By blurring the lines between male and female qualities both in terms of sex and gender while retaining components of a society's existing male-female dichotomy, androgyny challenges said society's sex-gender system.³ It highlights the distinction between assumed gender and biological sex.

Comparisons with Kabuki

I cannot discuss Takarazuka's *otokoyaku* without drawing comparisons to the *onnagata*, or male performers who play female roles, of Japanese kabuki. Much like in the Takarazuka Revue, most performers specialize in playing only one gender on stage (in this case the gender opposite of that associated with their biological sex), with occasional exception. The tactic of exaggeration presents another point of similarity between the performers of kabuki and those of the Takarazuka Revue. To quote Stickland, "the *onnagata* developed a technique of portraying exaggerated femininity that was said to surpass that of real women. This 'unnatural' representation of gender then took on an aesthetic value because of its very 'unnaturalness.'"⁴ Likewise, fans of Takarazuka often find the idealized romantic male of the *otokoyaku* to be more appealing than the "real" men they encounter in society,⁵ and as the *otokoyaku*'s look became more androgynous during the second half of the twentieth century, this "unnaturalness" developed further.

While *otokoyaku* may never have been seen as models of masculinity in the same way that *onnagata* have been lauded in the past in the case of femininity, they do create their own type of allure that takes advantage of their androgyny. According to Stickland, "the Takarazuka *otokoyaku*'s portrayal of masculinity is different from that of a typical man, sometimes seeming sexless or gender-neutral, sometimes deliberately seductive and

erotic,”⁶ a juxtaposition that could be due to the latent femininity which remains even when on stage. This “erasure of the boundary between masculinity and femininity”⁷ is highlighted in the use of the term *chuusei* in describing the androgyny of the *otokoyaku*, with its implications of something neutral, asexual, even childish and naïve – in other words, non-threatening.⁸

The Position of the *Otokoyaku*

Because of this inherent gender ambiguity, the masculinity of the *otokoyaku* is in many ways defined by the femininity of the *musumeyaku*. The *musumeyaku* makes up for her partner’s shortcomings in achieving a completely masculine appearance by projecting one of hyper-femininity, a phenomenon which can be seen as a reflection of the roles of men and women in the surrounding society, where a woman is often seen as secondary to a man, be it her husband, father, brother, etc. While one might expect that the natural limits of biological sex would create enough of a barrier in truly portraying a convincing male, great care has always been taken to limit the extent of the *otokoyaku*’s masculinity on stage, as the idea of a masculine female outside of the performance arena has a history of being seen as deviant in Japanese society,⁹ particularly during the Revue’s formative years. This concern in Japanese society about the loss of femininity and the perceived threat of women becoming “too masculine” may be a root cause in the *otokoyaku*’s shift over time to a more androgynous look.

While male concerns have played a significant role in how *otokoyaku* have come to be presented, there has certainly been an element of the performers themselves dictating changes, and by doing so rejecting patriarchally established gender roles.¹⁰ Prior to the early 1930s all performing members of Takarazuka wore their hair long regardless of stage gender, until the *otokoyaku* Kadota Ashiko decided to cut hers short, after which short hair came to be the standard for male role-players.¹¹ During the height of wartime years (from roughly 1937 into the early 1940s), *otokoyaku* received public criticism for their flashy appearance, prompting the performers to decide to stop perming their hair.¹² What is important in these examples is that the female performers made these decisions to alter their appearance; the changes were not made at the behest of their male directors.

Appeal to Fans

The Takarazuka Revue is attractive to different people for different reasons, but I think that for many women there is a certain appeal in choosing one’s gender versus having it assigned, both for company members and fans. This attraction is largely related to societal structures, both past and present, and the expectations for women and their roles therein. Women in the past were meant to defer to their fathers or husbands, their goal in life being to become a good wife and mother living to support her husband and raise his progeny. Today an overwhelming percentage of Japanese women are still housewives, and even working women are often put below their male counterparts, for example being expected to serve tea to fellow office members. Takarazuka provides a safe and even generally approved forum in which to reimagine one’s gender – for the *otokoyaku*. For

the fans, it at least allows them the opportunity to imagine such a choice, and to see others acting it out. Perhaps they can put themselves into that role as well: rather than solely putting oneself into the role of the main character on the stage, they may also put themselves into the role of the actor. In this way the increased androgyny of the *otokoyaku* may be even more liberating, by showing women that they don't have to subscribe to the gender dichotomy that is so closely linked to prescribed gender roles and behaviors; they can be a woman in whatever way they choose.

As stated by one fan in a 1987 letter to male role-player Daichi Mao, *otokoyaku* "symbolized a new era when females could begin to love themselves as themselves."¹³ I believe that a significant part of the *otokoyaku*'s appeal to female fans lies in this concept. In Robertson's words, rather than existing as "a mere woman – a patriarchal invention that exists only to indulge and pleasure males,"¹⁴ *otokoyaku* exist outside of the gender dichotomy and the social conventions that go with it. Indeed, it is my belief that as *otokoyaku* became more androgynous, they further defied this dichotomy. Their less "male" appearance made their performances more clearly those of *women* occupying male roles, which could be more empowering and hopeful for the female audience.

As of the 1930s, half of the Takarazuka Revue's audience was male.¹⁵ These numbers stayed fairly even for the first 40 years of the Revue's existence as Kobayashi made continued attempts to draw more female viewers, who were not always as common in the theatrical audience as they are now.¹⁶ In more recent years, women, and particularly housewives, make up the majority of theatre-goers as men spend more and more time at work.¹⁷ So while Takarazuka's overwhelmingly female audience is certainly worthy of comment, it is important to keep this context in mind.

Despite this general trend, one can observe several reasons for the Revue's now 90% female audience. For fans, *otokoyaku* can represent both the ideal man and the ideal woman, and are often admired by fans as female models.¹⁸ Conversely, Kobayashi himself declared in his time that by the very nature of the players being women, *otokoyaku* are seen by female viewers to be superior to or beyond men,¹⁹ mirroring the idea that the *onnagata* in kabuki demonstrates the highest form of femininity – the difference being that *onnagata* were presented throughout society as models for biological women to aspire towards, while *otokoyaku* are merely the idealized romantic fantasy of Takarazuka fans. The love and admiration that fans feel for the performers may be sexual in some cases, but according to Stickland, for many it reflects an appreciation of "the skill and beauty of cast members in their portrayal of gender, and the entire fantasy world their characters inhabit."²⁰

The Androgynous Shift of the *Otokoyaku*

It is interesting to note that the aesthetic of the *otokoyaku* began to shift to a more androgynous one after Takarazuka audiences became largely female. In a clip of the 1961 performance of *Karei Naru Sen Byoushi* (Splendor of a Thousand Beats), we see not only the traditional, "classic male" makeup on the *otokoyaku*, but also a significant number of men in the audience.²¹ Compare this to images of *otokoyaku* from the early 1970s, just ten years later, and performances of *The Rose of Versailles* in 1974 and 1976, as women become more and more prominent in the audience. The male role-players

begin to wear much more dramatic makeup, accenting the eyes and making them appear larger and more feminine with exaggerated false lashes.²² The primary gender of their audience may very well have facilitated this transformation. If women see in these male role-players the possibility, however fantastical, of breaking out of their prescribed gender roles, perhaps seeing them less as “male” and more obviously as women *playing* male makes that fantasy just a little bit more tangible.

The late 1960s through early 1980s was a prominent time for the shift to a more androgynous look for *otokoyaku*.²³ It was in the 1960s that male role-players were first encouraged to blend the male and female on stage, softening the features of the “classic” *otokoyaku* with changes to hairstyle and makeup. These changes were not instigated by the performers themselves however, but by the male directors in an effort to keep the women’s male “secondary gender” in check and allow them to perform as men without forfeiting their femininity. According to Kobayashi as well as many social critics of the early 1900s, an *otokoyaku*’s “maleness” was intended to be limited to the stage – in the words of Robertson, “a masculine female outside the context of the Revue was something deviant.”²⁴ In 1940, Kobayashi made efforts to reconcile the reservations that many had concerning *otokoyaku* by creating shows that promoted the concept of the “Good Wife, Wise Mother,” an image strongly associated with the “Japanese Woman.”²⁵ However, society continued to be concerned that the performers would forget how to be women or begin behaving inappropriately (i.e. as men) offstage, resulting in such efforts to clarify the limits of their masculinity (Robertson, *Takarazuka* 78). The results of these efforts are significant in that the actors are no longer cross-dressing with the intent of “passing” as male on stage; rather the goal has apparently become to deliberately appear androgynous.

This time also marks when *otokoyaku* began performing in female roles as well, a change that neither they nor their fans cared for.²⁶ Despite the initial upset, Robertson mentions that today one characteristic of a good *otokoyaku* is the ability to “negotiate successfully both genders...without being constrained by either.”²⁷ This standard born from the *otokoyaku*’s shift towards the female can be seen as related to the perceived threat of a masculine female and the directors’ subsequent efforts to remind both performers and viewers that these women were, in fact, “only” women, but I believe there is also a certain element of liberation in the thought that *otokoyaku* are not necessarily constrained to only performing one gender on stage. It is interesting that this freedom is only given to *otokoyaku*, as *musumeyaku* are not, conversely, given male roles to perform.

When given a female role, *otokoyaku* generally play powerful or sexually-charged women such as Oscar from *The Rose of Versailles* or Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, roles that would, to quote from Robertson, “revive her original femininity while at the same time retaining the sensuality of her ‘male’ gender.”²⁸ *The Rose of Versailles*, perhaps the company’s most well-known show, made its debut in 1974 and was a turning point in Takarazuka’s popularity.²⁹ Set in Marie Antoinette’s court, the romantic musical features the protagonist Oscar, a girl who was raised as a boy (and a role played exclusively by an *otokoyaku*). Oscar is female, but she functions in society for the most part as a man, and is accepted and even admired in her masculine roles. It is interesting how a story that so strongly mirrors what many *otokoyaku* experience and represent would be such a hit, with multiple versions of the production telling the tale from

different characters' points of view and an impressive number of restagings over the years.

Just a few years after *The Rose of Versailles*'s first performance in 1974, the 1977 premiere of Takarazuka's *Gone with the Wind* featured male role-player Jun Mitsuki in the role of Scarlett. Interestingly, this production also featured *otokoyaku* Haruna Yuri (as Rhett Butler) wearing a mustache, marking the first time a significant character appeared on stage with facial hair.³⁰ Here we see instances of certain elements being made more distinctly masculine than before, such as a lead male character having a mustache, despite the general trend in the opposite direction. The fact that this breakthrough occurred in the same performance that featured an *otokoyaku* performing a female role may be reflective of the blending of more male and female elements in *otokoyaku*, rather than simply striving for one gender or the other.

The 1970s may in fact feature some of the most exaggeratedly feminine *otokoyaku* performances. A 1976 presentation of *The Rose of Versailles* boasts Ootori Ran in the lead male role of Fersen with false eyelashes that far outdo Marie Antoinette's. The *otokoyaku* can also all be seen sporting large, flowing wigs with perfectly coifed long, soft curls.³¹ Publicity photos from the early 1970s also reflect this trend, with *otokoyaku* after *otokoyaku* posing with wide eyes and impossibly long lashes.³²

Seeming to have peaked in the 1970s and 1980s, the feminizing of male roles in Takarazuka performances began to settle in the 1990s and 2000s. To carry the thread through, a 2001 production of *The Rose of Versailles* features male leads with significantly less dramatic makeup (and shorter eyelashes) than their female counterparts, and even Minori Kou as a particularly masculine Oscar.³³ Despite many *otokoyaku* roles demonstrating this more recent downward trend in feminization, it is not a consistent aesthetic: a publicity flyer for the 2010 production of *Hamlet!!* shows Ryū Masaki as Hamlet with strikingly feminine makeup, including full, red lips and dramatic eyeliner and lashes. While there is always the variable of each actor being a unique performer with their own particular traits and qualities, perhaps this wider variety of "styles" of male performance is a change brought about by the experimentation with different levels of androgyny and femininity in the 1970s and 1980s, and is indicative of a new level of freedom for *otokoyaku*.

Conclusion

The androgynous *otokoyaku* disrupts society's conceptions of what constitutes "real" femininity and masculinity. They can be women without having to subscribe 100% to society's ideas of what it means to be feminine, and they can portray men, who are more powerful in society, without losing all of their femininity. Important to note is Robertson's explanation of "passing" as "selectively (over)acting and (over)dressing in order to be perceived unequivocally as female or male."³⁴ The use of the word "unequivocally" is particularly relevant, as Takarasiennes are known and even lauded for maintaining their femininity even when portraying men, creating the androgynous look that has become their hallmark. It could certainly be said that *otokoyaku* are being held back by the male hegemony from completely "passing" as a way of controlling their freedom and keeping their femininity and sex appeal even when they are portraying men.

I do not dispute that many of their changes in appearance, like the majority of company decisions, were at the behest of the male directors of the troupe, but I believe that the fact that the *otokoyaku* purposely refrain from “passing” can be viewed in a more empowering light as well: they are able to break out of the established gender dichotomy, to break the rules set by their society of what a woman is supposed to be and do without ceasing to be a woman.

Copyright 2013, Michelle Johnson

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Department of Theatre and Dance, Center for Japanese Studies, and the many others who lent their support to this project, as well as Kara Miller for her endless help and encouragement throughout the entire process.

Notes

1. *Merriam-Webster.com*, “androgyny”
2. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 50
3. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 47
4. Stickland 18
5. Stickland 111
6. Stickland 9
7. Kenko Kawasaki, quoted in Stickland 9
8. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 70
9. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 59
10. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 156
11. Stickland 31
12. Stickland 35
13. Hoshi Sumire, quoted in Robertson, *Takarazuka* 81
14. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 81
15. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 147
16. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 153
17. Klens 168
18. Stickland 7
19. Stickland 111
20. Stickland 7
21. YouTube, “宝塚歌劇 1961年 雪組公演 華麗なる千拍子 part2”
22. YouTube, “S46宝塚歌劇雪組公演グランド・ショー『シンガーズ・シンガー』 ①”
23. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 86
24. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 59
25. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 83
26. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 78
27. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 82
28. “Dou, oiroke aru kashira,” quoted in Robertson, *Takarazuka* 82-3
29. Stickland 46

30. Stickland 46
31. YouTube, “* ベルサイユのぼら III * 1976 愛あればこそ”; “1976年星組『ベルサイユのぼらIII』 フィナーレ”
32. YouTube, “S46宝塚歌劇雪組公演グランド・ショー『シンガーズ・シンガー』 ①”
33. YouTube, “Rose of Versailles 2001 Star Troupe ベルサイユのぼら”
34. Robertson, *Takarazuka* 39-40

Bibliography

- Armstrong, William Hamilton IV. “Neo-*Onnagata*: Professional Cross-Dressed Actors and Their Roles on the Contemporary Japanese Stage.” Diss. Louisiana State University, 2002. Web. 21 Sept. 2011.
- Atkin, Dennis H. “Performers in the Takarazuka Theatre.” SI: Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, 1987. Print.
- Berlin, Zeke. “The Takarazuka Touch.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 8.1 (1991): 35-47. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sept. 2011.
- Brau, Lorie. “The Women’s Theatre of Takarazuka.” *TDR* 34.4 (1990): 79-95. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sept. 2011.
- Edelson, Loren. *Danjūrō’s Girls: Women on the Kabuki Stage*. New York, NY : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- The Japan Ballet Association, ed. *A Short History of Ballet in Japan*. Tokyo: The Association, 1976. Print.
- Klens, Deborah S. “Theatrical Palimpsest: Tokyo 1992.” *TDR* 37.3 (1993): 166-170. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sept. 2011.
- Robertson, Jennifer. *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. Print.
- Robertson, Jennifer. “Theatres of Restraint: The Takarazuka Revue and the ‘State Theatre.’” *Anthropological Quarterly* 64.4 (1991): 165-177. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sept. 2011.
- Senelick, Laurence, ed. *Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference in the Performing Arts*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992. Print.
- Stevens Abbitt, Erica. “Androgyny and Otherness: Exploring the West through the Japanese Performative Body.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 18.2 (2001): 249-256. *JSTOR*. Web. 19 Sept. 2011.
- Stickland, Leonie R. *Gender Gymnastics: Performing and Consuming Japan’s Takarazuka Revue*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2008. Print.
- Sugiyama, Makoto, and Kanjūrō Fujima. *An Outline History of the Japanese Dance*. Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai (The Society for International Cultural Relations), 1937. Print.
- Yates, Ronald E. “Japan’s Takarazuka Theatre Makes Women, and Men, of Talented Girls.” *Chicago Tribune*. 10 June, 1990. Web. 26 Oct. 2011.
- “* ベルサイユのぼら * 1974 フィナーレ.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 27 Oct. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “* ベルサイユのぼら III * 1976 愛あればこそ.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 27 Oct. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “1976年星組『ベルサイユのぼらIII』 フィナーレ.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 21 Sept. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “Androgyny.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2011. Web. 21 Nov. 2011.
- “Gone with the Wind ~ You and I are both sides Tom.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 18 Apr. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.

- “Japan, Takarazuka all-girls revue in 1948 宝塚歌劇団.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 17 June 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “Muffin Song in Ernest in Love (Moon).” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 11 Aug. 2006. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “Rose of Versailles 2001 Star Troupe ベルサイユのばら.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 27 Aug. 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “S46宝塚歌劇雪組公演グランド・ショー『シンガーズ・シンガー』①.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 23 May 2010. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- TakaWiki. n.d. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “『オーシャンズ11』制作発表会パフォーマンス映像（宝塚歌劇 星組公演）.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 31 Aug. 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “宝塚歌劇 1961年 雪組公演 華麗なる千拍子 part2.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 2 Mar. 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “宝塚歌劇 星組『オーシャンズ11』初日映像（2011 宝塚大劇場）.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 17 Nov. 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “ベルサイユのばら'89 星組「バスティーユ」.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 21 June 2008. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “真矢みき@1997_sing sing sing.mp4.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 8 May 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011.
- “真矢みき-1997@「ザッツ・レビュー」.mp4.” *Online Posting*. YouTube, 8 May 2011. Web. 6 Dec. 2011

Address for correspondence:

Michelle Johnson
506 Beringer Circle
Urbana, IL 61802
USA
mmj.johnson09@gmail.com

The dance practice of the Dinaric people in Vojvodina (Participatory and presentational dance context of the people from Kordun)

Vesna Karin

Academy of Arts, Novi Sad (Serbia)

Abstract

The Festival "To Our People and Descendants" held in the town of Bačka Topola (Bačka, Vojvodina) gathers the Serbian population hailing from the areas in and around Mount Dinara, now living in Vojvodina. The Festival presents on stage the material and spiritual culture of their land of origin. All participants of the Festival belong to a so-called KUD (Cultural-artistic society), the institutions which were founded since late '40s and '50s of the 20th century all over former Yugoslavia in the aim of fostering the folklore that is applied to the scene.

Within the Festival the various customs, songs, traditional dances are shown. As they have been taken out of the context and transferred to a new locative reference, they don't have the same function it used to be once. On the other hand, the Dinaric people still dance at the dance events such as wedding, but on this occasion they do not performed their homeland dances.

This paper will explore the Dinaric dance practice in Vojvodina on example of people from Kordun (Croatia): in the participatory and presentational dance context.

Introduction

There were many colonizations and migrations of the various people and ethnic group on the territory of the northern Serbia, Vojvodina. The majority of the Serbian population originates from regions southern from the Sava and Danube rivers which, during the 20th century, came to Vojvodinian regions in organized (colonizations) and spontaneous migrations.

Most of the colonists moved from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia from the wide area of the huge Dinara massif - territory which is today split between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Inhabitants of the Dinara Mountain are known under the etic term as the Dinaric people, no matter of their religious or ethnic affiliation. One of the major regional groups of the Dinaric people are people from Kordun (Croatia) who live in small vilages Kljajićevo and Čonoplja (the north of Serbia).

The dance and musical practice of the Dinaric people in Vojvodina more and more becomes the object of ethnocoreological and ethnomusicological studies due to the fact that the Dinaric people colonized in Vojvodina keep and cherish forms of traditional dance and music from their homeland.

This paper will explore the Dinaric dance practice in Vojvodina on example of people from Kordun (Croatia).

The Dinaric dance practice in Vojvodina (people from Kordun)

According to the purpose for dancing – and question “why they are dancing?” there are two different dance practice named by Nachacewsky as:

- 1) „vival“ dance („living“ dance where the participants are focused on the experience at that very moment)
- 2) „reflective“ dance (dance in witch the participants actively link their current activity with dancing from the past) (Nachacewsky 2012:24).

It is important to note that Nachacewsky's terms is connected with his concept of the participatory and presentational dance context, which I used in my paper (Nachacewsky 2012:168):

- Vival dance = participatory dance context (dance practice of the Dinaric people which living a new life in Vojvodina)

- Reflective dance = presentational dance context (the reconstruction of their homeland dances)

The people from Kordun stil dance at the dance events such as wedding, but on this occasion they do not perform their specific homeland dances. They are dancing *užičko kolo*.

In ethnocoreology in Serbia this type of dance is known as a term “kolo u tri” and represents the group of dances of different names and melodies that are based on the same step pattern: one measure to the right, three measures in plase – one measure to the left, three measures in place and are performed in a round-shaped formation (most frequently as open circle) (Ranisavljević 2011:95). According to Selena Rakočević, in regard to its symmetry and simple basic choreological structure, this pattern dominated as a representative of the Serbian national dance in the first half of the 20th century, and especially after World War II. (Rakočević 2005:134). Here, it is important to say that this dance pattern is considered to be sort of a national symbol.

We can notice that the Dinaric people are dancing the dance type “kolo in three” which has survived in spite of the modern era. The reason of its vitality in the Serbian contemporary dance practice is the idea of “authenticity” (Rakočević 2005:135). Even someone of the Dinaric people determines him or herself as a “Kordunas” (man from Kordun), when dancing within the wedding, they are dancing *užičko kolo*.

It is interesting that even if dance tradition of Serbian people in Vojvodina based on formal type *malo kolo* (two measures in right side and two measures in left side) and *kolo u tri* is in function of secondary national simbol (Ranisavljević 2012:563), people from Kordun in Vojvodina would rather dance *kolo in three* than dances which belong the formal type *malo kolo*.

The Dinaric people do not use regional/local dances to express own identity outside the stage context but they are dancing *užičko kolo* to show the Serbian national identity. We can say that because today this type of dance “represents the model of the Serbian national identity expressed through the dance” (Ranisavljević 2011:95). Once I had interview with man who play accordion and I asked him way does he play *užičko kolo* instead of some more specific type of dance from Kordun and he answered “because people want that”. Dancing the *kolo in three* in everyday life, people from Kordun in Vojvodina want to express theirs national identity and solidarity with other Serbian people. They need to be closer to each other. Of course, beside expressing national affiliation, dancing the *kolo* has also social and funny function (Ranisavljević 2012:567).

The Festival "To Our People and Descendants" (hereafter referred to as "the Festival") held in the town of Bačka Topola (Bačka, Vojvodina) presents on the stage as it is stated in the Festival program “the material and spiritual culture” of their land of origin, whereby it deals with both the overall Dinaric and specific regional/local features. All participants of the Festival belong to a so-called KUDs (Kulturno-umetničko društva – Cultural-artistic society), the institutions which were founded since late '40s and '50s of the 20th century all over former Yugoslavia in the aim of fostering the folklore that is applied.¹

In this Festival they are dancing traditional dances such as: *prevaranta, milica, ajd na levo brate Stevo, drmeš, opa cupa skoči, kukunješće*, etc.

Within the Festival the various customs, songs, traditional dances are shown. As they have been taken out of the context and transferred to a new locative reference, they don't have the same function it used to be once. Their dances have been transferred onto stage. In this case, the traditional culture is presented within the festival of a programmatic name – "To Our People and Descendants", hitherto traditional dances exist only as revival.

Festivals being a rather complex and specific articulatory form, they bear a very particular meaning and communication-related dimension which ensures delivery of their messages.

Discussion and conclusions

In my fieldresearch within the questionnaire it was the question: “When you go onto stage, what do you want to say to audience?” The most of answers was: “We are alive”, “We do not want to forget our customs and songs” etc. Actually, they want to show own regional/local identity. Also, the “Dinaric” identity being all dance heterogeneity on local level of their land of origin gives the dimension of the homogeneity in the order with opposition to “We” and “They”, where “We” means the Dinaric people in Vojvodina, and “They” means indigenous Serbian people.

Based on all the above, expression Serbian national entities through dance is, according to Olivera Vasić and I can agree with that, integral part of the wider process of redefining Serbian national identity (Ranisavljević 2012:563 *apud* Vasić 2011:4). Beside that, people from Kordun and other Dinaric people in Vojvodina need to express

their own regional/local identity, but do that on the stage. Given perception provides additional light to solve issues related to dance and dancing of the people from Kordun in Vojvodina thus providing a better understanding of complex specifications in dance practice of the Dinaric people in Vojvodina.

Copyright 2013, Vesna Karin

Notes

1. For this Festival is particular interest because majority of the dancers are people who years ago danced themselves the same dances in traditional social context.

Bibliography

- Vasić, . „Kolo – prirodna etapa u razvoju narodne igre, ili isticanje nacionalne pripadnosti. Rukopis.
- Nachacewsky, A. *Ukrainian Dance. A Cross-Cultural Approach*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland&Company. 2012.
- Rakočević, S. „Serbian Folk Dances Today: the Problem of Authenticity and Vitality“ in Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Anne von Bibra Wharton and Laslo Felfoldi eds., *Dance and Society*. Budapest: Akademiai Kiado and European Folklore Institute, 2005, 129-135.
- Ranisavljević, Z. „Stage Performance and Process of 'Nationalization' of the Traditional Dance Patterns: the Case of *Kolo u Tri* in the Repertoire of the Serbian Ensemble 'Kolo“ in *How do Public Presentations Affect Perceptions and Practices of Music and Dance? Educational and Teaching Processes* (Second Symposium of the ICTM, Study group on music and dance in Southeastern Europe. Izmir, Turkey: ICTM, Study group on music and dance in Southeastern Europe and Ege University state turkish music Conservatory, 2011, 95:100.
- Ranisavljević, Z. „Simboličko značenje žanra kolo u tri u plesnoj praksi Srba“ in Sonja Marinković and Sanda Dodik eds., Banja Luka: Akademija umjetnosti Univerziteta u Banjoj Luci i Muzikološko društvo Republike Srbije, 2012, 557-570.

Address for correspondence:

Name Vesna Karin

E-mail address: kavesna@yahoo.com

Ecological Consciousness through Somatic Practice in Community-Based Performance: Palissimo's "Bastard"

Kelly Klein

Ph.D. Student, The Ohio State University

Abstract

This paper examines the rehearsal process and resulting choreography of Palissimo's "Bastard" of the Painted Bird Trilogy, a community-based work that includes a large group of local community members as performers. In preparation for the performance, the choreographer Pavel Zuštiak leads a three-day workshop and rehearsal process informed by Feldenkrais somatic principles to engage inner awareness and sensation and enhance the participant's experience of and interaction with the world. Performers are coached through somatic techniques to cultivate a "bird's eye view" awareness of the group and a soft-body, echoing dance scholar Deirdre Sklar's two "kinds of lucidity" in which we are able to undo dominant modes of being: in what I am calling distanced awareness, "one calls upon visual imagination to project across distances to 'see' the larger system"; in what I call intimate awareness, "one calls on proprioception, turning awareness inward to 'feel' one's body as a continuum of kinetic sensations" (91). With attention to how these methods are utilized in rehearsals for Bastard, I argue that these embodied practices challenge the status of the autonomous individual, so prized in liberal democracies, through the development of ecological consciousness and explore the individual and social implications of these embodied practices.

Introduction

The following discussion explores the political and social implications of the dance-theater work "Bastard" by the New York-based company Palissimo. "Bastard" is the first part of the *Painted Bird Trilogy*, choreographed by Pavel Zuštiak. Loosely based on Jerzy Kosinski's novel of the same name, the trilogy explores issues of displacement, otherness, identity, and alienation. *Bastard* is billed as a solo work, but includes a surprise ending. After a prolonged solo performed by Jaro Vinarsky, the small black-box theater fills with dozens of plain-clothed people who trickle in from the audience and off-stage. After a moment of stillness, the group begins to dart around the space, running, jumping, and lifting one another in a swarm of chaos that settles into an eerie yet harmonious symphony of bodies.

The choreography is based on an improvisational score that guides the action with some specific spatial and temporal directives, but is interpreted differently in each performance. The crowd, ranging in age from pre-teens to seniors, is comprised of community volunteers with varying levels of performance training. They prepared for the performance through a three-day rehearsal process. The question that comes to mind for me is how can such a large group of strangers with a range of performance and life experience form a cohesive unit in such a short period of time? Paradoxically, in training

for a piece about alienation, Zuštiak prepared the group by rehearsing embodied states of communion. In what follows, I draw upon data gathered through participant-observation of the workshop and performance at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio in September, 2012, as well as a personal interview with Zuštiak. I did not perform but did participate in many of the training activities that I will be discussing.

I am interested here in exploring the pedagogical techniques utilized by Zuštiak that both enable the group to perform the choreography as well as produce perhaps unintended phenomenological and sociopolitical effects. In this paper, I examine the workshop's activities, paying particular attention to the cultivation of what I call distanced and intimate awareness. These concepts are informed by dance scholar Deirdre Sklar's two types of lucidity that she argues lead to increased self-reflexivity and can subvert dominant power structures that have been naturalized at the level of the body. I argue that distanced awareness, through which "one calls upon visual imagination to project across distances to 'see' the larger system," holds possibilities for training participants to see themselves as part of a larger ecological whole, and thus offers important lessons for transformative environmental education. I also argue that intimate awareness based on proprioception or "turning awareness inward to 'feel' one's body as a continuum of kinetic sensations" (Sklar 91) prepares participants to open themselves to others in a way that challenges the status of the individual, so prized in liberal democracies, and suggests new avenues for world-making.

For both distanced and intimate awareness, I outline how each is called-up in the participants' bodies, discussing the bodily movements involved, the ways in which Zuštiak facilitates them, and their relationship to the principles of Moshe Feldenkrais's somatic techniques that Zuštiak identifies as influential to his pedagogical process. Then, my discussion turns to questions of why, and to what effect? What are Zuštiak's intentions for using these techniques, and what are their aesthetic and phenomenological effects? Throughout, I analyze the workshop's pedagogical practices for their value as embodied transformational education and their ability to resituate the neoliberal subject within a complex materiality. I show that this artistic venture not only democratizes concert dance performance by including non-trained performers, but also fosters an artistic praxis founded on kinesthetic communion rather than visual mimicry or competition.

I must first expound upon my understanding of what I see as a dominant and, in my opinion, problematic subjectivity idealized in contemporary U.S. society before I can properly argue for the ways in which this pedagogical process can trouble and transform it. In *Exhausting Dance*, dance scholar Andre Lepecki draws from a variety of philosophers and theorists to arrive at the observation that the process of modern subjectification "locks subjectivity within an experience of being severed from the

world" and therefore provides the basis for the continued ecological devastation conducted in the name of capitalist progress (10). I agree with this characterization, and believe such ego-driven tendencies have been exacerbated and even celebrated in and through the recent rise of neoliberalism in its privileging of the free, autonomous, competitive, self-made subject. I am using the term neoliberal subject to refer to the embodied experience of the self as rational, separate from its ecology, and working toward individual goals in competition with others.

For Feldenkrais, harmonious efficient movement is important mostly for "what it

does to the image of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us” (44). He saw this individual process of re-patterning as intrinsically connected not only to personal well-being, but also as a part of social change. He proposed fostering greater connectivity between individuals, their bodies and their physical and social environments as a cure for the alienation suffered by the modern subject.

Feldenkrais’s philosophy, particularly the ideal of self-awareness, provides Zuštiak with a foundation for his pedagogical technique. I draw this parallel between Zuštiak’s techniques and Feldenkrais principles to highlight what I see as a common overall effect of these two very different contexts. While the Feldenkrais Method is intended to heal the individual body in a therapeutic capacity and Zuštiak’s process is aimed to facilitate the performance of his choreography in a theatrical setting, both are concerned with the way in which individuals are embodied, conceive of themselves, and move in relationship to their environment. The mutual emphasis on distanced and intimate awareness has the potential to transform individuals’ experiences of themselves from autonomous, severed subjects to agents inherently connected to their surrounding ecology. I believe this commonality has important implications for conscious embodied artistic and/or somatic practice as educational tools in this time of increasing environmental volatility.

Distanced Awareness

Distanced awareness is particularly important in the performance of *Bastard* because the choreography is score-based rather than specifically designed. The score often called for the volunteers to perform the same movement or task, but not in perfect unison. Shifts between movements were usually instigated by one or two performers and then spread slowly through the group—“like a virus,” as Zuštiak described—requiring each performer to be attentive to the group as a whole. While the score provides a degree of structure, performers are able to exercise individual agency. Their choices are informed by constant mental and kinesthetic interpretation of the landscape through a distanced awareness. In contrast to choreographies meant to perform group unity through highly structured unison movement—in which, Zuštiak notes “it is easier [for the individual] to be isolated”—performers in *Bastard* “are forced to [interact with people].” They commune by tuning in to one another in order to collectively and improvisationally design the shape that each performance will take within the confines of the score. Ultimately for Zuštiak, the practice of viewing oneself and the group from a bird’s eye view prepared the volunteers for imagining the group from the audience’s perspective, revealing this choice as aesthetically, rather than politically motivated.

Throughout the rehearsal process, Zuštiak repeatedly coached the volunteers to experience their bodies as if from afar. In one of the first activities, volunteers walked and then ran within the confines of a square formed by orange tape marking the edges of the stage. Zuštiak suggested that they negotiate the density of bodies by imagining themselves as if from above. A similar view is called up in Feldenkrais *Awareness Through Movement*® classes to allow the individual to attend to the ways in which the body relates to itself in motion (*Awareness Through Movement*® Classes). This top-down view is historically linked to positions of power, recalling that of the sovereign, God, or, more recently, security and surveillance technology. However, in these cases

there is no exterior, omnipotent power dictating or judging their action. This “God’s eye” perspective is instead internalized and democratized, providing a tool with which each individual can assess and contribute to the overall landscape. The one-way perspective of surveillance technology, epitomized by the Panopticon, is troubled as participants can both see and be seen by each other, as well as see and be seen by the audience.

While the reasons for using this technique were primarily aesthetic, the practice itself has repercussions for the individual participant, as well as sociopolitical implications. On the individual level, this type of distanced awareness allows the volunteers to experience their bodies amongst and as part of a group of “other” bodies. Through this conscious embodied practice, the individuals transform from autonomous neoliberal subjects to materially situated, yet agential, components of a complex matrix of interacting ecosystems. They are therefore encouraged, as well as more equipped, to act out of responsibility for those systems toward collectively beneficial goals. As Zuštiak asserted, the social relevance of the rehearsal process for *Bastard* comes from “the awareness and the ability to...make choices within the context of the larger group. I know it sounds so heavy maybe but if we were as a society more aware of each other and making choices based on acknowledging the larger picture, I’m sure we would live in a different, different, different society.” Potentially, this awareness leads to an embodied understanding of one’s actions in relationship to other beings and systems, thereby expanding one’s awareness to include those previously othered in the creation of the modern neoliberal subject and informing one’s actions and decision-making.

Intimate Awareness

Intimate awareness was primarily guided in Zuštiak’s cultivation of what he termed the “soft body,” indicating a balance between stability and adaptability. A soft body was achieved through “soft joints” that are open and responsive to stimuli, but also stable, a soft and present focus, and breath control. I argue that this mode of embodiment challenges the autonomy and stability of the individual body by willingly accepting its vulnerability to external forces and bodies normally othered by the neoliberal subject.

Just as the *Feldenkrais Method* is concerned with becoming aware of learned behaviors that have become automatic in order to move more intentionally and efficiently (Awareness Through Movement® Classes), Zuštiak’s rehearsal process involved a (re)training of the body through an intimately aware embodied practice of the soft body. By maintaining soft joints, especially in the knees, the performers were more grounded than the upright posture of most pedestrians maneuvering a busy street. The arms, held close at soft angles in front of the body, acted as antennae, open and sensitive to stimuli, helping to guide quick maneuverings and shifts of weight through the dense weaving of bodies. From this stance, they were more mobile and able to not only avoid collision, but also to protect themselves if (when) they do make contact with another.

Further, Zuštiak encouraged a soft focus, in which the volunteers utilized the totality of their visual range in order to anticipate the movements of others. Many of the exercises encouraged nonverbal communion, which intervened in the habitus of dancers often seen on the concert stage. Zuštiak stated, “I don’t know where it comes from but in dance training there’s this glazed-over look that is instilled in us... So making them be human

beings on stage [is important]. That sounds ridiculous but often that is the base for that scene.” In all, the soft focus not only enhanced the harmonious arrangements of bodies in space but also allowed the individual bodies to be more fully engaged with their surroundings, as well as to demonstrate this engagement to the audience.

In the warm-up, Zuštiak incorporated deep diaphragm breathing that allowed the volunteers to fully experience an intimate awareness of their bodies and overcome habitual reactions. Breath was used to soften the impact when collisions happened as the volunteers ran in a constricted space. While the instinctual reaction is to gasp and tense the body upon impact, Zuštiak coached the volunteers to “recycle the energy” by exhaling into the collision. This softens the body in order to avoid injury and maintain kinetic momentum. Through the soft body made possible by intimate awareness, each volunteer practiced reacting to unexpected stimuli without anxiety or stress. This type of practice encourages the intimate experience of the individual’s inherent vulnerability to external forces, including other human beings, and works to allow the individual to find easefulness, rather than forcefulness and tension, within this connectivity. From this soft, grounded, and open posture, the volunteers were highly mobile and therefore could quickly respond to the movements of others to execute the score. This reflects The Feldenkrais Method’s principle of “effective movement,” described as the ability of the body to move in any direction at any time to avoid danger and/or influence the environment effectively (Linden). This practice, as it is repeated, can potentially dissolve at the societal level the neoliberal subject’s tendency toward competition and individualism. I believe that through the soft body, the boundaries of the individual “self” are dissolved, simultaneously expanding and diminishing the body schema to include and be subsumed by previously othered bodies. The neoliberal subject can thus transform into a flexible and agential subject aware of and operating within its inherent connectivity to its ecology as the boundaries of its autonomous, individual embodiment are experienced as fluid and malleable.

Conclusions

In *Bastard*, as well as in everyday life, the combination of distanced and intimate awareness allows the individual to make more informed movement choices. It could be said that these forms of awareness are therefore tools of the neoliberal subject that so highly values individual choice and freedom of movement. I believe this is true to a certain extent, and reflects Feldenkrais’s claim that functional integration of the body means “being able to do what the individual wants” (26). While it is true that this form of score-based choreography necessitates individual choice, the agents of this rehearsal process and performance are inherently situated within a material reality, limited by the score, the defined space, and the physical presence of other bodies. Choices are made based on the collective goal of the group, rather than individual gain or competition. Also, unlike the ideal neoliberal subjects that make decisions based on the rational mental interpretation of a situation, in *Bastard* and in the Feldenkrais Method, the kinesthetic experience informs and at times completely controls the decision-making process. The bodies of the community volunteers are encouraged to think in this pedagogical process. The myth of the autonomous neoliberal subject is revealed as undeniably material, supported as well as limited by its ecology.

Zuštiak utilized methods to cultivate both the distanced and the intimate awareness of the volunteers, allowing them to work “with what is rather than what it should be or could be” (Zuštiak). This aesthetic choice, combined with his use of community volunteers rather than trained performers, is interesting in that it relinquished a great deal of his control over the final product. Instead of designing the intricacies of the work, Zuštiak provided the volunteers with the necessary skills to make decisions and take responsibility for the work, allowing them to at once experience individual agency and inherent connectivity. The combination of these two forms of awareness serve as a form of embodied transformational education as the individual’s emerging relationship to the surrounding sociophysical ecosystem is explored, questioned, and potentially transformed, opening up possibilities for more harmonious world-making.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Pavel Zuštiak, the members of Palissimo, and the Columbus community volunteers for sharing their work and thoughts with me. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Harmony Bench for providing guidance and insight in the process of writing this essay.

Bibliography

- “Awareness Through Movement® Classes.” *The Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education*. The Feldenkrais Educational Foundation of North America and The Feldenkrais Guild of North America, 2012. Web. 25 Nov 2012.
- Feldenkrais, Moshe. *The Elusive Obvious or Basic Feldenkrais*. Cupertino: Meta Publications, 1981. Print.
- Lepecki, Andre. 2006. *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*. New York, London: Routledge. Print.
- Linden, Paul. “Principles of Feldenkrais.” *Columbus Center for Movement Studies*, N.d. Web. 25 Nov. 2012.
- Sklar, Deidre. “Remembering Kinesthesia: An Inquiry into Embodied Cultural Knowledge.” *Migrations of Gestures*. Eds. Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. 85-111. Print.
- Zuštiak, Pavel. Personal Interview. 15 Sept. 2012.

Address for Correspondence:

Kelly Klein
11006 Wood Elves Way Columbia, MD
21044 klein.419 at osu dot edu

Transnational Interaction and Dance at Hellerau: An Attempt to Trace the Hellerau Style

Author Johanna Laakkonen

University of Helsinki

Abstract

The performance activities that took place within the Neue Schule Hellerau and Schule Hellerau-Laxenburg are not often mentioned in written dance histories that tend to discuss choreographers who have ‘changed history’. This paper focuses on the school and its dance group which performed under the names Tanzgruppe Hellerau and Tanztrio Kratina between the years 1922 and 1929. The core of the group consisted of the choreographer and director of the school’s dance activities Valeria Kratina; two Finnish dancers Anssi Bergh and Mary Hougberg; and their colleague Rosalia Chladek. I will explore the changes initiated by the school’s new directors, and, following this reshaping, the hybrid character of what I call a new Hellerau style.

Furthermore, the paper will suggest that future research on Hellerau would benefit from a transnational perspective that extends beyond national borders.

Introduction

Emile Jaques-Dalcroze left Germany and his work at the *Bildungsanstalt für Musik und Rhythmus* in Hellerau Dresden in 1914. In 1919 his former students Christine Baer-Frissell, Valeria Kratina and Ernst Ferand-Freund re-established the school under the name *Die Neue Schule Hellerau – Schule Hellerau für Rhythmus, Musik und Körperbildung*. In July 1925 the school moved to an old castle near Vienna and was known as *Schule Hellerau-Laxenburg*. The new directors attempted to develop Dalcroze’s method into a more versatile tool for arts education and education in general. In this process, dance and gymnastics were given a more central position in the school’s activities.

In the following, I will first analyse the relationship between music and dance and, secondly, the role of gymnastics at Hellerau. Thirdly, I will make some remarks on the triangle of Rudolf Laban, Mary Wigman and the Tanzgruppe Kratina, as the company was often compared with the first two in the press. By analysing the changes that took place in music, gymnastics and dance I attempt to trace the elements of what I call a new Hellerau style. Rather than representing one school or method, this style developed gradually and comprised various elements derived from the dance and physical culture of that era.

The school’s own dance group, Tanzgruppe Kratina, named after the director of the dance programme, was founded in 1922. The school and the company were closely linked, and the latter acted as a showcase for the work done in Hellerau. Therefore, I will refer both to the company as well as to documents and research that discuss the school’s

activities. My most important sources on the company's work are the newspaper clippings in Kratina's estate in the German Dance Archives in Cologne. Some valuable studies, especially those by Karl Toepfer (1997) and Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller and Ingrid Giel (2011), Martina Donath (1987) and Axel Buschbeck (1973) in Austria have shed some light on the school's activities but less attention has been paid to Tanzgruppe Kratina.

Why transnational?

The school and its dance group can be considered as one example of the transnationalism of European dance modernism. According to sociologist Ulrich Beck, 'transnationality signifies forms of life and practice that replace the national either/or with co-national both/and. Co-national (hence non-national) forms of life, thought and practice which do not respect the boundaries between states are transnational.'¹ In research, transnationalism challenges the methodological nationalism and does not consider the nation-state as 'a self-evident point of departure'.²

In my presentation the term transnational refers first and foremost to Hellerau as an operational environment. Both the staff and students represented various nationalities and Tanzgruppe Kratina performed in various European countries. In the 1920s the school had three Finnish teachers: Marianne Pontan, Annsi Bergh, and Mary Hougberg. They were students of a Finnish Dalcroze teacher Maggie Gripenberg, and had studied in Hellerau before becoming staff members around 1924. The three also performed in the company, although Pontan did less regularly. When seen from the Scandinavian angle, the transnational perspective helps to unfold these new kinds of networks and connections between artists that Hellerau made possible and which were typical of modern dance in Europe in the 1920s.

Tanzgruppe Kratina

In the beginning, Tanzgruppe Kratina's performers were students, but as soon as Rosalia Chladek, Hougberg and Bergh graduated and became staff members, they formed the core of the company, with Kratina as its main choreographer and dancer. Kratina gradually created a repertoire that stretched from the re-interpretation of *Les Petits Riens* by Mozart (1924) to her expressionistic choreography to Darius Milhaud's *L'Homme et son désir* (1923) and the humorous *Le boeuf sur le Tôt* (1926) to modern interpretations of folk-influenced contemporary music.

Reinterpreting Dalcroze's rhythmic

From very early on many dancers, Laban and Wigman among others, had criticized Jaques-Dalcroze's rhythmic and the way it subordinated dance to music. Furthermore, the system was considered to produce dances that did not go 'beyond the expression of bright, sunny joy', as Karl Toepfer writes.³ Nor did the system establish, according to Toepfer, 'any serious emotional connection between music and movement'.⁴ Hellerau as a school and Kratina's company had to address these problems.

The new directorship drew from Jaques-Dalcroze's heritage but adopted a critical

stance towards some of his most dogmatic exercises which they found to be one-sided. Ferand-Freund emphasized that one should avoid the mechanical transfer of musical elements, that is, notes, to movements and vice versa. To make music and movement truly interact, it was necessary that both could provide stimulus for the student.⁵ He also pointed out the more general educational goals of the method and wrote that rhythmic was not meant to be a special area of study. It was not music, not gymnastics, not dance *an sich*. Instead, as the method set together sound, time, space and the body, it was able to form a basis for all areas of art and education that were concerned with those elements. The aim was not to educate virtuosos of a certain method but to concentrate on its human educational aspects.⁶

The more fluid approach to the relationship between music and movement freed Kratina and her dancers of the dogmatic musical visualizations that had characterized the work in the first Hellerau. Kratina explored these new possibilities, and in her works the link between the two became more open. Sometimes music was abandoned altogether, such as in *Musikloses Raumspiel* (1926). In works such as *Corelli Suite* (1925 or 1926) the Dalcrozian heritage is echoed. A critic wrote that in it, music was danced and the melody given a bodily form. ‘The music was transformed to movements in space’.⁷ In some works the company used percussion instruments that the dancers’ played themselves.

Gymnastics and dance

In early modern dance gymnastics had an important role as its exercises helped dancers to master their bodies. Gymnastics formed the basis on which a dancer stood, as Mary Wigman wrote in 1928. Training of the body had had a secondary role in Jaques-Dalcroze’s work and the new directors started a more systematic training in gymnastics and dance. A new term, *Körperbildung*, separated the system from the Swedish gymnastics and German *Turnen* that were taught in Hellerau during Dalcroze’s time. The new title emphasized the comprehensive approach of a working method that aimed to prepare students for dance.

As Toepfer and Oberzaucher-Schüller and Giel point out, the systematization of gymnastics teaching started under a Czech woman Jarmila Kröschlová, who was teaching in Hellerau in the early 1920s. Her teaching was based on the Bess Mensendieck system and she had also studied in Geneva and Hellerau.⁸ After Kröschlová left the school in 1924, the gymnastics programme was further developed and systematized by another Czech woman Rosalia Chladek and a Finn, Marianne Pontan, who included many elements from Mensendieck in their work. Pontan directed the *Körperbildung* programme until 1930 and formulated its principles in a written form in an article that was published in Austria as well as in Finland.⁹ By the end of 1920s the system was known as the Method Hellerau.

The more systematic training of the body was meant to prepare students for dance, and Kratina’s choreographies became technically more demanding. The mastery of the dancers’ bodies is also shown in photos of the works, such as *Böhmischer Tanz* (1924?) or *Les Petits Riens*. Characteristic features seen in many photos are strong forward, back and side bends as well as angled wrists and elbows. Kratina did not hesitate to use leaps or high leg extensions. (For copyright reasons the photos shown in the conference cannot

be shown here.)

The triangle of Hellerau-Laban-Wigman

Laban and Wigman set the standard against which Tanzgruppe Kratina was often measured in the press. Laban, whose ideas on rhythm and dance without music had been so contradictory to those of Jaques-Dalcroze, had great impact on Kratina and her dancers. Nora Guldenstein, who had studied in Hellerau, reported later in an interview that Kratina's dance classes were based almost solely on Laban's ideas.¹⁰ Bergh and Hougberg had studied with Laban, participated in his movement choirs and danced in his choreography in Hamburg's Schauspielhaus in 1923.¹¹ Chladek also joined Laban's summer course, but criticized him strongly afterwards.¹² In some reviews, there are references to Laban's influence and to the use of his *Schwung* exercises, for example.

Some critics have pointed out connections between Kratina and Wigman but they have hardly ever given any reason to back up their claim. Perhaps more interesting than the affinities between the two were their dissimilarities. Wigman was considered to dance visions that stemmed from deep inside of her soul, her dance being a kind of primeval creation, whereas Kratina's dance was considered to stem from a kind of 'second-hand' (*aus zweiter Hand*) experience, as one critic put it.¹³

The two women could also be seen as two poles of female dancing: Wigman was associated with demonic powers, whereas Kratina was seen as more sacred.

The company was often positioned between what can be understood as art versus non-art. Their work was seen either as gymnastics or dance; gymnastics or art. The close relationship between dance and music, still visible in many Kratina's choreographies, deprived dance of its avant-garde status, the latter being associated with Laban and Wigman, the leading exponents of *Ausdruckstanz*.

Some critics welcomed Kratina's and the school's analytical approach to movement and music. An enthusiastic critic prophesized that Hellerau was initiating a new dance culture that had as its goal a synthesis of intellect and feeling. A goal that required not only an education of the mind but also an artisan-like detailed education of the body.¹⁴

A need for a wider perspective

As shown above, what could be considered the new Hellerau style was a fusion of elements adopted from other contemporary dance and movement schools and merged with what the school and Kratina had retained from the Dalcroze's method. The reception of the company's work was double-edged. Hellerau, Wigman and Laban had their adherents among critics, and, while reading reviews, one has to take into account the tensions between these various 'schools' that were represented in German criticism, in particular.

Hellerau provided an operational environment for artists representing various nationalities but its work and impact has not yet been critically studied in a transnational context. The school, especially, is not part of German or Austrian dance history only. The work of Kröschlová, Pontan, Bergh and Hougberg, and the students from several continents, indicates that Hellerau did not 'respect national boundaries', nor should those who research it. To be able to further explore not only the connections between the artists

mentioned above and their countries of origin but also the work done in Hellerau, one needs to cross national borders.

Copyright 2013, Johanna Laakkonen

Notes

1. Beck 2006, 62–63.
2. Daniel Levy in Beck 2006, 33.
3. Toepfer 1997, 120.
4. Ibid.
5. Ferand-Freund 1926, 35.
6. Ibid., 38–39.
7. “Aus dem Aachener Kunstleben”, n.d. Nachlass Valeria Kratina, Bestand Nr. 67, II Beruf und Werk, 2.7., Zeitungsabschnitte 2.7.1., Kritikenalben, 1918–1938, undatiert, Tanzgruppe Tournee 1925/26, Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln. Kratina’s albums of critics’ reviews include many clippings that lack dates and/or the names of the newspapers in which the reviews were originally published.
8. Kröschlová 2000, xi–xii.
9. See, for example, Oberzaucher-Schüller 2011, 49–50, 143; a Finnish translation of Pontan’s text was published in the magazine *Kisakenttä* in 1930.
10. Hirmke-Toth 2009, 102.
11. Laakkonen 2013, 113.
12. Oberzaucher-Schüller & Giel 2011, 22.
13. “Tanzgruppe Kratina”, *Düsseldorfer Nachrichten*, n.d. Nachlass Valeria Kratina, Bestand Nr. 67, II Beruf und Werk, 2.7., Zeitungsabschnitte 2.7.1., Kritikenalben, 1918–1938, undatiert, Tanzgruppe Tournee 1926–27, Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln.
14. “Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, Gastspiel der Tanzgruppe Kratina der Schule Hellerau-Laxenburg“, 30.1.1926. Nachlass Valeria Kratina, Bestand Nr. 67, II Beruf und Werk, 2.7., Zeitungsabschnitte 2.7.1., Kritikenalben, 1918–1938, undatiert, Tanzgruppe Tournee 1925/26, Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln.

Sources

Archives

Deutsches Tanzarchiv Köln, Nachlass Valeria Kratina

Bibliography

- Beck, U. *Cosmopolitan Vision*. Trans. Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2011.
 Trans. of *Der kosmopolitische Blick oder: Krieg ist Frieden*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004.
- Ferand-Freund, E. ”Schule Hellerau für Rhythmus, Musik und Körperbildung” in *Künstlerische Körperschulung*, hrsg. Ludwig Pallat & Franz Hilker, 3., erw. Aufl. Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1926, 31–40.

- Hirmke-Toth, H. *Rhythmik in Hellerau-Laxenburg. Die pädagogische Arbeit der Schule Hellerau-Laxenburg 1925–1938*. Saarbrücken: Südwestdeutscher Verlag für Hochschulschriften, 2009.
- Kröschlová, J. *Movement Theory and Practice*. Trans. Olga Malandris with Zora Šemberová. Sydney: Currency Press, 2000.
- Laakkonen, J. Metsolan tanhuvilla. ”Juhani Ahon tanssilibretto näyttämöllä” in *Kotiseutu*, eds., Lassi Saressalo. Helsinki: Suomen Kotiseutuliitto 2012, 109–113.
- Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. & Giel, I. *Rosalia Chladek. Expression in Motion*. Munich: K-Kieser Verlag, 2011.
- Pontan, M. ”Ruumiinkehityksen perusteet.” *Kisakenttä* 1 (1930): 6–8. Print.
- Toepfer, K. *Empire of Ecstasy. Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture 1910–1935*. University of California Press: Berkley and Los Angeles, 1997.

Unpublished

- Buschbeck, A.C. ”Rosalia Chladek. Eine Monographie.” Theaterwissenschaftliche Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades an der philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Wien, 1973. Print.
- Donath, Martina. ”Die Tanzschule Hellerau-Laxenburg und Rosalia Chladek. Pädagogik und Wirkung des Ausdruckstanzes.” Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie an der Grund- und Integrativwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Wien am Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, Wien. 1987. Print.

Address for correspondence:

Name Johanna Laakkonen

E-mail address Johanna.laakkonen(at)helsinki.fi

Rehearsing and Transforming Cultural Diplomacy: Martha Graham's Tours to Europe during the Fifties

Camelia Lenart

Abstract

Focusing on Graham's tours to Europe in 1950 and 1954, and using newly discovered documents and pictures (such as a picture of Martha Graham with Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, or findings from the correspondence of the American ambassador Winthrop Aldrich), my work proves that the Graham's first European tours deserve the full attention of Cold War historians.

Challenging the idea that she became a "major ambassador for America" only on the occasion of her 1955 tour to Asia, my paper shows that the fifties' European tours were a time of redefinition of Graham's art, of her persona, and of the way in which both became part of the American cultural offensive in Europe, in the process of designing its "grand cultural strategy." My work also demonstrates that, having the approval of the American politicians and receiving "the State Department's blessing," Martha Graham rehearsed in Europe her role as a cultural diplomat of the USA, to be started officially on the occasion of the Asian tour in 1955.

Analyzing the way in which performing dance and acting politics redefined and enlarged Graham's career, as well as the boundaries of American cultural diplomacy in Europe, my paper completes the story and history of the special relationship between the dancer, her art, and the Cold War diplomacy.

"Manager Martha Graham dance troupe, arriving Paris April 13, Hotel George Fifth. Plans call Brady. Suggest facilitation." *Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, Telegram to the American Embassy in Paris, April 12, 1950.*

"Miss Graham's coming had been better and more discreetly prepared. Besides, it was generally recognized that her presentations had been more seriously studied than those of the preceding troupe." *Excerpt from the Monthly Report for May 1950 of the USIS-OIC (Cultural Relations Sections), American Embassy, Paris.*

In one of my first papers presented in this conference¹ I challenged the assumption that the first formal notice by the US State Department of Martha Graham was the statement of the American ambassador to Belgium, who warned Graham and the company in 1954 that skipping Brussels "would be considered an international slight."² I also questioned if the interest of the State Department in the famous dancer as a cultural diplomat of her country abroad started only then and there, demonstrating that during the first European tours, in 1950 and 1954 - for which Graham had "the State Department's blessing"³ and, for which, after their completion, she was thanked "for understanding her role overseas

with honor and responsibility”⁴ - the dancer “rehearsed” the role of a cultural ambassador, which would have the “official opening” on the occasion of the State sponsored tour of Asia in 1955.

Focusing on the presence of the dancer and her company in France, Britain and the Netherlands, my present paper furthers the discussion on the political side of Graham’s fifties European tours. While bringing in more evidence which proves that the tours had more political connotations than believed so far, my work also places them in the larger context of the American “grand cultural strategy” of the early fifties. It was a time when, beside Graham and other modern dancers, American ballet companies, jazz players, symphonic orchestras, and abstractionist painters toured Europe. Even if not (yet) officially endorsed, they all were carefully and consistently looked at and analyzed by highly ranked American political offices and officials, who, from beyond the stage, intervened and helped their “cultural diplomats in the making.”

Analyzing Martha Graham’s European tours in the context of the emerging American cultural diplomacy, and the way the relationship between the dancer and the system she would represent started and developed, is most revelatory and interesting. During the early fifties both “parts” were redefining and envisioning their future influence and impact, while also rehearsing their new roles: Martha Graham as a cultural diplomat, and the American cultural diplomacy as a valuable competitor in the field of cultural exchange.

Besides, the existence of this relationship prior to the 1955 tour to Asia proves, on one hand, that the political side of her first tours cannot be contested. It also shows that the American cultural diplomacy of the early fifties was less hesitant than often assumed, and that whenever needed, the artists performing abroad, including Graham, benefited from overseas support; even if not skilled, sophisticated, or fully organized as its European counterparts, it was a benevolent and pragmatic one.⁵

Not surprisingly, Graham’s first European tours reflect the characteristics of the “early stage” of American cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange. Focusing less on the financial support for the traveling artists, the State Department, USIS (named after 1954, USIA,) and the American Embassies abroad offered mostly a logistic help. This spirit (or maybe careful attitude) was best embodied by Forster Dulles’ words, when intervening on behalf of an American company touring Europe: “If, however, such a tour could be realized with private financial support, the Department would be glad to extend all of its facilitative services.”⁶ Or, on the same note, by the suggestion of a USIS representative that the institution played “an important albeit quiet role in assisting” American companies touring Europe, and “helping” the cultural events in which the American artists were performing.⁷

What Graham’s presence in Europe also highlighted was how the role of the politicians, American and European, changed, expanded, and got redefined due to the cultural diplomacy of the Cold War. The more artists of countries involved in the Cold War were present on foreign stages, for highly ranked officials, attending an artistic performance was becoming increasingly a statement of political alliances and partisanship. As my paper will prove, the American politicians were well aware of “the effectiveness of this kind of propaganda,”⁸ and acted accordingly. In Graham’s case, already prior to the “Brussels moment,” the American Secretary of State, numerous American Ambassadors in Europe and their European counterparts, important ministries,

and cultural attaches knew and helped her and her company's presence in Europe. The presence of the Queen of the Netherlands at one of Graham's performances in 1954 was another exceptional event which speaks for itself, and I will present it at large.⁹

In fact, even prior to Graham's first appearance in Paris, she was in the attention of the American officials. The correspondence between the State Department and the Committee of the American Festival in Paris is also relevant in showing the interest of the emerging cultural diplomacy in Martha Graham. The American officials were informed that beside the Ballet Theater, "ready and anxious to appear" in Paris, "a new dancer (sic) who is considered absolutely remarkable," namely Martha Graham, "indicated that she is more than willing to come with her company." Furthermore, what made her an even more suitable candidate for the new role, that of a cultural diplomat, was that for her possible presence in Paris "only a small amount of money would be needed for this and Mrs. David Bloomingdale (the youngest daughter of Baron Edouard de Rothschild) has donated a substantial part of this and is personally attempting to raise the remainder."¹⁰

Indeed, the 1950 tour to France of Martha Graham was officially sponsored by Mrs. Donald Bloomingdale - Bethsabée de Rothschild -¹¹ who was an older friend and supporter of Graham, and whose husband was at that moment an "attaché to the US Embassy in Paris." However, the American Embassy in Paris and the State Department were not unaware of Graham's plans. (The American Embassy hosted a lecture-demonstration of Helen McGehee's, a Graham dancer living in Paris since 1949, an event organized by the American representative of the Cultural Organization of the United Nations.)¹² As showed by the correspondence between highly ranked officials and important offices of the institutions mentioned above, they helped with the preparation of the tour, and supervised her presence there, proving that the rehearsal of the American cultural diplomacy in France (considered to be "a free and open market for news and a propaganda battleground") was already a serious topic on the agenda of the American politicians.

When Graham's representative went to Paris to arrange the details of the upcoming tour, a telegram signed by nobody else but the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, informed the American Embassy that Charles Green "manager Martha Graham dance troupe, arriving Paris April 13, Hotel George Fifth. Plans call Brady. Suggest facilitation."¹³ (Lesley S. Brady was the cultural attaché at the American Embassy.) The communication related to Graham's upcoming tour continued, and a month later, in a telegram from Paris, the Secretary of State was informed in a worried tone about "the incredibly bad performance" of the Chicago Ballet Theater, having as a possible outcome that "Prospects for Martha Graham (...) were definitely endangered by this unfortunate preview."¹⁴

In the May Report of the Cultural Relations Sections of the USIS-OIC from Paris, prepared by the cultural attaché Lesley S. Brady (the same person whom Graham's manager was prepared to contact in Paris,) Graham's performance was analyzed carefully. Compared to the "disappointing" presence of the Chicago Ballet Theater, Graham's "though painless was able to do little to repair the first,"¹⁵ but was appreciated because "Miss Graham's coming had been better and more discreetly prepared. Besides, it was generally recognized that her presentations had been more seriously studied than those of the preceding troupe." The American official also admitted that "the *results*

(were) a bit disappointing” as “French critics, always a little surprised by American ballet, had time only to express their initial displeasure, and not to express their final appreciation,” referring to the fact that “Miss Graham suffered an injury very early in her stay here.” Most interesting, but not surprising, is that the cultural attaché in charge with the report also knew about the “500.000 francs had been accorded to Miss Graham,” and brings in the possibility for partial remission of taxes for Miss Graham’s company, the sum requested being 600.000 francs (approx. \$17000).¹⁶

What about this money? In Les Archives des Affaires étrangères in La Courneuve, I found some revelatory letters related to this topic. The first, from the Ambassador of France in Washington to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, informed him about Graham’s visit to Paris, asking for her to be treated the best and to be offered the best facilities for her performance while in Paris.¹⁷ (Most probably, as it happened in case of the British Ambassador in Washington involved in helping with Graham’s tour to London in 1950,¹⁸ the incentive to intervene on her behalf was the result of a visit from Graham’s representative, Craig Barton.)

Soon, the Cultural Relations Department office (part of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of France) informed the US Embassy in Paris (assuring the American Embassy of its distinguished consideration) that Madame Martha Graham was offered 500,000 francs in order to help her trip to France.¹⁹ The French Ambassador in Washington was also informed about the financial support received by the dancer.²⁰ “Le Direction Generale des relations Culturelles, Echanges Artistique/Le Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres,” directly addressed the office of “Monsieur Le Ministre des Finances” (Direction des Contributions Indirectes,) and announced that Madame (sic) Martha Graham received the subvention of 500,000 francs from the French Association of Artistic Action, to present her “ballets” in France.²¹

Martha Graham was also in the attention of the American Ambassador in Paris, David Bruce. Prior to her tour he announced to the Secretary of State in Washington that the American artists’ presence in Paris, including Graham’s, could be complicated by the presence of Serge Lifar’s sympathizers, all revengeful after the problems encountered by him and his company in Paris on the occasion of the Ballet de l’Opera tour.²² Besides, Bruce warned the Secretary of State that the French impresario Anatole Heller, supposed to represent the American companies, was “unscrupulous and bungling,” thus suggesting to have his role restricted and minimized. Emphasizing that even “high French officials” recognized the dangers, Bruce warned that the impact of all these could be on the “Franco-American cultural relations.”²³ To all these, Dean Acheson responded promptly and advised utmost care and “soonest completion.”²⁴

When the first night in Paris for Graham and her company arrived, it was attended by important American personalities, such as Eleanor Roosevelt (in spite of a very busy agenda)²⁵ and the American ambassador, David Bruce and his wife (in spite of the fact that he did not like modern arts).²⁶ They all sat in the center box of the theater.²⁷ Taking into consideration the preoccupation with the tour of the American politicians shown above, their presence there was not a surprise.

The official correspondence related to Graham dating from 1950, involving highly ranked American and French officials and offices, and related to various aspects of Graham’s presence in France - from a possible avant-premiere at American Festival in Paris, impresarios, accommodation, money and taxes issues, to the analysis of previous

American appearances considered to have been bad publicity for her - show that the interest of the American politicians in the dancer was comprehensive and substantial, and not a coincidental one. Besides, it also asks for a reconsideration of the chronology of the politics and of the State Department's involvement in Graham's appearance in Europe.

Four years later, prior to the next tour to France, in 1954, Martha Graham and her company were again catching the attention of the American and French officials responsible for the cultural exchange. In a letter sent from the USIS offices in Paris, Lawrence S. Morris, the Public Affairs Officer and the Cultural attaché of the American Embassy in Paris, informed again the State Department in Washington that he was visited by Mr. A. M. Julien, director of the famous Sarah Bernhardt Theater. Julien wanted to invite a "first rate" American theater group to represent USA at the International Festival of the Dramatic Art in Paris, insisting that the State Department itself should be informed about the invitation.²⁸

While suggesting that serious attention should be given to the matter, as their country's achievements in theater "have been poorly represented," Morris brought into discussion Martha Graham, as a possible chance for the Americans to prove their cultural achievements and successes; the officer was also well aware of Graham's upcoming tour schedule, her previous presence in Paris and its outcome, as well as that she was observed and analyzed from the perspective of her potential role in the American diplomacy: "It is too early to know the results of Martha Graham's appearance, beginning April 30th, though she was coolly received by the press in her previous Paris engagement," said the sender, but he thinks that she should be considered for future support from the State Department.²⁹

In 1954 Martha Graham danced in Paris for a week, starting on May 1. Her visit intersected with politics in a very unexpected but suggestive way. On the last night of her performances, May 8th, the night she was closing, Galina Ulanova and the Soviet ballet were supposed to start their season. This did not happen, as the fall of Dien-Bien-Phu made the government prohibit the show of the Soviet ballet,³⁰ a hard moment for those who had bought 10,000 tickets, wanting to see the Soviet company's performances, and their star "with her sweet face and humble manners."³¹ "Our friends are angry today, because they have denied the Soviet dancers the right to dance. They seem to believe that Russian dancers are the ones who took Dien-Bien-Phu," mused Simone de Beauvoir.³² Instead of performing in Paris, the Soviet company and their star went to East Berlin, where they were triumphant.

At first sight, the two dancers' presence on the Parisian scenes might have looked like an interesting coincidence which happened during a confusing international context. For an attentive observer, Graham versus Ulanova, modern dance versus ballet, USA versus USSR virtual meetings signified much more. On one hand, they showed the extent to which politics was already influencing culture, making, or not, possible a cultural performance. On the other hand, it was one of the first confrontations of the two superpowers in the cultural field, and, even more importantly, in the field of dance. Both dancers, Martha Graham and Galina Ulanova, were on the Parisian stage more than dancers, namely as cultural ambassadors of their countries, roles in which they were to become most successful in the years to come.

I spoke about the relationship between dance and politics evident in Graham's 1950 tour to Great Britain in several other papers,³³ showing that her presence there was linked

to the hope that “sending her would combat the current misleading propaganda that the Americans’ productivity is limited to commercial and material fields” and that “the artist’s presence would be a compliment to the countries that have sent us (some) of their best.”³⁴ Mallory Brown, officer of Public Affairs of the American Embassy in London, conveyed to Graham in a letter the huge disappointment the tour’s cancellation had created among the embassy’s members, while also calling her (cancelled) presence on the London stage “an outstanding occasion of the year whereby American dancing could be presented to our British friends.”³⁵

New findings from the Archive of the Rhode Island Historical Society, hosting the papers of the American Ambassador Winthrop Williams Aldrich,³⁶ prove that the presence of Graham in London on the occasion of her 1954 tour, started in this city,³⁷ was not unknown to the officials of the American Embassy. In fact, soon after her arrival, Graham would be the guest of the American Ambassador and of his wife. “Late in the afternoon we had a cocktail party, which really turned into a very pleasant occasion,” remembered Harriet Aldrich, the Ambassadors, while writing to her children from London, on February 27, 1954. After enumerating her guests, members of the British aristocracy and also American artistic personalities (Donald Ogden Stewart, American author and screenwriter, Ben Wells, New York Times correspondent, Cornelia Otis Skinner, actress),³⁸ she mentioned the presence in the select circle of “Martha Graham the dancer, with her conductor and her manager.” Talking about the moment, Harriet Aldrich also mentioned that she was introduced to “quite a lot of Embassy People” “and it went very well.”³⁹

It is yet unknown if the Ambassador and his wife attended Graham’s season in London, started on March 1 and closed on March 20th. However, it is obvious that the Embassy knew about the dates of the performances, as after the last night a press conference for Graham and her company was organized in the Embassy’s building, followed by a party. There Graham gave a speech in which she quoted Saint John Perse,⁴⁰ which most probably was an unconscious choice, but an interesting one, as the poet Perse was also an artist who combined art and diplomacy.

The next day they sailed from Harwick to the Netherlands,⁴¹ where an exceptional event took place: Queen Juliana and Princess Irene of the Netherlands attended one of Graham’s performances, as shown by a picture found in a private collection. The Queen, adorned by beautiful jewelry, and the young princess are shown greeting Martha Graham, most likely prior to the performance. In front of her dressing room, Graham, who was wearing her Chinese robe, with a bandana tying her hair, looked comfortable but also content next to the royal guests.⁴²

The event took place either in Amsterdam (where the company performed three times) or in The Hague (where they performed twice),⁴³ as the Queen had residences and participated in the cultural events of both cities. However, it is hard to believe that an event of such importance, such as the visit of a royal at an American artist’s performance, could have taken place and could have been organized without the knowledge of both embassies and the involvement of the State Department.

Until then Graham received national honors, and was invited to perform at the White House; in the capitals of France and Great Britain, Graham and her company received the attention of members of embassies and other highly ranked officials; later on, during her

1955 tour to Asia heads of states would attend her performances. But it was the first time when a head of state, even more so, a royal, came to see her in Europe.

The presence of the royals at Graham's performance was a special event in many ways. The queen declared, when asked about her interest in the arts, that "on special occasions she attended a public performance,"⁴⁴ while her daughters were also supposed to accompany their mother to public performances also "on special occasions."⁴⁵ (However, they did not attend the performance of all American artists, not even when their name was Margaret Truman.)⁴⁶

Queen Juliana loved America, as during the Second World War she lived with her family in Lee, Massachusetts,⁴⁷ and "the regal without being royal queen" was also a lover of modern dance, which she studied since her childhood, when she took classes at the Royal Palace, alongside the future wife of the Dutch ambassador in USA Madame Van Roijen.⁴⁸ Her daughters, the princesses, studied rhythmic dance as well.

Juliana and her husband Bernhardt had a friendly relationship with the most famous Dutch-Americans in the White House, the Roosevelts,⁴⁹ and they met Graham prior to her visit to the Netherlands. Eleanor Roosevelt, a supporter inside and outside the United States of Martha Graham, visited Queen Juliana in her country several times,⁵⁰ while in 1952 the royal couple visited Mrs. Roosevelt at Hyde Park.⁵¹ No one can say if the Queen found out about Martha Graham from Eleanor, but when Juliana and Bernhard went to see the musical "The King and I" on Broadway, along with other famous names of the American arts and culture, they met Graham.⁵²

Thus personal reasons might explain the presence of the Queen at Graham's performance, as well as the interest of her subjects in "something new and original"⁵³ which the American ballet and other forms of dance could offer.⁵⁴ Still there were also political reasons which could have propelled the presence of a Dutch royal to a performance of an American artist. By the mid fifties the "almost perfect relationship" between the Americans and the Dutch was more elusive than ever,⁵⁵ in spite of the fact that the Netherlands was regarded as the most pro-American Western European country.⁵⁶ The optimistic remarks that the two countries were "easily at home with one another within our common Atlantic community"⁵⁷ were contradicted by the growing anti-American feeling in the country. The Americans were blamed for the economic dilemma of the Dutch and for losing their colonial Empire, and just before Graham's tour to the Netherlands, culminating with the Queen's presence at her performance, the country was organizing the Bilderberg Conference. Led by Prince Bernhard, it brought together leaders from European countries and the United States to discuss the growth of anti-Americanism in Western Europe, and possible methods for promoting Atlanticism and better understanding between the cultures of the United States and Western Europe.⁵⁸

Once the 1954 European tour - for which "the State Department picked up the tab -"⁵⁹ was over, Graham announced to her dancers that "The State Department is interested to sponsor our next tour!"

The rehearsal was over. A new stage of the relationship between the American cultural diplomacy and the dancer and choreographer Martha Graham was about to start. My paper proved that Graham's first international tours, whose story cannot be left untold, or their importance underestimated, did not lack political tones, and that the first steps of the relationship between the dancer and the American politics took place way

before the Brussels moment, and also before the Asian tour of 1955, when both, the dancer and her country, were ready to perform the full repertoire of the cultural diplomacy.

The European tours also played the role of the bridge between her national and her international fame, and opened the door for Graham's success as a cultural diplomat in Europe. In 1963 - after her success in Edinburgh, and prior to her presence in London for an impromptu season - David Bruce, now the ambassador of his country in London, was writing: "Thank you for your letter and the kind invitation to become a sponsor for the visit here of Martha Graham and her Dance Company. I accept with pleasure, not only because of my admiration for Miss Graham, but also because of the importance many of us attach to her visit here."⁶⁰ Importance of which – as the paper showed – American politicians, including him, were aware of for a long time.

Last but not least, my work also reflected the way in which revisiting areas of the life and career of Martha Graham acts upon the re-construction of her myth and ultimately transforms it. Transforming Graham is not an easy venture, and rewriting parts of her story, such as the one of her first tours to Europe, can be challenging. Still, it is a fascinating and worthy enterprise, as enlarging, enriching, and transforming is the essence of the dance historians' work.

Copyright 2013, Camelia Lenart

Notes

¹ "A new perspective on Martha Graham's tour to Britain in 1954 and the response to its artistic and political complexity", published in the *Proceedings of Dance History Scholars Annual Conference*, July 2010

² Agnes De Mille, *Martha. The Life and Work of Martha Graham* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p.316

³ Letter of Gertrude Macy to Sir Francis Evans, date unknown, 1950, FO 924, CRL 48/5, The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey

⁴ Letter of unknown sender to Mary Frances Stewart, February 22, 1955, Martha Graham Collection, box 230, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington

⁵ Embassy's Note no.426, June 30, 1955, and the Ministry's reply the same day, Affairs Etrangères, Relations Culturelles. Series 2, 1956-1959, Etats-Unis 2-63, Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France: by the time Graham first toured France her country was already organizing a "campaign of truth" there "targeted to counterbalance the steady march of dictatorship" by proving "the moral strength" of the Americans. The USA and France have signed already on May 28, 1946, a Memorandum of Understanding, renewed in 1955, stating the financial involvement of the two countries in the cultural exchange, and promising assistance to the artists and companies visiting each other's countries.

⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the American Embassy in the Hague, Signed Dulles, February 9, 1953, NND 852917, RG 59, Box 2383, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

⁷ Letter to the State Department from the American Embassy in The Hague, signed Collier D. Huyler, Public Affairs Officer, November 29, 1950, NND 852916, RG 59, Box 2409, National

Archives at College Park, College Park, MA; one year prior to Graham second tour to Europe, the performance “Porgy and Bess” was appearing in Germany and Austria under the State Department’s sponsorship, but has made other European appearances under private auspices

⁸ Letter from the American Embassy in The Hague to the Department of State, February 23, 1953,

ND 852916, RG 59, box 2409, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

⁹ Private Collection

¹⁰ Letter from Pomerania Ekstrom, in the name of American Festival in Paris, to Mr. Johnson, State Department in Washington, February 2, 1950, Registered at the State Department, Public Affairs office, on February 13, 1950, NND 852916, RG59, box 2386, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

¹¹ de Mille, Martha, p.290-291

¹² Correspondence, Helen McGehee Umanan Collection, Box 9, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington

¹³ Telegram from Dean Acheson, to the American Embassy in Paris, April 12, 1950, NND 852917, RG 59, Box 2383, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

¹⁴ Telegram to the Secretary of State from the American Embassy in Paris (signed Bonbright), May 10, 1950, NND 852917, RG 59, Box 2383, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

¹⁵ May Report of the Cultural Relations Sections of the USIS-OIC from Paris, NND 852917, RG 59, Box 2383, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

¹⁶ Monthly Report for May, Cultural Relations Sections, of the USIS-OIC, American Embassy, Paris, to Department of State, received August 21, 1950, NND 852917, RG 59, Box 2383, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

¹⁷ Letter of the French Ambassador in Washington to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, related to Graham’s trip to Paris, April 1950, R.C. 1948-1955, Serie II, Echanges Culturels, Etats-Unis, Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France

¹⁸ Letter of the Education Office in Washington to the Cultural Relations Department at of the Foreign Office in London, April 12, 1950, FO 924, CR/L 48/8, The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey

¹⁹ Letter of the Cultural Relations Department (part of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of France) to the US Embassy in Paris, 10 May 1950, Minister des Relations Exterieures, R.C. 1948-1955, Serie II, Echanges Culturels, Etats-Unis, Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France

²⁰ Letter of the Cultural Relations Department to the French Ambassador in Washington, 12 Mai 1950, Minister des Relations Exterieures, R.C. 1948-1955, Serie II, Echanges Culturels, Etats – Unis, Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France

²¹ Letter from Le Direction Generale des relations Culturelles, Echanges Artistique/Le Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres to Monsieur Le Ministre des Finances (Direction des Contributions Indirectes), 26 June 1950, Minister des Relations Exterieures, R.C. 1948-1955, Serie II, Echanges Culturels, Etats-Unis, Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France

²² His alleged collaboration with the Nazi was loudly disapproved by the American audience and the press

²³ Telegram, David Bruce to Dean Acheson, June 15, 1950, NND852916, RG 59, Box 2386, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

²⁴ Telegram, Dean Acheson to David Bruce, June 20, 1950, NND852916, RG 59, Box 2386, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA

- ²⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt, *My Day: The Best Of Eleanor Roosevelt's Acclaimed Newspaper Columns, 1936-1962* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), p.155
- ²⁶ Raj Roy, *Ambassador to Sixties London: The Diaries of David Bruce, 1961-1969* (Republic of Letters, 2009)
- ²⁷ Clipping from *Le Parisien Libre*, Dossier d'artiste Martha Graham, Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra Collections, Paris
- ²⁸ Letter from Mr. A. M. Julien to Mr Fairley, Assistant Cultural Attache, American Embassy in Paris, 2 April 1954, National Archives in Maryland, NND 852917, RG 59, BOX 2389, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA
- ²⁹ Letter from Lawrence S. Morris, the Public Affairs Officer and the Cultural attaché of the American Embassy in Paris, to the State Department, April 20, 1954, NND 852917, RG 59, BOX 2389, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA
- ³⁰ During the same time the Comedie Francaise was playing with packed houses in Moscow
- ³¹ Pierre Tugal, "Paris," *Dancing Times*, 44 (1954), 552.
- ³² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime The Prime of Life. The Autobiography of Simon de Beauvoir* (Paragon House, New York, 1992), p.498
- ³³ See SDHS Proceedings
- ³⁴ Letter of Gertrude Macy to Sir Francis Evans, date unknown, 1950, FO 924, CRL 48/5, The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey
- ³⁵ Letter of Mallory Brown to Martha Graham, August 15, 1950, Martha Graham Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, box 229
- ³⁶ Winthrop Williams Aldrich was the brother of "Abby" Rockefeller, the patron and sponsor of MOMA in New York
- ³⁷ The company arrived on February 22, after they left the New York harbor on February 17, on Queen Elizabeth
- ³⁸ Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Series I, Correspondence, Subseries 2, Harriet A. Aldrich, Folder 7, letter February 27th 1954, from Harriet Aldrich to her children
- ³⁹ Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Series I, Correspondence, Subseries 2, Harriet A. Aldrich, Folder 7, letter February 27th 1954, from Harriet Aldrich to her children
- ⁴⁰ Private Collection
- ⁴¹ Clipping, Ethel Winter and Charles Hyman Collection 1955-1961, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington
- ⁴² Private Collection
- ⁴³ Clipping, Ethel Winter and Charles Hyman Collection 1955-1961, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington
- ⁴⁴ Interview with Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, M. Buitenlandse Zaken, 1955-1964, 13727-13753, Nationaal Archief, The Hague
- ⁴⁵ M. Buitenlandse Zaken, 1955-1964, box 24950, Nationaal Archief The Hague
- ⁴⁶ Margaret Truman, Souvenir, *Margaret Truman's own story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), p.297; The president's daughter performed as an opera singer in Amsterdam around the same time as Graham, and even if the Queen and her husband, Prince Bernhardt, had been the guests of the Trumans on the occasion of the Queen's official visit to the States in 1952, they were not in the audience
- ⁴⁷ During the official visits to the States the queen and her husband always visited regions from New York State which still had a rich Dutch heritage.
- ⁴⁸ March 19, 1952, interview with Mme Van Roijen with WWDC mutual Women's Commentator, Hazel Markel, M. Buitenlandse Zaken, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, 1955-1964, box 24952

- ⁴⁹ William Hoffman, *Queen Juliana: The Story of the Richest Woman in the World* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p.94
- ⁵⁰ Ibidem, p.93
- ⁵¹ Program for the visit of Her Majesty The Queen Of the Netherlands and His Royal Highness the Prince of the Netherlands to The United States of America, April 1952, M. Buitenlandse Zaken, 1945-1954, Inv.nr. 24952 Nationaal Archief, The Hague
- ⁵² Letter to Baron DeVos van Steenwijk, the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, M. Buitenlandse Zaken, 1945-1954, box 24948, Nationaal Archief, The Hague
- ⁵³ Foreign service dispatch, from USIC in Amsterdam to the State Department, Feb. 5, 1952, NND 852916, RG 59, Box 2409, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA
- ⁵⁴ Foreign service dispatch, from USIC in Amsterdam to the State Department, Feb. 5, 1952, NND 852916, RG 59, Box 2409, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MA
- ⁵⁵ Mark T. Hooker, *The History of Holland* (Westport: Greenwood, 1999), p.139
- ⁵⁶ Gerald Newton, *The Netherlands: an historical and cultural survey 1795-1977* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1978), p.190; The Marshall plan offered the Dutch one of the highest amounts of money ever received by a European country, benefiting from “the goodwill of the war years; during the devastating flood in 1953, when almost half of the country was below the sea level, the USA gave again Holland a very generous help, the amount of f400 million.
- ⁵⁷ Speech remarks recorded by Walter Lippmann at a luncheon given by Washington Press, Friday April 4, 1952 for HM Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, M. Buitenlandse Zaken, 1955-1964, 13727-13753, Nationaal Archief, The Hague
- ⁵⁸ Among the American politicians present, the list included Dean Acheson, David Rockefeller, and William Fulbright, and Harrison Freeman Matthews, who served as Deputy Undersecretary of State, and who was a close member of the entourage of Dean Acheson and John Foster Dulles (both involved in the “early stage” of the American cultural diplomacy) who also at one point or another helped the American artists touring Europe in the early fifties.
- ⁵⁹ Stuart Hodes, Part Real, *Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham* [Kindle Edition] (Concord ePress, 2011)
- ⁶⁰ Private Collection, Letter of David Bruce to Robin Howard, July 16, 1963

Bibliography

Primary sources:

Library of Congress, Washington, USA
 Martha Graham Legacy Archive
 Martha Graham Collection
 Ethel Winter Collection
 Helen McGehee Collection
 Erick Hawkins Collection

Private Collection, London

Les Archives des Affaires étrangères (Archives diplomatiques), La Courneuve, France

Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra Collections, Dossier d'artiste Martha Graham

Nationaal Archief (Dutch National Archives) The Hague

Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island
Winthrop Williams Aldrich Papers

The British National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, Foreign Office Collection

Victoria and Albert Theatre and Performance Collections, London, Great Britain
Contemporary Dance Trust Archive, 1957-1999

National Archives, College Park, Maryland, USA
Materials related to Martha Graham, her Company and tours to Great Britain

New York Public Library for Performing Arts, New York, USA
Martha Graham Center of Dance Records, 1944-1955
Gertrude Macy Papers, 1953-1976
Isadora Bennett Papers, 1945-1966

Nederlands Dans Theater Archive, The Hague

Interviews and correspondence:

Pearl Lang, October 2008, New York, tape recording
Stuart Hodes, April-May 2009, email correspondence

Secondary sources:

Agnes DeMille, *Martha. The Life and work of Martha Graham* (New-York, First Vintage Books. Edition, 1992)

Ernestine Stodelle, *Deep Song: the Dance Story of Martha Graham* (New York: Schrimm Book, 1984)

Don McDonough, *Martha Graham. A Biography* (New York: Popular Library, 1975)

Robert Tracy, *Martha Graham's Dancers Remember* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1997)

Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export*(Wesleyan University Press, 1998), p.40-41

Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War. Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003)

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: the Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2003)

Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2000)

Richard Pells, *Not like us: how European have loved, hated and transformed American culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

Helen McGehee, *To Be a Dancer* (Lynchburg: Editions Heraclita, 1989)

Bethsabée de Rothschild, *La Danse artistique aux U.S.A. Tendances modernes* (Paris: Elsevier, 1949)

Andree Grau and Stephanie Jordan, *Europe dancing-perspectives on theatre, dance and cultural identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000)

Pells Richard, *Not like us: how European have loved, hated and transformed American culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997)

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (New-York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

- Leo Bogart, *Cool Words, Cold War, Premises of Propaganda: Reassessing the USIA's Operating Assumptions in the Cold War* (Lanham: University Press of America: 2nd Revised edition, 1995)
- Antony Haigh, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (New-York: Manhattan Pub. Co, 1974)
- John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc, 1969)
- Eleanor Roosevelt, *My Day: The Best Of Eleanor Roosevelt's Acclaimed Newspaper Columns, 1936-1962* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), p.155
- Raj Roy, *Ambassador to Sixties London: The Diaries of David Bruce, 1961-1969* (Republic of Letters, 2009)
- Margaret Truman, *Souvenir, Margaret Truman's own story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956)
- William Hoffman, *Queen Juliana: The Story of the Richest Woman in the World* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979)
- Gerald Newton, *The Netherlands: an historical and cultural survey 1795-1977* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1978)
- Mark T. Hooker, *The History of Holland* (Westport: Greenwood, 1999)
- Stuart Hodes, *Part Real, Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham* [Kindle Edition] (Concord ePress, 2011)

Address for correspondence:

Camelia Lenart

History Department

State University of New York at Albany

Albany, NY 12222, USA

E-mail address: ilenart@albany.edu

Resistance in Chilean Contemporary Dance: A Question of Corporeality, Scene and Politics

Adeline Maxwell

Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis, France

Núcleo de Investigación sobre Corporalidad y Artes Escénicas, Universidad UAHC, Chile

Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of dance not only as an artistic and corporeal practice, but also as an ideological one. Regarding dance in itself, we can find numerous values and queries that intersect each other, enabling discourses written in body and scene. In addition, in this discipline we can also find a utopian character of transformation and resistance. The concept of resistance is key in this work. The use of this concept aims at understanding political history of domination and liberation of the body concerning dance. In this paper I specifically deal with the work of certain individual and collective artists within the Chilean contemporary dance. These performers explore new expressive corporeal possibilities, differing from the dominant ones, creating a sort of political resistance befalling mainly through the body. They also establish ruptures with hegemonic principles extent in the Chilean history dance creation; principles that exert coercive strategies through hierarchy absorption and bodies idealization's values.

Introduction

Dance entails equally an artistic, corporeal art as well as an ideological one, where certain values and their queries intersect. The latter occurs simultaneously by virtue of the enactment of discourses inscribed on the dancing body, but also by means of its utopian, transforming, resisting character. The practice of certain dance artists distinguishes itself from the hegemonic ones, what implies a certain resistance inside the mere dance discipline; the resistance is mostly political. On this occasion we will refer to the work of certain Chilean contemporary dance artists which, one way or the other, enact this resistance.

This text has been written without any nationalist bias; instead, we do so with the aim of interrogating certain cultural influences implied in the exploration of a language related to a 'self-identity' in the field of dance practice. Discussing a 'self-identity' nowadays can be quite complex and due to our globalised context, we shall not necessarily deal here with a 'national' identity. We will comprehend this 'self-identity' simply as the one capable to emancipate itself from a hegemonic modality—to resist—, without incurring in 'the trap of a thought disguised of universalism where constant fluxes and refluxes between concrete spaces of the same system are neglected'¹. We do not intend to deny the contribution and the honest will of numerous foreign artists who achieved an important role in scenic dance development in Chile, but to examine the possibilities to rediscover 'ways of doing' adapted to the specific living context.

As for the notion of *resistance* applied here, this is borrowed, on one hand, from a rereading of Michel Foucault's theory about the 'Aesthetic of the Existence'² which purports freedom as a practical matter instead of a simply formal one: the freedom to choose a way of being. Resistance is then a creative instance, a productive practice reluctant to the normal, or regulated, mores which permit us a constant creation, modification of our very selves against a controlling, classifying, normalizing political power.

On the other hand, the work of Jean Pierre Zarader and his comprehension of *resistance* against what Derrida defines *Homohegemony*—'an hegemonic, domineering power with a tendency to homogenize, that is, to become homogeneous, to install, to even impose uniformity'—is also considered³. This philosopher proposes that the destiny of the *homohegemonic* will shall confront whatsoever remains heterogeneous; namely, "an Otherness rejecting such hegemonic and homogenizing will"⁴.

The Recent Origins of Chilean Scenic Dance

The relatively recent origins -as an independent art, particularly from the opera-, are commonly attributed to the successive arrival of several European masters.

On occasion of the second visit of Ana Pavlova, towards 1920, one of his company members, Jan Kawesky, decides to settle down in this country to create a Classical Ballet Academy. Another European master, Andrée Hass, a Swede by birth, Émile Dalcroze School's trainee, will inaugurate a dance academy in Chile in 1928.

Dance begins to consolidate itself as a 'social graces' teaching method in the more affluent Chilean layers, where its practice was promoted as a sort of corporeal education for the young ladies entering society.

Kawesky and Haas academies were preparing the soil for the arrival of the great influence scenic dance will have in Chile: the one derived from the German Expressionist branch; the latter takes place when in 1941, the Joos Ballet, in the midst of a tour around Latin America, splits up. This led to three of its members—Ernst Uthoff, Lola Botka and Rudolph Pescht—settling down in this country.

That same year, under Uthoff's—first Joos Ballet figure—direction and the patronage from the State, the *Escuela de Danza de la Universidad de Chile* [Universidad de Chile Dance School] is formed, constituting a milestone for the professionalization of dance in Chile. In the Escuela de Danza classical technique, modern dance—Leeder System—and rhythm discipline [eurhythmics] is taught.

The *Ballet Nacional Chileno* (BANACH), first national ballet, is created in 1945, associated to this school, with a stable and professional body. Those years, both School and Ballet receive the visit of important German masters, as Sigurd Leeder and Kurt Joos himself.

These European artists' contribution goes beyond dance institutionalization, conducting dance perception as a properly artistic practice, having an exclusive place (the scene), an exclusive and professional formation (given by the School), exerting professionals (the Ballet) and exclusive practicing corps: specialized dancing bodies, selected and formed according to European criteria.

The Western Influence on Chilean Scenic Dance

Following this idea, it is very important having in consideration that the Occidental influence present in Chilean scenic dance is based on a specific bodily expertise, related to the kind of training or corporeal ‘technique’ used to form the longed dancing body.

In this case, we are referring to classical and modern techniques, both carrying an ideal that configures the corporealities of those who practice them. Without daring to talk about a new ‘colonization’—at least of the dancing body—, these techniques, in confronting this new context (different corporealities and expressions), do not adapt to it but, in a sort of way, impose an idea of what is the ‘correct’, the ‘beautiful’, the ‘professional’ and the ‘artistic’.

What was danced in that moment, were remaking of European ballets and, at the most, choreographies designed by Uthoff himself—as *Coppelia*, *Petroushka* or *Carmina Burana*—. The dance troupe was rigorously selected according to strict technical and corporeal criteria.

El umbral del sueño [*The Dream Threshold*] by Malucha Solari, the first choreography created by a Chilean woman is premiered in 1951. It preserved the ‘school line, not only technically speaking but also thematically’⁵.

In her book *Historia social de la danza en Chile*⁶ [Social History of Dance in Chile], the historian María José Cifuentes adventures the hypothesis that the first choreographer in taking charge of searching for a ‘national language’ was Patricio Bunster, mainly with his work *Calaucán*, released on 1959.

While it may be possible to recognize a desire to insert contents concerning the Latin American context, we stress that the struggle for a dance ‘language’ evidently transcends the *oeuvre*’s theme. An attempt to exhort the Chilean public through interests which can identify with its own preoccupations is observed in Bunster’s production, without reaching the point of detaching from the European corporeal ideal; the same applies to the technique, as well as the choreographic or dance/spectator relationship structures taught by his German masters.

In other words, ‘self-identity’ can, in a certain way, be found in the content, but not in form: we found it in the explicit message, but not in the body (and its implicit message). Regarding what drives our interest in particular, we do not encounter in Bunster’s work an emancipation *vis-à-vis* the bodily and aesthetic canons imposed in scenic Chilean dance.

The ‘Latin Americanist’ trend—in content—and expressionist—in form—will have an increasing relevance in the sixties and seventies artistic panorama. In fact, this style is considered until nowadays as the national patrimony of Chilean dance and it is strongly installed in the national choreographic *imaginaire* and taught in the diverse schools of dance.

Contemporary Chilean Scenic Dance

When we talk about contemporary dance, we refer to a certain type of dance originated in Europe and the United States, stemmed from a classical and modern techniques crisis—

even though they are recreated and transformed by every creator or teacher—, also proceeded from abroad.

In Chile, we deal with a kind of dance with foreign roots, however postmodern queries and its alleged ‘representation crisis’⁷, have not been set aside from the Chilean artistic production.

A scenic and corporeal codes rupture in dance has begun to appear in a sort of collage of influences and recycling materials, next to a contemporary dance seed, in Chile in the beginnings of the eighties—despite the dictatorship and its cultural blackout—becoming increasingly poignant in time.

Analyzing the process this kind of dance has undergone in Chile, we can speculate that an more energetic break-up has begun to manifest itself very recently in its scenarios, since two or three years, by the emergence of a generation that has begun to deliver new methodological proposals.

These new proposals and this desire to get away from what a kind of homogenizing tradition that has left as a stigma in the Chilean scenic creation, constitute what we call resistance. We talk about a resistance against a classified and codified vision of the scene possibilities and, above all, against corporeal values linked to a totalizing ideal, a referent that creates disciplined bodies, these modelled according to dominant criteria.

Despite its arrival as American and European influence, contemporary dance allows an adaptation to the different cultural, social, geographical contexts, since it is based in experimentation and goes from the accomplishment of rules to the possibilities of playing with them.

This is the way certain artists and group of artists of the Chilean contemporary dance explore new ways of creating, of distancing themselves from pre-established patterns, thus generating a sort of resistance which first of all traverses the body and the way it is carried to the stage.

The New Generation of the Contemporary Chilean Scenic Dance

In the work of the choreographer Tamara González, former member of the art collective *La vitrina* [*The showcase*], syntactic methods where the movement does not represent nothing but itself can be appreciated. González works, for instance, with the notion of ‘corporeal memory’ as an incentive for creation, transforming the body in a mere significant, with referential signs unrelated to representation.

In her last *oeuvre*, called *En construcción* [*Under construction*], conceived along with Francisco Bagnara and David González, the reflection upon creative process methodologies is enacted in scene. We are confronted with a piece eschewing the conventional communicational modes with the public, allowing it to enter in the very process of the *mise-en-scène*, which means rendering dance accessible from within.

The artist Javiera Peón-Veiga observes in certain Chilean contemporary dance currents the quest for the abandonment of figurativeness as well as the narrative dimension through compositional experiments. In her production, Peón-Veiga tries to detach herself from an imposed narrative and question the body’s over-agitation, the ultra-kinetic value from the reproduction of technical codes related to what is expected from the *corps* dance: which dances permanently and also in certain specific ways.

The troupe *TorresRojas Cuerpo Creativo* [TorresRojas Creative Body], invites three choreographers—Paula Montecinos, Rodrigo Chaverini and Macarena Campbell—to create *pièces* for its work *Esquina Abierta* [Open Corner]. Insisting in the abolition of ‘art and experience mediation’ structures⁸, it is worked and re-worked from unforgettable visual elements. The outcome is a remix, a remake, a *pastiche* wherein the body is perceived in different situations, without imposed meanings, without a discourse ordaining timeline.

The group *Práctica en movimiento* [Practice in movement], crewed by Tamara González, Javiera Peón-Veiga, Josefina Green, Rodrigo Chaverini, Sebastián Belmar, Paulina Vielma, Aische Schwartz, Katalina Mella y Macarena Campbell, defines itself as an exchange space between artists [working] from the anxiety towards exploring creating unparalleled body staging methods.

Bárbara Pinto’s play called *Un solo* [A Solo] show us a person drawing its own silhouette over a sheet of paper giant size. In this case, none movement without a concrete *raison-d’être* is observed, since the aim of body use is the image that will be impregnated in the paper. We perceived a dance not aiming at the movement’s beauty, not even the mere movement, but a process wherein the spectator follows the body in the drawing of its contour. The outcome is thus the very experience of the body and our glance as spectators.

This creative method is relatively similar to the one developed by Alejandro Cáceres, whose last production, *Dilei*, shows an interface of sound and movement, wherein the performers interact with sounds, making out of their bodies sheer receptacles of the sonic waves, thus revealing this sensations for the spectator.

In the work of Paula Montecinos, the body stops being the metaphor of a self evident discourse and it is not yet enclosed by a temporary configuration that ‘says something’. This artist toys with the bodies’ animality, intervening them with sonic and luminous interactive elements, proposing the spectator a experience exceeding the mere observation: distance is eliminated, the same way the corporeal figure is suppressed.

The work of many Chilean dance artists has also aimed at developing forms to appropriate new spaces in which the body can unfold. Dancing in the street is, for instance, the main *motto* for the *Inquietos* [Restless] collective, which even rehearse in the street. An interesting work has been developed by the *Dama Brava* [Brave Lady] company, as well as *Anilina Colectivo* [Aniline Collective], which has participated in the *Corrientes Danza* [Currents Dance] project that encourage the promotion of dance in alternative spaces, squares and streets, enacting *site-specific* practices.

Regarding street exploration as a new format, the work of the artist Francisco Bagnara has been very relevant during the last two years, generating a tiny phenomenon in the world of the Chilean contemporary dance, which has summoned up an increasing number of practitioners.

In this last regard, it is also important to mention the work of the *Escena doméstica* [Domestic Scene] and *Escénica en movimiento* [Scenic in movement] festival organizers, whose aim is to realize dance samples into domestic, non conventional or theatrical spaces, carrying out a dancing body and spectator boundaries displacement. The choreographic works by Laura Corona and Pablo Tapia, to name a few examples, also make a notable contribution to the ways of space reflection for the dancing body as well as the place and the possibilities dance could offer to the spectator.

Resistance in Contemporary Chilean Scenic Dance

Chilean contemporary dance has experienced a rupture with tradition increasingly sharpened during the last years due to a generational renewal and the restless search for new creation methodologies. What we have intended to remark here has been the way the body not only can be dominated by a certain power, meaning at the same time its liberation from such submission. This implies a certain artist attitude which neglects the reception and the passive enactment of the dance corporeal techniques.

The space of political resistance, from the body staging experimentation which dance provides, concerns a dance tradition re-appropriation, tearing it apart, toying with the imposed prejudices, but also adapting it to its context. In this sense and taking into account the artistic exchange contributions and the enrichments they provide, we are no longer in front of 'an influence', but instead of several influences which allow us the expression of 'self-identity', resisting the *homohegemony* mentioned by Derrida.

We have not referred here to the contents able to comprehend in dance pieces, but rather we have talked about a certain kind of resistance related to a way of body thinking, because 'the means to resist the traditional hegemony are not uniquely found in the structures in whose interiority dance is produced but also in a particular attitude towards body.'⁹

Copyright 2013, Adeline Maxwell

Notes

1. Cornago, Óscar (ed.). *Utopías de la Proximidad en el Contexto de la Globalización. La Creación Escénica en Iberoamérica*. Ed. de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha: Cuenca, 2009. p. 11.
2. Castro, Rodrigo. *Foucault y el Cuidado de la Libertad*. LOM: Santiago de Chile, 2008. p. 375.
3. Derrida, Jacques. *Le Monolinguisme de l'Autre*. Galilée: Paris, 1996, pp. 69-78.
4. Ibid.
5. Cifuentes, María José. *Historia Social de la Danza en Chile*. LOM: Santiago de Chile, 2007. p. 190.
6. Ibid.
7. De Mussy, Luis, Valderrama, Miguel. *Historiografía Postmoderna*. Ril: Santiago de Chile, 2010. p. 19.
8. BURT, Ramsay. "Interprètes et Public dans Trio A et Roof Piece". In Rousier, Claire (ed.). *Être Ensemble, Figures de la Communauté en Danse depuis le 20^{ème} siècle*. CND: Paris, 2003. p. 234.
9. Huxley, Michael, Burt, Ramsay. "La Nouvelle Danse : Comment ne pas Jouer le Jeu de l'Establishment". In Febvre, Michèle (ed.). *La Danse au Défi*. Parachute: Montréal, 1987. p. 156.

Bibliography

- Banes, Sally. *Writing Dancing in The Age of Postmodernism*. London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.
- Bernard, Michel. *De la Création Chorégraphique*. Paris: CND, 2001.

- Bernard, Michel. "Des Utopies à l'Utopique ou quelques Réflexions Désabusées sur l'Art du Temps".
- Danse et Utopie*. Ed. Christine Roquet. Paris, Montreal: l'Harmattan, 1999. 34-67.
- Burt, Ramsay. "Interprètes et Public dans Trio A et Roof Piece". *Être Ensemble, Figures de la Communauté en Danse depuis le 20^{ème} siècle*. Ed. Claire Rousier. Paris: CND, 2003. 55-89.
- Castro, Rodrigo. *Foucault y el Cuidado de la Libertad*. Santiago: Lom, 2008.
- De Mussy, Luis y Valderrama, Miguel. *Historiografía Postmoderna*. Santiago: Ril, 2010.
- Foucault, Michel. "Des Espaces Autres". *Dits et Ecrits II*. Paris: Gallimard, 2001.
- Ginot, Isabelle (1999). "Une Structure Démocratique Instable *Danse et Utopie*". Ed. Christine Roquet. Paris, Montreal: l'Harmattan, 1999. 112-118.
- Huxley, Michael y BURT, Ramsay. "La Nouvelle Danse : Comment ne pas Jouer le Jeu de l'Establishment". *La Danse au Défi*. Ed. Michèle Febvre. Montréal: Parachute, 1987.
- Jowitt, Deborah. *Time and the Dancing Image*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Langer, Susanne. *Feelings and Form*. New York: Scribner And Sons, 1953.
- Loupe, Laurence. "Qu'est-ce qui Est Politique en Danse ?". *Nouvelles de Danse. Dossier Danse et Politique*. 30 (1997).
- Rancière, Jacques. *El Espectador Emancipado*. Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2010.
- Zarader, Jean-Pierre. "Identité et Résistance : Fondements et Enjeux Philosophiques", *Alea* (2009) vol. n° 11, n.1.

Address for correspondence:

Adeline Maxwell

José Miguel Carrera 157 depto. 14, Santiago Centro, Chile

Adeline.maxwell@gmail.com

Blackface Guineo Performances in Renaissance Spain: Sites of Minstrel Production and Nascent Racism

Kathy M. Milazzo
University of Surrey

Abstract

This paper examines blackface productions of the guineo, a dance recognised in Renaissance literature as emanating from the West Coast of Africa. Throughout the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, white Spaniards performed the guineo painted with black faces whilst grotesquely exaggerating the dance's Africanist movements in two prominent venues, in religious processions and on dramatic stages. This dance is examined in order to ascertain if pre-Industrial Age modes of production can be read as an early form of minstrelsy as it discerns strategies of power obtained by imitations of negro dance. The two spaces offer different perspectives on the guineo as a performative articulation which enables a multiplicity of discourses about race, morality, religion, and the State while they raise questions about the relationship between the Inquisition and blackface practice and possible seeds of nascent racism. Drawing on an analysis of minstrelsy as delineated by Eric Lott and an investigation of black theatrical speech (habla de negro) as investigated by Baltasar Fra Molinero, I will address the cultural strategies that functioned as a dominant figuration of black dance that both suggest and withhold the corporeal presence of black Spaniards through white appropriation of "blackness."

Introduction

As Carlos Fuentes, author and former Mexican ambassador, observes, Spain has a conflictive relationship to itself: "divided between absolute good and absolute evil. Sun and shadow, as in the bullring" (Fuentes, 1992, p. 16). And, I will argue, between black and white, *negro y blanco*. While divisions are never as stark as they are poetically positioned, divisions between ethnic groups were made manifest in Spain's portrayals of the guineo, a dance recognised in Renaissance literature as emanating from the West Coast of Africa. Featured throughout the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries in two prominent venues, in religious processions and on theatrical stages, white Spaniards performed the guineo painted with black faces whilst exaggerating the dance's Africanist movements. This paper examines this dance in order to ascertain if pre-Industrial Age modes of production can be read as an early form of minstrelsy as it discerns strategies of power obtained by imitations of *negro* dance. The two spaces offer different perspectives on the guineo as a performative articulation which enables a multiplicity of discourses about race, religion, and the State while they raise questions about the relationship between the Inquisition and blackface practice and possible seeds of nascent racism.

The Evidence

A dictionary compiled by Sebastian Covarrubías in 1611, Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española, contains two definitions of the term “guineo.” The first one is a black person from Guinea, the geographical location on Africa’s West Coast that he explained as the “land of blacks and Ethiopians in Africa hired [*a lo contratan*] by the Portuguese” (Covarrubias Orozco, 1995, p. 614) which indicates a gross understatement of the practice of slavery. Covarrubias’s second definition of the guineo is “a certain dance with quick and hurried movements which can be called lascivious for the agility and speed of the dance, it came from Guinea and is danced primarily by *negros*”¹ (Covarrubias Orozco, 1995, p. 614). That the guineo was primarily danced by *negros* indicates that blackface productions were not the only connotations of the guineo in Renaissance Spain. In order to present a racial burlesque, however, white actors needed to invest in black culture for their material. Other period literature, drawn from librettos and novels, ridicules the dances usually danced by servants, who were mostly of African descent, and observes that they danced “*inclinando con notable peligro y asco todo el cuerpo demasiado*” [inclining with notable danger and the whole body extremely disgusting] (Navarro García, 1998, p. 91). Other observers saw “*furious movements and ridiculous, scarcely decent gestures characteristic of blacks danced to the sound of the guitar*”² (Cotarelo y Mori, 1911, p. ccl). As danced by *negros*, the guineo was witnessed since the sixteenth century in public venues like the plaza in front of Santa María de Blanca where black Africans and their Spanish descendants were permitted to dance on most Sundays and feast days.



Figure 1. The plaza in front of the church, Santa María la Blanca.

Figure 1 shows this church in Seville that was just inside the old city gates and is barely a ten minute walk from the city’s main cathedral begun during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella which indicates that for centuries many Spaniards likely saw black dancers

during their *paseos*, or afternoon walks, for which Spain is known. Furthermore, Spain had a significant black population by the sixteenth century which was exacerbated by the development of the slaving industry in the mid-fifteenth century. By 1565, a census in Seville states there were 6,327 slaves out of a total population of 85,538 people, or 7.4% of the population (Earle and Lowe, 2005, p. 70 and Pike, 1972, p. 172).³ Therefore *negro* Africans and Spaniards were not only evident, but they existed in significant numbers enough for their dances to be noticed.

Blackface productions were recorded as early as 1525. Cotarelo y Mori, in his 1911 compilation of literary citations of Renaissance works, cites a requisition list for dances at the feast of the Assumption on the 15th of August 1525 which included “4 máscaras de negro, y por el betún para teñir las piernas y los brazos” [4 black masks, and the shoe polish for the legs and arms] (Cotarelo y Mori, 1911, p. clxxxii). This same production appeared again in feasts in Toledo in 1559, 1561, and 1585 (Cotarelo y Mori, 1911, pp. clxxii-clxxiv). The use of shoe polish to paint the limbs of white dancers suggests that the costumes did not cover the legs and arms thus allowing a degree of freedom in movements. More evidence of blackface is afforded by Lynn Matluck Brooks who describes dancers in the 1617 Immaculate Conception procession in Seville as “whites made into blacks which [sic] such shining faces” (Brooks, 1988, p. 164).

Explorations of Rationale

Blackface productions of the *guineo* in these religious processions seem to display political objectives. Imperial Spain was concerned with rationalising its dominion in the colonies. According to Anthony Pagden, “The School of Salamanca,” a Jesuit-based school which advocated an “elaboration of rationalistic moral philosophy based upon an Aristotelian and Thomist interpretation of the law of nature” offered Spain a justification for dominion over property, goods, actions, liberty, and bodies (Pagden, 1990, p. 16). Humanist philosophies facilitated the domestication of the supposed wild nature of the *negro* allowing the *guineo*, as both a dance and a people in Covarrubias’s definition, to become Spanish property that could be utilised to benefit the Church and State. Once it was formed into a counterfeit white articulation, the *guineo* took on other meanings. Appropriation, in one view, is an unbalanced vehicle for exerting power over the Other and presenting Other as less than human, and is a means of reiterating control over the conquered. Visually, the processions were stunning events which featured spectacular costumes with lavish floats because they were funded by the Church which had significant capital. White dancers with painted faces and limbs wildly imitating black dances to the sound of bells and drums juxtaposed with the solemnity of revered religious statues parading on floats above the crowds could encourage sentiments deemed appropriate by the Church and State and heighten emotional responses. Messages of authority, salvation, and order were embodied in spectacular, cathartic displays of pageantry. Blackface African dances in the religious processions were white Spanish interpretations of what *negro* ought to be—Christian, beautifully presented, and under Spanish control.

Theatrical productions, which also featured blackface performers, not only incorporated black soot and curly wigs to denote *negro* characters, but they utilised a peculiar practice known as *habla de negro*, a pidgin speech that emphasised an unrefined quality or lack of intelligence in *negro* characterisations in order to embellish parody. It

was employed in dialogue of black characters as well as in refrains for songs accompanying *negro* dances. For instance, the refrain for the guineo was in *habla de negro*:

¡Garrumé, garrumé, garrumé!
Que fase nubrado y quiele yové (Cotarelo y Mori, 1911, p. ccli)

While *garrumé* or *garrumbé*, used interchangeably in these refrains, was a rhythmic alliteration with indeterminate origins, the second line in regular Spanish might be translated as “que hace nubrado y quiere llover” [it is cloudy and it wants to/looks like rain]. This practice suggests that infantile speech patterns of *habla de negro* served as a racialising technique used to denigrate Spanish *negros*. Indeed, Baltasar Fra Molinero’s work on the image of the black in Renaissance Spain delves deeply into this argument noting that the representation of the black character would begin and end in laughter (Fra Molinero, 1995, p. 191). This mechanism placed the Spanish *negro* in a containable position.

As in Eric Lott’s analysis of American minstrelsy, the Spanish blackface practice deliberately distorted dialect in an action of ridicule. Lott states that “What was on display in minstrelsy was less black culture than a structured set of white responses to it which had grown out of northern and frontier social rituals and were passed through an inevitable filter of racist presupposition” (Lott, 1993, p. 101). *Habla de negro* was a codified way of imitating the speech of Spanish *negros* in spectacles exhibiting the objectification of black characters through repartee and physical burlesque. Building on the concept of infantile characters, if “habla de negro” was the standard aural vehicle for portraying “black” on Spanish stages for comedic effect, then the black body was also ridiculed visually in a “baila de negro” interpretation.

If theatrical portrayals of the guineo were comically exaggerated to increase hilarity, then distorted *negro* dance reinforced perceptions through visual afterimages. Blackface characters were not only made to be heard but made to be seen. In his work on Renaissance drama, Hugo Rennert cites numerous accounts of disorderly occurrences and states that Spanish playwright “Lope de Vega often alludes to the *vulgo* [vulgar people], as he calls them, in a tone of bitter contempt” (Rennert, 1963, p. 117). The Spanish theatre was very much at the mercy of the disruptive, paying public. As such, spoken words would be difficult to hear, and dance, being visual and rhythmic, carried the intention of *negro* portrayals more effectively. As a site for racial mimicry facilitated by a sense of entitlement in the inequality of colonial discourse, such imitations of the guineo reduced *negro* bodies to commodities for commercial and artistic exploitation.

What is puzzling, however, is what prompted white Spaniards to paint themselves black as early as 1525? It seems unlikely it was “to retain audience appeal,” like Tim Rice did in his later impersonations of Jim Crow, as Lynn Emery reasons, in her history of black dance (Emery, 1988, p. 184). The 1525 portrayal was in a religious procession and therefore was not subject to commercial motivations, although communication and excitement in the audience were compelling evidence of the Church’s domination. The early manifestation of blackface in Spain implies the imposition of controlled imagery through an action of colonialism. This action is explained in Lott’s observation of a “master text of the racial economy encoded in blackface performance” (Lott, 1993, p. 19). Through the use of “blackness,” class was staged as a matter of display. The lavish

costumes in the processions and the painting of the face and limbs were not realistic depictions, but ambivalent actions suggesting desire to both imitate and to distance *negros* in Spain. A split in colonial discourse, as is made evident through ambivalence, displays two attitudes towards external reality, according to Homi Bhabha: “one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates ‘reality’ as mimicry” (Bhabha, 2006, p. 130). Through mimicry, the *negro* subject, becomes a partial presence, something less than whole as seen through the eyes of white Spaniards.

But can the Spanish portrayals be considered in the same vein as minstrelsy? American minstrelsy has been attributed to anxiety from industrialization (Lott, 1993, p. 74). The obvious minstrel signs of black faces, curly wigs, and parodies of black bodies and behaviours in Spain suggest a pattern of racial mimicry in the representations of black people, yet to read this as minstrelsy, in the nineteenth-century understanding, is uncertain. As Jayna Brown notes: “Discursive claims compete, conflict, and are never complete. Racialized bodies wriggle through, around with, and against these claims” (Brown, 2008, p. 60). There is no one way to read this practice. Michael Pickering’s work on ragtime in Britain considered that the use of blackface stresses cultural difference because “Modernity as a way of seeing and experiencing the world relied heavily on a sense of contrast between its own orientation and its various exclusions, displacements, and projections of ‘difference’” (Pickering, 2000, p. 153). Creating difference separated low class dancing from upper class and theatrical renditions of the *guineo* seem to have intensified this dissimilarity. Therefore, one comparable strategy with minstrelsy deliberately created difference in order to distance white Spaniards from the black ones.

Were there undercurrents of social commentary inherent in the portrayals by white actors? Pickering states that: “Minstrelsy was like a hall of distorting magic mirrors in which temporarily, social and cultural problems, psychic tensions, and conflicts were grotesquely magnified or dissolved and images of self were inverted, reversed, thrown bizarrely out of shape, and then reassuringly restored” (Pickering, 2000, p. 176). By putting on a painted mask and playing infantile, low class characters, white dancers could move in ways that were deemed inappropriate in other settings. In Brown’s words, blackface was “a symbolic and temporary indulgence” that allowed a certain freedom (Brown, 2008, p. 73). If the use of blackface was a means to carry out behaviour contrary to the social norm, the carnivalesque is suggested through duplicity between black and white bodies. A grotesque, exaggerated performance of the *guineo* in Catholic Spain demonstrates that subversive elements existed in the shadows. Dancers could dance with more body parts moving, wiggle hips, and act provocatively because the audience saw them through the “distorting magic mirrors.” Conversely, temporarily acting black in a physical manner reflects back on “self” in that the distorted black image reaffirms the white Spanish image of righteousness, benevolence, and power.

English and American minstrelsy customs convey other images identifiable with Spanish practices—white fear of the black body through the creation of infantile characters, white desire through lascivious depictions of the dances, and white insecurity through portrayals of characters in a lower state. Ridicule asserts difference between the counterfeit white articulations and the dances of *negros*. Henry Overstreet, in a 1944 edition of the *Saturday Review*, considered images more powerful than reality. He states that: “The image of the Negro as a kind of clown, with comic turns of speech and

ludicrous behavior, has robbed him of dignity. The images of him as lazy, childishly dependent, and dishonest have excused us from having confidence in him; while the images of him as vicious and sexually irresponsible have put him outside the pale” (Emery, 1988, p. 197). If the ridiculing aspects of the portrayal of black characters by white actors are considered in terms of minstrelsy as defined by Overstreet, then the portrayals of *negro* characters in Renaissance Spain harmed black Spanish citizens by fixing a derogatory stereotype in the minds of white Spain through a process of degradation. While it is difficult to determine if the intent was as malicious as nineteenth-century minstrel practices indicate, the resultant creation and repetition of the degraded *negro* stereotype remain similar.

Before concluding, the Spanish Inquisition must be addressed. While an Inquisition had existed in Europe since the twelfth century, in 1477 the Spanish Catholic Monarchs re-established a modern form in order to control social discord and strife driving urbanisation. Toby Green, in *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear*, observes that the Inquisition was most severe during the first fifty years after 1477 (Green, 2007, p. 8). Prior to its re-establishment, after riots in 1449 against Spanish *conversos* in Toledo, the question of purity of blood, or *limpieza de sangre*, came into question as one could no longer hold office without proving their cleanliness of blood (Green, 2007, p. 196). Throughout the sixteenth century, the Inquisition increasingly defined conformity and normality in terms of blood by creating scapegoats out of anomalous groups which society had no interest in preserving. After removing the *conversos*, Spain targeted their *moriscos* creating differences with families who had lived legally in Spain for centuries and who were, by all accounts, thoroughly Spanish.

If the concept of *limpieza de sangre* developed from riots in 1449 and the first fifty years of the modern Inquisition after 1477 were the most severe, then the act of using blackface in 1525 leads to the conclusion that corporeally defining *negro* through imitations of the guineo encouraged Spain’s ideations of race long before Linnaeus classified humans into types. As the Inquisition clearly used fear as the best way to achieve political ends (Green, 2007, p. 14), playing the part of the *negro* was one of the few safe means to convey contrast. Spanish *negros* held no political advantage and were deemed too low to be threatening. As the Inquisition spread across centuries, it incorporated more artificial social constructs of difference that allowed it to categorise other Spaniards to persecute for political gains. Therefore, the physical expression of determined difference embodied in blackface interpretations of the guineo illustrates cultural antagonisms which reveal how the objectified black body signifies a concept of racism that foreshadows future classifications of peoples. The guineo, for all of its pretence of being a *negro* comedic dance, when it was danced by *blancos* Spaniards, reveals an uncanny truth about colonial authority and paranoia.

Copyright 2013, Kathy M. Milazzo

Notes

1. “Es una cierta danza de movimientos prestos y apresurados. Pudo ser fuse traída de Guinea y que la danzasen primero los negros.”
2. “Cierto baile de movimientos violentos y gestos ridículos, propio de los negros. Tañido ó son de este baile que so toca en la guitarra.”

3. This figure includes other slaves besides those from sub-Saharan Africa, but *negro* slaves did vastly outnumber other groups such as Moors and eastern Mediterranean people.

Bibliography

- Bhabha, H. (1994) *The Location of Culture*, 2006 edn., London, Routledge Press.
- Bray, X. (Ed.) (2010) *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600-1700*, London, National Gallery Company Limited.
- Brooks, L.M. (1988) *The Dances of the Processions of Seville in Spain's Golden Age*, Kassel, Edition Reichenberger.
- Brown, J. (2008) *Babylon Girls*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cotarelo y Mori, E. (Ed.) (1911) *Colección de entremeses, loas, bailes, jácaras y mojigangas desde fines del siglo XVI á mediados del XVIII*, Madrid, Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españas.
- Covarrubias Orozco, S. (1611) *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, 1995 edn. Madrid, Editorial Castalia.
- Earle T.F. and Lowe, K.J.P. (Eds.) (2005) *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Emery, L.F. (1988) *Black Dance from 1619 to Today*. Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Company.
- Fra Molinero, B. (1995) *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del siglo de oro*, Madrid, Siglo XXI de España Editores, S.A.
- Fuentes, C. (1992) *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Green T. (2007) *Inquisition: The Reign of Fear*, London: Pan Macmillan, Ltd.
- Lott, E. (1993) *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 1995 edn., Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Navarro García, J.L. (1998) *Semillas de ébano: El element negro y afroamericano en el baile flamenco*, Seville, Portada Editorial.
- Pagden, A. (1990) *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Pérez-Díaz, V. (1998) State and Public Sphere in Spain during the Ancient Regime, *Daedalus*, 127(3), pp. 251-279, JStor [online] Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20027514> (Accessed 23 August 2011).
- Pickering, M. (2000) Eugene Stratton and Early Ragtime in Britain, *Black Music Research Journal*, 20(2), pp. 151-180, JStor [online] Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/779465> (Accessed 12 December 2008).
- Pike, R. (1972) *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century*, The Cornell Press. The Library of Iberian Sources [online] Available at: <http://libro.uca.edu/aristocrats/aristocrats.htm> (Accessed 22 July 2008).
- Rennert, H.A. (1063) *The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- Suárez García, J.L. (Ed.) (2004) *Juan de Mariana: Tratado Contra Los Juegos Públicos*, Granada Editorial, Universidad de Granada.

Address for correspondence:

Kathy Milazzo
kpmilazzo@aol.com

Becoming Gypsy: Moving like the Other(s) Diane Oatley

Abstract

In The Meaning of the Body philosopher Mark Johnson makes a case for the significance of movement in terms of the body processes he holds as essential to the generation of meaning and knowledge acquisition in physical interaction with the world – equally essential as language and cognition. The paper asks whether this theory then represents a basis for rethinking dance as political activism. The perceptions of women studying flamenco dance, a dance tradition often defined as “gypsy”, indicate that exposure to flamenco dance and culture leads to the undoing of stereotypes regarding embodiment and difference, but respondents did not relate this undoing to bodily engagement, movement acquisition or physical learning processes particular to dance. Although Johnson’s failure to properly account for the role of the unconscious proves to be a serious shortcoming in the theory, and one which had implications for the findings, the theory represents a radical gesture to the extent that it redefines embodiment in its own right, opening for understanding dance as inherently ideological, as social enactment rather than solely mimetic spectacle.

Introduction

Hundreds of women come to Andalusia every year from all over the world to study flamenco dance. Why women decide to make such a journey and what they are seeking to achieve is of course very individual. Flamenco dance has in fact a multitude of manifestations: it is both a dance for the stage and a folkloric practice, and the role of the *gitano* population in the development and practice of flamenco remains a source of controversy. In this regard the *gitano*,¹ whether perceived as a mythical perception, as a form of cultural identity, or as a ethnic or racial category, represents a complex site of negotiation that dancers who come to Spain from abroad to study flamenco must resolve and come to terms with in their journey to understand the dance as an aesthetic practice and art form, how and where it takes place, its position in society, and the role it has assumed or been assigned in terms of cultural identity.

This negotiation is a learning process that is lived and unfolds in different ways in different women. I was interested in exploring how practitioners live this particular negotiation, both within and outside of the dance studio/performance space. Did the experience of learning about flamenco culture through the practice of dancing produce a particular form of knowledge about that culture and its manner of being in the world? And secondly, in exploring the *gitano* identity as found in flamenco, or the specific manifestation of flamenco as produced by the *gitano* practitioners with an eye to its embodiment, are practitioners seeking to “become gypsy”, or at the very least, to learn to dance like the “Other(s)”, however they have or have not defined this for themselves?

These questions in themselves proved to be fraught with a number of issues: the very presumption that one might best access the *gitano* identity through dance and the body is by definition Orientalist. The idea that by moving into a state of being-subsumed

by/in the body through dance one will be better equipped to become/access the Other, relegates the Other to a position outside of language, as if that body were dumb and mute and best understood sensually. Embodiment in and of itself is not an authentic or privileged state – it does not enable us to “access” the soma of other bodies in a manner that is more true. The issue thus became how to go about exploring these questions without further perpetuating stereotypes and in a manner that enabled bypassing a reactionary fetishizing of the body as the bearer of “the real”, also in my own perception of embodiment (Hewitt, p. 7).

The Meaning of the Body

What was wanting then was a theory that configured the body and knowledge in a manner opening up for the possibility of thinking about these issues through different parameters. This is what brought me to the theory of philosopher Mark Johnson as presented in *The Meaning of the Body*. Johnson here makes a case for the significance of movement, perception and emotion in terms of the primary body processes he holds as essential to our production of meaning and knowledge acquisition in interaction with situations in the world – equally essential as language, cognition, and the ability for abstract thought. Drawing from findings in neuroscience, what Johnson’s theory explores is not only how the body is lived, but how the body experiences and is wholly implicated in the acquisition of knowledge and sense-making, as he makes a case for the mind and body as a continuum. On the basis of this, he claims that “It is originally through movement that we come to inhabit a world that makes sense to us...we literally discover ourselves in movement” (Johnson, p. 20). For reasons of space I will not give an in-depth explanation of this theory but instead restrict myself to some fundamental points of relevance to the question at hand. According to Johnson:

- There is no radical mind/body separation: mind and body are merely abstracted aspects of the flow of organism-environment interactions that constitute what we call experience.
- Meaning is grounded in our bodily experience: there is no disembodied mind, no transcendent soul or ego that is the source of meaning. Our experience of meaning is based on our sensorimotor perceptions, our feelings and our visceral connections to our world; and, on various imaginative capacities for using sensorimotor processes to understand abstract concepts.
- Reason is an embodied process by which our experience is explored, criticised and transformed in inquiry. Reason is tied to structures of our perceptual and motor capacities and inextricably linked to feeling.(Johnson, 2007)

Johnson’s theory rejects thus the objectification of the body, or more precisely, the mind-body dualism running through the history of Western philosophy, stating “the cognitive/emotive dichotomy (that pervades Western philosophy) does more harm than good (Johnson, p. 9).” The theory offers a means of rethinking knowledge in a manner that profoundly institutes the body, sensation and perception, and the role of emotions/feelings in knowledge acquisition. All of these types of experiences are

traditionally discounted by science and philosophy as subjective and therefore as not being “factual”, scientific, or even useful in determining truth.

To understand embodied meaning, Johnson maintains that you must look at the felt qualities, which he defines as the feelings and emotions that ground our more abstract structures of meaning, which he illustrates first by exploring our “meaningful engagement with our world as it comes to us through our bodies” (Johnson, p. 17); according to Johnson, meaning reaches deep down into our corporeal encounter with our environment. “The world does not come to us prepackaged with determinate objects with their determinate properties...we learn about the meaning of objects by handling them, by means of what he calls ‘affordances’ or possibilities for interaction with objects” (Johnson, p.46). Finally, emotion is significant because “what is meaningful to us and how it is meaningful depends fundamentally on our ongoing monitoring of our bodily states as we experience (have feelings about) and act within situations in our world” (Johnson, p. 56).

Johnson does not, however, clearly situate the role or position of the unconscious, stating only, somewhat vaguely, that we may not have awareness of such knowledge acquisition processes. “Mostly, meaning emerges for us beneath the level of our conscious awareness” (Johnson, p. 17). It is a matter of “mostly automatic and unconscious” bodily processes, where meaning is intimately tied to emotions, only some of which “rise to the level” of conscious feeling of the emotion having a meaning. So although “emotions are our primary means for our being in touch with our world” (Johnson, p. 65), our means of “monitoring” any given situation, “most of this is not consciously entertained” (Johnson, p. 66-67). In the course of this study, as will be shown, it became evident that Johnson’s failure to adequately account for the unconscious represents a serious shortcoming in his theory, in particular because my thesis question relates to preconceived notions which by definition tend to be unconscious.

How does it feel?

Will dancers who spend the greater portion of their lives working with precisely the levels of knowledge that Johnson seeks to elucidate have a more acute understanding than of what he proposes as the inevitably embodied nature of knowledge? And by extension will not women coming to flamenco with all kinds of stereotypes about that tradition, through the experience of learning the dance, gain and produce knowledge through the learning of the dance itself that will inevitably undo those very prejudices?

I interviewed four women who have been dancing flamenco for more than ten years. One of the women was Spanish, from Jerez, but did not begin dancing until late in life. The three other women were from Holland, Canada and Japan, respectively. The interviews were very interesting for a number of reasons, not least from a narrative standpoint. I would have like to comment on the details here, but for reasons of space I will restrict myself to a summary of main findings.

With regard to the question of becoming gypsy, what the interviews revealed was that while the respondents’ exposure to flamenco dance and the culture of flamenco led to a revision of received notions in regarding ethnicity, difference, and otherness particular to that same culture, – in other words they all gave me politically correct, well-informed

responses – they did not, however, relate this revision to bodily engagement, movement acquisition, or other form of sensory perception (as opposed to conceptions) experienced while dancing. Their responses for the most part bypassed the level of soma and sensation altogether, to such an extent that the obvious conclusion was that they were either not aware of any processes taking place at this level, or if they were, were not able to verbalise them. When asked whether learning to dance Flamenco has introduced new knowledge or bodily experiences, none of them provided any indication that they had an awareness of this having taken place. This was the case no matter how I turned around the questions. One woman cited articles and books she had read, and although I reminded her again and again that I was interested in her experiences, she seemed unable or unwilling to speak of these. The “experience” she wanted or was able to give me was that of what she had read about flamenco.

Three of the four women had dance related injuries at the time of the interview, and surprisingly none of them understood these injuries as a potential source of new knowledge about themselves, the art form or about dance in general – they did not contextualise their injuries within the situation of dancing flamenco, or as being something particular to their own manner of responding to the dance. Their perception of their injuries was wholly instrumental, a mechanical, health condition to be treated, viewed as a malfunction which they were personally responsible for, as opposed to a potential cause for reflection about any felt qualities of the movement patterns specific to the aesthetic of flamenco dance, or any other type of embodied process particular to the dance or learning situation.

Two of the respondents did speak about a changed body image i.e. “I accept my large frame in a way I did not before, there is more acceptance for this in Flamenco” or improved self-esteem “I have more self-confidence since I started dancing Flamenco, my body is stronger, I feel proud of myself as a woman.” I find this to be relevant to the issues at hand, although the respondents again did not specifically relate these changes to any experiences particular to learning the dance – this was presented more as an unintended outcome or a side-effect. But certainly the fact that the dance practice produced such evolutions is relevant, and it is of interest that the discourse they are using to speak about this is a psychologising discourse: this perhaps the most available contemporary discourse we currently have on hand to speak about such processes.

One of the respondents did speak briefly and articulately about sensation in relation to the dance, that when she danced well, it was as if her blood vessels seemed to expand and her blood was vibrating. This is an experience I can identify with, in the sense of a particular space that is produced in flamenco and corresponds with what Johnson would call the “felt qualities” produced through a given aesthetic. This respondent was thus able to identify and verbalise an awareness of bodily sensations or “felt qualities” she experienced as being specific to her experience of dancing flamenco. But they fed only back into the dance itself: she demonstrated no awareness that the sensations she was able to speak about might have consequences in a broader sense, for herself personally, or her perception of embodied identity, of these sensations being an opening for further reflection about the dance itself, her practice of it, alternative perceptions about life, aesthetics, etc.

So what if I can't talk about it?

To paraphrase Johnson himself then, what sensible difference to any-body does the theory's truth make? What does it mean that these women, – all of whom it must be said were highly educated, intelligent and extremely articulate – for the most part did not refer in any sense to experiences related to sensation, perception, feelings, or anything that could be remotely identified as Johnson's "felt qualities"? There was very little reflection whatsoever about their learning processes that surpassed on the one hand a predominantly instrumental view of the body, and on the other, a very conventional, you could even say romantic, perception of dance as transcendent performance object.

Reading these findings through the lens of Johnson's theory, what can be identified here is a grey zone, comprising non-verbalised layers of experience, between a psychologising discourse or the discourse of self-esteem, which posits a very specific and in fact conventional perception of knowledge and the body, on the one hand, and a discourse for the description of sensation that remains sequestered if not within the body's soma, then within the conventional understanding of dance as artefact referred to above. I am not saying that either of these experiences are wrong; neither am I saying that an understanding of "dance as artefact" represented here is without value. The latter is also a tradition that is very much present in Flamenco and a thread that has played a very important part in the evolution of the dance itself, with regard to the mutually influential practices of flamenco as folkloric practice and flamenco as dance for the stage.

What I am suggesting is that this particular understanding of dance and its concomitant transmission does not stimulate the types of reflections or processes that I am looking for: it presupposes an understanding of embodiment and aesthetics very different from the implications of Johnson's theory, which as I will seek to show, offers the possibility of thinking about dance also *as social enactment* rather than solely mimetic spectacle, something of most obvious relevance to Flamenco as folkloric practice. But dance as social enactment would also be of interest with respect to women coming to the dance from outside of Flamenco's sociocultural context, who will of necessity be dancing flamenco unhinged from its [originary] "putative historical determinants" (Hewett, 2005; p. 212). This feeds immediately into the site of negotiation that is the focus of this article.

Secondly, what is also at stake is the articulation of types of experience and knowledge that are so profoundly devalued by our culture, that we do not view them as important: such experiences are merely "subjective", personal, private and therefore not scientific. In an interview situation, the respondents were seeking to provide me with information that would be valuable to a study, however they might define this, seeking to appear well-informed and intelligent, and also to impress me with their knowledge of Flamenco, all of which are agendas in which such "subjective knowledge" or "emotional experiences" will not even be considered, no matter how much I explicitly asked for this. For indeed, as Johnson emphasises: "One of the serious limitations of philosophy and of much cognitive science...is that it tends to equate meaning with language, more specifically with propositional language"(Forceville, 2008).

Another interpretation is that it is simply not possible to speak about such things. That we do not, on the one hand as I intimated above, have a discourse at hand by which to refer to them, and on the other, that there are quite simply levels of embodied

experience that cannot be told. I would however insist that if knowledge exists, it must be possible if not to express it in straightforward terms, at least to *refer to it*, to say something *about* it.

The latter leads us back to the role of the unconscious mentioned above, which I would hold is a wrench in the mind-body machinery Johnson is proposing here. A dualism is reinstated between that which can and cannot be known, which one might even conjecture is the source of the body/mind dualism in our culture, whereby the body (and by extension, dance) is inevitably relegated to the obscure realm of the unconscious/unknowable. And I would maintain that it is here that a stumbling block remains securely in place, with respect to any revolutionary implications this theory might have; its application in a dance context would of necessity have to provide for the role of the unconscious and along with it, the nature of embodiment in connection with language acquisition.

Discourse meets practice

I would hold that Johnson's theory is valuable for dance studies because of its proposed reconfiguration of the traditional body-mind dualism by which Western philosophy organises the world. That although it is perhaps the case the many of the experiences Johnson holds as being critical to knowledge production cannot be told, or again in his words "consciously entertained", his theory represents a radical gesture to the extent that it redefines embodiment in its own right, and along with it, the cognitive/emotive dichotomy that pervades Western philosophy. It hereby encourages an alternative understanding of the dancing body and cognition. Because in the very simplest of terms, what Johnson is saying is that our meaning-making is always inevitably embodied. And that embodiment is of interest to the extent that we can come to grips with it not solely as a representation of ideas, but as something ideological in its own right.

This reverts back to my above comments on validating other modalities of thought. On the basis of this it enables us to view and value dance in a manner that has larger socio-political implications, as something less removed from our pedestrian manner of being in the world. This relates to Johnson's focus on situations, "which comprise physical, biological, social, as well as cultural conditions" (Forceville, 2009) opening for understanding embodiment and dance also as interactive spaces of being, and by extension – for understanding dance as situation rather than a performance object. As the enactment of ideology rather than (solely) its mimetic representation.

As intimated above, this particular insight is of interest in terms of flamenco due to the fact that flamenco dance remains, also, a folkloric practice, a folkloric practice that is inexorably implicated in the social structures and identities of Andalusia and particularly for *gitano* practitioners it is a profound manner of forming and preserving identity, within which there is yes, performance as well, but also a highly performative aspect, having to do with the enactment of social identities, the creation and confirmation of family and community.² A dense tangle of social choreographies reverberates within this of which anyone participating in the dance at this level, will of necessity have a visceral knowledge, however intuitive and unverbilised that knowledge may be. As stated above the folkloric practice of flamenco has historically influenced and been influenced by flamenco for the stage, and this mutual interaction continues. There is then

I feel a need for an exploration of the properties particular to this dimension – folkloric dance as embodied meaning and social enactment.

Beyond this, the exploration of the site of negotiation sought elucidated by this study has, as stated above, implicitly involved an attempt to come to grips with it as a field of social enactment. I will close here with reference to the subtitle of Johnson’s book: “Aesthetics of Human Understanding”. He explains the use of the word aesthetics in this context by stating: “Aesthetics is not just art theory, but rather should be regarded broadly as the study of how humans make and experience meaning, because the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the very same ones that make linguistic meaning possible”(Johnson, p. 209). There is an obvious and interesting convergence here with the insights of cultural studies scholar Andrew Hewett about social choreography, which I feel opens further the intended field and direction of the subject matter covered here. Hewett states: “I do not claim that aesthetic forms do not reflect ideological positions: clearly they can and do. *But they do not only reflect*. My claim, instead, is that choreography designates a sliding or gray zone where discourse meets practice” (Gormley, 2013). This echoes my observation regarding the grey zone that interpretation of the respondents’ experiences through Johnson’s model highlighted in the interview material. To paraphrase Hewett in terms of my investigation of the project of “becoming gypsy”, I would propose that “the dancing does not do away with such categories, but [hereby] contains the potential to refine and rehearse them” (Pristaš, 2007). To explore them, and to open up a lateral space of exploration, being and embodiment, that “knocks up against reality” (Hewett, 2005; p. 8).

Notes

1. The Romani population of Spain, also known as the Iberian Kale.
2. This observation is my own, and is based on my own experiences and conversations with members of the *gitano* community in Jerez de la Frontera. For an explanation of the particular importance of flamenco for the *gitano* community, see e.g. Pedro Peña Fernández, *Los gitanos flamencos*, Editorial Almuzara, 2013, p. 93–96.

Bibliography

- Bhabba, Homi, K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge Classics.
- Butler, Judith, 1997. *Excitable speech. A politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Caballero, Ángel Alvarez, 1998. *El baile flamenco*. Madrid: Alanza Editorial, SA.
- Fernández, Pedro Peña, 2013. *Los gitanos flamencos*, Editorial Almuzara.
- Forceville, Charles. 2008. “Review of Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*” in *Metaphor and Symbol* 23: 292 – 297. University of Chicago Press.
- Gormly, Jeffrey. “What is social choreography?” <http://choreograph.net/raw/what-is-social-choreography> (accessed 12.05.2013).
- Hewitt, Andrew. 2005. *Social Choreography*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Johnson, Mark, 2007. *The Meaning of the Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Landry, Donna and Maclean, Gerald, 1996. *The Spivak Reader*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Leblon, B., 2003. *Gypsies and Flamenco*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press.

- Pristaš , Goran Sergej, 2007. “Andrew Hewitt: Choreography is a way of thinking about the relationship of aesthetics to politics” within Documenta 12 magazine project. <http://www.tkh-generator.net/en/openedsources/andrew-hewitt-choreography-a-way-thinking-about-relationship-aesthetics-politics-0> (Accessed 23.05.2013)
- Said, Edward, 1979, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books Edition: New York.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 1998. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, pp. 271-313. Chicago: University of Illinois.

Address for correspondence:

Diane Oatley
Hammerstadsgate 21D
0363 Oslo, Norway
diane oat@broadpark.no

À propos Grete Wiesenthal. All of a sudden – Dance is Art!

Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller

Director Emerita of the Derra de Moroda Dance Archives
University Salzburg

Abstract

In June of 1907, Grete Wiesenthal left her position as a member of the ballet ensemble of the Vienna Court Opera – a secure job entitled to a pension. With her versatile classical training, she had mastered technical bodily skills, and as such she was esteemed as a dancer able to entertain, in the perception of the Imperial Opera’s audience. This fact is surprising inasmuch as Grete Wiesenthal had the necessary technical ability for the demanded entertainment, but not what was deemed even more important at the time – the outward appearance expected of an Imperial Opera dancer. Not even one year later, Grete made her debut as a free dancer. By the time she left the performance venue – the Wiener Werkstätte cabaret Fledermaus – she had been elevated to an “artist“, in the eyes of Vienna’s elite. Moreover, the general opinion was that Grete Wiesenthal had demonstrated something new: dance per se could be art! How had this paradigm shift, unique in the history of stage dance, been accomplished?

Introduction

In June of 1907, Grete Wiesenthal left her position as a member of the ballet ensemble of the Vienna Court Opera – a secure job entitled to a pension. With her versatile classical training, she had mastered technical bodily skills, and as such she was esteemed as a dancer able to entertain, in the perception of the Court Opera’s audience. This fact is surprising as Grete Wiesenthal had the necessary technical ability for the demanded entertainment, but not what was deemed even more important at the time – the outward appearance expected of an Imperial Opera dancer. This included mainly a “sinuous”, well-endowed body.

Not even one year later, Grete made her debut as a “free dancer” together with her sisters Elsa and Berta. By the time she left the performance venue – the *Wiener Werkstätte* cabaret “Fledermaus” – she had been elevated to an “artist,” in the eyes of Vienna’s elite. Moreover, the general opinion was that Grete Wiesenthal had demonstrated something new: dance *per se* could be art! How had this paradigm shift, unique in the history of stage dance, been accomplished? Was it only the perception of the various audiences – there at the opera, predominantly the male gaze – here on the cabaret’s podium, that of “Young Vienna”?¹ There the expectation of being entertained by women, here the conviction of seeing something sophisticated and challenging. Was the new assessment of Wiesenthal’s dance due to the fact that she had taken the themes of Vienna and its waltz and, through her choreography, elevated them from the form most common in Vienna – a social dance – to the artistic waltz, a development that had long since taken place in music? Was it because

she had largely ignored the social dance and had reverted to folk dance as her basis? Was it simply that Isadora Duncan had prepared the ground in Vienna for a new perspective on dance?² Or was the reason quite different, perhaps, given that the arts – literature, painting, sculpture, applied arts – genres among whose protagonists Wiesenthal moved – had pre-formulated this new dance, so to speak? Had it been left for Grete Wiesenthal to physically bring a movement onto the stage that had already been formulated in texts, in paintings, fabrics or architecture?

Questions and more questions – which are to be answered as follows: first of all, Grete Wiesenthal, who is far too little-known outside Austria, will be introduced in a brief overview of facts and dates. Then, the novelty inherent in Grete Wiesenthal's dance, considered *Freier Tanz* or a precursor to *Ausdruckstanz*,³ will be portrayed briefly and compared to two other forms of stage dance extant around 1900: dance as practiced at the institution of the Opera and the *Variété*,⁴ which suddenly rose to a different, higher significance during these years.⁵ Then, the main section of this presentation will deal with the perception of a very specific audience and the question: And how did this new dance fit into the intellectual world of Viennese Modernism?

Facts and Dates

Grete (Margarete) Wiesenthal (born in Vienna in 1885 and died there in 1970) trained as a classical dancer at the ballet school of Vienna's Court Opera House, joining its ballet ensemble in 1901 and being named a *Koryphäe* of that ensemble in 1905. In 1907 she left the ensemble and made her debut together with her sisters Elsa (1887–1967) and Berta (1892–1953) at the *Wiener Werkstätte* cabaret *Fledermaus*, a platform for Viennese Modernism during those years.

Starting in 1910, Grete Wiesenthal was active as a soloist all over Europe. She danced and choreographed both her own solos as well as so-called “pantomimes” written specifically for her, had leading roles in films and was also active as a teacher and director of her own school and dance company. For the Vienna State Opera, she choreographed the ballet *Der Taugenichts in Wien* (1930, music: Franz Salmhofer); she also worked for the Salzburg Festival. From 1945 to 1951 she was the director of the dance department at Vienna's Music Academy. After Grete separated from her sisters, Elsa first formed a duo with Berta before reconstituting a trio with their sister Marta (1902–1996), which performed until the end of the 1920s.⁶

Thus, in all simplicity and brevity, the necessary biographical data. An assessment of Wiesenthal's oeuvre must take up far more space, since it is of major significance. This becomes even clearer when the all-revealing question is asked: what – compared to the existing forms of stage dance in Vienna up to that time – was new about Grete Wiesenthal's dance? The answer to this question must be surprising, for everything about Grete Wiesenthal's work was new!⁷

The applied technique was new, the style of dance was new, the dancer's appearance was new, including her costumes, dance shoes, hairstyle and such; what was also new was Grete Wiesenthal's self-concept. The aesthetics and concept of the works were new, as was their dramaturgy; the selection of music and the relationship between music and choreography were new. The performance mode was new – as a soloist (she was no longer part of

an ensemble built upon strict hierarchy) – and so was the performance venue – a podium. The audience was new and therefore its view of the dancer, the target group was new – artists, at first, and their circles – and the interaction between the dancer and her audience was new, and therefore the manner of presentation. Regarding the choreography, unlike ballet and cabaret dance, it did not consist of assembled stereotyped elements offered by stereotyped dancers.

In addition, the creative process was completely new: the creator and the interpreting artist were identical. While she relied on her classical training, Grete Wiesenthal only used it as a basis, providing a foundation for her individual way of movement. This had not grown from the traditional dancer categories (which seem to have become more permeable around the turn of the century)⁸, but rather from the “unmistakable uniqueness of one’s own physical prerequisites and talents”⁹. This dancer’s idiosyncrasy, later called “balancing and suspension technique”¹⁰, is marked by parallel foot positions, swinging movements, turns and leaps. An essential element of Wiesenthal’s choreography, entirely contrary to ballet practice at the time, the flow of which was frequently interrupted by stops and poses, was the fact that it was often characterised by a flow of movement also directed backwards, emphasised further by the corresponding flow of the costume and the fluttering of open hair. “Always departing from the idea of a work, lighting and technology, the empty space, but mainly a choreography developed from the music – all these came to be understood as the message of an individual, of a ‘new’ performer.”¹¹

Thus an assessment made retrospectively, i.e. with the knowledge of the further development of dance, especially *Freier Tanz*. But how was the dancer perceived during her lifetime and how could Grete Wiesenthal’s dance become part of Viennese Modernism? Why was the dance of the sisters Wiesenthal, which Grete had mainly choreographed, immediately celebrated as something new – including by personalities like Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt? Why were her creations considered manifestos of “Young Vienna” turned into dance? Why was Grete especially considered a figure of integration who had elevated dance – this too was new – onto the same level as literature, visual arts and music within the artistic constellation of Viennese Modernism?

Firmly Grounded in Viennese Art Around 1900

In the following, it shall be demonstrated that members of all the leading art forms in Vienna around 1900 shared significantly in the admiration of Wiesenthal as an artist. This can already be established around 1910, i.e. in very early observations, although their authors reveal the grounding of Wiesenthal’s dance in the contemporary arts of her time inadvertently rather than purposefully. With their outsider’s perspective, several leading German dance writers of the time – Oscar Bie, Werner Schur and Hans Brandenburg – make this particularly clear. Her Viennese companion Hugo von Hofmannsthal, on the other hand, who shall also be heard, recognised one of Wiesenthal’s essential sources of inspiration – perhaps because it was one he shared. Thus, Hofmannsthal not only accompanied Wiesenthal with admiration, but was also able to create for her. This was not the only way in which he proved the extent to which he considered them kindred spirits.

First, however, a repetition of the original question: how could such a paradigm shift take place in the context of dance – the fact that a person is first seen as a practitioner of physical abilities and shortly thereafter as an artist?

Let us begin by considering the audience at the cabaret *Fledermaus*. That audience was composed of artists from very different circles – including artists who felt at home in several genres: first of all, there were the venue’s proprietors, representing the new Viennese arts and crafts movement. Then there were the painters, some of whom, like Oskar Kokoschka, were also active writers. Then there were the new actors, “nervous players on nerves” who projected this engaged inwardness outwards physically, in order to be able to portray the “landscape of the soul” – occasionally even without words, through designed movement. The actors were joined by the new stage directors who placed the new artists in those new – empty – spaces, designed in turn by the new decorators. And then there was the highly diverse family of the literati. While Grete Wiesenthal was initially only a guest within that family – her close connection with Hugo von Hofmannsthal fell into a somewhat later creative period – through her husband Erwin Lang she became a fully-fledged member of the family of visual artists.

The Painters’ World and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Lang, whom Grete Wiesenthal married in 1910, was more than a “dialogue partner” in this context. Educated at the Academy of Applied Art, he became a kind of go-between who conveyed to Wiesenthal what he considered current in the visual arts in such a manner that she was able to transform it into another art form. “Wiesenthal’s dance documents the contemporary art scene observed by Lang in a physical manner”¹²; through him, the young Kokoschka lived in Wiesenthal, as did – in a streamlined version – Egon Schiele. Wiesenthal’s dance, however, reflected mainly the one painter who had become a model for the entire Viennese Modernist movement. This was Ferdinand Hodler.¹³ This Swiss painter undoubtedly deserves a place in the history of dance, for around the turn of the century, he captured something that, “dissolved and shifted chronologically, shaped itself into a stylistically distinct movement in dance, into modern dance.”¹⁴ And Grete Wiesenthal was among the first two to follow this path towards Modern Dance. If the arts-and-crafts practitioners and painters could not foresee this development, they still saw in Grete Wiesenthal’s dance those girls and boys of the “human awakening” (*Menschenfrühling*) which they considered themselves part of and had given visual shape to, placed on stage in reality. It is only too easy to understand that this is why they considered Grete Wiesenthal one of their own kind, and thus also as an artist.

In his introduction to the Wiesenthal woodcuts by Erwin Lang, Oscar Bie points out the dancer’s grounding in an exemplary manner:

“The sisters Wiesenthal have become a necessity of nature. In our dance-crazed times, somebody had to come along to draw a connection between old music and modern Viennese arts and crafts in dance. That is what they have done. Despite all the ill-will dividing Europe, they have given a body to the waltzes of Schubert and Lanner, and have distilled movement from Minne, Mackintosh and Moser. They have linked the old Empire and the new Empire – the old one in which profound airs stirred tender feelings, and the new in which tender arts aroused profound ideas, cultivating our surroundings to a citizen’s taste.

They have portrayed the decorative instincts inherent in Vienna's buildings and people, dramas and arts, all the way back to the time of the Marchionesses and up to the time of the *Secession* – and halfway, Johann Strauss smiles upon them. Because they rendered decorative Vienna with their bodies, they have become the most locally conditioned among their colleagues, and thus the most necessary, by nature. From a certain culture, they developed what had to become decorative, in the modern sense, in our dance – in other words, organically and soulfully."¹⁵

And he continues:

"Grete dances the characters. Grete tries out new things [...] It is natural feelings she gives shape to, she studies movements in nature and lends them rhythm, as Klimt does in his paintings. What does not dance? [...] Our hair dances, and the dress dances around the body, and the ribbons intertwine in the dance, continuing the movement in their own way, which nature gave to us, which we give to art [...] They have left behind all rococo architecture of legs and all uniformity of costume. They have refined themselves historically, become pliant in old Vienna, donned the feathers of Strauss, and now they look towards the great realm of the newly decorative, which they do not have to wax aesthetic about, since after all they can dance. They may smile about our stammering words. Grete is the artist."¹⁶

Bie finishes his assessment of Wiesenthal by completely embedding her art within Vienna:

"Her footfall is tone, her costume imagination, her movement a breath of Vienna, of that good Vienna that still lives on in delicate spirits, in open eyes."¹⁷

The Vienna Construct

Given this basking in a Vienna of Strauß waltzes, the question must be asked: what kind of Vienna is he speaking of? Is Vienna, constantly referred to, the city in which Wiesenthal lives? Or is it not rather an imaginary location whose atmosphere is characterised by waltzes?

In his extensive observations on Wiesenthal, Ernst Schur first hears Chopin, which makes him assume that here is the dance style of Isadora Duncan, who had been appearing in Vienna repeatedly since the beginning of the century:

"When the Chopin waltz starts, one thinks, 'Ah, it's like Duncan, hopping around like a governess. The cheerful-naïve, alert jumping of a billy goat, viewed through an academic mentality gazing gently but cross-eyed at antiquity."¹⁸

But the next dance has music by Johann Strauß, and, Schur writes, "the waves of the Danube flow gently in tones [...] And now one knows: Viennese culture. A typical expression of inner being."¹⁹ Schur claims that these dances are something "overheard"²⁰. He compares what he has seen with the behaviour of a girl hearing something from the outside in her room and beginning to dance "quietly", to float: all this has "the tender beauty of the unrevealed"²¹. This he calls "Viennese culture". Because of it, Vienna has a "culture of the future"²² – "And now we know what Vienna is".²³ Schur considers Wiesenthal's dance an "expression of culture"²⁴.

Thus far the quotations, which make clear the following: The very rapid acceptance of Grete Wiesenthal as an artist by the masters of words was possible because the dancer dealt with the same subjects as "Young Vienna".

Literary thought and Wiesenthal's were centred on a theoretical construct of Vienna which, upon closer inspection, consists of three elements whose close interaction allowed something unmistakable to arise. According to Marion Linhardt²⁵, within this construct one reverted to an "Old Vienna" from which an artificial line of tradition was seen to run through the *Biedermeier* period to the present (the time around 1900), complete with a "unit of meaning between Viennese dance music, musical folk character and Old-Viennese idyll"²⁶. In this context, Vienna is associated with a new perspective on waltzes in general and the Strauss dynasty in particular. Here, the Modernist viewpoint was oriented "only very marginally towards the reality of modern urban life," but was "fed rather by the atmospheres of a space of yearning removed from time, with a 'Viennese' hue." Both – the space of longing and the colouring – were "stimulated decisively by popular culture"²⁷. These "spaces of yearning" were the villages surrounding Vienna and the Vienna Woods as well as the Prater – all of them non-urban spaces. The suburb was evaluated as an "apparently norm-free, paradisiacal space [...] a kind of 'über-place'"²⁸. According to Linhardt, the Strauß family's music which arose from these places was accorded an almost mythical quality. Vienna functioned "as a representation in sound of an atmospheric place removed from time"²⁹.

Thus, the Viennese suburbs have an essential function in this new "Vienna construct", for here was born the desired "Viennese quality" which was defined essentially by the suburb and the culture of music and dance that was – supposedly – rooted there. This suburban culture of music and dance, however, is revealed in a woman, or more specifically in a "Viennese graceful girl"³⁰. This often-evoked Viennese grace, this musical being from the suburbs now stands before us in the person of Grete Wiesenthal. And if Grete Wiesenthal turns to the ground, listening, in her interpretation of the *Donauwalzer*, these physical gestures correspond with the Strauß and waltz construct ca. 1900. Strauß the Elder and Lanner would have done the same: "They listened to the Vienna Woods with its enchanting murmur and rustle. After all, in the Vienna Woods, there is singing and trilling in the air by day and by night ..." And more: "Air currents" had reached Lanner, "singing the rhythms of the Vienna Woods into his ear"³¹. Strauß' music was considered "a Viennese-ness embodied in sound, removed from space and time ..." ³². Grete Wiesenthal corresponded to this image perfectly; her dance was "the embodiment of Vienna, removed from space and time"³³.

High Culture, Folk Art und Popular Culture

Finally, we return to an aspect already mentioned above, an aspect regarding the world of literature, of painting and arts and crafts as well as Wiesenthal's dance: the interaction between high culture, its interest in folk art and in popular culture. Hans Brandenburg immediately recognises this grounding of Wiesenthal's dance:

"Presumably, Grete Wiesenthal will never create anything more popular (referring to the waltz choreographies *An der schönen blauen Donau* and *Frühlingsstimmen*); perhaps she is destined to create something even greater, even though in a certain sense, the level of popularity – easily misunderstood as it is – is a measure of greatness."³⁴

On folk art, let us consult a contemporary voice, that of Hugo von Hofmannsthal. He wrote to Grete Wiesenthal, using the term "we" to mean "we Viennese": "Our very own,

the folksong-like secret of one hundred years back, which became melody fifty years ago in Schubert's songs, and rhythm in Strauß' waltzes – here [meaning in Wiesenthal's dance] it appeared once more, bound by the spiritual and sensual appearances of the dancer – it became a moving image, suspended presence – it was transformed into words once again, as in the creations of a great folkloristic poet – but even more than words, as it expressed what cannot be said, the secret formula of one's innermost longing and its fulfilment. None of it was foreign, all of it was true."³⁵

This statement by Hofmannsthal merits two comments. First of all, the poet points out the grounding of art (including his own) in a “folksong-like secret”, thus emphasising a phenomenon that has obviously been given scant attention so far: the phenomenon that not only Eastern modernism, but also the Western variety – albeit less so – was inspired by folk art. Furthermore, with this remark, Hofmannsthal joins a group of artists who considered Wiesenthal's dance extraordinary. This assessment, however, stems solely from the fact that Wiesenthal was drawing on an intellectual world which arose from his own and that of his fellow artists – and not from the choreography just witnessed. This choreography, however, as has been already pointed out, was not only of the highest quality, but the degree of its grounding in folk art can hardly be overestimated.

In this context, and in the context of the subject of these observations, the question must now be asked: what are the possible sources for her dance, which manifests itself – not only – in a completely new vocabulary of movement? How can this element of “popularity” about Wiesenthal be understood?

The following represents a first attempt to identify possible sources. Wiesenthal draws on at least five such resources:

The character dances commonly danced at the Court Opera. Character dances are ethnic dances which have been “remodelled” for the stage, also known in dance jargon as “national dances”. Throughout the 19th century, such character dances developed into their own repertoire category within stage dance.

The character dances commonly danced as self-contained numbers at the cabarets. Character dances already adapted for ballet underwent an additional exaggeration in contemporary cabaret. The dances were often executed with a “grotesque” touch.

The dances of the Viennese suburbs. Wiesenthal herself lived in such a suburb. The suburb was a space where rural and urban dances began to mix. Thus, the folk dances acquired an elegant touch, while the social dances appeared in a somewhat rougher guise. The suburb, however, also brought forth dances of its own, characterised by working-class influence, for example the dance known as *Schieber*.

The dances of the villages surrounding Vienna. Even in the surrounding villages, folk dances were executed differently than in the countryside.

Authentic Folk Dance

This is not the place to discuss these hypotheses in depth, especially since, to my knowledge, neither 19th century folk dance nor character dance nor the *Variété* dance of this period have been studied extensively.

In summary, let us quote another contemporary witness: to Schur, from whom we have already heard, Wiesenthal was “Viennese culture”. He claims that because of her, it was

possible to know what Vienna was, not least because her dance looked into the “recesses and hiding-places of the human soul”³⁶ and thus brought the innermost to light. It was not least this ability that made Grete Wiesenthal an artist and her dance art. The main reason for her artistic stature, however, is that she opened up new sources for her art, and transformed them into something completely independent.

Copyright 2013, Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller

Notes

- 1 “Young Vienna” or “Jung-Wien” was a literary association led by Hermann Bahr.
- 2 Isadora Duncan had performed in Vienna in 1902, 1903 and 1904. Although her dance performances were widely noted – one of Duncan’s goals, evoking antiquity, held particular appeal to the representatives of the various arts – her dance had no immediate direct effect in Vienna. Her outer appearance and private behaviour were considered too extreme for any general admission that she might provide a serious artistic impulse. This attitude changed quickly, for the Viennese performances of American and European dancers that took place until 1908 – the year of Grete Wiesenthal’s debut as a *Freie Tänzerin* – changed the scene drastically (Maud Allan 1903, 1906; Gertrude Barrison, Rita Sacchetto both 1906; Ruth St. Denis 1907). In addition to the dance activities which occupied an increasingly more prominent place in the city, the feminist movement was gaining ground, encouraging a process of rethinking within the ranks of the dancers and of the audience. One of the most influential personalities of the feminist movement was Marie Lang, Grete Wiesenthal’s mother-in-law since 1910.
- 3 The term *Freier Tanz* is used for all those dancers who did not (yet) belong to one of the great families of the new stylistic dance development – Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman.
- 4 Since the author is of the opinion that the aesthetics, number repertoire and execution of the Central-European *Variété* differed both from the Anglo-American offerings of the Music-Halls and from vaudeville theatre, the French term *Variété* will be used in English as well. This by no means implies that the offerings of Central European and French houses were the same.
- 5 Meant as a protest, this look at the world of entertainment theatre by institutionalised dance led to a more liberal commingling between and a mixing of the forms.
- 6 Cf. Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. (Eds.), *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich 2009.
- 7 Most of the characteristics mentioned in the following can be understood quite generally as hallmarks of *Freier Tanz*; therefore they also apply to the representatives of this dance movement who made their debuts before Grete Wiesenthal.
- 8 In the productions of the Ballets Russes, the boundaries between dancer categories had also begun to blur.
- 9 Oberzaucher-Schüller, G., *Wiener Walzer, »illustriert in drei Bildern von Louis Frappart«, und Grete Wiesenthal*, in: Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. (Eds.), *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich 2009, 67–86, 83.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.

- 12 Oberzaucher-Schüller, G., *Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal oder Bewegung in Zeit und Ort*, in: Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. (Eds.), *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich 2009, 87–102, 94.
- 13 See *ibid.* for more detail.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Grete Wiesenthal. Holzschnitte von Erwin Lang. Mit einer Einleitung von Oscar Bie*, Berlin 1910, XX.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Schur, E., *Der Moderne Tanz*, 100.
- 19 *Ibid.* 101.
- 20 *Ibid.* 102.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Ibid.* 103.
- 23 *Ibid.* 104.
- 24 *Ibid.* 108.
- 25 In: Linhardt, M., *Zwischen Moderne und Populärkultur*, in: Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. (Eds.), *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich 2009, 49–56.
- 26 *Ibid.* 49.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 *Ibid.* 45.
- 30 *Ibid.* 52.
- 31 *Ibid.* 47.
- 32 *Ibid.* 49.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Brandenburg, H., *Der Moderne Tanz*, 1st edition 1913, 31.
- 35 Hofmannsthal, H. v., *Erinnerungen an Grete Wiesenthal*, in: Mayerhöfer, J. (Ed.), *Tanz im 20. Jahrhundert in Wien*, Ausstellungskatalog des Österreichischen Theatermuseums, Wien: Friedrich Jasper, 1979, 120.
- 36 Schur, 104.

Bibliography

- Schur, E., *Der Moderne Tanz*, Munich: Lammers, 1910.
- Brandenburg, H., *Der Moderne Tanz*, Munich: Georg Müller, 1st edition, 1913.
- Wiesenthal, G., *Der Aufstieg. Aus dem Leben einer Tänzerin*, Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt, 1919.
- Wiesenthal, G., *Die ersten Schritte*, Vienna: Agathon, 1947.
- Huber-Wiesenthal, R., *Die Schwestern Wiesenthal. Ein Buch eigenen Erlebens*, Vienna: Saturn, 1934.
- Prenner, I., *Grete Wiesenthal*, Thesis, Vienna, 1950.
- Hofmannsthal, H. v., *Erinnerungen an Grete Wiesenthal*, in: Mayerhöfer, J. (Ed.), *Tanz im 20. Jahrhundert in Wien*, Ausstellungskatalog des Österreichischen Theatermuseums, Wien: Friedrich Jasper, 1979.
- Witzmann, R., *Die neue Körpersprache. Grete Wiesenthal und ihr Tanz*, Vienna: Eigenverlag der Museen der Stadt Wien, 1985.

- Fiedler, L. M., Lang, M. (Eds.), *Die Schönheit der Sprache des Körpers im Tanz*, Salzburg/Vienna, 1985.
- Mundorf, S., *Grete Wiesenthal. Renaissance einer Tanzform*, Gauting: self-published, 2008.
- Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G., *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich: Kieser, 2009.
- Oberzaucher-Schüller, G., *Wiener Walzer, »illustriert in drei Bildern von Louis Frappart«, und Grete Wiesenthal*, in: Brandstetter, G., Oberzaucher-Schüller, G. (Eds.) *Mundart der Wiener Moderne. Der Tanz der Grete Wiesenthal*, Munich: Kieser, 2009.

Dr. Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller
Veithgasse 11
A-1030 Wien

Social Media! as a new paradigm for dance making

Maxx Passion

The University of Michigan

Abstract

Social media has changed the face of connectivity, and holds the potential to create a new generation of dance audiences. By using platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to create, document, and share both processes and results, dance makers are able to engage with an immediate network of contacts, but more importantly, reach a larger audience as our work is shared and curated across the Internet. Tools such as hashtags (#), calls-to-action for movement inspiration, and “share” buttons can be used in specific and meaningful ways that help create a community of active participants in our creative process. My research explores how the utilization of social media as a tool for dance making will simultaneously build one’s online network and offline audience.

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Maxx Passion and I am going into my second year of graduate school at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Prior to grad school, I lived in New York City for six years, living and working as a dancer. While there I spent many hours commiserating with friends and colleagues about the state of the dance world; where we were, where we were going, and why the majority of the public didn’t care about either. I also spent those six years supporting my dance habit as a bartender at high-end restaurants, and as it is a well-known fact that you will never have a more talented service staff than in New York City, the clientele at each of these establishments always wanted to know what “else” I did. Well, I would say, I am a dancer. To which they would invariably reply, “Oh! Have you auditioned for So You Think You Can Dance? I love that show!” I could see the disappointment on their faces when I would say, No... and I don’t plan to. But these conversations gave me hope that the non-dancing public did in fact have an interest in dance and dancers, so much so that they would participate and engage in the social media aspect of the show. Now, this can be seen as America’s obsession with reality television, but my optimistic viewpoint is that the public is also excited about the Content of these shows. They want to understand, and be a part of a world that had seemed inaccessible to them prior to these “Reality” shows. So how do we maintain this excitement for dance outside of a TV show? It is time for the dance world to capitalize on this newly opened door to an untapped audience base, and explore new avenues of connection and accessibility; the most obvious way to do this is through social media.

In this paper I will discuss my method of dance making that combines social media centered marketing strategies used by businesses large and small and crowd sourced content that is documented and shared via social media platforms, as a dance making tool that has the potential to make dance more accessible online and increase offline audience for live performances.

Methods of Composition

There are several “traditional” methods of composition that choreographers use to create new dance work, and as each new generation of dancers and dance-makers emerge, they bring with them a new set of expectations for how and why movement is executed and performed as well as aesthetic choices that color these decisions. The various tools and methods of composition that are employed by each choreographer can be dependent on a specific work being made, dancers they are creating on, or simply personal preference. No two choreographers create movement in the same way, nor do they pull inspiration from the same place. Now, we could go on at length about the use of personal narrative and music as inspiration for making work, but... we will not. However, the use of improvisation as a composition method will make a lovely segue into the rest of my paper...

Dance improvisation is a method that many choreographers use as a way to generate new movement ideas. Without the restriction of a codified movement technique, the dancing body is allowed to move freely through space and time, creating instantaneous dance vignettes. When I enter an improvisation with the intention of using the movement later as choreography, I film myself for an extended period of time, repeating a phrase here and there, in order to “set” a series of movements in my body. I also find it interesting to give myself movement parameters, or an intention for my exploration, as a way to narrow the scope of possibilities. For example: my left leg will initiate a series of movement. Or, the floor is sticky, how does my body respond/react to the floor? With my interest in the use of parameters and outside direction, I wondered what would happen if I used inspiration outside of myself? If I crowd sourced my parameters and performed the outcome? The result of this was #TweetDance and my own solo *I don't know, do you want to?* which is a crowd sourced performance improvisation score that incorporates objects brought to me by the audience. But, I will speak more about both of these projects in a moment.

Language, Symbols, Preservation, and Sharing

The utilization of language and symbols to inspire creativity has also been a common model used in the practice of dance making, and I have begun to explore how I can use online, social and digital culture as a new version of a well-known paradigm for dance making. Language and symbols are not only used as sources of inspiration, they are also a means to preserve and share work that has been created. Coincidentally, language, symbols, preservation and sharing are also the foundations of social media, making it an ideal platform for artists, and dancers in particular, to take advantage of. I have noticed that many businesses have begun to adjust to this new, two-way channel of communication between themselves and their consumers by placing content submission requests via Twitter and Facebook that were then translated into visual ad campaigns. My question is this, how can we adapt this model to dance making, while simultaneously building our audience, our network, and our digital profile? This is a twofold idea; if we create dances based on social media submissions, share our creative process on these

social media platforms, and then invite these contributors, who I have dubbed as Digital Muses, to see our work, we have begun to build a personal and creative relationship with our audience and have initiated a powerful conversation between audience and performer. If and when reach beyond our offline network, and create art for, about and to an audience that we otherwise would not know, the possibilities are limitless.

Theory into Practice

Social media is a natural platform for curation; when someone sees something that they find exceptional; whether it is beautiful, novel, distressing or funny, they share it via facebook, Tumblr, Instagram or Twitter. And while I have always been fascinated by the use of social media, and its ever-growing presence and impact on day-to-day existence, I have had a very different relationship with it than most people. I have never been interested in broadcasting the mundane details of my life to the world. Why would anyone care that I am drinking coffee? Again? But I *have* been interested in what people “like” on instagram and facebook, and what makes them “share” those things. What causes people to re-tweet on twitter, and how do hashtag trends begin? Taking note of how popularity works on these platforms can be translated into ways that the dance community can learn to share and be shared, which will in turn reach an audience outside of their own personal network. One video upload of a work-in-progress has the potential to be shared thousands of times over. Here is an example: Alexandra Beller is a dancer and choreographer based in New York City, she posted a video on Facebook that she recorded of her dancers as they used her 14 month old baby Ivo for movement inspiration. As he toddled through and around the studio, the dancers imitated his actions creating a beautiful phrase of movement. The video attracted facebook attention and was subsequently picked-up by a blogger for the *Huffington Post*. From there, the video garnered over 3,500 “shares” and 10,000+ “likes” on facebook. People from all over the country had suddenly been exposed to the Brooklyn-based dance company *Alexandra Beller/Dances*.

You may watch the video here: <http://vimeo.com/57978955>

So, what would happen if we actively pursued this process-based content sharing? I will put this idea into practice over the next three weeks while I continue my summer that is allocated for research as per my degree requirements. With the creation and performance of daily dance-sketches, I will carefully document and share each vignette via social media applications such as facebook, Twitter and Tumblr to see if this process will indeed expand my online network. I will invite online discussion, criticism, commentary and suggestions to create a community that circles around my creative process. As an added layer of experimentation, I will send out calls-to-action on these same networks to collect movement ideas, performance intention requests and suggestions on locations for future vignettes. The outcome of my research will be a new formula for creation, with importance placed on the sharing and documentation of my creative process by utilizing multiple modes of social media to reach a large network of online participants.

While speaking about improvisation earlier, I mentioned two projects that I have initiated that integrate improvisation, performance and crowd-sourced inspiration; #TweetDance and my own solo work. On June 2nd, 2013, I performed a solo at the Bowery Electric in New York City as part of a curated show of new and emerging choreographers. I incorporated my interest in improvisation inspired by parameters, and decided to invite my facebook, twitter and email contacts to be involved by asking them to bring in knickknacks, photographs or statuettes that were around their house so that I could use them to create a 5 minute, three dimensional movement and physical object collage. During the piece, I spoke to the audience, and used improvised movement sequences to build a collage of the objects far “downstage” of this non-traditional performance venue. After the show, I was encouraged by the feedback given to me in regards to the interactive element of the performance and the level of engagement the audience felt by being included in both the processes; creation and performance.

I found it intensely gratifying when an audience member responded to my performance in writing and described it as such: “[Maxx’ interaction with] *the individual objects, [connected a] reference to the individual interests and personal history of each member of the audience...The artist...transcends a collection of individuals, and achieves a unity of body in attendance.*”

I also developed the idea of #TweetDance, which premiered at the 7th annual Figment NYC event on June 8th & 9th of 2013. I co-produced this event with Kyla Ernst Alper, a New York City based dancer, dance-maker, aerialist, film-editor and multi-media artist. We invited “the public to direct minute-long dances performed by professional dancers” by sending a prompt to Twitter handle @underone and using #TweetDance. Each prompt sent to @underone was given to a dancer at random, and the dancer uses it to influence and direct their improvised performance.

The following #TweetDance was performed by New York City dancer, Larry Daniels and was filmed on Sunday, June 9th 2013, notice his prompt is “reading a book and writing a book report” which was tweeted to us by @MemoirsofTheKid

You may watch the video here: <http://vimeo.com/68067435>

Ernst Alper is also the founder of Under One Dances, and the Under One remix project, which “strives to build a broader community around dance through minute-long videos”. Under One intends to be an ever-growing collection of dances and dancers, as well as be an interactive live performance series, and this event was the perfect opportunity to test the possibilities of connecting online and offline worlds to create dance. These Tweet-dance videos were uploaded to the Under One Dances Vimeo channel, and were immediately available to be watched, re-watched, shared, remixed and tweeted.

You can find the Under One Dances Vimeo channel here:
<http://vimeo.com/channels/tweetdance>

The Under One remix project “encourages musicians, visual artists, and special effects artists to add their own twist to an original Under One video” by downloading the Under One video of their choice, adding their own original content to the dance, and then

uploading and sharing the “remixed” video to the Under One Vimeo channel, as well as to any other social platforms where it can be shared, liked, or tweeted.

To give you an idea of the work being created, here is a video of my own Under One video filmed in March of 2013, and remixed later that month by musician Kevin Keller:

You may watch the video here:

<http://vimeo.com/channels/underonedancesremix/62303678>

Ernst-Alper and I share an ideology and commitment to dance-making that recognizes social media as a place that can produce structured content submissions for inspiration, provide a platform to share our process and performance, as well as be used as a marketing device for our live shows. By linking these objectives into one method, we are simultaneously able to foster a relationship between ourselves and our online community, and increase the possibility of our online community attending an offline performance event.

My collaboration with Ernst Alper and Under One Dances has been an invaluable opportunity to put my theoretical approach of submission, creation, documentation and invitation into practice, and while it is early in the process, I am looking forward to the continuation of this experiment and what I believe to be the subsequent growth of our digital profile and offline audience.

I imagine this new paradigm for dance making as the beginning, not the end, of an important conversation about how to make dancers and dance makers a relevant and integral part of the cultural fabric. It is as important to reach a new audience, as it is to keep our current audience engaged and to do this, we must reach beyond the relatively limited connections offline, and discover new ways to connect dance making to the public at large.

Copyright 2013, Maxx Passion

Address for correspondence:

Maxx Passion

Email: maxxp@umich.edu

Twitter: [@maxx_is_maxx](https://twitter.com/maxx_is_maxx)

Instagram: [maxx_is_maxx](https://www.instagram.com/maxx_is_maxx)

Vimeo: vimeo.com/maxxismaxx

Exploring the Tradition of Dance Reconstruction With-in Contemporary Performance Contexts

Ursula Payne
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Abstract

Dance reconstruction projects from the Labanotation score or historical records provide a framework for students' practical dance experiences. In this paper I will focus on two approaches to dance reconstruction linking African-American dance traditions and contemporary dance practices. The staging of Robert Battle's Primate (2006) at the American Dance Festival (2012) drew upon distinct traditions in dance preservation and performance. How dancers perceive and interact with the stager determines the suitability of their understanding (of) and performance (in) the choreographic style reflected in Battle's choreography. I will also reflect upon how personal history (of the stager, choreographer and dancers) and one's own movement practice informed the interpretation and meaning of the dance notation score. The goal of analyzing these two approaches is to uncover the interrelationship between contemporary dance experiences (in-studio), the analytical frameworks of dance reconstruction and deepening student performers' historical literacy in dance.

Personal History

The late James Truitte planted a seed in my consciousness as an undergraduate student in 1990 who had just declared dance as a major. He was an adjudicator for an American College Dance Regional Festival and remembered my performance from an adjudication concert. As we passed each other in the hallway he made a point to compliment my dancing. When we spoke I was only aware of his accomplishments through his printed biography in the festival program. I didn't begin to understand the magnitude of his contributions to dance and that he studied Labanotation until I was further along in my career. (Dunning 1995) However my encounter with him in that hallway was essential because he encouraged me to attend the American Dance Festival. Mr. Truitte said in a direct tone "You should Study with Pearl." I did know who Pearl Primus was because the summer before I received a work-study scholarship to attend the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's eight week summer intensive. Pearl Primus was in residence staging *The Wedding (1961)* on the main company. I would often stand outside of the classroom and watch her when she would teach master classes.

Mr. Truitte continued to speak about The Black Tradition in Modern Dance project at ADF which featured several black dance companies and distinguished choreographers such as Pearl Primus, Talley Beatty and Donald McKayle. A significant component of the project involved the revival or staging of several masterworks that were being documented through Labanotation, film and/ or video. Mr. Truitte also stated that I should study dance notation at Ohio State University. His fear was that many dances would be lost to future generations of African-Americans because no one would know how to read and write notation or stage dances from the Labanotation score. Currently as

I am able to spend this critical time reflecting back on his wise and influential words, I can see that he was setting me on a path of dance scholarship that situated the practice and tradition of dance reconstruction alongside of African American dance traditions in contemporary performance contexts.

The Black Dance Tradition in Modern Dance Project (ADF)

In the summers of 1991 and 1992, I received full tuition scholarships to attend the American Dance Festival. I participated in repertory, composition and technique classes taught by Pearl Primus and served as her personal assistant. Dr. Primus staged excerpts from the *Bushashe*, *Strange fruit*, and *Negro Speaks of Rivers*. Although her classes were demanding on the body, she often told stories that were cultural, historical and philosophical to contextualize the dances we were learning. Likewise, Talley Beatty was an artist in residence that summer and staged his acclaimed jazz ballet *The Road of the Phoebe Snow*, which I also learned.

The following summer in 1992 Dianne McIntyre an Ohio State University alum continued to expand my view of conceptualizing and exploring diverse repertory experiences within a contemporary format. She attended OSU as an undergraduate student and learned Helen Tamiris' *Negro Spirituals* from Labanotation. McIntyre's knowledge of notation led to her accepting the challenge to re-stage Helen Tamiris' *How Long Brethren (1958)* a twenty-five minute dance work at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA in 1990. (Traiger, 2008) Diane McIntyre's reconstruction of Helen Tamiris' *How Long Brethren* and Primus' approach to staging excerpts from her repertory aroused my interest in the process of dance reconstruction and staging dances from score beyond the physicality of learning the movement vocabulary. Diane McIntyre's approach to reconstructing *How Long Brethren* utilized archival research materials photographs, notes, reviews, old programs and the memory of former dancers who might remember movement motifs or longer movement phrases. This approach to staging a dance relied on primary source materials and directly integrated the creativity of McIntyre- as director-and the students.

My present work with developing historically informed original contemporary dances utilizing the Pearl Primus archives housed at Duke University was grounded through my experience as a student in McIntyre's creative process and process for staging *How Long Brethren*. My experience with Diane was foundational to the shaping of my pedagogy informing repertory experiences. In 1997, Diane McIntyre invited me to participate as a special ability dance extra in the film *Beloved*. Diane was the choreographer for the movie which was based on Toni Morrison's novel and set shortly after the civil war in Cincinnati, OH. The film was directed by Jonathon Demme which was produced by and starred Oprah Winfrey. The dance scenes I participated in occurred during flashbacks of Denver (Sethe's daughter) and of Sethe herself, played by Oprah Winfrey who is the main character in the film. Dianne revived or (reconstructed) the *Ring shout* that would have been performed by enslaved and newly freed African-Americans during that time. The following description of the *Ring Shout* is from a historical essay titled *From Slave Ships to Center Stage* written by Zita Allen:

“Hunched low to the ground, flat feet pounding the earth with rhythmic intensity as they moved counterclockwise in a circle, a group of men and women wearing the drab, tattered, everyday clothes of southern plantation field hands danced. Their only musical accompaniment was the crisp sound of their hands clapping time and the low, guttural rhythms rumbling in their throats. (Allen)

Allen’s description mirrors my own memory of learning the choreography for the film and participating in the scenes where men women and children joined in moving around the circle dancing, clapping, making sounds and shouting. We were located in a clearing and responding to a sermon. This scene was a flashback from the character Sethe’s memory. Diane McIntyre’s choreography masterfully retained elements of the ring shout through dance, vocalizations and costuming matching precisely what Allen describes in her article.

I include these multidimensional experiences with Truitte, Primus, Beatty and McIntyre because they were influential on the generational process of reflecting back on my own heritage and lineage in being exposed to dance reconstructions connected to black dance traditions in Modern Dance. Perhaps this also has to do with gaining more wisdom with regard to making connections between pivotal moments in my dance career and helping my students acknowledge their own legacy in dance.

Discovering Labanotation at Ohio State University

I decided to attend Ohio State University in the fall of 1992 on a Dean’s Fellowship. I had no idea that it was the only program in the US that offered program of study in Direction from Labanotation Score and housed the Dance Notation Bureau extension. In fact, notwithstanding my previous experience, I was reluctant to take Labanotation. I didn’t have the longevity of career and had not acquired the seasoned knowledge to recall that vital conversation with Mr. Truitte. Being one of two graduate students who entered the program directly from an undergraduate dance program, I was surrounded by returning professionals who knew exactly what they wanted out of graduate school. At the end of my first year I was conflicted between my desire to dance professionally and continuing my studies. I was struggling with figuring out how to make connections between the courses I was taking, extra-curricular activities that supported the performance track, and how the curriculum would relate to my imminent career path. And then came my first discovery, I was really good at reading Labanotation and I enjoyed it.

As it turns out, I was hooked after my first course in Labanotation and it appealed to my desire to want to be known for my intellect and not just for my powerful dancing or well-developed body type. The Laban Movement Analysis framework gave me a language to describe movement in a manner that made sense and felt scholarly. Now committed, I shifted my program track which was performance to include direction from Labanotation score and stayed a third year to complete a 2nd MFA project of reconstructing staging Donald McKayle’s famous master work *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* on the University Dance Company.

In 1994 the score was just being completed and needed a checker. My task was to

stage the dance and check the score for accuracy. The 292 page Labanotation score was notated by Mary Corey and was identified as one of the significant master works that was documented through Labanotation during the Black Traditions in Modern Dance Project at ADF. Being my first independent project in staging a dance from Labanotation, I followed the score exactly until I had to dismiss a male dancer from the cast. Donald Mckayle supported my decision and we (Mr. McKayle and I with score in hand) began to adapt the spacing of the dance as necessary to disguise the space left by the missing dancer. Adaptions to the spatial design, timing and locations of the dancers in space occurred without altering the integrity of the original dance.

This project unfastened a way of engaging with dance and history where I was excited about what I might find. The methodological, analytical, critical thinking, theoretical and pedagogical skill I developed from this project, helped to connect a series of experiences that continues to inspire my current approach to shaping dance repertory experiences within contemporary performance contexts. Reconstructing *Rainbow Round My Shoulder* was an enormous responsibility that prepared me for initiating and completing dance reconstruction projects as a scholarly activity. Mckayle's attention to music, rhythmical development, rigorous and expressive movement vocabulary prepared me for the demands associated with staging Robert Battle's *Primate*.

The Adaptation Process: Primate

It was requested that I stage a dance from Labanotation score as a part of my repertory course as part of a special project for the ADF six weeks school. I contacted the Dance Notation Bureau in New York City which houses over 600 Labanotation scores in their library and searched the database for dances. I was told of a Labanotation score the DNB just acquired. The dance *Primate* was notated by Sandra Aberkalns, choreographed by Robert Battle for a cast of five dancers, and was 13 minutes and 26 seconds in length. Robert Battle is the artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and founder of BattleWorks Dance Company. ADF received permission from Mr. Battle to stage the dance from Labanotation as part of my repertory course assignment. This project was the first and only time that Mr. Battle had granted permission for his choreography to be staged from Labanotation and by someone (me) who was not a member of his former company BattleWorks Dance Company.

Issues of adapting parts of the dance started immediately upon my first rehearsal. Initially I settled on setting the limit for registration at ten students which would allow for two casts of five dancers. Fifteen students were permitted to register for the course which made for two casts of seven and eight dancers. This led to my first adaptation of assigning multiple numbers of dancers to a single role. For example three dancers learned the role of dancer T in the score and four dancers learned the role of dancer G. *Primate* is organized into three movements and I was able to stage the dance in four weeks. Approximately two weeks were left for refining movement, spatial patterns, and performance coaching.

Additional possibilities inherent in adapting the staging of *Primate* was further encouraged when I learned that I would be limited to one time slot during the repertory showings at the end of the festival. My ideas of faithfulness in staging the dance precisely as written were rigorously challenged. Because this staging was occurring within an

educational setting, my perspective on authenticity was expanded when I decided to position both casts in the performance space. My previous experience with making adaptations to the score during the staging of *Rainbow Round My Shoulder*, prepared me for this unique challenge of blurring the boundary between the original dance and my own creative authority as the stager.

The opening look of the original dance changed because of the increased number of dancers in the stage space. Expanding the cast to fifteen from five constitutes a significant change from the opening look of the original dance. Another adaptation occurring in the first movement was during the walking on heels section. I created depth between the groups by placing the first group downstage and the second group upstage. This special configuration was necessary because of what occurred later in the hinge section. Dancers needed space to execute a series of backward hinges in varying directions and the audience needed space to see the nuances in the choreography. The larger numbers of dancers in space added depth to the visual and visceral intensity of the dance which evoked an emotional response from the audience. The climax of the section occurred when all fifteen dancers suddenly merged into a line for the rocking section which increased the visual power of that moment within the first movement. The second movement involved both casts dancing in close proximity which increased the sensation of viewing a disturbing ritual involving elements of cannibalism.

Each adaptation altered the dance from the original performance, thus allowing the version performed by the students at ADF to acquire its own character. The last key adaptation emerged in the third movement where the physical demands of this section were tremendous. Spatial and timing adaptations occurred in order to move fifteen dancers around the stage in a safe manner. The choreography and movement vocabulary made it necessary for me to shift the timing of the 2nd group and develop canons in the phrasing. The performers were left with approximately twenty measures of music to bounce and move upstage. I was able to borrow six measures from the end of the dance and strategically insert those measures into parts of the last section to expand timing. Slightly altering the space and timing of certain segments allowed for the addition of multiple bodies in the space and gave the dancers room to complete the running, jumping tossing and splaying movements which were prevalent in the last movement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Indeed, as I was learning how to formulate my own process for staging dances from Labanotation score, I began to reflect on my previous history with participating in the reconstructions of several historical dances during the time of the Black Traditions in Modern Dance project. Reflecting upon this critical time in my development as a young black woman in dance permitted me to observe how I negotiated my identities as a stager and creative artist. Each choreographers approach to staging their own or another's work was experienced within the context of the repertory class at the American Dance Festival.

These kinds of contemporary dance experiences emphasize the importance of understanding the cultural, historical and social circumstances that provide critical contextual information about the work being learned. Furthermore, my pedagogical approach was developed to explore contemporary repertory experiences that combined

African-American and classical dance traditions to produce a pedagogy that acknowledges diverse traditions in dance reconstruction and original choreography. By synthesizing my own lived body of historical knowledge in the field, I discovered that my approach to engaging students in diverse repertory experiences was rooted in Black dance traditions and contemporary performance practices leading to transformative experiences for myself and the students involved.

Copyright 2013, Ursula Payne

Acknowledgements

I would like to give a special thanks to the Dance Notation Bureau in New York, The American Dance Festival, Elisa Clark and Tyler Gilstrap.

Bibliography

- Allen, Zita. "Slave Ships to Center Stage." Free to Dance
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/behind/behind_slaveships2.html 2001. 05 May 2013
- Dunning, Jennifer. "James Truitte, 72, a Dance, Teacher and Historian, Dies. The New York Times. August 24, 1995. Web 10 May 2013
- Traiger, Lisa. "Everything is Old Is New Again." *Dance Magazine* Jan. 2008. Web 20 May 2013

Address for correspondence:

Ursula Payne
1707 Highland Avenue
New Castle PA 16105
ursula.payne@sru.edu

Imbalances, Fractals, Divine Golden Sections The Butoh Dance, through Apparent Contradictions, as Energetic Experience

Andrea Polimene

AIRD – Italian Association of Research in Dance

Abstract

Fractals are the geometry of nature, an order in the apparent chaos of life. They have a feature of self-similarity, like an internal compulsiveness, an unlimited expansion. These are also peculiar features of some types of images. In this case, those which can move our body and are used in Butoh, a Japanese dance. In Japan, the writing uses ideograms and in culture and relationship with everything, the role of the image is crucial. To understand what occurs in a dancing body is not easy, but it is necessary. To investigate the principles of creative movement requires to invade other fields of knowledge, becoming more and more aware of being part of a whole. The golden section represents, quintessentially, the balance in arts; but its mathematical expression, paradoxically, is a periodic number, that is, incomplete, imperfect. We meet contradictions, paradoxes, perfections, mathematics and nature because the dance is, of all art forms, the most absolute, having our own body as a tool: a tool that has to be fully understood, yet, in order to release it from pain and enable it to rejoice. We must consider the art of dance as a chance of deep knowledge, not only as entertainment. True ecstasy is knowledge.

Tatsumi Hijikata, with Kazuo Ohno, is the founding father of Butoh – Japan, 1959.

The first performance was called *Forbidden Colors*, from a novel by Yukio Mishima. Mishima is one of the most important writers of our time, he wanted to be an actor and was obsessed by the body.

To be Japanese and to be obsessed by the body, is something consequential to their culture: the body holds a total power, without divisions.

Roland Barthes speaks of that, in *The empire of signs*.

Hijikata sought the origins of physical energy, of movement; it is a fascinating goal that lends itself to many studies, so one needs to ask many questions, but not only.

What is needed is perhaps to combine different types of knowledge, of experience, but above all, one must be bold, as Hijikata, Kazuo Ohno, Mishima and Mandelbrot were.

Mandelbrot is the discoverer of fractals: he was a very special geometrical mathematician Polish-born, emigrated in France.

Fractals are the specific dimension of the core of objects found in the nature.

Before him, no one had been able to measure them and discover their *fractus*, fractional essence.

Mandelbrot states in one of his books, that one can not understand everything by

means of the brain alone, sometimes you have to call in the eye and the hand, only in this way you discover something extraordinary.

Art, often, foreruns science.

In Japan, they think through images: writing is not phonetic, but ideographic. The ideograms are small drawings which assemble and overlap themselves, each drawing doesn't lose its meaning but adds, transforming itself, and giving rise to another word.

It's one of the principles of Butoh, but also of creative thinking, how creativity uses the images.

Many French philosophers talk about that; Bachelard, for instance.

But how is Butoh dance like?

Not only images are an important issue, but also many other things.

Primarily, Butoh has a close relationship with nature; this belongs to Japanese culture, which lives among paradoxes: top technology and houses without walls, opened to natural spaces.

Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata found themselves in the position of having to create a contemporary Japanese dance – in the East there is no separation between dance and theater – and, moreover, it had to be a dance suitable to the body of the Japanese, it had to hold their culture.

Butoh is the dance able to bring out what's inside the body – regarded as flesh – and to make art of that.

That was done not only by Butoh dance: in different ways, art is always a *homothetia*¹, of itself and of what surrounds us.

Each artist always portrays himself anyway, partly or in other forms. Just look at their works holding in hands the self-portraits of the artists, their photos, or the space where they lived. Yet, in the works the inner organs may be shown.

Our inner organs are mountains, sea, trees and other creatures. Perpetually, we reflect ourselves into the mirrors, into the waters of Narcissus. But it's redundant: all is already full and dense of us; and we, of all.

The works are always undecodable to the bottom even to the creator and are, above all, paradoxical and unbalanced.

The imbalance is a danger for the survival. Our whole body, our look, apparently drifts toward a balance. The divine golden section is *par excellence* that balance, it's perfect, a *ratio* that is an infinite number, irrational: 1.618033...

Whenever an aesthetic event satisfies and reassures us, we re-cognize ourselves on different levels.

Space, time, memory, movement, energy.

These are five key words for dance, but they also characterize our mere past. We are the space, fabulous microcosmos; the movement tells us that we belong to the whole.

A movement which is also infinitesimal; stillness doesn't exist. Butoh stages the awareness of time, a time able to contract and expand, a relative time, as well as, indeed, there is a relativity in our body.

All things in the world, in the universe and the human body, are connected each other on the basis of a rhythmic, mathematical relationship.

We unceasingly look for ordered systems, in opposition to chaos.

Mandelbrot was an especially, eclectic scientist; he was an employee of IBM for years and we owe to him the computer graphics.

But what is a fractal?

A new geometry of nature, a geometry which finds a order into form and chaotic processes.

The leaves of the trees, the shell Nautilus, the cabbage *broccolo*, the venous and lung systems, are fractalic and repeat themselves just alike. They are geometric forms that can be split into many parts, and each of them is a smaller version of the whole form.

Mandelbrot, by means of his studies, made that further step towards the human desire to control, understand and decode life itself. An unsuppressible desire, longing for immortality.

Time, dancing steps, death, life, being born again and dying countless times, contracting and expanding.

If the universe was not unbalanced, it would not exist; if the parts of our brain weren't unbalanced, we would not think.

Paradoxes, among homothetia, fractions, imperfections and imbalances.

Some dances insist on apparent balances: turnabouts on a single leg, clear demonstrations of virtuosity, of challenge *versus* Earth gravity. Yet, would be enough a slight dip in the stage, an imbalance, and the dancer would fall. Paradoxes of such a frail perfection.

Butoh comes from a land where it's difficult to survive and maintain balance; continuous seismic waves threaten walking. Then, stumbling is put on stage, without virtuosity. The body is, literally, naked.

Where is energy produced?

In the East, the body is a whole. Especially in Japan, the body is smart.

Hijikata believed and felt that way. Lately, many neurons were found in the heart.

«Dance arises in the head»: that's said in the West, too. But the thinking body, which dances on its own, is another thing.

Art is often redeeming, it's a pass of consciousness.

Dance, Butoh in this case, has the chance – given the sort of its approach to the deep – to tell us who we are and what we could do.

What is the point of contact among fractals, Butoh, golden section and imbalances?

In fractals, complexity increases constantly. Things on Earth are the measure of the whole system, they are like one thing inside the other. There is a body within a body inside another one: endless references, while maintaining the balance of the relationship within the human body, regarded as perfect and measure of all.

Remembrance of images, the memory, develops the bodily motor system. Changing the body, understanding the mind.

An unbalanced body dances, drawing to that nearly falling, that reaching the ground always lurking, which helps for sure to struggle against the force of gravity, but also to get something else, that is no longer the craved barycenter. Therefore, it's required to create new points of reference for the movement.

The focus shifts, one moves following visions, words that transcend a body which, to some extent, has been made unreliable.

You open yourselves to a wonderful source of energy.

You shove off.

You become whatever.

These other things rub in the memory, which is a discretion of brain and body, that can change very much the neurological and synaptic organization of our acting.

These things, visions and images, have fractal features.

A fractal is an homothetia, repeats itself identical to itself, dividing, widening and shrinking, not changing its nature.

In Butoh dance, evocation and durability of images which help moving the body, also own the following trait: it's as if they breathed, they expand and contract, but do not change.

They divide again and again and, like a vortex, swallow up the mind and give off energy: synaptic electric energy.

The golden section intervenes at this point, because the movements that are generated are fulfilling, as well as pleasure is rewarding, and aesthetic research, that can become ecstatic.

They are movements that set into the frame of the things that we know before discovering, before being theorized. The divine golden section is so: it's fulfilling and divine because it contradicts itself and talks of space relations and, therefore, time; numbers, as 1.618033..., which we know by intuition.

What we know of Hijikata's studies, it's only a small part of all that he wrote: most writings has never been neither translated from Japanese, nor published.

As for Kazuo Ohno, the situation is quite different: he was a unique and extraordinary artist; yet, as I heard from himself, when I met and spent time with him, he was the interpreter of the choreographer Hijikata. We know that an interpreter is also a creator, but it must be recognized that Hijikata's legacy to the creation and the theorization of Butoh was huge and unequalled.

The fundamental axiom of Butoh is to find one's own dance, that is a bit like saying to find oneself.

Thus, it's necessary to keep on creating starting from Butoh, because this dance is more fit than others to tell us many things about us, that might be useful for our future.

We are plunging into important and dangerous changes of our living. We can still think of art as an entertainment and a pastime; it's an important role, but it's also necessary to join human talents to find new solutions for surviving. Creative talents have this peculiarity: they can sense things which are still undemonstrable.

Images that move the body in Butoh have their names, one can evoke them. They are things like: «smoke in my chest, a snake in the back, feet in the mud, flies on face», etc.; and all occurs at the same time. Yet, no one has investigated the treats of these images, so far.

That is, where do they take shape in the moment of action?

How long do they linger on the mind?

What are their breadth and movement features?

But questions may even be others. To the first question I tried to answer in a previous study of mine; on the second, I'm working; and for the third, I propose their fractal na-

ture: they are homothetic, grow smaller and larger without altering their shape.

The traits of the visions which are used, that is, their typology and not only their symbolic level, in my opinion, contain at least a portion of energy in its arising condition.

When the body dances in a collective situation, when we are our own culture, the places we inhabit, the nature that surrounds it, our language, when we recognize ourselves in the movements of the others, we belong to a whole.

In other cultures and other ages, body and dance were also a social and collective reality. All old dances, rites and customs that tell that the body was beyond individuality.

Butoh wanted to give answers because put questions to itself; and it did that, because he had to survive.

A naked body, boundless, able to shove off, suffering, energetic, intuitive, primitive, old. A body which, through dance, tells birth and death, metamorphosis; and can do it because it sinks, swims.

Most part of our body is made up of water.

In Butoh dance, sometimes, dancers seem to move slowly in a substance that bear them, that is not air.

And other times, when movements are fast, they seem to fight for breath, as if they were plunged in an aquarium.

We may think that it's still the memory of birth, surely, but it's above all the need of water.

How do we see the world when we are in water?

What are our vision systems?

Transparent, slipping images, that grow larger and smaller; swimming in primigenial waters, rebirthing.

We should sink into ice before each dance, to learn developing much heat, to create water.

Fractals, ice crystals, a thousand things that transcend us and tell us, through an extraordinary art that is dance, that we do not need anything but ourselves... Who are we?

If we could understand how our body works, we could consume less, much less, and spend the time of our life with much more serenity.

Anthropology tells that in other ages, in some cultures, it happened.

Let's give space to art, to insights of art, for they can help us, along a problematic way, by means of lightness and awareness.

Because in the end, as many artists said, art is the only magic that saves from death.

Copyright 2013, Andrea Polimene

Notes

1. a *homothetia* is a transformation by which all lengths become larger or smaller, in the same *ratio*, in all directions.

Bibliography

- Henri Bergson, *L'evoluzione creatrice*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina, 2002, pp. XXII-300 (1. ed., 1907)
- Henri Bergson, *Materia e memoria: saggio sulla relazione tra il corpo e lo spirito*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1996
- Mariella Combi, *Il grido e la carezza*, Roma, Meltemi, 1998
- Umberto Galimberti, *Psiche e Techne. L'uomo nell'età della tecnica*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2002
- John Horgan, *La fine della scienza*, Milano, Adelphi, 1999
- Leonardo da Pisa, *Scritti di Leonardo Pisano*, a c. di B. Boncompagni, Roma, 1857-1862
- Mario Livio, *La sezione aurea*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2003
- Benoît Mandelbrot, *Gli oggetti frattali*, Torino, Einaudi, 2000
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia della percezione*, Milano, Bompiani, 2003
- P. Midolo, *Archimede e il suo tempo*, Arnaldo Lombardi, 1993 (1. ed., 1912)
- Gaudenzio Temporelli, *Sezione Aurea e Musica: breve storia del "Numero d'Oro" da Duffay al «progressive-rock» dei Genesis*,
<http://www.sectioaurea.com/sectioaurea/S.A.&Musica.htm>

‘Dancing for your votes’: Concepts of value in U.K Male Street dance crew performances on televised talent show competitions

Laura Robinson
University of Surrey

Abstract

Street dance crew performances within televised talent show competitions, such as Got To Dance and Britain’s Got Talent, continue to capture the imagination of prime-time audiences across the U.K and internationally. They prompt viewers to engage with their favourite crews through the fiscal act of voting. With no set rules or guidelines, viewers extend the boundaries of their choreographic evaluation to include the mediated and spectacularised competitive format, which incorporates backstage interviews, judges’ comments and pre-recorded features of the dancers in rehearsal.

Through an analysis of both the choreography and the wider television show production, this paper explores the construction of value within male street dance crew performances on UK televised talent show competitions. Using Sherril Dodds’ (2011) concept of ‘embodiments of value’ within popular dance, I consider the commodification of the male dancing body, the transformational journey of the contestants and the emphasis on the aesthetic of the dance form. The subjective valuing of these dance acts by audiences and judges also produces a series of dualities that are negotiated through both choreography and production; these include individuality vs. collegiality, labour vs. effortlessness and ordinary vs. extraordinary.

Introduction

This paper derives from my PhD research which investigates the construction of spectacle within male street dance crew performances on U.K televised talent show competitions, and specifically draws upon my research regarding the construction of value within these contexts. These performances prompt viewers to engage with their favourite crews within a competitive framework through the fiscal act of voting, but with no set rules or guidelines, viewers extend the boundaries of their choreographic evaluation to include the wider dance event; the environment that contextualises the staged choreography, including pre-recorded dance rehearsals, interviews, playback of previous weeks’ performances, comments by the judges, feedback from family and friends, reactions of contestants at voting decisions and the feedback from the viewers through social media websites. The dance event is therefore all encompassing, and openly encourages subjective valuing.

I draw upon Sherril Dodds’ (2011) understanding of value within a popular dance context, which she defines as both ‘an external measure of worth constructed by “outsiders” and an internal system of judgement created by the “insiders” of a popular dance scene’ (2011, p.4). Value, therefore, is a fluid concept that is composed, shaped and negotiated through social exchange, while ‘embodied value’ refers to the ‘multiple

enunciations of significance, judgement and worth that are expressed through the movement practices of different communities engaged in popular dance forms' (Dodds, 2011, p.5). Dodds (2011) considers three variations of value within popular dance; value as a system of economic exchange, as an expression of taste culture with particular link to class, and as a notion of aesthetic discrimination. In terms of my own research, these three notions of value are placed at the centre of the analysis due to the competitive production that presents and frames the popular dance practice. From the self-evaluations of the crews' own performances, to the comments of the judging panel and the interactive feedback and votes of the television viewers, measures of financial worth, class value and aesthetic perception lie at the heart of competitive male street dance crew performances. This valuing of the performance is one-sided, with the opinions and preferences of the crew's themselves carefully edited and neatly framed within the dance event. Through an analysis of Diversity's, Flawless' and A-Team's performances within the dance events of ITV1's *Britain's Got Talent* (2007-ongoing) and Sky 1's *Got To Dance* (2009-ongoing), this paper aims to unpack these three notions of value within the popular performances of the street dance crews.

Economic value

With viewing figures of 19.2 million and with over 4 million votes cast in 2009 alone, Britain's Got Talent is one of the top rated entertainment programmes on ITV1. This mass dissemination and public consumption of 'talent' featured within a prime time Saturday night television slot on a terrestrial channel places popular dance acts, such as Diversity, within a commodity fuelled commercial market. In order to obtain the financial rewards of the competition, which Juliet McMains describes as 'desired objects', the dance crew must sell themselves through their performances, both on and offstage, in order to encourage the home viewer to make a financial transaction through telephone, text or web voting (2006, p.4). The male street dance crew thus operates within a complex process of economic-exchange, whereby artistic license and creativity is negotiated alongside the 'regulating and restraining forces' of the competition and the overall SYCO television production (Dodds, 2011, p.65).¹ The competitors who desire the commodities of fame and financial reward in turn become the desired commodities themselves through the competition process, symbolically representing fame, power, youth, vitality, coolness and opportunity.

The main desired award on offer within these competitions is the cash prize ranging from £100,000-£250,000, which is particularly relevant and appealing within popular dance practice, as dancers frequently earn low wages, require an agent to obtain performance work and subsidise their performance work through teaching. Some competitions also offer competitors a weekly wage once they achieve a certain level in the competition, so it is in the financial interest of the performers to remain in the competition for as long as possible. This emphasis on the desired rewards of the competition is emphasised by numerous overly dramatized references to the home viewers to pick up the phone and vote if you want your favourite act to stay in the competition. In her research into DanceSport competitions, McMains states that because the mechanisms of the competition are in full view of the audience, the physical

proximity of the desired objects ‘intensifies the promise of eventual accessibility’ (2006, p.4). In the case of Britain’s Got Talent, the financial transaction takes on an embellished life and death scenario, as the promise of desired commodities are within close reach of the contestants.

The importance of this financial transaction is also realised within the thematic content of the performances. Within their semi-final performance, Diversity halt the action of the dance, pausing for crew member Ashley Banjo to pick up one of the dancers’ arms as if it were a telephone, and dial a number, while an electronic voiceover states, ‘You have voted Diversity’, highlighting the close link between the creative product of street dance and the desire for public votes. This valuation of creative practice has been observed by Burnett, Shuker and Storey when they comment that ‘as consumers determine what is popular with their economic capital, popular forms are then quantifiable through indicators such as sales figures, audience capacity, ratings, chart position and frequency of airtime’ (Burnett, Shuker and Storey, cited in Dodds, 2011, p.55). In the case of the process of voting, a numerical value is subsequently awarded to the street dance performances to determine their potential financial worth within the competition.

This emphasis on the visibility of economic worth is discussed in the Marxist-humanist work of David Graeber, who describes value as ‘collectively generated’, in that there is a requirement for some form of public acknowledgement of worth (Graeber in Dodds, 2011, p.97). Economic value is therefore tied in with the concept of public visibility, as items of visual adornment can be considered as types of currency. In relation to Diversity’s win on ITV1’s *Britain’s Got Talent*, the very visual process of the numerical calculation of the public votes, the dramatic lighting change of closing the phone lines and the slow opening of the results envelope symbolises the importance of the economic valuing of the dance crew on a mass scale. With regards to the studio audience, the camera cuts away three times from Diversity’s performance to reveal a brief shot of the theatre audience clapping and cheering, which I posit provides both a visual and oral method of valuing the performance, and aids in determining the crew’s economic worth. Furthermore, the gradual embellishment of Diversity’s costumes and set as they move through the levelled stages of the competition process also visually reveals their increase in financial value, as by the final performance, the crew, who originally performed in black tracksuits, are given access to expensive pyrotechnics, customised black and silver boiler suits and background lighting effects.

This emphasis towards visibility in order to achieve economic worth extends into the choreography of the crews’ performances. The prevalence of virtuosity and athletic ability is both a result of the temporal limits placed upon the crew by the competition, and also a method of displaying the crew’s aptitude and athletic dexterity. In the example of Diversity dance crew’s final performance, the crew’s constant and rapid shifting between aerial stunts, group unison sequences, and machine like formations, complimented by the ever changing camera angles, spectacularises and multiplies the crew’s presence on screen. By increasing the prominence of the crew through their choreography and overloading the audience with rapidly changing shapes and images, the television production increases the crew’s economic-exchange value within the commercial market.

I maintain though that this embodiment of high economic value is transitory, due to the rapid shift in desirable commodities within a constantly changing market. Only a few crews, including Diversity, subsequently retain a similar high profile and financially lucrative status to that earned within the first year after the broadcasting of the competition. While this micro-capitalist model of the dance competition offers crews such as Diversity the opportunity to financially profit from the process of economic-exchange through the transaction of physical labour to achieve monetary value, this does not necessarily enable creative freedom. As Geoff King reveals, by being part of the process of exchange within a capitalist framework, there is in fact a loss of individuality due to 'a blanket nomination of the self as a source of undifferentiated labor power' (2010, p.7). Consequently, the individuality and agency represented by the dance crew; a quality that is emphasized within the genre of street dance and utilised as a commodity within advertisements and music videos, is therefore confused and blurred when placed within the capitalist market.

Class-based value

So in relation to class-based values within the male street dance performances, Flawless dance crew state to the judging panel in their audition that their ambition is to 'chase the dream and not the competition'. The dream for Flawless and all of the auditionees on reality television competitions is the promise of popularity and fame, which will lead to increased financial income, greater opportunity and access to the 'desired objects'. This dream consequently refers to the opportunity for social mobility through the transitioning across class divides. Building upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), Beth Skeggs (2004) maintains that similar to other identities, bodies are socially and culturally marked with class signifiers and it is through systems of exchange that concepts of worth are placed upon certain characteristics.² These ideas around class transition and the subjectivity of class relations is significant within literature regarding reality television, as the transition from ordinary to extraordinary through the process of competition is widely referenced. Redden suggests that reality television competitions offer liberal opportunities to auditionees to transition to a better way of life through the open audition process, mirroring the capitalist ideal that opportunity and success is achieved through hard work, or as Jade Boyd describes, 'the ideology of a democratic free-market economy as enabling the creation of a new and better self' (2012, pp. 263-264). In order for these programmes to dramatize this makeover of the individual, the competitor must be initially coded and stereotyped as 'ordinary' through editing techniques and the visual style of the programme. By coupling ordinariness with a dramatic emphasis upon the reality of their experience, the producers carefully chart the contestant's transitional journey through the programme.

In the case of Flawless and other dance crews, this notion of ordinary is constructed through the programme's emphasis upon the crews' seemingly working class backgrounds and the notion of the labouring body. Within the pre-recorded and edited film clips of the crews that are shown prior to the crew's performances, the viewer witnesses crew members discussing their experience using their personal rhetoric and colloquial language, while situated within an urban backdrop or modest family home. In

terms of the labouring body, while the choreography and facial expressions of the crews mask the intense power and strength required of the dancers through their adoption of Thompson's aesthetic of 'cool', their use of tight unison and symmetry can only be achieved through extensive rehearsal and the honing of bodily control through effort and training (Thompson, 1966). After their semi-final performance, the crew state in an interview that they have 'been working every day, just, blood, sweat and tears, putting everything we've got into it', while after the final performance, they state that they have had a 'really really really tough time, we've been rehearsing really hard, since after twelve last night, we was just really, been putting in all of our work'. While the spectacular choreography and physical prowess of *Flawless* may be far removed from the home viewer's ability, these interviews emphasising that success is possible through struggle and hard work speaks back to Redden's egalitarian dream. The fact that *Flawless* are positioned as a working class, all black male dance crew who have succeeded through hard work is problematic though, as while this representation works against the abundance of negative media stereotypes that represent black British male youths as violent or apathetic, including the media spectacle of the British youth riots of 2011, the programme is actively valuing the desire for upwards class transition and the escapism from working class life.

This emphasis on the transition to a new and better self is also witnessed in the interweaving of stationary dancer interviews with rapid video clips of their athletic ability, both from their previous performances and from studio rehearsals. In the case of *Flawless*, the VT segment before their semi-final performance features short bursts of the most explosive moments of their audition routine, including a brief shot of a symmetrical group formation, a dancer running over the backs of the other crew members and an aerial windmill stunt. While 'ordinariness' is portrayed through the crew's dress, colloquialisms and content of their interviews, the viewer is continuously reminded of the extraordinariness of their physical ability, and their potential to transition to a new and improved self through their dancing talent.

I argue, however, that while the transformational journey of the dance crews may lead to success, in the majority of cases the contestant/s return to where they originated. In the case of *Flawless*, the crew was beaten by *Diversity* in the 2009 final, and while they have made television and stage appearances, they have not received the same level of acclaim, opportunity or success as their competitors. I therefore concur with both Redden (2008) and McMains (2010), who liken the often unfulfilled aspirations of reality television competitors as mirroring the western capitalist system, in that success is only available to the few. Once again, by celebrating those contestants who prove themselves to be special, these programmes represent working class life as something to be escaped from, which in turn devalues the 'ordinary' contestants who fail to succeed at social mobility.

Aesthetic value

So finally I will focus on issues of aesthetic valuing of the crew's performances with regards to taste values and the reaffirmation of the high art/low art divide, with particular reference to A-Teams' performances on Sky1's *Got To Dance* (2009-ongoing).

Dodds (2011) situates the devaluing of the aesthetic within popular forms as a result of the positioning of popular art against the Western dance canon, which she describes as 'biased elitist and ahistorical' (p.90). She reveals that this close relationship between popular dance and its capitalist production marks the popular as inferior, in comparison with 'high art' practices that appear independent and free of the market. Interestingly, street dance as a genre is often referred to by both dancers and public as 'commercial dance', due to its prevalence in processes of economic exchange, such as competitions, advertising and television work. From Dodd's position then, by framing the commercial practice of street dance within the additionally commercial activity of the televised competitive format, the crew's performances could be valued as inferior in comparison with theatrical high art forms such as ballet or contemporary dance, due to the close connection with the fiscal.

Immediately after A-Team's audition performance on Sky1's *Got To Dance* (2009-ongoing), the judging panel finish their standing ovation, quietly sit down, and unanimously award the dancers three gold stars by pushing a button on their panel desk. Prior to receiving any verbal communication regarding the judge's evaluation of the choreography, this symbolic action signifies to the dancers that they are through to the semi-finals, but also commences the process of the crew's value being measured in numerical figures that hold financial significance, such as levels of applause, numbers of social networking comments and, of course, numbers of telephone, text and web votes. In terms of the intervention of quantifiable measurement, Van den Braembussche maintains that while aesthetic value is measured in terms of taste and inspiration, economic discourses situate financial value in terms of 'calculations, cost and benefits' (Van den Braembussche, cited in Dodds, 2011, p.92). By placing the emphasis on the numerical value of the crew rather than highlighting the crew's creativity, artistic expression or choreographic content, the aesthetic value is subsequently devalued by its consistent link with the monetary form.

This potential external devaluing of the aesthetic of the dance form is also achieved through the emphasis on spectacle within the choreography. A-Team's audition demonstrates both the crew's explosive aerial acrobatic ability as well as their extreme corporeal control through their glides and body popping ability, creating a visual intensity that is designed to transfix the attention of the home viewer. Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle deemed spectacle the 'least artistic' of tragedy's six parts', favouring narrative and spoken word, and viewed spectacle's role as to entertain audiences consisting of manual labourers and farmers (Lavik, 2008, p 170). In a cinematic context, Ernst Lavik observes how this devaluing of spectacle still remains, stating that 'the use of spectacle in Hollywood cinema tends to be conceived of as an appeal to the lowest common denominator' and that higher value is placed on the narrative of the film rather than its excessive visual displays (p 176). While the crew's emphasis on physical dexterity is celebrated within the competition by the cheering and whooping audience, it places an emphasis on a surface level appreciation of the performance rather than the universally valued notions of artistic content and creative expression.

This spectacularisation of the body continues within the comments that surround the choreography, with the body consistently being described in superlatives and exaggerated descriptive language by both dancers and judges. Phrases such as 'close to perfection as you can possibly get' and 'I dared not even blink in case I missed anything'

heighten the extremity of the body in motion, while adjectives such as ‘jawdropping’, ‘insane’ and ‘ridiculous’ once again emphasise the implausibility of the performances. In terms of the judging panel, their comments guide the home viewer in making aesthetic choices through both language and subjective opinion. In terms of A-Team’s audition on Sky1’s *Got To Dance* (2009-ongoing), Kimberley Wyatt address the crew, stating ‘you guys think so outside of the box, you come with creativity, it’s very theatrical but it’s still got that street edge, it’s still grimey, and raw and nasty, I love it’. Here, the audience is initially educated in the crew’s mix of styles and the quality of their performance, but are then informed of the judges’ personal opinion about the piece. Consequently, aesthetic judgement of these performances is based around the subjectivity and the knowledge and experience of the judging panel. In her investigation into the popular, Dodds notes that ‘since popular culture is awarded little or no value, its aesthetic discourse is under developed in comparison to art’ (2011, p.93), while John Fekete maintains that taste cultures are forged through ‘aesthetic competencies’ (Fekete, cited in Dodds, 2011, p.92) and ‘not all readers possess the same level of competence’ and there lies the possibility of multiple interpretations of taste (Fekete, cited in Dodds, 2011, p.92). In terms of the aesthetic value of the performance, the audience is therefore only ever provided with a condensed and clichéd description of the dance aesthetic due to its undeveloped technical discourse, which in turn devalues the cultural product of street dance due to its audience’s inability to accurately verbalise the qualities and technicalities of the dance.

Conclusion

This paper cannot cover all the multiple instances of value construction within this research context, but it does begin to problematise the complicated yet prolific practice of valuing of popular dance bodies. While these conclusions highlight the often restrictive nature of the competitive television production in relation to the male street dance crew performance, especially in regards to economic opportunity, social mobility, and the discrimination of aesthetic worth within discourses around the popular, I also maintain that that the act of valuing can also demonstrate resistance against the construction of the street dance crew as merely a commercial product. In particular, the cleverly disguised amalgamation of street dance styles such as funk, house, and break dance within crew choreography demonstrates the internal valuing and homage to hip hop’s rich cultural heritage, while at the same time fitting within the restrictive 2 and half minute format and musical restrictions dictated by the televised talent show competition. In addition, the media visibility and public attention, (and in some cases, adoration), that is achieved by these crews through the mass external valuing of their choreography offers opportunities to re-value normative discourses that surround the concept of spectacle within popular dance choreography, as well as question the representation of the British male youths who undertake this practice.

Notes

- 1 SYCO is 'a global music, television and film production joint venture between Simon Cowell and Sony Music Entertainment. Syco Television is also the owner of the "Got Talent" television format. Versions of both "The X Factor" and "Got Talent" are co-produced by Syco and are shown in more than 70 countries and have won multiple awards including National television Awards and Bafta's. The X Factor launched in America on Fox in the Fall of 2011 with Simon as a judge. Both The X Factor and 'Got talent' are formats created by Simon Cowell' ([Simon Cowell online](#), 2013).
- 2 In his seminal research regarding 'capital', Bourdieu (1984, p.6) recognises 'taste' as a system of classification that categorises both the object in question and the classifier of the object.1 Dodds summarises this theory, stating 'through expressions of 'taste' individuals reflect particular class lifestyles facilitated by their habitus; that is, the particular dispositions to which they have access as a result of their knowledge, assets and upbringing. The habitus is therefore delineated through different classifying practices and class lifestyles are a product of the habitus' (Bourdieu, cited in Dodds, 2011, pp. 88-89).

Bibliography

- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- Boyd, J. "“Hey, we’re from Canada but we’re diverse, right?”: neoliberalism, multiculturalism, and identity on So You Think You Can Dance Canada", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 29 (4), 2012, 259–274.
- Dodds, S. *Dancing on the canon: embodiments of value in popular dance*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Graeber, D. *Toward an anthropological theory of value*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
- King, G. "Stardom, celebrity, and the money form", *The Velvet Light Trap*, 65(1), 2010, pp. 7–19.
- Lavik, E. "The battle for the blockbuster: discourses of spectacle and excess", *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 6(2), 2008, 169–187.
- McMains, J. "Reality check: Dancing with the Stars and the American dream" in Carter, A. and O'Shea, J. (eds.) *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. 2nd Edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2010, 261-272.
- Redden, G. "Making over the talent show", in Palmer, G. (ed.) *Exposing lifestyle television: the big reveal*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2008, 129-143.
- Skeggs, B. *Class, self, culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Thompson, R. "An aesthetic of the cool: West African dance", *African Forum*, 2(2), Fall, 1966, 85-102.

Address for correspondence:

Laura Robinson
7 Shalford Road
Guildford
Surrey
GU4 8AA
laurahrobinson@gmail.com

The interplay between creating Hebrew culture in the British Mandate of Palestine and the dance of Yardena Cohen

Henia Rottenberg
Western Galilee College

Abstract

Yardena Cohen (1910-2012), an Israeli choreographer and dancer, created and performed mainly during the 1930s and 1940s in the British Mandate of Palestine. This paper investigates her unique contribution to the development of Hebrew culture within the context of shaping and formulating of nation-state and national culture for the new Jewish Yishuv (community). My aim is to explore Cohen's employment of ancient materials combined with formal frameworks inspired by German dance expressionism to rebuild new traditions that stretch back to Biblical times.

Introduction

Yardena Cohen - a dancer, choreographer and teacher – was born in Haifa in 1910 and passed away in the city in 2012, at the age of 102. Yardena is considered one of the founding mothers of Hebrew dance. She commenced developing her dance career at the beginning of the 1930s in the then British Mandate of Palestine, having returned from studying in Austria and Germany. Yardena created and performed solo dances, and in 1937 won the first prize in the National Dance Competition held in Tel Aviv. Later on she created festivities for the Kibbutzim, and taught dance. She won the prestigious Israel Award in 2010 for her lifetime achievements, saying that "She left an unforgettable mark on contemporary art and culture."

This paper investigates Yardena's unique action and contribution to the development of Hebrew culture within the context of shaping and formulating a nation-state and a national culture for the new Jewish *Yishuv* (a term used by the Jewish community to represent the land of Israel) in Mandatory Palestine. My aim is to explore Yardena's employment of ancient materials stretching back to Biblical times combined with formal frameworks inspired by German dance expressionism, to rebuild new artistic traditions. I will focus mainly on festivities created for the agricultural cooperative settlements during the 1940s, when her artistic activity was at its peak. In this context I will examine how far did she conform to the *Yishuv's* ideology and whether she found a way to express her unique voice?

Creating Hebrew Culture in Mandatory Palestine

The historian Eric Hobsbawm (1983) argues that close interaction between nationality and ethnicity is among the central causes affecting the design of nation-states and the formation of national cultures. Ethnicity serves as raw material of ancient and "primitive" communal identity, out of which a new modern national identity is being formed. During that period Hebrew culture was considered the uppermost factor in the process of consolidating the national identity of the new Jewish *Yishuv* by its leadership and cultural elite. Zohar Shavit (1998), an Israeli cultural researcher, claims that art in the *Yishuv* was

perceived as a means of stimulating national sentiment and connecting the people with the idea relating to the ancient homeland.

The aspiration to build a new national society became possible thanks to Zionist ideology. That basis determined that Hebrew culture should be 'original' and 'authentic'. In the context of art these are not identical terms. 'Originality' refers to an aspect of creating a new work, distinguished from a duplicated, copied or forged piece; while 'Authenticity', is the internal substance of everything, the initial essence of existence, which with time has been covered with wrappings and to which we aspire to return (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1927). These two ends are expressed in formulating the ideological nature of Hebrew culture as generating national identity that relied on ancient Hebrew myths. Shavit (1998) further argues that the new Hebrew culture has also borrowed and assimilated 'foreign' aspects that have become part of it, such as cultural frameworks from cultural centers in Europe, despite their geographical distance.

The central position given to culture shaped to a great extent its directions of development (Segev, 1999, p. 11-12). Major culture institutions were established, such as the philharmonic orchestra or the core for radio broadcasting. The creative process of dance – ethnic, folkloric, social, and theatrical – was shaped largely by European artists who immigrated to Eretz Yisrael with the Nazis rise to power in 1933 (within theatrical dance, modern dance, rather than ballet, symbolized the urge for innovative, independent, secular, and progressive culture). They combined their training in the dominant Ausdruckstanz with inspiration from the Zionist environment. Among them were Tille Rössler, a principal teacher at Gret Palucca's school in Dresden, the dancers Else Dublon, Paula Padani, and Katia Michaeli, who danced in Mary Wigman's company, and Gertrud Kraus, a notable Viennese dancer and choreographer (Eshel, 2003).

Getting Started

Yardena was born to a native family of intellectuals, scientists and educators. The landscapes of the Mediterranean and Carmel mountains, oriental music, Arabic rhythms and local figures were part of her world. At the age of 14 she already created the dance *Zionism* (1924), while still a high school student. Upon completing her studies Yardena joined a commune on a hill in Hadera, the members of which worked during the day in orchards and building roads, and at night discussed issues such as equality, values, socialism, and the redemption of man.

In 1929 Yardena studied modern dance for two years at the State Academy for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, under the direction of Gertrude Bodenwieser, and continued to Dresden to study with Palucca. The thriving of Ausdruckstanz was a unique opportunity for her to explore new worlds of dance, music, painting and sculpture (Howe, 2001). She writes in her book *The Tambourine and the Sea*: "I let new sounds and colors penetrate into my dormant worlds and evoke them. I felt the act of creation within my body" (Cohen, 1976, p. 32), and she goes on saying, "however, in the world of dance I paced being lonely and alien" (Cohen, 1976, p. 31).

In Dresden during the performance of the Indian dancer Uday Shankar Yardena heard Wigman tell Palucca: "This Palestinian; [...] among us this girl is a foreigner. She has come from another world, and there she should return..." (p. 33). Yardena's feeling of estrangement increased, and upon the Nazis' rise to power she returns to Haifa, equipped with the new culture she had absorbed (Cohen, 1976, p. 33).

Dancing between East and West

The anthropologist Ted Polhemus (1993) argues that embodiment of cultural perceptions,

gestures and movements absorbed by the body, is a result of living in a certain way within a certain society, expressed not only in everyday movement, but also in forms of dance of that same group. In other words, physical movement is a source for historic information, which can be identified in its cultural context.

Upon returning to Eretz Yisrael, Yardena was searching for her personal voice (she will open her studio in 1953). She created solo dances, and during the 1940s began producing festivities for the Kibbutzim that reflected Zionist ideology of the Jewish *Yishuv*. Since agriculture was the economic and ideological center during this period, nature and landscape received a representative and symbolic meaning. These ceremonies were a secular alternative to Jewish religious and traditional dance that did not suit the needs of a modern state (Manor, 1998, p. 570).

Yardena's multi-participants celebrations that interlocked with local landscapes had an affinity with amateur 'movement choirs' of Rudolf Von Laban. The ritual festivals he desired to restore had artistic and cultural motivations (the need for socialization) in the context of daily life, and were placed within a tradition of a national movement (Kew, 1999). Similarly, Yardena regarded the festivities as a means to evoke the culture of *feast*, emphasizing the intensity of dancing and celebrating together, and focusing the energy on ideological ardor and new life.

Easily remembered steps and patterns, which did not require prolonged training, enabled carrying out the celebrations. When Yardena commenced to create, she saw before her eyes "biblical figures with their light steps, bells on their feet, moving their hips and calling me to revive them..." – stories she heard from her father (p.73). An additional radical approach was her stepping away from Proscenium stage. Canceling the partition between viewers and dancers enabled her to carry out the festivities in open air by all community members and guests.

Kibbutz Sha'ar Ha'amakim's 10th anniversary celebration in 1945 was based on the Biblical story of Barak Ben Avino'am who defeated the army of Sisra at the place where the Kibbutz is located. Yardena selects and sculpts the national collective memory by means of creating an affinity with stories of the past, in order to emphasize continuity of the Jewish People in the region. The celebration opened with a trumpet blast which gathered all members in the Kibbutz yard, and from there a cart full of music players led the parade of celebrators with songs and music to the large festivity space in the fields, with the mountains around and where the Kibbutz' herds of sheep and goats serve as its scenery. At the dancing corner the celebrators set the peg of Yael's tent, under which the choir and orchestra were seated. To the sounds of the songs girls descended from the hills, pitchers on their heads. In the second part of the celebration the Biblical feast blended into the Kibbutz' Anniversary celebrations – past and present.

Yardena invited the Arab neighbors from the area to celebrate and participate in the field feast. That was extraordinary since close relationships between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish *Yishuv* deteriorated upon the beginning of violent incidents increased since 1929. She invited a group of young men dressed with abbayahs and kaffia [male Arab cloak and head-dress] to join, and they danced a restrained and quiet dance to the sounds of flute (Cohen, 1976, p.101). The action attests to her independent political standpoint which exceeded the consensus.

The reviews praised the performance. Her father, P. C. Yardeni, wrote in the newspaper *Davar*, "From the hills the Arab neighbors of Azubeidat came gliding down, wrapped in their black cloaks [...]" (1944). The critic Giora Manor refers to its artistic aspect, post-factum, writing: "I remember a performance, which had perfect harmony between movement, music, landscape and the literary content" (2001, p.49); whereas Amitai chooses to emphasize the contribution to the renewed national culture: "The Kibbutzim, happily celebrating their feasts this way know also to rise early [in] the day following the feast to their work" (box 121.10.2.6).

In summary, Yardena's unique work was in itself an artistic act, but at the same time ideological by consciously contributing to the process of inventing modern and national

Hebrew culture and identity. She writes, "[...] our revitalized tradition is blessed with festivities [...] each feast holds its root in the Bible; it's beautiful stories integrated in working the land will serve us as a bridge between ancient and revitalized tradition" (Cohen, file 121.10.5.1.2). Furthermore, in a period of extreme ideological-political polarization, Yardena chose to establish ties of friendship with Palestinian Arabs and thereby presents an independent standpoint.

Copyright 2013, Henia Rottenberg

Bibliography

- Amitai, A. Deborah's Song and Bees Song: The 10th Anniversary to Shaar Haamakim. Box Yardena Cohen: Critics, 121.10.2.6, Archives of the Dance Library of Israel. [Hebrew]
- Eshel, Ruth. Concert Dance in Israel, *Dance Research Journal*, 35: 1, 2003, pp. 61–68.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. Introduction. In Hobsbawm, Eric. & Ranger, Terence. (Eds.) *The Invention of Traditions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 1-14.
- How, S. Dianne. *Individuality and Expression: The Aesthetics of the New German Dance, 1908-1936*. New York, Washington, Baltimore, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Vienna, Paris: Peter Lang, (1996) 2001.
- Cohen, Yardena. Folk festival and dance, Box Yardena Cohen: Dance Thoughts, 121.10.5.1.2, Archives of the Dance Library of Israel. [Hebrew]
- Cohen, Yardena. *The Drum and the Sea*. Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1976. [Hebrew]
- Kew, Carole. From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance: The Rise and Fall of Rudolf Laban's Festkultur. *Dance Research*. 17:2, Winter 1999, pp. 73-96.
- Manor, Giora. The Development of Dance in the Jewish Settlement, In *The History of the Jewish Community in Eretz Yisrael since 1882*, Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Israel Academy for Sciences and Humanities, 1998, pp. 557-572. [Hebrew]
- Manor, Giora. Still Walking Barefoot: about Yardena Cohen. *Dance Today*, 4, 2001, pp. 46-49. [Hebrew]
- Polhemus, Ted. Dance, Gender and Culture. In Thomas, Helen (Ed.). *Dance, Gender and Culture*. UK: Macmillan, 1993, pp. 3-15
- Segev, Tom. *Palestine under the British*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1999. [Hebrew]
- Shavit, Zohar. Introduction, In *The History of the Jewish Community in Eretz Yisrael since 1882*, Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and the Israel Academy for Sciences and Humanities, 1998, pp. 1-7. [Hebrew],
- Yardeni, P. C. 10th anniversary in Shaar Haamakim. *Davar*, Box Yardena Cohen: Critic, 121.10.2.6, Archives of the Dance Library of Israel. [Hebrew]

Address for correspondence:

Henia Rottenberg
henia.rottenberg@dancevoices.com

Some Notes on Phenomenological Dance Research in the Nordic Context

Leena Rouhiainen

Performing Arts Research Centre, Theatre Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki

Abstract

As part of a tripartite keynote panel exploring Nordic dance research, this presentation explores the regional evolvement of phenomenological dance research. This scholarly orientation is introduced through an account of the author's early engagement with it and what she has learnt during the past fifteen years. While the presentation offers a short overview of the locally increasingly strong approach, it simultaneously introduces some main tenets of phenomenology and phenomenological research. These include 1) its appreciation of subjective experience, 2) its descriptive approach, 3) its interest in embodiment and 4) its goal in delineating the constitutive structures of the objects it observes. The presentation points to the thematics that phenomenologically oriented Nordic dance research has addressed by nearly twenty researchers. By introducing choreographer Jana Unmüssig's doctoral research project, it likewise points to some interlinks between phenomenology and artistic research in dance.

Presentation

Visual material

The video material that is projected on the background is a documentation of German choreographer Jana Unmüssig's piece *Colour Colour*. She is a doctoral candidate at the Theatre Academy of the University of the Arts Helsinki and the piece is part of her artistic research project. It premiered in March 2013 at the Zodiak Centre for New Dance and was performed by the dancers Hanna Ahti, Gabriela Aldana-Kekoni, Eeva Muilu and Sofia Simola. I am presenting this material with the choreographer's permission and will shortly return to the work at the end of my presentation.¹

Learning about phenomenology in Finland

I myself ventured into realm of phenomenology some fifteen years ago in Finland, when I had an earnest need to understand my own professional practice and the field of contemporary dance better. At the early phases of my career as a dancer, I was perplexed by the fact that there seemed to be so much knowing in dance performance, but very little conversational dialogue in our daily practice on how we managed to think in movement and perform skilfully. In some instances we dancers silently followed choreographers' instructions, and in others we improvised together in diverse environments. In so doing, we relied on the tacit knowledge we had accumulated and on our individual ways of solving the more open or closed assignments. At the time, there even seemed to be some antagonism towards the existing Anglo-American dance theory that had emerged on the

basis of the previous modern dance. Nonetheless, I craved for further insight into how dancers manage their work, and set about doing doctoral research. To broaden my view, I interviewed in it some of my colleagues on how they related to rehearsing, performing and living as dance artists and settled on a phenomenological approach to interpreting their experiences.

At the end of the 20th century in Finland, dance research and writing were still somewhat scarce and consisted mainly of dance criticism, a few publications in dance history, disparate biographies of artists and some socio-economically inclined surveys. On my supervisor's advice, while searching for research approaches with which to address experience, especially of the motional body, I began reading Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. At some points he seemed to describe my own bodily experiences and, at others, his writing was cryptic, but I kept to it. In learning to understand his thinking better, I found support especially in two Finnish philosophers' writings. In her early work and doctoral dissertation *Bodies Moving and Moved* (1998) Jaana Parviainen, while underlining the significance of the lived body in dancing, acknowledged the impact of the socio-historical contexts of contemporary dance in the construction of the dancing subject. Sara Heinämaa (2000; 1996), in turn, introduced Edmund Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's approaches to phenomenology to Finnish readers and gave a detailed overview of the body's complex intertwinement with the world that these philosophers addressed. Likewise, psychologist Lauri Rauhala's (1993; 1995) theorizing on a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach for research in the human sciences offered me my first insights into how to construct interview-based research.

Interest in phenomenology increased considerably in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Finland. Among other things, following philosopher Juha Varto's lead, the University of Tampere founded a publication series devoted solely to phenomenology. It managed to publish its volumes for a few years. At the time, the same institution, as well as the University of Jyväskylä, began generating phenomenological research that probed into embodiment, sports, dance and the martial arts, for example (e.g. Klemola 1998, 1990; Parviainen 1994; Varto 1996). Some researchers, similarly, began exploring phenomenology as a research method for the human sciences (e.g. Perttula 1995; Varto 1994). Then a few researchers in education also became engaged on a phenomenological approach (e.g. Lehtovaara 1994; Värrö 2007). The increasingly lively debate in and on phenomenology had a recognizable impact on the positions upcoming dance researchers in the country took. Instead of explaining what dance was or how it should be done, it allowed the idiosyncratic experience of dance artists, pedagogues and students to come to the forefront of analysis. This, I believe, was a research approach that dance professionals were comfortable with. It contrasted third-person evaluative observations that they were accustomed to in dance criticism, for example, and allowed their embodied voices to be heard.

The phenomenological movement and Nordic dance research

Since the time I worked with my doctoral research entitled *Living Transformative Lives* (2003) the field of contemporary dance in Finland and in the Nordic countries more

generally has become more conversational, even discursive, in the sense that dance artists, practitioners and pedagogues are ever more articulate about their dance activities. Additionally, dance research is increasingly rehearsed in all of the Nordic countries – often by dance practitioners themselves. As the phenomenologically oriented pieces of research compiled in this region have relied on various viewpoints, I shall, in a few broad strokes, introduce how I have come to understand phenomenology as a field of research.

As is well known, around the turn of the 20th century Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological movement, opined that the scientific thinking of his day had lost touch with reality and lacked coherency. He advocated that philosophers in their observations and analysis return to things themselves in order to understand their ownmost nature. Describing lived experience with as little scientific bias as possible became Husserl's initial approach to achieving this goal. His philosophical method begins from the perspective of subjective experience, but is interested in its transcendent nature. By exploring how consciousness engages with things outside itself, Husserl dealt with a philosophy of consciousness that aimed at unravelling the constitutive structures of reality. He provided meticulous analysis of the composition of different types of experience, while simultaneously elucidating some of their individual, cultural and historical grounds. In the end, Husserl hoped that phenomenology would re-establish philosophy as the first science. His aim was that it would come to offer reliable ontological and epistemological foundations for the other sciences to follow. (Heinämaa 2000, 1996; Moran 2000; Pakes 2010; Parviainen 2006; Perttula 1995; Spiegelberg 1982/1960; Zahavi 2003)

Nonetheless, phenomenology is more than a simple continuation of the project Husserl launched. It has often been described as a style of thinking that delves into various issues related to human consciousness and existence on the basis of what is evident to us in our experience or given in the disclosure of our being-in-the-world. It is a critical form of philosophy, in that while interrogating our relation to the world, it aims to bring to the surface uncritically accepted assumptions and unnoticed preconditions upon which phenomena come into being. Some of its main themes have revolved around empathy, sensation, perception, consciousness, embodiment, motility, sexuality, expression, language, art and inter-subjectivity. For the purposes of their undertakings, each phenomenologist has approached these issues in her or his own way, drawing on or resisting previous phenomenological positions. It is evident that different standpoints on basic phenomenological themes have resulted in diverse emphases in phenomenology, namely what have been termed transcendental, existential, hermeneutic and narrative phenomenologies. The first generation of phenomenologists produced what now might be called classical phenomenology, and includes the work of such originators as Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Paul Ricoeur, to name a few. (Carr 2003; Merleau-Ponty 1994/1962; Moran 2000; Spiegelberg 1982/1960)

Likewise, phenomenological adaptations made in different fields of research have introduced orientations of their own. For example, there is a lineage of phenomenological aesthetics that scrutinizes the nature of art works and aesthetic experience, especially. As

a backdrop to social constructionism there is the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz and his followers, who explore inter-subjectivity and the social realm. In its turn, phenomenological psychology looks at how concrete experience is formative of individuals' life worlds and offers distinct research methodology for psychology. There is a circle of phenomenologically oriented feminist thinkers. Cognitive phenomenology dialogues with findings in cognitive sciences, while offering further insight into the formation of human consciousness.

This all goes to show that phenomenology encompasses a multitude of applications, and its original impetus has been contaminated by a variety of perspectives and interests. Indeed we should talk about phenomenologies in the plural. This plurality encompasses the dialogue between phenomenology and dance that has gained momentum since the late 1960s. It was launched by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone's *The Phenomenology of Dance* published in 1966 and has conversed with various phenomenological notions ever since.

During the past ten years or so, the potential that phenomenology offers to dance studies has been well appreciated in the Nordic countries. A host of dance practitioners, educators and artists have ventured into exploring their own field of practice with phenomenological underpinnings. Here phenomenological dance research has both dialogued with phenomenological philosophers and taken a more psychological approach in analysing the experiences of dance professionals, practitioners and students. I counted up to eighteen Nordic practitioner-researchers whose phenomenological articles and other research I have read during the past decade. Their work has produced new understanding of the local practices in social, ethnic and contemporary dance. They have generated detailed views on how different dance practices form the dancer's body and subjectivity more broadly. Their analyses have dealt with the impact the addressed forms of dancing have on kinaesthetic experience, interaction between dance partners, the production of space and the ways in which dancers relate to the world more generally. This research has likewise probed into how dancing involves and generates bodily memories, how dancing carries cultural significance and forms grounds for ethical ways of relating to others. It has investigated how dance pedagogy can act as an agency of change for differently bodied dancers or support children's awareness of their embodied experiences. Similarly contemporary dance performance has been introduced as a disclosure of reality in which bodily consciousness is explored in the now moment. (Anttila 2007; Engel 2001; Engel and Jeppesen 2010; Engelsrud 2010, 2007; Karoblis 2010, 2007; Kozel 2011, 2010; Löytönen 2004; Monni 2008, 2007, 2004; Parviainen 2003, 2002; Ravn 2010, 2009; Ravn and Hansen 2012; Rouhiainen 2009, 2008, 2003; Rustad 2013, 2012; Svendler 2012, 2009; Siljamäki et al. 2012a, 2012b; Winther 2010; Välipakka 2003; Østern 2010, 2008)

Why phenomenology?

Perhaps the following are some of the general tenets that have made phenomenology so pertinent to dance researchers here.

Phenomenology has appreciated subjective experience, especially as it is immediately lived, as a basis for scholarly analysis. This has offered dance research a perspective through which to focus on the moment of dancing and to do so from the performing dance artist's, student's or pedagogue's viewpoint. This positions the dance practitioner at the centre of phenomenologically oriented research, even if it is not concerned with simply elucidating the individual subject's outlook but more generally the "what it is like" of experience (Pakes 2011). Exploring the moment of dancing, in fact, is something that dance studies continue to benefit from as new forms of performing that mould our experience and relation to reality are advanced.

Phenomenology has provided detailed insight into sensation, perception, embodiment and motility. So, in addition to offering a legitimate perspective to explore the immediate experience of dancing, it offers concepts of discussing it. Phenomenological interest in embodied experience has suited the ethos of both modern and post-modern dance. They have relied upon and cultivated bodily knowledge as well as excavated kinaesthesia, while probing into what the body can do in performance. Likewise, what might be viewed as a somatic turn in dance education delves into what can be learnt by perceiving the body in dialogue with its environment from the perspective of subjective experience.

Another feature is phenomenology's interest in description. As a first level of analysis, it has often produced rigorous descriptions of experience. Many phenomenologists have utilized poetic means and novel expressions to depict the objects of their observation. Phenomenological description thus offers detailed evidence of what is lived through and, in relation to dance, can present evocative documentation of contemporaneous events of dance. And as is evident, phenomenology has already had a strong influence on dance writing in the Nordic context.

Phenomenology likewise involves a certain orientation towards thinking, through which observed phenomena are addressed afresh to scrutinize their ownmost nature – something that socio-cultural concepts and beliefs often conceal. This approach, frequently referred to as the reduction, requires becoming aware of preconceptions and casting them aside in order for phenomena themselves, as it were, to move the phenomenologist. Phenomenologists thus view things as if they were strange in order to gain new insight into them. This practice of bracketing could be understood as being something that dance artists work with when they question the norms and limits of their artistic practice. Mark Franko draws on Jacques Derrida's thinking and exclaims that "the phenomenological reduction or bracketing could be those of the proscenium stage itself" (Franko 2011, 1). While hiding something, the stage offers disclosure of something else. American dancer and choreographer Steve Paxton's *The Small Dance* could be another example of a practical form of phenomenological reduction. There are certainly elements of bracketing in the work of Jana Unmüssig.

What must still be underlined is that despite criticism that flows towards the opposite direction, phenomenology is an enactive and world-engaging research orientation. Phenomenology can be understood to involve a form of co-existence, in which new insights evolve from placing our experiences in a dialogue with those of others and the

world. Sensitivity and openness to others who inhabit a shared circumstance, and the materials and environments involved in it, are called for in this kind of research. Additionally, owing to the situational and historical nature through which phenomena are given to us, phenomenological research turns out to be continuous questioning that requires self-reflexivity and produces only tentative answers. In spite of being partial, these answers aim to be intersubjectively valid, since, in phenomenological terms, meaning and rationality emerge exactly where perspectives blend and confirm each other. (Merleau-Ponty 1995/1964; 1995/1962) If we understand embodiment as intrinsically intertwined with others and the world, phenomenologist Dan Zahavi's observation elucidates this stance. He states: "There is no pure point of view and there is no view from nowhere, there is only an embodied point of view" (Zahavi 2003, 98).

Summing up

Phenomenological inquiry has intertwined with different bodies of knowledge. Despite being criticized for its subjectivism and universalizing tendencies, it continues to be a dynamic field of research. The potential opened by the work of previous phenomenologists has not been exhausted, and by interlocking with new perspectives phenomenology can offer a critical approach to exploring both the material and experiential aspects of dance and dancing in their distinct socio-historical contexts. Here, embodied practice can be understood to produce socio-politically impactful embodiment. And if we follow Ann Cooper Albright's (2011) insight into Merleau-Ponty's thinking, it is the verbs that he emphasizes: sensing, perceiving, doing and knowing. In this sense the first phenomenological condition is active participation in different forms of life including dancing, dance-making, and observing dance. With its critical stance phenomenologically oriented dance research has the potential of unearthing what is beneath the conventional and instituting new forms of perceiving, doing and understanding dance. I say this with the reservation that, while conducting phenomenological research into dance, we should clarify the links to the earlier research we have done and explain what we understand by phenomenology more precisely. We should address this, in addition to acknowledging the lineage of dance we are involved with.

To return to the video material, Jana Unmüssig utilizes phenomenological insights in her doctoral work. Her artistic research lingers around and battles with the question of what place Heideggerian philosophy can have in her choreographic practice. Her goal is to allow artistic practice itself to further articulate this question in a variety of ways. Currently, she has explored the themes of Dasein, temporality and seeing as forms of bodily practice. In the rehearsals of *Colour Colour*, while relying on such basic bodily organisation as standing, sitting and lying, seeing was practised in the form of seeing things, other people and one's own body. The performers likewise observed duration as a compositional tool. In so doing, they focused on minimal shifts in their perception and explored silence. While the performers attended to these tasks, they were likewise asked to reduce their movement to only what was necessary in order to sustain the ongoing exploration. Unmüssig's work is an example of a practical phenomenological enquiry.

Copyright 2013; Leena Rouhiainen

Bibliography

- Albright, Ann. C. 2011. "Situated Dancing: Notes from Three Decades in Contact with Phenomenology." *Dance Research Journal* 43(2): 7–18.
- Anttila, Eeva. 2007. "Mind the Body: Unearthing the Affiliation between the Conscious Body and the Reflective Mind." In *Ways of Knowing in Dance and Art*, edited by Leena Rouhiainen et al., 79–100. Helsinki; Theatre Academy.
- Carr, David. 2003. "Transcendental and Empirical Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition." In *The New Husserl: A Critical Reader*, edited by Donn Welton, 181–98. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Engel, Lis. 2001. "Body Poetics of Hip Hop Dance Styles in Copenhagen." *Dance Chronicle* 24(3): 351–372.
- Engel, Lis and Jeppesen, Rikke S. 2010. "The Dance of Words." *Nordic Journal of Dance* 1: 58–65.
- Engelsrud, Gunn. 2010. "'To Allow Oneself to Dance. . .': Understanding the Individual Training of a Selection of Young Dancers." *Nordic Journal of Dance* 1(1): 31–44.
- Engelsrud, Gunn. 2007. "Teaching Styles in Contact Improvisation: An Explicit Discourse with Implicit Meaning." *Dance Research Journal* 39(2): 58–73.
- Franko, Mark. "Editor's Note: What Is Dead and What Is Alive in Dance Phenomenology?" *Dance Research Journal* 43 (2): 1–4.
- Heinämaa, Sara. 2000. *Ihmetys ja rakkaus: esseitä ruumiin ja sukupuolen fenomenologiasta*. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Nemo.
- Heinämaa, Sare. 1996. *Ele, tyyli ja sukupuoli: Merleau-Pontyn ja Beauvoirin ruumiinfenomenologia ja sen merkitys sukupuolikysymykselle*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Karoblis, Gediminas. 2010. "Dance." In *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, edited by Hans Reiner Sepp and Lester Embree, 67–70. Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London and New York: Springer.
- Karoblis, Gediminas. 2007. "Controlling Gaze, Chess Play and Seduction in Dance: Phenomenological Analysis of the Natural Attitude in Modern Ballroom Dance." *Janus Head* 9(2): 329–343.
- Klemola, Timo. 1990. *Liikkunta tienä kohti varsinaista itseä: Liikunnan projektien fenomenologinen tarkastelu*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Klemola, Timo 1998. *Ruumis liikkuu – liikkuuko henki? Liikunnan projektien fenomenologinen tarkastelu*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Kozel, Susan. 2011. "The Virtual and the Physical: A Phenomenological Approach to Performance Research." In *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, 204–222. London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Kozel, Susan. 2010. "Intuitive Improvisation: A Phenomenological Method for Dance Experimentation with Mobile Digital Media." *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Philosophia*, Anul LV: 71–80.
- Lehtovaara, Maija. 1994. *Subjektiivinen maailmankuva kasvatustieteellisen tutkimuksen kohteena*. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis A (338). Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Löytönen, Teija. 2004. *Keskusteluja tanssi-instituutioiden arjesta*. Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1995/1964. *Signs*. Translated by Richard C. McCleary. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1995/1962. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Collin Smith. London: Routledge.
- Monni, Kirsi. 2008. "About the Sense and Meaning in Dance" Michael Klien et al., eds., *Choreography as an Aesthetics of Change*, edited by Michael Klien, 37–44. Limerick: Daghdha Dance Company.
- Monni, Kirsi. 2007. "Tanssiesteettinen perintö ja Deborah Hayn radikaali taide – ontologisen eron pohdintaa." In *Liikkeitä Näyttämöllä, Näyttämö & Tutkimus 2*, edited by Pia Houni et al., 26–61. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino Kustannus/Helsinki University Press.
- Monni, Kirsi. 2004. *Olemisen poeettinen liike: tanssin uuden paradigman taidefilosofisia tulkintoja Martin Heideggerin ajattelun valossa ja taiteellinen työ vuosilta 1996–1999*, Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu.
- Moran, Dermot. 2000. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pakes, Anna. 2011. "Phenomenology and Dance: Husserlian Meditations." *Dance Research Journal* 43 (2): 33–49.
- Parviainen, Jaana. 2006. *Meduusan liike: Mobiiliajan tiedonmuodostuksen filosofiaa*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Parviainen, Jaana. 2003. "Dance Techne: Kinetic Bodily Logos and Thinking in Movement." *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 2: 159–175.
- Parviainen, Jaana. 2002. "Bodily Knowledge: Epistemological Reflections on Dance" *Dance Research Journal* 34 (1): 11–23.
- Parviainen, Jaana. 1998. *Bodies Moving and Moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Parviainen, Jaana. 1994. *Tanssi ihmisen eksistenssissä*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Perttula, Juha. 1995. *Kokemus psykologisena tutkimuskohteena. Johdatus fenomenologiseen psykologiaan*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Rauhala, Lauri. 1995. *Tajunnan itsepuolustus*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Rauhala, Lauri. 1993. *Ekistentialinen fenomenologia hermeneuttisen tieteen filosofian menetelmänä. Maailmankuvan kokonaisrakenteen erittelyä ihmistä koskevien tieteiden kysymyksissä*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.
- Ravn, Susanne. 2010. "Sensing Weight in Movement." *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* 2 (1): 21–34.
- Ravn, Susanne. 2009. *Sensing Movement, Living Spaces: An Investigation of Movement Based on the Lived Experience of 13 Professional Dancers*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.
- Ravn, Susanne and Hansen, Helle P. 2012. "How to explore dancer's self experiences? A study of how multi-sited fieldwork and phenomenology can be combined." *Qualitative Research in Sport Sciences*: 1–18.
- Rouhiainen, Leena. 2009. "Havainnoiva tanssi." *Synteesi* 1: 53–64.
- Rouhiainen, Leena. 2009. "Somatic Dance as a Means of Cultivating Ethically Embodied Subjects." *Research in Dance Education* 9(3): 241–257.
- Rouhiainen, Leena. 2003. *Living Transformative Lives: Finnish Freelancer's Brought into Dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology*, Helsinki: Theatre Academy.
- Rustad, Hilde. 2013. *Dans etter egen pipe; en analyse av danseimprovisasjon og kontaktimprovisasjon – som tradisjon, fortolkning og levd erfaring*, PhD Thesis, Oslo: Department for Physical Education, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.
- Rustad, Hilde. 2012. "Dance in Physical Education: Experiences in Dance as Described by Physical Education Student Teachers." *Nordic Journal of Dance* 3: 14–29.
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. 1996. *The Phenomenology of Dance*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Svendler Nielsen, Charlotte. 2013. "Children's Embodied Voices: Approaching Children's Experience's through Multi-Modal Interviewing." In *Hermeneutic Phenomenology in*

- Education: Method and Practice*, edited by Norman Friesen et al., 163–176. Rotterdam, Boston and Taipei: Sense Publishers.
- Svendler, Nielsen, Charlotte. 2009. *Ind I bevægelsen – Et performativitet fænomenologisk feltsudie ome kropplighed, mening og kreativitet i børns læreproesser i bevægelseundervisning I skolen*. PhD Thesis. Copenhagen: Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, University of Copenhagen.
- Siljamäki, Mariana., Anttila, Eeva. Perttula, Juha and Sääkslahti, Arja. 2012a. “Tanssinharrastajien kokema voimaantuminen eri kulttuureista lähtöisin olevissa tanssimuodoissa.” *Liikunta & Tiede* 49(6): 52–59.
- Siljamäki, Mariana, Perttula, Juha, Sääkslahti, Arja and Anttila, Eeva. 2012b. “Tanssikulttuurisia kohtaamisia. Lansiafrikkalaisten tanssien, itämaisen tanssin ja flamencon kulttuuritaustan merkitys suomalaisten harrastajien kokemana.” *Kulttuurintutkimuslehti* 29(3): 15–27.
- Spiegelberg, Herbert. 1982/1960. *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Varto, Juha. 1996. *Lihan viisauus*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopiston jäljennepalvelu.
- Varto, Juha, ed. 1994. *Kohti elämissaailman ja ihmisen laadullista tutkimista*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto
- Värri, Veli-Matti. 1997. *Hyvä kasvatus – kasvatus hyvään. Dialogisen kasvatuksen filosofinen tarkastelu erityisesti vanhemmuuden näkökulmasta*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Winter, Helle. 2010. “The Mothers: Life and Death in Dance Therapeutic Processes in Dansenergia.” *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 5 (2): 171–184.
- Välipakka, Inka. 2003. *Tanssien sanat: representoiva koreografia, eletty keho ja naistanssi*. Joensuu: Joensuun yliopistopaino.
- Østern, Tone. 2010. “Teaching Dance Spaciously.” *Nordic Journal of Dance* 1: 46–57.
- Østern, Tone. 2008. *Meaning-Making in the Dance Laboratory: Exploring Dance Improvisation with Differently Bodied Dancers*. Helsinki: Theatre Academy.
- Zahavi, Dan. 2003. *Husserl’s Phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Zahavi, Dan. 1999. *Self-awareness and Alterity: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

¹ The video material was shown by courtesy of the choreographer. For a short clip of the rehearsals and photographs of the performance visit: <http://www.zodiak.fi/en/calendar/event/215--colour-colour>. The piece was also performed in Kampfnagel, Hamburg and at Impulstanz, Vienna International Dance Festival, in 2013, see <http://www.impulstanz.com/en/performances/2013/id586/>. For more information on the choreographer’s work, see <http://www.jana-unmussig.com>

Address for Correspondance
 Leena Rouhiainen
 Performing Arts Research Centre
 Theatre Academy
 University of the Arts Helsinki
 PO Box 20
 FI-00097 UNIARTS
 FINLAND
 leena.rouhiainen(at)teak.fi

Gesture as an instrument to understand and pass on early modern dance

Turid Nøkleberg Schjønsby

Abstract

Early modern dance was at its peak about hundred years ago. Symbolism was a great inspiration for innovative dance in the 20th century. According to the creators themselves, “the movement of the soul” was the core of the dance. How can we today understand the patterns of movement which were used in this dances? Many of these dance methods have been handed down as tradition, or reconstructed based on pictures, descriptions or copying of the masters. In my presentation I will introduce some selected dances which were created in the beginning of 1900, by Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Rudolf Steiner. The manners in which the dancers are handed down through four generations tell us something about what elements are central in the movement buildup of the dances. Based on theories of gesture developed by Merleau-Ponty, Greimas and Lyotard, I will discuss how certain key elements will crystallize in the dance creators’ visual movement material. My presentation contains videoed dance, photos and sketches. The methods are derived from textual analysis, fieldwork and interviews.

Introduction

In August 2012, I defended my dissertation on early modern dance at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim (Schjønsby 2012). I will here present some of the themes I have been concerned with: Gestures in dance which had its origin one hundred years ago, and which still are existing as dance traditions.

Around 1900 a new era of dance and movement art started. The renewers did not come from the great established theaters, but from individuals who were developing new principals for dance, and who searched for the origin of movement. According to the dance creators themselves, “the movement of the soul”¹ was the core of innovative dance in early modernism (1900-1925). Dance has changed. Our vocabulary on dance today is focused on body. How can we understand the patterns of movement which were used in dances from this time? 101 years back, in 1912, Isadora Duncan (35) Ruth St. Denis (33), are in 1912 in the middle of their careers. Rudolf Steiner (51) is not at all a dancer. He is educated in technique and science, and he is also doctor in philosophy. Together with a group of young people he develops a movement art which he call eurythmy. These dances and ways of dancing have been transmitted as tradition through 100 years. The methods and choreographies are handed down as tradition, or reconstructed based on pictures, descriptions or copying of the masters.



Figur1: Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Rudolf Steiner.

Handing down the dances and dance-techniques

Isadora Duncan became an ideal for the free dance. Her dance technique and choreographies has been handed down in America, Central Europe and Russia (Daly 2002). Her method had a Revival in the 1970's, when young dancers started to take up this special way of dancing, guided by persons who had been near to Duncan herself (Duncan, Näslund & Quinlan 1996). In 1914 the start of Denishawn by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn marked the beginning of the modern dance in USA (Sherman 1983 Shelton 1990). Some of the students were Avant garde and made their own schools. Rudolf and Marie Steiner made an eurythmy-company, touring to different theaters in Europe (Parr 1992, Steiner 1982). In the 1970s eurythmy academies, with 4 years education were build in most of the European countries. Eurythmy exists today as a pedagogic tool in the Steiner schools, but also as stage art.

The dances and ways of dancing are passed on and follow the rules of transmitting tradition (Bakka 1978, Barz & Cooley 1997) and thus there still is possibilities to study the expression of the movements. A dilemma in handing down and reconstructing early modern dance is: How to take care of what the dance artists called "The movement of the soul" (Duncan 1924).² After working with this question for a long time, my conclusion is: We must direct our focus to the gestures.

Understanding of gesture

A temporary definition of gesture is: Physical movement which expresses meaning, emotion and responds to music and speech. I experience the gestures with my senses. I understand the meaning immediate. My question for this paper is: *How is gesture used in transmission of early modern dance?*

Three thinkers, Algirdas Julius Greimas (1917-1992), Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) have written and talked about gestures in different ways. In the theory of Greimas the gestures are understood as signs (Greimas, 1987). He is concerned of the meaning of the gestures and he classifies the gestures in a system. Merleau-Ponty builds his understanding of gesture on Phenomenology and existentialism (Merleau-Ponty (1994). The subject is in the center for knowledge. He elaborates the roots and communication of the gestures. The gestures are experienced by help of senses. He regards gesture as a unit of body and mind, and he stresses the body's

function in the gestures. I can hear gestures. I can see gestures. I can sense gestures with my body. It is not only concerning how the movements look like, but that they express a meaning which can be sensed initially. Merleau-Ponty expresses that it is as if the gesture “takes residence” in my body (Merleau-Ponty 1994, p. 152). The gestures also are a key to transform sound into bodily movement. Lyotard uses gesture for understanding art (Lyotard 1992). The art does a gesture which opens for insight in what is forgotten and hidden in the everyday life. Lyotard also focuses the sublime dimension of the art in connection with gesture.

Gestures and individual expression

Merleau-Ponty stresses the bodily awareness in the gestures in his essay *Eye and Mind* (Merleau-Ponty 2000). Some gestures may look quite the same, but the bodily expressions make them different. I have chosen to show some pictures of Isadora Duncan to illustrate bodily awareness in the dance. These images show how the body, the peculiar of her “bodily voice”, penetrates the gestural expression in the dance. When we see a dancer in the Duncan tradition from newer times, the body gives the movement an individual expression. We also can see how St. Denis and dancers from the Eurhythmy tradition the individual bodily expression color the dance. That appearance, body, age and the individual color the dance-expression in the moment deal with radiation, consciousness, presence and scenic “magic”. Many stories about Duncan are reflecting that she could give something which the audience experienced as magic.

Interviews of dancers

I have collected material through interviews, case studies and analyzed these (Stake 2000). From each tradition I have made interviews of teachers who are transferring these dance traditions (Schjønby 2001, 2003, 2009 a, b, c)³. They all have artistic experience and are teaching in dance education. The movements are taught through imitating on the one hand, and through explaining the quality of movement through pictures and stories. This is combined with the dancers making their own images. I also have video recorded material, two solos from each tradition. To see the gestures as clear as possible, I have chosen to study solos instead of groups of dancers. Thus my case-studies are studies of video recorded solodances combined with interviews. These give me opportunity for mapping the structure of the gestures.

The tradition after Duncan

Narcissus, choreographed by Duncan: In the Choreography for *Narcissus* the Greek myth is a basis. This is not communicated explicitly; the audience may know the myth in advance and out of this recognize elements

The action in the dance Kathleen Quinlan describes as follows:

You come in with a leaf in your hand

You look at the leaf. You move uneasy in the room.

You see the sea, walk to the sea, sit down, let your gaze move around and put your hand in the water.

You sleep. It is late.

You wake up, look in the water- and see you mirrored in the water

You are scared; don't know where to go;

You are uneasy
 You run around, flee....
 You come back
 You have defeated the fear
 You have been out in the nature
 You catch a leaf in your hand and look at it
 You turn around your own axes. Thoughts go around in your head.
 You see (admit) a connection with the leaf and what you have experienced.
 (Free after Quinlan, Schjønsby 2003)

According to Quinlan, the main point of the dancer is not to tell a myth, but to touch the problem: Who am I in this world. This is an attitude which is transferred to the dancer through the myth. Breschiani stress that Duncan performed the great masterworks of art as dance: “She was enacting all the archetypal gestures of Christianity and the Greek world: the western heritage – and a little bit of the Egyptian.” (Breschiani in Schjønsby 2009a).

The musical gestures are even more obvious. These give energy, flow and feeling (Breschiani in Schjønsby 2009). My conclusion is that the Greek myth is a basis. The action is showed in the dance. An attitude is transferred to the dancer through the myth. The gestures thus have different sources, and it is not always clear what the gesture relates to, music or myth. This gives the movement expression a ambiguity which we can recognize as characteristic in symbolism.



Fig 2.

Narcissus danced by Kathleen Quinlan, Stockholm. From the video *Brief Moments* (Bowden, A. 1995)

In *Ave Maria* choreographed by Duncan, the gestures are in the intersection of inner state and **iconic** gesture. This old gestures had a special meaning in earlier times. Parallel we find gestures from romantic music. We also find gestures which in the Renaissance could have had a special meaning and be understood as ritual gestures. For instance can we recognize a gesture from a painting of the Annunciation from early 1500 by Melozzo da Forli in Pantheon in Quinlans interpretation of *Ave Maria*.

Dances after Ruth St. Denis: From Exotic images and ritual to music visualization

In *Incense*, a religious ritual becomes dance. Actions in a ritual are carried out as dance by the dancer. Some dance elements are added. This is structured by the music. The gestures can be understood as ritual gestures. By treating this dance as a religious ritual, the dancer can give the gestures another type of involvement than by copying the movements.

Later in her career St. Denis made her *Music Visualization*, using the structure of music as choreography. Here motives, phrases, pitch make gestures. Some dancers choose to color these with a strong emotional engagement, and others have a more sober or objective interpretation. This shows the gestures ability to be colored by the subjective involvement - or using emotional gesture.



Fig.3

Brahms Walz og *Liebestraum* with June Balish. From the film *Denishawn Dances on* (Rowthorn & Vanaver, 2002)

The tradition after Rudolf Steiner: Speech eurhythmy and tone eurhythmy

In *Speech eurhythmy* gestures are developed from the (spoken) sounds and the grammar in speech (Steiner 1968). The sound gestures are used to catch the most essential in the words and to form word gestures. Grammatical functions can be expressed through gestures: Sound gestures, word gestures and gestures of sentence. The students learn the gestural vocabulary, and later they use it in quite a free way.

Steiner and Merleau-Ponty seem to have a common view on gestures of sounds: Steiner is working with the idea that words present qualities in what they describe. Merleau-Ponty also stresses that the sounds have a meaning. He uses expressions as phonetic gesture and word-images. «The speech has a meaning which the intellect does not seize» (Ref.). Greimas, on the other hand, regards the sounds are arbitrary phonemes.



Fig. 4

Noe som vekker meg (Speech eurythmy) Choreograph and dancer, Margrethe Solstad.
Videorecording (Schjønsby 2005).

To make music visible and to fetch qualities which are invisible on the surface, was Steiner's intension with the tone eurythmy (Steiner 1984). The tone eurythmy use gestures which are developed from intervals (the relations of the tones and tension between them: (prim, second, third, quart, quint etc.). The movements are also based on rhythm, pauses, harmony and musical energy, and draw attention on qualities which live in the music and want to make this visible. Colors and changing of colors through costumes and lightening are parts of the expression

The tone eurhythmy and the music visualizations of St. Denis have much in common: movement, colors and changing of colors through costumes and lightening. But there is a big difference in how the gestures are developed. To make the music visible can be regarded in the light of Lyotards understanding of gesture as art: To make visible things which are under the surface and not open in the everyday-life (Lyotard 1992, p. 30 ff.).

Results

From these studies we can see that there are gestures from different parts of our life which are activated in those examples of the early modern dance. I can find 3 groups of gesture in these dances: 1. Gestures based on stories, myths, rituals, images and speech 2. Emotional gestures 3. Musical gestures. The emotional gestures exist both in music and speech. Merleau-Ponty uses rage as an example of this category. Rage is a gesture which affects your whole being, your voice, your movements, your pose (Merleau-Ponty 1994, p. 151). Sorrow, happiness, laughter are other examples. The emotional gestures go well together with gestures which tell a story as well as with gestures developed from music. Because of that, they have the ability to make a bridge between speech and music.

Gestures based on stories , images and speech	Emotional gestures	Musical gestures
Myths Mythical images Epic elements Words Phonetic gestures	Angriness, happiness, sorrow etc.	Intervals Motives Phrases Parts of the music

Lyotards view upon art as being to make visible things which are under the surface and not open in the everyday-life, I choose to be inspiration and an overall view on these

dance traditions. The early modern dance-creators wanted to show the subjective reality, how the world is experienced and at the same time finds new possibilities for expressions of the body in art.

Conclusion

Gesture is a tool to use both in studying and handing down early modern dance. All these ways of movement are bodily, physical. But they are carried and transferred through techniques which stress the dancer's intension, involvement, inner pictures, cooperation of arts - much more than the physical movement itself. The dancers are using these inner pictures for a while, until the movements are a part of their expression. Using gestures give possibility to include "the movement of the soul". It affects our understanding of dance with roots in early modernism. On one side it brings the dance near to drama. On the other side it is an instrument to incarnate sound, phonetic and musical qualities and make them bodily.

After using gesture in studies of historical dance, my question is: Can gestures be an instrument for dealing with contemporary dance?

Copyright: Turid Nøkleberg Schjønsby 2013

Acknowledgements

I want to give my thanks to NTNU and to my advisers Prof. Gediminas Karoblis, Prof. Egil Bakka and Dr. Kristin Rygg. I want to thank Dr. Anne Fiskvik for following this work with encouragement and good advices. I also want to thank my informants.

Notes

¹ Isadora Duncan uses the expression "the movement of the Soul", in her book *The Art of the Dance* (Duncan 1924). Steiner also regard the soul as a center for eurythmy (Steiner 1986, s. 176).

² My informants are Kathleen Quinlan, Jeanne Breshchiani (the Duncan tradition) Jane Sherman, Livia Vanaver, Cynthia Word (The dances of St. Denis), Margrethe Solstad, Göran Kranz and Ragnhild Fretheim (Eurythmy)

Bibliography

- Bakka, E. (1978). *Norske Dansetradisjonar*. Oslo: Samlaget.
- Barz, G. F., & Cooley, T. J. (1997). *Shadows in the Field : New perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Breschiani, J. (2000). *Myth and Image in the Dance of Isadora Duncan*. New York University, New York.
- Daly, A. (2002). *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press.
- Duncan, A., Näslund, E. & Quinlan, K. (1996). *Anna Duncan: In the Footsteps of Isadora: Dansmuseet 10 november 1995-10 mars 1996*. Stockholm: Dansmuseet.
- Duncan, I. (1928). *The Art of the Dance*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
- Greimas, A. J. (Red.) (1987). *Toward a Semiotics of the Natural World i On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Liotard, J. F. (1992). "Gestus". Unpublished manuskript, København.

- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1994). *Kroppens fenomenologi*. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2000). *Øyet og Ånden*. Oslo: Pax Forlag.
- Parr, T. (1992). *Eurythmie - Rudolf Steiners Bühnenkunst: Eine Dissertation: Als Dokumentation herausgegeben von der Sektion für Redende und Musizierende Künste am Goetheanum*. Dornach.
- Shelton, S. (1990). *Ruth St. Denis: A Biography of the Divine Dancer*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Sherman, J. (1983). *Denishawn: The Enduring Influence*. Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers.
- Stake, R., (2000), Case Studies, Kapittel 16. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.
- Steiner, R. (1968). *Eurythmie als sichtbare Sprache*. Dornach: Verlag der Rudolf-Steiner-Nachlassverwaltung.
- Steiner, R. (1982). *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Eurythmie* (red.). Dornach: R.Steiner Verlag.
- Steiner, R. (1984). *Eurythmie als sichtbarer Gesang*. Dornach.
- Schjønby, T. N. (2012). *Bevegelse og uttrykk: Gestiske strukturer I tidligmodernistisk dans*. Avhandling for graden philosophiae doctor, Det humanistiske fakultet, Institutt for musikk. NTNU (The Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Trondheim.

Video

- Bowden, A. (1995). *Brief Moments* [Video]. A. Film. Sverige: Dansmuseet.
- Honsa, R. (2002). *The Birth of Modern Dance* [Video]. New Jersey Center Dance Collective.
- Schjønby, T (2005). Videorecording from eurythmy, Moscow. (Unpublished. Private Archive)
- Schjønby, T. N. (2003). Videorecorded interview with Kathleen Quinlan (Unpublished. Private Archive)
- Schjønby, T. N. (2009). Videorecorded interview with Jeanne Breschiani (Unpublished. Private Archive)
- Schjønby, T. N. (2012). *Bevegelse og uttrykk: Gestiske strukturer I tidligmodernistisk dans*. Avhandling for graden philosophiae doctor, Det humanistiske fakultet, institutt for musikk

Adress for correspondence:
 Turid Nøkleberg Schjønby
 Evangsgutua 6, 2850 Lena, Norway

turid.schjonsby@gmail.com

**Helping Restore the Importance of Dance in the Western Aesthetic
Tradition:
The Real Meaning of *harmonia kai rhuthmos* as “song and dance” in
Plato and Aristotle**

**Gregory Scott
New York University**

Abstract

The importance of Plato and Aristotle in Western aesthetics is so well known to a university audience as to not require explanation. What is hardly known, though, is how often both Greeks use the phrase “harmonia kai rhuthmos” in various works, and how those words are almost always unfortunately simply transliterated as “harmony and rhythm,” as mere musical terms, rather than, I will show, translated properly, as “song and dance,” which is how Plato explicitly defines the terms in an apparently little-read part of his last work, the Laws. In this session, I take the audience through a couple of passages from both authors to demonstrate my claim. The moral of the story will be that anytime one sees the translation “harmony and rhythm” in Plato’s or Aristotle’s work, be it aesthetic theory or not, one should examine the surrounding context and make sure that dance has not been improperly removed in favor of musical approaches. (The presentation presupposes no knowledge of ancient Greek.)

For a conference on dance history and dance theory subtitled “Traditions and Transformations,” it is apropos to speak of the unappreciated place that dance has, or not, had in the tradition of Western aesthetics stemming from Plato and Aristotle, a tradition that has greatly influenced not only the subsequent philosophy of dance but of drama and literature in Western Europe. It is also appropriate to transform the traditional interpretation of their thought, placing dance correctly back into their writing in lieu of the musical interpretations that the Greek texts have invariably, or almost invariably, spawned.

My goal today is to present a few examples of how dance words have been misconstrued as musical words in the ancient Greek corpus so that dance scholars can be better situated to defend dance when other scholars, especially literary theorists and ancient Greek philosophers but even musicologists and historians of ideas, continue the wrong tradition of misinterpreting those words.

Probably the most important passage on dance from Plato, and arguably from the surviving ancient literature on aesthetics, is the one found in his last book, the *Laws* Book II at 665a, the Stephanus number that will allow you to get to the passage quickly no matter what translation you use (if you use one). I pick one that classicists deem good enough to employ for the Perseus Project from Tufts University in Boston, which is the website where anyone can see both the Greek and English translations. (Sorry, but I don’t think they have a translation yet in any Nordic language.) Plato says, through the

character of the Athenian Stranger, who apparently represents Plato himself and who is conversing with a Cretan and a Spartan throughout the book on what makes the best laws for a city:

(Passage 1)

Athenian

(Plato, *Laws* II 664e-665a):

At the commencement of our discourse we said, if we recollect, that since all young creatures are by nature fiery, they are unable to keep still either body or voice, but are always crying and leaping in disorderly fashion; we said also that none of the other creatures attains a sense of order, bodily and vocal, and that this is possessed by man alone; and that the order of motion (κινήσεως) is called “rhythm,” (ῥυθμός) while the order of voice (in which acute and grave are blended together) is termed “harmony,” (ἁρμονία) and to the combination of these two the name “choristry” (χορεία) is given. We stated also that the gods, in pity for us, have granted to us as fellow-choristers and choir-leaders Apollo and the Muses, -- besides whom we mentioned, if we recollect, a third, Dionysus. (transl Bury).¹

Ἀθηναῖος:

εἶπομεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, κατ’ ἀρχὰς τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἡ φύσις ἀπάντων τῶν νέων διάπυρος οὔσα ἡσυχίαν οὐχ οἷα τε ἄγειν οὔτε κατὰ τὸ σῶμα οὔτε κατὰ τὴν φωνὴν εἶη, φθέγγοιτο δ’ ἀεὶ ἀτάκτως καὶ πηδῶ, τάξεως δ’ αἰσθησιν τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, τῶν ἄλλων μὲν ζῶων οὐδὲν ἐφάπτοιτο, ἡ δὲ ἀνθρώπου φύσις ἔχει μόνη τοῦτο: τῆ δὴ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμός ὄνομα εἶη, τῆ δὲ αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκεραννυμένων, ἁρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορευέοιτο, χορεία δὲ τὸ συναμφοτέρον κληθεῖη. θεοὺς δὲ ἔφαμεν ἐλεοῦντας ἡμᾶς συγχορευτάς τε καὶ χορηγοὺς ἡμῖν δεδωκέναι τὸν τε Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ μούσας, καὶ δὴ καὶ τρίτον ἔφαμεν, εἰ μεμνήμεθα, Διόνυσον.²

This translation is not perfect, unfortunately. Clearly κινήσεως means not just motion, which could be motions of the stars or of other inanimate objects or of sounds, but the motion of children’s or adults’ bodies. Also, the better way to render the word ῥυθμός is not merely to transliterate it as “rhythm,” which is too abstract and vague and which surprisingly is what too many, if not all, previous translators write, but to translate it as “ordered body movement,” or as dance, for that is exactly what Plato is saying. Finally, distressingly, ἁρμονία is also merely transliterated as “harmony,” when harmony *per se* – as a chord of three notes and the chordal progressions – did not really exist in ancient Greek music – at least the music Plato cared about – and when the context clearly shows that the word means song or tune or music.

The sentence that is bolded, then, in Passage 1 should be: *the order of (body) motion is called dance (rhuthmos), while the order of voice (in which acute and grave are blended together) is termed song (harmonia).* In short: *Rhuthmos* is dance, and *harmonia* is song (or music or tune). Actually, *harmonia* might be tune or music rather than song, because ordering the voice could involve humming without words, or whistling a tune, but nothing hinges today on the differences between the three choices and hence in this context they are synonymous.

I might add in passing that dance (*rhuthmos*) for Plato here presumably does not mean only a system of highly stylized steps but any kind of ordered body movement, given his lack of qualification for the term. Finally, the χορεία or choristry is then, as Plato explicitly says, the music and dance, *not* mere music and rhythm, a phrase that itself typically suggests for us moderns just music. I should emphasize also that the mere transliteration of *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* as the phrase “harmony and rhythm” are almost always, if not always, given both here in the *Laws* and in the rest of the Platonic and Aristotelian works by translators, at least from all the editions I have seen going back at least one hundred years, which gives you an idea of how extensively dance has been removed from these two influential philosophers.

Take another example from Plato. Still in the *Laws* the Athenian further says:

(Passage 2a)

Laws II 654e, The Athenian:

What we have next to track down, like hounds on the trail, is goodness of posture and tunes in relation to song and dance (transl Bury).

ταῦτ' ἄρα μετὰ τοῦθ' ἡμῖν αὖ καθάπερ κυσὶν ἰχνευούσαις διερευνητέον, σχῆμά τε καλὸν καὶ μέλος καὶ ᾠδὴν καὶ ὄρχησιν)

Note first here that *melos* is used in one of its allowable senses, but that often it can mean song-dance together. Also note *schema* for postures which will be important later. There is no problem here with the translation. However, then the Athenian adds almost immediately the following passage:

(Passage 2b):

Laws II 655a:

ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μουσικῇ καὶ σχήματα μὲν καὶ μέλη ἔνεστιν, περὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἀρμονίαν οὔσης τῆς μουσικῆς, ὥστε εὐρυθμον μὲν καὶ εὐάρμοστον...

(i)

...while postures and tunes do exist in music,^{NB1} which deals with rhythm and harmony, so...one can rightly speak of a tune or posture being “rhythmical” or “harmonious,”...

NB1: “Music” comprises both dance and song (including instrumental accompaniment), whether executed by single performers or by groups (χορεία). The “postures” are those of the dancer, the “tunes” those of the singer.³

Now, again Bury does not get *harmonia* right, and merely transliterates it, as he does *rhuthmos*. However, at least the footnote that he gives is correct. Still, it is better to translate the passage so no footnote is needed, if possible, which I do now, reminding you that *mousikê* comes from “arts of the Muses” and that Plato at 665a, just a few paragraphs away, as we saw, had defined *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* as “tune and dance”:

(ii)

But while postures and tune exist in “music”, “music” being dance and tune, so one can rightly speak of “good dance” (εὐρυθμον) and “good tune” (εὐάρμοστον) ...

This suffices for Passage 2b, -- clearly *mousikê* or “music” in Plato’s sense is both dance and tune, and not just an ordering of sounds, as the term music is for us. It is also clear that *mousikê* or “music in the Greek sense” is a synonym for *choreia*, which we saw above in Passage 1 is also the combination of song and dance. Additional proof for this, if any more is needed, is the use of εὐρυθμον and εὐάρμοστον in the passage we just examined: you all know eurhythmics from dance history, which obviously is the εὐρυθμον, and the εὐάρμοστον is what some badly transliterate as “good harmony” but is much better either “good song” or “good melody” or the like.

Furthermore, with respect to another passage, Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, a classicist at Stanford University whose work often focuses on dance in ancient Greece, herself claims the following:

(Passage 3):

Among the extant texts, the clearest definition of *choreia* is given in Plato’s *Laws* (654b):... ‘*Choreia* is the totality of song (ὠδὴ) and dance (ὄρχησις) together’. χορεία γε μὴν ὄρχησις τε καὶ ὠδὴ τὸ σύνολόν ἐστιν.⁴

Notice, then, that ὠδὴ (song) and ὄρχησις (dance) are therefore synonymous with *harmonia* and *rhuthmos*. Finally, as some ancient musicologists recognize, *choreia* can also be synonymous with *melos* for Plato, so that although *melos* can mean simply melody, as noted above it can also mean “song-dance” or what I call “choral compositions” if a group is involved because there is no single word in English to my knowledge that conveys the phenomenon.⁵ Many other similar cases exist in the Platonic corpus, and I can provide the references and the arguments from previous and upcoming publications after this talk or if you send me an email.

Let us see another example now of how *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* continue to be mistranslated, but from the corpus of Aristotle, Plato’s most famous student. The example occurs in the very first paragraphs of the *Poetics*, which in my view is better titled *On Dramatic Musical Theater* or *Dramatics* for short, because, for instance, the form of drama called tragedy in that book requires music, dance and spectacle according to Ch 6.

Now, after opening the book with a mention of arts that have plots – tragedy, comedy and epic -- along with arts like the dithyramb and most sorts of music for wind and string instruments, Aristotle mentions almost immediately the three aspects of mimesis – the means, the objects, and the manners – and begins to explain the first aspect, the means:

(Passage 4, partial translation):

οὕτω κὰν ταῖς εἰρημέναις τέχναις ἅπασαι μὲν ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀρμονίᾳ, τούτοις δ’ ἢ χωρὶς ἢ μεμιγμένοις: οἷον ἀρμονία μὲν καὶ ῥυθμῷ χρώμεναι μόνον ἢ τε αὐλητικὴ καὶ ἢ κιθαρῖστικὴ κὰν εἴ τινες ἕτεραι τυγχάνωσιν οὔσαι τοιαῦται τὴν δύναμιν, οἷον ἢ τῶν συρίγγων, αὐτῷ δὲ τῷ ῥυθμῷ [μιμοῦνται] χωρὶς ἀρμονίας ἢ τῶν ὀρχηστῶν, καὶ γὰρ οὗτοι διὰ τῶν σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν μιμοῦνται καὶ ἦθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις (1447a21ff)

So is it also in the arts which we have mentioned, they all make their representations in **ῥυθμῷ and language (λόγῳ) and ἀρμονίᾳ, using**

these means either separately or in combination. For ἁρμονία and ῥυθμῶ alone are employed in oboe(aulos)-playing and kithara-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function, as, for example, pipe-playing. ῥυθμῶ alone without music is used by dancers (ὄρχηστῶν) [in their representations], for by means of “gestured” dance (σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν) they even represent character and emotions and actions [my translation].⁶

Let us now work our way through this passage, from top down. I leave untouched for the moment what ῥυθμῶ and ἁρμονία mean. Note first that the oboe-playing is sometimes translated by others as flute-playing, but that I follow still others who render it more correctly as the oboe, because the aulos is really a reed instrument. The kithara is a small lyre. Note second that no one seems to know for sure what function Aristotle is referring to when he says “in any other arts which have a similar function,” of which more later. Note third, at the bottom of the passage, that “in their representations” is in square brackets because not all manuscripts have the Greek word μιμοῦνται. Note fourth that σχηματιζομένων is the same word (but with a different inflection) that Plato had used in a passage above, the postures (σχήματα) that along with tune comprise “music” in the Greek sense.

The question now is: How should we translate *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* in this passage? Should we give *rhuthmos* multiple translations, or is there one that is completely consistent throughout? That is, should we merely transliterate *rhuthmos* as the abstract “rhythm” or should we translate it as something more concrete, namely, “ordered body movement” or dance, as Plato uses it?

Translators, with very rare exception and for reasons that follow, have usually been unsure how to treat *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* here, too often writing that *rhuthmos* only means “rhythm” when it should be clear that Aristotle is using it to denote ordered body movement (or dance), at least when he refers to the dancers themselves. Those translators also always to my knowledge merely transliterate *harmonia* as “harmony,” again, in spite of there being no harmony in ancient Greece to speak of in this context.⁷

To my knowledge, the primary reason that they all have been puzzled stems from the sentence that is bolded in your handout in Passage 4: **“For ἁρμονία and ῥυθμῶ alone are employed in oboe-playing and kithara-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function, as, for example, pipe-playing.”** All translators I am familiar with have taken a modern view about the playing of instruments and have not realized that the Greek musicians were more like rock-and-roll guitarists than they were like symphonic musicians glued to a chair. That is, while playing the aulos and kithara, the Greeks danced, -- and I apologize to the Greeks if they are offended by a comparison to rock-and-roll! Indeed, the three instruments that Aristotle picks to make his point about *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* -- especially the aulos and kithara -- are, out of dozens of ancient Greek musical instruments that could have been chosen to make his point, the ones used by performers in the theater.⁸ All of these instruments (with the pan-pipes being the instrument depicted on vases by satyrs cavorting and therefore one of the instruments that was used in the satyr plays at the end of tragedies) are typically depicted on vase paintings being carried and played while in locomotion, not while sitting.

If, then, one reads the whole passage with “ordered body movement” or dance as the translation for *rhuthmos*, following Plato, it all makes perfect sense and the meaning of the word is consistent throughout. I use “dance” because it is shorter, again without implying that the movements need to be stylized, -- they merely need to be “ordered body movement.”

(Passage 4, full translation):

So is it also in the arts which we have mentioned, they all make their representations in **dance and language and tune**, these means either separately or in combination. **For tune and dance alone are employed in oboe-playing and kithara-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function [i.e., to be used in the theater], as, for example, pipe-playing.** Dance alone without music is used by (orchestra-)dancers [in their representations], for by means of “gestured” dance they even represent character and emotions and actions [my translation and my insertion of the explanation of the “similar function”].

In older and upcoming publications, I give ample additional support for all of this, including the many Greek texts from both Aristotle later in the *Dramatics* and other authors attesting to the aulos-playing and kithara-playing involving dancing.

Let us move to Aristotle’s *Politics* and the last passage for us today. Aristotle is discussing whether and how *mousikê* should be taught to children in the *polis*. At the very end of *Politics* Book VIII Chapter 6, in a statement that would warm Plato’s soul, Aristotle rejects the professionalism of some musicians because they cater to a potentially vulgar crowd and because of their bodily postures and gestures. He says in an oft-used translation by Benjamin Jowett from the 1905 Oxford edition:

(Passage 5):

Aristotle, *Politics* VIII 6-7, 1341b15-26:

The vulgarity of the spectator tends to lower the character of the music (μουσικήν) and therefore of the performers; they look to him – he makes them what they are, and fashions even their bodies by the movements which he expects them to exhibit. We have also to consider rhythms (ῥυθμούς) and modes (ἁρμονίας), and their use in education. Shall we use them all or make a distinction? And shall the same distinction be made for those who practise music with a view to education, or shall it be some other? Now we see that music (μουσικήν) is produced by melody (μελοποιίας) and rhythm (ῥυθμῶν), and we ought to know what influence these have respectively on education, and whether we should prefer excellence in melody (εὐμελῆ) or excellence in rhythm (εὐῤυθμον).⁹

ὁ γὰρ θεατῆς φορτικὸς ὦν μεταβάλλειν εἴωθε τὴν μουσικήν, ὥστε καὶ τοὺς τεχνίτας τοὺς πρὸς αὐτὸν μελετῶντας αὐτοὺς τε ποιούς τινας ποιεῖ καὶ τὰ σώματα διὰ τὰς κινήσεις, σκεπτέον δὴ τι περὶ τὰς ἁρμονίας καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμούς, καὶ πρὸς παιδείαν πότερον πάσαις χρηστέον ταῖς ἁρμονίαις καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ῥυθμοῖς ἢ διαριετέον, ἔπειτα τοῖς πρὸς παιδείαν διαπονοῦσι πότερον τὸν αὐτὸν διορισμὸν θήσομεν ἢ τρίτον δεῖ τινα ἕτερον. ἐπεὶ δὴ τὴν μὲν μουσικήν ὀρώμεν διὰ μελοποιίας καὶ ῥυθμῶν οὖσαν, τούτων δ’ ἐκάτερον οὐ δεῖ λεληθέναι τίνα δύναμιν

ἔχει πρὸς παιδείαν, καὶ πότερον προαιρετέον μᾶλλον τὴν εὐμελῆ μουσικὴν ἢ τὴν εὐρυθμον,...

Let us start again at the top of this passage and proceed sentence by relevant sentence. Note immediately that bodily movement unquestionably is being discussed as part of the music performers and of “the character of music,” as Jowett unfortunately translates *mousikê*, because clearly this word should be better translated as “song-dance,” or as “music in the Greek sense,” as we saw Plato using it above, and as will be clearly confirmed even later in this same passage from the *Politics*. Next is the typical translation, or rather, mere transliteration, of ῥυθμούς as “rhythm” and the translation of ἀρμονίας as “modes.” At least Jowett is being a bit creative here though, not using harmony for ἀρμονίας. However, “modes” is not much better, for it hardly makes sense. Modes of what? Scales? Melodies? And even were harmonia only a musical term, why is Aristotle concerned with such fine-grained musical distinctions when giving only a general, broad overview?, -- but let me examine this point a little later. Rather, as we have seen many times already today, ἀρμονίας and ῥυθμούς should be very clearly translated as our old friends, “music and dance,” proven by the later occurrence of the phrase toward the end of the passage when Jowett say that music (*mousikê*) is produced by *melopoiias* and *rhuthmon*. There is no word for “produced,” and the verb is *ousan*, a form of *eimi*, “to be.” So Aristotle is simply saying *mousikê* is tune (*melopoiias*) and dance (*rhuthmon*). Thus, Aristotle is simply repeating Plato’s terminology.

To go now to the very end of passage: Aristotle adds the upcoming goal for the rest of the treatise. He asks whether we should use all “musical modes” according to Jowett, when there is no word for “modes.” In actuality, Aristotle is simply asking whether we should use all songs and dances in education, although admittedly he might be implicitly asking whether we might use all *kinds* of music and dance. Also, according to Jowett, Aristotle asks whether we should prefer excellence in melody (εὐμελῆ) or excellence in “rhythm” (εὐρυθμον), the same pairing that Plato gave himself in Passage 2b except Plato, you recall, used εὐάρμοστον (“good song”) instead of Aristotle’s “good melody” (εὐμελῆ). Both authors use, though, εὐρυθμον and again it should mean here in the *Politics* “good dance,” as it does for Plato.

Obviously, Jowett around 1905 (and all scholars after him to my knowledge) take this paragraph to mean Aristotle is considering music and rhythm in our senses of the words, and is asking whether in educating children we should prefer excellence in melody, as if by a singer or instrumentalist, or excellence in “rhythm,” as if by a drummer, *leaving aside all of the other aspects of musical performance that are important to musicians, such as dynamics, tempi, etc.* To raise the question I suggested once before, is Aristotle really concerned here about such fine-grained musical distinctions? I insist: absolutely not; rather, Aristotle is really asking whether we are to be concerned with teaching children excellence in “music” or excellence in “dance,” both of which were part of typical Athenian “musical” performance, and here I mean “musical in the Greek sense. (By the way, we should not assume that the aural experience always had priority, in part because the word *orchestra*, where the music and dancing takes place in the theater, stems from the word meaning “to dance,” *orchesthai*). Finally, recall that Plato had explicitly used terms like εὐμελῆ - excellence in music -- or εὐρυθμον -- excellence in dance in the *Laws II* in the overall context of children learning music and dance, which is Aristotle’s exact same concern in this part of the *Politics*.

In conclusion, if I had a lot more time, I could take you through the rest of *Politics* VIII Ch 7 and through other Aristotelian texts and translations to show how *harmonia* and *rhuthmos* are used together from the Renaissance to mean only musical concepts in our senses of the words, as harmony and rhythm, when in fact the phrase really means song *and* dance. However, I am out of time, so let me conclude by saying that I hope our mutual exercise today causes you to be careful anytime you see the words “harmony and rhythm” in translations in ancient Greek texts. If you do, look at the context and see if “song and dance” isn’t the more appropriate translation, and help put dance back into the foundations of Western aesthetics. Plato and Aristotle themselves would applaud you.

Copyright 2013, Gregory Scott

Notes

1. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 10 & 11 translated by R.G. Bury. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1967 & 1968.
2. *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet. Oxford University Press. 1903.
3. Trans by Bury, op. cit.
4. Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi, “*Choreia* and Aesthetics in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* : The Performance of the Delian Maidens(Lines 156–64),” in *Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (April 2009), pp. 39-70; p. 55. This and Peponi’s other recent work is a gold mine of information about *choreia* and *mousikê* and how dance is in element in both.
5. At *Symposium* 187d he indicates that *melopoian* – the making of the *melos* -- means the combination of *rhuthmos* and *harmonia*, which we will see also accords with Aristotle’s usage in *Poetics* 6. The best scholars, many of whom I follow in almost everything else, unfortunately in my view miss the correct meaning of *harmonia kai rhuthmos* as “music (or song) and dance” in many areas of the Platonic-Aristotelian corpus, when we are not in purely musical contexts (where music means, as in English generally, a wholly aural phenomenon). For instance, in reporting Plato’s view at *Repub* 398d, Eric Csapo, again in line with virtually every other scholar, says: “‘A song [*melos*] is *logos*’, Plato insists, ‘and mode (*harmonia*) and rhythm (*rhuthmos*) are to follow the words.’” (“The Politics of the New Music,” *Music and the Muses: The Culture of ‘Mousikê’ in the Classical Athenian City*, eds Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson (Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 218.) Csapo does this even while noting a few pages later the crucial passage in the *Laws* II 665a (p. 238). On the contrary, in my view, at *Rep* 398d, Plato is insisting that even though a “danced song” (*melos*) is all three things together, the language (*logos*) is the most important, with music/tone and dance being subordinate to it.
6. Aristotle also may be merely identifying the dance with ordered body movement, so there may be no need for “represent.” Finally, representing using movement need not be “dramatic”; one can represent geometrical shapes that have no more meaning than the shape, so dance need not be “story-conveying,” although it certain can be that too, and maybe preferably for Aristotle. On this point, see my “Twists and Turns: Modern Misconceptions of Peripatetic Dance Theory,” *Dance Research* (Edinburgh University Press, U.K.), Vol. 23.2, Winter 2005.
7. Gerald Else brackets “rhythm” as of dubious authenticity as a result in some of these passages (*The Argument*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Univ Press, 1957, p. 35). On the topic of harmony, a renowned music historian says:

“Indeed, of all the possible features of Greek music, the only one which we can feel certain of being able to apprehend from the range of our own experience is the Greeks’ neglect of harmony; for it is certain that their choruses sang in unison or at the octave, and that the instrumental accompaniment was in unison with the voice except for a few passing notes.”

(From Kathleen Schlesinger, *The Greek Aulos: A Study of its Mechanism and of its Relation to the Modal System of Ancient Greek Music*, Methuen & Co, London, 1939, pp. xvii.)

On the other hand, on some accounts, the aulos, which was double-reeded, was played in such a way that one of the pipes produced merely a drone (like a bagpipe) as the base for the melody that was played on the other pipe. Eric Csapo says:

“It is true that ancient music did not make extensive use of harmonics or polyphony, but the common impression that they were totally absent or at best marginal is wrong, and largely due to the silence or hostility of our sources, since this was another realm of New Musical experimentation.”

(From “The Politics of the New Music,” op. cit., pp. 220-221.)

For our issue here, it does not matter who is right on harmony: Clearly, harmonics would have been a rare occurrence, and it is virtually impossible to imagine Aristotle or Plato himself, whom Csapo correctly cites reacting negatively to New Music, using *harmony* in some new sense like “harmonics,” when *harmonia* was a well-established term in Plato’s time and when Plato’s definition at *Laws* II 665a shows it to be along the traditional line of “music” or “song” or “tune,” e.g., as used by Aristophanes, *Clouds* 961.

8. Kitharas are sub-categories of lyres, according to M.L. West (p. 50). He says that “lyres may be played while sitting, standing walking (for example in a sacrificial procession), *or dancing (especially in a group)* [my italics]” (p. 74) [M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford Univ Pr., Oxford) 1992]

On pan-pipes, West adds: “Despite its general neglect in polite society, there appear to have been a few executants who cultivated it for public display. A Hellenistic inscription from Magnesia, specifying arrangements for the festival of Zeus the City Saviour, prescribes that an aulete, a panpiper (*syristês*), and a citharist are to be laid on to entertain the crowd.” (ibid., p. 112)

9. Transl by Benjamin Jowett, reproduced in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (Random House, NY) 1941.

The Speech Act of Bodies: modes of doing dance and performance

Jussara Sobreira Setenta

Federal University of Bahia

Abstract

This proposition discusses the idea of dance as a speech act of the body, organizing itself in a co-dependence between practice and theory. For that, it will be part of a discussion that treats the dancing body as thought, both propositional and politically invested. It will consider that in the production of dance/performance different modes of acting occur. Each one of them must be observed from how the body comprises and takes care of the perceptive information present in doing. In such doings different ways of dealing with the body operate. Thence, there is the possibility of discussing the distinct procedures and modes of enunciation. In the process of production of artistic speeches it is possible to observe the modes of doing emphasizing the need to recognize the existence of different ways of studying and organizing speech in the body. Namely, doing brings saying with itself so indistinctly that this relation becomes combined and articulate. Such relation enables adaptations, prospections and the emergence of aspects of complexity in the actions of dance in which the body says itself in its act of doing. The enunciated speech act comprises the modes of artistic acting and action organized in practices so intertwined of experiences that they do not separate modes of being from modes of the world. Such experiences discuss ideas in the body. The body is then treated as the field of occurrence of propositions and critical reflections charged with artistic conducts in continuous process of making.

Introduction

The present work was organized with the aim of sharing a view of complex issues involving the ideas of body studied from the perspective of the fields of dance and performance. It also aims at questioning how spaces for coexistence and convergence of propositions created in distinct fields of knowledge can be found. For that, it is worth the effort of presenting the idea in which dancing and performing bodies expose through its acts – or doings – a mode of speech, a saying. The idea presented herein is that of dance as a saying- doing¹ of the body; that is, the artistic process of doing in dance that exposes what it is saying in its doing.

This mode of understanding doings in dance is opposed to the idea of unsayability and points towards modes of doing which are able to enclose distinct modes of dance – or dances – that the body is capable of organizing and accomplishing. These distinct dances also comprehend the mode how they understand the world and relate to it. In this sense, it becomes vital clarifying that each speech of dance will expose a different mode of artistic organization and composition, even though they will be presenting saying-doings in dance.

The saying-doing of these bodies has priority in this discussion as it considers differences in the modes of organizing – in the body – ideas of dance and performance.

Those differences are not limited to experiences exclusive to artistic practices; they also regard bodily experiences related to writing and saying. At first, this consideration regarding bodily conditions which are already distinct – writing, saying, dancing/performing – may seem obvious. However, the interest in this presentation resides in discussing bodies that have been working with the triple attuning of organizing ideas of dance under distinct formulations: written, verbal, choreographic/performing. All of them involved in the theoretical environment of research, education and production of knowledge.

In the process of producing artistic speeches, we can see modes of doing emphasizing the need for recognition of the existence of different forms of studying and organizing speeches in the body. That is, the act of doing brings speech so indistinctly that the relation between both becomes cohesive and articulate, allowing adaptations, prospections and the emergence of aspects of the complexity present in the acts of dance in which the body says itself in its doing. The saying-doing comprehends modes of artistic action and acting and is organized through practices entwined with experiences which do not separate the modes of being from the modes of the world. Through such experiences ideas are discussed in the body. The body is then dealt with as a field of occurrence of artistic conducts and propositions in a continuous process of doing.

Thus, the occurrences take place in the body and it negotiates with information through agreements which are established in the very act of its constitution. Thence it is possible to observe speeches of dance inventing their own speeches from the choice of topics which emerge in their doings – and there are also those selecting topics already dealt with in other doings. It is worth emphasizing that the body is always a transitory state of negotiations with what is usually named as internal and external world and that the body acts according to each circumstance. There is no single or conclusive result, for "the interesting thing is not to see the underlying project in all that, but seeing in terms of strategy, how the pieces have been displayed"².

About the body in definition

This position deals with the body as a self-organizer of enunciates that is in constant movement of becoming defined. In this sense, it carries the comprehension in which the body exists in states of transitoriness, transformation, unquietness, permeability, investigation and critical reflection. At all times the body is in a constant movement that cooperates with its own constitution. In this act of constituting itself it gathers and questions pieces of information which can be accessed along the constitutive process. The collection of information constituting what we are, each one of us, is being reorganized at all moments of our lives. The mode of doing, or how we treat such information in artistic constructions, will indicate the implications relevant to the organization of artistic sayings and doings.

The body then groups information in the transitory process of stabilization-destabilization so proper to the process of its constitution as a body – and that calls attention to questions regarding the constitutive process of the body – in an articulation between such body and its distinct environments. It is important to clarify that environment is understood herein "as the group of conditions for establishing interactions between systems"³. Through the articulation body-environment, the perception of the

impossibility of dissociation between nature and culture occurs, as well as the production of such body from processes of articulation between the world and the resultants acquired by these processes.

Such instances of manifestation indicate the contextual co-implication of this body that, in search of establishing modes of doing that enclose in themselves an understanding of the body as a field of occurrence of processes such as: cognition, communication and evolution, to which the living and cultural systems are implied⁴. This allows a comprehension of dance and performance as processes which potentialize and implement differentiated configurations and expose formulations worked upon having the distinction between writing, speaking, dancing, performing as a starting point. They are demands of formalization and have their own structures but are articulated with correlate types of knowledge which contribute to the complexity of artistic doing processes.

Thus, several different experiences are imprinted in the body and collaborate with the process of producing saying-doings. The dancing and performing body is exposed to distinct forms of bodily preparation and also to distinct instructions which trigger the process of artistic organization of distinct doings. Bodies in movement of dance and performance expose artistic peculiarities and should reflect about their own doings. However, critical reflection on such doings will not always occur and there are still several bodies in process of organization of their speeches which are not available to invest in a combination of questionings which will make a relevant question feasible for such doing and there also those in which possible answers will emerge from the process of doing instead of being considered ready, answered from the beginning.

Idea of dance as saying-doing of the body

To mention such idea we will start from the point in which dance is not unsayable. It is, otherwise, not only sayable but it also does say itself while it is done, or in its doing. A process in which at the same time does what is says in saying what is doing and organizes what we call speeches of dance and performance – which are not restricted to verbal domain. In these doings, the bodies are implicated in and committed to the relations they establish, approach and discuss with the environment, regarding questions of difference the artistic saying-doing. This idea of dance deals with the body as propositional and politically invested thought. It will consider that in the production of doings in dance and performance different doings will occur. Each one of them should be observed from the mode how they deal with such information.

In these doings, different forms of dealing with the body operate, thence the possibility of discussing distinct procedures and modes of enunciation. In the process of creating artistic speeches it is possible to observe modes of doing emphasizing the need to recognize the existence of different forms of studying and organizing speech in the body. We start from the comprehension that doings in dance and in performance are constructed as singular occurrences creating specific bodies for each proposition and that these enunciations may expose distinct configurations. Questions of difference are welcome and therefore collaborate with the continuity that will promote the investigative study interested in observing what emerges from the process of artistic doing. The attentive observation of the forms chosen to proceed to studying may assist the critical-reflexive

outcomes of such process so that from these outcomes the reorganization of several different other modes and procedures will occur.

Through observation of the mode how this speech produces itself comes the perception that there is, among the distinct types of speech, one that invents the mode of saying itself. It is distinguished from others exactly for not being a speech about something outside the domain of speech but for inventing the mode of saying; that is, for inventing speech itself according to that which is being said. This modality of speech is herein named as saying- doing. It is worth discoursing on this modality considering that the exhibition of artistic works in dance and performance do not fit into the category of the unsayable and they are therefore saying at the same time they are doing.

It falls to doers and creators of speech to be interested in this mode of reflexive construction that will collaborate with the emergence of propositional and critic artistic saying-doings. The configurations resulting from these doings will be exposed in several different formats and will thereby be accessed in distinct space-time dimensions by distinct publics. This plurality of possibilities regarding different information, formats and accesses lead to perceptions also distinct and singular. But the chosen pieces of information will be the ones responsible for the propositional characteristic of each enunciation.

Dealing with the dancing and performing body as a saying-doing means becoming disengaged from notions such as cause/effect and the fact/proof framing. In its doing and dealing with forms of organizing the body from presuppositions which clash these notions, the body may lead to sustaining modes of thinking which go through indirect, imprecise, circumstantial and risky paths in its mode of enunciation and implementation of ideas in such body. Therefore, it is suitable to present which (other) ideas have favored the emergence of this comprehension and mode of dealing with dance and performance as saying-doing.

In order to deal with dance/performance as saying-doing, we have as starting points the theory of speech acts by Austin (1990) and the idea of performativity constructed by Butler (1997). These authors collaborate with the proposition of a close look towards dance and performance under mutable perceptive conditions. The ideas and considerations presented by both are instigating for this exposition. Not only instigating in these scenario; they are instigating in themselves. This is so for such notions seem to indicate that the discourse of certainties gives way for those of uncertainties and collaborates with the observation of different doings of dance and performance.

It has been considered herein that Austin brings to the verbal field of knowledge a type of question that is able to be shared in the field of dance/performance. In a concise way, this theory will consider language as a form of action – this has been the greatest interest of presenting it in the artistic context – taking into consideration conventions, contexts, purposes and intentions of the speaker. In the act of speech is then manifested the intention of a subject in communicating with another subject from the recognition of the intention of the first one.

The uttering of the words is, indeed, usually a, or even the, leading incident in the performance of the act (of betting or what not), the performance of which is also the object of the utterance, but it is far from being usually, even if it is ever, the sole thing necessary if the act is to be deemed to have been performed. [...] it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should also perform certain

other actions, whether 'physical' or 'mental' actions or even acts of uttering further words. (AUSTIN 1962, p.8)⁵

Austin's transfer to the domains of the artistic is supported in respect to the rules he proposes. It means electing, above all, inside the framework mounted by him, actions which are always in the present, in the first person and are action verbs. This kind of verb is that which constitutes a speech act – or a scene in the case of dance – that does not use language to describe what is outside dance itself. Understanding the nature of constative and performative uttering, being attentive for the difference between action/acting may help treating the different dances and performances which the body is capable of accomplishing. It also serves the purpose of treating the body as producer of questions and, far from aiming at finding conclusive solutions and responses, investigating how these questionings of the body are being resolved in the body itself.

From Austin's theory (1990), Butler (1997) will expand the concept of performative to the concept of performativity which, in a wider way, deals with acts and organization of speech as actions which are not just phonetic. The speech act starts being understood as a bodily act and in this manner constitutes itself as a syntactic crossing of the speech – as it is also body – with Linguistics. From the start, what is interesting in Butler's (1997) approach is the corporeal state of the action indicating different modes of speaking and expressing ideas. It is the performativity of the performative. And it is worth highlighting the importance of the political content of the speech constructed in the body that communicates itself through its doing.

For Butler (2000), the speech act is related to the body and also to language. The force of the speech act in a bodily relation communicates itself through doing. A saying-doing that not only 'communicates' an idea but 'accomplishes' the message it conveys. [...] I maintained that the speech act is a bodily act, and that the "force" of the performative is never fully separable from bodily force: this constituted the chiasm of the "threat" as a speech act at once bodily and linguistic. [...] In other words, the bodily effects of speech exceed the intentions of the speaker, raising the question of the speech act itself as a nexus of bodily and psychic forces. (BUTLER 1997 p.141)⁶

The concepts of these authors, here briefly described, are part of the group of discussions that continue in the process of doing and reflecting critically. They are part of a study that is constantly in progress, interested in re-discussing and redefining pieces of information which will come into existence along the discursive path of this idea, as well as information neighboring such path. When they find space in a field of knowledge which is not philosophical nor linguistic, but artistic, such concepts are actually exposed as triggers of different modes of thinking, doing and saying aspects and constitutive modes of artistic instances of dance and performance. This also places epistemological, political and institutional implications in a prominent position, as much as the mode how bodily movements have been searching to define and constitute themselves in the relation body- context.

Dance/performance and different modes of doing

The different speeches of dance/performance gain political configuration through the understanding that it is in the body that questions regarding 'inside' and 'outside' may be accommodated. And that the body, besides exchanging with the environment in which it

is, is also the environment where discussions and decisions derived from the process of these doings take place. It is also in the body that conditions of producing speech become explicit. The process of doing is accompanied by exercises of critical reflection collaborating with the formulation of discourse and leading to destabilizations which propitiate the emergence of renewed information.

Such formulations are possible depending upon the availability of the bodies which, in process of organization and artistic construction, are attentive to the differences present in the modes of doing dance and performance. From this performative perspective, these differences in modes of organizing are presented as questions problematizing the meaning of doings in dance and performance and as the questioning of the modes of acting artistically. It is difference dealt with as process and as an operative quality.

Difference then will be in the spaces of transformation and negotiation and in a constant movement for the organization of other spaces, the political one included. The performative experiences – as productive activity of artistic speeches – accomplish a certain type of sharing and exchange, and assume a critical sense derived from other types of doings in dance and performance. Generally, the critical position leads to political approaches and – when considering politics as performativity dance – performance and politics are not distinct instances, instead, they are interstitially imbricated in one another.

The coexistence of dance and politics in the dancing/performing body will occur in an interstitial space, in-between, where possibility is a necessity. Such space-in-between still requires 'a displacement of attention on the political as pedagogical, ideological practice, towards politics as vital necessity in daily life – politics as performativity'⁷. In such 'in-between' the mixture of pieces of information existent with those which had not begun to exist in the body will occur. The body will work on both kinds of information; not choosing between one or another. From this mixture will emerge a piece of information that carries traces from other pieces but presents itself as singular information. In the given interstice will then take place the transit of ideas, information, and propositions.

Thus, we will be able to understand that dance, as a performative and organizative action, deals with a materialized saying-doing as bodily actions which present several pieces of information constantly exchanged, negotiated and articulated in the relation between the subject and the world. The performative process adopts a form of moving in which actions are withdrawn from a certain context and inserted in another, configuring an operation of repetition that may be interrupted, questioned or refused. In this procedure of interruption reorganizations of experiences and possibilities of creation which do not aim at only reproducing pre-established context are activated. An investment in the process of organization that produces renewed actions in performative enunciates occurs. The invention of speeches derived from doings of the body also take place.

It is worth mentioning again that the importance of the understanding of the body as a field of occurrence of propositions and critical reflections, those charged with artistic conducts in continuous process of doing. Therefore, it is in the body that questions regarding 'inside' and 'outside' may find accommodation. And the body, besides exchanging with the environment in which it is, is an environment itself in which discussions and decisions derived from the process of doing dance take place. It is also in the body that conditions of producing speech become explicit – in this case, specifically: speeches of dance.

Conclusions

Such approach proposes that the act of dancing allows artists to expose their ideas, questions, conflicts and thoughts in their own bodies, revealing a type of bodily discourse. Such procedure goes beyond copying steps or choreographic sequences – the most important aspect is the form how artists choose, organize, articulate and make the information/questions available in their bodies than having an actual technical virtuosity as a goal.

The singular mode of organizing and articulating information in the body will make artists perform/accomplish their ideas of dance. In this extensive context of information that crosses all bodies daily, not only information regarding narratives and dance steps themselves must be considered, but also all information related to the most diverse experiences a body has had of many varied kinds of possibilities, such as: intersubjective, social, artistic, cultural, political.

The bodily organization of speech of dance turns information exchanged between the body and its environment into its own material in the world: records, traces and vestiges of life, stories of life. From the contact established with information coming from the outside and information already existent in a body, the movement of reorganization occurs and it triggers the production of new information. The movement born from such combination of information may take the form of constructed, structured and organized speeches as a discourse of dance in which, in each new situation of being in the world, new information is configured.

The coexistence with difference in artistic saying-doings allows not only the discussion of purposes of the works but also that of the modes of doing which characterize their resultants. The importance of observing how these modes are organized seems crucial for comprehending the distinct formats and procedures to implement artistic ideas. The articulation body-environment configures itself as a necessity for the contextual comprehension in which artistic experiences in progress are developed. And it is also precise in terms of indicating the continuity and the specificities of artistic saying-doings in both dance and performance.

Notes

¹ Concept created by the author. (SETENTA 2008)

² Free translation from the Brazilian edition (apparently not translated into English): “o interessante não é ver que projeto está na base de tudo isto, mas em termos de estratégia, como as peças foram dispostas” (FOUCAULT 1979, p.152)

³ Free translation of the original excerpt in Portuguese: “enquanto conjunto de condições para as interações entre sistemas se estabelecerem”. (BRITTO 2002)

⁴ TOMASELLO 2003

⁵ Excerpt in Portuguese: “[...] geralmente o proferimento de certas palavras é uma das ocorrências, senão a principal ocorrência, na realização de um ato (seja de apostar ou qualquer outro), cuja realização é também alvo do proferimento, mas este está longe de ser, ainda que excepcionalmente o seja, a única coisa necessária para realização de um ato [...] é necessário que o próprio falante,

ou outras pessoas, também realize determinadas ações de certo tipo, quer sejam 'físicas' ou 'mentais', ou mesmo o proferimento de algumas palavras adicionais." (AUSTIN 1990, p.26).

⁶ Excerpt in Portuguese: "[...] sustento que um ato de fala é um ato corpóreo, e que a “força” do performativo nunca é totalmente separada da força corpórea: isso constituindo o quiasma da ‘ameaça’ enquanto ato de fala ao mesmo tempo corpóreo e linguístico [...] em outras palavras, o efeito corpóreo da fala excede as intenções do falador, propondo a questão do ato de fala ele mesmo como uma ligação do corpóreo e forças psíquicas." (BUTLER 2000, p.255).

⁷ Free translation from the original in Portuguese: “ainda um deslocamento da atenção do político como prática pedagógica, ideológica, da política como necessidade vital no cotidiano – a política como performatividade” (BHABHA 1998, p.)

Bibliography

Austin, J.L. *Quando Dizer é Fazer: palavras e ação*. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1990. Tradução de Danilo Marcondes de Souza Filho do original *How to do things with words*.

Bhabha, Homi K. *O Local da Cultura*. Tradução de Myriam Ávila, Eliana Lourenço de Lima Reis, Gláucia Renate Gonçalves. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 1998.

Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: a politics of the performative*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Britto, Fabiana Dultra. Corpo e ambiente: co-determinações em processo in *Paisagens do Corpo*. Cadernos PPG-AU, número Especial. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2008.

Tomasello, Michael. *Origens Culturais da Aquisição do Conhecimento Humano*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2003.

Setenta, Jussara S. *O Fazer-Dizer do Corpo: dança e performatividade*. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2008. <http://books.scielo.org/id/fs>

Constructions of the Past in Words and Movement

Elina Seye

University of Tampere

Abstract

There is little historical evidence about the Senegalese sabar tradition, especially about sabar dancing, which is a social, largely improvised dance form. Even oral histories do not offer much insight into the development of sabar dancing, and there are practically no historical sources to be found in archives.

When trying to gain some insights into the past of the sabar dance tradition, one is thus left with the descriptions of people on how they used to dance or saw people dancing in the past. These accounts are sometimes contradictory and often also quite vague statements emphasizing how “different” everything was before. In any case, such statements construct images of the past of this tradition. Similar images of the past are also constructed in performances of Senegalese ‘ballets’, dance companies that transform the sabar tradition to be presented on stage. These performances typically strive to an ‘authentic’ interpretation of the tradition, with the scenes set in an undefined past.

This paper discusses these constructions of the past of sabar dancing on the basis of my own fieldwork materials: What kind of a past is actually being constructed? How do these constructions relate to the social sabar dancing of today?

Introduction

My paper deals with the Senegalese *sabar* tradition, which includes both dancing and drumming, but I will concentrate here on dance. The *sabar* is a social, largely improvised dance form, which present at practically all kinds of celebrations among the Wolof people in Senegal. It is mainly a recreational dance form that people usually learn by watching and imitating others. However, it has also become a stage art since Senegal’s independence in 1960, when the National Ballet was founded and it started adapting local dance traditions to be presented on stage as well as training dancers to become professional performers. Many other “ballets”, i.e. folkloric dance companies, have been founded since then and they usually follow the model set by the National Ballet.¹

There is very little historical evidence about the *sabar* tradition, especially about *sabar* dancing. *Sabar* drummers generally belong to specific families of musicians, and within these families, musical skills as well as related oral histories are passed on. These oral histories mainly deal with the families of musicians themselves and to some extent with the origins of the *sabar* drums and rhythms. Although some dancers of the past may be remembered and mentioned in such accounts, they do not tell us much about dancing. The performances by ballets also offer audiences images of the past with the intention of presenting “authentic” Senegalese traditions, a national heritage of dance.

This paper discusses these constructions of the past of *sabar* dancing on the basis of my own fieldwork materials, mainly interviews and a video recording of a performance of the Senegalese National Ballet (*Le Ballet National du Sénégal "La Linguère"*) in Dakar, March 2006. I look at what kind of a past is being constructed in people's verbal statements and in dance performances, and how do these constructions relate to the social *sabar* dancing of today?

Words

As pointed out above, even oral histories do not offer much insight into the development of *sabar* dancing, and there are practically no historical sources to be found in archives. When trying to gain some insights into the past of the *sabar* dance tradition, one is thus left with the descriptions of people on how they used to dance or saw people dancing in the past. These accounts are sometimes contradictory and often also quite vague. Mostly, older people just emphasize how "different" everything was before, in their youth. On the other hand, the general assumption seems to be that specific rhythms and dances that are considered traditional are still performed more or less the same way as they used to be.

Especially in Dakar, new dances with corresponding rhythms, often based on older dance rhythms, appear every year and again disappear within a few years. These are easily recognized as new creations as opposed to other dances that are considered traditional. But sometimes also older dance rhythms that have already fallen out of practice are revived and are included again in the *sabar* repertoire. It is therefore hard to say how long the three or four dance rhythms considered the most traditional ones, the most stable parts of the repertoire, have been so central. Still, many of my interviewees name these specific dance rhythms as the parts of *sabar* that "cannot be changed", that have "always" been the same and should stay that way:

There are rhythms that will never die. (Moussé N'Diaye, musician)

Obviously, even the most traditional rhythms and dances will not stay exactly the same in a tradition that is orally transmitted and partly improvised. Especially in dance, new variations of older movements and phrases of movements emerge regularly. The difference between new creations and "unchanging" tradition is thus practically impossible to define. Some of my interviewees viewed change as something very natural, a consequence of other changes in society and the way of life:

History is moving. [...] I cannot play what my grandfather played a hundred years ago; it does not make sense anymore. (Moussé N'Diaye)

Also others noted that e.g. some dances have fallen out of practice or are known only by older people. Younger people typically said that they are not changing anything in the old dances, but they might add some new elements (interview with Karim Thiam, musician) or simply perform the same dances and rhythms in a faster tempo (interview with Pape Moussa Sonko, dancer). In contrast, some older people lamented the way that young people dance nowadays. When I asked what has actually changed, many referred

to the dance rhythms being played so fast that the dancing becomes mechanical and therefore is no longer beautiful or lacks grace (interviews with Ousmane N'Dior and Oumy Sène, dancers):

Young people dance like a machine, especially in Dakar. (Oumy Sène)

Furthermore, some mentioned foreign influences that are being added to *sabar* dancing. Of such influences specifically were mentioned movements of the hips and bottoms (interview with Oumy Sène) and acrobatic elements that professional male dancers like to include (interview with Ousmane N'Dior). The addition of hip movements to *sabar* dancing was interpreted as an influence of dances from the Ivory Coast and Togo, although Oumy Sène noted that similar dances actually have a long history also in Senegal, but they used to be danced by only the women belonging to the caste of carpenters (the *laubé*). She further emphasized that in the past, a dancer was not supposed to let her legs show, but several wrap-around skirts were worn one above another, and therefore the movements of the upper body and the arms were more important. The *sabar* of today is more characterized by its leg movements, high kicks that often reveal the dancer's legs and even her thighs, vigorous jumps and fast turns.

Another interesting question about the history of *sabar* dancing is related to gender. Most people that have I talked to share the view that in the past only women danced, and still today the majority of people participating and dancing at social dance events will be women, whereas the only men dancing are usually professional dancers. However, there are a few people (interviews with Massamba Gueye, specialist in oral literature and traditions of the Wolof, and Nago Koité, dancer) who claim that, actually, in the past men used to dance equally to women, but it is due to the influence of Islam that men have stopped dancing. So, although in the more recent past men generally have not danced unless they were professional performers, in the more distant past this has probably not been the case.

Before there were no professional dancers, due to religion and civilization all people do not dance like they used to before. (Nago Koité)

The influence of Islam may also be reflected in the views mentioned earlier that a (female) dancer should not use movements of the hips and bottom or show her legs while dancing. It does not seem very plausible that such ideals would have been followed in the past, even though the dances may very well have been slower and less focused on the movements of the legs. It is true that when older women dance, they have a different style of dancing, and they do not dance as fast and jump as much or kick their legs as high as younger people, but it is not clear if these specific differences of dance style are more due to their age than to changes in the *sabar* tradition itself. In any case, they certainly do not avoid movements of the hips and bottom according to my observations.

Movement

Images of the past are also constructed in performances of Senegalese ballets, dance

companies that transform the *sabar* tradition to be presented on stage. Their performances typically strive towards an “authentic” interpretation of the tradition, with the scenes set in an undefined past.² I have looked in more detail at a performance of the National Ballet that I was allowed to film for my research, but I have seen several other similar dance performances in Senegal, and there are also some filmed performances (at least excerpts of them) available on YouTube. Often, but not always, such dance performances consist of several scenes, each of which presents a different ethnic tradition. In the show of the National Ballet, the scene presenting the *sabar* tradition lasted about 16 minutes and was situated in the middle of an almost two-hour performance, just before the intermission.

The scene both starts and ends in a similar way to a typical *sabar* dance event: The drummers start alone and play some solos as well as some unisono patterns (*bakk*) to show of their skills. The scene ends with the *lëmbël* dance, the exact dance that concentrates on the movement of the hips and bottom that was mentioned earlier; it is typically the last dance to be played at a *sabar* event, if it is played at all. However, the musical phrase typically played to mark the beginning and the ending of a *sabar* event is not played in this performance, although other ballets do often play it, especially at the end.

Apart from the beginning and the end, the scene does not follow the course of a usual *sabar* event: The dance rhythms are played in a different order than they normally would and certain rhythms that usually would be played are left out. The entrance of the first dancer is very theatrical, but otherwise the scene does not have the kind of a theatrical storyline as some other scenes in the same performance. There is a lot of group choreography, and male dancers dance all rhythms (except the *lëmbël*) equally to women, both features that are not typical of social *sabar* dancing. Group choreographies are mostly set for men and women separately, although there are a few short passages that everyone dances together. It quite understandable that a stage performance would make use of group choreography and not just the one-solo-after-another setting typical of recreational *sabar* dancing. Although the movements used in these choreographies could be seen in other kinds of contexts of *sabar* dancing, these staged dances obviously have a very different structure due to the long sequences of group choreography instead of very short improvised solos.

Towards the end of the *sabar* scene, there are more dance solos, also by both female and male dancers, although there are far more female dancers and solos by female dancers. Only the two youngest male dancers do solos. However, the solos do not seem to be improvised, because in several cases, the other dancers or a part of them join the soloist, performing the last movements of the sequence in unison with him or her. Nevertheless, the solo drummer moves a few times to the front of the stage to be nearer to the solo dancer – a gesture that emphasizes the close interaction of the solo drummer and the solo dancer in the *sabar* tradition. If the solos are choreographed (as it seems), this is not really necessary, because the drummer knows what the dancer will be dancing in advance, but rather a visual way to direct the attention of the audience to the solo dancer while the other dancers keep moving in the background.

There is no clear reference to the past in this particular scene, but such performances of *sabar* dancing obviously represent “the tradition” for many people. “The tradition” is something that is respected, something connected to the past, whereas the usual

improvised social *sabar* dancing – despite its obvious connection to such dance performances – is regarded as something just for fun and sometimes even morally questionable. E.g. after a *sabar* dance event (a wedding celebration) where I had danced a solo with a sequence that could be considered “ballet style”, a young woman, a friend of a friend, came to me and complimented my solo by saying: “You know our tradition better than we do.” In my opinion, all the women that danced at the event were better dancers than me, although, judging by their style of dancing, none of them were professional dancers. But then again, neither am I, and I certainly did not stand out for the quality of my movements – as a professional dancer usually would – but rather due to the specific movement sequence that I had learned from one of my dance teachers.

It seems then, that it is not so much the skills of the dancers that count, that make stage performances more “traditional” for the general public than social dancing. Rather it must be the way that these dances are presented on stage, as set (group) choreographies, that makes the difference for them. Interestingly enough, this exact trait could also be considered the most Western one, an external influence rather than something that has been passed on from past generations. The picture that ballet performances construct of the *sabar* tradition seems thus very contradictory. As was mentioned earlier, most people believe that men did not dance in the past, but in ballets men dance equally to women, and to my knowledge, this is not criticized or even questioned by the audience. Also, the female dancers of the National Ballet did not avoid showing their legs; on the contrary, at one point of the performance they even lift their skirts to reveal their underskirts.

Conclusion

To sum up, there seem to be slightly differing views about the past of *sabar* dancing, and the way that the *sabar* is presented in ballet performances does not necessarily reflect all of these views. What is said about the *sabar* and how it is presented on stage probably does not tell us much about the past, but more about current ideals of *sabar* dancing and the discussions surrounding it, including wider conceptions of appropriate behavior and morals. It seems that *sabar* dancing needs to be transformed in some way to count as “tradition”, the social improvisatory dancing that anyone can participate in does not have the high status of tradition, despite the fact that people recognize it as the same genre of dance as the *sabar* dancing performed by ballets.

Copyright 2013, Elina Seye

Notes

1. See Castaldi: *Choreographies of African Identities*.
2. See Castaldi: *Choreographies of African Identities*.

Bibliography

Castaldi, Francesca. *Choreographies of African Identities. Négritude, Dance, and the National Ballet of Senegal*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Address for correspondence:

Elina Seye
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Main building, E233
33014 University of Tampereen yliopisto
Finland
elina.seye@uta.fi

Unraveling the Sacrifice: An Investigation into Choreographing Death in Three Rites

Amy Smith

University of North Carolina–Greensboro

Abstract

This paper explores danced death onstage through the investigation of three versions of The Rite of Spring: Millicent Hodson's reconstruction and the choreographies of Pina Bausch and Martha Graham. The appeal of this piece, which has been recreated hundreds of times over the past century, arguably lies in the Chosen One, the unlucky victim who is sacrificed to the spring by her community. Choreographers and researchers have explored numerous aspects of the ritual, such as gender roles, violence, isolation, rape, self-sacrifice, and compliance, yet the choreographers' choices of how to represent the piece's final death have hardly been addressed. My research on choreographic representations of death, as well as an "appropriate" audience response, results from careful observation of each work and exploration of existing research. I also reflect on somatic and choreographic information imbedded in Hodson's reconstruction of Nijinsky's Chosen One solo, amplifying and troubling the act of research through bodily action. I conclude that when death cannot literally be represented onstage, the extensive draining of an individual's life force accentuates the sacrificial act. The reenactment of this sacrifice serves as a reminder of the precious nature of life and the responsibilities of individuals within a greater community.

The Chosen One's solo has always attracted me and beckoned to me since my original viewing several years ago of Millicent Hodson's reconstruction of Vaslav Nijinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Due to this intrigue, I began my research on *The Rite of Spring* by focusing on themes of sacrifice and victimization, expecting a feminist discussion on the evolving female role in both dance and society as displayed by the perpetuation as well as accruing emphasis on the selection and death of the sacrificial virgin. Instead, as I began to analyze the recreations of *Sacre* choreographed by Pina Bausch and Martha Graham, the difficulty of representing death through dance became a new lens through which to explore *The Rite*. Largely grounding my discussion in German and performance studies scholar Kate Elswit's article, "'Berlin...Your Dance Partner Is Death'", which focuses on death and dance during the Weimar Republic, I have investigated both how Nijinsky, Graham, and Bausch chose to choreograph the Chosen One's death as well as why they made those choices. Does added violence in Bausch's version intensify the audience's reaction to the sacrifice? Is the virgin's ritualistic transformation believable or even realistic?

Certainly, Nijinsky strove to choreograph a believable sacrificial solo, one that would exhaust the performer to the point of nearly fainting. Choreographer and dance historian Millicent Hodson explains, "The solitary valor of the sacrificial solo, with its

relentless jumps despite exhaustion, its unremitting effort toward perfection in the face of failure, was surely an interior portrait of himself that Nijinsky left to posterity.”¹ The Chosen One reflected Nijinsky’s own potential artistic sacrifice in choreographing the rebellious *Rite*. His original choreography premiered along with Igor Stravinsky’s score on May 29, 1913 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Nijinsky hoped that in creating this avant-garde work, he would be opening doors for numerous other choreographers to explore their imaginations and to dare to challenge both the dancers and the audience. Thus, both Nijinsky and the Chosen One accepted their fates with power and determination, giving their whole selves to the community rather than timidly attempting to fulfill their individual roles.

Recreations of the dance then began as early as Léonide Massine’s 1920 *Sacre*, with hundreds of versions following (notably, Hodson’s reconstruction on the Joffrey Ballet premiered in 1987.) *The Rite of Spring*, with its infamous riotous past and female “victim”, was a bold choice in 1975 to help feed Pina Bausch’s *Tanztheater* rebellion. As the curtain rises on her piece, a woman is laying prone on a dirt-covered stage, a pleasant expression on her face, and a piece of red cloth (revealed later as a dress) acting as her pillow. Symbolizing the uninformed or complacent public, the woman is grossly ignorant of the significance of her chosen headrest. Later in the piece, with the subsequent increased chaos of the score, the red cloth is tossed between the women in a game of hot potato until one unlucky victim is left standing. A man viciously grabs her, dragging her backward. In a reference to Nijinsky’s original “Chosen One” solo, the woman begins frenetically dancing around the stage, patrolled by the shirtless men who prevent her from escaping. This is hardly the climax of the piece, as Bausch’s first choice is not her last. Throughout the selection process, multiple victims accumulate: one physically grabbed and forced to dance, one raped by the men, one publicly killed for the spring.

In Martha Graham’s version, which premiered in 1984, the choice of maiden is simpler; a shaman (a role which replaced Nijinsky’s original sage) overlooks the mating dances until he suddenly plucks one woman off the back of her partner. As the shaman cruelly torments the Chosen One, her upper body convulses, her chest squirming, as if her heart is racing too quickly for her body. Perhaps due to fear of the shaman’s power, the other women make no effort to come to her aid and even help to physically transform the virgin’s hair and dress before the rite. Female complacency is apparent in all three versions of the *Rite*, although more so in Graham’s and Bausch’s versions where the enemy is emphasized as man rather than fate.

This complacency captures the nature of tribal sacrifices by showing the fear of the maiden yet not displaying any resistance by a member of the tribe, even the Chosen One. Many ancient tribes dispersed over a wide range of the Earth reportedly carried out similar rituals in which a maiden or young couple is sacrificed to a god to ensure prosperity and good crops for the season.² Mythologist Joseph Campbell, a large influence on Graham’s work, emphasizes that, “These are not gifts, bribes, or dues rendered to God, but fresh enactments, here and now, of the god’s own sacrifice in the beginning, through which he, she, or it became incarnate in the world process.” These rituals are the tribes paying homage to a much grander sacrifice the god or goddess made many years before, as recounted in the tribes’ myths. Modris Eksteins describes the emotions surrounding Nijinsky’s sacrifice:

Rebirth, life, and death were depicted without obvious ethical comment...In this portrayal of the continuity of life, fundamental, brutal, and tragic, beyond individual fate, there was no suggestion of sentiment...The victim was not mourned but honored. The chosen maiden joined in the rite automatically, without sign of comprehension or interpretation. She submitted to a fate that transcended her. The theme was basic and at the same time brutal.⁴

Indeed, the original “plot” for the ballet is simple: begin a spring ritual, select a maiden by chance, and wait for her to dance to her death.⁵ So why has this simple storyline generated a multitude of analyses and recreations?

I argue that the appeal of *Sacre* lies in the Chosen One. Many choreographers, particularly Graham and Bausch, attempt to identify with the virgin and consider the story from a new perspective. I yearned to understand the role corporeally, and thus learned the reconstructed solo developed by Millicent Hodson. Though I was proud to have danced every last step, which expends an immense amount of energy, I had in no way performed the *Rite of Spring*; I had gone through the motions. How do you embody fear while trying to remember how many jumps are next or count the number of beats until you run to stage left? Nijinsky created this movement as his personal connection to fear, his interpretation of embodied terror. I contemplated the meaning of the sacrifice—by a game of chance, this woman finds herself chosen to be an offering of blood and flesh for the betterment of the community. She has most likely lived in this village her whole life, knowing that one day, she may be the Chosen One. Did she have options? Could she have fled to a different community? Or was she proud to play a part in allowing her people to continue to thrive and flourish? Was her fear, then, not fear that she would be picked to die but fear of the unknown and of whether her body could perform the dance, or of whether her sacrifice would indeed be enough to please the god/goddess?

In general contemporary society, death is rarely addressed so forwardly and simply, and perhaps this is the cause for my emotional disconnect in attempting to dance the sacrificial solo. The human adversity to death comes with our belief that we have conquered nature; we forget the power of the elements until we are harshly reminded by a hurricane, tornado, tsunami, earthquake, etc. Campbell argues that our approach to death lacks sophistication:

All of us are to become, in the end, food for other beings...It is, in fact, a new insight, fostering not a return to infancy but a willed affirmation of man's fate and of the ruthless nature of beings, to which we, today, with our much more sensitive, humanized, and humanistic response of revulsion, may be said to be reacting in the more childish way.⁶

Death presents itself through multiple facets in our lives without question, but when displayed so openly onstage, our natural instinct is to recoil. How do we differentiate between what are “socially acceptable” ways to die? Campbell offers an interesting argument:

The number of lives offered up in such rites is far less, proportionately to the population, than that sacrificed in our own cities in traffic accidents... what for us

is “accident” is placed in the center of the system—namely, sudden, monstrous death—and this becomes therewith a revelation of the inhumanity of the order of the universe.⁷

When viewing *Sacre* through Campbell’s argument, Nijinsky’s “crime against grace” was only in displaying what many are loathe to address: chaos, disorder, and injustice.

The idea of “death”, both its role in society and how to represent it through movement, strongly pervades Bausch and Graham’s choreographic choices. Attempting to choreograph “true death” is futile when the dancer will clearly survive the performance. As Elswit explains, “Their combination complicated the material authority they were seen to share.”⁸ While this sharing of the body as a medium can be viewed as a difficulty, Elswit also acknowledges that the body is the only artistic medium that *could* truly display death (although at quite a price to the performer.) Thus, if death is not real onstage, how should choreographers address it?

The answers to these questions lie in Elswit’s analysis, although she may not agree with my simplistic interpretation. Simply, when death itself is not possible, it must be represented by its opposites: life, animosity, and vivacity. Elswit states that, “the animation of life...complicates death’s authenticity and finality,” yet her anxiety about the failure to achieve true *rigor mortis* in a performance narrows her focus to only seeing how dance is *not* death.⁹ Earlier in her article, Elswit explains:

What becomes visible in performances that stage death is that spectacles of the real demand to be perceived as authentic by displaying the performers’ bodies at their physical limits; but approaching those limits simultaneously reinforced and challenged their necessary illusions.¹⁰

Thus, Elswit believes that an emphasis on life accentuates death but does not allow the performer to embody death. However, the question is not whether the performer feels like he or she is dying or is experiencing death, but whether the audience is aware of the inward experience of death through the dancer’s outward display.

In Nijinsky’s original *Sacre* choreography, the virgin literally jumps and spins herself to death, so that the efforts to resist gravity (that which ties us to the earth and accentuates our mortality) drain her life force. Graham’s version drains her virgin not through physical exhaustion but instead through the mystical powers of the mysterious shaman. Similarly, Bausch’s victim is chosen by the alpha male of the group; they dance a short duet before she continues on in a frenzied solo that results in her death. Though the choreographers’ commentaries differ on how society views death and victims, all three represent death through the loss of the essence and energy that fuels our bodies. This idea is similar to performance studies scholar Shelley Berg’s conclusion that in the Chosen One’s solo, the choreographers have magically transformed “human matter into pure energy.”¹¹ Whether this life force was given willingly is another matter.

Of course, the performers are not actually dead, promptly returning for curtain calls as the audience applauds their efforts. Here, we have two more issues addressed by Elswit: the “survival” of the dancer and the fact that the audience is clapping for a death. The stage is a place where the normal laws of nature do not apply, in which a death can be imagined due to magic or a danced suicide. Elswit is more interested in performances

in which new realities are not created on the stage and in which the barriers between enactment and display fall away.¹² However, Nijinsky, Bausch, and Graham all create isolated communities who most certainly abide by their own rules; for the audience to accept that death is possible through fear and frenzied jumping is only a small stretch of their imagination. Death itself does not resist the laws of nature; similarly, the need for a virgin to be sacrificed for the continued survival of the community is accepted in all three *Rites* as simply natural law. What is foreign and horrific to the audience is automatically accepted within these three disparate communities.

Once the dance is completed, the audience is suddenly jolted back to reality, aware that the death did not actually occur. The escapism provided by the choreography was such that they hopefully felt sympathy for the virgin, understood the parallels to “real” communities, and remembered personal moments of isolation and victimization. Again, Elswit may address my view as too simplified—the performer did *not* die, and the audience would not clap for a real death. She distinguishes between the enactment and the display of death, arguing that a balance of the two is necessary in all performances. I would contend that the deaths in the three aforementioned *Rites* are almost all display, with the enactment only in the attempt to capture the fear within the virgins of their impending deaths. For all three choreographers, the focus is not the death itself but rather what the death represents: the loss of a life for the perpetuation of life and how/why victimization exists in society.

With the choreographers so blatantly displaying the life within the performer, one may hope the audience is clapping for the dancer’s bravery in laying bare her physical limits and in displaying the preciousness of our human essence. Dance studies scholar and feminist theorist Marianne Goldberg depicts the audience’s reaction to Graham’s *Rite*:

Her 1984 *The Rite of Spring* received standing ovations, yet it was difficult to tell whether the audience was cheering Graham as the national treasure she has been or condoning the reactionary dances she is now making...the spectators sanctioned what was essentially a well-dressed rape onstage.¹³

If Goldberg had hesitations about the cheering of the spectators for Graham’s choreography, one must certainly wonder how the audience of Bausch’s *Rite* felt about clapping for her emotional and violent reinterpretation. Again, I would argue that they were honoring the efforts of the dancers, but after such an emotional episode, perhaps the audience could sustain an encore, but the dancers certainly could not. As Lydia Sokolova explained in her description of dancing Massine’s *Chosen One* in 1920, “whatever it did to the audience it nearly killed me.”¹⁴ Still, Berg notes that the audience provided “deafening applause.”¹⁵

I would like to conclude this discourse by sharing my own personal narrative of learning Hodson’s recreated *Chosen One* solo:

My arms and legs tremble. My heart beats viciously out of my chest, pounding in my ears and anxiously pumping blood through my exhausted body. I try to control my breathing, feeling as though I have sprinted a mile. One glance in the mirror reveals a crazy mop of hair framing a sweaty forehead and flushed cheeks. I have

just successfully completed Nijinsky's "Sacrificial Virgin" solo. But the accomplishment is bittersweet.

Copyright 2013, Amy Smith

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer many thanks to Dr. Ann Dils for her guidance and support throughout this research process.

Notes

1. Millicent Hodson, *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for "Le Sacre Du Printemps"* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1996), xi.
2. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: The Viking press, 1959), 171.
3. Campbell, *Masks of God*, 181.
4. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 50.
5. Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 9.
6. Campbell, *Masks of God*, 180.
7. Campbell, *Masks of God*, 181.
8. Kate Elswit, "Berlin... Your Dance Partner Is Death," *TDR: The Drama Review* 53, no. 1 (2009): 87.
9. Elswit, "Berlin... Your Dance," 78.
10. Elswit, "Berlin... Your Dance," 75.
11. Shelley C. Berg, *"Le Sacre du Printemps": Seven Productions from Nijinsky to Martha Graham* (Ann Arbor; London: UMI Research Press, 1988), 150.
12. Elswit, "Berlin... Your Dance," 76-79.
13. Marianne Goldberg, "She Who Is Possessed No Longer Exists Outside: Martha Graham's *Rite of Spring*," *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 3, no. 1 (1986): 17.
14. Berg, *Seven Productions*, 71.
15. Berg, *Seven Productions*, 71.

Bibliography

- Berg, Shelley C. *"Le Sacre du Printemps": Seven Productions from Nijinsky to Martha Graham*. Ann Arbor; London: UMI Research Press, 1988.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. New York: The Viking Press, 1959.
- Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.
- Elswit, Kate. "Berlin... Your Dance Partner Is Death." *TDR: The Drama Review* 53, no. 1 (2009): 73-92.
- Goldberg, Marianne. "She Who Is Possessed No Longer Exists Outside: Martha Graham's *Rite of Spring*." *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 3, no. 1 (1986): 17-27.
- Hodson, Millicent. *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace: Reconstruction Score of the Original Choreography for "Le Sacre Du Printemps"*. Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1996.

Transcendence, Testifying, & Funkitivity: The Spiritual and Political Dimensions of Charisma in David Dorfman's *Prophets of Funk*

Kate Speer

University of Colorado Boulder

Abstract

When charisma is present in both performance and activism, it can be a manipulative and empowering catalyst to move an audience to action. Using American choreographer David Dorfman's Prophets of Funk (2010) as a case study, this paper focuses on the construction and application of charisma both spiritually and politically to create active audience citizens, who are more critical of their actions in the world, perhaps even inspired to act after leaving the theater. Through a close reading of Dorfman's choreographed text in conversation with Funk philosophy, the culture of the black Pentecostal Church, and theories of charisma posited by Joseph Roach and Max Weber, I will reveal how Prophets of Funk positions Funk composer and musician Sly Stewart as a charismatic prophet. Additionally, the work suggests that if charisma can be caught, like catching the spirit in Pentecostal worship, then there is the possibility for the audience to leave the theatre with their own charisma. Thus, this dance serves as an example for activists and artists alike that charisma is a potent and palatable method to shift their audience's perspective so that it is in line with their message and to potentially ignite social change.

When charisma is present in both performance and activism, it can be a manipulative and empowering catalyst to move an audience to action. This “quality possessed by abnormally interesting people” is marked by a “strange magnetism” between a performer, activist, or political leader and the audience (Roach 555, 558). Using American choreographer David Dorfman's *Prophets of Funk* (2010) as a case study, this paper focuses on the construction and application of charisma both spiritually and politically to create active audience citizens, who are more critical of their actions in the world, perhaps even inspired to act after leaving the theater.

Since its formation in 1985, David Dorfman Dance has become one of the leading American modern dance companies known for politically relevant and community based works. Dorfman's latest work, *Prophets of Funk* (2010) follows the rise, demise, and redemption of Funk composer and musician Sly Stewart using a collage of hits from his band, Sly & the Family Stone. Through a close reading of Dorfman's choreographed text in conversation with Funk philosophy, the culture of the black Pentecostal Church, and theories of charisma posited by Joseph Roach and Max Weber, I will reveal how *Prophets of Funk* positions Sly Stewart as a charismatic prophet. Additionally, the work suggests that if charisma can be caught, like catching the spirit in Pentecostal worship, then there is the possibility for the audience to leave the theatre with their own charisma. Thus, this dance serves as an example for activists and artists alike that charisma is a

potent and palatable method to shift their audience's perspective so that it is in line with their message and to potentially ignite social change.

The Philosophy of Funk

Funk is the “ruthless discipline of rhythm and the awesome expansion of improvisation; it is the righteousness of social comment and the rebelliousness of political action” (Thompson vii). According to George Clinton, Funk philosophy considers freedom a state of mind and advocates transcending one's problems through release (Wright 39). Consequently, Funk's aesthetic “of uninhibited soulful behavior that remains viable because of a faith in instinct, a joy of self and a joy of life, particularly unassimilated black American life” was inherently political (Vincent 4). The very essence of Funk represented egalitarianism, because no one voice or instrument was primary (Vincent 16). By affirming and validating the African American experience both through lyrics and stages shows, Funk became a forum in the popular mainstream music scene for making explicit the continuing presence of racism in America (Vincent 5). Thus Funk mixed pleasure, performance, and intellectuality (Bolden 26).

In *Prophets of Funk* during the song “Stand!” the movement represents a celebration. The music itself is infectious and joyful: not only a black pride anthem, but also referencing the ritual act of standing and testifying. When the music shifts into a tighter groove, horns pierce on the one and three, hand clapping catches the double beat, and voices accent the rhythm with Na Na Na. Likewise the dancers' quality of movement shifts to fast, sharp movement that hits and accents the complex rhythmical landscape (Dorfman). The shift is meant to be hot, a crowd pleaser showcasing the dancers' efficacy with rhythmical expression and funk.

Additionally, the etymology of Funk reflects a black oral tradition of emptying a signifier and refilling it with another meaning. The origin of “funky” comes from the Ki-Kong word “lufuki” of the Bakongo people of Central Africa and means strong body odor, which culturally signified hard working integrity (Vincent 33). However, as a slang word for smell, a euphemism for sex, and an auditory proximity to fuck, funky in white American speech is closely associated with black stereotypes of promiscuity and looseness (Thompson vii; Vincent 24; Bolden 15). Thus, the naming of a primarily black music genre Funk connects both to the etymology of the word indicating a high level of commitment and integrity, fusing leisure and labor, and to a resistive strategy against the white male dominated music industry (Bolden 15).

The Dimensions of Charisma

Across the literature, Sly Stewart is referred to as the “most popular Pentecostal mystic” in the country or “part shaman, part preacher, part trickster, [and] part soul brother” (Neal 3; Kaliss xiv). His “vivacious banter and infectious positivity complimented by a strikingly deep voice that could soar and scorch your soul in an instant” speaks to a charisma or an “it” quality that captivated both white and black audiences across America (Vincent 94). According to Barbara Campbell, Sly would work both himself and the

audience into a frenzy that resembled a revival meeting (Neal 6). People's recollection of the band's set at Woodstock resembles black preachers who would invite their immobile community to transcend their reality, similar to Pentecostal worship (Neal 7).

Pentecostalism grew out of a protest against the black Protestant congregations that took on white religious attitudes such as removing shouting and dance-possible rhythms during worship (Hurston 103). As a result, the Sanctified Church or Pentecostalism became "a rebirth of song-making" and is frequently marked by spirit possession, lively music, and religious fervor (Hurston 104; Booker 29). Additionally, there is a presence of sexuality both in Pentecostal worship and Funk music. Telia Anderson considers a sermon's heightened emotion to be parallel to sexual intercourse, climaxing with sustained shouting usually occurring at the height or conclusion of a sermon. Both an attraction to the pastor and a personal, sensual relationship with Jesus reflects a connection between the spiritual and the corporeal experience (Anderson 121).

In his article that attempts to define the "quality possessed by abnormally interesting people," Joseph Roach suggests that that "it" quality of charisma is marked by a "strange magnetism which attracts both sexes" (555, 558). In *Prophets of Funk*, Raja Kelly, who portrays the youthful Sly, exudes this strange magnetism when he disappears completely into the character of Sly Stewart. With the same gesture, Kelly is able to possess contradictory qualities such as being tall and lanky with immense coordination and rhythmical acuity, "linking male 'sexual domination' with 'vulnerability' in the same hot breath" (Roach 560).

Kelly solidifies his connection with the audience and hooks their attraction in the number "If You Want Me to Stay" a hit from the 1973 album *Fresh*. The song is the epitome of Funk featuring Sly's sultry vocals that drag the lyrics to deep, low chords; his intimate, high-pitched screams; and the bass guitar's percussive subtle beat that is simultaneously cool in tempo and hot in rhythm. The video projection of Kelly in shades lip-synching and bouncing his head to the beat is addictive. Not only are his lips seductive, but also the additional dance of his Afro completes his cool image. There is an intensity in his performance while he remains emotionally detached. Kelly reinforces the bounce and groove of the music as he struts across the stage, his long legs taking an easy stride as the hips coolly sway. His psychedelic platform shoes exaggerate his height, adding visual contrast when he weaves the knees in and out in a deep pli . His pelvis becomes a focal point between his snaking torso and lanky legs (Dorfman).

Due to my emotional arousal towards Raja Kelly, I am in a state of what Richard Bord calls "uncritical information receptivity" in which I am susceptible to Kelly's influence and directions because I have attributed my emotional state to his unusual characteristics or charisma (488). The ability for Kelly to direct the audience's actions is most prominent towards the end of *Prophets of Funk* when Kelly uses verbatim Sly Stewart's speech from the band's set at Woodstock:

Sly Stewart: What we would like to do is sing a song together. Now you see what usually happens is you get a group of people that might sing, and for some reasons that are not unknown anymore they won't do it. Most of us need approval, most of us need to get approval from our neighbors before we can actually let it all hang down, you see. But what is happening here is we are going to try to do a sing-along. Now a lot of people don't like to do it, because they feel

that it might be old-fashioned. But you must dig that it is not a fashion in the first place, it is a feeling and if it was good in the past, it is still good. We would like to sing a song called Higher and if we could get everybody to join in we'd appreciate it.

Call: I want to take you higher. Audience Response: Higher!

What I want you to do is say higher and throw the peace sign up, it will do you no harm...

Call: I want to take you higher. Audience Response: Higher!

Call: I want to take you higher. Audience Response: Higher! (Woodstock).

Both the original Woodstock and the staged version follow the message characteristics and delivery factors outlined by Richard Bord as necessary in the construction of alternative perspectives, or simply put, the narrowing of the audience's perspective so that it is in line with the speaker. For one, the speech is simple in its theme, the speaker merely wishes for the audience to sing a song together, because it will create a collective feeling of good will (Bord 490). Two, the speaker uses high action verbs, such as sing along or throw the peace sign. This suggests a specific behavioral reaction, increasing the audience's commitment to the speaker's message, and heightening their emotional state. Third, the speaker focuses on a shared identity in order to ignite collective action. In this instance, there is the "we" group who will participate in the sing-along and the "they" group who need approval and think it is old-fashioned (Bord 491). Fourth, the rapid delivery of the message with short pauses between statements inhibits the audience from forming an alternative opinion and gives the speaker an appearance of self-confidence. Finally, repetition and elicitation of the audience response creates a "pseudo-intimate bond between the speaker and the audience" (Bord 492). The call and response communication process emphasizes community and generates a unified movement (Smitherman 108). As a result, the audience feels a personal attachment to the message.

Partake in Funkativity to Reach Higher Ground

While manipulated by Raja Kelly's charisma to participate in this call and response, the audience still has agency. According to Max Weber, charisma, which is sometimes referred to as the gifts of the Spirit or the characteristic of unusually interesting people, is determined by the audience (Bord 486). It is the audience who attributes greatness to the speaker based on their emotional arousal and the speaker's message qualities. Thus, if we endow Kelly with charisma and choose to follow his prophetic path to salvation we are agents in our own meaning-making journey. This active participation, like in Pentecostal worship, allows for the audience to be fully present and engaged with the performance on a more intimate level.

However, it is not just the charisma of Sly as portrayed by Raja Kelly. Aptly titled *Prophets of Funk*, there exist multiple prophets both in the past, as in Sly Stewart, and in the present, as conveyed by the current dancing personalities onstage. Additionally and more importantly, there is the suggestion that prophets and prophecies exist within ourselves. And if charisma can be caught, like catching the spirit in Pentecostal worship,

then there is the possibility for the audience to leave the theatre with their own charisma. The implications of that occurring are huge, because it transfers the charismatic power of the performer to the audience. No longer is it a strict hierarchal relationship between performer and viewer. The stage is democratized as the audience member is empowered and receives the gifts of the spirit. Following this activation, the audience then interacts with other social worlds, consequently spreading the charisma beyond the theatre.

In conclusion, Funk music becomes the vehicle that transfers the charisma of the stage to the audience. As an example for activists and artists alike, charisma functions both as a manipulative tool to shift the audience's perception and as an empowering catalyst to ignite audience activation. Further research would explore the political ramifications of employing charisma in activist strategies, because there is the potential for collective movement directed toward either oppression or liberation agendas. However within the limitations of this research, the construction of Sly Stewart as a charismatic prophet represents a tool to transfer charisma to the audience and an aid to reach Higher Ground, enhancing the audience-performer connection and creating active audience citizens in everyday people.

Copyright 2013, Kate Speer

Bibliography

- Anderson, Tolia U. "Calling on the Spirit': The Performativity of Black Women's Faith in the Baptist Church Spiritual Traditions and its Radical Possibilities for Resistance." *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader*. Eds. Harry J. Elam Jr. and David Krasner. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001. 114-31. Print.
- Bolden, Tony. "Theorizing the Funk: An Introduction." Introduction. *The Funk Era and Beyond: New Perspectives on Black Popular Culture*. Ed. Tony Bolden. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 13-29. Print.
- Booker, Queen. "Congregational Music in a Pentecostal Church." *The Black Perspective in Music* 16.1 (1988): 29-44. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Oct. 2011.
- Bord, Richard J. "Toward a Social-Psychological Theory of Charismatic Social Influence Processes." *Social Forces* 53.3 (1975): 485-497. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Oct. 2011.
- Dorfman, David, chor. *Prophets of Funk*. Schaeffer Theatre, Lewiston, ME. 4 Aug. 2011. Performance.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *The Sanctified Church*. New York: Marlowe, 1997. Print.
- Kaliss, Jeff. *I Want to Take You Higher: The Live and Times of Sly & the Family Stone*. New York: Backbeat Books, 2008. Print.
- Neal, Mark Anthony. "Sly Stone and the Sanctified Church." *The Funk Era and Beyond: New Perspectives on Black Popular Culture*. Ed. Tony Bolden. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 3-9. Print.
- Roach, Joseph. "It." *Theatre Journal* 56.4 (2004): 555-568. *JSTOR*. Web. 14 Oct. 2011.
- Smitherman, Geneva. *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986. Print.
- Thompson, Dave. *Funk*. San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2001. Print.
- Vincent, Rickey. *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996. Print.

Woodstock 3 Days of Peace & Music. Dir. Michael Wadleigh. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2009. DVD.

Wright, Amy Nathan. "A Philosophy of Funk: The Politics and Pleasure of a Parliafunkadelicment Thang!" *The Funk Era and Beyond: New Perspectives on Black Popular Culture*. Ed. Tony Bolden. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 33-50. Print.

Address for correspondence:

Kate Speer
Department of Theatre & Dance
261 UCB
Boulder, CO 80309
kate dot speer at gmail dot com

The Dancer as a Maker: Interaction in the Choreographic Process

Tuuli Tahko

University of Roehampton

Abstract

What is the role of the dancer in the making of contemporary dance? The relationship between a dancer and a choreographer is one historically fraught with questions of dominance and the use, and potential abuse, of power. The dancer's role has often been that of a silent tool, an able body at the choreographer's disposal – a position which many have found problematic. On the other hand, in recent years there has been a shift towards collaborative modes of making dance and other works of performing art. This paper examines the ways in which dancers contribute to the making of dance works by studying in detail the interactions taking place in the creative process. The paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork with a professional contemporary dance company. Observations from rehearsals and interviews with the participants will be used to explore the agency of the dancer in the choreographic process.

Introduction

In this paper, I discuss what the interaction that takes place between a choreographer and a dancer in a choreographic process can tell us about the agency of the dancer in making contemporary dance works. My aim is to elucidate the communicative and creative role of the dancer as a maker through examining the rules of interaction and relations of production that prevail in the rehearsal studio. I will approach dance rehearsals as a place of work and a social situation in which roles and relationships are constructed and enacted through communication. A course of communicative events that resulted in a section of choreography in performance will be compared to how some dance researchers have analysed the relationship between dancers and choreographers. I will argue that by analysing the communication that takes place in the choreographic process we can better understand the different roles that dancers assume and are assigned in making work. I will focus on the notion of the silent dancer and suggest that even if the dancer's verbal output is at times limited, she is still both communicatively and creatively an active participant in the choreographic process.¹

The paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted for my ongoing PhD research into communication in the choreographic process. I followed a professional contemporary dance company, in this case a temporary coming together of freelance dancers and dance-makers, for their main rehearsal period of about six weeks until the first performance of a new piece. I also interviewed the participants and filmed as much of the process as I could for further analysis. My focus here is on presenting and analysing a particular sequence of events from rehearsals² but first I will briefly discuss

on a more general level the relationships between dancers and choreographers that exist in my material and in dance literature.

Processes, Roles and Relationships

The choreographic process is a social situation in which the participants' roles are constructed in relation to one another. To discuss the dancer's role in making work it is therefore necessary to turn to her relationship with the choreographer, to their "relations of production", as Sally Gardner³ calls them. It is worth noting that these include financial and employment relations. In my case study, for instance, the choreographer was also the employer who applied and received funding for the project and paid the dancers. Cast and paid by the choreographer, the dancers are inherently subordinate to him. As Leena Rouhiainen⁴ points out, "freelance dancers need to acquire jobs in dancing," which must mean complying with choreographers' wishes to some extent. As one interviewee described the relationship, "I'm there trying to fulfil whatever it is that is being asked for."⁵ This employer-employee relationship is established in written agreements but also in everyday communication between dancers and choreographers. The choreographer may be more or less trusted or successful as a leader and may have more or less reason to trust or value the dancers' contribution, but he is nevertheless in a position of authority.⁶

In dance literature, the choreographer's authority is sometimes expressed in terms of the voice of the choreographer dominating over the silent dancer. Randy Martin⁷ sets the dancers' moving, social body against the choreographer's verbal authority. Jaana Parviainen⁸ draws attention to the "speechless" quality of interaction in ballet and modern dance and to the stereotype of the "dumb" dancer, who is trained not to think or speak for herself. She claims that "consensus in the dance field is constituted by silence and lack of discussion, unquestioned values, uncritical attitudes toward one's own doing". According to Rouhiainen⁹, the dancer has to "surrender her or his body and skills to the goals of the choreographer" and be open to and willing to work with whatever questions the choreographer presents to her. Rouhiainen¹⁰ also points out that some choreographers may find that too much talking during rehearsals distracts them from their purpose, and that dancers may find it difficult to speak up, anyway, since they are expected not to.

The power imbalance and the dancer's role as a silent tool, an able body at the choreographer's disposal, have been considered problematic. Martin¹¹ seeks to empower dancers by depicting them as a collective social body, a totality that eventually takes over the choreographer's authority. The dancers are the "raw material out of which the dance will be hewn" and "the social body that must speak the choreographer's mind" but in performance the company gains independence from the choreographer: "[t]hat the dancers can go beyond the directives of the choreographer while embodying, to some extent, her role is evidence of the assent of totality in the choreographic process and, also, the internalization of authority."¹² Rouhiainen¹³ proposes that there is a need for ethical dialogue between the choreographer and the dancer: "[w]ithout fluent dialogical communication a choreographer's openness towards her or his collaborators might be thwarted, and the other might simply become a means to the choreographer's ends." Many artists are engaging in collaborative modes of making dance where power to make decisions and responsibility about the outcome are shared.¹⁴

In her Didactic-Democratic framework model of different approaches to choreography, Jo Butterworth¹⁵ identifies five kinds of choreographic processes ranging from “traditional” (‘didactic’) to democratic processes of “co-ownership”, the former marked by the dancer’s status as instrument to the expert choreographer and the latter by “collaborative methods” and “collective decision-making processes”. Butterworth points out that various approaches to working can and do co-exist within a choreographic process, but the two ends of the scale— what after Martin¹⁶ could be called a “relationship [...] of command and response” and what Rouhiainen¹⁷ terms “co-operative and collective participatory practices” – seem to reflect the way practitioners discuss their experiences. The dancer’s communicative role varies between the traditionally expected silence and equal partnership in dialogue, with more collaborative approaches often valued positively.¹⁸

The opposition between silence and dialogue above suggests a rather verbally oriented view of communication, which I hope to question. The next section will provide an overview of the creation of one particular sequence of choreography, focusing on the first two days that this part was worked on. It will neither cover all instances of communication nor delve deeply into any single event; rather, my aim is to give an idea of how one might begin to unravel the complexities of interaction in dance-making and use them to better understand the roles and rules of the situation. Language in itself is a complicated phenomenon, but talk is also accompanied by various actions and frameworks such as gestures, gaze and the actors’ orientation in space. I take my cue from Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson¹⁹, according to whom “[o]ne cannot not communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot not respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating.”

From totem pole to chorus line

A movement task involving all dancers, including MM (the choreographer who will also dance in the final work), has finished. MM gets up and goes to the side of the room to check his camera and notes. The dancers have ended up on the floor close to each other and stay there but sit up and form a sort of line. MM returns with his notebook and sits down facing them. [orientation] The ambient music that was playing for the previous task continues in the background throughout the rest of the day.

MM um, we did something last week [when MM was doing research with other dancers] where I did – I’ve done it before which is something that’s probably gonna come at the end or near the end, which is a bit like a kind of chorus line [...] that we advance forward with this kind of connected thing and we all do kind of unison um and I’d like... I’d like you to construct some [gestures with hands] that we kind of [...] something fairly simple we just kind of generate a little bit of movement... maybe kind of like eight moves... that’s imagining that there’s a [hands go up and down, drawing a shape] totem pole in front of you [hands gesture forward] and then you’re [keeps doing hand movements] describing certain parts of it [iuu *sound effect*] er [hands still moving] so you’re imagining the faces

and the wings and the [?] animal [unclear] but you could – it’s quite nice if you think about carv- you’re carving the wood off it [hands keep going] and it’s kind of this thing [hands moving along a circle in front] or yeah. so some kind of tracing, carving so there’s a there’s eh-a bit of tension through it maybe rather than just [does floppy hand movements from elbows onwards] patterning, you know, there’s something that [moves from the torso as well] shifts you so some- something kind of just [arrives?] in eight – eight moves... if that makes sense

- CC that describe the pole [hands go up and down in front]
MM describe a totem pole

MM gets up and says he will find some pictures to show for inspiration and asks the dancers to keep the movements in front of them rather than reach out sideways, “for reasons you will find out.” He turns away and walks to the side of the room. Some of the dancers quietly exchange a few words with each other as they get up one by one and find a spot in the room to work on their own. MM tells them that they will teach their phrases to each other and asks them to bear that in mind. After a couple of minutes he adds: “and quite good if it’s got some accents in it as well, it’s quite easy for it just to become flowing but actually, the things that were more staccato were also nice.” At MM’s comments, some of the dancers stop what they are doing and turn to look at him while others continue as they were. [orientation, gaze] The work continues without talking with music playing in the background for some minutes. MM then offers to show pictures on his computer, and gradually each dancer makes her/his way to the pictures and back to creating the phrases, without talking. Again, a few minutes pass, and MM notes: “you can use your legs if you want to.” Some more minutes, and the following exchange takes place:

- MM can you just refine what you have rather than adding anything else on
CC say again
MM can you just um establish what you have, don’t add any on now
CC even if I don’t have eight [movements]?
MM yeah [?] fine
CC if I have seven?
[chuckles from others]
MM yeah seven is fine [some dancers turn to talk to each other] ... seven of good quality

Work continues. MM joins the dancers on the floor and starts to work on a phrase of his own. After some more minutes the dancers begin to drift off to rest/drink/write etc. Eventually the phrases are filmed for MM to view later. Dancers end up sitting, stretching, chatting. MM, standing, facing the dancers, explains what the phrases are for.

- MM ...and then we do it like shoulder to shoulder [taps his right shoulder with his left hand] so that this [snakes his right arm to the side, inwardly rotating from the shoulder] would become the other person’s waist [moves his arm across his belly, repeats the movement] or this [moves right arm to the side, elbow at a straight angle, shoulder rotating

outwards, repeats a couple of times] would go round the next person's head – you could send them [takes a step forward while doing a down and up snaking movement with his hand and arm] [unclear] so [repeats the earlier movements] everything we do starts to connect with [?] body parts if that makes sense? and things like where you're connecting but you're falling in space [left arm raised, falls a few steps backwards]

MM demonstrates several more possibilities of connections and tells the dancers about a previous piece where he used a similar structure. Apart from one intern, the dancers make no comments that would be audible on the video.

The next day a longer part of the morning rehearsal is spent talking. MM brings up the totem pole task and explains his vision for its symbolic function in the piece, talks about realism vs. symbolism and how he sees the section working. "It allows us to be watched." MM talks about the conventions of renaissance painting, inviting the gaze by looking away, and this section as a device for doing that. He then asks the dancers to recap what they have from yesterday, their totem phrases. Everyone gets up, chatting quietly, adjusting clothing, finding room to work. MM says he can show them the videos from yesterday but no one takes him up on the offer.

MM chooses DD's phrase for everyone to learn. She teaches her phrase facing the mirror, the others scattered behind, [orientation] and explains it verbally as well (although mostly too quietly to hear on the video). She is in charge of how many movements she teaches before repeating or moving on. With each repetition she gives vocal/verbal cues to the others. After each repetition, everyone takes a few steps back – the phrase travels forward – and begins again, led by DD [non-vocal direction]. MM is quite near the mirror as well, and asks DD questions about some of the movements.

After four and a half minutes, MM steps towards the mirror and turns to face the dancers as they back up for another repetition. He watches one repetition in silence and at the end of it says: "Nice. Let's, um do it shoulder to shoulder, and have a little look at what – what kind of connections [...]" The dancers form a line facing the mirror. MM stands in front of them, sometimes facing them and sometimes facing the mirror, a couple of times also joining the line. He asks "what (would happen) if...", "can we..." "shall we go...", "would that make sense...". The dancers respond by trying things out and occasionally comment verbally, sometimes also suggesting something to try. MM is not part of the line most of the time, but tries the movements himself as well. He directs vocally/verbally the beginning of repetitions (e.g. "aaand" with different inflections), the steps taken, the connections made. He modifies the movements, creating connections, adjusting directions and timing, introducing new movements (usually modelling them himself) and giving corrections to all or some of the dancers. He finds out whether his suggestions work in a line by observing the dancers try them out.

He breaks down some of the movements, explaining where the weight is, how the twist happens. "Think more about..." "I think you need to..." "You still wanna go through..." "Wait for yourself to be sent..." MM is the main vocal presence in the room. Throughout repetitions of the phrase he "makes noises" to mark rhythm and cue certain movements. A few times he asks DD what comes next in her phrase or how she did a particular movement; she responds by showing and later on also verbally.

- MM what happens from there?
 DD [inaudible, shows the next movements]
 MM [tries the movement] I think I might have to change the – keep the arm in relation to the back but change the back, so that the arm comes forwards [showing all the while] [...] let's open up that leg then. what's the where's the arm going?
 ...
 MM I feel like I could do another [everyone trying out snaky arms] ... do you step forward on that leg?
 DD um ... I didn't but we can [does the arm movement while taking steps forward, others copy]
 MM [copies as well; inaudible] I think do that ... can you let the legs slide but the finger lead? [while showing]

The dancers are trying out the material DD gives and the changes MM makes, mostly without talking, although they do ask a few questions. When there's a slight pause, they start to try out ways to connect to each other at the end of the snaky arm. Before moving from one bit to the next, MM often says "nice" or gives other feedback. MM asks them to repeat the whole phrase a couple of times while he watches and gives vocal cues, before breaking for lunch.

Most of the other dancers' phrases don't make it into the piece. Phrases from earlier research are added to the sequence, which keeps growing until quite late in the process. Unlike the rest of the piece, this is strict unison, and requires a lot of rehearsing and an outside eye to get right. The chorus line is performed twice: in silence as the piece begins, and with piano music at the very end of the work. I'm not privy to all the conversations or instructions about how to perform the section, but as the opening night approaches, I get the feeling that not all the dancers are sure about the intention of the section. I find it impossible to judge its effect on the audience since I am by now reasonably familiar with the movements, having tried some of them myself and seen most of the rehearsals. My eyes look for missed movements, points that usually go 'wrong', the expressions on people's faces as they advance towards the audience. Nevertheless, I find it very watchable: it lays the dancers very bare in front of me as individuals. The unison, performed in a straight connected line, offers a chance to take in each performer.

Discussion

MM used the same task in research the week before. Back then the chorus line phrases were built by the dancers from a combination of all their movements and the dancers were asked to do much of the initial joining together of the material. They taught their phrases to each other and joined them into a longer phrase, connecting side by side, on their own, before MM started to modify the movements. This time, however, the choreographer selects only one phrase for everyone to learn and takes an active role in the joining of the line. DD's role is different from the other dancers in this section of the rehearsal, first because she is in charge of teaching the phrase and then because she is consulted about her original phrase while the modifications are made. At first, she is in front of everyone else, showing them what to do and helping them with verbal cues. That

she is only temporarily in charge becomes apparent when MM steps away from the group and turns to watch them. Only he has the licence to do this, and his move signals a change in the situation. By saying “nice” after the last repetition of the phrase, he reclaims his initiative. At the same time, DD’s phrase shifts from her control into common (or the choreographer’s) property. When MM asks DD “do you step forward on that leg?” DD responds “*I didn’t but we can*” (emphasis added). MM then picks up her physical suggestion for the stepping forward and immediately modifies it.

While the description above covers only a small part of the creation of one section in one work and should not be used as a basis for generalisations, some communicational aspects stand out. Perhaps most obviously, the dancers do not have much of a verbal presence in this part of the process. In dance literature, the dancer’s silence implies powerlessness. The choreographer has the authority to expect silence from the dancer. But what does the dancer’s silence actually entail? In the choreographic process, the dancer’s verbal activity may be limited at times, but inasmuch as the work is made “on” her, she is still an indispensable part of the process. She may not always be invited to take part in the process verbally, but this does not mean that she is not communicating. When the dancers generate movement according to the choreographer’s instructions, they are communicating their understanding of those instructions as well as their own creativity. When they learn material and try out the choreographer’s adjustments, they are providing him with important information about what the movement looks like, how it does or does not work. The (largely) non-verbal response is no less crucial than the (largely) verbal instruction for the success of the interaction.

To some extent the scene is reminiscent of that depicted by Martin: the choreographer is the authority who speaks and the dancers are the physical and social body that tries to perform his vision. When the choreographer speaks, the dancers usually give him their full attention, facing him, looking at him. When he asks them to do something, they respond quickly. Initially, the dancers only have enough information to get started. When one of them asks whether it is enough to have seven movements instead of the requested eight, she has no way of knowing that eight is a random number that will have no significance regarding the outcome, nor that she will not be asked to teach her phrase to the others – in fact, her phrase will not be used at all.

In interviews, the dancers pointed out that in contemporary dance it is common for the dancers to be asked to “engage on various levels with the work”, which often means generating movement material.

Most people don’t work in a way of like here’s the steps, I’m gonna teach you a load of steps. Some people do, I’ve certainly worked like that [...] but most of the time you’re required to engage on various levels with work.²⁰

In contemporary dance it feels like the dancer – even if she’s not irreplaceable in each work – still she is in such a big role in producing the movement material [...] ²¹

Inviting the dancers to engage in movement creation can be a show of trust and help build a collaborative relationship. However, as was the case in the example above, it is not always clear to the dancers what the movement material is for and whether it will be used in the work, which may put the dancer in a precarious, powerless position. Dealing with

this communicative uncertainty was described by one interviewee as part of the dancer's job:

It's his piece, and then I try to, if I don't understand, I just try to do my best to bring something that he wants as well. Of course I want to understand everything and of course I want to do the way I want to do but it's not my job.²²

Conclusion

What is the dancer's job then, as regards her interaction with the choreographer? Many writers have pointed out the difference in the dancer's and the choreographer's perspectives on dance/movement: the choreographer, as the first audience of the work, has a visual view of the dance, whereas the dancer's experience is primarily – although not exclusively – physical.²³ As regards communication, this means that the dancers need to interpret the choreographer's directions and negotiate the physical possibilities and limitations of the choreographer's vision. The chorus line was born from the dancers' active engagement in generating movement within the given parameters, trying out the choreographer's suggestions and honing his choices, the dancers' relative quietness perhaps allowing the choreographer to maintain his train of thought. The choreographer may have been the one verbally in charge, throwing movements and adjustments at the dancers, but even when the dancers were not asked to actually solve the problems amongst themselves, their communicative role in trying out the suggested movements was crucial. Interaction with dancers is what gives the choreographer the means to make his selections. Sometimes he may make his choice based on the dancers' ease, at other times he might prioritise the visual effect and ask the dancers to make it work in their bodies. Either way, he is dependent on the non-verbal – and of course also verbal – feedback from the dancers, i.e. their execution of his instructions.

Susan Leigh Foster²⁴ has written about the versatility required of “the hired body”, the dancer who during her career works for a range of different choreographers with different demands on her body. Similarly, Rouhiainen's²⁵ interviews with contemporary dancers and choreographers revealed that the dancers are expected to place at the choreographer's disposal “a multitalented body easily capable of adapting to various kinds of dance tasks” but that they “also need to be able to draw on their bodily experience, to be attuned to a bodily memory, to be attentive and sensitive to their work environment, as well as to interpret the shifting work-processes they are engaged in.” I believe that this attentiveness and sensitivity to the work environment are largely a matter of communication. Dancers need to quickly tune into the nature of the process and communicate accordingly. There might be room for conversation or the choreographer might prefer to keep his cards close to his chest. The dancer might be invited to voice her thoughts and questions or to seek solutions through improvisation and practice. The freelance dancer's interactive role may vary considerably from job to job and indeed within any choreographic process. The ability to translate each choreographer's desires into suitable movement, to ask for clarification when needed, and the physical communication required to make something work in a group are all part and parcel of the dancer's professional skills and enable collaboration in a creative relationship which often, at its heart, is not collaborative in the sense of being an equal partnership. Defining

this set of communication skills more precisely will be one of my goals as I move forward with this research.

There are many approaches to choreographic processes, eliciting different kinds of roles and behaviour from the participants, but the dancer is hardly only a highly skilled “instrument”. Rather, she actively engages in varying communicative strategies as befits the nature of the process. The dancer not only makes movement and performs it but she, for her part, makes the interaction within the choreographic process work (or not). It is through constant interaction that she becomes an agent in making the dance.

Copyright 2013, Tuuli Tahko

Notes

1. I will use the masculine third person singular pronoun for the choreographer and the feminine for the dancer throughout this paper for no other reason than having observed a male choreographer in my case study and wanting to keep it clear which role I am referring to.
2. The section introduced in this presentation was chosen mainly because the quality of the video footage enabled a reasonably accurate transcription of events; filming in a way that is useful for a close reading of communication but not obstructive for the participants of a dance rehearsal is tricky at best and impossible at worst.
3. Sally Gardner, “The Dancer, the Choreographer and Modern Dance Scholarship: A Critical Reading.” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 2007, 25 (1), p. 36.
4. Leena Rouhiainen, *Living Transformative Lives: Finnish Freelance Dance Artists Brought into Dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology*. Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2003, p. 250.
5. AA, personal interview, 17 January 2013.
6. The discussion here deals with companies and processes where a choreographer (or more than one choreographers) has been named rather than a dance-making collective with no assigned leadership roles.
7. Randy Martin, *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self*. New York & London: Bergin and Garvey, 1990.
8. Jaana Parviainen, *Bodies Moving and Moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art*. Tampere studies in philosophy. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1998, p. 106.
9. Rouhiainen 2003, pp. 238, 247.
10. Rouhiainen 2003, pp. 258-259.
11. Martin 1990, p. 98.
12. Martin 1990, p. 118.
13. Rouhiainen 2003, p. 260.
14. See e.g. Leena Rouhiainen, “Artistic Research and Collaboration.” *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 2008, 20, pp. 51-59.
15. Jo Butterworth, “Too Many Cooks? A Framework for Dance Making and Devising” in Jo Butterworth & Liesbeth Wildschut, eds., *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 178.
16. Martin 1990, p. 98.
17. Rouhiainen 2008, p. 51.

18. Many of my interviewees expressed an interest in collaborative modes of working and the types of communication involved in them, but a proper discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this paper.
19. Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin Bavelas & Don D. Jackson. *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*. New York: Norton, 1967, p. 49.
20. MM, personal interview, 10 April 2013.
21. CC, personal interview, 31 January 2013.
22. DD, personal interview, 31 January 2013.
23. Cf. e.g. Martin 1990, p. 86, Parviainen 1998, p. 135, and Carole Hamby, "Dance and the Dancer." *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1984, 24 (1), pp. 39-46.
24. Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in Jane C. Desmond, ed., *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997, pp. 235-257.
25. Rouhiainen 2003, p. 250.

Bibliography

- Butterworth, Jo. "Too Many Cooks? A Framework for Dance Making and Devising" in Jo Butterworth & Liesbeth Wildschut, eds., *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*. London: Routledge, 2009: 177-194.
- Foster, Susan Leigh. "Dancing Bodies" in Jane C. Desmond, ed., *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997: 235-257.
- Gardner, Sally. "The Dancer, the Choreographer and Modern Dance Scholarship: A Critical Reading." *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 2007, 25 (1): 35-53. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004124>>.
- Hamby, Carole. "Dance and the Dancer." *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 1984, 24 (1): 39-46. <DOI:10.1093/bjaesthetics/24.1.39>.
- Martin, Randy. *Performance as Political Act: The Embodied Self*. New York & London: Bergin and Garvey, 1990.
- Parviainen, Jaana. *Bodies Moving and Moved: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Dancing Subject and the Cognitive and Ethical Values of Dance Art*. Tampere studies in philosophy. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1998.
- Rouhiainen, Leena. "Artistic Research and Collaboration." *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 2008, 20: 51-59.
- Rouhiainen, Leena. *Living Transformative Lives: Finnish Freelance Dance Artists Brought into Dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology*. Helsinki: Teatterikorkeakoulu, 2003.
- Watzlawick, Paul, Janet Beavin Bavelas & Don D. Jackson. *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*. New York: Norton, 1967.

Of Irregular Pearls: Baroque Influences in Jiří Kylián's Work

Katja Vaghi

University of Roehampton, UK

Abstract

How can an historical period influence the production of a piece of choreographic work? What are the references used and how are they used? Does the type of references selected change over one's career? Is there such a thing as an historical period, or should we rather talk about a style, or even an attitude? What are the characteristics we are drawing on from? These are only few of the questions I am dealing with in my research on Jiří Kylián. Kylián heavily draws on the baroque as a source of inspiration and uses the period to rethink our contemporary society.

Still not all references are alike. They do not work at the same level in the dances nor have the same influence on interpretation. Some are more obvious and works on more superficial elements (as for example costumes and props) others are less open and influence the deeper levels of the structure. Is it possible to differentiate and name these kind of referencing practices and how do these different kinds of references influence the construction of meaning? Following Oscar Calabrese (1992) and Mieke Bal's (2001) examples, I shall bring examples from Kylián's dances to explain how different types of references work and what their relationship to the baroque is.

Introduction

The work of the Finnish artist Susanne Gottberg (1964) creates a bridge between past and present. This is particularly true of *Object* (2011), exhibited 06.04.–09.06.2013 at the Trondheim Kunstmuseum (Norway); the painting, which represents an empty white woman's headpiece, clearly recalls Robert Campin's (1375 – 1444) *Portrait of a Woman* (1430). It actually can be defined as a copy¹ of Campin's work from which the young woman has been erased. In the exhibition, nothing points to the connection between the two, leaving the reference to the viewer to be discovered. Through the active reception of *Object*, Gottberg establishes a tacit link between past and contemporary society.

The phenomenon described above best epitomizes the core concern of this research, although this article deals with the same concept in dance. It explores the baroque element in the work of the Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián (1947)² analysing the fluid exchange between past and present, and attempting to explain the artist's choice of such a distant period. This paper gives only a brief sample of a larger discussion through an introduction to the analysis of light and costumes in *Bella Figura* (1995) in relation to Caravaggio's and Bernini's work³.

The theoretical framework sustaining this paper goes back to the publication in 1987 of Omar Calabrese's *L'era neo Barocca* (translated into English in 1992 as *Neo-baroque*) which introduced a new critical term: the Neo-baroque⁴. From the onset Calabrese's analysis of Italian entertainment culture seeks to find "a character, a quality, a general distinctive sign that we could use to define our epoch"⁵, but he concludes that rather than

the contemporary moment being a new historical period, or the postmodern period, it is the reappearance of a previous one, the Baroque, requiring the term ‘Neo-baroque’. Along similar lines, many scholars after him argue for the return of the baroque in contemporary society⁶. This paper is an application of Calabrese’s notion, which remains under-researched in dance, to in relation Jiří Kylián’s choreographed dances⁷. Alongside Calabrese two other sources are highly influential for this study: Angela Ndalians’ consideration of virtual reality in her analysis of the US contemporary entertainment industry and Mieke Bal’s investigation of baroque-inspired contemporary visual art, including a close reading of these works in relation to Caravaggio.

Calabrese, in his analysis of the Italian entertainment industry, highlights several similarities between contemporary society and the baroque, grouping them into categories such as limit and excess, detail and fragment, instability and metamorphosis, knot and labyrinth, to mention a few. In this research, analogous categories are applied to dance. Calabrese sees the baroque period as characterised by “those categories that powerfully ‘excite’ the ordering of the system, that destabilize part of the system by creating turbulence and fluctuations within it and thus suspending its ability to decide on values”⁸. The baroque is thus opposed to ‘order’ and ‘system’ in ways that are also reflected in contemporary society. Similarly, Ndalians applies these categories and gives detailed examples from the multimedia aspects of the contemporary film industry, which consist of sequels, series and spin-offs from different films and videogames⁹. On the other hand, Bal’s use of Calabrese’s categories is complemented by a narratological approach to the analysis of deictic elements in contemporary visual art¹⁰. By defining one artist-source Bal is able to investigate specific baroque influences on contemporary artworks. The analysis of time and space elements allows her to establish a correspondent to deictic function in visual art and thus analyse the effect produced by the work onto the viewer.

To conclude this brief introduction and set these theoretical approaches in a bigger context, it is possible to see how there has been a shift in the definition of what is understood as baroque; from a datable historical period, it has become a style tied to the characteristics of an art object, such as the particular way in which light or colour is used and has now shifted to a way of doing things and of perceiving the world, or what Gilles Deleuze (1925 – 1995) in his book on Leibniz defines as an ‘operative function’¹¹.

Jiří Kylián and *Bella Figura*

In observing Kylián’s works, it is possible to argue that many of his later pieces express an explicit baroque influence. This is particularly clear in *Sarabande* (1990), *Sweet Dreams* (1990), *Petite Mort* (1991), *Bella Figura* (1995) *Six Dances* (1986) and *Birth-Day* (2001). In these pieces the baroque is present not only in the form of foil swords and floating dresses but also in the music and in light design, together with other elements. Kylián himself has stressed the connection. In an interview on the DVD version of *Bella Figura* he maintains that we are “children of the Baroque”¹². It is thus safe to state that the period exerts some influence on his choreography. This paper focuses on two aspects of this last dance.

Bella Figura is a 30-minute-long work that premiered on 12th October 1995 at the AT&T Danstheater in The Hague and was danced by the main company NDT I. The title,

Bella Figura, is taken from the Italian ‘fare una bella figura’ which literally means ‘make a beautiful figure’ but should be understood as ‘making a good impression’¹³. In adverse circumstances, it implies keeping a poker face.

With references to the title, in the interview Kylián explains that the expression perfectly describes the general condition of dancers and performers, since they have to put on what he calls a ‘brave face’ in order to perform. To come onto the stage, they are forced to strip away their own history so that no personal material filters on stage. Disconnected from their personal experiences, they nonetheless have to adopt a transcendental version of these. Paradoxically, what they hide is also what defines them as human beings and as artists, and in the end, enables them to perform. With the piece, Kylián aims to expose this paradox to the audience’s eyes¹⁴. At the same time, through the idea of a common experience on and off stage, he questions the difference between performance and life as something typical of the baroque. In fact, a notion central to baroque art is the blurring between object and subject, which together with other baroque influences, can be seen in the use of costumes and light design. Similarly to Bal, this research takes a comparative approach, using Caravaggio’s and Bernini’s work as examples of baroque art.

Costumes

Starting with the analysis of costumes, throughout the piece there are three sets of costumes: skin-coloured underwear, red tight-fitting leotards and black shorts, and big red skirts. Even though these are not full baroque attires, they nonetheless convey a sense of baroque. This is particularly true for the first, the skin-coloured underwear, and the last, the red skirts. The remaining costumes, the leotards, could also be seen as bearing baroque influences as they are very similar to corsets, a typical item of the period. In fact, Kylián uses an analogous costume but in a different colour in *Petite Mort* (1991). Since these have become a staple outfit in Kylián’s later pieces, this research only concentrates on the other two, skin-coloured underwear and red skirts¹⁵.

The skirts are worn for the group sequence in the middle section of the piece. Unlike the rest of the tight-fitting costumes, they are very large and long, almost covering the dancers’ feet. Inspired by the *robe à la française*, a type of dress worn during the early eighteenth century formed by an overskirt, a main skirt and panniers on each side of the hips, the skirts lend a flowing quality to the dancers’ movements with the characteristic delayed oscillation of material around the hips. In *Petite Mort*, too, Kylián proposes a similarly rigid version of this costume but with a quite different and comical effect, as while wearing them the dancers roll onto the stage. In *Bella Figura*, the skirts are slightly reworked from the original *robes*, adding what look like pockets on each side, and both men and women wear them with bare chests. In an interview for the Semperoper restaging of the piece, Kylián explains that the skirts¹⁶ are a ‘unisex’ statement conveying the idea that every individual has an aspect of the opposite sex¹⁷ in them, connected to the Chinese notion of yin-yang.

The effect of seeing both men and women with bare chests and large skirts, elicits a particular kind of frisson, as from the back the dancers all look alike but as soon as they face the audience their difference becomes visible. Thus, for the viewer the unisex

costume produces an oxymoronic effect in line with Kylián's intent: while the men's bare torso's have no direct sexual attribution, their skirts do not fit with the standards of manliness. On the other hand, while the women's skirts fit the feminine cultural stereotype, exposed breasts have a direct, erotic connotation. Interestingly, the vulnerability initially associated with the women's bare chests is quickly transmitted to the men, making them look exposed as well. The feeling conveyed is that of having entered a private realm, a space where the baring of the chest is legitimate. Similarly, in baroque art, the private space is also intruded upon by the viewer's glance. Committed to the dramatization of action, baroque artists often depicted their figures at the peak of private moments such as Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St Thomas* (1601-2), in which St Thomas' finger is seen entering Jesus's wound, or Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1647-1652), in which the Saint is represented levitating at the peak of religious passion.

A similar effect of vulnerability and intimate private space is also produced by the second costume, the skin-coloured underwear. Used twice in the piece, at the beginning and after the group sequence, it appears in both cases juxtaposed against the black of the curtains. In the second appearance, after the group dance, two female dancers stay behind and drag the curtains closed on each side of the stage. In the frame thus created they lower their skirts halfway revealing skin-coloured underwear, and then kneel down. The framing draws attention to the fragile beauty of their moving bodies engaged in a duet at a distance. Reaching toward and evading one another, their bodies assume contorted and unnatural postures similar to the stark asymmetrical poses found in baroque paintings, as in Caravaggio's *John the Baptist* (1602) in which the Evangelist is seated in a slouched position and reaches back away from the viewer with his right hand, and in *Amor Vincit Omnia* (1601-02) in which Cupid is depicted frontally with his right side twisted and his leg bent as if jumping over an obstacle. The baroque tendency to theatricality can be seen in the capture of characters mid-action in distorted postures that give the sensation of movement, as the story is told through the events depicted rather than through symbols as in previous periods¹⁸. This can be clearly seen in Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* (1647-1652) where the movement of levitation is intensified by the folds of her dress, and in *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-25)¹⁹ where the god is seen reaching for the Nymph as her hands are already transforming into branches reaching for the sky.

On the other hand, Kylián's costumes also enhance the contrast between the colour of the skin and the black of the curtains that frame the dancers. This recalls Caravaggio's dramatic use of light, or *chiaroscuro*, as seen in *John the Baptist*, where a light shines from the left bottom corner, and in *Amor Vincit Omnia*, where the light shines from the left at the height of Cupid's knee. At the same time, in the dance scene the strong light on the girls' skin washes away any natural colour, making the bodies appear white and thus recalling Bernini's contorted sculptural groups (*Apollo and Daphne* (1622-25)). As final point of similarity the colours chosen by Kylián for this piece (red, white and black) are the same ones found in many of Caravaggio's works.

Light design

With the mention of colours and *chiaroscuro* the focus shifts to the use of light. While the baroque taste for theatricality is most apparent in the tendency to depict dramatic

narrative moments at their peak (as seen in Caravaggio's *The Beheading of John the Baptist* (1608), in which a guard is caught in the middle of beheading John the Baptist, the sword half way through St. John's neck and the guard reaching for a knife to finish him off), it is also traceable to the use of light as a tool for enhancing effect. Often in Caravaggio's paintings and those of his followers, the Caravaggisti, an external light comes into the scene from the side, highlighting the important elements. The light creates a stark contrast between the lighter and darker sections of the works, as in *The Calling of St. Matthew* (1599-1600), in which only Matthew is in the cone of light that comes in from the right-hand side and the majority of the painting is in darkness. The subjects are thus literally put under a spotlight. The lighting design conceived by Kylián and realised by Tom Bevoort evokes a similar mood, with three aspects contributing to this effect: the direction, the type and the intensity of light.

With regard to the first element, in the same way as in baroque painting, strong sidelights at person height shine from the wings so that each of the dancers' movements cast a shadow onto the floor and onto the other bodies. This is not 'neutral' lighting²⁰ designed for visibility but rather has the purpose of highlighting the dancers' physicality and thus their humanity as it focuses on the quirky aspects of the human body in motion. The light and shadows become part of the narration with the effect of drawing the audience closer.

As for as the second aspect, in this piece there are several types of light, but two in particular are interesting for this discussion. As two dancers appear on stage in the prologue, they are lit from two different sources. A warm light shines in front of the curtain on the female dancer suspended in the air as the curtain embraces her with its folds and, in the frame, a cooler light shines on a man positioned upside down in a shoulder-stand. The man wears skin-coloured shorts, recalling Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of St. Peter* (1600). As in Caravaggio's painting and due to his upside-down position, the details of the skin, muscles and bones are magnified, giving a sculptural effect that emphasises the three-dimensional quality of the body. Under the cooler lights, the man's movements acquire a particular intensity and sense of openness, which is also due to the column of air between the curtains, which is brightly illuminated. On the other hand, the warmer light on the female dancer gives the impression of access to something intimate, hidden in a folded fabric and revealed by the light of a candle. The co-presence of these two different types of light creates an interesting frisson that is repeated several times in the piece.

The final important aspect is the intensity of the light sources. As seen before, *chiaroscuro* is characterised by stark contrast between light and the elusive details of what lies in shadow. Kylián, besides using the effect to create powerful shadows on the bodies, also applies it to create contrast across the whole stage, particularly through the use of the curtains. At the onset of the group scene, the curtain slowly descends into the arms of a line of dancers, hiding their torsos so that ultimately only their feet and skirts are visible. The stage is thus cut into two sections with a contrast created between the bright cool light being reflected on the floor behind the dancers' legs and the faint warm light in front of the curtain.

As should be clear by now, the curtains are a very important feature of this particular work. Per convention the curtains create a contrast with the lights; the one indicates the beginning of a performance and the other its end. Kylián uses them both to create a game

of frames. Notably, frames are yet another characteristic of baroque art, as can be seen in Pietro da Cortona's (1596 – 1669) work *Allegory of Divine Providence and Barberini Power* (1633 – 9) created for the grand salon in the Barberini Palace. The five frames represented on the ceiling of the salon are constantly transgressed by the characters moving from one to the next. Indeed, it can be argued that the attitude of baroque art is largely focused on the act of overcoming and transgressing intentionally tight frames, thus producing a sensation of overflow and excess. In *Bella Figura* the space of the performance is altered through the use of frames that help focus attention on the action. The curtains are used to cut the stage in sections vertically and horizontally by moving from side to side. They are also used as props, to be held and folded, thus losing their state of invisibility and becoming part of the narration. The illusion of the fourth wall is broken when the curtains are touched by the dancers, as they belong to the realm of what is off-stage and thus are part of the same diegesis as the public. The effect is one of connection between the audience and the dancers.

On the other hand, in holding the curtains the dancers foreground their physicality by creating folds in the fabric. For Deleuze the fold is the figure that epitomizes the baroque: “The baroque refers not to an essence but rather to an operative function, to a trait. It endlessly produces folds”²¹. In the piece there are several physical folds, such as the folds of the skirts, as opposed to the sleek appearance of the dancers in leotards, and the folds in the curtains. Nevertheless, the fold Deleuze is referring to is the characteristic tendency of baroque art to blur the boundaries between object and subject, which is precisely Kylián's intention with *Bella Figura*. At different levels in the piece, continuity is created between the space of the observer and that of the observed, thus creating folds in the experience of the viewer.

Conclusion: the Baroque that undefined past

The examples of baroque influences on Kylián's work, suggest that his is a loose reference to the period. Similarly to Deleuze, he perceives the baroque to be an operative function, a way of perceiving reality rather than a style or an historical period. This is confirmed by the fact that Kylián does not give an exact timeframe. He is interested in the temporal distance between the baroque and today rather than in the exact dating of the period. As for his rationale, it can only be supposed that the temporal distance enables audiences to see what remained constant. The past is used to underline what remains the same throughout history: our humanity. The blurring of past and present thus echoes the blurring of the line between subject and object.

Copyright 2013, Katja Vaghi

Notes

1. For reason of space the phenomenon shall be simply referred to as copy. In fact, the instance might be interpreted, applying Andreas Böhn's terminology, both, as a quotation of statement (Äusserungszitat) and of form (Formzitat). Briefly, with quotations of statement are intended those instances that refer to a particular event. On the other hand,

- with quotations of form are understood all those the reference to aspects of a work that point to the modality in which the reference occurs, in this case, as it is an example of Renaissance portrait, genre convections and historical period.
2. Trained in Prague and London, Kylián started his professional dance career by joining John Cranko's Stuttgart Ballet in 1968. His initial successful experiments with choreography under Cranko lead him to be appointed in 1976 as artistic director of the Nederland Dans Theater (NDT), a role that he left in 1999 to become house choreographer until December 2009. He still continues to create and to coach younger generations of choreographers.
 3. In this paper the analysis shall be restricted to these two visual elements only. A more detailed analysis encompassing the other levels of the choreographic works are included in the final research.
 4. Calabrese bases his research on Severo Sarduy's notion of the 'Relapse'. Sarduy, S. *Barroco*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1974.
 5. In dance studies, Mark Franko has dealt with the Baroque in terms of its political meaning in relation to early court ballet.
 6. Calabrese, O. *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992, 3.
 7. Eco in Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*; Bal, M. *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Prosperous History*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999; Ndalians, A. *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004; Hills, H. *Rethinking the Baroque*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011; and in dance Franko, M. *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
 8. Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*, 26.
 9. One of the reproaches moved to Calabrese by Ndalians is that his discourse is limited to few examples with only fragmented analyses.
 10. Deitic words are language markers that define the position in space and time and, the relation between speaker and receiver. Examples are: "here", "there", "then", "now", "I", "you".
 11. Deleuze, G. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. London-New York: Continuum books, 2006.
 12. Kylián, J. (dir.). *Nederlands Dans Theater Celebrates Jiří Kylián: Including an Introduction of the Three Ballets* [DVD], Halle/Saale: Arthaus-Musik, 2005.
 13. To open an aside, in Italian, most of the time when the expression 'bella figura' is used without the verb 'fare' (or to do) it describes the opposite: "to make a meagre impression".
 14. Kylián, *Nederlands Dans Theater Celebrates Jiří Kylián: Including an Introduction of the Three Ballets*.
 15. The same skirt reappears the year afterward in the spoof ballet *Trompe L'Oeil* (1996), a piece created for NDT III, the older company, and containing more than one reference to *Bella Figura*.
 16. Again, in *Trompe l'Œil* the skirts are worn by men and women alike.
 17. See the interview to Kylián for the Dresden restaging 2012 by the Semper Opera Ballet.
 18. More precisely, as a rule of thumb, the Renaissance features the characters as seemingly detached from the background whereas in the Baroque they are involved in it.
 19. It is clear that Kylián's ideal of beauty is not that of the perfect body but rather its quirky aspects.
 20. This design does not illuminate the subjects evenly and with a minimal amount of shadows as can be seen in contemporary productions of the *Sleeping Beauty* (1890).
 21. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 3.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Kent, D. and C. Dumais-Lvowsky. *Jiří Kylián: Mémoires Oubliette*. Halle/Saale: Arthaus-Musik, (2011). [DVD: *Mémoires Oubliette, Wings of Wax*]
- Kylián, J. (dir.). *Nederlands Dans Theater Celebrates Jiří Kylián: Including an Introduction of the Three Ballets* [DVD], Halle/Saale: Arthaus-Musik, 2005. [DVD: *Bella Figura, Sleepless, Birth-Day*]

Secondary Sources

- Adshead, J. (ed.). *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*. London: Dance Books, 1988.
- Adshead-Lansdale, J. *Dancing Texts: Intertextuality in Interpretation*. London: Dance Books, 1999.
- Bal, M. *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Prosperous History*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Bal, M. "Auf die Haut/Unter die Haut: Barockes steig and die Oberfläche" in Burgard, Peter (ed.) *Barock: neue Sichtweisen einer Epoche*. Vienna: Böhlau, 2001.
- Bauer, H. and A. Prater (2008) *Barocco*. Köln: Taschen, 2008.
- Boucher, B. *Italian Baroque Sculpture*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1998.
- Bremser, M. *Fifty contemporary choreographers*. Routledge: London, 1999.
- Burgard, P. (ed.). *Barock: neue Sichtweisen einer Epoche*. Vienna: Böhlau, 2001.
- Calabrese, O. *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Calloway, S. *Baroque Baroque: The Culture of Excess*. Hong Kong: Phaidon, 2000.
- Curiger, B. *Riotous Baroque: From Cattelan to Zurbarán, Tributes to Precarious Vitality*. Zurich: Snoeck, 2012.
- Deleuze, G. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. London-New York: Continuum books, 2006.
- Franko, M. *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Fuchs, R.H. *Dutch Painting*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1987.
- Hills, H. *Rethinking the Baroque*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.
- Jackson, N. "Dance and Intertextuality: Theoretical Reflections" in Doolittle, L. and A. Flynn, (eds.). *Dancing Bodies, Living Histories: New Writings About Dance and Culture*. Banff: The Banff Centre Press, 2000: 219-229.
- Kelly, M. *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Lansdale, J. *Decentring Dancing Texts: The Challenge of Interpreting Dances*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Martin, J. R. *Baroque*. Frome and London: Butler and Tanner, 1977.
- Ndalianis, A. *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004.
- Panofsky, E. "What Is Baroque" in: Lavin, I. (ed.). *Three Essays on Style: Erwin Panofsky*, Cambridge, Mass. – London: MIT press, 1995 [1934].
- Sarduy, S. *Barocco*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1974.

Online sources

- Aldrige, D. D. "Baroque", in J. Cannon (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Available from: <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t110.e357>> [accessed 26 April 2012]
- Sadie, S. "Baroque era, the", in L. Allison (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Available from: <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t114.e594>> [accessed 20 April 2012]
- Sadie, S. "Classical era, the", in L. Allison (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Available from: <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t114.e594>> [accessed 24 January 2013]

Address for correspondence:
Katja Vaghi
kvaghi@gmail.com or
katja.vaghi@roehampton.ac.uk

Do the Rite Thing: Construction and Tradition of German/ic Sword Dance Histories in the 20th Century

Hanna Walsdorf
Heidelberg University

Abstract

In the German-speaking world, the conception of sword dance history has been repeatedly changed and is ideologically charged. As a guild dance, the sword dances originated in the Middle Ages and were performed as ritual actions in relation to Carnival customs. But in the course of the rising nationalism in the first third of the 20th century, this context was to be denied in favor of a new perspective: Sword dances were now seen as the continuation of a direct line of cultic Germanic weapon dances. Through this outrageous but commonly accepted interpretation, the dances' past was rewritten in a pro-Germanic way, negating their actual social and ritual context. In the 1930s and 1940s, no other folk dance was as popular as the "ancient" sword or knife dance, which was associated with qualities such as manliness and martial strength. Therefore, it was re-contextualized into Nazi conventions and festivities.

Introduction

In three main sections, my paper looks into the Original, the Relative and the Transformed Context of German Sword Dance History. By evaluating contemporary print resources, it traces the ways in which German sword or knife dances and their use were made 'Germanic' and, consequently, a political instrument of the Nazi regime. In addition, the question of these dances' fate will be raised: How are they perceived today? Who uses them when, where and for what purpose? Whose tradition is purported to be authentic? Have we overcome the ideological charge of the past?

Original Context: Sword Dances in the Middle Ages

The first known mention of German sword dancing can be found in Tacitus, in chapter 24 of his ethnographic work *Germania* from 98 C.E.: "In terms of public diversions, there is only one that can be seen at practically every event. Naked youths, who enjoy the sport, throw their bodies back and forth between sword blades and spears. This exercise has bred certain skills, and the skills in turn have taken on form, yet not as a business or for pay, though the spectacle is rewarded by the onlookers' enjoyment."¹ Tacitus' report would remain the only one to confirm the practice of sword dancing on German soil up until the 14th century. "It was only when the guilds arose as a new and ambitious bourgeoisie in medieval German cities," Herbert Oetke writes, "that the 'sword dance' began to reappear in contemporary documents."² While sword dances performed by the guilds of smiths and cutlers in the Bavarian city of Nuremberg are recorded from 1350,

16th century records of sword dances – including a small number of depictions – survive from all over Germany. Generally speaking, the guilds – by no means limited to the cutlers and also including e.g. shoemakers, furriers and bakers – danced in the public squares and in the city streets – “in front of important buildings, before the courthouse, the homes of the city councilmen, and the houses of good customers.”³ Nevertheless, the records surviving from Nuremberg outnumber those of any other city:

“Beginning in 1449 until 1539, the city of Nuremberg commissioned the documentation of the ‘Schembart’ processions, pre-Lenten parades staged by the tradesmen’s guilds of Nuremberg that resembled our contemporary Carnival parades. These documentations were in the form of books which illustrated the costumes and formations of the various groups participating. These books also mention the names of the guild masters and their journeymen who marched. It was largely the guilds that staged the dances with the objective to represent their trade and to show their common interest. The dancers were linked by some object, swords, hoops, and in the case of the butchers’ guild, by leather rings that suggested sausages. In studying these illustrations one can see all the elements which we still see today in the various sword dances of European countries: there is the fool, the hobby horse, the man-woman, the bells and ribbons worn by the dancers.”⁴

In the available literature, it was nearly always taken as a given that modern sword dances were culturally linked to the old Germanic dances – yet in reality there were a broad range of sword dances. Depending on their form and function, there were weapon-based, war and guild dances, which may be classified as

- *Linked sword dances* (All dancers are joined by their swords and execute most of the figures in this position.)
- *Martial or military combat dances* (In these dances, the members are not linked; each dancer holds his sword independently and two individuals or groups execute maneuvers simulating combat.)
- *Solo sword dances* (These are dances of skill and agility. The dancer executes a series of leaps and steps over the crossed swords without touching them.)⁵

In early 20th century literature, these types and functions seem to have either become confused or were simply ignored, suggesting that dancing with swords must be a martial sword dance, part of a direct lineage of cultic Germanic weapon dances. In many cities, over the course of the 19th century the sword dance had ceased to be a Carnival tradition, having “taken on a life of its own and adopting new elements, such as the Prussian jargon for military commands.”⁶ As such, the stage was perfectly set for the dance’s exploitation as a propaganda vehicle.

Relative Context: The Reinvented History of German/ic Sword Dances

No other folk dance is so prominent in the literature of the NS regimes as the sword dance. Its appeal to NS propaganda makers was self-evident, as the guild dance conveyed topoi like manliness and martial strength and was suggestive of a direct and historically significant link to their Germanic forefathers – titles like “On the Dance of the Germanic

Peoples and the Sword Dance”⁷ and “The Sword Dance as a Dance of Camaraderie”⁸ were characteristic of the discourse at the time. In his book on German folk dances, Richard Wolfram maintained that German “farmlands” had preserved the sword dance “as a custom with close ties to boys’ initiation and a rite of passage qualifying them for entry into boys’ and men’s groups”⁹ – a claim that is false, pure and simple: The sword dance was and is the guild dance of smiths and cutlers. Nonetheless, Wolfram’s interpretation reflected the popular consensus among folk dance researchers in the ‘Third Reich’ and was ideally suited to the work of the Hitler Youth (just as the similarly supported stick dances or the Hitler Youth’s self-made acrobatic boys’ dances were¹⁰).



Figure 1: “Schwerterschlagen” in Traunstein, from Wolfram 1936.

For example, Fritz Meinetsberger was far from the mark when he based the historical age of the German sword dance on “mentions by Tacitus and Plinius” and postulated “that it was most likely used by our Germanic forefathers as a test of skill and rite of passage for youths, derived from cultic rituals.” In so doing, he effectively equated the thoroughly historically charged cultic weapon dance with the knife dance practiced in his own time, proceeding to describe the influence of Christianity on the later history of the dance, claiming the sword dance had “all but disappeared from the fields of this new culture as an expression of dexterity, manly skill and bold fighting spirit” and in many cases “only with the establishment of guilds, supported by a characteristic cultural spirit, did it reemerge [...] as if dredged from the subconscious.”¹¹

Such attempts to find or invent historical foundations for the dance practices in the Third Reich can be found in practically every contemporary folk dance publication to address the sword dance – extensive monographs¹² were also published on the subject. Even the dance lexicon¹³ published by Otto Schneider in 1985 includes an article on

“Sword Dance,” the bibliography of which lists uncommented, canonized publications on the subject from the 1930s, such as that by Walter Jaide: In his *Collection of German Sword Dances* (1936), he presented extensive descriptions of the North German, Innviertel- and Nuremberg-style sword dances, also covering the German-Bohemian sword dance and Gastein-style coming-of-age dance, all of which had been musically edited by Ernst Günther Pook and were cited as being “historically authentic and tailored to dancing.” In the first chapter of his book, Jaide called for the sword dance to be adopted in the “customs within young men’s associations.” On “Dance and the Martial Bearing” he wrote:¹⁴

[...] As such, the sword dance would take its rightful place in the renewal of the dance ethos and dance ‘culture’ so urgently needed in our time, stemming from the spirit of the youth teams! – Moreover, it is precisely the sword dance that can make the inner unity of martial strength and ethnicity, politics and our essential folk ties, weapon and custom, dance and defense, into a concrete experience. And that in turn reflects an essential function of the German youth teams.”¹⁵

In his essay on “Movement and Ornament in Old Figure Dances” (1937), Erich Bitterhof took a similar approach, claiming that one could feel “the sacred acts of the ancient Germanic times, in every movement and in each moment”; there was, he claimed, “no other dance that demanded more inner discipline and alertness, dependability and camaraderie” and “in no other setting is one so palpably and intensely immersed as in the sword dance.”¹⁶

As can be seen in Fritz Meinetsberger’s descriptions, which he wrote for the 1934 Handworkers’ Week in Nuremberg, the aspect of disciplined camaraderie was truly central and indeed indispensable for the successful performance of the sword dance, the figures of which could “at times even be ascribed a near-mythological significance.” Following a walkthrough of the “dance plan, or better said battle plan,” a greeting and short speech, the dance was begun with “figures like lines, circles and loops,” and the resultant “splitting of the dancers into two opposing groups”; then came the “actual dance,” which included elements like sword-sharpening and the presentation of flowers in honor of certain people in attendance. Each of the two groups began moving “like a ‘chain’” to form a ring, which was connected to its partner ring by “bridges,” through which all dancers had to thread their way before lining up to form “a new bridge with their crossed blades.” After performing some challenging leaps themselves, the groups’ two “kings and leaders” had each youth in their group jump over the blades, then jumped again themselves, despite “the risk of having their heads cut off by their own comrades.” The subsequent battle between the two groups ensued after each “had assumed a traditional Germanic wedge formation and the two kings had stepped forward.” After “some tussling” the two groups stormed one another “with great fervor, before ultimately reforming for a battle between the members of each team.”¹⁷

“Now, quite unexpectedly, twelve of the fighters skillfully joined their blades together to form a lattice referred to as a ‘rose,’ each group lifting their king on the lattice framework just created and bringing them together for a noble trial by single combat. This climax of the day’s events was tantamount to that in a theatrical play and lacked none of the

dramatic charge. Once “Sieg heil!” had been shouted out anew, the dancers lined up their blades, allowing the two kings to leap back down to the ground.”¹⁸

Propagated as having a direct traditional bond to the cultic weapon dances of the Germanic peoples, the sword dance that was actually the guild dance of the knife makers and cutlers was torn from its actual historical context and recoded as a cultural practice: For the purposes of National Socialism it represented the revitalization of a legacy from the Germanic age which, with the addition of “military” vocabulary, allowed the skill involved in the dance movements and the subtlety of the figures to be interpreted as quasi-warlike and quintessentially manly action.

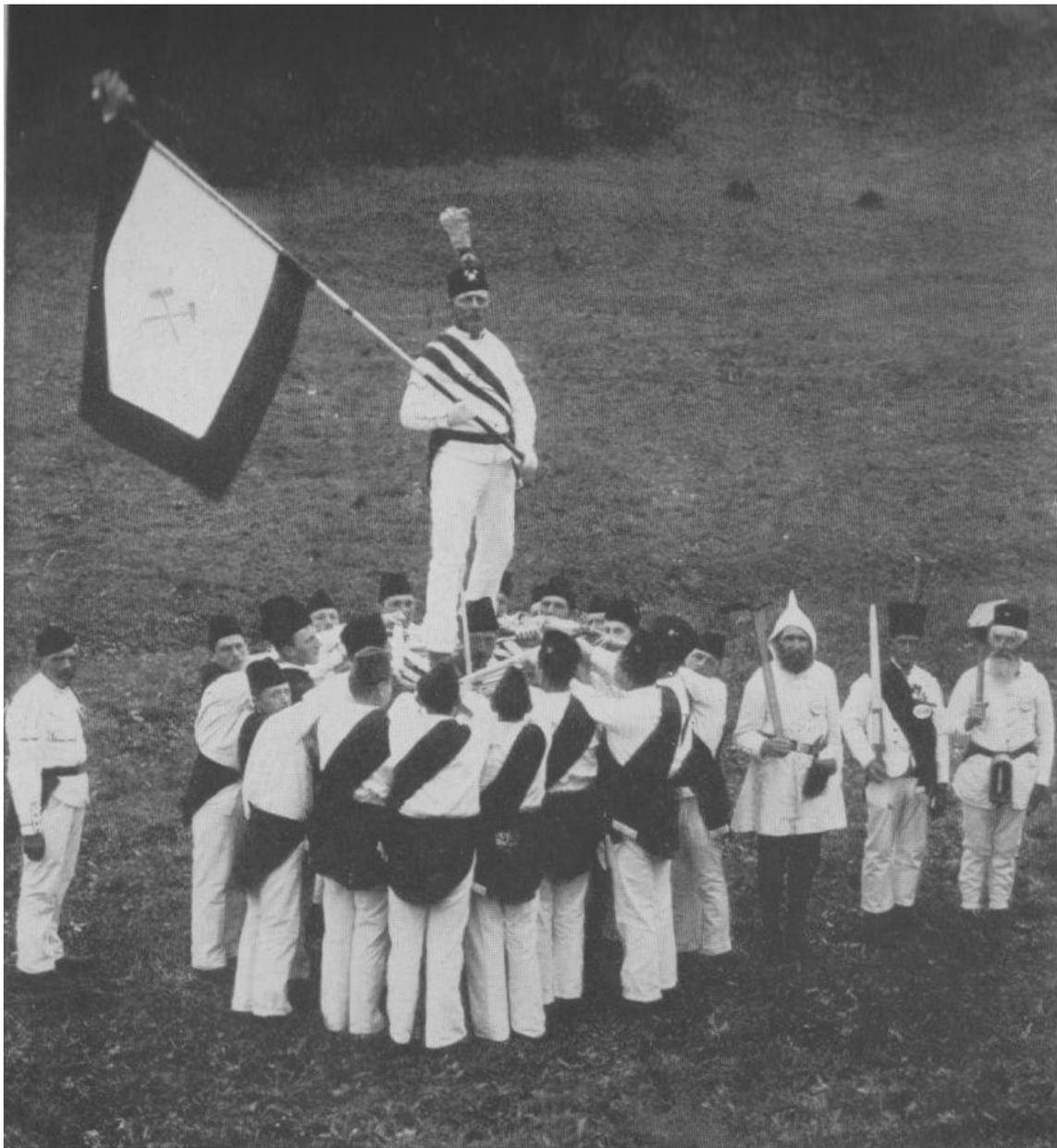


Figure 2: The “rose”: Sword Dance in Hallein (Austria), from Wolfram 1936.

Transformed Context: Sword Dance Folklore

In the years following the Second World War, the exploitations of folk culture in pursuit of the National Socialists' goals led "to an idiosyncrasy in broad groups of the populace that would reach as far as the following generation."¹⁹ In fact, folk dance in Germany has yet to rid itself of this brown patina – although folk dances continue to be practiced in numerous local culture preservation groups (especially in southern Germany). In their current form, they are just as far removed from their original guild-based context as they (for the most part) seek to distance themselves from the exploitation perpetrated by the Nazis. It goes without saying that medieval guild dances such as the various types of sword dances are historical cultural practices preserved by people who live in very different social structures today than did those who created them. Sword dance performances today are appealing as demonstrations of folklore – and most of the respective folk dance groups that maintain their own websites simply skip over the 'brown' part of their or their dances' history.²⁰

Conclusion

The historiography of German/ic sword dances must be considered confused and badly in need of a differentiated view. From its first mention in the first century C.E. to today's folklore renditions, there seem to be a number of misunderstandings, which, taken together with intentional misinformation, serve to obscure its true history. As the (ritual) contexts constantly changed and its meanings were manipulated to better suit ideological ends, the "German sword dance" can hardly be said to have an unbroken history. Further, it has yet to rid itself of its ideological charge – simply making it a blank space in the chronicle is hardly conducive to a representative historical heritage.

Copyright 2013, Hanna Walsdorf

Notes

1. Tacitus: *Germania*, chapter 24,1-2: "Genus spectaculorum unum atque in omni coetu idem: nudi iuvenes, quibus id ludicrum est, inter gladios se atque infestas frameas saltu iaciunt. Exercitatio artem paravit, ars decorem, non in quaestum tamen aut mercedem: quamvis audacis lasciviae pretium est voluptas spectantium."
2. Oetke, Herbert: *Der deutsche Volkstanz*, Vol. 1, Berlin (East) 1982, p. 114.
3. Oetke, Herbert: *Der deutsche Volkstanz*, Vol. 1, Berlin (East) 1982, p. 129.
4. http://germanfolkdancers.org/2010_summer_nl_german_sword_dance.htm.
5. http://germanfolkdancers.org/2010_summer_nl_german_sword_dance.htm.
6. <http://www.schwerttanz-ueberlingen.de/die-geschichte/>.
7. Rohr, Erich: *Deutscher Volkstanz*, Berlin 1934 (= Deutsches Volksgut. Schriftenreihe für die deutsche Jugend herausgegeben vom Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat, 5. Heft), pp. 8-11.
8. Van der Ven-Ten Bensel, Elise: Bericht aus den Niederlanden, in: *Volkstum und Heimat* 3 (1943), p. 55f.; 56.
9. Cf. Wolfram, Richard: *Deutsche Volkstanze*, Leipzig 1937 (= Bilder zur Deutschen Volkskunde, 5. Folge), p. 13.

10. Cf. Krautscheid, Jutta: Schnellkurs Tanz. Bühnentanz von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Köln 2004, p. 24f.
11. Cf. Meinetsberger, Fritz: Ein Bauerntanz hat andere Kraft als das Gehupf der Handwerkschaft? (1934), 2 pages, p. 1, TAL Rep. 019 IV b Nr. 1-17 (no number).
12. See also e.g. Meschke, Kurt: Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im germanischen Kulturkreis, Leipzig 1931; Wolfram, Richard: Schwerttanz und Männerbund, Kassel (no year); Au, Hans von der/Peinen, Bernhard von: Deutscher Schwerttanz, Kassel 1935; Beheim-Schwarzbach, Martin: Der Schwerttanz [Erzählung], Hamburg 1938.
13. Schneider, Otto: Tanzlexikon. Der Gesellschafts-, Volks- und Kunsttanz von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart mit Bibliographien und Notenbeispielen, Vienna 1985, pp. 478-480.
14. Cf. Jaide, Walter: Deutsche Schwerttänze. Quellengetreu dargestellt und zum Tanzen eingerichtet. Musikalische Bearbeitung von Ernst Günther Pook, Leipzig 1936, p. 5.
15. Ebda., p. 5f.
16. Bitterhof, Erich: Bewegung und Ornament im alten Figurentanz, in: Gymnastik und Volkstanz, Mai 1937, pp. 98-100; 100.
17. Cf. Meinetsberger: Ein Bauerntanz hat andere Kraft als das Gehupf der Handwerkschaft? (1934), p. 1, TAL Rep. 019 IV b Nr. 1-17 (no number).
18. Ebda.
19. Cf. Bröcker: Volksmusik, Sp. 1735f. und 1752. – Trachten- und Heimatvereine blieben auch nach 1945 wirksam, cf. ebda., Sp. 1753. See also Reichel, Peter: Steine des Anstoßes. Der Nationalsozialismus im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Westdeutschen, in: François, Etienne et al. (Ed.): Nation und Emotion, Göttingen 1995, pp. 168-188.
20. The US-based society of German Folk Dancers states on their website that “over the last 20 years, German folk dance groups have taken more notice of this type of dance, while Great Britain has always cultivated its ritual dance traditions, as have the Belgians. Recently England hosted an international gathering of sword dance groups, which was also attended by German sword dancers. The British publication “Rattle Up My Boys” (a quarterly publication for sword dancing enthusiasts) reports on group activities and scheduled events. It has been indirectly instrumental in establishing a network of sword dance groups all over Europe.” URL: http://germanfolkdancers.org/2010_summer_nl_german_sword_dance.htm.

Bibliography

- Au, Hans von der/Peinen, Bernhard von: Deutscher Schwerttanz, Kassel 1935.
- Beheim-Schwarzbach, Martin: Der Schwerttanz [Erzählung], Hamburg 1938.
- Bitterhof, Erich: Bewegung und Ornament im alten Figurentanz, in: Gymnastik und Volkstanz, Mai 1937, pp. 98-100.
- Corrsin, Stephen D.: Sword Dancing in Europe. A History, London 1997.
- Jaide, Walter: Deutsche Schwerttänze. Quellengetreu dargestellt und zum Tanzen eingerichtet. Musikalische Bearbeitung von Ernst Günther Pook, Leipzig 1936.
- Krautscheid, Jutta: Schnellkurs Tanz. Bühnentanz von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Köln 2004.
- Meschke, Kurt: Schwerttanz und Schwerttanzspiel im germanischen Kulturkreis, Leipzig 1931.
- Röhr, Erich: Deutscher Volkstanz, Berlin 1934 (= Deutsches Volksgut. Schriftenreihe für die deutsche Jugend herausgegeben vom Reichsbund Volkstum und Heimat, 5. Heft), pp. 8-11.
- Schmidt, Otto: Schwertertanz, in: Volkstum und Heimat 3 (1943), pp. 39-45.
- Schneider, Otto: Tanzlexikon. Der Gesellschafts-, Volks- und Kunsttanz von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart mit Bibliographien und Notenbeispielen, Wien 1985, pp. 478-480.

Van der Ven-Ten Bensel, Elise: Bericht aus den Niederlanden, in: Volkstum und Heimat 3 (1943), pp. 55f.

Walsdorf, Hanna: Bewegte Propaganda. Politische Instrumentalisierung von Volkstanz in den deutschen Diktaturen, Würzburg 2010.

Wolfram, Richard: Deutsche Volkstänze, Leipzig 1937 (= Bilder zur Deutschen Volkskunde, 5. Folge).

Wolfram, Richard: Schwerttanz und Männerbund, Kassel 1936.

Address for correspondence:

Hanna Walsdorf

hanna_walsdorf@yahoo.de

Daniel Nagrin: Dancing Agency in the 1960s

Diane Wawrejko, PhD, MFA, CMT

Columbia College Chicago

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the 1960s dances of American choreographer and dancer Daniel Nagrin through the lens of agency. Nagrin privileged choreographic content over form. I argue that his specific images are embodied expressions of social and political actions, which anthropologists Jennifer Hornsby and Drid Williams call 'agency'. I ask, "In what ways do Nagrin's choreographic methods of 'doing-acting' affirm agency? And how did Nagrin use agency to display, support, and protest cultural issues of this time?" Unlike his contemporaries, I show how Nagrin's use of specific embodied actions resulted in dances of the human condition that contextually reflected American issues and values during the 1960s. By viewing his dances and tracing patterns that occur in what he calls the "core of X," I assert that Nagrin re-negotiates content as actions/agency. As a result, my analysis challenges and problematizes ideas of what is American dance modernism. As a former student of Nagrin, I rely upon my choreographic studies with him supplemented by his written books. Other sources include videotapes from him of his 1960's dances, professional critiques, and reviews. The body-as-culture theories in which aesthetic, social, and cultural moments are constructed and embodied in the act of performance are useful to probe Nagrin's use of agency-as-action. I adapted post-structural dance analysis models to analyze Nagrin's choreographic methods. As a result, agentic themes emerged such as racism in "Not Me but Him (1965)"; work ethic in "Path (1965)"; and political protest in "Peloponnesian War (1968)".

Introduction

The 1960s solos of American choreographer Daniel Nagrin (1917-2008), often regarded as a minor pioneer of American modern dance (Gruen 1975), are examined as agency. Anthropologists (Hornsby 1980, 2004 and Williams 2004) define agency as embodied expressions (see Franko 1995) of social and political actions. I further define it as social consciousness and ask, "In what ways do Nagrin's choreographic methods of 'doing-acting' affirm agency?"

Nagrin described his unique six-step choreographic methodology, appropriated from acting techniques, as follows:

At the heart of Stanislavski's teachings and Tamiris's development of them lies a creative act which amazingly enough tends to be ignored most of the time by much of the dance profession. It asks the imagination, the heart and the mind of the dancer to build the entire performance around a specific set of images which are linked as if they were a model sentence

having a subject, a predicate and an object with subordinate clauses. The entire process can actually be encapsulated in one sentence: *Who (or what) is doing what to whom (or what) and where, in what context and under what difficulties and why?*

Nagrin 1997:33-34

I like to think of this as ‘someone (or thing) is doing something to someone; where and/or when, what is the obstacle, and why/to what extent.’ As a Master’s of Fine Arts choreography and performance student for three years at Arizona State University during the mid 1980s, I constantly heard Nagrin refer to this six-question process as “getting to the core of X.” This concept of X motivates the creation of his dances and is the crux of his entire opus. I call this “the Nagrin Method” and argue that it is grounded in the notion of human agency through actions. I rely upon my choreographic studies with Nagrin, his books (Nagrin 1994, 1997, and 2001) and videotapes (1967, 1985, and 2004), critiques, and reviews to conduct a contextual analysis.

With the theme of ‘dance actions’ in mind, my framework for analysis is based upon the following theories. Jennifer Hornsby’s “realistic account of human agency” views bodily actions as “exercises” of a person’s will in order to “bring about the things that they actually do” (Hornsby 2004:16, 21). Thus, the choices made are treated as causal power or agent-causation at work when actions are manifest. The agent has the capacity to act deliberately and *intentionally* based on ethics and motivation, and action is defined as “a *person’s* intentionally doing something (2004:19).”

The semasiological theory of Drid Williams contributes further when she states that human actions cannot be independent of the “social settings, intentions, and value systems in which they exist (2004:204).” Like Williams who emphasizes action as inclusive of bodily movements and lived experience, Nagrin defines action as “the inner life that drives what we see on the stage . . . ‘action’ becomes central. It refers to the *verb* that drives the dance and the dancer (Nagrin 2001:44).” These theories are useful as they support my examination of Nagrin’s agency-as-action dances.

My adapted post-structural models of Janet Adshead (1988) and Angela Kane (2003) are drawn upon to analyze Nagrin’s use of agency in his choreography. I will show how Nagrin appropriated Stanislavski’s methods to create agentic dances of the human condition. Agency emerges by tracing patterns that occur in Nagrin’s treatment of subject matter and thematic diversity. I argue that he arrived at his “core of X” through actions, particularly his use of minimal movement and expression. Nagrin re-negotiated these as content rather than form through the agentic actions of socially conscious dances. Unlike his contemporaries (Banes 2003), Nagrin’s use of specific embodied actions resulted in dances of the human condition that contextually reflected American issues and values during the 1960s. I assert that agentic themes emerge such as racism, work ethic, and political protest. Thus, my analysis challenges and problematizes ideas of what constitutes American dance modernism. It also provides insights into a non-formalist approach to choreography and criticism.

Contextualization

The 1960s was a tumultuous decade in America. Many upheavals and meta-revolutions occurred politically, socially, philosophically, and aesthetically which questioned all establishment norms. Pragmatism and the modern-Enlightenment manifesto that positioned man as possessing all the answers were destroyed after the first atomic bomb dropped in 1945 (Appleby et al 1994). The American mindset of the 1950s was dominated by McCarthy's fear of communism, the launching of Russia's Sputnik that placed the first man in space, and threat of nuclear holocaust (Kane 2000 and Manning 1988). During the 1960s, traditional foundations of American culture were shaken and challenged by Kennedy's New Era liberal social policies, various life-style experimentations (Banes 2003), women's and civil rights protests, cities burning due to unrest and riots, assassinations, and the divisive Vietnam conflict which was never declared a war. Since the contextual relationship between art and the cultural times is complex and possibly reflective (Adshead 1988 and 2007; Desmond 1997; and Williams 2004), it is plausible to assume that dance was experiencing a shift as well. Modern dance experienced its own cultural revolution through the application of such devices as audience engagement, defamiliarization, and the celebration of the everyday that blurred art and life (Banes 2003 and in Docherty 1999). Although Gus Solomons (1998:6) suggested that Nagrin was "influenced by the experiments of the avant-garde Judson Church group," this is suspect as personal information from Nagrin whilst a graduate student indicated otherwise. Nagrin worked with neither the Judsons nor Robert Dunn, teacher of composition classes during the 1950s and early 1960s that were attended by those later known as the Judson group. However, it is reasonable to assume that Nagrin possessed "a continual awareness of the contemporary world" (Schlundt in Cohen [ed] 1998:530-31) and changing times that were reflected throughout his works.

Nagrin's solos during this decade include his *Spring (1965)* concert tour featuring *A Gratitude (1964)*, *In The Dusk (1965)*, *Why Not? (1965)*, and *National Dance I & II (1965)*. Other dances are *Nineteen Upbeats (1965)*, *Not Me, But Him (1965)*, *Path (1965)*, and *Peloponnesian War (1968)*. Since Nagrin's first two questions are 'who are you' and 'what are you doing,' how movements are treated reveals further how he defined the core of X. Due to limitations on the length of this article and since the conference theme centres on dance actions, I will focus on these two questions of his six-step method.

Minimal Movement

Nagrin used minimal movements to further define and clarify his 'X,' or 'what X is doing,' which merits closer examination. Sally Banes (2003) asserts that art in the 1960s was minimalistic. Several critics such as Carbonneau (1995), Guest (1967), Jackson (1965), Michelotti (1996), Solomons (1998), and Vaughan (1975) commented on the minimalist movement characteristics within Nagrin's works during this time. These actions are marked by stripped-down, pedestrian movements seen for the first time in his experiments with performance art works such as *Peloponnesian War* and minimal, task-like works such as *Path*. The extent to which this minimalistic movement vocabulary is



Path by Daniel Nagrin, photographer unknown. Used with permission from the Daniel Nagrin Foundation Theatre, Film, & Dance Foundation, Library of Congress collection.

consistent with or differed from the 1960s dancers is examined. With minor exceptions, his movement contrasts with the physically virtuosic feats of his earlier Dance Portraits.

From viewing the concert videotape and DVD (Nagrin 1985 and 2004), *Spring '65* consists of several new works and some revivals. Several of these dances and even the spaces between them contain elements that further define the character of X. For example, movement minimalism emerges through a seamless flow of various commonplace actions and functions both between and within the dances. Stanislavski (1936:33) said all of the actions that “happen on stage must be for a purpose,” as no action or movement from the performer is unintentional. Taking this agentic notion into Nagrin’s works with the assumption that he is working from Stanislavski’s ideas, his core of X, therefore, is revealed in the intention of doing. Doing is seen through stillness, gestures and other non-weight-bearing movements, and pedestrian and task-like movements. Character-defining actions are evident in natural walking, operating the tape recorder, lighting a cigarette, drinking water, sitting down, changing and tying shoes, and wiping his face with a towel before the next dance begins.

In viewing *Why Not* (1965), some of X’s doing-actions are playing what appears to be an American street game called craps. Nagrin’s X throws imaginary dice by thrusting the arm outward and ecstatically snapping the fingers, hand slapping the rhythm, and foot

stamping. *In the Dusk's* movements contain statuesque poses and various uncoded arm movements sans torso. Between *National Dance* and *Not Me, But Him*, Nagrin performs some non-codified hand and arm gestures that flowed into the next dance. In the latter, some reviewers considered his movements to be effortless (Jackson 1965 and Marks 1965) and exciting, holding an audience's attention (Guest 1967). From the videotape, Nagrin begins with a pose, his back to the audience with right hand pointing a finger in the air. According to written accounts, *Nineteen Upbeats* used "common movement" (Osolin cited in Schlundt 1997:44) and gestures such as everyday grooming (Guest 1967). However, the specific intentions behind the actions are unknown since various correspondences with Nagrin (2005) proved unfruitful. This is not surprising from my experience with him regarding intention and reception. In *Peloponnesian War*, he changes clothes several times to reveal different characters, takes a bath, performs another morning



Peloponnesian War by Daniel Nagrin, photographer unknown. Used with permission from the Daniel Nagrin Foundation Theatre, Film, & Dance Foundation, Library of Congress collection.

routine of waking and dressing, arm-wrestles with a disembodied hand, sleeps, and smokes (Fortney 1968 and Schlundt 1997). Nagrin's random, pedestrian walks can be seen as similar to the art-for-art's-sake works of Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, and Kenneth King during this time. However, the difference is that Nagrin's actions are based in content with the intent of revealing the 'X.'

From viewing the videotape of *Spring '65*, these interjections of physical virtuosity and stamina appear which contrast with minimalism that further defines both the X and his actions. For example, the cartwheels and a double *tour en l'air* in *A Gratitude* contrast with tender and slow movements to define an exuberant character. *Why Not* employs a fast, uncoded spin. The first section of *National Dance* later included in *Peloponnesian War* uses steps from Eastern European traditional dances. These consist of a fast grapevine, then Ukrainian men's *bleking* hops that end in a small *plié* on one leg with the other leg stretched out to the side and heel touching the floor, and finishing with large jumps from a deep *grand plié* as seen in Russian men's folk dances. Nagrin's parody of a jazzy Broadway style with frenzied spins, kicks, leaps, and a wide, plastic smile are seen in *Not Me, But Him* and *National Dance II* from *Peloponnesian War*. In contrast are the slow, smooth qualities of *In the Dusk*'s aerial jumps and leaps.

Nagrín's continual popular culture display of the ordinary and every day movements reveals the character. This use of agency blurs the boundaries between real life and art. This is similar to Stanislavski's (1924:49) Realism focus, particularly in directing Chekhov's plays in which the common and ordinary in the world around him were used. The vernacular and pop art were emphasized by many 1960s artists who would "fling anything which is 'read' in front of us and call it 'art'" (Reid 1969:125). Examples are Andy Warhol's Brillo pad box and his multiple neon portraits of Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe (Banes, 2003). In general, art at this time could be anything that was displayed through the

use of ordinary gestures, actions, rhythms, and . . . household objects [incorporated] into their paintings and performances . . . blurring the boundaries between art and every day life, [an] arrant celebration of the banal . . . a shocking . . . fascination with the mundane.

Banes 2003:3

Nagrín did just that with his minimalist and quotidian dance actions to produce agency.

Expression

Nagrín further reveals his X through bodily expression via actions. Stanislavski (1936:43) taught that all on-stage "action must have an inner justification" rather than developing it from contrived emotions which produces "false acting." He achieved this through inner psychological work to evoke inspiration, then the outer work through embodiment, or the "I am" (1961:27). In all his concert works, Nagrin never resorted to dancing an emotion in a literal sense; but expression (Franko 1995) is inherent in a strong image of either who or what he was through the function or action, or his X. The complexity of expression, which is a disputed concept, is defined as the pressing outward of water from a sponge, but yet the same water is contained within the sponge (Best 1974 and Reid 1969). Mark Franko (1995:ix) states that expression (*Ausdruck*) is the inner pressed out through force, the "outwarding of inwardness" stimulated by the experience of emotion. He extends this to dance and distinguishes between "expressive" that is outward and contains subjectivism or emotion; and "expression" which is inward and privileges the moving body's presence

rather than the expressive pursuing of an emotion. The latter is a key characteristic of modernism (1995:6). Expressiveness in dance is not the emotional expression of choreographers, dancers, or spectators but of certain characteristics emergent in the bodily movement that is three-fold: stimulus, feeling impact, and expression (1995:x). For example, a work does not symbolize sadness but is, in itself, sad (McFee 1992). This notion is similar to Isadora Duncan's use (Layson 1987) and to what Martha Graham did in *Frontier* (Franko 1995). The looking outward transformed her, and the audience saw and believed what she saw (Nagrin 2001). The movement itself possesses emotive qualities within Nagrin's dances to define the core of X. For instance, Nagrin's X embodies happiness in *A Gratitude* and Eastern European essences in *National Dances* through very lively, uplifting dances. Nagrin worked through the action rather than emotion to create movement. He writes:

the action produces the emotion. Stanislavski says, never work for or from the emotion; only work from the specific action and the emotion will follow . . . Where I work from, indeterminacy and uncertainty prevail and answers are few.

Nagrin 2001:103

It is clear from the above quote that Nagrin works from expression rather than working from an emotion, which is consistent with my experience with him. He embraces Stanislavski's (1924/48, 1936/59, and 1961) concept of expression through embodied action to find the core of X. This idea contrasts with abstract expressionist painters' uses of the moving body in which emotion is separated from content and intent (Franko 1995 and Copeland 2004). Nagrin's expression includes the notion of content/function; that is, ideas, feelings, images, or experiences achieved through a specific image. Since these feelings cannot exist without content, a "something," such as the specific image of a personal, felt experience (Reid 1969:46) is needed, which is Stanislavski's (1924) focus. This is evident in Edgar Allan Poe's and T.S. Eliot's works which denied expression that "involves emotion" (Reid 1969:77). Nagrin's content through embodied expression is seen in the angry movement sarcasm in *Peloponnesian War* that projects his adversity for the Vietnam conflict; through the removal of a black-faced mask in *Not Me, but Him* to reveal whiteness, problematizing racism; and through the repetitive pacing in *Path*, which pays tribute to the hard-working ethic of construction crews. Nagrin's allowing the body to speak through movement and content contrasts with the "classical expression theory" (Sirridge and Armelagos 1977:15) that projects an emotion by the dancer (Martin 1939 and 1975). For example, emotion is evident in one of two phases of Martha Graham's dances, distinguished as materialist and dramaturgical rather than the previously attributed Americana/Mythology category (Franko 1995).

Summary and Conclusion

In his 1960's solos, Nagrin's dance actions through treatment of subject matter feature the framing of content through minimal movement and expression. Nagrin chose diverse themes that feature task-like work and human agency, but with immediacy. His six-step

method of getting to the core of X is clear. I have argued that Hornsby's (2004:23) articulation of agent-causation with its "realistic account of human agency" is seen in these dances. These works involve an action-oriented, motive-based, observational analysis of a specific character addressing relevant social issues and offering conflicting results. I have called this the "The Nagrin Method." Within his six-step compositional model, Nagrin's dances at this time are based in his 'X' or specific characters [agents], and his 'core' is found from the intentional *doing* of specific tasks or functions [actions] with effects [causes]. Nagrin's choices of actions-as-agency are "exercises of [his] capacities" (2004:23) to bring about both reflexivity and change.

My analysis aims to illuminate Nagrin's conception of the dancing body and his methods through the lens of agency. He asserts human agency in two ways: by creating social critiques based on actions, and by using social themes as content. These compelling dances based on social critiques demonstrate a progressive fusion of what it meant to be American at that time for him. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Nagrin privileged content over form and themes from popular culture, embracing these ideas through agency. It is remarkable how closely Nagrin's works mirror the socio-political landscape. This distinguished him from his contemporaries.

The Nagrin Method provides a new way to create dances which positions Nagrin within a separate strand of modernism, one that differs significantly from that adhered to by other choreographers. Nagrin's method provides an alternative critical lens through which we can analyze, read, and narrate the genre of American modern dance differently. His use of agency through action and content, among other factors, is part of a larger legacy but also a strand of modernism that merits a re-visiting of historical strategies and analytical modes of choreographic processes. It suggests the need for both a deeper examination of extant critical and historical writings and a more thorough critical analyses of concert works.

Copyright 2013, Diane Wawrejko

Bibliography

- Adshead-Lansdale, Janet. *The Struggle with the Angel: A poetics of Lloyd Newson's 'Strange Fish.'* Hampshire, UK: Dance Books Ltd, 2007.
- Adshead, Janet (ed) Briginshaw, Valerie Hodgens, Pauline and Huxley, Michael. *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice.* London: Dance Books, 1988.
- Appleby, Joyce Hunt, Lynne and Jacob, Margaret. *Telling the Truth about History.* New York: WW Norton, 1994.
- Banes, Sally. Introduction to Terpsichore in Sneakers in Docherty, Thomas (ed). *Postmodernism: A Reader.* New York and London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1999:157 – 171.
- _____. (ed). *Reinventing Dance in the 1960s: Everything was Possible.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.
- Best, David N. *Expression in Movement and the Arts.* London: Lepus Books, 1974.
- Carbonneau, Suzanne. Nagrin's Revived Visions, *The Washington Post*, 10 October 1995. www.nagrin.com. Accessed 4 July 2004.
- Cohen, Selma Jeanne (ed). *International Encyclopaedia of Dance.* Vols. 1 – 7. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Copeland, Roger. *Merce Cunningham: The Modernizing of Modern Dance.* Routledge: New

- York and London, 2004.
- Desmond, Jane C. (ed.) *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Docherty, Thomas (ed). *Postmodernism: A Reader*. New York and London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1999:157 – 171.
- Fortney, Alan Jon. Daniel Nagrin, An Evening of Dance and Cinema. New York University, June 15, 1968. *Dance Magazine*. 42:8, Aug 1968:26.
- Foster, Susan Leigh. *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*. [Chapter section on Daniel Nagrin's Workgroup]. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002:73 – 79.
- Franko, Mark. *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Gruen, John. Original archival manuscript of interview with Daniel Nagrin. Transcript, 23 leaves. New York Public Library: Jerome Robbins Dance Collection, 1975.
- Guest, Ann Hutchinson. Daniel Nagrin, LAMDA Theatre, London, May 6, 1967. *The Dancing Times*. 57:682, July 1967:517.
- Hornsby, Jennifer. *Actions*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.
- _____. "Agency and Actions," in *Agency and Action*, eds. H. Steward and J. Hyman. Cambridge University Press, 2004:1–23.
- Jackson, Harriet. Daniel Nagrin at YM-YWHA, New York, April 24, 1965. *Dance News*. 46:6, June 1965, p. 13.
- Kane, Angela. Through a Glass Darkly: The Many Sides of Paul Taylor's Choreography in *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*. 21:2, Winter 2003:90 - 129.
- _____. Paul Taylor's Choreography: In the Public Domain. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, London Contemporary Dance School, 2000.
- Layson, June. Isadora Duncan: Her Life, Work and Contribution to Western Theatre Dance. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1987.
- Manning, Susan. Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric: A Response to Sally Banes' "Terpsichore in Sneakers." *The Drama Review*. 32:4, Winter 1988:32-39.
- Marks, Marcia. Daniel Nagrin, 92nd Street "Y," New York, April 24, 1965. *Dance Magazine*. June 1965:67-68.
- Martin, John. *Introduction to the Dance*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1939.
- _____. *Introduction to the Dance*. [Reprint from 1939 edition with additional information and used comparatively by this researcher.] New York: Dance Horizons, 1975.
- McFee, Graham. *Understanding Dance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Michelotti, M. Auton. D.C. Report: A Trio of Tributes. Concert review of Shane O'Hara performing in The Nagrin Project. *DanceView*. 13: 2, winter 1996:30-33.
- Nagrin, Daniel. [Videotape]. *Solos, 1948-1967*. Performed by Daniel Nagrin, 1967.
- _____. [Videotape]. *Nagrin Videotape Library Sampler*. Performed by Daniel Nagrin, 1985.
- _____. *Dance and the Specific Image: Improvisation*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994.
- _____. *The Six Questions: Acting Technique for Dance Performance*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.
- _____. *Choreography and the Specific Image: Nineteen Essays and a Workbook*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
- _____. [DVD]. *Spring '65 Concert*. Tempe, AZ: The Daniel Nagrin Theatre, Film, and Dance Foundation. Performed by Daniel Nagrin, produced 2004.
- _____. [Email, various]. nagrin@imap2.asu.edu, April-May 2005.
- Reid, Louis Arnaud. *Meaning in the Arts*. London and New York: George Allen & Unwin LTD, and Humanities Press, 1969.
- Schlundt, Christena L. *Daniel Nagrin: A Chronicle of His Professional Career*. Berkeley:

- University of California Press, 1997.
- _____. Daniel Nagrin in Cohen, Selma Jeanne (ed). *International Encyclopaedia of Dance*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, vol 4, 1998:530-31.
- Sirridge, Mary and Armelagos, Adina. The In's and Out's of Dance: Expression as an Aspect of Style in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 36, 1977:15-24.
- Solomons, Gus. NYC (*sic*) review of Shane O'Hara's concert, The Nagrin Project. *Dance Magazine*. 72:7, July 1998, pp. 68-69.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *My Life in Art*. Robbins, J. J. (trans). New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924.
- _____. *An Actor Prepares*. Reynolds Hapgood, Elizabeth (ed and trans). New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1936.
- _____. [Originally published in 1924 and used comparatively by this researcher.] *My Life in Art*. Robbins, J. J. (trans). New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1948.
- _____. [Originally published in 1936 and used comparatively by this researcher.] *An Actor Prepares*. Reynolds Hapgood, Elizabeth (ed and trans). New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1959.
- _____. *Creating a Role*. Reynolds Hapgood, Elizabeth (trans) and Popper, Hermine (ed). New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1961.
- Vaughan, David. This, that, is and isn't: Daniel Nagrin. *Dance Magazine*. 49:5, May 1975:25-26.
- Williams, Drid (2004). *Anthropology and the Dance: Ten lectures*, second edition. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Address for correspondence:

Diane Wawrejko

wawrejko@comcast.net

Swinging Out in Sweden: African American Vernacular Dance's Global Revival and its Scandinavian Roots

Christopher J. Wells

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Abstract

In revival subcultures, dancers and musicians form tight bonds in the present by perpetually reconstructing the past through music and movement. This paper examines how Swedish social dance enthusiasts in the 1980s catalyzed the contemporary global revival of the lindy hop and other African American social dances. It chronicles these dancers' shift from focusing on literal reconstruction through studying film to embodying the creative, improvisatory spirit of social dance through collaboration with the dance's original Harlem practitioners. Through the author's experiences dancing at this revival's current cultural center—the Herräng Dance Camp in rural Sweden—and through extensive interviews with the camp's participants and organizers, the paper illustrates that through this tension between literal reconstruction and creative freedom, participants create a shared pool of embodied knowledge and construct a common history built from traces of film clips and the vivid personal accounts of aging African American dancers. Today, the camp's Swedish organizers act as cultural brokers, constructing and nurturing a global network of dancers, from Rio de Janeiro to Beijing, to reinvigorate and advocate for this form of African American popular culture.

Like all subcultures, the global lindy hop revival has its fair share of insider knowledge, but from Beijing to Buenos Aires, there's one thing everybody knows: if you *really* want to learn the lindy hop, you have to go to Sweden. Specifically, you need to visit Herräng, a town of only a few hundred residents 2.5 hours north of Stockholm at the northern tip of the Norrtälje municipality. Every July, dancers from around the world converge here for the annual Herräng Dance Camp, a five-week intensive workshop where participants gather to perfect their steps and to dance all night to the music of Chick Webb, Count Basie, and Benny Goodman. Put simply, they party like it's 1939.

The Herräng Dance Camp began in 1982 as a retreat for twenty-five members of the Swedish Swing Society. As swing dancing grew in popularity throughout the 1980s and '90s, the camp began attracting dancers internationally. When the Neo-swing craze of the late 1990s catalyzed the lindy hop revival in the United States, Americans began flooding Herräng, and the camp's popularity grew exponentially. Since then, the Herräng Dance Camp has been a crucial force in building a sustainable level of global interest in the lindy hop. Today, the lindy hop revival is a global subculture now growing most rapidly outside of the United States. Indeed, many would say the world's most vibrant scenes are in Seoul, South Korea and Vilnius, Lithuania with emerging communities in Beijing, Sao Paulo, and Tel Aviv. As the largest and only multi-week swing dance event

in the world, the Herräng Dance Camp serves as the nexus of this movement. Dispersed around the world, lindy hoppers share styles and ideas and maintain friendships primarily through Facebook and by watching each other dance on YouTube. Yet every July, this globalized community becomes extremely local; in one small Swedish town, the lindy hop becomes the dominant cultural force, the core of the mainstream, and the principal source of shared knowledge.

I have been an active participant at Herräng since 2004 following my sophomore year of college, and in 2010 and 2011 I assumed the role of oral historian/participant-ethnographer and conducted substantive interviews with the camp's leadership and participants. In this paper, I will show how early Swedish interest in swing dancing's African American roots formed the cultural philosophy that currently drives community creation and cultural communication in Herräng. My observations will focus on the camp's dual mission of inclusion and conservation, and I argue that these two seemingly contradictory aspects of Herräng—an ethic of universal inclusion and a conservative policing of historically informed dance aesthetics—actually feed into each other to create for participants a shared history, a shared sense of purpose, and a shared kinesthetic vocabulary.

Roughly around the time of the camp's 1982 founding, two of the Swedish Swing Society's members, Anders Lind and Lennart Westerlund, were discovering swing dancing's African American roots through a copy of Marshall and Jean Stearns' 1968 book *Jazz Dance*, which Lind came across at Stockholm's *Dansmuseet*. The book led them to performances by Whitey's Lindy Hoppers in films like the Marx Brothers' 1937 classic *A Day at the Races* or the 1941 Olsen and Johnson feature *Hellzapoppin'*. The pair became obsessed with these sequences, and along with their new dance troupe "The Rhythm Hot Shots," they learned to reproduce these routines through careful study and liberal use of their VCR's slow motion function.¹

Yet film study proved insufficient; Westerlund and Lind wanted to learn these dances from living practitioners. They traveled to New York City in 1984 to find Al Minns, one of the dancers from the *Hellzapoppin'* sequence, and brought him to Sweden to teach workshops. For Minns, the Swedes' interest in the dance was a refreshing change from the relative indifference he found in his home country.

The Swedish youth, their enthusiasm, is comparable to the enthusiasm we had in the '40s and late '30s. At the present time in the states, the dancing is mostly soul, Donna Summer and Richie James, you know, the video tape kind of stuff, maybe because we don't have big dance halls anymore and the big orchestras are almost non-existent.²

More than simply teaching the Swedes new steps and movements, Minns began to radically alter their perspective on dancing and their pathways to kinesthetic engagement. During his time in Stockholm, Minns encouraged the dancers to disregard numbers, steps, and counts. Rather, he asked them to internalize the music's rhythms, to feel their way through, and to improvise and experiment. In his own dancing, he demonstrated a more laid back, subtle, and social style than the acrobatic routines the Rhythm Hot Shots were extracting from films. Here is footage of Minns dancing in Stockholm at the Swedish Swing Society's weekly practice.³ Through Minns, and their trips to New York,

these Swedish dancers were exposed to a more socially oriented dance culture that focused on improvisation and emphasized experience and interaction rather than presentation. When asked in Sweden where he found happiness in dancing, Minns replied, “I believe it’s the union of the body with the rhythm and the sound of the music. You know, a person doesn’t have to make big movements in order to look good dancing if they *feel* the music.”⁴

When Minns died shortly after his 1984 visit to Sweden, Westerlund and Lind sought out Frankie Manning, another pioneering dancer, who first came to Herräng in 1989. Manning taught the Swedes “the difference between social dancing and stage dancing. It was only after we spent time on social dancing that I showed them the authentic way to do the air steps [aerial maneuvers], which they were very good at catching onto.”⁵ According to Westerlund, “Manning was the key person for the transition from the Swedish Jitterbug to the African American Lindy Hop.”⁶ Westerlund initially resisted learning a dance that looked virtually unrecognizable compared with the film clips he idolized, yet over the past thirty years he has come to not only understand *social* lindy hop as the dance’s heart and soul, but also to view it as a vital technical basis for the routines the Hot Shots continue to develop and perform.⁷ Manning, who taught at the camp nearly every year until his death in 2009 at the age of 94, would become the camp’s primary source of authenticity. He gave contemporary swing dancers a direct lineage to 1930s Harlem and a living reference point for their cultivation of a historically informed style. Manning’s dance style, worldview, and accounts of his experiences have become absolutely central to the camp’s cultural and aesthetic philosophy.

Manning’s desire to spread the lindy hop as far and wide as possible still drives the camp’s mission of global outreach. According to the organizers, Herräng should be a place that anyone can come and where everyone should participate. The camp plays a key role in global “scene building,” spreading the dance around the world by creating new hardcore enthusiasts who in turn bring the dance to their home cities. Toward that end, one of Herräng’s core missions over the past decade has been to expand the lindy hop’s reach beyond the United States and Western Europe. Around the year 2000, the Hot Shots began traveling to Russia to offer free classes and workshops and encouraged dancers to come to Herräng in hopes they would begin teaching and growing scenes at home. Dancers from Russia received the so-called “Russian discount” and attended classes for a substantially reduced price. This work led to the development of large and vibrant lindy hop scenes in Moscow and St. Petersburg and to a massive influx of Russians to Herräng every year. The camp expanded these efforts to other former soviet states and, most recently, to Beijing and Buenos Aires. Ultimately, the camp offered the discount to anyone from a country with a standard of living below that of Western Europe. The camp’s greatest success story in recent years has been Vilnius, Lithuania, where the dance scene has rapidly grown into one of the world’s most thriving lindy hop communities. When I started at Herräng, there were four or five Lithuanians, but now hundreds come every summer, and, in 2011, Herräng welcomed participants from emerging scenes in Rio de Janeiro and Istanbul.

The camp supports a spirit of innovation and creativity, yet also essential is the mission of protecting and preserving black vernacular dance styles—what some Folklorists have termed “Cultural Conservation.” For the camp’s organizers, experimentation is encouraged, but there is at some point a line in the sand beyond which too wide a range

of styles or musical preferences will dilute the dance beyond recognizability and weaken the community's ties to history and to the aesthetics of Harlem dancers like Minns and Manning. This is an excerpt from my interview with Daniel Heedman, one of camp's organizers. He articulates the camp's attempt to encourage inclusiveness and diversity while protecting the purity of the lindy hop.

If you go to a smaller event in Spain or in Sweden or in UK you will find a typical way of dancing and they have the same style. Now, if you go to another place, a small local scene where they have a workshop for a week or something, you find those people dancing in another way. But in Herräng, all styles are represented and everybody's dancing together with each other. So it's the one place where everybody around the world can get together and share styles and impressions and ways of thinking and just learning more about the dance. So, I think that's one thing, the diversity and the history. Then the third thing is, to direct people in the right direction when it comes to lindy hop, because I think a lot of people want to change the dance and develop it further and take it to "the next level" and after certain development cycles you're kind of into a new dance and I think it's Herräng's mission to keep the dance where it belongs, which is: this is what it was in the '40s and this is what *is* lindy hop. Now, if you change it too much, you're outside of those boundaries and you're not really dancing lindy hop anymore.⁸

While encouraging the creation of new steps and the cultivation of personal styles, the organizers advocate maintaining clear reference points for one's movement choices, limiting creative explorations to those movements that would seem to be plausible choices for a dancer at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom in the '30s and '40s. So, if it is not something they *did* do, it is at least something they *could have* or *might have* done.

Nothing in Herräng is more rigorously policed than the music played for nightly dances. Around the world, lindy hoppers dance to a variety of musical genres, but in Herräng, DJs play jazz music from 1925-1945 nearly exclusively, and the camp invites only those live bands the organizers trust are committed to playing in that style. As Belgian tap dancer and Herräng co-owner Fatimah Teffahi put it, "for us, it's important to have a reference, to say that we've been told that this is what was played in the Savoy Ballroom or Alhambra ballroom in the '30s and '40s."⁹ Here is a response from Lennart Westerlund, to a camper inquiring about more democracy and stylistic flexibility at the camp.

When the personality of the camp was shaped in the '90s especially, I mean, of course you have to say "what do we want the camp to look like?" You make some major decisions and my experience from that period of time when people in Sweden for instance danced jitterbug, or maybe sometimes they called it lindy hop, but they danced it to rock and roll, Beach Boys, sometimes rockabilly music. Then you have to put your foot down and say, "okay, I'm going to do something different from this, we're gonna do swing music." Then, it's not about compromises or democracy

anymore, it's gonna be: if you like this track, you're very welcome to join and do something *within* the track. If you like the other track, please go there, because it will suit you much better. So to me, it's very important sometimes to say, "okay, this is what *we* stand for, and, if you don't like it, maybe there is someone else producing something that you will be more attracted to."¹⁰

While as a scholar I understand the pitfalls and problems of rigorous fidelity to, and claims of authority over, an imagined historical other, as a dancer I have found Herräng's conservatism artistically and socially generative. I think the best term to describe my experience at the camp is "immersion." I have found that by molding our bodies to specific techniques and rhythms, participants create a shared pool of embodied knowledge and experience that is crucial to the formation of relationships in Herräng. On any given night, I can walk into the main ballroom, meet someone new, and instantly share a deep and intense physical experience with them, one that requires trust, sharing weight, and a mutual understanding and negotiation of style and convention. In Herräng, the "authentic" lindy hop becomes a kinesthetic language that everybody speaks.

The focus on dancing authentically and the immersion in old jazz music, vintage clothing, and in the imagined historical space of depression-era Harlem are key to community construction at the camp. In a sense, any barriers of cultural translation vanish as attendees construct not just a common culture, but also a common history built from traces of film clips and the vivid personal accounts of Manning and the other old African American dancers the camp invites every year as guests of honor. In his work on the temporary, portable communities of bluegrass festivals, Robert Owen Gardner argues that festival participants create tradition over time to become "communities of memory" much like fixed cities or towns.¹¹ In Herräng, camp participants build their community of memory not only out of their own lived experiences, but also those of the dancers they idolize. They strengthen their shared sense of place by tying it to a mutually agreed upon—one might say constructed or imagined—sense of shared origins. Furthermore, the camp's rhetoric of inclusion is itself historically informed as the camp's organizers attempt to recapture the spirit of Harlem's Savoy Ballroom, which was New York's most prominent integrated venue for social dancing. Though historical accounts conflict, Manning always painted the ballroom as a non-raced haven for the joyous celebration of music and dance and as an escape from the troubles and frustrations of one's daily life. Following Manning's worldview, the camp offers a rhetoric of utopian inclusion, welcoming all-comers from all cultures, the only requirements being an open mind and an investment in the camp's mission of conservation.

Having focused on the organizers' goals and strategies, I will conclude with one useful model from the literature on folk festivals to theorize the way dancers experience the camp's physical and temporal space. In her work on Australian folk festivals, Michelle Duffy attributes community building to a tri-partite process of intensification, isolation, and dislocation. In the interest of time, I will focus here on the third element: dislocation.¹² In Herräng, dislocation removes dancers from their disparate national identities, making all of us temporary citizens of an intentional community removed from the real world both spatially *and* temporally. Herräng can feel like an all-day, all-night immersion into a surrealist culture. To illustrate this, I'm going to play the camp's

promotional video for 2011 which communicates the centrality of Frankie Manning and also shows a lot of dancing, both social and performance, and a number of bizarre happenings including the spontaneous construction of the first Swedish “Hooters” (an American chain restaurant) in a tent at 3am.¹³ As Heedman explained it,

For me, Herräng is a place out of space, and it’s where you should see something you won’t see in reality, normal life. So, for me, the entertainment is important, it should be something special and surrealistic. ... I see Herräng like a bubble. It’s a bubble, and a lot of people need this shared experience, and you see stuff that you won’t see anywhere else. That’s our ambition, I think.¹⁴

Daniel described his vision for the camp as ultimately transcending dance and becoming a space for historical immersion that removes people completely from their real lives and identities.

While community building in Herräng relies on *dislocation*, it also relies on *location*, on the creation of a temporary physical space for a community otherwise defined by a fractured multiplicity of remote scenes; Herräng takes a global subculture that communicates through the virtual world and re-renders it as a small town. In a world where the internet and social media do so much to facilitate community across vast distances, why does the swing revival have this drive to congregate in a single, isolated geographic location? For me, it is about the immediacy and corporeality of the lindy hop as a partnered dance. Of course, we all need to meet in a physical place because to do what we do, we need to touch each other—to use our bodies cooperatively as instruments of communication, exploration, and conservation. When I went to Herräng in 2009, just after Frankie Manning had passed away, there was a heightened sense of urgency to the task of creating and communicating those traces of cultural memory his spirit and his style imprinted on the bodies of those who learned from him. I felt how deeply contemporary lindy hop dancers rely on transmitting shared embodied knowledge and producing memory through the body.

As the dance’s original practitioners continue to pass away, young enthusiasts lose access to the memorial archives their dancing bodies held. Indeed, in 2013, dancers enthralled by old lindy hop footage no longer travel to Harlem to learn from the old masters; they are more likely to make the trek to Sweden. Herräng, now an institution with its own long history and years of cultural memory, continues to anchor this revival in shared tradition while nurturing the lindy hop’s continuing growth as a living dance. Whether from Stockholm, Beijing, or North Carolina, dancers in Herräng form tight bonds in the present by perpetually reconstructing the past through music and movement.

Copyright Christopher J. Wells, 2013

Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks to the organizers and participants at the Herräng Dance Camp for agreeing to interviews for this project and for many years of dancing, friendship, and enthusiastic support.

Notes

1. Manning and Millman, 229.
2. Minns, Interview in Stockholm, part 2. YouTube hyperlink in bibliography.
3. Minns, Dancing in Stockholm. YouTube hyperlink in bibliography.
4. Minns, Interview in Stockholm, part 1. YouTube hyperlink in Bibliography.
5. Manning and Millman, 224.
6. Lennart Westerlund, forum with the organizers of Herräng Dance Camp, Herräng, Sweden, July 28th 2011.
7. Author's paraphrasing from numerous public lectures and discussion forums at Herräng Dance Camp between 2004 and 2011 in which Westerlund expressed this sentiment.
8. Daniel Heedman, interview with the author, Herräng, Sweden, August 2nd 2011. Quotation marks inferred from Heedman's inflection.
9. Fatimah Teffahi, forum with the organizers of Herräng Dance Camp, Herräng, Sweden, July 28th 2011.
10. Westerlund, forum with the organizers, 2011. Italic emphasis inferred from Westerlund's inflection.
11. Gardner, 3.
12. Duffy, 52.
13. Herräng Dance Camp, "2011 Promotional Video." YouTube Hyperlink in bibliography.
14. Daniel Heedman, forum with the organizers of Herräng Dance Camp, Herräng, Sweden, July 28th 2011.

Bibliography

- Duffy, Michelle. "Lines of Drift: Festival Participation and Performing a Sense of Place." *Popular Music* 19 no. 1 (2000): 51-64.
- Gardner, Robert Owen. "The Portable Community: Mobility and Modernization in Bluegrass Festival Life." *Symbolic Interaction* 27 no.2 (Spring, 2004): 155-178.
- Herräng Dance Camp. "Herräng Dance Camp 2011 Promotional Video." YouTube video. Posted by "Calle Elvis Johansson," October 26, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNonDs1lyCE>
- Manning, Frankie, and Cynthia Millman. *Frankie Manning: Ambassador of Lindy Hop*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2007.
- Minns, Al. "Al Minns Part 1." Interview in Stockholm, Sweden, 1984. YouTube video. Posted by "twobarbreak," January 24, 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6DlImqOWBlg>.
- . "Al Minns Part 2 (the Story of the Sweds[sic]." Interview in Stockholm, Sweden, 1984. YouTube video. Posted by "twobarbreak," January 24, 2007. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQv1wNxKJH0>.
- . "Al Minns" Dancing in Stockholm, Sweden, 1984. YouTube video. Posted by "going2havefun," June 15, 2007. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mr_yKGFwCQQ.

Address for correspondence:

Christopher J. Wells
309 Broad st. Apt. A.
Carrboro, NC 27510
chriswnyc@yahoo.com

Transforming Tradition: The Integration of Laban Movement Analysis and Classical Ballet

Cadence Whittier

Associate Professor of Dance, Hobart & William Smith Colleges, USA
Co-Director and Faculty, Integrated Movement Studies, USA

Abstract

Integrating the somatic traditions of LMA/BF with the classical traditions of ballet pedagogy creates a classroom culture that fosters technical growth, self-understanding, and artistic exploration. Similar to other somatic approaches to dance pedagogy, LMA/BF emphasizes sensory responsiveness, perceptual awareness, and intentional action. As ballet dancers apply the LMA/BF theories to their dancing, they develop greater body knowledge and learn how to make a multitude of artistic choices when performing classical phrases. The integration of LMA/BF and classical ballet was presented in a Workshop Presentation during the conference. Workshop participants used LMA/BF Effort theories to physically explore and analyze balletic movement.

Introduction

Traditional ballet pedagogy emphasizes outer form, technical mastery, and codified performance of the balletic vocabulary. In her dissertation *Multiple Embodiment in Classical Ballet*, dance educator Paula Salosaari stresses the need to expand on these traditional methods to include the “skills of interpretation, improvisation and co-authorship.”¹ Dance educator Emma Dixon echoes this stating, “ballet...should never solely be about the attainment of physical goals and quantity, but about discovery, knowledge and quality” and calls for teachers “to ensure that classical dancers become whole, integrated movers who can sense and feel their movement as human beings—dancers who are capable of making connections within themselves and to their environment.”² In my experience, emphasizing artistic choice and “inner listening” during the ballet technique class teaches dancers how to uniquely perform and interpret the balletic vocabulary, which in turn, enhances their technical skills and capacity for self-expression.

My pedagogical approach in the ballet classroom is influenced by the concepts and theories of Laban Movement Analysis/Bartenieff Fundamentals (LMA/BF), which is rooted in the work of Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958) and Irmgard Bartenieff (1900-1981). Laban, with the contribution of many collaborators, developed a system for analyzing and notating the functional and expressive landscape of human movement. Bartenieff, a physical therapist, applied the LMA theories to somatic and rehabilitative practices, developing as a result the Bartenieff Fundamentals. LMA/BF practitioners have continued developing the LMA/BF theories and have applied the theories to multiple disciplines and areas of application.³

Integrating the somatic traditions of LMA/BF with the classical traditions of ballet pedagogy creates a classroom culture that fosters technical growth, self-understanding, and artistic exploration. An LMA/BF approach to dance pedagogy has “been tied to a

student-centered approach to dance education because it tends to encourage movement exploration and creativity, while recognizing qualitative elements of movement description and use.”⁴ As ballet dancers apply the LMA/BF theories to their dancing, they develop greater body knowledge and learn how to make a multitude of artistic choices when performing classical phrases.

Somatic Themes in LMA/BF Inquiry

There are numerous somatic themes that frame traditional LMA/BF inquiry. Five were addressed in the Workshop Presentation (Table 1). Workshop participants applied each theme to their performance of a *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu*. The *port de bras* for this step varied either moving from *bras bas* through *first position* and ending in *second position*, or moving from *first position* through *bras bas* to *second position*.

Table 1: Five Somatic Themes
1. Function/Expression
2. Inner/Outer and Personal Uniqueness
3. Parts/Whole
4. Change as a process
5. Relationship

Function/Expression

Observing a *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu* from a Functional perspective produces many possibilities for analysis. For example, I could focus on seamlessly shifting my weight from one leg to the other, or maintaining proper alignment of the upper leg over the lower leg, or performing a fluid and lifted *port de bras* throughout the entirety of the movement. What Functional characteristics do you focus on when teaching this movement to your students?

The *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu* can also be analyzed from an Expressive perspective. I could focus on the dynamic quality of the movement, performing it with a powerful attitude and then a serene attitude. Or, I might create an image for the movement: “my *port de bras* moves like a gentle breeze on a warm summer day.” Or, I could think about something I desire as I perform the movement: “As I initiate the *chassé à la second* I gather what I desire in my arms and I send it into the space around me as I push from the ground to the *pointe tendu*.” What Expressive approaches do you use when teaching this movement to your students?

Approaching the movement functionally improves technical capacity, which in turn, enhances expressive potential. Similarly, approaching the movement expressively through imagery, dynamics, and personal meaning may help dancers perform the movement with greater technical accuracy. For example, imagining the arms moving like a gentle breeze will likely help them embody a more fluid and lifted *port de bras*. Regardless of the intent used, “the slightest change in any movement element...affects the functional as well as the expressive content.”⁵

Inner/Outer and Personal Uniqueness

It is easy for dancers to become overly focused on outer image in ballet training, partly because the movement is highly specific and codified. In my experience, however, balletic movement is also highly expressive and personal. Inner motivations, associations, and sensations impact how ballet dancers perform the movement.

There are many ways to honor the “inner life” of the dancer during class. Ask dancers to generate their own images, characters, stories, sounds, and words for the class sequences, and to reflect on how the movement feels or makes them feel. Perform the *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu*. What images or associations come up for you as you perform the movement? What sensations do you notice in your body? What qualities do you want to convey when you perform the movement?

Parts/Whole

When performing a *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu*, a dancer may choose to focus on certain parts of the movement: perhaps the articulation of the feet during the *battement tendu*, or the depth of the *plié* during the *chassé*, or the coordination of the arms with the legs. Focusing one aspect of a movement brings clarity to that part and is therefore a useful approach in ballet training. It is also important for dancers to recognize how “change in one part changes the whole.”⁶ For example, increase the difficulty of the *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu* by finishing the movement with the leg at 90 degrees. Most dancers initially focus only on the extension of the leg in *à la second*. However, if they also focus on how the torso and supporting side of the body supports the movement, they will perform the extension with greater ease. Try this yourself: as your leg reaches and lifts to the side, simultaneously widen your torso and spread your supporting arm sideward into space. Is it easier to lift the leg when you establish this side-to-side countertensional pull between gesturing leg and supporting arm?

Change as a Process

Many ballet dancers approach their experiences in class with a “fix it” mentality, but there are no quick fixes to well-established neuromuscular and psychophysical patterns. Approaching ballet technique with this in mind changes the language I use in the classroom. Instead of stating, “Place your pelvis here when you perform the *chassé à la second* to *pointe tendu*,” I say “What happens when you try moving your pelvis this way during the *chassé à la second*? What differences do you notice?” This rather simple change in language use impacts the culture of the ballet classroom. It encourages dancers to explore their movement from a “what if” perspective: “What if I try it this way?” “What happens when I....?”

Relationship

Dancing with others and communicating to an audience is essential in ballet performance, and therefore dancers must have opportunities to develop those qualities in technique class. Instead of standing in isolation throughout the duration of barre and

center, dancers can face partners while they perform the class phrases, observe a peer perform, demonstrate movement for the class, stand in a circle for *demi* and *grand pli  *, and so on. These types of activities teach dancers how to project their energy into space, observe differences in movement choices, and communicate their observations to their peers.

LMA/BF Theories of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space

Laban Movement Analysts use four theoretical categories to analyze human movement: Body, Effort, Shape, and Space (Table 2). These four categories provide a multi-faceted and comprehensive “map” for analyzing ballet technique. The category of Effort was explored in greater detail during the Workshop Presentation.

<u>BODY</u>	<u>EFFORT</u>
How is movement organized and sequenced in the body?	What is the overall energy, emotionality, and dynamic quality of the movement?
<u>SHAPE</u>	<u>SPACE</u>
How does the form of the body (the constellation of the body parts) change in relationship to internal or external environmental stimuli?	What spatial pulls, pathways, and tensions does the person reveal as s/he moves in space?

We are in the realm of Effort when we consider the overall energy, emotionality, and dynamic quality of any given movement. There are four areas of study within Effort and each area is broken down into two polar parts:⁷

- **Time Effort**—Sudden and Sustained Time, describes how a person’s intuitive sense of time causes him/her to move. Is s/he urgent? Or, does s/he linger?
- **Space Effort**—Direct and Indirect Space, describes how a person attends to his/her environment. Is the person single-focused or multi-focused?
- **Weight Effort**—Strong and Light Weight, describes how a person engages his or her mass as s/he moves. Is s/he powerful or delicate?
- **Flow Effort**—Bound and Free Flow, describes the energetic quality of a person’s ongoing movements. Are they controlled or unconstrained?

Since there are many possible Effort permutations to explore, navigating through LMA Effort provides dancers with both flexibility and specificity.

Pedagogical Process

During the Workshop Presentation, I presented the four parts of my pedagogical process in the ballet classroom (Table 3).

Table 3: Pedagogical Process
<p><u>Developing Body Knowledge and Movement Literacy</u></p> <p><i>How do dancers deepen their knowledge of their bodies and their movement capacities? How do dancers deepen their knowledge of the qualitative aspects of the ballet aesthetic?</i></p>
<p><u>Experimentation and Choice</u></p> <p><i>How do dancers develop personal uniqueness within this technique form? How do they learn to move from their inner impulses?</i></p>
<p><u>Interaction/Communication/Relationship</u></p> <p><i>How are the dancers relating to each other during class? Are there opportunities for peer education and observation? How do the ballet dancers actively contribute to the class experiences?</i></p>
<p><u>Meaning Making</u></p> <p><i>How do the dancers' new physical discoveries impact their self-perception? What new insights and connections will they discover? What new possibilities for creativity and self-expression are available to them?</i></p>

In order to experience the above pedagogical process, the Workshop participants learned a short *center waltz* exercise. They then applied the LMA/BF Effort Theories to the *center waltz* and considered the following questions:

- *How do I convey specific moods, feelings, or ideas through my dancing?*
- *How is the overall mood of my movement affected when I perform the same steps with different dynamics?*
- *How do different Efforts help me execute the balletic phrases with greater technical proficiency?*
- *Which Efforts are difficult to embody and which are easy?*

Conscious use of Effort in class positively impacts technical and artistic development. Artistically, experimenting with Effort teaches dancers how to use their energy specifically and variedly in order to create different moods and qualities when dancing (Table 4). Technically, embodying different Efforts will change the physical organization of the body: muscle tone, proprioceptive responses, neuromuscular connections, Breath Support, and body sequencing will all shift and change as the dancers' Effort-life changes. A *sauté arabesque* performed with outpouring power (Free Flow and Strong Weight) looks and feels quite different than a *sauté arabesque* performed with contained delicacy (Bound Flow and Light Weight). The first teaches them how to execute the movement

with force and momentum, while the second teaches them how to execute it with lifted control. As the Effort qualities change, the technical skills required to achieve the movement also change (Table 4).

Table 4: Artistic and Technical Benefits for the Eight Effort Qualities⁸		
Effort	Technical Benefits	Artistic Benefits
Sudden Time	Moving with speed and agility	Performing with an urgent attitude
Sustained Time	Drawing movements out; Suspending movements	Performing with a lingering attitude
Direct Space	Moving with precision; Channeling a movement in space	Performing with single-focused awareness or a single-minded attitude
Indirect Space	Dancing with multiple points of focus	Performing with multi-focused awareness or an expansive attitude
Strong Weight	Moving with power and force	Performing with a bold and commanding attitude
Light Weight	Moving with delicacy and lift	Performing with a gentle or soft attitude
Bound Flow	Moving with control	Performing with a contained and measured attitude
Free Flow	Moving with fluid ease	Performing with an outpouring and carefree attitude

Take a moment to embody different Efforts in your own body. Recall a *center waltz* exercise you taught in class recently. Embody different Efforts as you perform the exercise. For example, perform the exercise focusing primarily on Light Weight (delicate use of force) and then Strong Weight (powerful use of your force). Then, experiment with Time Effort, emphasizing Sudden Time (urgency) and then Sustained Time (lingering). Continue this until you have embodied each of the eight Efforts.

How did each Effort quality change your muscular engagement and your body connectivity as you performed the *center waltz* exercise? For example, did use of a particular Effort help you travel through space more efficiently, or find greater ease in your upper body or more clarity in your gesturing leg? How did each Effort quality affect the mood or qualitative content of the exercise? Did use of a particular Effort conjure up particular “characters” or “personalities” or images/metaphors?

There are many ways that balletic steps can be performed and interpreted. Using LMA/BF as a navigational tool helps dancers nurture, strengthen, and experiment with the many possibilities. This process teaches them to interpret and “color” the steps in personal ways, which develops personal uniqueness and artistry.

Conclusion

LMA Effort is a broad and multifaceted framework for studying movement dynamics. Studies in LMA Effort increase the dancers’ capacity to interpret and embody the

expressive nature of the balletic movement. This develops their artistic attitudes and sensibilities as soloists and as members of an ensemble. Ultimately, “when a dancer is able to enhance prescribed movement above and beyond the actual ballet vocabulary, mechanics and anatomical concerns, and set counts, then he or she enters the realm of artistic expression.”⁹ As dancers learn to navigate through the vast landscape of Effort qualities, they expand their expressive range and strengthen their ability to make conscious choices about their performance energy when executing balletic sequences and choreography.

The teaching model presented in this paper aims to “cultivate creativity,” to “combine mindfulness with skill development, and enhance self-expression by bringing greater awareness to the inner self and personal experience.”¹⁰ Dancers participate creatively in their own education when they develop increased body knowledge, experiment with different ways of performing the balletic vocabulary, and interact with their peers. This, in turn, promotes an energetic, collaborative, and engaged classroom culture.

Copyright 2013, Cadence Whittier

Endnotes/Works Cited

1. Salosaari, P. *Multiple Embodiment in Classical Ballet: Educating the Dancer as an Agent of Change in the Cultural Evolution of Ballet*. Theatre Academy. 2001. 17.
2. Dixon, E. The mind/body connection and the practice of classical ballet. *Research in Dance Education*. Vol. 6, No. 1/2, April/December 2005. 76.
3. The LMA/BF theories have not developed in isolation; they have been shaped and informed by other somatic disciplines and areas of study (i.e. neuroscience, behavioral psychology, human anatomy, phenomenology, human development, Body-Mind Centering, Alexander Technique, and so on).
4. Green, J. Socially Constructed Bodies in American Dance Classrooms, *Research in Dance Education*. Vol. 2, No. 2, 2001. 158.
5. Hackney, P. *Making Connections: Total Body Integration Through Bartenieff Fundamentals*. Routledge. 1998. 45.
6. *ibid.* 40.
7. These definitions first appeared in: *Bill Evans Dance Teachers Intensive Newsletter*. Ed. Cynthia Williams. June 2013. 6.
8. Table 4 and the paragraph prior to Table 4 first appeared in: *Bill Evans Dance Teachers Intensive Newsletter*. ed. Cynthia Williams. June 2013. 6, 7.
9. Spohn, C. & Prettyman, S.S. Moving is like making out: developing female university dancers’ ballet technique and expression through the use of metaphor. *Research in Dance Education*. April 2012. Vol. 13, No. 1.
10. *ibid.* 49.

Address for correspondence:

Cadence Whittier
whittier@hws.edu

A performance as shared space of action

Liesbeth Wildschut

In collaboration with Arno Schuitemaker, choreographer

Utrecht University

Abstract

*Since the discovery of the ‘mirror neurons’, a lot of research related to the activity of these special brain cells has been carried out. Outside academia people like the Dutch choreographer Arno Schuitemaker became fascinated as well. For him, these mirror neurons are a source of inspiration, since this knowledge provides insight into the relation between action and observation (Iacoboni, 2008; Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008), and therefore into the relation between performers and spectators. Schuitemaker used this knowledge while working at *The Fifteen Project* (2011). The core of the performance is a shared experience of dancers and spectators.*

*In this paper I will give insight in which ways knowledge about mirror neurons played a role during the making process of *The Fifteen Project*, and in the empirical research in which I explored kinesthetic experiences of spectators watching *The Fifteen Project*. Earlier studies has shown that movement experience plays an important role (Calvo-Merino a.o., 2005). My research indicates that also performance characteristics and the way the choreographer and the dancers address the audience may intensify kinesthetic empathy.*

Introduction

The title of this paper concerns how performers and spectators are involved in, as Arno Schuitemaker calls it, ‘a shared space of action’. The starting point for my collaboration with Arno Schuitemaker was our shared interest in neuroscientific research, and the role Mirror Neurons play since the nineties. Arno was inspired by the discovery of those Mirror Neurons, because it gives us new insights into the relation between action and observation and therefore into the relation between performers and audience.

I am interested in involvement processes of people watching dance performances and especially in *kinesthetic* empathy. I try to get insight in how this process takes place, and the discovery of the Mirror Neurons is of great help to understand some of this process. When I found out that Arno’s last work: *The Fifteen Project* was inspired by neuroscientific knowledge, I asked him permission to set up an empirical experiment. I wanted to depart from the research questions I work with. This time to explore (mainly) physical experiences of spectators, in order to relate them to performance characteristics. So *The Fifteen Project* was already touring before my research started.

In this small-scaled empirical research I have focused on manifestations of kinesthetic empathy. I will start with some insights, gained from neuroscientific publications, followed by how knowledge of Mirror Neurons inspired Arno during the making process of *The Fifteen Project*. Next I will explain the research method and present some results of the

exploration of manifestations of kinesthetic empathy, which give rise to further questions and discussion.

Watching Movement

In my research I focus on how people physically react on movements while watching a dance performance. I try to gain more insight into the mechanisms of this, often unconscious, connection between spectator and dancer. The question is how the transformation from watching a movement to feeling the movement takes place, because what happens in the spectator's body is different from the activity of the observed movement.

Brain research reveals more about the way in which our brain processes visual stimuli. In the early nineties, neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti and his research team at the University of Parma in Italy managed to register certain cell activities in the brains of monkeys who were making grabbing movements. They made a spectacular discovery: Accidentally they discovered that the same neurons of the monkeys were active when they *watched* the grabbing movement. This means that not only neurons located in the visual area of the brain, but also neurons located in the motor area of the brain are activated while observing movement.

The discovery of the activity of these mirror neurons, which results in an internal mental transformation, turns out to have implications for our understanding of the behaviour of others. The activation of mirror neurons puts the observer in the same internal state as when the action in question is carried out. These mirror neurons (so called because for these neurons *seeing* is the same as *doing*) form a system to match observation and execution of motor actions.

In the Social Brain Lab, a research centre in the Netherlands, supervised by neuropsychologist Christian Keysers, they discovered that people born without arms watching someone picking up a glass with his or her hand, neurons lit up in those brain areas which have to do with *their* way of picking things up, namely with their feet. People with hands activate areas which specifically control the hand, whereas people without hands show motor representations of the acts they perform with their feet (Gazzola e.o., 2007). These research results show that the mirroring in the brain is a subjective interpretation of someone else's acts, in terms of your own personal motor programme.

Hidden and visible manifestations

Vittorio Gallese, also a member of the University of Parma research team, states that we have a brake system, presumably located in the frontal cortex, that makes that we do not execute observed gestures. So we have the urge to imitate, but we don't. We know that because people who have brain damage in this area cannot stop imitating, even if they are ordered to. Rizzolatti states that the brake system can also 'leak' in the case of people who do not have such brain damage. This results in action, against the observer's will (Noorderlicht VPRO, Mai 23, 2002).

If we apply these research results to the situation in the theatre where during a dance

performance the spectator focuses on the movements of the dancers, then the premotor brain area will show activity related to the observed movements. It is conceivable that the repression mechanism of some spectators may show leaks.

For my PhD research (Wildschut 2003) I asked forty dance experts: choreographers, dancers, dance teachers and dance critics about their experiences with kinesthetic empathy. Their answers showed that this mostly is felt as an inner experience, but also can be visible from the outside. Many answers show that visible movement is restrained and has a kind of 'overflow' in the farthest limbs. This is in line with the brake system as discussed by Rizzolatti. The experts urge to move is channelled in a direction acceptable for that moment, for instance by moving a hand or a head.

The Fifteen Project

In my studies until now I mainly focus on qualitative and quantitative research, using questionnaires in the theatre setting. The research carried out among spectators of *The Fifteen Project*, choreographed by Arno Schuitemaker, gave me the opportunity to explore further and add new findings to results of earlier research, which I carried out among children and experts and among students sitting close by or further away, which was the topic of my presentation in Odense, two years ago. Before explaining the method I used, I will give insight in Arno's way of working, inspired by the knowledge of Mirror Neurons.

By accident, Arno's eye fell on a book of Marco Iacoboni (2008): *Mirroring People. The New Science of how we connect with others*, followed by another one: *Mirrors in the brain. How our Minds share Actions and Emotions*, written by Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia (2008). These books became a source of inspiration to explore the relation between dancers and spectators as a 'shared space of action', so called by Rizzolatti and which means that when we mirror someone else's action, we share this action in a joint space. Arno added a 'shared space of time' to stress the here-and-now. In order to do that he developed for example a very complex 'fingerduet' that keeps speeding up and constantly varies on itself.

The performance started with the audience on the floor, together with the dancers, in order to link action and observation: they watch and move, looking at becomes being part of. Later on, when the spectators are seated in a square, the interchange between audience and performers is expressed the other way round: sometimes one or more dancers take place in between the audience. And halfway the performance some spectators are challenged to literally mirror movements of the dancers.

I selected four episodes to ask questions about, immediately after the performance, which you can watch at <http://www.arnoschuitemaker.com/choreographies/#>. The first fragment is an off-balance duet, with spectators standing close by. Next the duet with the fingers, followed by one dancer in the air, supported by the other dancers and in the last episode you see a unisono part with all five dancers. In the performance the supporting part comes before the unison part.

As we all know, while watching a dance performance, the audience receives an amount of information. Although the dance itself is usually a domineering aspect, the spectators determine for a large part where to focus their attention and if they want to be involved in

an empathic, experiencing way or an understanding, rational way at certain moments during the performance.

As an outcome of my PhD study I found that in kinesthetic empathy the attention for, or maybe even concentration on, the movement plays an important role. Concentration on the movement can be caused by the interest of the spectator, for instance because of his or her own experience with dance. But it can also be caused by the choreographer who draws the attention to the movement and addresses the body of the spectator, which was often the case in *The Fifteen Project*.

As part of my search for getting more information about and more insight into the involvement process of kinesthetic empathy, I decided this time to explore kinesthetic experiences of spectators in relation to performance characteristics.

The questionnaire

The research experiment took place twice, immediately after the performance. The setting was very suitable, because in the final part the audience was seated on chairs in a square, with the performers in the middle. One of them asked the spectators to stay for a while and fill out a questionnaire.

For each selected scene I asked eight statements about possible involvement strategies, only the last one about physical experiences. They answered these eight statements for each scene without knowing that my focus was on their *physical* experiences. All statements were answered on a five-point scale: from not at all to very strong. The episode with the strongest physical experience was chosen and with this scène in mind, more statements were answered:

<p>8 statements about involvement strategies scene 1 8 statements about involvement strategies scene 2 8 statements about involvement strategies scene 3 8 statements about involvement strategies scene 4</p> <p><i>Selected scène</i> 23 statements about what evoked the physical reaction 6 statements about external visible manifestations 9 statements about external visible movements of body parts 6 statements about inner felt manifestations 9 statements about inner felt movements of body parts 1 question about what the physical experience evoked 1 open question about a strong moment 9 short questions about audience characteristics</p>
--

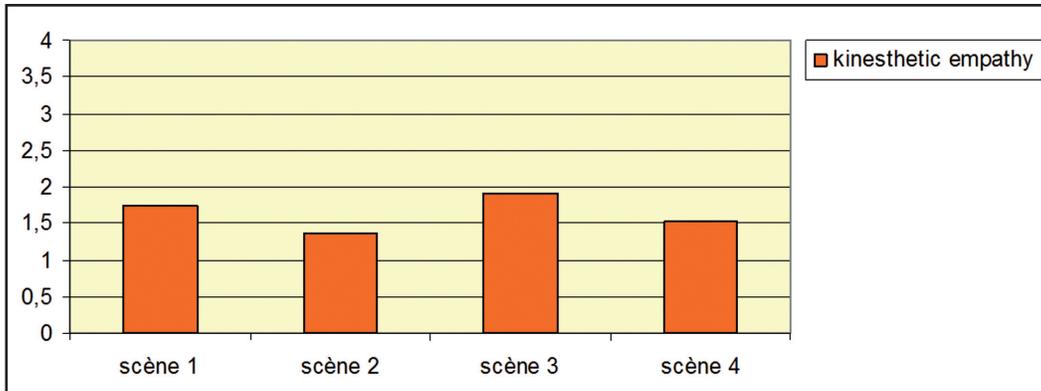
The group consisted of 17 men and 29 women, average age 31. It is important to keep in mind that the answers are the respondents's memories of the awareness of their physical experiences.

The results

My first question was: Are there differences in the awareness of kinesthetic empathy while watching the four selected scenes? In other words: do different movement characteristics evoke a stronger or weaker sense of kinesthetic empathy?

Diagram 1 represents the mean intensity of kinesthetic empathy felt in each scene. 0 stands for ‘not at all’ and 4 means a very strong physical experience.

Diagram 1: Kinesthetic empathy

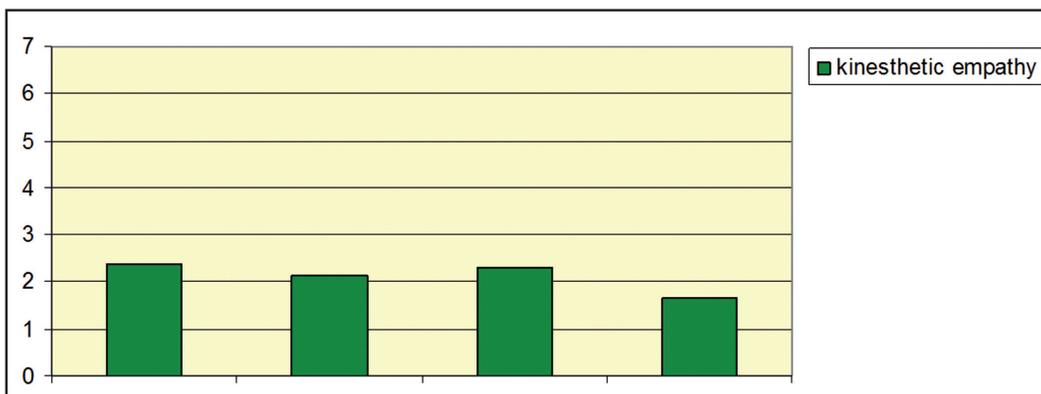


Significant differences:
 Between scène 2 and 3: $p=.01^{**}$
 Between scène 3 and 4: $p=.05^{*}$
 Between scène 1 and 2: $p=.078$ (trend)

Here we see that there is a strong significant difference found in the mean score of kinesthetic empathy between scene 2 and 3, a significant difference between scene 3 and 4 and a tendency between scene 1 and 2. The mean score is nearly 2, which means ‘rather strong’. It is fluctuating between 1.37 in the second scene and 1.91 in the third.

I was pleasantly surprised by this result. In another study with the same statements about involvement strategies measured in four scenes, I found a lower intensity, as you can see in Diagram 2.

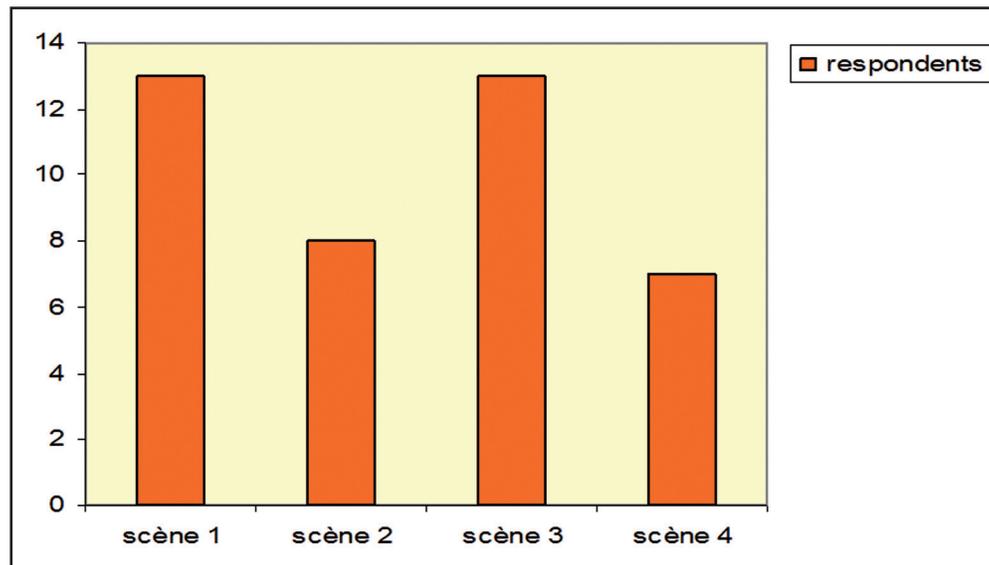
Diagram 2: Kinesthetic empathy Landscape



It is impossible to test if the differences between the two performances are significant, because I used other scales, but if you compare the means, then you can see that in case of the performance *Landscape*, choreographed by Amy Raymond, in between ‘not at all’ (0) and ‘very strong’ (7) is 3,5 and that point is not reached. So we may presume that there is a difference in the mean intensity in kinesthetic empathy between the two performances. The way of addressing the spectators by the movements of the dancers during the four studied scenes in *The Fifteen Project* evoked more intense kinesthetic experiences than happened in *Landscape*, but there is no statistic evidence available.

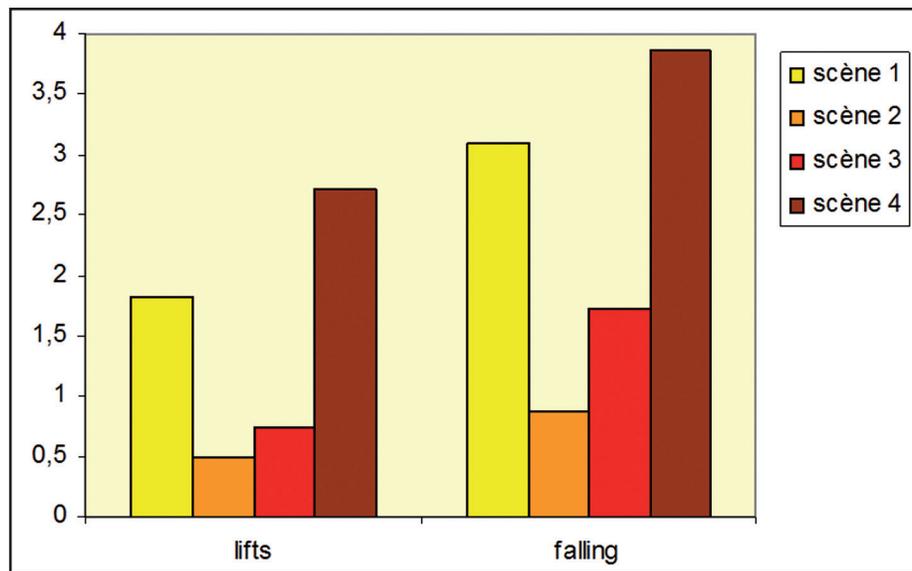
I asked people to answer further questions with only the episode in mind with their highest score, and continue with that specific scène in mind. In Diagram 3 you can see that 13 respondents answered statements related to scene 1 and scene 3, 8 spectators continued with the second episode and 7 with the fourth. 5 respondents fell out, because they were not kinesthetically involved or did not remember.

Diagram 3: Respondents



When we take a closer look at kinesthetic empathy as a reaction to movement characteristics we see that these reactions vary in each episode. As an example we can look at lifts and falling movements in Diagram 4:

Diagram 4: Movement characteristics

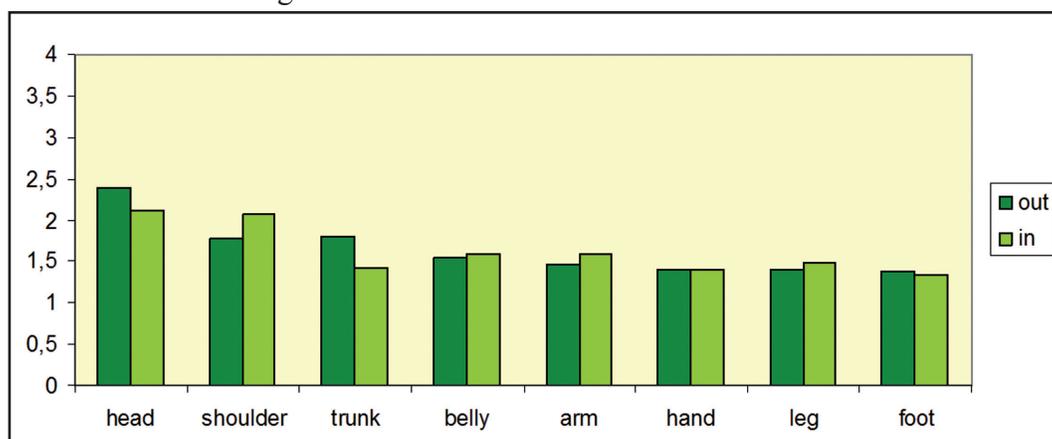


Here we see that extremely strong reactions on falling movements are felt during the fourth episode, where one dancer was lifted by the others, and also in the first scene, the off-balance duet. More or less the same pattern we recognize for lifting movements. This is interesting, because the fourth episode is, according to Arno Schuitemaker, a further development of what was seen in the first episode.

Let us look at another research question: Which parts of the body are involved? I asked the respondents in which parts of their bodies the movements manifested themselves.

We suppose that these physical experiences are mostly invisible, but inner felt. According to Rizzolatti our brake system can leak and this results in action, against the observer's will. Therefore I asked for inner felt as well as external visible movements. In Diagram 5 can see the results:

Diagram 5: Visible and inner felt manifestations



Shoulder: $p = .083$

Statistic analysis showed no significant differences between visible and inner felt movements. Only in the shoulder I found a marginal difference: a tendency that the inner felt movement is stronger than the outer visible movement of the shoulder. This is not what I expected, based on my study with experts, where they were asked to talk about their experiences. Also the brake system, mentioned by Rizzolatti, supposes a stronger inner felt moving than a visible one.

Conclusions

I finish with some thoughts about the findings presented above:

The four studied scenes evoked more intense kinesthetic experiences than happened in Landscape, but there is no statistic evidence available. *One of Schuitemaker's aims with The Fifteen Project* was to create a shared space of action between performer and spectator, which is supported by this result. It is plausible that the way of addressing the spectators invited them to move along with the movements of the dancers.

I found differences between the scenes in the degree of kinesthetic empathy. A stronger or weaker sense of kinesthetic empathy could be related to different movement characteristics.

The presupposition that kinesthetic empathy is mainly an inner felt sensation is not supported in this study. A possible explanation of this result can be found in the setting of the performance: in the beginning the spectators don't have a seat. They can walk and turn around if they like, and later on some spectators are invited to mirror the performers. It is plausible that, during the performance, this prompted the respondents to show leaks in the brake system, as mentioned by Rizzolatti.

I conclude with the notion that we are talking about experiences of spectators they try to remember. It is possible they only think they felt the movements they reported. Therefore, the research I am carrying out at the moment, in collaboration with the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, based in Nijmegen, combines questionnaires and brain scans, in order to correlate conscious and unconscious experiences, which will give us further insights in the process of kinesthetic empathy.

Copyright 2013, Liesbeth Wildschut

Bibliography

- Calvo-Merino, B., D.E. Glaser, J. Grèzes, R.E. Passingham and P. Haggard. (2005). Action observation and acquired motor skills: an fMRI study with expert dancers. *Cerebral Cortex*, 15 (8), pp. 1243-1249
- Gazzola, V., H. van der Worp, Th. Mulder, B. Wicker, G. Rizzolatti and C. Keysers. (2007). Apathics born without hands mirror the goal of hand actions with their feet. *Current Biology*, 17, pp. 1235-1240
- Iacoboni, M. (2008). *Het spiegelende brein. Over inlevingsvermogen, imitatiegedrag en spiegelneuronen*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Nieuwerzijds

Rizzolatti, G. and C. Sinigaglia. (2008). *Mirrors in the brain, how our minds share actions and emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Wildschut, L. (2003). *Bewogen door dans. De beleving van theaterdansvoorstellingen door kinderen*. Academisch proefschrift Universiteit Utrecht.

Television documentary

Noorderlicht VPRO, 23 mei 2002.

Website

<http://www.arnoschuitemaker.com/choreographies/#>

Address for correspondence:

Liesbeth Wildschut
Wolter Heukelslaan 42
3581 ST Utrecht
The Netherlands
E.M.M.Wildschut@uu.nl

Unfolding the Continuous Transformation of In-between States in a Daoist Movement Practice

I-Ying Wu

University of Northampton

Abstract

This lecture-demonstration investigates the continuous process of transforming consciousness through sequential emergent movements and aims to take a deeper look at in-between states based on Daoism, a Chinese traditional thought involving the philosophy of qi-energy. I explore how motivation of movement shifts in the continuous transformation of in-between states, and how this transformation relates to the self informed by Daoism. This practice articulates with three Daoist notions: wu, wu-wei, and the self. In terms of this movement practice, wu can be thought of as an in-between state of being; that is, something as nothing or nothing as something, in which everything unidentified is still whole. Wu-wei can be understood as an attitude or a way to move in an in-between state of wu when movement is about to emerge. The self can be viewed as a felt sense of being now and here, which flows along with states of qi-energy. In this presentation, I will unfold the process of becoming wu-wei in the form of a sequence of emergent movements accompanied by my poetic voyages that uncover how the self changes. Moreover, I will discuss how this movement practice reflects Daoism and the meaning of the serial transformation.¹

This continuous transformation focuses on exploring the idea of being unknown that comes from the ambiguity of Daoism. The unknown is not absolutely without knowing but it implies an ambiguous in-between. In this practice, the unknown itself is an image that can give rise to emergent movement; moreover, it is a conscious sense of being in the moment and having an attitude open to the surroundings. It is a blurred, intangible and open-ended experience rather than being an object that has to be located inside or outside of the body.

As a mover, I feel the unknown as a state of being that is changing quietly over the whole process of this practice. I question: what gives rise to movement, and how? In practice, while the intention behind movement is gradually reduced, “something” must replace intention in order to evoke movement. The “something”, or the unknown, is a series of complex and implicit experiences that occur sequentially throughout the process. Something growing and fading over the course of transformation, or diverse ways of being, take over movement in this process, and each one gradually transmutes into the next.

Procedures

In this practice of continuous transformation, movement is initially driven by an

intentional response to sensation and images of the unknown. Eventually movement becomes emerging from a certain felt sense of being, a preconscious, inner and bodily “experiencing” in Eugene T. Gendlin’s (1997) term (p. 13). There are three things to “release” in the process. The intention to respond to the kinaesthetic sensation of imagery with movement begins to soften when I am aware of in-between space in my body. After going through a period when my mind and sensation determine movement, the intention-led motivation is reduced, and the unknown image itself starts to lead movement. At the time, I can still be conscious of image and sensation, but movement no longer responds to a stimulus, whether mental decision or sensation or a chaotic blend of both. Movement starts to emerge by means of imagery. There is no reception-and-response relationship, and an interim stage appears in which intention gives way to image and sensation; however, a medium or image for movement is needed. The image-led motivation is more passive in terms of intention, while this way is more active in terms of movement itself. The next thing to break down is the learned skills and physical frame through the state of the melting body. I begin to feel free physically, and therefore have a sense of more possibilities in movement after this stage. Finally, the image of the unknown becomes blank. Without image as a medium, movement seems to emerge by itself from a felt sense of being, which can be seen as traces of image. The image of the unknown changes from a vivid picture in my mind or body into an abstract felt sense of existence.

During this practice of continuous transformation, my state shifts when I am aware of a change spontaneously emerging from the inner, along with an implicit tendency of Chinese qi-energy in movement, and I just follow up. In some moments, the process proceeds slowly and deeply inward because some shifts are too subtle to be named.

Since this practice focuses on exploration of the unknown, the procedure revealed in here is not the only way to go through it. There is always the potential to divide this transformation into more detailed states. I am not involved in a state as a task to complete but rather to allow some “space” of consciousness for the next state leaking or permeating through its boundary. Thus, each state within this transforming process is in-between, such that it may include some qualities of other states. For example, although this process proceeds from intention-led motivation to a felt sense of being, it does not mean intention completely disappears at the end. There is indeed an implicit intended tendency to undertake particular procedures and reach a felt sense of being as an end throughout the process. By the same token, a felt sense of being as a trace of imagery is a part of intention-led motivation that involves intention, images and sensation.

The image of the unknown is gradually abstracted in the process. In the later stages of this practice, a felt sense of the absence of triggers to direct movement reveals a gap that does not make sense or is unknown to the world based on the continuity of logical thinking. The gap is the unknown itself; the gap is a felt image or a trace of an image. The relationship of cause and effect does not exist because the lag time between stimuli and responses of movement shrinks to zero. Therefore, the image of the unknown within consciousness and sensation is gradually taken away or released through a series of states that ends with only a felt sense of the unknown. A felt sense of being is too subtle to show the relationship between movement and its trigger. The motivation finally shifts from a cause-and-effect, one-to-one mapping system to a holistic, correlative mapping system. To sum up, the unknown image shifts from a cause of movement to the leader of movement, and finally weighs more in a felt experiencing of

being along with the emergence of movement, which goes beyond a relationship between the object and subject.

A Daoist perspective

This transformation signifies a journey to *wu* in movement while learning *wu-wei* based on Daoism, a Chinese philosophy of qi-energy. *Wu* means *wu* yet its literal meaning is not absolutely nothing, as it bears a sense of the in-between, that is, something as nothing or nothing as something. *Wu* is a state in which everything unidentified is still whole. *Wu* suggests the in-between means not only a chaotic state in which things have not been named but also an integral whole of those things from a Daoist perspective. *Wu-wei* is an attitude as well as a way to move in an in-between moment when movement is about to emerge in a state of *wu*. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames (1998) employ the term “nonassertive actions” to describe *wu-wei* (p. 52). They suggest Daoism does not encourage individuals to be passive or subject to everything but it highly values the spontaneous “arising” or emergence from *wu*. *Wu-wei* can lead to a relatively passive yet sensitive and transient disposition of movement in terms of its intent to move.

Wu-wei may be parallel to “letting go,” the notion that is used in Contact Improvisation or some release techniques and somatic practices. However, this does not mean letting one state go and becoming another, based on dualism, but rather a dynamic state of being in-between. *Wu-wei* is more like unfolding one’s own hand and letting the thing in the hand present itself, *wu-wei* or allowing something to emerge from it, *wu-wei* rather than grabbing, holding or throwing it away. Intention is not dumped, but released to let something implicit and subtle emerge. Therefore, I sense my intention, image, sensation, and a felt sense of being all exist throughout the sequential transformation of the in-between, but one of them stands out and leads the movement during each state.

Within the general tendency toward less intention, there are subtleties that occur in this practice. In fact, meditative awareness goes inward and outward several times in diverse degrees during this continuous transformation: the kinaesthetic sensation goes deeper; awareness expands, including both the outside and inside as a world; and the self is brought a little inward, from an utterly open state to a felt sense of being in the world, with a purified emergence of movement. The differences of awareness between inward and outward can be subtle. The shifts of meditative awareness can be thought of as different states of consciousness and being.

The self

Based on the Daoist conception of qi, since modes of being or consciousness flow continuously, the status of the self changes in this movement practice as it goes through a process from intention of movement to a felt sense of being. A sense of the self emerges from how I feel myself at the moment. A state of the self fluctuates and flows with changeable experiences.

In this movement practice, I suggest the self is a felt sense of being now and here.

The self is related to felt experiencing about “I” at the moment. Informed by the Daoist thought about qi, I regard the self as a holistic entity capable of being tuned with various factors such as sensation, determination, a felt sense, etc., that can be experienced in the moment. The self may have a substantial felt sense when each factor is felt strongly; it may also have an absent felt sense when all factors are detached. Consequently, there is not another “something” that arises when the subjective self is released. The self has always been there since it can be sensed from a felt sense of being, including the body, recognition, psyche, and consciousness. I can inherently sense my self, and this felt sense comes from the fact that my movement emerges intuitively and spontaneously from my self.

Copyright 2013, I-Ying Wu

Notes

1. I read out the text of this article after unfolding this Daoist movement practice in my lecture-demonstration. There are blank spaces distributed purposely in this article. The goal of arranging spaces is to alert readers to a sense of the in-between and its vagueness by means of “experiencing” space. When reading this article, readers should keep in mind that a space between words may be as meaningful as a gap or space of the in-between in movement. This idea is inspired by an old Chinese text in the Daoist book, *The Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower*. The Chinese annotator Wang Kui Pu notes that there is a space in the original text describing the space between the eyes. Since heightening awareness between the eyes brings on the state of *wu*, he interprets the space as *wu*, an in-between and holistic state (Lu-tsu, 2006, p. 122). A space contains infinite possibilities; nothing (emptiness) means something (fullness). Space is no longer a symbol of emptiness or nothing, but instead it is something unknown. Try reading this article with an awareness of blankness. Spaces encountered within this thesis can be felt as a breath or a blurred area among the materials that shape it.

Bibliography

- Ames, R. T. & Hall, D. L. *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Gendlin, E. T. *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning: A Philosophical and Psychological Approach to the Subjective*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997.
- Lai, X. S. [賴錫三]. *Contemporary Interpretation of Spiritual Glow in Zhuang-zi* [莊子靈光的當代詮釋]. Hsinchu: National Tsing Hua University, 2008.
- Lu-tsu [呂祖]. *Contemporary Interpretation of the Principle of Taiyi Golden Flower* [太乙金華宗旨今譯]. (Wang K. P. [王魁溥], Trans.). Taipei: Dandao Culture, 2006.
- Ou, C. J. [歐崇敬]. *Zhuang-zi and Deconstructionism* [莊子與解構主義]. Taipei: Showwe, 2010.

Address for correspondence:

I-Ying Wu
 No. 43, Ren-ai Road, Chia-yi City, Taiwan (R.O.C.)
 gingingla@gmail.com

How technology actualizes dancers interfacing with new media sets within a polaristic context of *Qi*: The case of Huang Yi's *SPIN* (2010)

Yi-chen Wu
University of Exeter

Abstract

My goal for this paper is to build a philosophical framework, based on Confucian scholar Mencius' sense of Qi, for rethinking the spatial implications of dancers interfacing with new media sets, as shown in the Taiwanese choreographer Huang Yi's SPIN (2010). The dancers' live performances in SPIN are captured by a spinning camera and instantly edited into mirror images that are then projected onto screens, hung on the four auditorium walls. This setup emphasises not only the competition between the dancers and their mirror images over who will dominate the performance, but also their mutual referencing of each other's hidden bodily and psychological spaces. In keeping with Mencius' sense of Qi, I propose that this setup -- the dancers "interfacing" with their mirror images -- fosters a dynamic equilibrium between them. That is, the dancers' stirrings by and responses to the images can be interpreted as the communal acts of rival but interdependent polarities. Working as the dancers' equivalent selves, the images are necessary counterparts for sending and receiving the dancers' psycho-physiological strengths.

Introduction: How can we view the relationship between the world and I?

The Western rationalistic tradition, originating from Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, holds that the physical domain is separated from the non-physical, namely, mental domain (see Zahorik and Jenison, 1998: 79). In this view of body-mind dualism, the physical domain is conceived of as 'the objective world of physical reality', while the mental domain is 'the purely subjective world of an individual's thoughts and feelings' (ibid.: 80). This view leads to a strict distinction between subject and object.

In the last century, Martin Heidegger's phenomenology has reoriented the conventional Western way of viewing subject and object. He claims that in the mode of 'being-in-the-world', existence is like a state of being 'thrown' into a flux, in which the potential for interactions between humans and things are prerequisite to their incorporation into the environment (see ibid.: 82-84).

Likewise, the perceptual theory of J. J. Gibson shares the Heideggerian ideology of orientation. His notion of 'affordances' asserts that an organism's actions are related to the extent of the environment's supportive information (see ibid.: 82-85). This notion indicates that existence rests on the reciprocal symbiosis between an organism and its environment.

Since the end of the last century, an increasing number of researchers have adopted a Heideggerian/Gibsonian metaphysic, a turn to ecology, for their analyses of new media artworks. The main concern of this philosophical position is the correlation between the

potential for action and informationally dynamic environments. In this context, more and more new media artworks show a tendency toward ‘moving beyond the design of equipment to the design of Being through our activities of bringing forth’ (Winograd, 1995: 125). That is to say, this type of artwork focuses on the constitution of environments whose information providing systems may affect the performer’s actions or interactions.

As artist Jeffrey Shaw suggests, ‘The art-work is more and more embodied in the interface’ (Shaw in Duguet, Klotz and Weibel, 1997: 157; cited by Giannachi, 2004: 27). This indicates the spatiality of the interface, where the performer exchanges information with the new media set. In this sense, the interface is not merely tied to the constitution of the environment in which the incorporation of the performer and the set is made possible. Rather, the interface is also tied to the dynamics of such environments that support and embody the performer’s performative task.

I suggest that this very feature of the interface, in relation to the dynamics of the mediated environment, exists in the classical Chinese worldview, which lies in the notion of *Qi* and is characterised as a form of polarism. In this paper, my discussion of the interface takes the standpoint of this *Qi*-cultivated Chinese worldview.

I focus on two main issues. The first concerns the concept of interface and its spatial implications, drawing on the ancient Confucian scholar Mencius’ theory of nourishing Floodlike *Qi* (*yan-qi-lun*). My reason for applying the notion of *Qi* to the analysis of this issue is because the embodiment of interfacing is requisite to the unity of humans and the lifeworld, and the unity of body and heart-mind in the Chinese worldview of *Qi*.

Keeping with *Qi* worldview, the second issue concerns the possibility of a philosophical framework in relation to new media arts. Subsequently, I use Huang Yi’s *SPIN* as a case study to illustrate the framework. Finally, I provide a summary of these findings.

The meaning of *Qi*

In ancient China, *Qi* ‘denotes the psychophysiological power associated with blood and breath’ (Chan 1969: 784; cited by Tu 1985: 36-37). This notion can be found in numerous works of classical Chinese philosophy, medicine, literature, art, politics, agriculture and astronomy. Due to its psychophysiological nature, *Qi* is constantly altering between physical and non-physical domains. Hence, *Qi* operates not only as the substratum of humans, diverse things and their environments, but also as the engagement between these components and as the power source that activates this engagement.

The environments wherein humans and things coexist are conceived of as *Qi* biospheres. In other words, humans and things interconnect with their environments via the ceaseless flow of *Qi* among these components, which works to form a dynamic unity. This uniting requires the interplay of *yin* and *yang Qi*, that is, the interplay between rival yet interdependent polarities. Here, polarities -- such as those between body and heart-mind, and self and others -- are not considered as totally different attributes, but as diverse expressions of a common *Qi* that differs depending on the situation.

To this day, the notion of *Qi* still underlies the Chinese psyche and culture. If one denies that *Qi* is true, it is equivalent to a refusal of the Chinese worldview on nature and society (see Sakade, 1993: 142).

The embodiment of interfacing in *Qi* biospheres

The notion of *Qi* fundamentally affects Chinese people's understanding of the body. During the Warring States Period (BC 476-221), the notion of '*hsing-Qi-hsin*' unity – that is, the unity of 'the human bodily form, *Qi* and the human heart-mind' – was shared by various schools of Chinese philosophy, medicine and martial art (see Yang, 1996: 4, my translation). *Hsing-Qi-hsin* unity implies that through the flow of *Qi*, a person's body is indivisible from her heart-mind.

In this period, Mencius was the first person who emphasised the psychophysiological nature of *Qi* (see Li, 1999: 67-68), rather than conventionally viewing *Qi* as a vital power. In response to the notion of *hsing-Qi-hsin* unity, Mencius proposed a theory of nourishing Floodlike *Qi* (*yan-qi-lun*). This theory indicates the incessant effort to keep *Qi* penetrating and engaging the body and heart-mind, that is, an effort to keep the inner and outer in unison (see Yang, 1996: 23). Here, the term Floodlike *Qi* (*how-jan-chih-qi*) creates an image of flux that reflects the constant transmission of information between the inner and outer (see *ibid.*). Through cultivation, the perceptual and vital forces in a person's *Qi* may come to ceaselessly incite mutual communications and interactions between this person and her surroundings.

Based on Mencius' theory of nourishing Floodlike *Qi*, I suggest that the effort to let *Qi* freely flow between the inner and outer can be thought of as fostering the *Qi*-cultivated interface between oneself and one's surroundings. By '*Qi*-cultivated interface' I mean a spatial progression by which one's self and one's surroundings correspond with each other via the flow of *Qi*. Without the embodiment of interfacing, various pairs of polarities may not be integrated as a unity. That is to say, a person interfacing with her surroundings via the flow of *Qi* can be characterised as cosmologically participating in an effort to reach a dynamic equilibrium in her dyadic relationships.

Toward an application of Mencius' Floodlike *Qi* to the interface in new media artworks

Drawing inspiration from Mencius' theory of nourishing Floodlike *Qi*, I will propose a philosophical framework that can be used to examine a phenomenon, where the use of new media technology may help embody the interfacing between the performer and the new media set.

As previously suggested, the *Qi*-cultivated interface that is fostered by nourishing Floodlike *Qi* can be thought of as a spatial progression by which one's self corresponds with one's surroundings via the flow of *Qi*. I suggest now that this phenomenon of a *Qi*-cultivated interface is equivalent to the embodiment of the performer interfacing with the new media set throughout the course of the performance. This embodiment lies in a specific quality of new media technology -- the capability to both incite mutual communication between the performer and the set and facilitate the interweaving of the performer's body and heart-mind with the set to ultimately create a dynamic unity. Thus, the set works as the performer's rival yet interdependent polarity, as it sends and receives the performer's psycho-physiological strengths.

In this context, interfacing may be interpreted as a communal act that needs to be implemented by the performer and the new media set. Hence, the focus shifts away from

the materiality of the interface to the spatiality of the interfacing that occurs between the performer and set. Such interfacing occurs when information circulates between the performer and the set.

Case study: Huang Yi's *SPIN*

In *SPIN*, a custom-made mechanical arm that holds a camera is suspended from the ceiling and spins around the perimeter of the stage. The speed of the mechanical arm's spinning and the height of the camera's position are automatically manipulated by a computer throughout the performance. The dancers' live performance captured by the camera is instantly transferred to a computer and edited into mirror images that are then projected onto four large screens, which are hung on the four auditorium walls. Using the mirror effect, each projection shows only half of an original scene where the dancers perform. Furthermore, due to the spinning camera, the mirror images shown on the right and left sides of each projection constantly reveal the hidden parts of the original scene and, meanwhile, shift into the communal boundary between the two sides.

I propose that this scenic setup gives rise to a phenomenon of *Qi*-cultivated interfacing. By this I mean that the visible set of the mechanical arm and camera on stage seems to disappear from the performance, whereas the mutual referencing of the dancers and their mirror images is brought to the foreground. That is to say, the camera's spin and the projected mirror effect require the dancers to not only perform with their partners on stage but also with their doubles on the screens. Through changing their positions relative to each other and to the spinning camera on stage, the dancers achieve this twofold task, simultaneously interacting and engaging with their partners on stage and their doubles on the screens.

In this context, I suggest that the relationship between the dancers and their doubles involves the interplay of *yin* and *yang* polarities. As Huang writes in his dissertation, the coexistence of the stage and screens in this dance-work aims to present a *T'ai-chi* diagram (see Huang, 2010: 15). According to my analysis, this is achieved through the cyclical process by which the mechanical arm and camera approach and subsequently pull away from the dancers. The position of the mechanical arm and the viewpoint of the camera fundamentally affect and interweave the actions of the dancers and their doubles. Not only does this scenic setup emphasise the contest between the dancers and their mirror images over who will dominate the performance, but it also generates an impression that the two appear to constantly become the other. Thus, this setup fosters a dynamic equilibrium in the spatial relationship between the dancers and their doubles.

Finally, I suggest that due to the previously discussed scenic setup, the dancers interfacing with their doubles is characterised as a communal act of rival yet interdependent polarities. By this I mean that the dancers' use of the stage space correlates with their doubles' use of the screen space, creating a dynamic whole -- the dynamic configuration of the stage space and the screen space. In this sense, what is foregrounded by this setup is not the dancers' two-dimensional images, but the dancers' bodily spaces, whose constitution depends on the actualisation of the interfacing between the dancers and their doubles.

Conclusion

Drawing on Mencius' theory of nourishing Floodlike *Qi*, I have proposed a framework with respect to a phenomenon of interface-in-action: through embodying the interfacing with their projected doubles, the dancers create a dynamic equilibrium in the spatial relationship between their true and mediated selves.

Copyright 2013, Yi-chen Wu

Bibliography

- Giannachi, G. *Virtual Theatres: An Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Huang, Y. [黃翊] *Huang Yi: SPIN 2010 Graduate Project Report* [黃翊《SPIN 2010》畢業製作報告], postgraduate dissertation. Taipei National University of the Arts, 2010.
- Li, Z.H. [李澤厚] *The Chinese aesthetic tradition* [華夏美學]. Taipei: San Min Book Co., Ltd., 1999.
- Sakade, Y. [坂出祥伸] "A 'Common Qi' Penetrating Haven, Earth and Humans: the Senses of Nature and Social Order" [貫通天地人之「一氣」—其自然觀與社會秩序觀] in Yang Rurbin ed., *The Philosophy of Qi and Vision of the Body in Traditional Chinese Thinking* [中國古代思想中的氣論及身體觀]. Taipei: Chuliu Publisher, 1993: 141-156.
- Tu, W.M. *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.
- Winograd, T. "Heidegger and the design of computer systems" in Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay eds., *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995: 108-127.
- Yang, R.B. [楊儒賓] *The Confucian Sense of Body* [儒家身體觀]. Taipei: Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, 1996.
- Zahorik, P. and Jenison, R.L. "Presence as Being-in-the-World." *Presence*, vol. 7, no. 1 (February 1998): 78-89.

Address for correspondence:

Name Yi-chen Wu

Full postal address No. 43, Ren-ai Road, Chia-yi City, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

E-mail address wu.yichen1125@gmail.com

Isadora Duncan's Adopted Daughters, the "Isadorables": Their Activities and Characteristics

Emi Yagishita

Waseda University/ The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

Abstract

In the history of dance, Isadora Duncan's name is very well known, while those of her adopted daughters, Anna, Irma, Theresa, Lisa, Margot, and Erika are surprisingly less known, although they have had a significant impact on the history of dance. The name "Isadorables," as Isadora's daughters came to be called, was coined by the French critic Fernand Divoire in 1909; they played a key role in continuing the Duncan method which was first initiated by Isadora.

This paper focuses on their activities and characteristics after they separated from Isadora, some as late as 1921. The activities of each of her daughters are discussed, particularly their own dance schools and performances, on the basis of unpublished materials, which include photos, brochures, and newspaper and magazine articles from the United States and Europe, as well as interviews with dancers who studied with the Isadorables.

The present study determines the Isadorables as the heirs of Duncan Dance and describes each of their activities and characteristics. Through the years the Duncan Dance spread all over the world, and in particular Anna, Irma and Theresa taught dance in the United States and Lisa taught in France.

Introduction

All of the Isadorables entered Isadora's first school in Grunewald, Germany in 1905, which shut down in 1908. Even after this school closed, they all stayed together more than ten years. A critical event occurred in 1921, when Isadora decided to go to Russia to create another school there. At this point, the Isadorables broke up and each started to develop their individual path. Margot died prematurely at age 25 in 1925 of pneumonia and Erika decided to give up her dance career to become a painter. Before the trip to Russia, Anna had a disagreement with Isadora when they were in Greece, because she fell in love with Isadora's pianist and lover, Walter Rummel. Lisa had a boyfriend and Theresa was going to get married, so, both of them were unable to go to Russia with Isadora, thus only Irma followed. After they separated from Isadora, they all created their own careers as dancers or, in some cases, other fields. In this paper, I write briefly about Duncan Dance's heirs, Theresa, Anna, Lisa and Irma, and discuss their careers and activities in depth, particularly their dance schools and performances.

There has been little previous deep study on the Isadorables. In fact, there is nothing except one book by Lilian Lowenthal in 1993. This paper, attempts to fill in the gap in the literature by using unpublished materials that Lowenthal did not reference in her

book, including photos, brochures, newspapers and magazine articles from the United States and Europe, as well as interviews with some of the Isadorables' students.

1. THERESA DUNCAN (1895 Dresden-1987 New York)

When Theresa was 9 or 10, she danced at the Royal Central Theater in Dresden. Isadora saw her perform and invited her to study at her school in Germany. However, when Isadora announced that she intended to go to Russia in 1921, Theresa chose to follow her own career in the United States, especially in New York. First she did a solo performance in New York City in 1922.¹ After she married art historian Stephan Bourgeois, and then founded her own school called "School of The Classical Dance"² in New York City in the 1930's, she created her own dance group, "Helliconiades."³ However, her dance school and group did not continue for very long. Probably due to her growing family, Theresa cut her dance activities short, and focused on her two sons.

However, in 1934 she was invited to dance at the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the President.⁴ She was the only Duncan Dancer who danced there, and it must have been a great honor. In the 1940's she performed again with the Helliconiades, and in 1954 held twelve different performances under the name of "A Classical Festival." I had a chance to see the associated brochures, thanks to Pamela De Fina; these brochures present Theresa dancing to the music of great composers such as Debussy, Handel, and Scarlatti –all composers that Isadora never used at her own performances. Theresa was expanding the Duncan repertoire in terms of music.

In her later years, Theresa cultivated a relationship with Isadora's niece, Ligoa Duncan and performed several times at "Ligoa Duncan Art Center" on New York's East Side.⁵ After that, she established a new institute, "Isadora Duncan International Institute," with her student, Kay Bardsley, in Mount Kisco, New York and created a performance group, "The Maria Theresa Heritage Group", with which she performed. In 1982, being the only remaining Isadorable alive, Theresa, aged 87, did a solo dance performance to Tchaikovski's Sixth Symphony. The next year she danced in New York in her last performance, and passed away at age 92 a few years later.⁶

2. ANNA DUNCAN (1894 Moudon, Switzerland-1980 New York)

Anna's father saw an article about the Isadora Duncan School in Grunewald in the newspaper, and took Anna to the school. Then, Anna entered Isadora's school on January 19th, 1905. In 1920, she had a love affair with pianist, Walter Rummel; Isadora's disapproval caused an estrangement with her. After Anna broke up with Rummel, she went to the U.S.A. and performed with fellow Isadorables Lisa and Margot as the Isadora Duncan Dancers.

On May 2nd, 1926, having begun her career as a dance teacher, she had her first solo performance at the Guild Theater⁷ in New York City. In 1928 August 8th and 9th, she danced with "The Anna Duncan Dancers"⁸ at Lewishon Stadium;⁹ the performance featured the music of Schubert. From 1928 to 1931 Anna performed annually at Lewishon Stadium. However, after 1929, Anna's students' names can no longer be seen in the program of Lewishon Stadium. There is a possibility that she performed without them. In 1929, on January 15th, she danced with a 42-member orchestra, performing the

music of Gluck, Schubert and Chopin. Ligoa's son, Michel, showed me one program from Jacob's Pillow in the 1940's; according to the program, Anna performed on the stage where Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn danced. Anna had shared the stage with them before at Lewishon Stadium. After 1942, Anna's performances were few, however at age 71, in 1965, she danced *The Virgin Name is Mary* as her last performance. Anna was also involved with theatre and film. For example, in 1927 she was given the part of Salome in Phillip Barry's play, *John*; and in 1933, she played the maid in George Cukor's film, *Dinner at Eight*.

According to interviews with Gemze De Lappe,¹⁰ who was a student of Anna, her school in New York was in Carnegie Hall. However, she also taught at Tamara Daykarhanova's acting school. Anna became blind in her later years, but she started to write her own autobiography. The text was never finished, and she died at age 85, on March 6th 1980.

3. LISA DUNCAN (1898 Dresden-1976 Dresden)

Her real name was Elizabeth Milker. She entered Isadora's school at age 6 or 7. She also did not accompany her to Russia in 1921, but chose to join tours in the U.S.A. with Anna and Margot for several months.¹¹ After the U.S.A. tours, she returned to Paris and opened her own school. At first the school was located at The Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, then on Versailles Avenue. Later, her school was on Sablon Street; investigations reveal that, according to a pamphlet, her location was later on Pelouze Street.¹² Very little can be learned about her teaching style from pamphlets. However, Fernand Divoire discussed the differences between Lisa's school and Isadora's: according to his view,¹³ Isadora's goal for her dance school was "Life and Beauty", while Lisa simply wanted to create a school for dance. She taught her students how to walk, how to run, and how to jump technically. Divoire states that Lisa's approach to dance was a fusion of Isadora's dance and her own, and that Lisa had created a wonderful new form of dance.¹⁴

About Lisa's choreography: she created *Orpheus*, performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris. A new version of *Orpheus*, her dance presented a scene of the "Furies" that stood out in that she used masks created by Andre Barsacq. This was a significant change for Duncan Dance in that Isadora had never used masks. Unfortunately, there is no film record of this dance, so I cannot comment on this performance in any more depth. In 1937 Lisa became a French citizen. When she became ill in later life, she returned to Germany, spending her last years in Dresden and passing away in 1976.

The famous French choreographer, Maurice Bejart, at age 20, took classes in her school in Paris. In prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya's DVD documentary,¹⁵ he says, "Isadora was a character who fascinated me, because it was she who invented modern dance. Without Isadora, 20th Century ballet would not have existed." In this documentary, Bejart demonstrates Lisa's approach to Duncan Dance. Thus, we are fortunate to know how Bejart was inspired by Lisa Duncan and how she contributed to the next generation's new dance.

4. IRMA DUNCAN (1897 Hamburg-1977 California)

Irma entered Isadora's school on February 1st 1905. As noted above, only Irma

accompanied Isadora to Russia in 1921. Together, they opened the Isadora Duncan School, at Prechistenka 20 in Moscow. In 1924, Isadora left Russia for reasons which might have been both political and financial.¹⁶ However, Irma remained in the Moscow School where she taught the students.

In 1926, Irma and her students toured China; the tour was covered by the press. According to *Harbin Observer*,¹⁷ the group had planned to extend the tour to Japan, but these plans were cancelled due to the death of the Emperor Taisho. Irma had wanted very much to tour Japan. After Isadora's tragic death in 1927, Irma and her selected students toured the U.S.A. in 1928 and 1929; both tours were a great success and were well covered by the press.¹⁸

In 1939, Irma had disputes with her impresario Sol Hurok.¹⁹ The U.S.A. tours came to an end. The Soviet government demanded that the Russian students return home. The American government had made clear their differences with the Soviet regime and, in due time, the students returned to Moscow. However, Irma stayed in the U.S.A and Anna arranged for her students to work with Irma.²⁰

Irma left these words: "I'll teach until Isadora's work is finished...I want to raise teachers."²¹ To fulfill this promise, Irma opened "The Isadora Duncan School of Dance" in 1931. According to *The New York Times* in 1931, the school had the support of Isadora's brother Augustin Duncan, as well as the conductors Walter Damrosch and Leopold Stokowski. Stepping up to lend support were photographers Edward Steichen and Arnold Genth, writer Max Eastman, and the wife of the great singer Enrico Caruso.²² Irma had succeeded in gathering around her New York's artists and art sophisticates.

Irma also was able to fulfill Isadora's dream of dancing to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. She did so in 1933 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. According to *The New York Times*, fifty Duncan dancers, six hundred character dancers, sixteen singers, and a 200-person orchestra took part in this major event. Walter Damrosch conducted.²³ I interviewed one of Irma's students, Gemze De Lappe, who was a child, took part in the Madison Square Garden's Ninth Symphony concert. She recalled that it was a huge event and a wonderful performance.²⁴

In 1937, Irma wrote a book on the technique of Duncan Dance entitled *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*. Previously, however, she had published *Isadora Duncan's Russian Days* with Allan Ross MacDougall, who had been a private secretary to Isadora in 1945. Then in 1965, Irma published her autobiography *Duncan Dancer*. As a writer, she came full circle as Isadora's consummate apprentice who would come into her own and pass the baton to the next generation. Because, unfortunately, there is no motion picture record of Isadora's schools, Irma's book on technique becomes a priceless contribution to the understanding of Isadora's vision. Irma died, at age 80, in Santa Barbara in 1977.²⁵ Her students, Hortense Kooluris and Julia Levine, created in 1977 "The Isadora Duncan Commemorative Company" and from this company many of the next generation of Duncan Dancers were born. There are now many Duncan dance teachers and dancers all over the world.

Conclusion

In this paper, I focused on Isadora's adopted daughters who carried forth the Duncan Dance. I discussed their activities after having left Isadora's direct influence. Theresa,

Anna, Lisa, and Irma became the successors of Duncan Dance after Isadora's death. They taught and danced, each in her own way. Theresa, Anna, and Irma taught in the U.S.A. while Lisa did so in France. From these four dancers most of the following generations were born.

Theresa used classical music that Isadora did not use at her performances and she danced until she was 87. Anna created large performances at Lewishon Stadium: however, her career was not just limited to dance but also involved theatre and film as an actress. Lisa taught dance in France and made her version of *Orpheus*, in this version, she used masks at her performances and created a new interpretation of the work. Irma did several performances with her Moscow students in many countries, later with American students in the U.S.A. She danced to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which had been Isadora's dream. Moreover, she published a technique book on Duncan Dance and books on Isadora, greatly contributing to Duncan Dance. Owing to Isadora Duncan and the efforts of the four Isadorables, Duncan Dance spread all over the world and continues to be pursued to this day.

Copyright2013, Emi Yagishita

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the descendants of Isadora Duncan -- Ligoa Duncan, Michel Duncan, and Dorée Duncan -- for the help they have given me in my research, and to the Duncan Dancers Gemze De Lappe, Pamela De Fina and to other dancers, too numerous to list.

Notes

- 1 According to newspapers, Theresa started her solo performance from 1922: Dunning, Jennifer. "Maria-Theresa Duncan, a Dancer and Last of the 'Isadorables' Dies." *Los Angeles Times* 17 Dec. 1987.
- 2 She founded her own school called "School of The Classical Dance" at 113 West 57th St., Studio 604. Her husband, Stephan Bourgeois was a president of "The Foundation of the Classic Dance, Inc." and also was one of the teachers at the Foundation. He gave lectures on paintings and sculptures to her students.
- 3 All dancers' ancestors were Greek, dancers were Anastasia, Calliope, Maia, Nike, Eutherpi, Athene, Anatole, Ludmilla, Meropie, Kore, Aigera.
- 4 According to: Jennifer Dunning Theresa danced at the White House in 1942 ("Maria-Theresa Duncan, a Dancer and Last of the 'Isadorables' Dies." *The New York Times* 16 Dec. 1987, p.28). However, according to Pamela De Fina, she danced at the White House on May 2nd, 1933 (*Maria Theresa: Divine Being Guided by a Higher Order*, Pennsylvania Dorrance, 2003, p.16).
- 5 I have done interviews with descendants of Isadora Duncan, and I confirmed this. (Duncan, Ligoa. Personal Interview. 9 Aug. 2011, Duncan, Michel. Personal Interview.10 Aug. 2011, Duncan, Dorée. Personal Interview. 20 Aug. 2011)

- 6 I have done interviews with a student of Theresa, Pamela De Fina. She said that Theresa's way of teaching was as follows: First she started from a story, then she created gestures that interpreted the story; afterwards, she developed the gestures into movements and created new works supported by music. She took wave movements that were very typical for Duncan Dance, and made movements of strength and weakness; on the other hand, she said that Isadora said "Don't imitate me", and she created her works that followed her soul. (De Fina, Pamela. Personal Interview. 5 and 6 Aug. 2011)
- 7 The theater remains as "August Wilson's Theater."
- 8 The Anna Duncan dancers are Anna Criss, Ester Lubin, Abigail Goodstein, Judith Seinfeld, Julia Levine, Selma Rubin and Ethel Goodman.
- 9 Lewishon Stadium opened in 1915, and it shut down in 1973. Famous composers and conductors like George Gershwin and Eugene Ormandy used this stadium. This stadium sat 20,000 people at maximum.
- 10 Gemze De Lappe is an American dancer who worked closely with Agnes de Mille and was originally trained by Irma Duncan, Anna Duncan and Michel Fokine. She was in Fokine's company. But she also took part in Broadway musical theatre performances: *The King and I*, *Paint Your Wagon*, *Juno*, *West End* and *Oklahoma!*
- 11 "Duncan Sisters Offer Moods of the Dance." *Los Angeles Times*, 27 Feb. 1924.
- 12 School's pamphlet: "Cours de Danse Lisa Duncan."
- 13 Divoire, Fernand. *Pour la danse*, Éditions de la Danse, 1935.
- 14 Robinson, Jacqueline. *Modern Dance in France*, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997, p.59.
- 15 Delouche, Dominique. *Maya: Portrait of Maya Plisetskaya*, VAI, 2009.
- 16 Lenin, who liked Duncan Dance, gave a little support to the school. After he died on January 21st in 1924, it became more difficult to get support from the new government. So, Isadora decided to do performances in Germany to support her school and did her farewell performance on September 29th 1924 at the Bolshoi Theatre.
- 17 "Local and General." *Harbin Observer* 16 Oct. 1926. I found this newspaper article at New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
- 18 "Irma Duncan Gives Fine Dance Recital." *The New York Times* 28 Dec. 1928. "Duncan Dancers in Charming Program." *The New York Times* 31 Dec. 1928. Martin, John. "The Dance: Concerning The Duncan School." *The New York Times* 6 Jan. 1929. Martin, John. "The Dance: The End of a Record Season." 19 May 1929. "Big Audience Greet Duncan Dancers." *The New York Times* 29 Dec. 1929.
- 19 "Irma Duncan is sued." *The New York Times* 26 Jan. 1930. Sol Hurok was a famous impresario and he was a producer of Anna Pavlova and Michel Fokine.
- 20 After the Moscow students left the U.S.A., Anna sent her students to Irma and they were called the "American Duncan Dancers."

- 21 Carleton, Varna. "Duncan Dancers Begin Season Tonight." *World* 6 Oct. 1929.
- 22 "Duncan School to Open." *The New York Times* 13 Dec. 1931.
- 23 "Activities of Musicians Here and Afield." *The New York Times* 22 Jan. 1933.
- 24 De Lappe, Gemze. Personal Interview. 18 Sep. 2011.
- 25 Kisselcoff, Anna. "Irma Duncan Dead; Disciple of Isadora." *The New York Times* 22 Sep. 1977.

Bibliography

- Blair, Fredrika. *Isadora: Portrait of the Artist as a Woman*. Quill, 1986.
- Caen, Édouard et Pierre Abraham. *Danser c'est vivre : Georges Pomiès*. Éditions Pierre Tisné, 1939.
- De Fina, Pamela. *Maria Theresa: Divine Being Guided by a Higher Order*. Dorrance, 2003.
- Dikovskaya, Lily. *In Isadora's Steps*. Book Guild, 2008.
- Divoire, Fernand. *Pour la Danse*. Édition de la Danse, 1935.
- Duncan, Anna. *In the Footsteps of Isadora*. Dansmuseet, 1996.
- . *In the Footsteps of Isadora*. Dansmuseet, 2010.
- Duncan, Dorée, ed. *Life into art : Isadora Duncan and Her World*. Norton & Company, 1993.
- Duncan, Isadora. *Der Tanz Der Zukunft*. Verlegt Bel Eugen Diederichs, 1903.
- . *My Life*. Liveright, 1927.
- . *The Art of the Dance*. Theatre Arts Books, 1928.
- Duncan, Irma, and Allan Ross Macdougall. *Isadora Duncan's Russian Days*. Covici Friede, 1929.
- Duncan, Irma. *The Technique of Isadora Duncan*. Kamin, 1937.
- . *Duncan Dancer*. Wesleyan University Press, 1965.
- Lowenthal, Lillian. *The Search for Isadora*. Princeton Book, 1993.
- Musée Bourdelle. *Isadora Duncan : Une Sculpture Vivante*. Paris Musée, 2009.
- Robinson, Jacqueline. *Modern Dance in France : An Adventure 1920-1970*. Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997. (Robinson, Jacqueline. *L'aventure de la danse moderne en France 1920-1970*. Éditions Bougé, 1990.)

Brochure, Program, Magazine and Newspapers

- "Éducation du Corps-Plastique, Rythme et Danses." Brochure of Lisa Duncan School, n.d.
- Martin, John. "Maria-Theresa in Dance Recital." *The New York Times* 24 May 1937.
- "Recital Lisa Duncan." Program of Lisa Duncan's performance at Théâtre National de l'Opéra Comique, 1936.
- "Four Soloists From the Duncan Ballet Troupe." *Harbin Daily News*, n.d.
- "Irma Duncan Gives Fine Dance Recital." *The New York Times* 28 Dec. 1928.
- "Lisa Duncan et son ensemble." *La Semaine à Paris*, 9 May 1930.
- "Music: Anna Duncan at Stadium." *The New York Times* 7 Jul. 1931.

Address for correspondence:

Emi Yagishita

eyguardianangel@gmail.com

angelemi@u01.gate01.com

Perceptions of Isadora Duncan's art in Russian criticism

Elena Yushkova

Independent scholar, Russia

Abstract

American dancer and dance reformer Isadora Duncan (1877-1927) became an important part of Russian culture from the moment of her first performance which took place in December 1904 in St. Petersburg. Her subsequent Russian tours were in 1905, 1907-1908, 1909, and 1913. In 1921 she was invited to Soviet Russia by its new Bolshevik government and founded the School of Duncan in Moscow. All of her visits were widely covered by the Russian Media. The coverage varied according to the artistic and social contexts of certain periods of time as well as to the dancer's ideas and techniques across different periods of her life. While the theater criticism of the Silver Age (1900s) saw in her work an embodiment of the idea of 'the unspoken' (the highest and symbolic reality, something beyond expression) and a basis for a new Gesamtkunstwerk, the Soviet newspapers and magazines of the 1920s found in her art 'the roar of the revolution's trumpet' and a possibility to educate new Russian people using a new revolutionary approach to education.

Introduction

Discussions on Duncan were always stormy. Journals such as *Vesy (Scales)*, *Theater and Art*, *Apollon*, *Zolotoe Runo (Golden Fleece)*, *Masks*, *Studio*, along with the newspapers *Russia*, *Theater*, *Stock Exchange Bulletin*, *Russian Word*, and later – *Izvestiya*, *Art's Life*, *Ogonyok* and others published numerous reviews—some enthusiastic, some critical, and some outright insulting. This paper summarizes some topics of discussions which characterize not only Duncan's dance but also the Russian art of certain periods of time.

First reviews

First publications on Isadora Duncan appeared in Russian periodicals several months prior to her visit in December, 1904. Poet and artist Maximilian Voloshin who saw Duncan in Paris, introduced her to the Russian public in May, 1904. The dance of Duncan, in his opinion, wonderfully expressed the essence of music and dancer's attitude towards the world, the human soul, and the Cosmos. Duncan's dance came from remote antiquity, but was directed towards the future and would remain throughout the centuries as a model of beauty and freedom. 'Nothing can shake the soul as much as dance... Dance is the highest of the arts, because it reaches sources of rhythm contained in the pulsation of human hearts'¹. Being a poet, Voloshin succeeded in depicting an inspired woman in a semi-transparent tunic whose smooth movements were far from ballet technique.

Summarizing the discussions which took place after her first tours in 1904 and

1905 in St. Petersburg and Moscow, we can discover several directions: critics wrote about Duncan's 'nudity', antiquity, new freedom of women, philosophical approach to dance, about possibility of using the classical music for that kind of dance, and creating a total art work on a basis of dance. Of course critics compared her movements to classical ballet's pas and tried to define the difference between them (simplicity, freedom, expressive hands and arms, absence of acrobatics and of steel toes).

Despite the fact that Duncan never performed naked, her semi-transparent tunic looked quite shocking at that time. Critics wrote that her 'nudity' didn't provoke vicious thoughts and didn't challenge the sense of morality. 'Her dress covers her body like a light cloud'². But some writers marked imperfections of her body and were insulted by the absence of traditional parts of her costume.

Although there were very poetic descriptions, especially written by the critics from the Symbolists' circle, connecting Duncan's dance with Greek figures on vases and Greek mythology, opinions about the nature of this 'antiquity' differed: Valerian Svetlov called Duncan 'Schliemann of antique choreography'³, but Nikolai Shebuev found in her dance images from Semiradsky's paintings (representative of modern academism)⁴.

Alexander Benois started a discussion on a synthesis of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk* – total art work) which was supposed to stem from the dance. He stressed that thanks to Duncan there would be a dance reform in Russia, which was extremely necessary for the Russian ballet.

Symbolists' magazine *Vesy* in Moscow devoted an article to Duncan almost in every issue in 1905: by Lydmila Vil'kina⁵, Ellis (Kobylynsky)⁶, Sergey Solovyov, Andrey Bely⁷ and others. *Vesy* also published translations of short reviews from European magazines, as well as a very strange article entitled 'Heinrich Heine on Isadora Duncan'⁸ although the poet had died long time ago.

Vil'kina saw in Duncan's performances the 'sacred symphonies'⁹, 'sunny and moon-light mysteries of passion and melancholy'¹⁰. The poetess drew images of: awakening nature, a flutist from an Etruscan vase, a refined face of Botticelli's Venus, a female body from the Golden ladder of Burn-Jones, Aphrodite turning into furious Maenad and then – to praying Artemis... She depicted a moon ecstasy in which the dancer was becoming more and more lucid and raised almost to the sky...¹¹. Mikhail Sizov in the magazine *Art* asserted that Duncan brought to the world a new meaning of corporeality and broadened the traditional understanding of a human body and its mission. 'Duncan's art represents the Body in its self-worth, beauty and a free love to the Spirit... In her art there are many vibrating threads which have to connect Western and Eastern cultures... She is a comet, glittering with a remote light'¹².

'I realized that her dance was about the unspoken ... She... flied to the heights of immortality'¹³, poet Andrey Bely wrote in *Vesy*. Bely asserted that Duncan reached in her art the highest spirituality and embodied something beyond words which had an enormous philosophical and esoteric value. Sergey Solovyev found the creation of 'spiritual corporeality' in Isadora's work. 'In her dance the form finally overcomes the stagnation of material, and each movement of her body is an embodiment of spiritual acts'¹⁴.

Maximilian Voloshin concluded that Duncan danced everything which other people spoke, sang, wrote, played, and drew¹⁵. Rafalovich wrote that Duncan led the art of dance from a dead alley to the true road¹⁶.

But Duncan's opponents refused to see any depth in her dance. Their judgments matched the commoner's opinion. On January, 23, 1905, the newspaper *Russia* published an open letter by well-known conductor and musical critic Alexander Ziloti to the violinist Leopold Auer, who conducted the orchestra during Isadora's second tour in Russia. In this letter Ziloti chastised Auer for participating in Isadora's program, asserting that it was unacceptable for a musician of his level to accompany such a 'primitive' dance. 'Despite all my efforts, I could not find any connection between the music and the movements of Ms. Duncan. She first raised her hands upwards; suddenly she went down as if searching for paper lost on the floor... Then she began to dance a kind of cancan, then to jump like a goat'¹⁷. The next day Auer published an open reply, making excuse to his decision by explaining that he had never seen these dances before and during the performance looked only at his musical score in order not 'to shudder with horror,' which occurred at the first moment he was acquainted with the style of the dance¹⁸. 'To many people it was strange to see Duncan, her bare feet, her rabid leaps, her baby goat jumping, her whirling which illustrated the miraculous sounds of Chopin... This was tiresome, boring, very monotonous and very bold'¹⁹, wrote critic Alexander Plescheev in the newspaper *Petersburg Diary of Theater-Fan* in December, 1904. He assumed that the admiration of Isadora was provoked only by the European press.

All reviewers involuntarily competed in elevated style of writing, in richness of imagination, in breadth of historical associations, made attempts to understand the essence of Duncan's art and find the origins of her creativity. This gave Russian criticism a new impulse. But while delighted writers attempted to define the essence of her art, formulate her basic postulates, and explore its unique characteristics, Duncan's opponents refused to see any depth or philosophy expressed in her dance.

Coverage of Duncan's tours in 1907-13

While the first tours provoked poetic, impressionistic reviews, during the following tours critics wrote more analytical articles, although still very emotional. In 1907 the translation of Duncan's essay *Dance of the Future* was published in Russia and after that critics could use her theoretical statements in their descriptions of her dance. In the preface to the essay Nikolay Suslov stressed that Duncan had spiritualized the dance, 'transformed it into a story of an emotional depth'²⁰. Another achievement of Duncan is an individualization of the dance and a rehabilitation of a human body²¹.

Influenced by Duncan, magazines started discussions on dance which led to serious research on dance history. The most interesting debates on dance, pantomime and different kinds of stage movements took place in *Apollon* magazine in 1909-1914²².

We can find tracks of these discussions in the books on dance history by famous ballet and art critics of that time, which have been forgotten until the 21st century. Valerian Svetlov, Nikolay Vashkevich, Sergey Khudekov, Andrey Levinson and later – Alexey Sidorov in their volumes reflected the common interest to Duncan's work as well as tried to understand how her art would influence the dance of the future. All these authors acknowledged that choreography in Russia received a strong impulse, although their personal opinions about Duncan's dance were very different²³.

Practitioners of the Russian ballet, who seemed to be far from the free dance, were enraptured by her performances and found new ideas for themselves. Among them were

young choreographers of the Mariinsky and Bolshoi theaters Mikhail Fokin and Alexander Gorsky, ballerinas Anna Pavlova and Vera Karalli. Alexander Benois, being an exacting ballet critic, acknowledged that Duncan's art became vital for modernization of the Russian ballet theater²⁴.

During these Russian tours, critics continued a discussion on a *Gesamtkunswerk*. Alexander Roslavlev in the journal *Theater and Art*, № 5, 1908, asserted: 'In Duncan's dances there are distinct allusions to the possibility of arts merging on their common basis'²⁵. But later, in 1913, Alexander Kugel neglected this idea. 'Only the fantasy of the critics erases the boundaries of contiguous arts, but not Duncan herself'²⁶.

Akim Volynskiy published a conversation with Nikolai Molostvov in 1908, in which the two discussed optical images—internal and external, the new moral truth, the new integrity of mind and heart²⁷, based on Duncan's art.

Philosopher Vasily Rozanov in 1909 wrote: 'In her dance the entire human being is reflected, the entire civilization lives—its plasticity, its music, its lines, its soul, its everything!'²⁸. The views of Vasily Rozanov are relevant to his philosophical-aesthetic concepts. He was looking for answers to questions about the relationships of physiology and beauty, natural harmony and perfect ballet technique, which had been polished for centuries. He described her dances as 'the primary dances, early like the morning, primary as food and drink, 'not invented,' also as drink and food, and begun from the physiology and feeling of the human being!'²⁹. He affirmed that the dance of Duncan was ancient and consisted of naïve, pure, and natural jumps and leaps. Comparing the dance of Duncan to ballet in which the legs were extremely developed, Rozanov welcomed the revival of the movements of upper torso, arms, neck, head and chest and absence of ballet *pas*. Rozanov concluded: 'The primeval nature does dance itself'³⁰. And he predicted that 'Isadora Duncan's personality, her school will play a large role in the battle of ideas of the new civilization'³¹.

In 1913, the tours of Duncan in Russia caused a flow of reviews again. This time the critics were no longer in a state of shock; their reviews were less enthusiastic and more analytical as they attempted to figure out what led the public to concerts of the barefoot dancer beyond novelty. "She gives simple visual forms, but under them there is a rich spiritual content. Plastic beauty is the real cult of 'Duncanism'. 'Since there is less beauty in our gray average life, thirst for beauty becomes increasingly greater'³², explained Valerian Svetlov, commenting on sold-out concerts of Isadora.

Some serious critics specifically accented the spiritual content and the embodiment of "genuine" beauty, despite some imperfections of the body and certain limitedness of the lexicon of the dancer. Among them there were Fyodor Sologub, Edward Stark (published in *Theater and Art*), Fyodor Komissarzhevsky (in *Masks*) and others. 'I don't know any other plastic actor of our time who could express in the movements of the body the motion of his/her soul with a larger power and the naturalness than Duncan'³³, wrote theater director Komissarzhevsky.

In 1914 *Severnnye zapiski* magazine published Duncan's article *What I think about dance*,³⁴ which consisted of several chapters: *Wave movements in nature, Choir, Gymnastics and dance, School of dance*. This publication demonstrated that Duncan was recognized in Russia as a thinker.

Coverage of Duncan's work in Soviet Russia/USSR

The new wave of reviews appeared in 1921, when the dancer, desperate in her attempts to find a support for her school in Europe, unexpectedly received an invitation from Soviet Russia. It was made in London by the Russian trade representative Leonid Krasin, who was impressed by her concert in the British capital; and then the official invitation came from Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar of Enlightenment³⁵.

Lunacharsky in August, 1921, published in the newspaper *Izvestiya* an article, entitled 'Our guest', full of revolutionary rhetoric, where he justified the necessity of this strange school in almost ruined after the Revolution and the Civil War country, which didn't have money even for essentials: 'She, like a true artist, rebels against the atmosphere of impudent, ruined, full of hatred and disappointment bourgeois Europe'³⁶. Thus, the idea to use a world-famous artiste took place from the very beginning. Lunacharsky's fellow critic and official Pavel Kogan found some points of intersection between Duncan's work and the new proletarian culture. 'She has always tried to escape from the bonds with which European Philistinism chained any impulse for freedom of a human being. Her creative aspirations are consonant with the unlimited ideas of the Revolution'³⁷. He was the one who found the 'roar of the revolution's trumpet' in Isadora's art.

The director of Duncan's Moscow school Ilya Schneider saw in *Slav March*, performed at her first concert in November 1921, how the dancer transformed herself into a bow-backed workman who could be considered as a symbol of oppressed Russia, and who succeeded to tear his fetters and become free³⁸.

In the 1920s descriptions of Duncan's dances were very poetic as well, but it was a new poetry. New proletarian critics saw in her art a protest against Western bourgeoisie, her freedom from old culture, evaluated her pedagogy as very revolutionary and proper for children of the new State.

They also stressed her proletarian origin (although that wasn't true), her sympathy towards poor and oppressed people, her greatness in her fight against traditions. They liked labor movements in her dance, her expressiveness in dramatic pantomimes. Quite soon critics got impressed by Duncan's students – young and beautiful, harmonically developed. They wished all Russian children could study at the Duncan's school.

But some of authors were disappointed by Duncan's body (not that young now), by her sentimental pieces which were far from a harsh reality, and later - by her marriage with Esenin. They discussed also Duncan's new technique which was closer to pantomime or mimed drama at this period of her life³⁹.

Among the opponents of Isadora was a famous ballet critic Akim Volynsky who wrote that 'Isadora Duncan haven't saved and won't save the Humanity... Her declared beauty has nothing to do with antique beauty... Maybe her dances reproduce some vulgar dances in ancient Greek small restaurants, which are depicted on vases. But they don't even touch the soul of the dance in Dionysus's orchestra'⁴⁰. He stressed that 'this soft and loose... plastique... without a metal skeleton inside... can weaken a young generation's mentality... and paralyze their activity'... although at the moment 'a glorification of human psyche'⁴¹ is more appropriate for education.

Duncan was very enthusiastic about Russia. She choreographed several new compositions inspired by Soviet reality and communist ideas and published a lot of

ecstatic statements in Russian and foreign media, although she had stayed in Russia only for three years⁴².

Criticism of the Soviet time, devoted to Duncan and her school, reflected all stages of art development in the new state: from revolutionary romanticism to ideological service. NEP (new economic policy), which was established in 1922, also influenced the school – during that time a kind of capitalism was formed, and education wasn't free any longer. School of Duncan fought for existence from the first days, since its opening in December 1921. It was deprived of the state support although at the beginning Duncan was provided with a beautiful mansion in the city center (Prechistenka street, 20) and staff. Then Isadora received ARA's (American Relief Association) support for a while, and then - had to open additional paid groups (although this idea was against her principles).

The year of 1923 became an important milestone in a formation of the cultural policy of the USSR. On the one hand, XII Convention of the Bolsheviks' Party resolved that the theater had to be used for systematic mass propaganda of the communist ideas⁴³. On the other hand, in Moscow the Choreological Laboratory of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences under the leadership of Alexei Sidorov and Alexei Larionov conducted serious research of the human motion and became a refuge for different plastique studios which soon had to shift to illegal way of life⁴⁴.

There were more and more skeptical articles on Duncan in magazines and newspapers. 'Duncan still shows us the harmonic human being's emotion... But there is no such an environment for creation of the new Hellenes'⁴⁵, - writes V. Arlov.

Nevertheless, in August 1923, after Duncan's return from America, the Media happily wrote about a deep connection of Isadora's thoughts with the Soviet ideology – mostly because of her involuntary propaganda of the Bolsheviks which she had conducted in the USA (and was deprived of her American citizenship after that). 'Duncan returned to Russia to which she considered herself spiritually connected. Her ideas about the free and harmonic education of a spirit and a body in beauty, in her opinion, could take root only in Russia'⁴⁶, - wrote *Ogonyok*. The educational program of Duncan was considered to be very useful again. 'To take a poor proletarian child and to make a healthy and joyful creature from him – this is a big accomplishment'⁴⁷ – wrote ballet critic Viktor Iving in the newspaper *Pravda* after the performance of the school in Moscow in November.

1924 could hardly be successful for the school because this year, after Lenin's death, big changes in cultural policy took place. On August 26, the Decree of the Moscow Council about the plastique studios was released, which ordered to close more than 10 famous studios and to include a communist to the management of the Duncan's school⁴⁸.

But thanks to the Commissar of Sport Nikolay Podvoysky in summer of 1924 the school got a right to live; he helped organize a training for six hundred⁴⁹ proletarian children at the Red Stadium. Irma Duncan taught children to dance revolutionary dances choreographed by Isadora earlier⁵⁰. After the training all children in red tunics went to Prechistenka street, singing the *International*, and Isadora danced and sang at the balcony of the school building⁵¹.

Departure of Duncan to the West was inevitable. There was no state support, Russian tours of the dancer were financially disastrous. And in September 1924 there

were farewell performances of the School at the Chamber and Bolshoy theaters, where Isadora had very sad introductions, saying that the students didn't have anything to eat and funds to pay for utilities⁵² The Media after the performances were ecstatic. *Izvestiya* stressed that 'the whole program manifests a revolutionary spirit', that the main trend of it is 'the realism of feelings'⁵³ *Rabochy zritel* insisted that 'the Duncan pedagogical system should be used more widely, and for ALL proletarian children...'⁵⁴

But that was unrealistic, and after departure of Irma Duncan to the USA in 1928 the school became almost illegal: it didn't fit in the new culture of socialist realism and mass sports, and survived only because the former students had long tour in Siberia at the beginning of 1930s and staged anti-fascism pieces during the war time in 1940s. But in 1949 the school was closed and hadn't been mentioned anywhere until the end of the 1970s.

In 1927, after the tragic death of Isadora Duncan, Russian criticism summed up her creative work. Alexander Gidoni in the journal *Contemporary Theater*, № 4, 1927, wrote: 'Isadora Duncan has been pulverized in the contemporary art of dance. But this dispersion is very fruitful for artistic culture of our days'⁵⁵. Aleksey Gvozdev, who considered Duncan's art as bourgeois, asserted in *Red Newspaper* that Duncanism eliminated itself, 'without having created monumental form capable of expressing the heroic mood of the epoch. But it did open the first breach and cleared the way for new achievements, which must be reached for by a new generation of dance reformers under the influence of the social revolution'⁵⁶.

Conclusions

Summarizing discussions of Isadora Duncan in Russian criticism, we can note that the perception of her dance changes according to a situation in Russian and Soviet art. Duncan was always welcomed by the Russian Media with a huge enthusiasm, but the nature of this enthusiasm varied. The Symbolists had seen an elevated spiritual meaning in her work, the early Soviet newspapers and magazines employed propagandistic rhetoric to justify the invitation of the world-famous artiste at a moment when the country was suffering the devastation of war and revolution and to convince the world opinion regarding the greatness of the new political system by proclaiming Isadora's passionate love for revolution.

Copyright 2013, Elena Yushkova

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the Fulbright-Kennan program, which supported this research project in 2007-2008.

Notes

1. Aisedora. Gastrol'i v Rossii. (Isadora. Tours of Russia). Collection of reviews. Ed. T. Kasatkina. Preface by E. Souritz. M. ART, 1992 p. 32. Some of reviews are quoted in scholarly articles in English translation: Souritz E. Isadora Duncan's influence on dance in

- Russia. Dance Chronicle, 1995. - Vol. 18. No.2.P. 281-291; Bardsley K. Isadora Duncan and the Russian ballet. Proceedings of SDHS, 1988, February, 12-14
- 2 Ibid, p. 76
 - 3 Ibid, p. 49
 - 4 Ibid, p. 42
 - 5 Vesny, 1905, № 1, c.40-42
 - 6 Vesny, 1905, №3, 38-40
 - 7 Aisedora, p. 84-89
 - 8 Vesny, 1905, № 4, c. 85-86
 - 9 Vesny, 1905, № 1, c.40
 - 10 Ibid, p. 42
 - 11 Ibid, p. 41-42
 - 12 Vechera Aisedory Duncan v Moskve // Iskusstvo. 1905, volume. 1. p. 48-51, p.50-51
 - 13 Aisedora, p. 89
 - 14 S. S. Aisedora Duncan v Moskve. // Vesny. 1905. № 2, p. 40
 - 15 Aisedora, p.30
 - 16 Ibid, p. 58
 - 17 Ibid, p. 80
 - 18 Ibid, p. 83
 - 19 Ibid, p. 46
 - 20 Aisedora Duncan. Tanets buduschego. Lektsiya. Transl. N. Fil'kov, Ed. N. Suslov. Moskva, 1907, p. II
 - 21 Ibid, p. VI-VII
 - 22 See Yushkova E. Plastika preodoleniya, Yaroslavl, 2009, p.73-76
 - 23 Vashkevich N. Istoriya khoreografii vseh vekov i narodov. Spb. Lan'. Planeta muziki. 2009; Levinson A. Staeryi i novyi balet. Mastera baleta. Spb. Moskva. Krasnodar. Lan'. Planeta muziki. 2008; Svetlov V. Sovremennyyi balet. Spb. Moskva. Krasnodar. Lan'. Planeta muziki. 2009; Khudekov S. Illustrirovannaya entsiklopediya tantsa. M. Eksmo, 2009. Sidorov A. Sovremennyyi tanets. M. Pervina, 1922
 - 24 Aisedora, p. 64
 - 25 Ibid, p. 121
 - 26 Ibid, p. 196
 - 27 Ibid, p. 112
 - 28 Ibid, p. 144
 - 29 Ibid, p. 142
 - 30 Ibid, p. 143
 - 31 Ibid, p. 145
 - 32 Ibid, p. 165
 - 33 Ibid, p. 198

- ³⁴ Severnye zapiski, 1916, February-March, № 2, p. 7-38, № 3, p. 24-52, № 4-5, p. 50-78
- ³⁵ McVay G, Moskovskaya shkola Aisedory Duncan (Moscow school of Isadora Duncan) Pamyatniki kultury. Novye otkrytiya. Pismennost. Iskusstvo. Archeologiya. Yezhegodnik – 2003. Moscow. Nauka. Ed. T.B. Knyazevskaya. P.. 326-475, p. 329
- ³⁶ Aisedora, p. 289
- ³⁷ Duncan I. Dvizhenie – zhiz'n. Izdanie shkoly Duncan. M., 1921, p.1
- ³⁸ Rudneva S. Vospominaniya schatlivogo cheloveka. Stefanida Dmitrievna Rudneva i studiya muzykal'nogo dvizheniya Geptakhor v dokumentah Tsentral'nogo moskovskogo arhiva-muzeya lichnykh kollektsey. Ed. A. Kats. M.: Izdatel'stvo Glavarhiva Moskvy, 2007, p. 664
- ³⁹ V. Vecher Duncan. Izvestiya.11.11.23. State Bakhrushin Theater Museum (Moscow) Makarov V.V. Isadora Duncan. Clips from newspapers, file 152. list 342-352, № 252504/4291-4301 Their statements are close to the views of contemporary American scholars - see Daly, A. Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America. Wesleyan University Press. Middletown, Connecticut, 2002; p. 15
- ⁴⁰ Volynsky A. Shkola Aisedory Duncan. Zhiz'n iskusstva, 1922, № 35, 5.09 State Bakhrushin Theater Museum (Moscow) Makarov V.V. Isadora Duncan. Clips from newspapers, file 152. list 342-352, № 252504/4291-4301
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² These pieces are included in the repertoire of contemporary Duncan dancers. The most recent example – performances by Lori Belilove in New York in October 14th, 2012, entitled *Impressions of Soviet Russia* - <http://clicks.skem1.com/archive/view/?c=1g0RMu&g=676&PHPSESSID=bee3530d54e31094ed392def03a52422>–last visit 21.08.2013); her passionate writings are collected in *Duncan, Isadora, and Rosemont, Franklin. Isadora Speaks: Uncollected Writings & Speeches of Isadora Duncan. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1981*;
- ⁴³ Zhidkov V. Teatr i vremya: ot Oktyabrya do perestroiki. M. STD, 1991, p. 105
- ⁴⁴ Mislér N. Vnachale bylo telo. Ritmoplasticheskie eksperimenty nachala XX veka. M. Iskusstvo - XXI vek, 2011, p. 109
- ⁴⁵ Aisedora, p. 288
- ⁴⁶ D.K. Vozvraschenie Aisedory Duncan. Ogonyok. 26.08.1923, State Bakhrushin Theater Museum (Moscow), file 152, list. 342-352
- ⁴⁷ Pravda, № 263, November 21, 1923, № 22. RGALI (State Archive for Literature and Arts, Moscow) Iving (Ivanov) Viktor Petrovich. file 2694, list. 2, document.18, p. 83
- ⁴⁸ Mislér. P. 109
- ⁴⁹ McVay, p. 377; see also Roslavleva, N.P. Prechistenka 20: The Isadora Duncan School in Moscow // Dance Perspectives. Vol. 16, Winter, New York: M. Dekker, 1975, p. 26
- ⁵⁰ McVay, p. 379
- ⁵¹ Ibid, 378
- ⁵² McVay, p. 384.
- ⁵³ Ibid. p. 383.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 384
- ⁵⁵ Aisedora, p. 308

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.309-312

Bibliography

Newspapers and magazines:

Apollon

Vesy

Iskusstvo

Izvestiya

Pravda

Severnye zapiski

Zhiz'n iskusstva

Books:

Aisedora. *Gastroli v Rossii. (Isadora. Tours of Russia). Collection of reviews.* Ed. T. Kasatkina.

Preface by E. Surits. M. ART, 1992

Aisedora Duncan. *Tanets buduschego (Dance of the future).* Lektsiya. Transl. N. Fil'kov, Ed. N.

Suslov. Moskva, 1907

Daly, A. *Done into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America.* Wesleyan University Press.

Middletown, Connecticut, 2002

Duncan Isadora. *Dvizhenie – zhiz'n (Motion is life).* M. Izdanie shkoly Duncan, 1921

Duncan I., Macdougall A.-R. *Russkie dni Aisedory Dulkan I yeyo poslednie gody vo Frantsii*

(Russian days of Isadora Duncan and her last years in France) Trans., ed. G. Lakhuti.

Moscow. Moskovsky rabochy, 1995

McVay G, *Moskovskaya shkola Aisedory Dulkan (Moscow school of Isadora Duncan)*

Pamyatniki kultury. Novye otkrytiya. Pismennost. Iskusstvo. Archeologiya. Yezhegodnik –

2003. Moscow. Nauka. Ed. T.B. Knyazevskaya. P.. 326-475

Misler N. *Vnachale bylo telo. Ritmoplasticheskie eksperimenty nachala XX veka (Body was first.*

Rhythmic-plastique experiments of the beginning of the 20th century). M. Iskusstvo - XXI vek,

2011

Roslavleva, N.P. *Prechistenka 20: The Isadora Duncan School in Moscow.* Dance Perspectives.

Vol. 16, Winter, New York: M. Dekker, 1975

Rudneva S. *Vospominaniya schatlivogo cheloveka (Memoirs of the happy person).* *Stefanida*

Dmitrievna Rudneva i studiya muzykal'nogo dvizheniya Geptakhor v dokumentah

Tsentral'nogo moskovskogo arhiva-muzeya lichnyh kolleksyi. Ed. A. Kats. M.: Izdatel'stvo

Glavarhiva Moskvy, 2007

Zhidkov V. *Teatr i vremya: ot Oktyabrya do perestroiki (Theater and time; from the October*

until the perestroika). M. STD, 1991

Yushkova E. *Plastika preodoleniya (Plastique of the Overcoming; Short notes on the history of*

the Russian plastique theater of the 20th century). Yaroslavl, YGPU, 2009

Archival materials

RGALI (State Archive for Literature and Arts, Moscow) Iving (Ivanov) Viktor Petrovich. file

2694, list. 2

State Bakhrushin Theater Museum (Moscow) Makarov V.V. Isadora Duncan. Clips from newspapers, file 152. list 342-352, № 252504/4291-4301

E-mail address: elyushkova@yandex.ru

