



# Proceedings



## Dance and the Social City

Thirty-fifth Annual International Conference  
The University of the Arts  
Philadelphia, PA  
June 14–17, 2012



Society of Dance History Scholars  
Proceedings

**Dance and the Social City**

Thirty-fifth Annual International Conference  
The University of the Arts Philadelphia, PA  
June 14—17, 2012

The 2012 SDHS conference, *Dance and the Social City*, was held June 14—17, 2012 at The University of the Arts, Philadelphia. 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. The Society of Dance History Scholars is not legally responsible for any violation of copyright; authors are solely responsible.

Published by the Society of Dance History Scholars, 2012.

## Contents

1. Banerjee.....	1
2. Bodel.....	17
3. Bourassa .....	25
4. Bragin.....	51
5. Brooks .....	59
6. Caruso Haviland .....	65
7. D'Amato .....	77
8. Davies Cordova.....	83
9. Dickason .....	95
10. Farrugia .....	109
11. Fuller .....	115
12. Haller .....	123
13. Hamp .....	129
14. Hoshino .....	137
15. Kainer .....	141
16. Kattner and Davis .....	149
17. Katz Rizzo .....	159
18. Lenart .....	167
19. Malinsky .....	181
20. Mazzocca .....	187
21. McPherson.....	195
22. Millyard.....	201
23. Murray .....	207
24. Nyqvist.....	217
25. Parfitt-Brown.....	223
26. Ravn .....	229
27. Russell .....	237
28. Vasinaron.....	251
29. Westwater .....	261



## City dances, dancing cities: architecture and space in contemporary Bharatanatyam dance practices

*Suparna Banerjee*

University of Roehampton, London

### **Abstract**

*Bharatanatyam, an Indian classical dance, has a deep-rooted connection to temple architecture; and thus setting this dance tradition against the post-modern cities is not as uninformed as it might appear. Current practices of the contemporary choreographers in placing bodies in atypical performance spaces and embracing digital technologies contest the conventional use of dance space. Drawing on contemporary choreographies, I will argue that these choreographers have not only consumed and appropriated architectural space in novel ways but also expanded the boundaries of practices. This paper will be informed by the relevant theoretical frameworks and supported by film excerpts of the choreographies.*

### **City dances /dancing city**

Since the nineties, the urban city landscape and architecture are the sites for situating dance and bodies in the domain of 'South Asian dance' in Britain. The complexities of thinking dance tradition through the conjuncture of dance and city life are worth discussing for the ways they raise issues to explore multiple perspectives of the contemporary practices of Bharatanatyam dance within an urban environment'. Shobana Jeyasingh, a contemporary choreographer has created Duets with automobiles (1993), a 'dance for camera', which portrays the idea of being able to transfer homes to the geometric spaces of the London architecture using Bharatanatyam (Briginshaw, 2001, 2000). Her choreographic experimentations have interested many dance scholars to engage themselves with the modern urban life in terms of dance milieus and events (Briginshaw, 2001, 2000; Jordan, 1999; Meduri, 2011, 2008 a/b; O'Shea, 2008, 2007; Roy, 2003, 1997; Khalil, 2009) and Jeyasingh herself published critiques on her choreographic works (Jeyasingh, 1998, 1990).

It may be assumed that Jeyasingh's choreographies using city places have inspired many emerging contemporary choreographers such as Mayuri Boonham, Subathra Subramaniyam, Ash Mukherjee and Divya Kasturi in visualising city buildings, gardens, traffic roads, automobiles etc., adopting Bharatanatyam dance idioms. Current practices also embrace the city sites as a potential venue of creating live dances outside the theatre as seen in Jeyasingh's Counterpoint (2009) and Boonham's Paradiso (2011), which are usually described as 'site-specific works'. How do these dances get institutionalised? How is this transcendence perceived by the spectators? This paper thus outlines some of the ways in which cities and city life might be apprehended through contemporary 'city dances'<sup>2</sup> in London.

Bharatanatyam as a 'classical' dance is renamed and reconstructed in the post-colonial period (Gaston, 1996; Meduri, 1996; Srinivasan, 1985; Soneji, 2010) and its repertoire chiefly abounds in temple rituals and recounts mythological tales on Hindu

gods and goddesses (Gaston, 1996; David, 2009). It is interesting to note that the emerging contemporary choreographers in Britain somewhat paradoxically connect themselves to the marginal 'sacred space' on the urban stage as exemplified either in the titles of the choreographies or in their name of the company. For instance, the titles of the choreographies such as Urban Temple (2003) by Boonham and Subramaniyam or the name of the company such as "Ash Dance Theatre: Temple Dance for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" have provoked me to investigate: what should we be looking for – the urbanism in these performances? What is the nature of the 'temple dance for the 21st century'? Is the 'urban concert stage' (O'Shea, 2007) sacred? Is the notion of 'sacred-stage' getting fluid with the mobility and displacement? Or is the perimeter of the stage expanding? An importance therefore should be laid on the construction of the parameters of performance stage in urban locale, as performances are enacted in 'physically and symbolically bounded space' (Chaney 1993, quoted from Edensor 2000, p. 123).

In this paper, I examine the works of the emerging choreographers in London who have engaged in visualising city spaces and whose city dances need exploration in dance scholarship. The following dance videos analysed in this chapter are the recordings of the performances: Quick! (2006; 9 minutes excerpts; full length 15 minutes) by Nina Rajarani and Song of the City (2011; full length 38 minutes) by Ash Mukherjee.

### **Theorisations on city**

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the rapid industrialisation of European cities had developed the traditional city into what became popularly known as metropolis, which engendered not only a conspicuous cultural transformation but also fostered the academic pursuit to study these new urban phenomena and their social effects. Sociologist Louis Wirth was the first to coin the term 'urbanism' to refer a set of behaviour or ways of living that is distinct from rural values in his book, Urbanism a way of life (1938), which might have acted as a precursor to the rise of urban studies as a discipline. He integrated bricks and mortar to human beings living in a society as expressed: 'The city consequently tends to resemble a mosaic of social worlds in which transition from one to the other is abrupt' (1938, p. 193). To him, a city is a differentiated space that entails 'heterogeneity' and the social contacts in urban cities are short-lived: 'The city is characterised by secondary rather than primary contacts. The contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental' (1938, p. 12).

Scholars (for example Sennett, 1994; Mitchell, 1995 and Boyer, 1994) attest to the creeping commodification of the city spaces, the erosion of values and loss of cultural ethos in metropolis. Sociologist, Jonathan Raban in his account of London in his book Soft City proposes dual nature of city and associates with tactile sensoriality:

The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture (1974, p. 10).



This concept is opposed to ‘hard’ city that refers to the material fabric of the city. ‘Soft’ refers to the imagined side of the city which allow certain indeterminacy, fluidity and subjectivities:

...the city goes soft; it awaits the imprint of an identity. For better or worse, it invites you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in...Decide who you are, and the city will again assume a fixed form around you. Decide what it is, and your own identity will be revealed, like a position on a map fixed by triangulation’ (1974, p. 10).

Theoreticians have linked city with theatricality and performativity. David Harvey, a social and Marxist theorist, depicts city to be a ‘theatre, a series of stages upon which individuals could work on their distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles’ (1989, p. 5). Raban also describes the ‘intrinsic theatricality of city life’, arguing that public spaces in the city ‘often resemble lit stages awaiting a scenario’. He goes on to characterise clothing, buildings and skylines all in theatrical and semiotic terms, suggesting that ‘this kind of signification, communication, meaning-making, identity-forming, city-making is the “grammar of the city”, and “the art of urban living”’ (1974, p. 25). Although in one sense, city buildings have a materiality and permanence which performances do not, yet performance and performativity are intrinsic to urban life as affirmed by these scholars. I argue that a microwave oven and toaster in Quick! and lifts, trains and huge moving cranes in the promotion video of Song comprise performative elements.

### **Conceptualisations of space**

Since the time of Plato, philosophers have remained troubled and intrigued by the concept of space. Fairly recent, theorists have pushed the boundaries of spatial studies from aesthetic discourse to post-modern realities. Researchers from diversified disciplines have used concepts of space to understand the complexity of the social world (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Massey, 1994; Soja, 1996; to name but a few). Different forms of spatiality have been crucial in explaining multiple social dimensions from the circulation of global capital flow to gendered power relations. While I do not intend to construct an ambitious meta-theory of space, but at the same time, I acknowledge that it is essential to study some relevant theories to understand the particular phenomenon of dance practices in relation to space. There are numerous other ways of conceptualising space from which I am going to select those one that highlight themes of the dances that are discussed later.

Post-Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre stated that ‘space is a product’ (1991 [1974], p. 26). To him ‘every society produces a space, its own space’ (1991 [1974], p. 31). By production he connoted both to economic production of things and the larger philosophical concept, ‘the production of oeuvres, the production of knowledge, of institutions, of all that constitutes society (Lefebvre 1975a, p. 226, quoted from Elden 2004, p. 94). He argued that space is not neutral but it is political: ‘there is a politics of space because space is political’ (1991[1974], p. 192). By 1938, he had conceived space in terms of Euclidean geometry and described geometric space as abstractive (1968 122, p. 133 quoted from Elden 2004, p. 95). Besides, he classified space as the ‘perceived space’ of daily routine, the ‘conceived space’ as understood by experts and

professional practices, and the 'lived space' as associated with experience and nonverbal symbols (1991 [1974], p. 38-9).

### *Spatiality in Bharatanatyam*

As I am concerned with concept of space and spatiality in the above mentioned choreographies, hence it might be difficult to negotiate the complex cleavages and interrelation among city space, social space and dance spaces without actually understanding how dance space is consumed in Bharatanatyam. Thus what I outline here is a brief overview of how space is conceived in Bharatanatyam elemental dances called *nritya*<sup>3</sup>. As Bharatanatyam is believed to originate from the Sanskrit tradition<sup>4</sup>, therefore it is obvious that its performative preoccupation with space is conceptualised from the principles promulgated by the classical Sanskrit dance commentators. For them, space was conceived in terms of geometrical shapes<sup>5</sup>. The performance history of Bharatanatyam is complex and contested by various dance communities locally and globally and their notions of using space largely vary due to their different assumptions on lineage<sup>6</sup>.

The attention to proportion characterises the classical architecture of Bharatanatyam dance to this day. Kapila Vatsyayan, a Sanskrit literature and dance scholar, drawing inspiration from various ancient Sanskrit texts, has theorised the dynamics of body in space in Indian Classical dances (2006, 1992 [1974], 1982, 1968, 1967). She has shown the connections between dance and ancient and medieval Indian painting, sculpture, architecture and ritual. She systematised connections between stances and movement shapes and gave a contemporary practical concept of *nritya* as the delineation of measured, coordinated human movement and the rendering of a specific pose in a given time (Vatsyayan, 1992 [1974], p. 14). The basic posture of a Bharatanatyam dance is the integration of many triangles (Vatsyayan, 1992 [1974], p. 25) and while performing, the dancers are constantly trying to achieve the 'perfect pose'- 'a moment of arrested time- in limited space' (Vatsyayan, 1967, p. 233). She argued:

The poses she [a dancer] strikes are sculptural, not only because she holds a stance in a given point of time, but also because through a succession of these she realizes the moods and attributes of gods and goddesses, as laid down in iconography (Vatsyayan, 1963, p. 33).

Although this establishes the priority of temporality over spatiality in performing movements (Vatsyayan, 1992 [1974]), yet the intertwining of spatiality and temporality in its performativity is undeniable.

### **Heterotopia**

The etymology of 'heterotopia' is derived from the Greek *heteros*, which means 'another' and *topos*, which means 'place'. Philosopher Michel Foucault, postulates the concept of heterotopias<sup>7</sup> as follows:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater

brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space; but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden (1986 [1967], p. 25).

Foucault (1986 [1967]) has elaborated a detailed description of various principles of heterotopias and has meticulously pointed out to their nature and diverse functions. He designates two types of 'different spaces': utopias and heterotopias. Utopias are unreal, while heterotopias are actually real places:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted (1986 [1967], p. 24).

For Foucault, the theatre is such a counter-site which has the capacity to present different places on stage, either at the same time or successively. With regard to time, he referred to places such as festivals that spring into life at certain points of the year. These spaces are classified rather as specific 'heterochronies' as they embrace 'temporal discontinuities': 'marvellous empty emplacements on the outskirts of cities that fill up once or twice a year with booths, stalls, unusual objects, wrestlers, snake ladies, fortune tellers' (Foucault, 1998 [1966], p. 182). What emerges as particularly important for the analysis of a theatre hall is the same what Foucault has described as 'heterochronies' which is 'linked to slices in time' (1986 [1967], p. 26). Thus theatre halls as heterotopia can contain moments of rupture in social and spatial history.

Drawing on these assumptions, I will demonstrate how this notion of heterotopias can be applied to these above mentioned choreographies.

### **Interface of architecture and dance repertory**

Dancing about architecture is not as impossible or unlikely as it may sound: in fact many Bharatanatyam dance compositions have been conceived of as relating directly to the 'built environment' or temple architecture. This way of thinking is believed to be imported from the *Vishnudharmattoro Purana*<sup>8</sup> that states the encounters between bodies and spaces. On the other plane, the ancient play houses that were built following a specific grid, replicated the architectural squares and each marked by four pillars at a specific distance from each other. These pillars of the play-house shared architectural feature with the *natamandapa*, dance-hall of the temple (Vatsyayan 1983, p. 43-8).

Drawn within this geometry, a Bharatanatyam dancer typically traverses space along lines or in triangular formations, creating a symmetrical pattern where one half of the body was usually static. Each step was grounded and reinforced in the sound of her anklets as her feet danced through various rhythmic iterations only to return to the balanced *samabhanga*<sup>9</sup> pose (Vatsyayan, 1974). Thus the architectural spaces have had an impact on the choreography, its layout, and the way it was perceived.

Bharatanatyam dance repertoire has a deep-rooted connection to temple architecture (Balasaraswati, 1978, p. 111). It may be argued that Balasaraswati, a

renowned exponent of Tanjore School imported the architectural concept of three-dimensional geometry by situating body against the temple architecture and referred to stability that temple architecture lends to the body in anchoring its space. Simultaneously she has posited architecture against moving body that has a temporal association. Art scholar Alessandra Lopez y Royo has studied interrelations between Indian classical dances, space and temple architecture (2007, 2005, 2002) and has reviewed the questions:

‘what is space? Is it static and always there, or is it ‘produced’ by movement and by construction? Is it three-dimensional as we commonly understand it, or is time also part of the equation, as Einstein and the physicists after him have proposed – giving us notions of ‘spacetime’? Is it measurable, or is space itself a measure? Is it a conceptual framework, or does it have its own ontology – its own nature of being and existence? Is space a perception? Can it be owned or, what do we really own when a ‘space’ is ours?’ (2006)

Lopez y Royo (2010) examines the nature of Indian classical dance and argued that these practices are no longer ‘sacred’ but can be viewed as a vehicle for modern spirituality, which is also dependent on choreographers’ beliefs and subjectivities.

In view of the above theories and assumptions, my intention is to study how Bharatanatyam dance spaces interact with city architecture in these dances that are under examination.

### **Encounters between city architecture and movements**

In cities, architecture functions as a potential stimulus for movement as a reflection of real life. The interrelation between architecture and dance has intrigued many scholars and practitioners. Dance studies scholar Valerie A. Briginshaw analysed Jeyasingh’s Duets and centred her discussion on body/space theorisation (2000; 2001). She used the term ‘architectural space’ in dance to mean ‘spaces that are structured actually or conceptually according to ideas associated with building design (2001, p. 183). Her explorations of space, body, subject, tradition, history, identity provided a multi-layered analysis to read this choreography as a postmodern text. The vivification of the city buildings, the readings of the video dance as an architectural text, the mobilisation of the office building on screen and the assertion of woman power in this choreography, all have opened up the questions that flow from the situating dancing body amid city buildings.

Robert J. Yudell, an architect claims: ‘all architecture functions as a potential stimulus for movement, real or imagined. A building is an incitement to action, a stage for movement and interaction. It is one partner in a dialogue with the body’ (1977, 59). In their book, *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (1977), the postmodern architects Kent Bloomer, Charles Moore, and Robert Yudell establish a set of analogies between the modern apartment and human anatomy. Within this conception, the problem of architectural space can barely be understood without recognising the ‘issue of embodiment’. Bernard Tschumi (1998), an architect and educator, states that architectural space is a ‘spatio-temporal form, interweaved of time, space and successive events within’. Drawing upon these theories, I have examined how these architectural spaces are associated with human subjectivity and temporal reality.

## Virtual architecture

William J. Mitchell in the opening sentence of his book, City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn (1995) writes: 'My name is wjm@mit.edu'. This new web identity of people has invariably interlinked the structures and materials of hard and soft (here 'soft' denotes software) city - bits and files with bricks and mortar; coded information with buildings; and web links and search engines with bridges and streets. John Beckman, an architect, in his edited book, The Virtual Dimension: Architecture, Representation, and Crash Culture (1998), argues that liquid 'soft architectures' of digital media flow over, under and through the local concrete and 'hard architectures' of our contemporary cities, creating an indeterminate 'floating' environment. This view through the lens of urban virtual mobile scene is read as traversed; and the interrelation of body, film and the architectural ensemble unfolds a practice of mobile spaces.

Projecting architecture virtually embodies a variety of experiences in addition to its spatio-temporal realities in these contemporary choreographies. The Soviet filmmaker and theorist, Sergei M. Eisenstein made a pioneering effort in linking the architectural ensemble to film, designing a moving spectator for both. His essay on visual space bearing a Spanish title *El Greco y el cine* (1980 [1939]) states that:

An architectural ensemble... is a montage from the point of view of a moving spectator.... Cinematographic montage is, too, a means to 'link' in one point-- the screen--various elements (fragments) of a phenomenon filmed in diverse dimensions, from diverse points of view and sides<sup>10</sup> (translation quoted from Bruno 1997).

The superimposition of images have transcended a fixed geometry and interwoven real architecture with urban digital spaces. But before going into further critical examination of the dances against these theories, the following section focusses on the analyses of the dances.

## Quick!

The literal inscription of body and city is emphasised virtually through projection in Nina Rajarani's choreography Quick!, the 'Place prize'<sup>11</sup> winner in 2006. A London-based Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer, Rajarani established Srishti Dance Company which is known for its contemporary creations. Quick! situates Bharatanatyam dance in the world of business through the fast movements performed with aural renditions of *shollukattus*<sup>12</sup> in fast tempo. In this choreography, the business professionals with corporate outfits connote to the capital flow, power and city as a hub of financial growth. The timer of microwave oven reflects the temporality and commodification and digitisation of city-life. The traffic lights show not only the intersections of the city but also a potent symbol of power of control movement of urban.

The choreography contains rhythmic patterns of footwork that are set to a regular binary metrical cycle. The ways in which these patterns are developed, contrasted, overlapped and alternated, create a climax and finally an anti-climax when the dancers are seen to collapse on the floor. The repertoire of movement material in this

piece is varied and its rhythmic contour is interspersed with centripetal gyrations, rolling, sliding steps, revealing the slippery and uncertain city pace. The four male dancers are seen to form a quadrilateral in space and this style of phrasing movements is predictable and recognisable from a certain aesthetic viewpoint, as found in traditional dance sequences. It demonstrates masculine space, which according to a critic, is 'filled with frantic testosterone vanity and the high-powered stress of the modern businessman'<sup>13</sup>, from where women have been historically excluded.

It is a blend of ordinariness and spectacular - pedestrian's plain walk as opposed to intricate patterns of hand gestures and perfectly measured foot placements. The dexterous performance also arises from the complexity in placing real bodies against virtual bodies on the back stage. Movement renditions may contain hints of recognisable codes from practices but they become abstracted through energy concentration, bodies placed in city roads, combination real bodies and images, changes in dancers' orientation and facial expression. This choreography makes it at places repetitive by including fast walking movements, where bodies appear to be colliding and overtaking, which obviously signify the rat-race that exists in business world. Dancers form a horizontal line, kneeling on their legs and break this static posture to respond to the flourish of the following elaborate rhythmic contour.

### **Song of the city**

Song is choreographed and performed on August 5-6, 2011 by Ash Mukherjee, the Director of *Ash Dance Theatre* to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, the famous bard, dramatist and music composer from India. Originally from Kolkata, Mukherjee is presently working as a London-based Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer. Inspired by the songs and poems of Tagore, Song explores the fluid borders between self and the city. It features ballet, Bharatanatyam and contemporary dance movements and is accompanied by a wide range of western musical instruments, such as congo, saxophone, bass and synthesizer.

Song was premiered in the Vault at Southwark Playhouse in London, as an attempt to bridge eastern and western culture as told by Mukherjee in an interview: 'We both wished to do this in an unconventional way and in an unconventional setting and above all in a way that may be relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> century western audiences'<sup>14</sup>. The set consists of a space that is divided into city streets comprising walls and narrow lanes at both the sides. The male dancers are seen in white shirt, long black cloak and black pant whereas the female dancer wears a deep neck cut tight-figure fitting black top with a black straight skirt whose length is above knee with a long cut in its front. Here buildings and city are carved to evoke choreographer's nostalgia, sometimes in dark, and sometimes in low luminosity.

For most of the part, Song adopts the broad techniques of Bharatanatyam, i.e. *nritta* and *abhinaya*. Phrases are repeated in various tempos, keeping the orientation of the dancer in different directions as well. The centrifugal thrusts, large stretching movements, sudden vigorous turns, forceful jumps, sensuous proximal contacts of male and female body, fluid movements and use of codified gestures are its characteristics features. Although the promotion video<sup>15</sup> uploaded by Akademi gave an impression that it is a 'time-space' compression that brought bodies and several city spaces together in real time.

In the opening scene, a male dancer is observed moving with extending and stretching arms on the floor and his face is kept in dark. The female dancer enters the stage and repeats the movements on floor and her bodylines convey fluidity. Codified language and facial expression are adopted to translate this *baitalik*<sup>16</sup> song that is rendered slowly to heighten nostalgia for lost love. The fragmented movements emphasize and characterize mobility of dancers in the city space, both physically and emotionally. In this choreography, east/west binary is blurred by placing dancers against London architecture, codified gestures against western music and dance techniques. Each fragment locates the audience physically and conceptually in city and personal space, allowing them to make momentary glimpse of the choreographer's world.

The stage as canvas is dispersed with multiple urban images composed of a historical route of Mukherjee, exposing the audience of his encounters with different aspects of city spaces. The sound track of poems is equally layered with meanings where the audience experiences a juxtaposition of city empowerment and emotional attachment to one's 'root' city. The unification is shown by movements borrowed from diverse styles and hand gestures. The piece concludes with three selected songs from Tagore. In the first two songs Mukherjee suggests solutions how to deal with the hidden emotion of city life: jealousy, treachery, commodification, frustration, rivalry, angst, power game in relationship, etc. expressed through gestures. Moreover, city is read as a heterogeneous space with fleeting contacts. Other contacts had expressions of caress, embrace, leaning, rolling on, pushing to throw away, squeezing throat, etc. These contacts are extended and contrasted to reveal the despair and ray of hope that city life offers. The piece represents Mukherjee's travel history which is translated through mime, gesture and text. The non-linear arrangement of images mirrors the fragmentary life of all city dwellers.

## Discussions

### *City images*

The choreographies exhibit many of the features related to a postmodern city and fabricate a rich network of practices which transforms every available space into a potential theatrical space. The popular account of urban life as reflected in Quick! and Song is about speed and mobility. Quick! emphasises that we live in the 'age of accelerator' in which speed is invested with huge effects that lead every city inhabitant to become a passer-by and an alienated person. Understanding a city through its built architecture is complimentary to digital city images. Residential enclaves, city streets, crossings, cars waiting at the signals, double-decker buses, noises, playgrounds and city dust, all possess visible urban identities of a 'hard city'.

The Song used ambitious imaging strategies to appeal to a variety of contemporary western audiences in its promotion flyers. The icon of the Tower of London has been utilised as marketing tool that connotes to the economic, cultural and global flow of capital (Eade, 2000) and choreographer's nostalgia for his culture, language and 'home'. Rajarani exposes the office complexes, crowded city roads and traffic signals as the potential power control centres of 'hard city' and simultaneously presents ideological complexities which underlie everyday readings and experiences of corporate workers in Quick!. I argue that in these choreographies there is a continuous overlapping of 'soft' and 'hard' (Raban 1974) images of city.

### *Boundaries of urban stage*

This stage hauls together a spatial narrative evoking journeys to 'other cities', juxtaposing it with present urban locale, revealing the fragmented nature of post-modern space (Harvey 1989), with its souvenirs, nostalgia, codes, practices, food, language and its myriad connections to 'other' places. The readings of these choreographies indicate abundant travel metaphors that contest the dimensionality of traditional performance stages. For instance, in Rajarani's Quick!, there is no border between the performers and the musicians and this breaks away with the restriction imposed on the barrier that is usually drawn for the musicians. Instead, in these choreographies the musicians become the part of the show and spectacle. The movements are directed towards all the directions. This connotes to the divergent travel trajectories and histories of the choreographers.

Boundary of stage is pushed by creation of parallel projection of moving bodies in these choreographies. For instance, Rajarani's Quick! creates visual tension between the dancers' virtual movements at the backdrop portraying the high pace of an urban city and the stage space transformed into a world of business using stylised idioms from Bharatanatam. Maya Deren, a filmmaker and film theorist, asserts that films replace the 'artifice of the theatre by the actuality of landscape, distances, and place' (1960, 64). It 'removes the spatial limits of theatre and stage, direct contact with audience at the moment of performance, and chronological (physical) time, replacing real laws of gravity with other laws of spatial orientation (Greenfield, 1999, p. 2). Despite the fact that screen space is two-dimensional, the layering of bodily images that is possible within the depth of the film frame suggests bodily actions and relationships in time and space beyond the edges of that frame. In grafting real performing bodies with media projection of virtual on screen dancers' bodies, it blurs the boundaries of built space and projected space.

It is interesting to note that Mukherjee's Song replicate the movements of Bharatanatyam vocabulary, but also draws cues from various traditions, especially ballet and contemporary. It dominates in several breaks and body's gravity-defying gesture, which is fundamental to Bharatanatyam technique, to capture the shape of a city like London in a world of flux. This piece portrays the complexities and fluidities inherent in the mutual construction of bodies and built spaces, in linking the human body with architectural space and his present and past cities through texts. What Mukherjee had imagined for the urban stage is an architecture that would figuratively move the audience by making the performance space come alive with variegated human emotions and feelings.

### *Heterotopia as other spaces?*

This relationship between private and public space is conspicuous in Rajarani's Quick!. Public space contained in these areas is eventually separated from the rest of the city, and its use is essentially restricted to the city members. The urban space draws attention to the potential roles of new communications technologies in cities as seen in both the choreographies. With information technology bringing various areas into proximity of one another, the spaces constantly juxtapose themselves, one against another, which is similar to Foucault's heterotopia: 'a sort of place that lies outside all



places and yet is actually localizable' (Foucault, 1986 [1971], p. 12). The most obvious heterotopias demonstrated are corporate office space, bedrooms; the skylines in the night, busy roads, traffic signal, etc. I argue that by bringing in all these heterotopias inside a theatre hall, these choreographies have resulted in 'space-time compression' (Harvey, 1989).

### *Architectural construction: real versus virtual*

Urban images in these choreographies are hybrid interface between electronic and built media (Pile 1996). For instance, Rajarani's Quick! creates visual tension between the dancers' virtual movements at the backdrop portraying the high pace of an urban city and the stage space transformed into a world of business using stylised idioms from Bharatanatam, and constitutes a 'fully lived space, a simultaneously real and-imagined, actual-and-virtual, locus of structured individual and collective experience' (Soja, 2000, p. 11). Quick! projects media-images of the city roads, bodies in motion, images of kitchen appliances, automobiles, etc. and valorises the monumental grandeur of the London city. The import of virtuality onto the real performance space has led to hybrid interface between electronic media (broadcast or wired) and built media (encoded in the urban environment, theatre/stage space) as seen in Quick!, and Song. New spaces emerge, disappear and overlap with one another, with the virtual city being projected at the backdrop, whilst standing alongside and being interwoven into real urban life (Fahmi, 2003). It is considered the natural extension of mediatecture (Riewoldt, 1997; Mitchell, 1995) and mediascape (Christensen, 1993), challenging concepts of spatiality and temporality.

### **Conclusion**

By situating dance choreographies in city settings, the choreographers in this study open up possibilities for exploring and consuming city spaces in a novel way. The analyses of these choreographies suggest how urban stages have incorporated myriad images, roles, scripts, languages and choreographic cues from indoor to outdoor activities. The city is portrayed as an imaginary construct and thus its subjective experience can never be homogeneous; rather it exists as multiple narratives. These choreographies demonstrate fragmented realities, identity crisis, root, nostalgia for home city, bilingual problems, fast pace of city life, feeling of alienation and rising work pressure in jobs.

Through various city places such as playground, buildings, lifts, garden, streets, signal crossing and stairs, the choreographies expose how bodies and city mutually construct space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]). Contrary to traditional item from Bharatanatyam repertoire that is either performed to weave a storyline through gestures and facial expressions in mimetic dance and linear/cyclical progression of audio-visual rhythmic patterns in elemental dances, these performances exhibit instances of 'heterochronies' that slice them to investigate and unravel the dislocated images. The geometry of body, architectural spaces and stage architecture converges to create a new performative space identity on urban stage. In this manner, these dances disrupt the logic of visualization of structures in traditional items and point to new possibilities of subjectivity. They recognise the city as a locus of discontinuities, crossroads, turning points, fragmentary realities and short-lived contacts.

Videography was exploited to offer new perspectives of city life by bringing many images into sharp juxtaposition, and in turn establishing connections between apparently disconnected elements. Movements continuously overlap between real and projected space which blurs boundaries of detachment and attachment. This interface between dancers and their animated body implies the creation of an unstable system. The spatio-temporality of these dances engages with the ways in which everyday happenings are sliced to create meanings. The deconstructive task leads towards unpacking and reconstruction of the urban meanings through these pixel identities in which the images, signs, symbols and practices are coded, decoded and juxtaposed in a new fashion. The superimposition of virtual images and real bodies has transcended a fixed geometry. As a result, architecture of cities no longer is generated through the static conventions of urban planning but erected as ‘city of bytes’, ‘city of bits’ or ‘city of pixels’, which collapse the gulf between construction and city dwellers’ identity. It may be argued that is a ‘live mix’ experienced in ‘choreo-culture’ as seen in these choreographies and their making processes have involved teams of artists having backgrounds of varied disciplines. In the future, we will probably watch live performances through web-mediated programs that will merge living bodies across distances.

Copyright 2012, Suparna Banerjee

### Acknowledgements

This is part of a chapter from my PhD thesis presented at the 2012 SDHS conference. I am thankful to my supervisory committee (Andrée Grau, Ann David and Avanthi Meduri) for their guidance and inspiration.

### Notes

1. However, it is important to note that this attempt to place bodies either inside city buildings or virtually on the screen against the city streets is not new in the realm of South Asian dance. The Indian dancer and choreographer, Uday Shankar, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 and its resultant utter despair. See Purakayastha (2012) for more details.
2. By ‘city dances’, I mean those choreographies which have featured and produced urban space by using city architecture through their performances on stage.
3. *Nritta* in contemporary classical dance practices is defined to be an item that is devoid of mimetic elements and abounds in rhythmic sequences. This concept is borrowed from Nandikesvara’s *Abhinayadarpanam* (see verse no 15).
4. By sanskritic tradition, I mean the ancient dance practices that are coded in the ancient treatises by several commentators. I borrow this term from Bose (2001).
5. Bharata uses terminologies such as *rekha* (line), *ayata* (rectangle), *mandala* (circle), *bhramari* (circular movements), all these relate to geometric shapes. For instance, Sarangadeva, a post- Bharata commentator in his *Sangitratnakara*, a thirteenth century

- treatise, defines *rekha* as: 'The harmonious combination of limbs, which are pleasing to eyes and mind' (quoted from Bose 2001).
6. See Meduri (2004); O'Shea (2007; 1998) for knowing about differences that exist between various schools and practitioners.
  7. Foucault conceptualises heterotopia on three occasions: first, in his preface to *Les Mots et les choses* (The Order of Things) published in 1966 (1966a); second, in the same year, within a radio broadcast as part of a series on the theme of utopia and literature; and finally, in a lecture presented to a group of architects in 1967. In two short broadcasts on December 7 and 21 in 1966, Foucault spoke on 'spatial' for a French public radio about utopia. The broadcasts have recently been issued on an audio CD entitled "Utopies et heterotopias" (Foucault 2004). The published lecture, "Des Espaces Autres", has been translated into English as "Of Other Spaces" (1986) and "Different Spaces" (1998a). Only just before he died in 1984, he allowed the journal *Architecture Mouvement Continuïte* to publish the lecture version. English translations appeared two years later as *Of Other Spaces*, in the literary criticism journal *Diacritics* (Foucault, 1986 [1984]) and the architecture journal *Lotus International*. See Peter Johnson's "Unravelling Foucault's 'different spaces'" (2006).
  8. *Visnudharmottara Purana* is a Sanskrit treatise that dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. In *Khanda* 3, King Vajra is asked to master the canons of movement in the living so that it can be easily arrested in the plastic medium of stone and colour by Sage Markendeya. As *natya* (the theatrical art) and *chitra* (sculpture/painting) are imitation of the universe, man and other beings in their state of emotion, thus Indian sculpture demands a firm understanding of anatomy of the human body to capture it as a visual image.
  9. *Samabhanga* is the straight and erect pose to convey equipoise in which the two vertical halves of the body are equally divided by an imaginary central median line called *sutra*.
  10. Accessed on February 23, 2012 from [http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/faculty/lerner/wide\\_angle/19\\_4/194bruno.htm](http://www.pitzer.edu/academics/faculty/lerner/wide_angle/19_4/194bruno.htm)
  11. The Place Prize is Europe's most prestigious award competition for contemporary dance choreography and was initiated in 2004. It is sponsored by Bloomberg and competition runs every two years and commissions twenty UK-based choreographers to create new works.
  12. Rhythmic and metrical sequence to which elemental dance is performed in Bharatanatyam dance choreography.
  13. Accessed from: <http://www.srishti.co.uk/aboutus/press.html>
  14. Accessed from: <http://www.run-riot.com/articles/blogs/interview-rising-talent-ash-mukherjee-talks-run-riots-beth-wood>
  15. Accessed from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXPgua4aNZA>
  16. It literally means the songs that are not set to any particular metre.

## Bibliography

- Balasaraswati (1978) On Bharata Natyam. *Dance Chronicle*, 2 (2), 106-116.
- Beckman, J (eds.). (1998) *The Virtual Dimension: Architecture, Representation, and Crash Culture*. Princeton Architectural Press, Boston.
- Boyer, C. (1994) *The city of collective memory: its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.
- Briginshaw, V.A. (2001) *Dance, space, and subjectivity*. Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Briginshaw, V.A. (2000) "Dancing bodies in city settings: construction of spaces and subjects" in D. Bell & A. Haddour, eds., *City visions, Pearson Education*: England. pp. 107-119.

- Christensen, E. (1993) 'Mediation and Return: Ambiguous Identity of The City's Edge' in M. Quantrill and B. Webb (eds.) *Urban Forms, Suburban Dreams*. Texas: Texas A&M University Press, College Station, pp. 9-14.
- David, A. R. 2009 'Performing for the Gods? Dance and embodied ritual in British Hindu Temples' *Journal of South Asian Popular Culture*, 7(3), 217-231.
- Deren, M. (1960) 'Cinematography: the creative use of reality' in G. Mast, M. Cohen & L. Braudy (eds.) *Film theory & criticism: introductory readings*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 59-70.
- Eade, J. (2000) *Placing London: from imperial capital to global city*. UK: Berghahn books.
- Edensor, T. (2000) 'Moving through the city' in D. Bell & A. Haddour (eds.) *City visions*. Pearson Education: England, pp. 12-26.
- Elden, S. (2004) *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*. London: Continuum.
- Fahmi, W. (2003) 'City inside out(side): post modern (re)presentations: city narratives and urban imageries' in *Online Proceedings of Planning Research Conference*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University. Available at: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/planning/conference/papers.html> accessed 22nd December 2005.
- Foucault, M. (1986 [1967]) 'Of Other Spaces' *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22-27.
- Foucault, M. (1998 [1966]) 'Different Spaces', in J. Faubion (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, The Essential Works* 122 Vol. 2, pp. 175-185, London: Allen Lane.
- Gaston, A. (1996) *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Greenfield, A. (1999) 'Close-up of the heart'. *Dance on camera* 2(1), 2-3.
- Harvey, D. (1989) *The condition of postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (1973) *Social justice and the city*. London: Arnold.
- Jeyasingh, S. (1998) 'Imaginary homelands: creating a new dance language' in A. Carter (eds.) *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge. pp. 46-53.
- Jeyasingh, S. (1990) 'Getting off the Oriental Express: Shobana Jeyasingh on classicism east and west', *Dance Theatre Journal*, 8(2), 34-37.
- Jordan, S. (1999) 'Cultural Crossings: Containing the Crisis...and the Indian in our Midst', in P. Chantal (eds.) *Proceedings from the conference Dance: Distinct Language and Cross-Cultural Influences*, Montreal: Parachute.
- Khalil, S. (2009) 'Identity politics in Shobana Jeyasingh's *Faultline*, 2007'. Available from [http://www.dancebooks.co.uk/sdr-uk/docs/2009\\_ESC\\_proceedings\\_Oct\\_2009.pdf](http://www.dancebooks.co.uk/sdr-uk/docs/2009_ESC_proceedings_Oct_2009.pdf) (Accessed 15th January 2011).
- Lefebvre, H. (1991[1974]) *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Lopez y Royo, A. (2010) 'Indian Classical Dance: A Sacred Art?' *The Journal of Hindu Studies*, 3, 114-123.
- Lopez y Royo, A. (2007) 'The reinvention of Odissi classical dance as a temple ritual' in E. Kyriakidis (eds.) *The Archaeology of Ritual*. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA.
- Lopez y Royo, A. (2006) *Dance-Space-Architecture*. Available at: <http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/49/75> (Accessed 20th January, 2011).
- Lopez y Royo, A. (2005) 'Rock Corridor: Buddhism with a contemporary Javanese inflection through a site-specific performance in Tokyo'. *Indonesia and the Malay world*, 33, 19-36.
- Louis, W. (1938) 'Urbanism as a Way of Life'. *American Journal of Sociology*, 44(1), 1-24.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Meduri, A. (2011) *Traces and Trails: Faultline/Bruise Blood in India/London*. Available from: [http://www.rescen.net/Shobana\\_Jeyasingh/HmH/delhi.html](http://www.rescen.net/Shobana_Jeyasingh/HmH/delhi.html) (accessed 9th February 2012).

- Meduri, A. (2008a) Labels, Histories, Politics: Indian/South Asian Dance on the Global Stage. *Dance Research*, 26, 223-243.
- Meduri, A. (2008b) The Transfiguration of Indian/Asian Dance in the United Kingdom: Contemporary "Bharatanatyam" in Global Contexts. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 25(2), 298-328.
- Meduri, A. (1996). Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadasi and her Dance, Unpublished PhD thesis (New York: New York University).
- Mitchell, W. J. (1995) *City of Bits: Space, Time and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mumford, L. (1996 [1937]) 'What is a city?' in Richard T. LeGates and y Frederic Stout (eds.) *The City Reader*, London: Routledge, pp. 183-188.
- O'Shea, J. (2008) "Unbalancing the Authentic/Partnering Classicism: Shobana Jeyasingh's choreography and the Bharata Natyam 'Tradition'" in J. Landsdale (eds.) *Decentring dancing texts: the challenge of interpreting dances*. Basingsoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 38-54.
- O'Shea, J. (2007) *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Pile, S. (1996) *The Body and the City*. London: Routledge.
- Raban, J. (1974) *Soft City: What Cities Do To Us, and How They Change the Way We Live, Think and Feel*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Riewoldt, O. (1997) *Intelligent Spaces: Architecture for the Information Age*. London: Calmann and King Limited.
- Roy, S. (2003) 'Growths and Outgrowths' in S. Kothari. (eds.) *New Directions in Indian Dance*. Mumbai: Marg. pp.156-167.
- Sennett, R. (1994) *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*. New York: Norton.
- Soja, E. (2000) *Postmetropolis*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Soja, E.W. (1996) *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Srinivasan, A. (1985) Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance. *Economic and Political weekly*, XX, (44), 1869-1876.
- Soneji, D (eds.) (2010) *Bharatanatyam: A Reader*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Tschumi, B. (1998) *Architecture and Disjunction*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Vatsyayan, K. (2006) *Dance in Indian painting*. New Delhi: Roli Books Private Ltd.
- Vatsyayan, K. (1983) *The Square and the Circle of the Indian Arts*. New Delhi: Roli Books International.
- Vatsyayan, K. (1982) *Indian sculpture*. Abhinava: New-Delhi.
- Vatsyayan, K. (1974) *Indian Classical Dance*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (2nd edition, 1992).
- Vatsyayan, K. (1968) *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. New Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi (2nd edition, 1977).
- Vatsyayan, K. (1967) The Theory and Technique of Classical Indian Dancing. *Artibus Asiae*, 29 (2/3), 229-238.
- Vatsyayan, K. (1963) *Notes on the Relationship of Music and Dance in India*. *Ethnomusicology* 7(1), 33-38.
- Wirth, L. (1938) Urbanism as a Way of Life. *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, 3-24.
- Yudell, R.J. (1977) 'Body Movement' in K.C. Bloomer, C.W. Moore and R.J. Yudell (eds.) *Body, Memory, and Architecture*. New Haven, CT/ London: Yale University Press. pp. 57-75.

**List of Videos referred**

Quick! 2006. Nina Rajarani. Srishti Dance Co. Available at:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBuS8HME8Wg>. Accessed on September 10, 2011.

Song of the City. 2011. Ash Mukherjee. Akademi Productions.

Address for correspondence:

Name: Suparna Banerjee  
Full postal address: Department of Dance  
Froebel College  
University of Roehampton  
Roehampton Lane  
London  
SW15 5PJ  
United Kingdom  
E-mail address: banerjes@roehampton.ac.uk

## Urban Curb: how the city structures dance understanding

*Michael Bodel*

### **Abstract**

*Recent thinking in epistemology posits the cognitive functions of understanding & reasoning as sprung from our bodily experience being ‘in-the-world’. Moving away from there, adding this to that, watching the bird disappear behind a building are activities that equip us with the tools to recognize abstract concepts and the relationships through metaphor. The proposal is that only because of our bodies, we are able to take square roots, get jokes, and — of particular importance to the thesis of this paper — interpret a dance.*

*Nothing has altered the way we perceive the world as cataclysmically as the rise of the post-industrial, technocratic city. Contemporary dance has made its home in these meccas of mass clustering, transience, planned spaces and intersecting trajectories. This paper examines how, as audiences and dance artists alike, our reading of what choreography is has evolved alongside and possibly as a result of the perceptual demands of the urban life-world. In addition to the aforementioned theory of embodied cognition, James Gibson’s concept of “affordances” informs my proposal that cities have had an artful hand in shaping and also restricting the possible scope of how we understand choreographed movement on stage.*

I will start ideally with the Ideal Gas Law. The law states that in a contained volume, say a subway car, as the number of people increase so too does the pressure of the system. This fact tingles on our skin, requiring no mathematical proof. Those of us inhabiting 21<sup>st</sup> century cities feel this reality all the more: fewer people less pressure, more people more pressure. As populations boils over, cities expand. One manifestation is urban sprawl, another is the high-rise.<sup>1</sup> These two axes establish the vertically and horizontally stratified city<sup>2</sup>.

We descend from these high apartments and commute in from these suburbs in order to sit in a dance concert. As an example, I take Ballet Frankfurt’s dance *One Flat Thing Reproduced*, choreographed by William Forsythe.<sup>3</sup> When dancers pour onto stage, whatever additional meaning I might construe, I glean a primary understanding that *the pressure is building*. The Ideal Gas Law has manifested sensorially because of my lived experience in the city, where the ebb and flow of people-pressure is an everyday phenomenon I navigate.

In Forsythe’s work, dancers move at full tilt within a matrix of steel tables. The stage design mimics an environment natural to Manhattanites and inhabitants of many post-Haussmanian cities whose daily motions are regimented by the grid.<sup>4</sup> My urbanized body is attuned to this anti-biotic law of orthogonal streets, which denies that I can go from *point a to point b* in a line. As a result, I ignore an inherent violence to the grid of steel tables, which is, after all, ordinary. Later in the piece the dancers glide across the table tops, and I feel levity and freedom. Having mapped city blocks onto the tables, the dancers read as gorgeous giants who defy the bounds of the urban plan fantastically. I feel a freedom that I am denied within the kinetic limitations of the city.

In this brief example I have traced how my bodily experience in the urban lifeworld has engendered two primary meanings, namely *the pressure is building*, and *the dancers are free*.<sup>5</sup> These understandings are platforms off of which I spring to the myriad higher interpretations that are frequently the focus of dance criticism, dance studies, and post-show arguments at the bar. For audiences and choreographers alike, underlying perceptual schema provide the bases for shared understanding and communication, but also trace limiting confines on what movement means. We step off the street into the sacred envelope of the theater, ready to uncover the cultural or political themes at play, keen to interpret, yet we are unaware how the street has crept beneath the lobby doors and into the dark seat beside us.

I use the example of the urban experience in order to suggest a new conceptual lens for live art hermeneutics. In line with pragmatist thinking, I present a wrinkle in the chain of art signification between our perception of raw phenomena and our latter interpretation of symbols. The place of the *primary meanings* I will explore, like Shusterman's *understanding*, is prior to any *interpretation*, let alone reflection.<sup>6</sup> Both culture and history play a role, even at this earliest stages of meaning, because of how thoroughly they discipline our physical experience in the world.

In this paper, I locate my examples in the first-person and only gesture briefly towards specific instances of dance interpretation as "proof". As such, the exploration abounds with holes, but my hope is that it wears such holes provocatively, like a sandal or summer dress.

Until recently, dominant Western sciences have scrubbed the process of cognition clean of any association with the body. Central to my exploration are theories that run counter to this narrative and that position *understanding* as both selective<sup>7</sup> and enactive.<sup>8</sup> Phenomenologists working in the wake of Merleau-Ponty and Dewey have pointed to the way that perception is colored by our sensorial schema and influenced by our surroundings.<sup>9</sup> The theory of *embodied reason* championed by George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Joseph Grady take this a step further, linking these perceptual schema directly to our systems of reasoning. They propose "conceptual metaphor" as an essential process by which we map entities from an embodied domain to a conceptual, cognitive domain.<sup>10</sup> Examples include how we conceive of *important* as *big*, *more* is *up*, *less* is *down*, *organization* is *structure*, *causes* as *forces*, *help* as *support*. In short, without bodies we would not understand concepts as we do, let alone grapple with the complex structures of math, music or dance.<sup>11</sup>

One central conceptual metaphor<sup>12</sup> governs how we map time onto space. I think of the future as ahead of me, and the past behind me; my childhood is distant, while tomorrow is right around the corner.<sup>13</sup> The way that we language abstraction is an indication that meaning-making is grounded in the corporeal world, as are our artistic methods in dance. Choreographers know that we construe changes in spatial locations as changes in affective state, even if not in the way rigidly proscribed by a Del Sartre or Doris Humphrey handbook. When I watch a dancer move from the wide open stage into a dim pool of light, I understand that he has entered a new emotional place, or that some facet of his inner life is being shared. More momentous is that we assume *relationships between* concepts because of our experiences in the world-at-hand. When three isolated dancers sweep towards the same point on stage, I subconsciously lump them together as a group,<sup>14</sup> and understand them to be *seeking the same thing*.



Schema are not universal, but are shaped by the socio-cultural landscapes we move through. For more than half of the world's population, this landscape is the urban lifeworld.<sup>15</sup> The environmental bias of our schematic understanding is what I consider the *urban curb*. With this philosophical platform built, I can dive into the clutter of the city to wrestle with the systemic factors that stick with us as we step into the dance studio.

The post-industrial cityscape exceeds a human scale. The rift between home and inhabitant widened with the invention of the I-beam and again during the Modernist period of Western architecture, where geometric grandiosity ignored and reduced the body.<sup>16</sup> I propose that everyday physical dwarfing contributes to the way that urban audiences might read a dance as fantastical and dancers as super-human. Dancing bodies navigate the stage with startling speed and force in contrast to our own lethargic pace in the city. Through lighting and scenery, theatrical scale can be dilated, and human agency seems to explode. The *virtual power*<sup>17</sup> of dance depends not only on the scale and characteristics of the performance, but on the scale and characteristics of the life-world to which the spectator is habituated.

Through conceptual metaphor we often construe emotional difficulties as physical impediments.<sup>18</sup> However, a defining aspect of the "metropolitan regime" is the ubiquity of obstructions, from highway barriers to turnstiles to street lights.<sup>19</sup> I submit that the city muffles the drama inherent to external restrictions on the dancing body; it weakens the conceptual metaphor.<sup>20</sup> Theatrical lighting and scenery more frequently *grant* the dancing body agency than *deny* it. Likewise, fixed choreography itself, which proscribes the dancer's movements as a staircase disciplines our own, is so pervasive that Modern dance has historically ignored it as a site of semiotic significance.

A choreographer hoping to communicate some sense of struggle frequently opts for *human over structural* impediments, for example, one dancer grabbing another. The strength of this trope has been augmented by the modern city, where bodies are forced every which way by planners and architects, but rarely by each other. This allows human-on-human touch to ring with associations of control, violence or intimacy. Navigating a crowded street, circumvention becomes standard. Then, observing dancers fluidly gliding past one another, I conceive of them as insulated individuals at cross-purposes, rather than social beings actively avoiding one another (another equally possible understanding). We cannot switch off our schematic tendencies when the house lights fade.

Whether or not these generalizations have traction, the strictly schematic view of understanding is incomplete when applied to the experience of watching dance. Many theories of embodied cognition are guilty of positioning external objects and conceptual correlatives as fixed. In dance, movement defies this sort of phenotyping. I propose a more fitting lens for this project is James Gibson's concept of *affordance-character*.<sup>21</sup> While the properties of affordances are contested,<sup>22</sup> the theory boils down to the notion that our perception of an object is based on the "opportunities for action" that the object presents to us.<sup>23</sup> Gibson proposed that we don't perceive "chair" first and foremost, but rather "thing-to-sit-on".<sup>24</sup> As philosopher John Sanders sums up: "environments are just organism-indexed parts of the world. Organisms are just parts of the world distinguished from what they are embedded in. What is real is an infinitely complex array of ... affordances."<sup>25</sup> Affordances encourage us to consider the effect and exchange between dance and observer as the primary site of analysis, as opposed to, say, the anatomical

details of a gesture. Dance's *virtual power* is its ability to tease out sets of potentialities, shared while not perfectly prescribed among the lived-bodies of dancer, choreographer and spectator.

With this new optic, the question "What are the perceptual schema intrinsic to the city" can be rephrased "How does the city want to be grasped?". One response is "in pieces." Simultaneous action, juxtaposition and a multi-focal space have become cornerstones of contemporary, Western concert dance. I submit that the urban lifeworld has not only contributed to these postmodern proclivities, but demanded it.<sup>26</sup> This does not preclude the myriad factors dance scholars have identified as feeding the formation of a postmodern dance aesthetic. However, it was the city that fostered these affordances. It was the city that carved these capacities in the mind-bodies of art consumers, and that demanded artists fill them.

Walking down the same city streets for years, I am amazed when I notice something new on a second story facade. I ignore what is overhead, because it rarely affords me anything. The theory of affordances urges that we consider what aspects of choreography we might ignore, because those aspects rarely afford us much of consequence in the course of our everyday. I suggest that there are overarching temporal arcs in a contemporary dance that tend to fall by the wayside, namely exceedingly slow movements. Like balconies overhead, these tempos are not positioned as dominant sites for aesthetic or narrative production by the choreographer, nor received as such by the city spectator. To an urbanite, such as myself, slow movement across stage frequently "reads" as a background element, even if it is, in fact, in front of other action. This perceptive proclivity also has its up-sides. Instances of slowness are imbued with the power to become poignant punctuation marks in a dance — another tool in the choreographer's toolkit.<sup>27</sup>

Even the flow of negative space on stage is influenced by the transience we experience when we occupy the city air. For all but the most affluent urbanites, space is leased and turn-over is brisk. Demographics of a city quarter can switch depending on whether it is 7am, 2pm or 10pm, as populations replace one another.<sup>28</sup> Every time I take a step, I sense that my previous position is being replaced by a new person. This fosters an affordance that space *wants* to be filled. As the chorus leaves center-stage, I anticipate the soloist to fill that space. This expectation is then massaged by the choreographer to create new meanings: the affordance might be denied or altered or pleurably fulfilled.

Looking into the urban future, technology will beg us to grab the city in new ways and, consequently, place new constraints on our conception of dance. Machines will continue to replace proletarian labor, and teleconferencing will supplant in-person interactions of the elite. In both cases, citizens will work increasingly in isolation. This will establish new choreographic tropes, as it will no longer be normal to "turn to" or "turn away" from someone (both tropes predicated on the normalcy of physical presence). The semiotics of dancer facings will be scrambled; two dancers in a similar pose on opposite sides of stage may soon read as socially connected, as opposed to isolated. Even the convention of a unified stage space may fall further out of fashion, and be replaced by multiple, spatially separated scenes.

The modern city is typified by the technological sublime, and the future trends toward this ideal of omniscient urbanity.<sup>29</sup> One aspect of this will be the proliferation of advanced mapping capabilities, cultivating a new hunger for quantifiable spatial awareness. Since

Rudolph von Laban began the project of an all encompassing dance notation, the choreographer has been positioned as urban planner, where the actions on stage model the inter-subjective interactions of citizens. Will a common capacity for knowing *who-what-where*, push live arts further in the direction of the improvisatory and spontaneous, or will it drag dance deeper into disembodied domains of virtual reality and modeling?

Forward-thinking projects such as the *synchronous objects* platform developed by Ohio State University to accompany Forsythe's *One Flat Thing Reproduced* exemplifies how the capacity to model can be both productive and dangerous.<sup>30</sup> The website is intended to provide new ways of "understanding" the dance, to use their serendipitous term.<sup>31</sup> However, there is the double-edged reality that the model of the dance threatens to replace the original.<sup>32</sup> This danger will persist as we become more at ease in virtual networks and navigating life through *apps*.

A final urban future we might consider is the privatized city — the city of jails, gated communities and theme parks postulated by Michael Dear.<sup>33</sup> As we grow habituated to areas that do not afford us entrance, might negative space on stage lose the exciting potentiality that we now feel? Will an urbanite understand uniformly distributed bodies as transgressive, whereas we now he sees them as regimented? Perhaps dance will serve the valuable function of opening up spaces for bodily participation.

My exploration has been limited to contemporary concert dance and a monolithic Western city. For clarity's sake, I've also been silent on the topic of social and participatory dance. I do not intend to pigeonhole any dance or urban experience as "standard". The generalizations I have concocted to suggest semiotic relationships do not preclude the importance of a deeper analysis of the specifics of a dance, its environment, and its audience, in the application of these ideas. Acknowledging these biases, I still propose that the intersection of enactive cognition and environmental studies is a fertile nexus for ethno-choreologies in any setting, be it a mountain town, sprawling suburb, or virtual reality domain.

Finally, I would like to point to other socio-cultural factors that might discipline the body far more than the constraints of urban architecture. Sexuality, social belonging, leisure activities, religious practices and daily labor all shape our perceptual schema and influence our primary understandings of art. Upon further investigation, these examples will also shed light on the way that our experience grasping the world alters how we handle dance.

Copyright 2012, Michael Bodel

---

<sup>1</sup> Two perils whose possible solutions are rigorously explored: in Leccese & McCormick, *Charter for the New Urbanism*.

<sup>2</sup> Kostof, *Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*.

<sup>3</sup> Ballett Frankfurt, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Kostof, *Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History*.

<sup>5</sup> Here invoking the most basic form of aesthetic meaning as suggested by Jackson Barry: in Barry, 1999, 116.

<sup>6</sup> Shusterman argues against "hermeneutical holism" by reinstating the role of understanding as independent and prior to any act of interpretation: in Shusterman, "Beneath Interpretation: Against Hermeneutic Holism.", 181–204; and defended in Shusterman,

- 1993.
- <sup>7</sup> Shusterman, "Beneath Interpretation: Against Hermeneutic Holism."
- <sup>8</sup> Gallagher, "Intersubjectivity in Perception."
- <sup>9</sup> Notable examples include Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), 22; Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind* (Boston: MIT Press, 1991); Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- <sup>10</sup> Most extensively explored in Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Johnson, 2007; Grady, 1997.
- <sup>11</sup> Johnson, "Embodied Reason", 81.
- <sup>12</sup> Grady, 1997. Quoted in Johnson, 2007, 178-79.
- <sup>13</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, 78; Johnson, 2007, 29-34.
- <sup>14</sup> Johnson, 2007, 231.
- <sup>15</sup> Husserl's "life-world" is a convincing lens in urban studies as it establishes the transient "lived" nature constitutive of the city, therefore acknowledging the city's power to regiment without casting its inhabitant as entirely powerless. The term is convincingly explored in Madsen and Plunz, 2002.
- <sup>16</sup> Copeland, "Dance Postmodern Architecture Postmodernism", 28.
- <sup>17</sup> Adopting Susanne Langer's concept of the affective mode of artistic communication. Langer, 1953; Dunagan, "Dance Knowledge and Power."
- <sup>18</sup> This is reflected in English expressions like "She hit a wall" or, "He had to push through." Johnson, 2007, 189.
- <sup>19</sup> Mumford, 1970, 265-279.
- <sup>20</sup> One such anecdotal example is my interpretation of the matrix of steel tables in *One Flat Thing Reproduced* as a normal element on which the dancers play: a foil for the dance, not an impediment.
- <sup>21</sup> Translated from Kurt Lewin's *Aufforderungscharakter* in Sanders, "Affordances: An Ecological Approach to First Philosophy", 129.
- <sup>22</sup> These debates are most prominently waged in *Ecological Psychology Journal*; i.e. Turvey, "Affordances and Prospective Control: An Outline of the Ontology" and Stoffregen, "Affordances as Properties of the Animal-environment System."
- <sup>23</sup> Gibson, 1979, 127-143.
- <sup>24</sup> More recent thinking has qualified that affordances are acculturated, as in Costall, "Socializing Affordances", and contingent on both subject and environment, as in Stoffregen, "Affordances as Properties of the Animal-environment System."
- <sup>25</sup> Sanders, "Affordances: An Ecological Approach to First Philosophy," 133.
- <sup>26</sup> Here invoking the broadest definition of the term, such as by Susan Manning in Manning, Manning, "Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric: A Response to Sally Banes' 'Terpsichore in Sneakers.'" My goal is not to confine these aesthetics to any one movement, but to point out that wherever aspects of "post-modernity" are identified in a dance, we can look to the environmental conditions of their creation as a factor in their development.
- <sup>27</sup> Of course any positive generalization blossoms with counter-examples: Robert Wilson and Eiko & Koma have made careers probing these tempos. More obviously, anti-urban speeds are found in the slow signification of Butoh, which, not coincidentally, was spawned in a period of unprecedented, urban time dilation.
- <sup>28</sup> Marcuse, 2002, 105.
- <sup>29</sup> Madsen and Plunz, 2002, 224.
- <sup>30</sup> "Synchronous Objects"
- <sup>31</sup> The mission of the project is explained in three brief essays by William Forsythe, Maria Palazzi, Nora Zunigga Shaw and on the website of "Synchronous Objects".
- <sup>32</sup> Baudrillard, 1994.
- <sup>33</sup> Short, 2006, 49.

- Alan Costall, "Socializing Affordances," *Theory & Psychology* 5, no. 4 (1995)
- Ballett Frankfurt. 2003. "One Flat Thing Reproduced" October 3, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Howard Gilman Opera House.
- Brenda Dixon Gottschild. 1998. *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts*. Greenwood Press.
- Colleen Dunagen. 2005. "Dance Knowledge and Power." *Topoi* 24 (1).
- Congress for the New Urbanism. 2000. *Charter of the New Urbanism*. Ed. Michael Leccese and Kathleen McCormick. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Damian Thompson. 2007. *Does This Grab You?* WPP.  
www.wpp.com/wpp/marketing/media/does-this-grab-you.
- Eleanor Rosch. 1991. *The Embodied Mind*. Boston: MIT Press.
- George Lakoff, and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books.
- Ivar Hagendoorn. 2004. "Some Speculative Hypotheses About the Nature and Perception of Dance and Choreography." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11 (3/4).
- Jackson Barry. 1999. *Art, Culture and the Semiotics of Meaning*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- James Gibson. 1979. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jean Baudrillard. 1994. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- John Rennie Short. 2006. *Urban Theory: A Critical Assessment*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- John T. Sanders. 1999. "Affordances: An Ecological Approach to First Philosophy." In *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersection of Nature and Culture*, ed. Gail Weiss and Honi Fern Haber, 121–143. New York: Routledge.
- Joseph Grady. 1997. "Foundations of Meaning: Primary Metaphors and Primary Senses". PhD. Diss. University of California, Berkeley.
- Lewis Mumford. 1970. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.
- M. T. Turvey. "Affordances and Prospective Control: An Outline of the Ontology." *Ecological Psychology* (4).
- Mark L. Johnson. 1999. "Embodied Reason." In *Perspectives on Embodiment: The Intersection of Nature and Culture*, ed. Gail Weiss and Honi Fern Haber, 121–143. New York: Routledge.
- . 2007. *The Meaning of the Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. 1980. *The Phenomenology of Dance*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Peter Madsen, and Richard Plunz. 2002. *The Urban Lifeworld: Formation, Perception, Representation*. New York: Routledge.
- Peter Marcuse. 2002. "The Layered City." In *The Urban Lifeworld: Formation, Perception, Representation*, by Peter Madsen and Richard Plunz, 95–114. New York: Routledge.
- Pierre Bourdieu. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richard Shusterman. 1990. "Beneath Interpretation: Against Hermeneutic Holism." *The Monist* 73 (2) (April): 181–204.
- . 1993. "Interpretation, Mind, and Embodiment." *Psychological Inquiry* 5 (3): 256–259.
- Roger Copeland. 1983. "Dance Postmodern Architecture Postmodernism." *Performing Arts Journal* 7 (1): 27–43.
- Shaun Gallagher. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2008. "Intersubjectivity in Perception." *Continental Philosophy Review* 41: 163–

---

178.

Sondra Horton Fraleigh. 2004. *Dancing Identity*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Sprig Kostof: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History. 1991. *The City Shaped*.

London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Susan Manning. 1988. "Modernist Dogma and Post-Modern Rhetoric: A Response to Sally

Banes' "Terpsichore in Sneakers." *The Drama Review* 32 (4).

Susanne Langer. 1953. *Feeling and Form*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Synchronous Objects." Accessed June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu>

T.A. Stoffregen. 2003. "Affordances as Properties of the Animal–environment System."

*Ecological Psychology* (15).

## Unpacking Eugène Giraudet's Library: Dance, Books, and International Relations in Fin-de-Siècle Paris<sup>1</sup>

*Dominique Bourassa*  
Yale University

### **Abstract**

*Eugène Giraudet (1861-19?) was an exceptionally prolific and influential Parisian dance teacher, choreographer, author, and bibliophile. His library catalog, published in his 1900 *Traité de la danse, Tome II, Grammaire de la danse et du bon ton*, is more than a simple record of the books he owned. It also serves as a wish list and a directory of prominent dance personalities. As a whole, it presents an unparalleled conspectus of dance teaching, book collecting, business, and international networks radiating from a major metropolis—the historical urban center of the dance world—in the late-nineteenth century.*

### **Introduction**

Eugène Giraudet, born in 1861, was an exceptionally prolific Parisian dance teacher, choreographer and author. By 1900, even while teaching dance 10 hours a day, he could claim 10 books, 784 newspaper articles, and 132 choreographed ballets among his accomplishments.<sup>2</sup> In his treatises, Giraudet tried to present an encyclopedic compendium of dance knowledge.<sup>3</sup> His 1900 *Traité de la danse*, tome II, *Grammaire de la danse et du bon ton* (see Figure 1), aims to cover no less than dance around the world and through the centuries, from the ape to the present, as you can see in the frontispiece (see Figure 2).<sup>4</sup> In order to control this vast body of information, Giraudet amassed a large private library that he describes in this book.

When I first decided to “unpack” Giraudet’s library, I thought I would be studying merely a personal dance library catalog. My assumption was that since Giraudet’s *Traité de la danse* covers dance around the world and through the centuries, his library would include a wide variety of books that would shed light on the content of his *Traité de la danse* and other works, provide the sources of his knowledge, and maybe (if I was lucky) reveal works that are unknown today.

Giraudet’s own introduction to his library not only confirms my expectation, but also reveals that his library has an unexpected physical manifestation. He writes:

My library on dance, contredanses, etc., from all times, places, and countries, treatises, handbooks, works, methods, loose pages, newspaper articles, plans, drawings, figures, engravings, illustrations, treatises on life in high society, etc. Each teacher has his compartment arranged alphabetically by the names of authors and teachers of dance, with their names and addresses, date, price, etc.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, Giraudet kept track of his library in some kind of compartmentalized furniture that functions like a traditional card catalog. Unlike an author card catalog in which many authors share a drawer, Giraudet’s catalog gives each author his or her own

compartment. As Giraudet accumulates information about a person (books written, dances choreographed, etc.), he adds it to the proper compartment. For your information, Giraudet's printed catalog includes 1,126 entries, give or take a few duplicates. Therefore the size of Giraudet's physical catalog must have been enormous, and one can easily imagine the shifting work involved when a new author had to be interfiled.

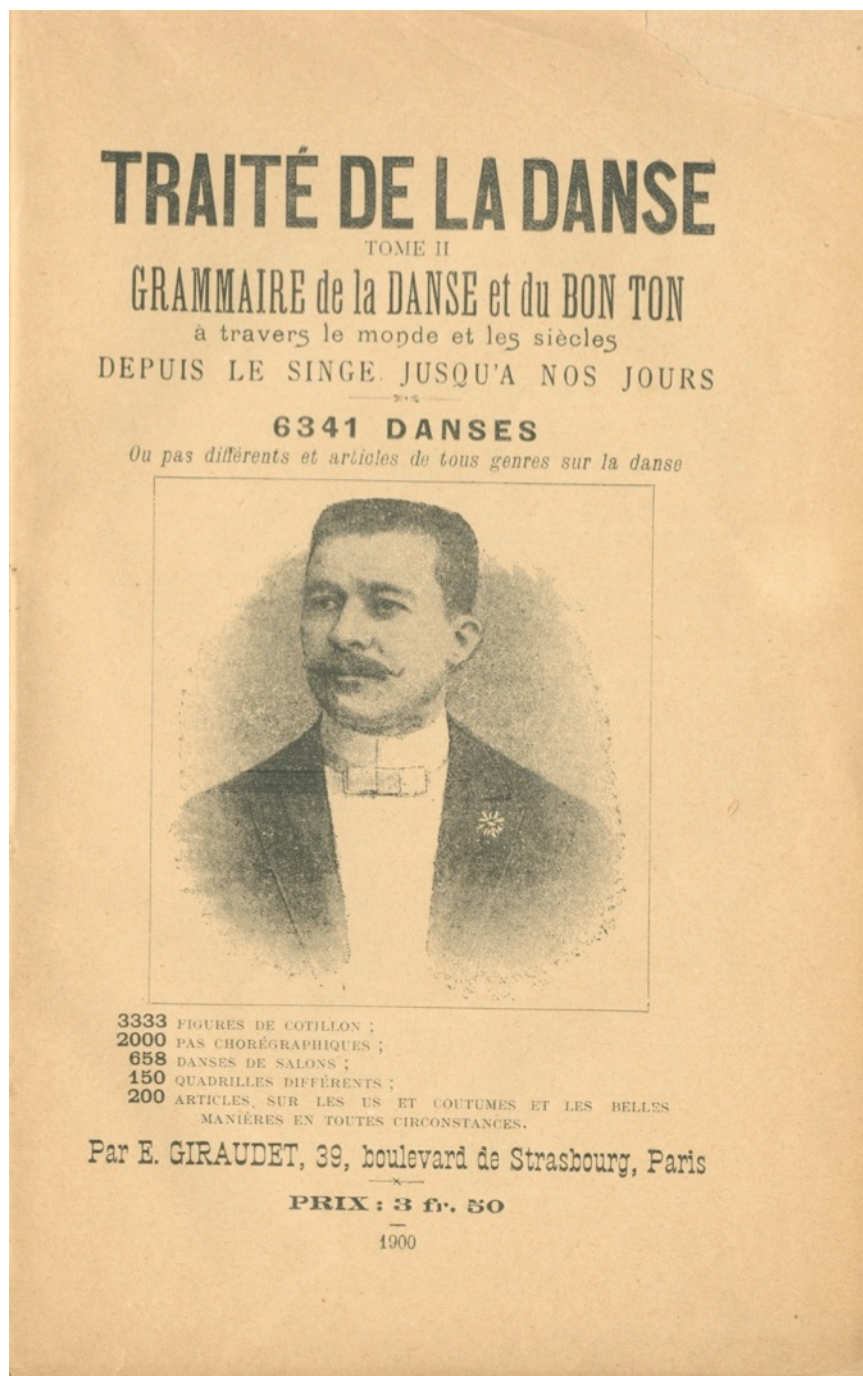


Figure 1: Eugène Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, title page (photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)



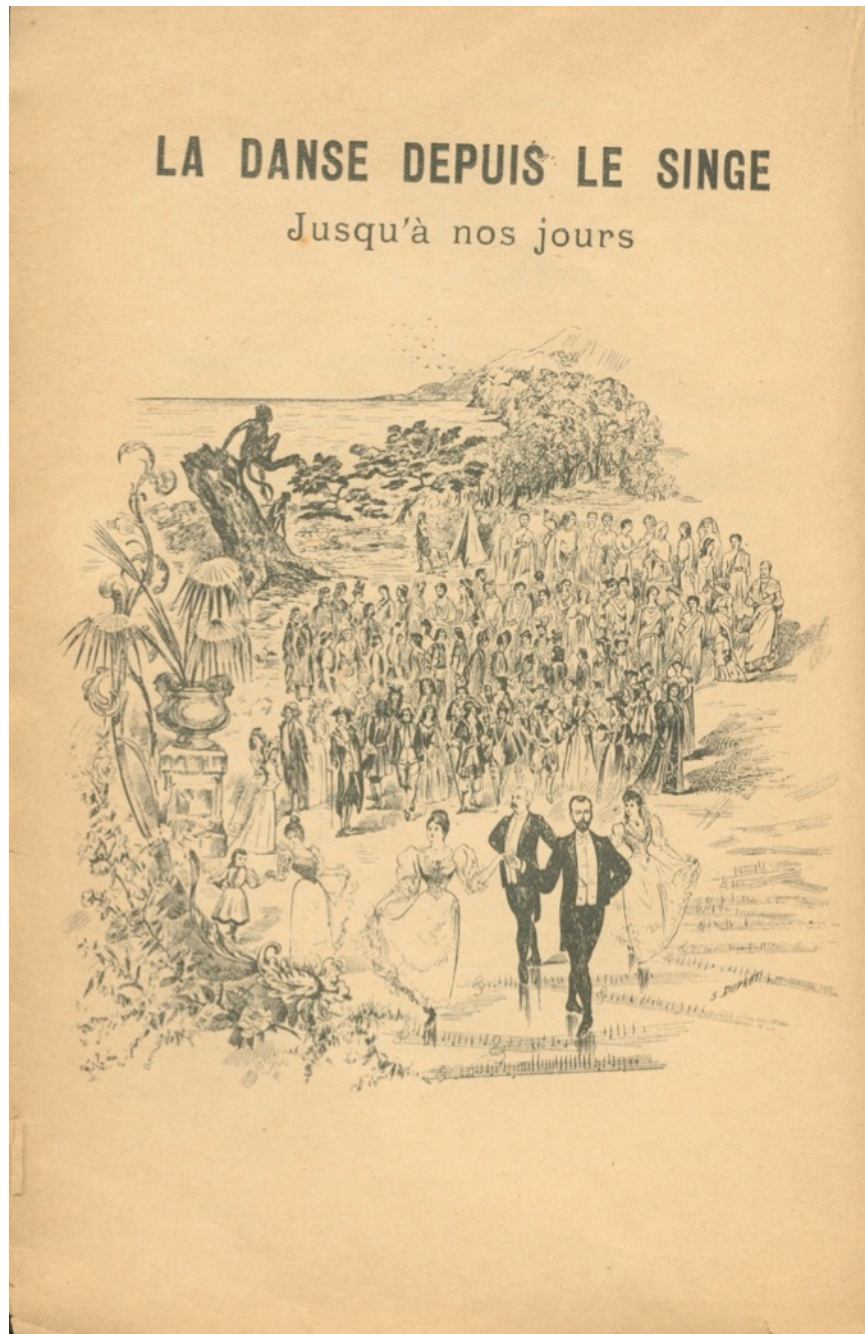


Figure 2: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, frontispiece  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

Giraudet's printed catalog does not look at first very different from other printed library catalogs of the time: a list of books organized roughly in alphabetical order by author's last name, as the first page shows (see Figure 3).<sup>6</sup>

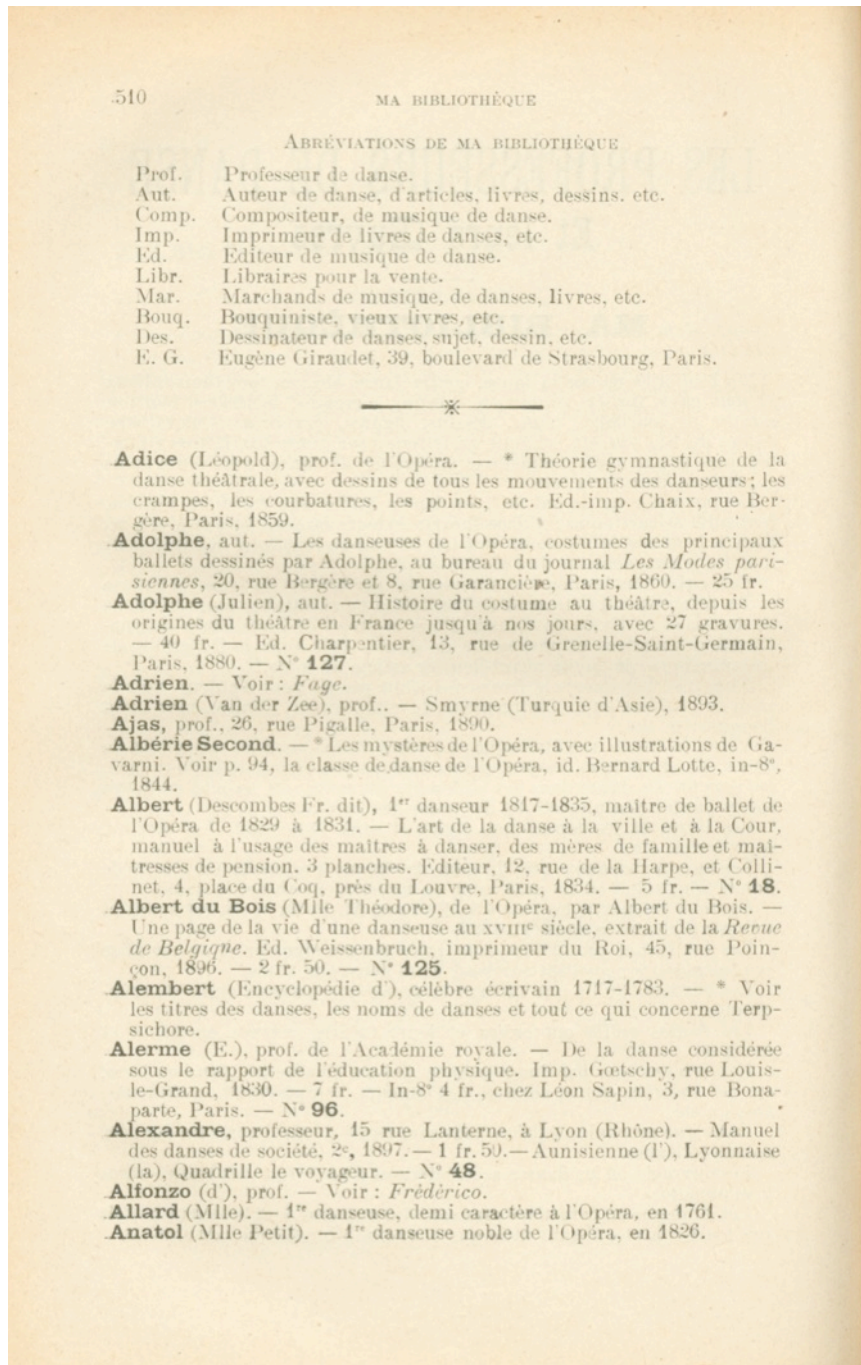


Figure 3: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 510  
 (photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

It does not take long to realize, however, that Giraudet's catalog is much more than a simple list of books he owns:

- Yes, it does include books Giraudet owns. They are followed by numbers in bold that are, I think, call numbers that help Giraudet find his books in his real library (see Figure 4).<sup>7</sup>

Adolphe (Julien), aut. — Histoire du costume au théâtre, depuis les origines du théâtre en France jusqu'à nos jours, avec 27 gravures. — 40 fr. — Ed. Charpentier, 13, rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain, Paris, 1880. — N° 127.

Figure 4: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 510  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- It also shows books Giraudet would like to acquire (his wish list, as it were). Asterisks indicate these (see Figure 5).<sup>8</sup>

Adice (Léopold), prof. de l'Opéra. — \* Théorie gymnastique de la danse théâtrale, avec dessins de tous les mouvements des danseurs; les crampes, les courbatures, les points, etc. Ed.-imp. Chaix, rue Bergère, Paris, 1859.

Figure 5: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 510  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- The catalog also describes the contents of some books. For instance, De la Cuisse's 3-volume *Répertoire des bals* is followed by a 1.5-page description of its contents (see Figure 6).<sup>9</sup>

Cuisse (de la), maître de danse en 1762, Paris, auteur d'un bel ouvrage en 3 tomes de 92 contre-danses allemandes, françaises, anglaises, etc. Son titre est : Le Répertoire des bals ou théorie pratique de contre-danses, avec théorie; musique, dessins et chansons, 3 volumes, le 1<sup>er</sup> en 1762; le 2<sup>e</sup> en 1765; le 3<sup>e</sup> en 1769. — 200 fr. Ed. Cailleau, rue Saint-Jacques, près rue des Mathurins, Paris, 1762. Voici les danses que comportent les 3 volumes :

1<sup>o</sup> Tome I : Notes et explications des dessins et figures, etc. 1<sup>re</sup> contre-danse, La Marquise, contre-danse du sieur D...; 2<sup>o</sup> La Mienne; 3<sup>o</sup> La Fontaine; 4<sup>o</sup> L'Original 5<sup>o</sup> La Victorieuse; 6<sup>o</sup> L'Intime; 7<sup>o</sup> Les Quatre Veuves; 8<sup>o</sup> Le Tambourin de Daquin; 9<sup>o</sup> La nouvelle Anglaise; 10<sup>o</sup> La Bonne Foy; 11<sup>o</sup> Les Quatres Cousines; 12<sup>o</sup> Les Moulinets brisés; 13<sup>o</sup> Les 4 doubles allemandes; 14<sup>o</sup> La Dubois; 15<sup>o</sup> Ma Favorite, dédiée à mon ami; 16<sup>o</sup> Les Amusements de Clichy; 17<sup>o</sup> Les Fêtes d'Orléans, dédiée à Mme de Cypierre, Intend. d'Orléans; 18<sup>o</sup> L'Ortie ou l'Hôtel de l'Ortie, id.; 19<sup>o</sup> Menuet des Festes d'Orléans, dédiée à Mme de Cypierre, Intend. d'Orléans; 20<sup>o</sup> Les Amusements de la Loire, id.; 21<sup>o</sup> La jolie d'Orléans, id.; 22<sup>o</sup> Les fontaines du Loiret, id.; 23<sup>o</sup> La Nouvelle singulière; 24<sup>o</sup> Les Absences; 25<sup>o</sup> La France; 26<sup>o</sup> Les Nouvelles Etrennes; 27<sup>o</sup> La Nouvelle Provence; 28<sup>o</sup> La Fleury ou Amusement de Nancy. Manque la Bionni, 6<sup>e</sup> feuille après la Victorieuse, fin du tome I, dernières pages. Avec privilège du Roy, 1764, 14 juin, 49<sup>e</sup> règne du Roy.

2<sup>o</sup> Tome II : Suite du Répertoire des bals ou recueil de contre-danses, 1765. Une page pour l'explication des dessins. 1<sup>re</sup> contre-danse, La belle Georgette, par MM. Perrin et la Hante; 2<sup>o</sup> La Rosalie, contre-danse nouvelle dédiée à Mlle Rosalie, par M. Denis, maître de danse;

Figure 6: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 522  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- The catalog takes at times the form of an annotated bibliography. In this example (see Figure 7), Giraudet says that Edward Scott's *Dancing as an art and pastime* includes "beautiful engravings of all dances" (actually, the illustrations are not engravings but photographs).<sup>10</sup>

**Scott** (Edward), prof., 17, Compton, avenue Brighton, London (Angleterre). — Dancing as an art and Pastime; éd. George Bell and sons, York St., covent Garden, Londres (Angleterre), 1892. Belles gravures de toutes danses. — 20 fr. — N° 146. — Chorolista, La Versa, Craco-

Figure 7: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 561  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- At other times, the catalog becomes an index of dance references. For example, Giraudet would like to own a translation of James Cook's *A voyage towards the South Pole and round the world* for the description of dances that can be found on 4 specific pages (see Figure 8).<sup>11</sup>

**Cook** (Le capitaine). 1728-1799. — \* Voyage dans l'hémisphère boréal et austral et autour du monde; traduit de l'anglais à Lausanne en 1796. 14 vol. in-8°. — T. II, p. 339, Une représentation de danse chez les habitants d'Uliéta. — T. IV, p. 251, La danse appelée la Timoi-dée. — T. V, p. 25, La danse d'un indien chez les insulaires de l'île Mauréa. — T. VI, p. 96, Théorie d'une danse guerrière dans la Nouvelle-Zélande; voir dans toutes les bibliothèques. — La danse dans

Figure 8: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 521  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- Giraudet's catalog is also a biographical dance dictionary. Most of the subjects are dance personalities such as Noverre (see Figure 9).<sup>12</sup> But there are also others with dance accomplishments, like Louis XIV, who crop up here and there (see Figure 10).<sup>13</sup>

**Noverre** (M.), prof., 1727-1810, maître de ballet de l'Opéra de 1777 à 1779. — Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets, par M. Noverre, maître de ballets de Son Altesse sérénissime monseigneur le duc de Wurtemberg, et ci-devant des théâtres de Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Londres, etc., imprimé chez Aimé Delaroche, aux Halles de la Grenette. 1755. — 5 fr. — Avec approbation du roi. — N° 51.

Figure 9: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 553  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

**Louis XIV** a pris des leçons de danse avec presque tous les maîtres de l'époque, mais plus particulièrement du maître Prévost; après quoi Louis XIV inventa des pas de danse, des ballets, prenant toujours part aux danses de ballet comme aux danses de la Cour, de 1650 à 1715 il dansa.

Figure 10: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 547  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- The catalog is also a directory of dance teachers and schools, as you can see in this example (see Figure 11).<sup>14</sup> The date following an address is the most recent date Giraudet knew the person was teaching at this address.

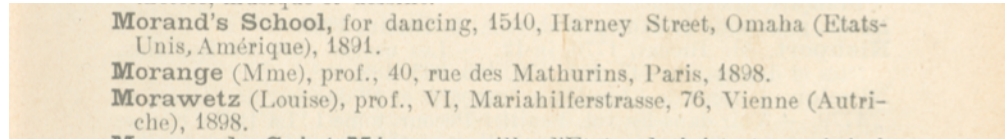


Figure 11: Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 551  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

- Finally, the catalog provides an opportunity for Giraudet to boast of his accomplishments by posting his curriculum vitae (see Figure 12).<sup>15</sup> Obviously, he gives himself the longest treatment, more than 2.5-pages worth of achievements.

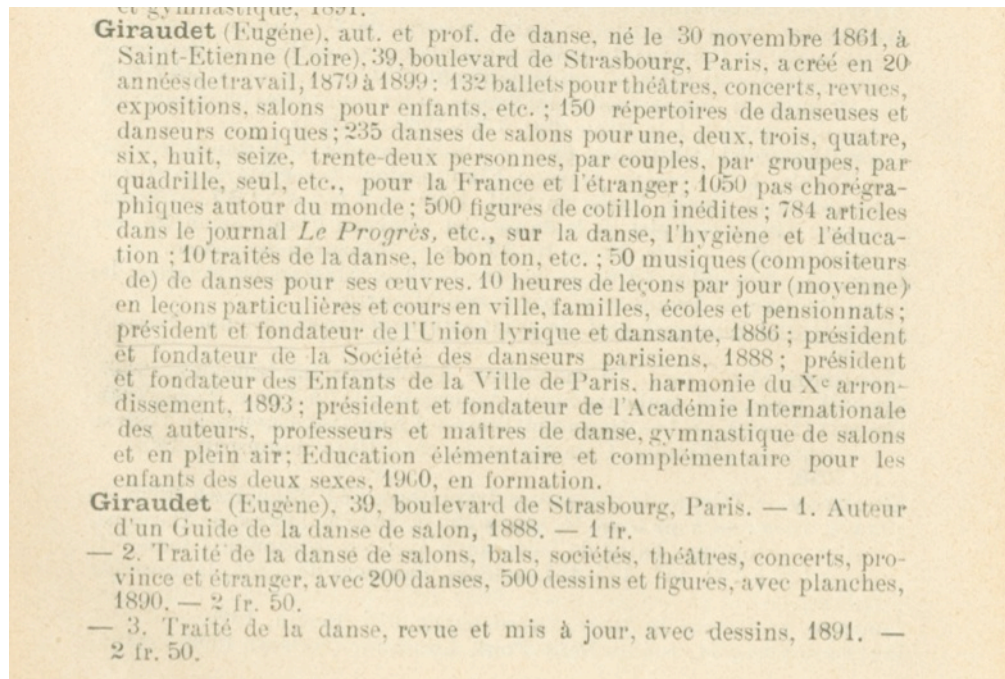


Figure 12: Giraudet's *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 534  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

My presentation today will focus on 3 aspects of Giraudet's catalog: the books he owns, the books he wishes to acquire, and the dance teachers and schools of the last 20 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that he lists.

### Giraudet's Library

In all, Giraudet's library contains 274 volumes published between 1702 and 1900, including 229 one-volume works, 11 two- or three-volume works and 8 instances of multiple copies and editions. More than half date from the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a median date of 1883 (see Figure 13).<sup>16</sup> At this point, I have been able to trace in libraries 90% of the books Giraudet owned.<sup>17</sup>

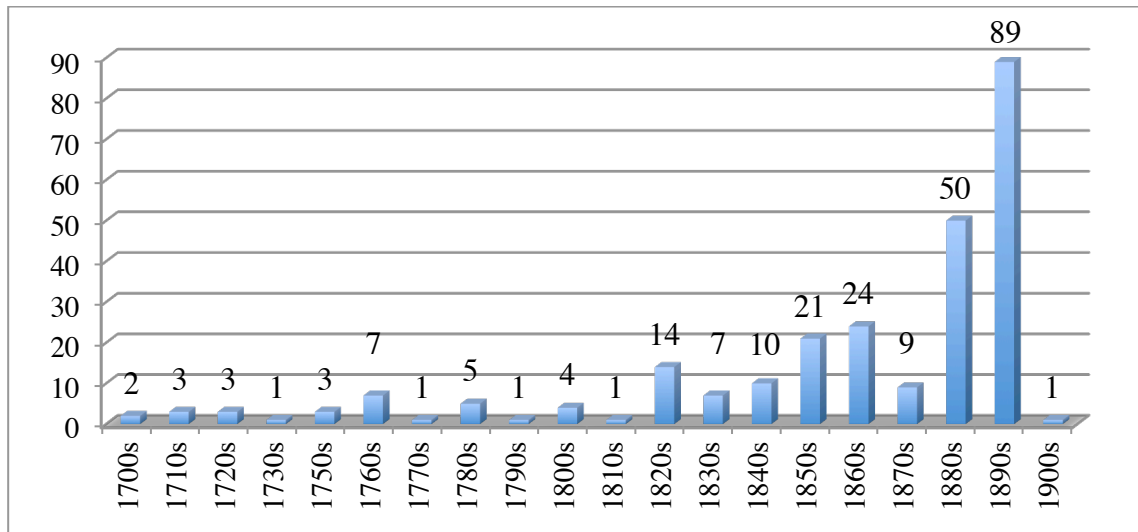


Figure 13: Number of Books by Decade

Giraudet indicates the prices of 233 books. The least he paid for a book is 10 centimes for an unidentified small dance treatise published by Qu erolle in 1898; the most, 200 francs for De La Cuisse’s 1768 3-volume *R pertoire des bals*. The monetary value of his library is at least 2,500 francs based on the value of the books of which Giraudet lists the price (including his own books).<sup>18</sup> Although in general “it is impossible to propose a multiplier that converts these prices (...) into actual francs or euros because they have meaning only within a given economic environment,”<sup>19</sup> the rules and regulations of Giraudet’s dance school listed in his *Trait  de la danse* include a very detailed price schedule for 36 services he offers that allows us to judge the value of his library in relation to his income and at the same time offers a glimpse into Giraudet’s nature as a business man. To pay for all his books (see Table 1), Giraudet would have to choreograph 25 dances, sell 125 group-lesson packages of 10 lessons each, teach 500 30-minute private lessons, or have 25,074 women use the coatroom in his rooftop dance school on week nights, as shown in this engraving from his book (see Figures 14-15).

Table 1: Possible income sources for Giraudet’s Library

SELECTED SERVICES	PRICE IN FRANCS	QUANTITY
Choreograph a dance	100.00	25
10 private lessons in 1 month	50.00	50
Package of 10 group-lessons	20.00	125
1 month of group lessons at 2 lessons/week	15.00	167
1 private dance lesson (30 minutes)	5.00	501
Coat room fee for women on weekday nights	0.10	25,074



Figure 14: Location of the coatroom in Giraudet's dance school  
 Giraudet, Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. [396]  
 (photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)



Figure 15: Coatroom in Giraudet's dance school  
 Giraudet, Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. [396]  
 (photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

Giraudet collects mostly books in French. Of the 14 foreign language titles found in his library, one is in Spanish, three in German, four in Italian, and six in English. The most prolific author in his library is, of course, himself with 10 works. Then comes the dance teacher Gustave Desrat (1830-19?) with 5 different works and the musicologist François-Henri-Joseph Blaze (known as Castil-Blaze, 1784-1857) with four.

As one might expect, Giraudet is an avid collector of books on dance (see Figure 16). They include books on how to dance, on dance history, notation, dancers, balls, the dance of death, etc. Many are now classics (works by Cahusac, Feuillet, Noverre, and Zorn, to name but a few). Giraudet’s library also contains books on topics other than dance. They are about arts, combat (that is, boxing, fencing, canes, and sticks), education, etiquette and morals, the language of flowers, games, law, literature, music, performing arts, physical education (such as gymnastics and calisthenics), and social life and customs. Most of the books in Giraudet’s library are handbooks and instruction manuals (see Figure 18).<sup>20</sup> Other types of books found are antidance tracts, *belles lettres* (novels, poems, and drama), biographies, dictionaries and encyclopedias, wit and humor books, music scores, periodicals, synopses and libretti, textbook and thesis. Giraudet’s library also includes numerous newspaper articles relating to dance, and an amazing collection of dance sheet music that he lists in separate sections that I have not started to “unpack.”<sup>21</sup> He advertises, by the way, that he is available to copy for a fee any of the sheet music he owns.<sup>22</sup>

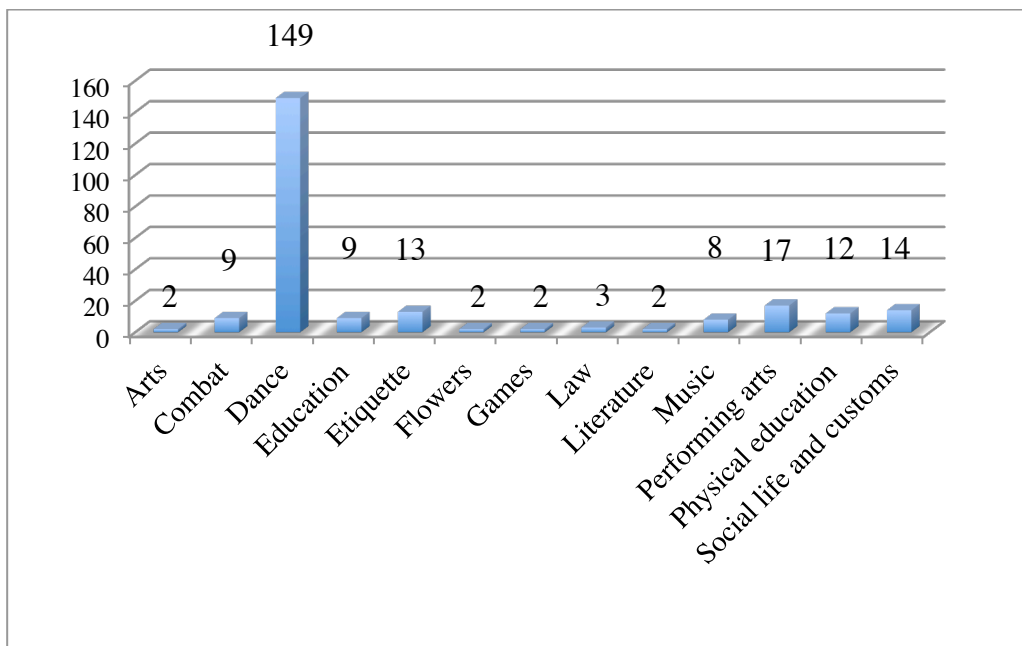


Figure 16: Topics in Giraudet’s Library



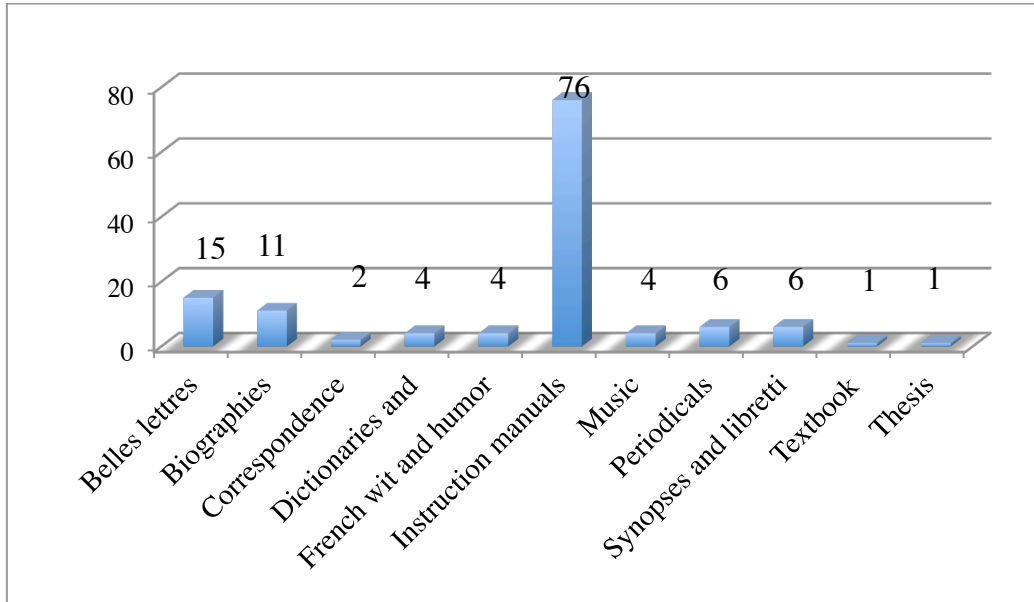


Figure 17: Genres of books in Giraudet's Library

Bold numbers following books Giraudet owned, as I said earlier, are a type of call number. At first glance, Giraudet does not seem to have a specific classification system for his books. However, the shelflist I reconstructed shows that Giraudet usually tries to keep books by the same author together by giving them consecutive call numbers. This desire for collocation means that sometimes he has to use call numbers such as “30bis” and “30ter.”<sup>23</sup> Another interesting aspect is that all foreign language dance books and their translations are classed near each other in the 140 to 156 range, and all antidance tracts are classed in the 248 to 257 range.<sup>24</sup>

Giraudet's catalog remains at this time the only known example of a dance teacher's private library, making it impossible to compare his library to that of his contemporaries.<sup>25</sup> Giraudet cannot be called either a typical “bibliophile” or “bibliomane.”<sup>26</sup> He does not collect antiquarian books or luxurious contemporary editions because they are beautiful, rare, expensive objects. He collects books old and new, expensive and cheap, for practical reasons. Urban dance teachers of that period typically taught current ballroom dances, fancy or demonstration dances (these could be theatrical or historical dances), etiquette and deportment, and basic fitness exercises.<sup>27</sup> That books on such topics formed nearly 75% of Giraudet's library therefore makes sense. Books about education show Giraudet's interest in learning the latest pedagogical theory; law books, his need to know the legal way to conduct business such as drawing contracts. Books on boxing can be explained in part by the fact that Giraudet is writing a book on “French boxing as mimetic dance for the parlor, and as a technique for self-defense.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, he may incorporate any works he owns into his own works. For example, compare Giraudet's image, based on Carlo Blasis' 1830 *Manuel de la danse* (see Figure 18): you will notice that Giraudet changed the costume of the dancers, but kept the figure number!<sup>29</sup> This indicates that the functions of his library include broadening his curriculum and expanding his publication output.

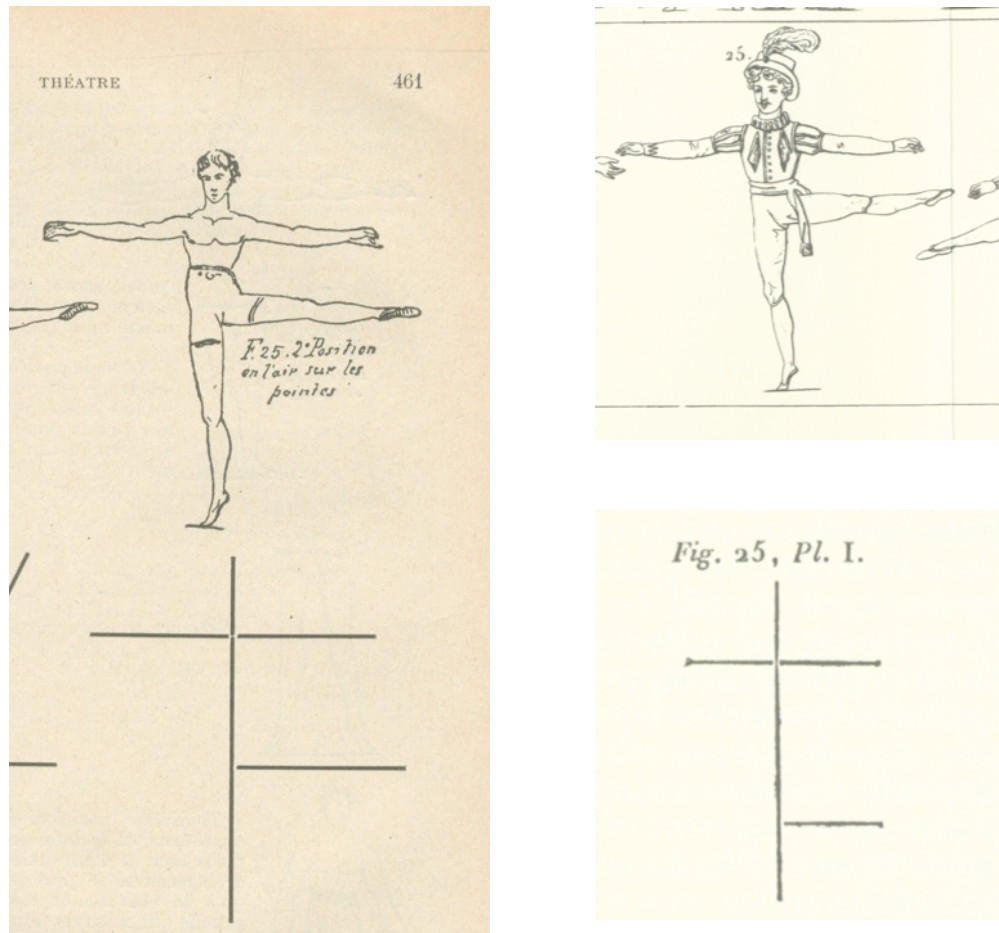


Figure 18: Comparison between (left) Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome 2, p. 461  
 Photo: Collection Dominique Bourassa  
 and (right) Carlo Blasis, *Manuel complet de la danse* (Paris, 1830);  
 facs. Ed. Paris: L. Laget, 1980) p. 104 and plate 1

### Giraudet's wish list

Turning now to the second focus of this paper, Giraudet's wish list indicates that there are 185 books he wants to acquire for his library. They date from 1498 to 1898 and include rare gems. Most are on topics similar to those he already owns: a majority (54%) are about dance (see Figure 19). Topics not already represented in Giraudet's library are language, philosophy, and religion. In the social life and customs category, travelers' diaries constitute a new genre.

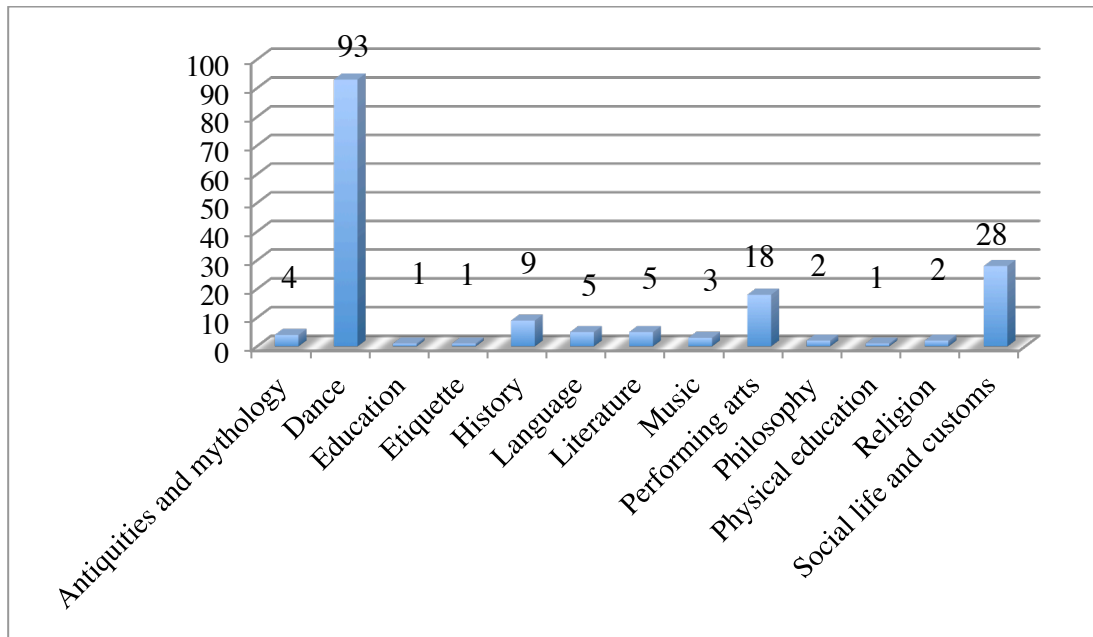


Figure 19: Topics in Giraudet's Wish List

When I first started to study Giraudet's wish list, I faced a major problem: many of the books appeared nonexistent: I could not find their titles in online public access catalogs and bibliographic utilities. Yet, Giraudet often indicates the exact page numbers where information on dance is found in these books. Could that mean that even if Giraudet did not own these books, he already had consulted them, maybe in libraries, bookstores, *cabinets de lecture*, colleagues' houses? But how could he have known about so many books that don't seem to exist today? The key to this mystery was on his own shelves, where I found the definitive source of over 60% of his wish list: Desrat's 1895 *Dictionnaire de la danse*, which contains an annotated bibliography of dance books and other books containing information about dance held at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra.<sup>30</sup> Comparing Giraudet's wish list to Desrat's annotated bibliography, I discovered that instead of giving the proper title of a book, Giraudet often quotes or paraphrases Desrat's description of the book and copies Desrat's page references. Here is an example: Giraudet says he wants to acquire Abbé Brunoy's 1730 *Études des anciennes danses théâtrales et civiles*, citing 5 particular pages (78, 310, 103, 200, and 212) (see Figure 20).<sup>31</sup> As you can see in Desrat's *Dictionnaire*, the real title of Brunoy's work is *Théâtre des Grecs* (see Figure 21). But you can also notice that the misleading title given by Giraudet and the page references are copied from Desrat.<sup>32</sup> While it might be shocking to realize that Giraudet plagiarizes Desrat, an interesting conclusion can be drawn: Giraudet used Desrat's *Dictionnaire* to plan the growth of his library.<sup>33</sup> But one wonders if he read Desrat's work carefully. Among the books Giraudet wants to acquire is *La danse avec le Roi et au théâtre*, supposedly written in 1665 by Pierre Beauchamps, Louis XIV's dancing master. There is no other mention of this book anywhere, and Desrat says that authors who attribute dance books to Beauchamps "unscrupulously tamper with historical truth."<sup>34</sup>

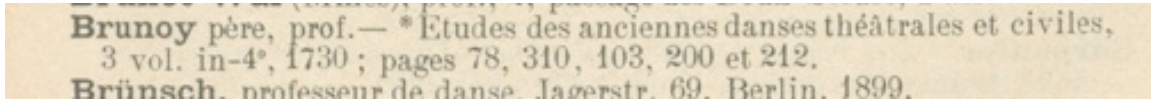


Figure 20: Giraudet, Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, p. 517  
(photo: collection Dominique Bourassa)

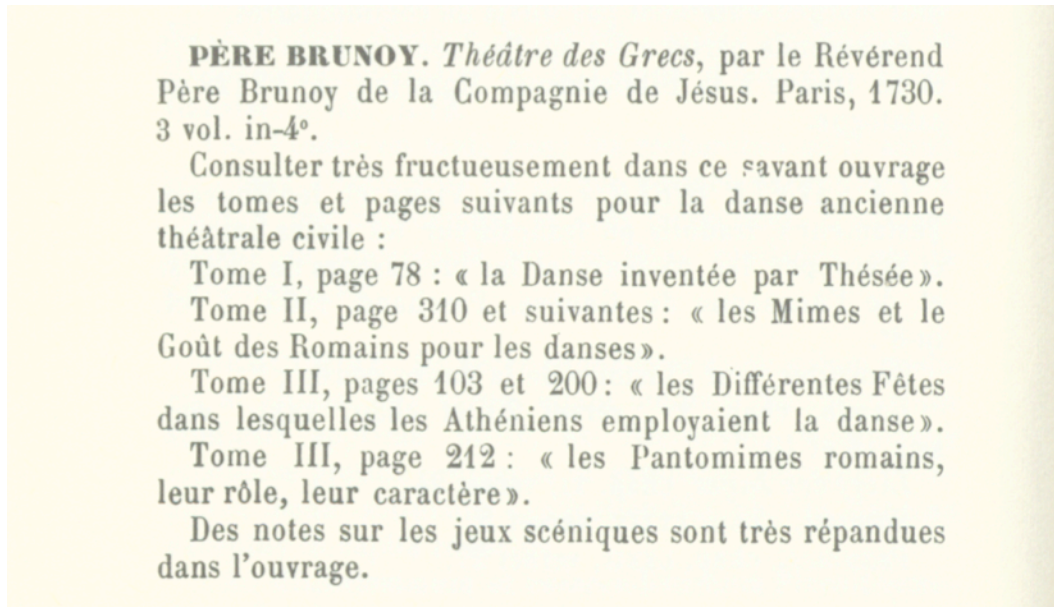


Figure 21: Gustave Desrat, *Dictionnaire de la danse historique, théorique, pratique et bibliographique* (Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1895; facs. ed. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977), p. 428

One of the most interesting aspects of Giraudet's wish list is that it includes the name and address of vendors where 34 books could be purchased in 1900.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the copy of Beaujoyeux's 1582 *Ballet comique de la royne* that used to belong to the library of the Comte de Lignerolles is for sale for 1,500 francs at Damascène Morgand, 55, passage du Panorama, Paris.<sup>36</sup> The addresses Giraudet lists allow us to trace his book shopping footprints. In this map (see Figure 22), the green schoolhouse in the upper right corner shows the location of Giraudet's school on 39 Boulevard de Strasbourg. The other locations point to bookstores where Giraudet must have shopped. You can see that they are located in two different sectors of Paris: three bookstores are on the Right Bank near the Bibliothèque nationale and four are on the Left Bank near the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts.<sup>37</sup>

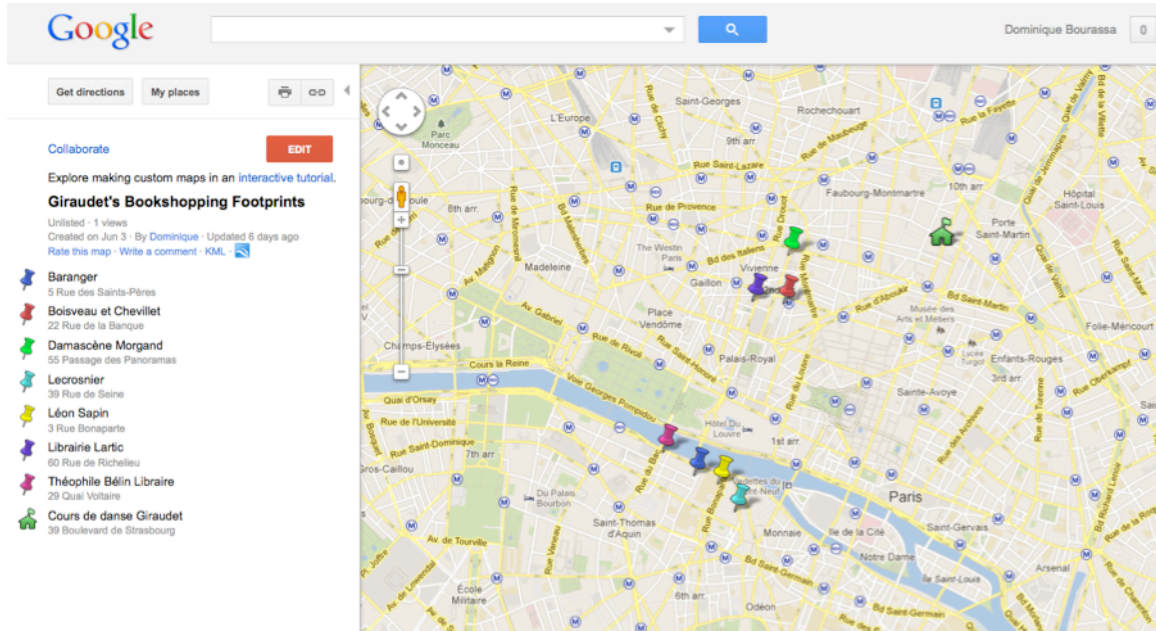


Figure 22: Giraudet's shopping footprints. Google Maps, June 10, 2012.

### Giraudet's directory of teachers and schools

My final focus of research is Giraudet's professional contacts: the dance teachers and schools that were active between 1880 and 1900 whose names Giraudet incorporates in his library catalog. The list I compiled of roughly 525 dance teachers and schools,<sup>38</sup> with anecdotes scattered here and there, provides an intriguing view of the *fin-de-siècle* dance world and allows one to see interconnections between teachers (who studied with whom; who is related to whom; who teaches at another's school; who takes over another's school, etc.). For example, Giraudet's former student, A. Galloux, taught 6 months in 1888-1889 in a room at the Café de la Porte-Saint-Martin, a mere 5 minute-walk from Giraudet's school, and then, disappeared.<sup>39</sup> Mme Faroux, who was Périn's student in 1886, not only succeeded to Mme de Grandsaigne-Montfort as teacher at the casino of Enghien-les-Bains, but also adopted her daughter, Mlle de Grandsaigne-Montfort, who in turn succeeded her when she died on March 21, 1899.<sup>40</sup>

Giraudet knows teachers in 17 countries, as distant as Egypt and Brazil. The country most represented is obviously France, with 222 teachers, followed by Germany with 127, and the United States, with 66 (see Table 2). In these 17 countries, Giraudet identifies no fewer than 175 cities and towns where 516 teachers were active (see Figures 23-25). As you can see in this table listing cities where more than 5 teachers were identified, Paris still gives the impression of being the center of the dance world with the most teachers, 103, followed closely by Berlin with 99 teachers, and Vienna with 44 teachers. The most impressive detail, however, is that in 439 cases, Giraudet pinpoints the street addresses where his colleagues work.

Table 2: Number of Dance Teachers and Schools by Country

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>Total</b>
Austria	44
Belgium	10
Brazil	1
Bulgaria	2
Canada	2
Egypt	1
England	3
France	222
Germany	127
Holland	7
Hungary	16
Italy	26
Portugal	3
Romania	3
Russia [Ukraine]	2
Switzerland	14
United States	66

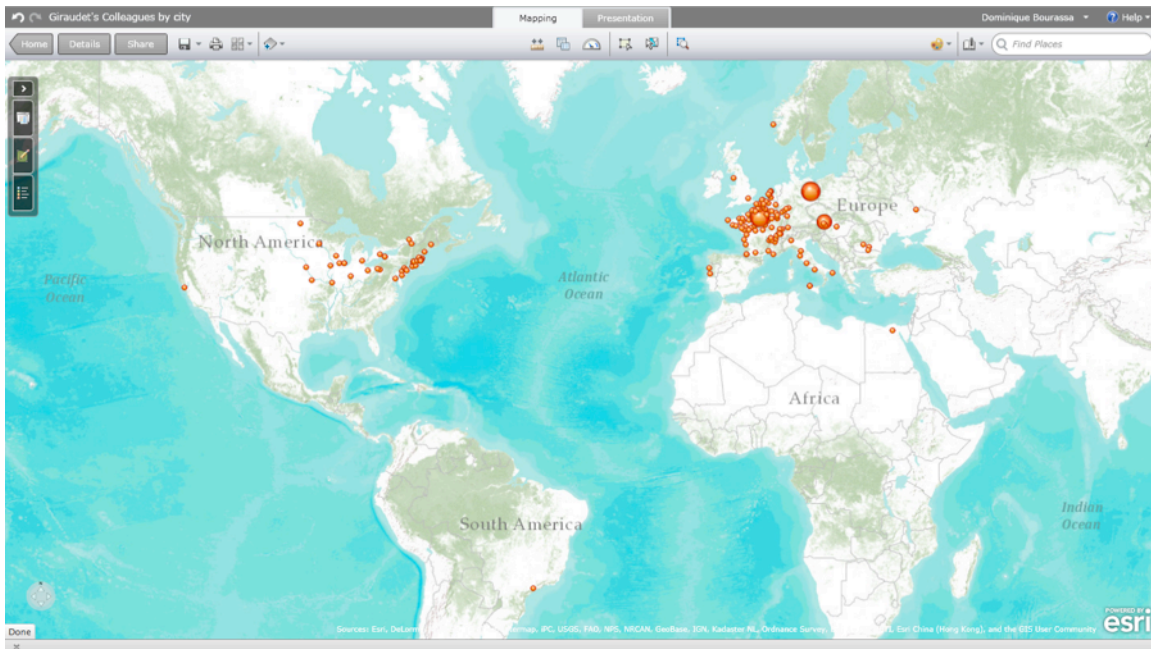


Figure 23: World View of Giraudet’s Colleagues by City. ArcGIS Explorer Online, June 9, 2012

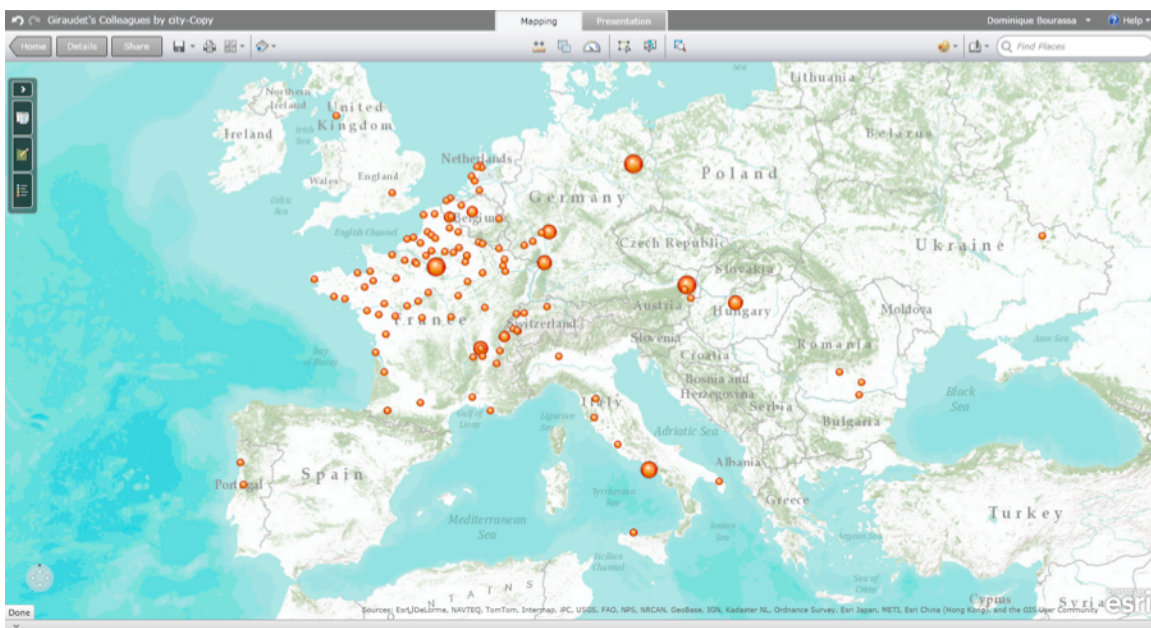


Figure 24: Giraudet’s Colleagues in Europe. ArcGIS Explorer Online, June 9, 2012

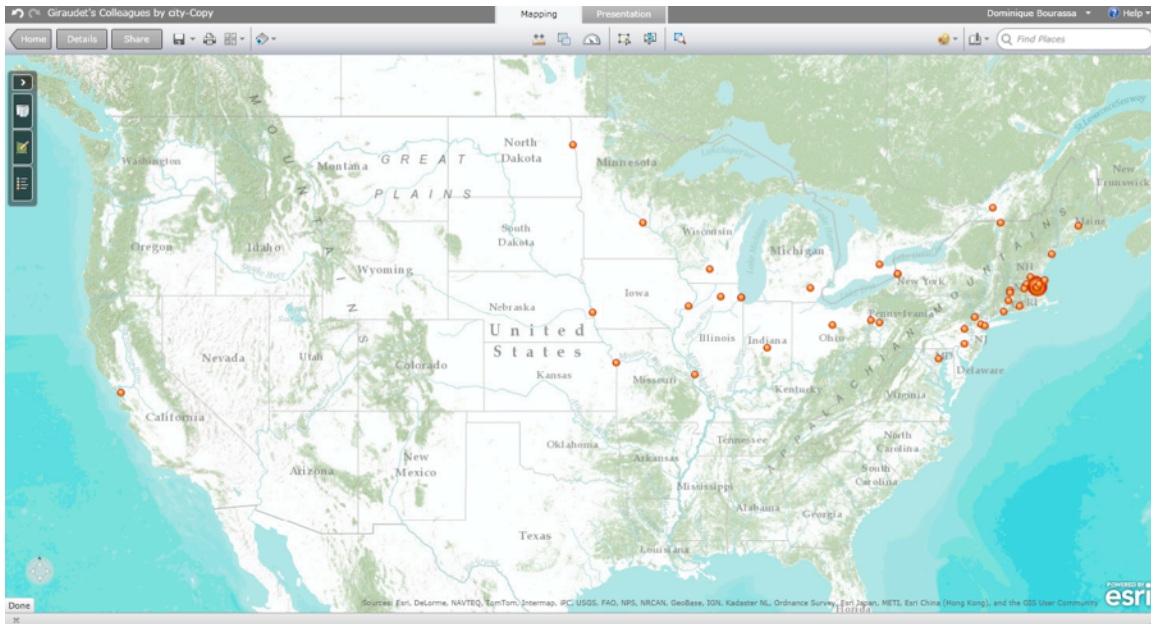


Figure 25: Giraudet’s Colleagues in North America. ArcGIS Explorer Online, June 9, 2012

Table 3: Cities with more than 5 teachers and schools

CITY	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF TEACHERS
Paris	France	103
Berlin	Germany	98
Vienna	Austria	44
Naples	Italy	19
Budapest	Hungary	15
Karlsruhe	Germany	12
Lyon	France	8
Frankfurt am Main	Germany	8
Boston	United States	8
Brussels	Belgium	6



I was hoping that Giraudet’s directory would document the “growing feminization of the [dance teaching] profession” that occurred in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Giraudet does list some women in his directory. However, it is difficult to know their exact numbers because he does not always add a teacher’s first name or title such as Mrs. or Miss. Still, I was able to identify 88 women in 7 countries (see Table 4). This number includes 7 women who were active Parisian husband-and-wife teaching teams.<sup>42</sup> One of the most interesting women Giraudet mentioned is Mlle Dumur who teaches in seven different towns (see Figure 26).

Table 4: Number of Women Teachers by Country

Country	Total
Austria	10
England	1
France	53
Germany	2
Italy	5
Portugal	1
United States	16

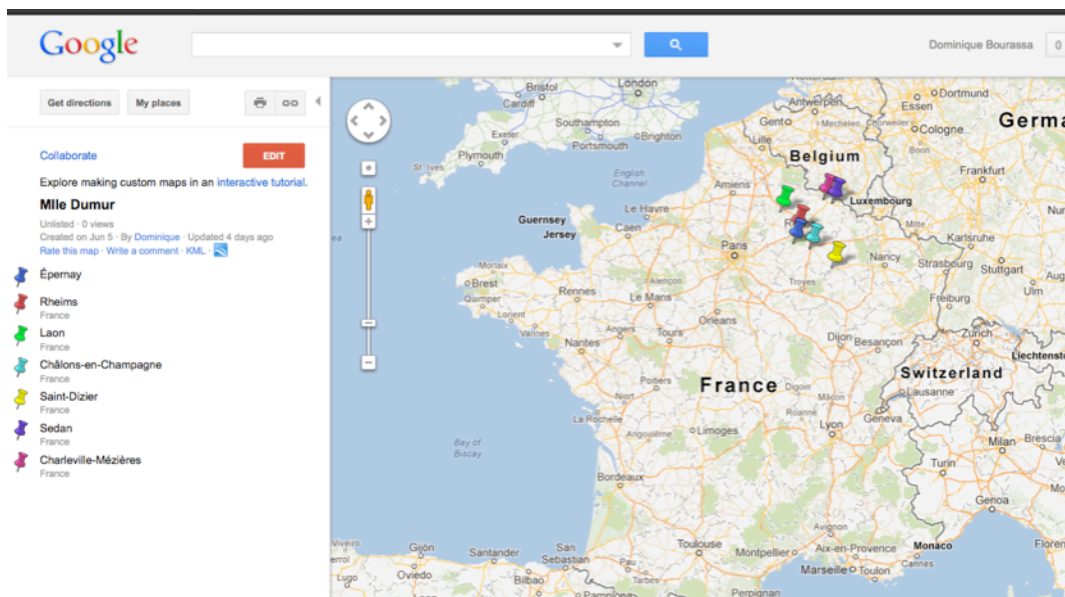


Figure 26: Mlle Dumur’s Teaching Footprints. Google Maps, June 10, 2012

Many questions come to mind: How did Giraudet compile his list of teachers and schools? Did he meet teachers at dance contests, conventions and congresses, or at world's fairs, such as the 1897 Exposition internationale de Bruxelles?<sup>43</sup> Did he use city directories or directories of dancing associations such as the Dancing Masters of America?<sup>44</sup> Since 90 of the 98 teachers listed in Berlin are said to have been working there in 1899, it seems quite probable that Giraudet had a directory handy for this city. But for small towns, in particular those in France, one could assume that teachers working there traveled to Paris where they met Giraudet<sup>45</sup> or that he traveled to cities during the summer.<sup>46</sup>

One may also wonder why Giraudet gathered such a list of names and addresses. This may be explained in part by the fact that he was trying to enlist potential members for an international society of dance teachers he aimed to create, in order to bring uniform professionalism to the field.<sup>47</sup> Another possible reason might be that Giraudet wants to acknowledge the creative spirit inherent in dance teaching: dance teachers often invent exercises, methods, and choreographies, but don't always write them down or publish them.<sup>48</sup> In his introduction to his "library," Giraudet asks dance masters and teachers to let him know not only about their new books published, but also about "the dances they created, and their future works in dance and method" in order to update his "library" in future editions of his treatise.<sup>49</sup> With its inclusion of such works, along with the works he owns and the ones he desires, Giraudet's published library is in effect an ideal virtual world library of dance knowledge.

## Conclusion

As a nosy person snooping in Giraudet's library, I was able to judge him by the content of his shelves. However, doing so leads to many unanswered questions that can become new paths to explore Giraudet's life and works. In fact, I feel I have just scratched the surface of knowing who Giraudet is as an author and a dance teacher.

Nevertheless, Giraudet's library catalog is a fascinating source of information. His library presents an unparalleled conspectus of dance teaching, book collecting, business, and international networks radiating from Paris--the historical urban center of the dance world--in the *fin-de-siècle*.

Copyright 2012, Dominique Bourassa

## Notes

1. This paper was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation with animations. Most of the pictures from this presentation have been inserted in this paper. A preliminary report on this subject, titled "Unpacking Eugène Giraudet's Library: A Work in Progress," was presented 12 Jan. 2012 at the meeting of the Research and Planning Committee of the Western European Studies Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries held during the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in Dallas.

2. Eugène Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, tome II, *Grammaire de la danse et du bon ton à travers le monde et les siècles depuis le singe jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: [author], 1900), pp. 534-36. See also, Giraudet, pp. 1-2. Other works by Giraudet include: Eugène Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, 7th ed. (Paris: Imprimerie A. Veutin, [1894?]); Giraudet, *La danse, la tenue, le maintien l'hygiène & l'éducation*, 55th ed. (Paris: [author], [1897?]). These 3 books are available through the Library of Congress website: American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490-1920 at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/dihome.html>. Giraudet also published a serial: *Journal de la danse et du bon ton* (Paris: [author], 1905-1914).
3. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. xiv, writes: "Tel qu'il est, mon ouvrage se présente au public comme l'inventaire le plus complet des choses de la danse. Mon but a été de lui offrir un guide sûr, un conseiller éclairé, une bibliothèque de la chorégraphie toujours prête à enseigner ; en un mot d'édifier sous une forme claire, facile aux recherches et accessible à toutes les intelligences, l'encyclopédie de l'art chorégraphique."
4. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, frontispiece. The people dancing in the foreground are the late president of France, Félix François Faure (1841-1899) and his wife Berthe (1842-1920) and daughter, Lucie (1866-1913), with Tsar Nicholas II of Russia (1868-1918) and his wife, Alexandra Feodorovna Romanova (1872-1918) and daughter, princess Olga (1895-1918). Their presence celebrates the visit of the Tsar to Paris in order to lay the foundation stone of the Pont Alexandre III in commemoration of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894.
5. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. [509]: "Ma bibliothèque sur la danse, contre-danse, etc., en tous temps, lieux et tous pays, traités, guide vade mecum, ouvrages, methods, feuilles, articles de journaux, plans, dessins, figures, gravures, illustrations, traités du bon ton, etc., chaque professeur à son casier par lettres alphabétiques et par noms d'auteurs et professeurs de danse, avec leurs noms et addresses, date, prix, etc."
6. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 510.
7. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 510.
8. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 510.
9. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 522-23.
10. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 561: "Belles gravures de toutes danses."
11. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 521.
12. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 553.
13. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 547.
14. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 551.
15. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, pp. 534-36.
16. Note that some inaccurate dates have been corrected and others have been added using bibliographic tools. For instance, Giraudet's erroneous date of 1840 for Friedrich Albert Zorn's *Atlas der Tanzkunst* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber) has been corrected to 1887. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 567.
17. The unidentified books include five manuscripts (two by Giraudet) that might be lost today. More research is needed before declaring that the others books are lost because Giraudet often makes spelling mistakes and sometimes gives generic titles for books, making it difficult to trace them.
18. The exact value is 25,074 francs; the mean is 10.76 francs per book; the median, 4 francs.
19. Elizabeth Parinet, *Une histoire de l'édition à l'époque contemporaine (XIX-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004), p. 133, note 21: "Il est impossible de proposer un coefficient multiplicateur qui convertisse en francs ou en euros actuels ces prix et ces salaires, car ils n'ont de sens que dans un environnement économique donné."

20. There is a huge increase in production of practical advice books during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Parinet, p. 66.
21. See Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, pp. 573-81 and pp. [585]-614.
22. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. [585].
23. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 525.
24. The book of which Giraudet owns most copies is an anti-dance tract: Brieux de Saint-Laurent's *Quelques mots sur les danses modernes*. That Giraudet owns antidance tracts is not surprising. In order to fight attacks against dance, one has to know what they are. But why he would own five different editions of Brieux's work is a mystery. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 517.
25. According to Gustave Desrat, *Dictionnaire de la danse historique, théorique, pratique et bibliographique* (Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1895; facs. ed. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977), pp. [381]-82, private libraries rarely include dance books. The catalog of the public sale on May 27, 1867 of the library of the French ballet master Edouard Carré (also Carey) is one of the richest catalogs with regard to dance that Desrat ever saw. Carré was able to rescue some of his dance books and manuscripts from the private sale. After his death, Charles Truinet dit Nutter (1828-1899) acquired many of these items for the Bibliothèque nationale de l'Opéra. Unfortunately, I have not been able to trace a copy of the public sale catalog.
26. On book collecting in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, see Willa Z. Silverman, *The New Bibliopolis: French Book Collectors and the Culture of Print, 1890-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 2008. Private libraries greatly varied in size. Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) owned 756 books at his death. The catalog of his library is posted on LibraryThing. <http://www.librarything.com/legacylibraries/profile/GustaveFlaubert>
27. On late Victorian dance teachers teaching such subjects, see Theresa Jill Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 76-77.
28. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 535: "Boxe française de fantaisie pour le salon avec danse et défensive." It seems that this book was never published.
29. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 461; Carlo Blasis, *Manuel complet de la danse* (Paris, 1830; facs. ed. Paris: L. Laget, 1980), p. 104 and plate 1.
30. Desrat, pp. 379-459.
31. Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, p. 517.
32. Desrat, p. 428.
33. Consulting Desrat's Dictionnaire brings Giraudet to consult Charles Nutter (1828-1899), the librarian of the Bibliothèque nationale de l'Opéra. Indeed in a letter dated May 9, 1898, Giraudet asks Nutter to give him a catalogue of books on chorography referring to Desrat's *Dictionnaire de la danse*. One may also conclude that Giraudet must have acquired Desrat's *Dictionnaire* sometime between 1895 and May 9, 1898. Giraudet, [1 lettre d'E. Giraudet à Charles Nutter, 9 mai 1898], Bibliothèque nationale de France, FONDSNUTTER-309(LAS341), <ark:/12148/btv1b84199252>.
34. Desrat, pp. 393-94.
35. Giraudet also lists the price of 19 other books but does not give the addresses where these books are for sale.
36. Raoul-Léonor, comte de Lignerolles (1817-1893) is said to have possessed one of the finest private libraries in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1894, his library, described in *Catalogue des livres et précieux manuscrits composant la bibliothèque de feu M. le comte de Lignerolles* (Paris: Porquet, 1894). was sold at auction for 1,136,407 francs. "La bibliothèque

du comte de Vignerolles,” *Bibliothèque de l’École de Chartres*, t. 55 (1894), pp. 430-31.

Retrieved Jan. 16, 2011 from Persée

[http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec\\_0373-6237\\_1894\\_num\\_55\\_1\\_462780](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec_0373-6237_1894_num_55_1_462780).

37. All bookstores are walking-distance from Giraudet’s dance school: there is approximately a 20-minute walk from Giraudet’s school to the farthest bookstore on the Right Bank, the Librairie Lartic and a 37-minute walk to the farthest bookstore on the Left Bank, Théophile Bélin.
38. This number is approximate because there might be a few duplicates and some teachers are listed as “MM,” “Mmes.”
39. Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, p. 532.
40. Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, p. 529 and 537.
41. Buckland, p. 93.
42. Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, p. 529 and p. 537.
43. Many dance contests took place in France in late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A Grand Concours National de Danses, for exemple, was held in Tours in 1892. Book number 89 in Giraudet’s library contains the rules, registration form, and program of this contest: "Concours national de danses le 7 août 1892; règlement général, lettre d'adhésion, programme du concours organisé par les Sociétés Chorégraphiques et l'Union Chorégraphique de Tours" (Tours : Impr. F. Gouraud, 1892). Giraudet, *Traité de la danse*, p. 537.
44. In a different section of his *Grammaire de la danse*, Giraudet (pp. 568-569) includes a list of members of the “Association nationale américaine des Maîtres de danse des États-Unis et du Canada” and the dances they created. This list seems to have been copied from one of the Association’s publications. Since it does not include all the names listed in Giraudet’s library catalog and does not give exact street addresses, it cannot be the main source used by Giraudet to establish the names in his library catalog. Also, this list mentions a forthcoming convention in June 1895, while 44 out of 66 American teachers in Giraudet’s catalog are given a date of 1897. The only publication published by the *Dancing Masters of America* during this period I have traced in libraries so far is *The Terpsichorean: Newsy Technical Journal for Dancing Instructors, Students, Ballroom Owners* (Chicago: American Dance Pub. House, 1897 to 1935). The New York Public Library and the Library of the University of Wisconsin hold some issues of this journal. The association also published *Minutes and Directory of the Dancing Masters of America, Inc., and affiliated clubs* ([s.l.]: Dancing Masters of America, [s.d.]). The earliest surviving example I have found so far dates from 1938 and is held at the library of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
45. For example, Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 609, mentions Guiseppe Sanasi Conti’s friendly visit on 12 Sept. 1899.
46. In the “Règlement du Cours de danse Giraudet,” Giraudet (*Grammaire de la danse*, p. 400) writes: “Pendant l’été, le professeur se réserve également le droit de fermer son cours, ou de se faire remplacer par ses adjointes et adjoints, si le Cours ne ferme pas de l’année. En se faisant inscrire, les élèves acceptant le present règlement.” On dance teachers’ work schedules, Buckland (p. 76) writes, “The majority of urban teachers followed the long-established practice of regular teaching from autumn through to early summer, holding weekly classes at their own premises and traveling to schools and private homes in the vicinity. Beyond this, in a long-established practice, summer months in the dancing teacher’s year were devoted to knowledge and skills refreshment, at home or abroad, the more successful teachers occasionally tutoring provincial or less informed colleagues.”
47. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 609.

48. He does not claim to have choreographed ballroom dances; he writes that he has “created” them. His generic phrase for what we would call a choreographer is “Auteur de danse.” For example, he refers to Henri Delvallée (b. 1852) as “auteur des Lanciers polkés.” Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 510 and 525.
49. Giraudet, *Grammaire de la danse*, p. 509. Giraudet’s catalog includes books without call numbers or asterisks (sign indicating books he wants to acquire). These could be books he knows exists but does not intend to purchase.

## Bibliography

ArcGIS Explorer Online, June 9, 2012. <http://www.arcgis.com/explorer/>

An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals, ca. 1490-1920. Music Division, Library of Congress. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/dihome.html>

“La bibliothèque du comte de Vignerolles,” *Bibliothèque de l’École de Chartres*, t. 55 (1894), pp. 430-31. Retrieved Jan. 16, 2011 from Persée  
[http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec\\_0373-6237\\_1894\\_num\\_55\\_1\\_462780](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec_0373-6237_1894_num_55_1_462780)

Blasis, Carlo. *Manuel complet de la danse*. Paris, 1830; facs. ed. Paris: L. Laget, 1980.

Buckland, Theresa Jill. *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

*Dance Masters of America. The terpsichorean; newsy technical journal for dancing instructors, students, ballroom owners*. Chicago: American Dance Pub. House, 1897-1935.

Desrat, Gustave. *Dictionnaire de la danse historique, théorique, pratique et bibliographique*. Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1895; facs. ed. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977.

Giraudet, Eugène. *La danse, la tenue, le maintien l'hygiène & l'éducation*, 55th ed. Paris: [author], [1897?].

----- . *Journal de la danse et du bon ton*. Paris: [author], 1905-1914.

----- . [1 lettre d'E. Giraudet à Charles Nuitter, 9 mai 1898], Bibliothèque nationale de France, FONDSNUITTER-309(LAS341), <ark:/12148/btv1b84199252>.

----- . *Traité de la danse*, 7th ed. Paris: Imprimerie A. Veutin, [1894?]

----- . *Traité de la danse*, tome II, *Grammaire de la danse et du bon ton à travers le monde et les siècles depuis le singe jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris: [author], 1900.

Google Maps, June 10, 2012. [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)

LibraryThing. <http://www.librarything.com>

Parinet, Elizabeth. *Une histoire de l'édition à l'époque contemporaine (XIX-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004.

Silverman, Willa Z. *The New Bibliopolis: French Book Collectors and the Culture of Print, 1890-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

Zorn, Friedrich Albert. *Atlas der Tanzkunst*. Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1887.

Address for correspondence:

Dominique Bourassa  
Catalog Librarian for French Language  
PO Box 208240  
New Haven CT 06520-8240  
[dominique.bourassa@yale.edu](mailto:dominique.bourassa@yale.edu)





**Black Street Movement:  
Turf Dance, YAK Films and Politics of *Sitation* in Oakland, California**

***Naomi Elizabeth Bragin***

Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies  
University of California, Berkeley

***Abstract***

*Turfing is an improvisation-based dance rising from street culture of black Oakland youth. YAK Films' YouTube-broadcast 'RIP' videos capture turfing at street-side sites of death in the community. The site-specific dance-film collaborations critique Oakland's unreported history of policing, violence and death, publicizing people whose daily reality constitutes these sites. This paper uses the neologism 'sitation' to investigate collective kinetic processes that link site, movement, memory and cultural meaning, creating playful breaks in institutionalized space. Turfers take space as an arena of struggle and difference, to address those passed from tell-able history. Within the contemporary moment of politicized occupations in a transnational collective imaginary, the RIP videos invigorate debates linking direct action protest, social media, movement aesthetics, collectivity and violence.*

***Introduction***

What I will argue in this paper is for an understanding of dance style as a community-based aesthetics that immediately addresses local needs. Amidst experiences of extreme social and economic isolation and fragmentation, dance style is a politically necessary modality through which young people build community and continuity, creating practices predicated on 'being there'—together in physical presence. By arguing for a local community-basis of street dance forms I am also saying that dance styles must be historicized within their local contexts, as a product of local conditions and as an embodied response to those conditions.

I use the neologism *sitation* to describe collective kinetic processes that create breaks in institutionalized space, linking site, movement, memory and cultural meaning. *Sitation* incorporates local identity and history into the aesthetic material of dance form, intimating a particular politics of space. These dance practices lay claim to space to build continuity, permanence and stability. Space is not a blank slate onto which performance is momentarily inscribed but is a container of local history and collective memory. Beyond a consideration of site in the s-i-t-e spelling, I am also thinking of cite in the c-i-t-e sense. These practices use bodily movement as a citational practice that creates chains of reference, establishing dance lineages and accessing collective memory. Ideas that performance is essentially ephemeral, not reproducible or even a process of substitution, cannot fully address how embodied practices work to contest impermanence and create continuity, with especially high stakes for groups historically subject to the exploitation, distortion and erasure of their histories.

Turfing is an improvisational dance style rising from the local street culture of black Oakland youth in the early 1990s. In fact, turfing literally c/sites the local—the term ‘turf’ referring to territory but also meaning ground, soil, roots. Turf movement is highly intertextual, linked to local language, rap lyrics, street culture and fashion. Turfing references a lineage of black street and social dance styles, especially tutting, which is an early 1980s hip-hop style that mimics hieroglyphs and relief sculptures of ancient Egypt. However turfers apply unique dynamics to these styles to reveal turf’s local character. While turfing falls under the global category of hip-hop dance, it remains tied very much to the specificity of its Oakland location.

In the last three years turfing has gained global attention through several YouTube broadcast dance-film collaborations. Oakland dance collective *Turf Fienz* first got together with *YAK Films* at East Oakland’s Youth Uprising community center, where *YAK* co-directors Kash Gaines and Yoram Savion were teaching free film classes. Several years after the videos’ viral spread, *YAK* had established itself in the global street dance scene. Savion and Gaines relocated and now travel internationally to document local manifestations of street dance culture.

The films, which I will collectively call the RIP Project, are simply titled with the name of a departed friend, family or community member, and prefixed by ‘RIP’. They show turfers in transitory city locations (intersections, train stations, abandoned houses) using dance as a ritual of mourning. In East Oakland neighborhoods where the films take place, rituals of mourning are commonplace, evidenced in hastily constructed street side altars marking locations of death and heavily circulated R.I.P. T-shirts carrying air brushed or screen-printed images of recently passed loved ones. The videos transmediate these practices—they transform altars and T-shirts into a distinctively kinetic mode of commemoration, and they extend the mourning ritual from the streets into the media platform of cyberspace.<sup>1</sup>

These site-specific dances explore a deep persistence of history and memory that stays in tension with the transient character of their chosen sites of tribute. Local events, recounted through movement and film, have generally been excluded from the official historical record and especially from mainstream news media accounts. The storytelling function of turf dance is critical, challenging a lack of awareness and inability to speak to the experiences of young black men in Oakland. The rituals are ultimately acts of *sitation* that take over space to root it in the local.

### ***RIP Rich D***

Of *YAK*’s four RIP films made between 2009 and 2011, *RIP Rich D* has attracted the most attention, virally charting close to five million views. *Rich D* was filmed at the intersection of Macarthur and 90th Streets in East Oakland, where an hour earlier the brother of dancer D-Real had died in a DUI-related car crash. In the initial frames, the camera cuts to the street signs naming the intersection, then pans down to two of the dancers, implicitly identifying them with the geographic location. The film claims a direct link between site, movement and memory. *Rich D* refigures and extends the idea of a street side altar, replacing traditional objects of mourning (flowers, candles, stuffed toys) with the dancers’ bodies, moving in tribute at the site of passing. The camera

extends this mourning ritual from public space into cyberspace, calling on the participatory engagement of YouTube viewers.

While the film intimately links locality and embodied response, it also shows the instability of the relationship between body and place. The opening is filmed in long shot and the dancers' clothing masks them completely, temporarily obscuring race, age and gender. A cop car bearing Oakland police insignia rolls up to the hooded figures—perhaps to question them. The visual effect is that of a car figuratively passing over the dancers' bodies. These opening long shots change to close-ups in the ending scene, which reveals the features of the dancers' faces as they relate intimately to each other. The narrative arc that bridges opening and closing scenes tells a story of the fragile connection between body, movement and location, as well as a contradictory experience of being both hyper-visible and invisible. By making their bodies visible, the film makes clear the dancers' ethical right to be there. At the same time the passing cars, magnified by the filmmakers use of jump cut editing, work to visually erase and re-place the dancers' bodies, undermining the consistency of the body's presence. Ultimately the right of the black male body to be present in space is subject to question and threat.

Miwon Kwon has theorized site-specific art in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' places, which is helpful for thinking about experiences of place as unstable, even threatening and alienating. Kwon argues that while a "stressful relationship to place is...thought to be detrimental to a subject's capacity to constitute a coherent sense of self and the world,"<sup>2</sup> being in the wrong place one "begins to recognize himself, or more precisely the conditions of his own estrangement, and is set on a journey to account for his identity."<sup>3</sup> In the films, the unstable relationship of body and place, underscored by the systematic control and hyper-surveillance of the body's movements, sets the conditions for an exploration of identity through movement.

Sound is a crucial part of substantiating the films' sense of the local. Local rap artists produced all music used in the films. Some of the films were actually filmed without music; beats were only added during the editing process. The absence of environmental sounds or street sounds to some extent distances YouTube viewers from the original site of performance. However I would argue that for YouTube viewers who are also local community members, locally produced music is crucial to how the films build meaning. The soundtracks ground aesthetic production in the local and sound ultimately reinforces the cultural knowledge being circulated among immediate community members.

Facing loss, *RIP Rich D* is about connections actively sought, enacted and reimagined, making site account for history. In these events, turfing activates what Diana Taylor calls the 'repertoire' as a privileged mode of witnessing. In other words it is embodied practice that enables transmission of collective cultural memory.<sup>4</sup>

### ***RIP 211***

In considering how the films portray a relationship between death, movement, site, memory and meaning, I draw on Derrida's concept of hauntology—an ethical call to challenge Western intellectual frameworks of knowledge that privilege the autonomous vision of the modern subject.<sup>5</sup> In this case we assume the camera captures truth—what we believe we can discern through infinite rewinds and replays of the film. Yet, we learn

from Derrida that specters haunt and undermine the spectator's absolute hold on "truth," daring us to speculate on the unknowable.<sup>6</sup> The videos play with presence and absence, paradoxically fixing and obscuring meaning as they represent a complex collective experience of violence, trauma and death.

*RIP 211* was made in tribute to Kenneth "211" Ross, who was shot and killed by Oakland police in his home. The film was shot in an abandoned house in East Oakland, which the community had transformed into a shrine to Ross. Unlike *RIP RichD*, site does not mark the literal place of passing. Instead the entire house has become a shrine to the passed/past. Graffiti messages to 211 cover the walls and furniture. Dancer Chonkie touches the writing on a wall, symbolically transferring the written tribute to his body to be refigured as abstract gesture as he dances. Visual continuity is literally fragmented by the film's heavy use of jump cut editing, which functions to undermine linear temporality and to underscore the transitory, spectral qualities of the space—the shrine as a way station between life and death. The dancers are even ghostlike—their bodies disappearing and reappearing across time and space. The film calls any sense of permanence and continuity into question, showing a complex and contradictory relationship to death.

Death is not securely separated from life in *RIP211*, and the film's fragmented format destabilizes any straightforward narrative. At the same time that the dancers' bodies testify to the concrete reality of death, the films display the ephemerality of the physical body itself. As the dancers convene with ghosts, secular dance transforms into ritual. The dancers' improvisational play heightens this sense of indeterminacy.

Margaret Thomson Drewal explains the function of improvisation in Yoruba ritual: "Innovations in ritual, then, do not break with traditions but rather are continuations of it in the spirit of improvisation."<sup>7</sup> As an Africanist aesthetic practice, improvisation in turfing is not wholly spontaneous or new creation but rather stems from a lineage of dance forms that turfing references and makes responsive to the specific conditions of the local. Differently said, the turfers' repertoire makes past forms have meaning in the here and now. The dancers and filmmakers collaboratively manipulate turf's movement vocabulary to root meaning in time and space. The ritual function doubles the stakes, endowing movement with intimate significance. Ultimately, the liberatory possibilities of turfing are found through connection with the local.

At the same time the films critique larger spatial systems predicated on the contingency of bodies. The violent erasure of these deaths/the dead makes community modes of testimony and witnessing most critical, emphasized through the YouTube interface which allows users to extend the play of each performance—to stop, rewind, fast forward, replay, comment, and link. Transferred to cyberspace, practices of linking, repetition, temporal disjunction and immediacy are magnified and multiplied. However, in this proliferation of signs and practices of reception, meaning continuously gets reassigned. How meaning is interpreted depends on who is watching and in what context. Once free floating on YouTube, the films become open to interpretation.

### ***RIP Oscar Grant***

The final film I turn to is the most high profile of the deaths and most directly political. Oscar Grant was prostrate and unarmed when transit police officer Johannes Mehserle

shot him in the back, on the platform of East Oakland's Fruitvale BART train station on New Year's Eve of 2009. Numerous civilian onlookers used cell phone cameras to capture and immediately disseminate footage of the fatal shooting across the web. Less than a month after Mehserle was charged with murder, a jury found him guilty of involuntary manslaughter, adding fuel to ongoing local protests.

The soundtrack of *RIP Oscar Grant* lays a beat-heavy hip-hop instrumental under news accounts relaying the events surrounding Grant's death and the community response. Rather than stating a direct verbal message, the film articulates a political response through aesthetics, constructed primarily by the dancers' movements through public space. Different from the other films, *RIP Oscar Grant* overtly positions dance as a form of direct action—the dancers re-embodiment the act of protest through turf style.

Again, the process of *sitation* politicizes, building collectivity by citing other contexts and making institutional space accountable to unreported histories. At one level, the dancers' solos cite prior films. The inter-texts of MAN's solo recall both Gene Kelly's famous solo from *Singing In The Rain* (a canonical performance among street dancers), and also his own solo in *RIP RichD* (which bears the subtitle "Dancing in the Rain"). At another level, *RIP Oscar Grant* heightens the non-productive, play-oriented aspects of turfing, as the dancers move among commuters in the BART station and on the trains. Their bodies' aesthetic, freestyle presentation in spaces that regulate movement immediately challenges the way bodies normally inhabit space, questioning its 'appropriate' use. As their bodies work to re-incorporate Grant's memory into these spaces, both dancer and filmmaker draw out the obscured meanings of space, using turfing repertoire as a tool for storytelling and remembrance. In a particularly telling solo, Looney embodies Grant as a BART train metaphorically passes over his body, caught in an elegantly off-balance pirouette. Through the process of *sitation*, turfing visibilizes and localizes Grant's body, to insist on the persistence of memory at the site of his death.

While *RIP Oscar Grant* overtly positions turf dance as an act of protest, at a larger level the RIP films are an aesthetic exploration of direct action engagement, opening up a critique of representation and the systematic surveillance and profiling of young black men. At the same time, they may invoke a narrative of redemption that reifies the 'exotic other' of black street culture. There are moments when *RIP RichD* recalls a Los Angeles based style called krumping, which gained huge recognition after the release of the dance documentary *Rize*. *Rize* was part of a trend in Hollywood-produced dance movies like *You Got Served*, *Stomp the Yard* and the *Step Up* series that renewed an interest in African-American inner city street dance. *Rize* employed a standard celebration narrative of struggle, resistance and redemption, to frame black street culture. Yet celebration discourse is pernicious when it reinforces a view that oppressed communities are numb to their oppression or that aesthetic practice is a sufficient response to systematic disenfranchisement. Ultimately, global circulation of the RIP Project necessarily stands in ambivalent relation to the sociopolitical reality of its Oakland community of origin.

### ***Conclusion***

Turfing's particular site-specific process is about "cultivating what is presumed to be there already."<sup>8</sup> In this respect the RIP Project challenges a notion of the contingent

meaning of site that “has tended to get conflated or confused with the idea of fluidity of identities and subjectivities, even of physical bodies, to such an extent that a certain romanticism has accrued around ...the 'liberation' of the artist from the local.”<sup>9</sup> As I said before, turfing roots their liberation in the local. Nonetheless, the films’ assertive linking of place and historical event stays in tension with their suggestion of unstable, nomadic identities, posed by the transitory spaces of performance, ephemeral passing of cars and trains, and edited erasure of dancers’ bodies. Ultimately, turfing acts as an embodied mode of witnessing, calling those passed/pasts to convene with the moving present.

Copyright 2012, Naomi Elizabeth Bragin

### Acknowledgements

Rich D, June, 211, Oscar Grant, and all those unnamed—may your spirits always rest in power.

### Notes

1. While Henry Jenkins has coined the term *transmedia* to describe fictional narratives that develop across media platforms, I am using the term to consider dance as a kinesthetic mode of storytelling that, in the particular instance of the RIP Project, bridges embodied and virtual mediums of expression. Henry Jenkins, “Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling,” in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 96.
2. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 164.
3. Ibid.
4. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).
5. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
6. Ibid.
7. Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 23.
8. Kwon, 160.
9. Ibid.

### Bibliography

- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Drewal, Margaret Thompson. *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Gaines, Kash. “Turf Feinz ‘Rip Oscar Grant’ Yak Films Fruitvale BART Shooting in Oakland, CA.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atyTZ8prhCg>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

- Jenkins, Henry. "Searching for the Origami Unicorn: The Matrix and Transmedia Storytelling." *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- YAK Films. "Turf Feinz 'Rip Richd' YAK Films Dancing in the Rain Danse sous la Pluie Hip Hop Street Dance Oakland." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQRRnAhmB58>. Accessed September 2, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Turf Feinz in 'R.I.P. 211' YAK Films Turfing, Dancing Hip Hop Street Dance Oakland, CA." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-t01opsPos>. Accessed September 2, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Turf Feinz in 'R.I.P. June' YAK Films Turfing, Turf Dancing eNinja, Chonkie and NoNoize." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqH9s5mwTEY>. Accessed September 2, 2012.

Address for correspondence:

Naomi Bragin  
naomib at berkeley dot edu





## John Durang: On the City's Stage

Lynn Brooks

Franklin & Marshall College

### **Abstract**

*As the United States formed its national identity, American performers wove their work and lives into the new nation. Dancer John Durang, the first American-born stage professional, centered his wide-ranging career in Philadelphia. He wove himself into civic life in a number of ways: representing the Philadelphia printers' trade in the Federal Procession of 1788 that celebrated the ratification of the United States Constitution; owning and developing land in early Philadelphia; establishing America's first "dynasty" of American-born theater practitioners; and forming a traveling theatrical troupe, comprised of his own family, that toured the hinterlands of Pennsylvania and Maryland.*

As the United States formed its national identity, American performers wove their work and lives into the new nation—shaping American identity and being shaped by the unfolding of the new nation. Dancer John Durang, the first American-born stage professional, centered his wide-ranging career in Philadelphia—at the time, the nation's most vibrant political, commercial, and artistic city. Durang created theatrical opportunities in Philadelphia, presenting his own puppet theater at the age of 18, and he performed with the city's major troupes, including the Old American Company, Ricketts Circus, and the Chestnut St. Theatre Company. He also contributed a family of showmen and women to the city's stages and participated in events and enterprises that demonstrated his civic pride.

The first such event I will discuss occurred in 1788 when John Durang played a small but visible role in the Federal Procession at Philadelphia celebrating the ratification of the newly forged United States Constitution. In his *Memoir*, he recalled this occasion with pride: "I was in the pageant of the first grand federal procession in celebration of the ever memorable 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1776 in the character of Mercury, on the printer's press. Mrs. Beach [Bache], Dr. Franklin's daughter, made the dress, cap, and wings for me. Dr. Franklin was in the room at the time she fit the cap on my head" (p. 9).<sup>1</sup>

Having labored through the summer, the Constitutional Convention had completed its work on 17 September 1787 and sent its delegates to their home states to argue for ratification.<sup>2</sup> The aged Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia's and the new nation's leading statesman, returned from his years of diplomacy in France to help forward the constitutional process. The desperate need for a return to financial, administrative, and military stability in the new nation, after a shaky beginning under the Articles of Confederation, made this period of state ratification tense. Pennsylvania ratified the Constitution early (in December 1787), an occasion marked by a brief procession of officials, artillery fire, and church bells. As each state ratified over the next months, local celebrations became increasingly elaborate. In hopes that, by the 4th of July 1788, a sufficient number of states (nine) would ratify to adopt the Constitution, Judge Francis Hopkinson of Philadelphia led the planning for a civic celebration of that much-desired outcome—which, indeed, was realized when New Hampshire ratified on 21 June 1788. Each trade was invited to send representatives to the planning committee, and Franklin's

grandson, printer Benjamin Franklin Bache, was a publicist for the event. If Bache's mother, Sally Bache (Ben Franklin's daughter dressed John Durang for his appearance in the procession in the presence of Franklin himself, that might have been as much of the parade as the grand old gentleman saw, for he was too feeble to participate in, or even watch, the event, although half of the city's population did. Charles Willson Peale, painter and museum founder, was the celebration's major design genius.

On the great day, church bells rang, ships flew their flags, military units formed, public officials assembled, the professions and artisans joined ranks, and clergymen of every creed came together, forming a procession of 5000 people. Each of the ten states that had by then ratified was represented by ships in the harbor and by important statesmen in the procession. Floats, banners, and insignia symbolically linked independence and federalism, freedom and plenty, immigration and national union, exemplified by the procession's centerpiece, Peale's Federal Edifice. A leading Philadelphia musician, Alexander Reinagle, composed a dedicatory march, and the Old American Company, with which Durang had been performing for about three years, presented a grand occasional piece, *The Fourth of July; or, The Sailor's Festival*.<sup>3</sup>

The trades section of the march covered everyone from brewers to bakers, stonecutters to silversmiths. The printers, whose position by lottery fell in the middle of the tradesmen's section, included a compositor printing up copies of an ode to freedom and unity, written for the occasion by Judge Hopkinson. Sheets bearing this ode were tied to pigeon's legs; these birds were the business of twenty-year-old John Durang to release as he posed on the float as Mercury, messenger to the gods. Francis Hopkinson confirms Durang's description of his participation "in the character of *Mercury*, in a white dress, ornamented with red ribbands, and having real wings affixed to his head and feet, and a garland of flowers round his temples."<sup>4</sup> Copies of the ode "at intervals, rose from Mercury's cap and flew off, amidst the acclamations of an admiring multitude."

With this step, Durang consolidated the first phase of his adult identity: he had recently married and had created his own puppet theater for a season in his father's Philadelphia home. He had secured a position with the Old American Company (the nation's top theatrical troupe), and had been featured prominently at the heart of the new nation's civic celebrations. Not bad for a twenty-year-old. In a few years, he would become a landowner in Philadelphia.

Durang's first land purchase, "on the South side of South or Cedar Street in the township of Moyamensing," between Fifth and Sixth Streets, was undertaken in August 1793, when he was twenty-five, the debt being discharged in March 1799—a remarkably short time for a mortgage.<sup>5</sup>

Despite a yellow fever epidemic in 1793 and sharp price increases in the city, Durang consolidated the means to become a landowner. He comments that, while the deed granted him 7 years to pay for the land, "Fortune enabled me to buy the lot in four years' time" (p. 37), although the official record suggests it took 6 years to pay off. Durang's plot was about 20' broad by 120' deep, and stretched south of the city's edge to Small Street, just outside the official city limits. The deed identifies Durang as a "hairdresser." While Durang's father, Jacob, was a barber-surgeon, John was fully employed on the stage in this period, first with the Old American Company, and then with Ricketts' Circus. Perhaps, for the crucial step of purchasing land, Durang considered the listing as hairdresser safer than admitting his theater identity. In 1801, Durang

purchased a second plot of land, also on Small Street.<sup>6</sup> His address in the Philadelphia directories remained 216 Cedar Street from 1802 until his death 20 years later.

Durang writes of improvements he made to this property over time, although, in contrast, he never mentions the birth of any of his children. Perhaps everyone had children, but Durang knew that becoming a landowner set him apart. His *Memoir* reflects his pride: “I was the first builder on the Square when all around me was vacant.... I fenced in my lot all round and planted several fruit trees. Two apple trees bear a quantity of fruit every year. I planted a range of poplar trees to shade the back of the house.... I amused myself 3 summers in my garden, but that fell through in consequence of my traveling [for theatrical tours]. Those whom I left my house in charge with took little pleasure in gardening so all soon went to waste” (pp. 37-38).

This house—Durang does not state its plan or who built it—places him in a pioneering position, for the first half of the nineteenth century was a great age of house building in the new nation.<sup>7</sup> Philadelphia was early in this trend, since the 1790s were a boom period in the city. William Priest wrote of a scenario that might describe Durang’s house-building progress: “The first object of an industrious emigrant, who means to settle in Philadelphia, is to purchase a lot of ground in one of the vacant streets. He erects a small building forty or fifty feet from the line laid out for him by the city surveyor, and lives there till he can afford to build a house; when his former habitation serves him for a kitchen and wash-house.”<sup>8</sup>

It would be years before the house Durang began on this property was completed because his professional travels intervened in its progress. But, after a tour with the circus to Canada in the late 1790s, Durang gladly returned to Philadelphia in December 1798: “I finished my house in South Street and settled my family in it and made everything as comfortable as possible” (p. 93). About a year later, he was again invited to travel with Ricketts’ Circus, but by this time, he was “settled in a home with my family and would not leave that to seek a living in a foreign country and trust to chance” (p. 102). Instead, he produced his own circus in Philadelphia that year and, he wrote, “amused myself at home and in my garden. And in the meantime build an addition to my front house, a stable and carriage house at the end of my lot fronting on Small Street and paved both the fronts of South Street and Small Street” (p. 105).

Durang’s property grew and improved: he had a finished house, soon extended, outbuildings for horses and carriages, a cultivated garden, and paved streets. Planting a garden, as Durang did, was a step toward gentility in this period, when most American houses were surrounded by weedy, unshaded yards. Street-paving demonstrated Durang’s interest in an up-to-date home, for muddy streets were unsightly and tracked dirt inside. These improvements were reflected in Durang’s rising tax rates: in 1794, his county taxes for house and land were \$172, rising to \$399 for 1798, and \$600 in 1803.<sup>9</sup>

John Durang and his wife Mary, a singer and actress in the Philadelphia theater, produced a family of six children. The eldest son, Charles, was born in 1791. Two sons, Ferdinand and Augustus, followed, and three daughters—Charlotte Elizabeth, Catharine Juliet, and Mary Ann—arrived between 1803 and 1808, all growing up in the house that John built. All six appeared on the stage and all but Augustus had careers as performers. The children appeared with the Chestnut St. Theatre Company, then the nation’s most elegant and technically advanced theater. Between 1802 and 1816, Durang formed his family into a company, supplemented by other actors, that he presented in summer

theatricals touring through small towns of rural Maryland and Pennsylvania between seasons with the Chestnut St. troupe.

His 1810 tour is a good example of these undertakings, beginning in Lancaster, Pennsylvania to which the players traveled in a wagon “complete with a canvas top and two horses for the baggage and scenery, and I travelled on horseback. I keep’d the horse, Cornplanter, for that express purpose to accompany the family and baggage wagon, who I would always send off a day before, over take it on the road, and then ride on before to make the arrangements in the lodgings for my family and the company” (p. 122). The opening bill at Lancaster was played at Rohrer’s on 18 June 1810, advertised under the heading, “Mr. Durang, Professor of dancing and member of the new theatre of Philadelphia.”<sup>10</sup> The bill included Tobin’s *Honey Moon; or, a School for Matrimony*, with a Rural Dance, and O’Keeffe’s comic opera, *The Highland Reel*. The troupe performed with a band of clarinet, cymbals, triangles, drum, tambourine, violins, and bass viol—quite a contingent for so small a company, and probably hired from local musicians, supplemented by the actors. The company moved to Humrick’s tavern at Carlisle, playing mid to late July,<sup>11</sup> and then to Chambersburg, where they played successfully at Colonel Snyder’s inn. A few weeks later, they were at Fechtig’s coffeehouse in Hagerstown, Maryland, where Durang promised “to offer to the public the most admired compositions of theatrical and dramatical performances, historical comedies, operas, pantomimes and ballet dances, accompanied with scenery, machinery, painting in transparencies, music and brilliant dresses, with the addition of a *corps du ballet* by Mr. Durang’s pupils.”<sup>12</sup> The “pupils” were probably Durang’s children, but since he was, in this period, also teaching a dancing academy in Philadelphia his having “pupils” was no idle boast. In fact, Durang likely also offered some social dancing lessons in some of the towns where his troupe toured in the summers, bringing the refinements of big-city theatre as well as social dance and etiquette to those living far from the metropolis. After playing at Jacob Miller’s inn at Frederick, Maryland, in September, the company performed at Hanover, Pennsylvania on 1 October, where they ended the season.

Durang and Company concluded their final tour in 1817. They had carried theater, social dance, and big-city culture to thousands, traveling far into areas unserved by regular dramatic entertainments, and creating an extensive touring repertory. Durang had stretched himself, as well, playing everything from ballets to burlettas and comic operas to Shakespeare in German (his own abbreviated and translated version of *Richard III*, called *Der Falsche Koenig*). He had provided a summer income for his family, and given employment to other actors during the summers, often a fallow theatre period. And, between summer tours, he returned to Philadelphia, tended his garden, and built up the home to which he retired in 1821. There, he wrote his memoir, and, surrounded by his daughters, died in March 1822 – a true man of the American stage, and a fine citizen of Philadelphia.

Copyright 2012, Lynn Matluck Brooks

### Acknowledgements

This information is given in fuller form in Lynn Matluck Brooks, *John Durang: Man of the American Stage* (Cambria Press, 2011). For Brooks’ website on John Durang, see <http://johndurang.yorkheritage.org/>.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All page numbers given for quotations from John Durang's *Memoir* are taken from *The Memoir of John Durang, American Actor, 1785–1816*.

<sup>2</sup> On the Federal Procession and the ratification process see: Bell, Jr., "The Federal Processions of 1788," and Francis Hopkinson, "An Account of the Grand Federal Procession," in *The Miscellaneous Essays*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the title Pollock, *Philadelphia Theatre*, 142, provides for the OAC performance, but Bell, "Federal Processions," p. 18, calls it *A Procession of the thirteen States to the Temple of Liberty*, although he later (p. 25 n) gives the same title as Pollock. The *Pennsylvania Packet* published the complete order of the procession (4 July 1788), taking up three full columns, and then reviewed the procession on 9 July 1788.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkinson, "Account," 385-86. The following sentence quoted is from p. 387.

<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia City Archives, Deeds, D-74, p. 340.

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia City Archives, Deeds, EF 29, p. 708.

<sup>7</sup> Bushman, *Refinement of America*; Chappell, "Housing a Nation"; and Larkin, *Everyday Life*, ch. 3., discusses home building, design, gardens, road paving, and related themes.

<sup>8</sup> Priest, *Travels in the United States*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Philadelphia City Archives, County Tax Assessments, Moyamensing Township.

<sup>10</sup> *Lancaster Journal* (16 June 1810).

<sup>11</sup> *Kline's Carlisle Weekly Gazette* (6, 13, 20 July 1810).

<sup>12</sup> *Hagerstown Gazette* (21 August 1810).

## Bibliography

### Archives:

Philadelphia City Archives

County Tax Assessments, Moyamensing Township  
Deeds

York County Heritage Trust

*Memoir of John Durang*, manuscript.

### Books:

Durang, John. *The Memoir of John Durang, American Actor, 1785–1816*. Edited and with an introduction by Alan Downer. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966. Digital edition, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/text-idx?c=pittpress;cc=pittpress;view=toc;idno=31735057893855>.

Bell, Whitfield J., Jr. "The Federal Processions of 1788." *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* LXVI/1 (January 1962): 5–39.

Bushman, Richard L. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Chappell, Edward A. "Housing a Nation: The Transformation of Living Standards in Early America." In *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert. Charlottesville, Va: United States Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1994.

Hopkinson, Francis. "An Account of the Grand Federal Procession." In *The Miscellaneous Essays and Occasional Writings of Francis Hopkinson, Esq.*, vol. II. Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1792.

Larkin, Jack. *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790–1840*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Pollock, Thomas Clark. *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933.

Priest, William. *Travels in the United States of America, Commencing in the Year 1790 and Ending in 1797*. London: J. Johnson, 1802.

Newspapers:

*Hagerstown Gazette*

*Kline's Carlisle Weekly Gazette*

*Lancaster Journal*

*Pennsylvania Packet*

Address for Correspondence

Lynn Matluck Brooks

Dance Program

Franklin & Marshall College

PO Box 3003

Lancaster, PA 17604-3003

lynn.brooks@fandm.edu

**“Good looks, good health and a knowledge of dancing”:  
Training the stage dancer in Philadelphia in the early 1900s**

*Linda Caruso Haviland*

Bryn Mawr College

*Although Philadelphia was home to early models of professional instruction, the first decade of the 20th century saw significant growth in dance training for aspiring professional dancers. Among Philadelphia instructors, two emerge more frequently with reference to theatrical dance—Albert W. Newman and C. Ellwood Carpenter. Through their schools and their focused training for the opera companies, they moved the city towards the establishment of professionally geared institutions for classical dance instruction. Despite differences in training, pedagogy and careers, both contributed to the development of an “all American” ballet and to securing dance as an integral part of “artistic” stage productions.*

The presence of émigré Dancing masters has been documented in Philadelphia since at least 1728, instructing an elite or upwardly aspiring clientele in social dancing and genteel accomplishments and using performance primarily as a marketing tool to attract and retain students. A steady stream of professional performers soon flooded the shores of Philadelphia as well, claiming a pedigree not only by way of their training at European academies but also through established performance careers. While frequently garnering additional income by serving as social dancing masters either concurrently with or upon retiring from a full performance schedule, this group also compensated for the young Republic's lack of established academies by serving as the vanguard of instruction for the nascent population of native professional dancers.<sup>1</sup>

Philadelphia provided early models of professional instruction that reflected this symbiosis between social dance and the stage and between imported dance artists and native dancers. American-born John Durang pursued a determined if peripatetic approach, supplementing his own talent, capacity for imitation and choreographic imagination by pursuing private study with touring European artists.<sup>2</sup> In another model, academy-trained émigré performing artists, like the Hazards in mid-19th century Philadelphia, opened schools that welcomed the social elite and aspiring middle class, but also established a curriculum that would guarantee some systematic professional level instruction for the nation's first home-grown ballet dancers.<sup>3</sup> George Washington Smith might have celebrated his academy, established in Philadelphia in 1881, as the first in which a renowned American ballet artist provided training to American dancers; but with ballet at a nadir in Europe and the US, Smith saw himself, instead, as the last vestige of true dance art in a wasteland of high kickers and novelty acts.<sup>4</sup> In 1909, the New York Metropolitan Opera opened its own ballet school under the direction of foreign-born Malvina Cavalazzi, a move applauded in a Willa Cather essay noting that the US "had no dancers because we have had no schools."<sup>5</sup> But between Smith's death in 1899 and the next wave of European ballet stars arriving during and after World War I and the Russian Revolution, who provided training for the Philadelphia ballet dancer?

Among Philadelphia instructors noted in newspaper articles or ads during the early part of the century, two emerged more consistently and frequently with reference to ballet-- Professor Albert W. Newman and C. Ellwood Carpenter. Both young men were born into families of dancing masters and were already carving out careers teaching in their schools and choreographing entertainments for society and charity events. However, their positions as ballet masters with reputable local opera companies, their status within the regional arts and social scene, their students who went on to professional careers mark both Newman and Carpenter as legitimate instructors of Philadelphia's young class of professional ballet dancers. Because Newman, in particular, was distinguished by his training, interest in pedagogy and extensive publishing, this paper will focus on him.

Albert W. Newman was born in 1871 and began his career, in a studio at 6th and Vine, as apprentice and, then, partner to his father Charles, an émigré from Germany who can be identified as a dancing master in this city as early as 1855.<sup>6</sup> Even in his early twenties, Newman seemed serious about his research into dance. 1894 news references recount his travels to Europe to study and laud "Newman's system of physical culture" as "entirely original."<sup>7</sup> That same year, he began to publish articles on dance in the newspaper, the first of which advised that dancing was not just entertainment, but a "fine art" and an "enjoyable means of physical culture. . . [that] should impart health and vigor to both body and brain."<sup>8</sup> An announcement for another article in the series described Newman as an authority on dancing and physical culture, recognized both here and in Europe and "deserving of the many flattering notices received of these articles."<sup>9</sup> By 1894, he was teaching in his own studio, the Conservatory of Dancing and Physical Culture on North Broad Street. Early indications of Newman's interest in choreographic forms beyond the ballroom are evident in an 1894 article that lauded his students' skills in a variety of dance forms, including operatic, and noted that the program featured a ballet, *La Fete de la Rodere* by Mr. Albert Newman who "distinguish[ed] himself as a composer and instructor of dances but also as a classical dancer."<sup>10</sup> Granted, ballet in those days could include any number of dubious takes on classical dance, but Newman seemed set on getting it right.

His pedagogical interests continued to expand and by 1905 he began advertising classes that specifically targeted "Stage aspirants desirous of obtaining engagements with first-class companies."<sup>11</sup> Although others in the city, particularly Al White, were noted for stage dancing, their expertise generally included tap dancing, buck and wing, and other dances familiar from both minstrelsy and vaudeville. Newman's work and publications generally shied away from these forms, focusing instead on the 'high art' forms of the day.

In 1907, he was hired as ballet master for the newly formed Philadelphia Operatic Society (POS). Founded by opera manager, John Curtis, POS was an amateur opera company to which patrons and interested participants subscribed. Contrary to the New York Met, which modeled itself on European Opera houses and operated on a diva-based system, Curtis committed to developing local talent and was among the earlier modern US managers to produce operas in English. While its amateur status likely drove some of



these decisions, the company enjoyed a good reputation and it is clear from Curtis' writings that he was sincerely interested in developing an art form featuring American performers in artistically integrated and balanced productions.<sup>12</sup> This interest in native artists extended to ballet masters as well for, unlike professional opera companies, POS eschewed the practice of hiring European choreographers and ballerinas and was, thus, instrumental in developing professional level American dance talent in the city.

In September of 1907, Newman signed an audition ad for an upcoming production of *Aida* "Albert W. Newman, Philadelphia Operatic Society. Only grand ballet in Philadelphia."<sup>13</sup> A review of the opera enthused that it "included a ballet of singular originality and charm, distinctly superior both in its conception and execution to the usual thing."<sup>14</sup> A September, 1909 article noted Newman's return from another European study trip and announced auditions for the fall production. It does not seem promising that the only qualifications listed in this first article were that "Applicants must be young and pretty."<sup>15</sup> But by November, and in the same Fall season that the New York Met announced the institution of its ballet school, the paper carried a feature story on the Philadelphia Operatic Society ballet, identifying it as "the only organized ballet in Philadelphia and the only non-professional ballet in the world" and followed with a detailed account indicating the serious purpose with which Newman undertook the development of a professional level dance corps in the city. From "hereafter" the story stated, "the dancing corps of the society is to be given complete instruction in modern expressive dancing, and in future the ballets will be in strict accordance with the period and scene of the opera." The article boasted that "this [would] make a decided novelty in grand opera ballet dancing as it has not heretofore been attempted by the big professional companies," where, in most cases, the "divertissement by the corps du (sic) ballet... [was] merely a series of pretty figures created by the ballet master, without regard to the appropriateness of the figures or steps." In addition to these shifts in choreographic vision and structure, the article announced that ballet rehearsals would expand from an event-specific to a year-round schedule, with "absolute proficiency" the aim of instructor and dancers alike. The qualifications still included good looks but now added "good health and a knowledge of dancing."<sup>16</sup>

We will never know to what heights Newman may have been able to take this nascent company, for in 1910 Newman resigned, citing professional pressures. He continued his successful school, where he not only taught the requisite social dances but also listed as areas of dance expertise "aesthetic, interpretative, [and] greek [sic], "with "classic dancing a specialty."<sup>17</sup> A 1916 preview of a charity event refers to his school as the Newman Ballet School.<sup>18</sup>

This is an opportune moment to mention C. Ellwood Carpenter. Like the Newmans, dance instruction was a family business for the Carpenters and C. Ellwood's teaching interests seemed directed primarily towards social dances. But like Newman, Carpenter would have had the opportunity to observe the foreign-born prima ballerinas in the New York Met's Tuesday night series in Philadelphia during opera season and in performances interpolated into variety type shows in the city during off-season.<sup>19</sup> And he would have had expertise in those 'steps' shared between social dance and ballet. Despite no evidence

of more serious classical training, from April of 1910 through 1914, Carpenter replaced Newman as the Ballet Master of the Philadelphia Operatic Society. Carpenter continued Newman's practice of choreographing and interpolating longer ballets into the operas but he was also the first US ballet master hired by a Philadelphia-based opera company to create stand-alone ballets. He choreographed three for POS including a 1913, two-act *Coppelia*. As had the *New York Times* in a 1910 interview with Pavlova, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* tried to prepare the audience for this forgotten and unfamiliar art form, explaining that *Coppelia* was an 'ocular opera', "an excerpt from *The Tales of Hoffman* ocularized or subjected to ballet adaptation."<sup>20</sup> In 1914 John Curtis split with the POS and founded the Behrens Opera Club, inviting Carpenter to join as its first ballet master. Carpenter continued to choreograph for that company through the end of 1916 during which time he also staged two more full ballets.

In 1915, Newman was re-hired by the Philadelphia Operatic Society for its April production of *Faust*. (Figure 1) His choreographic talent was again singled out for the "distinct originality" of his dances.<sup>21</sup> Although it was Carpenter who would create the



Figure 1. Philadelphia Operatic Society's corps de ballet, 1915. *Newman Catechism on Classical Dancing*

first stand-alone ballet for POS, Newman, in 1916, also choreographed a full “pantomime ballet,” *The Dance of the Pyrenees*, which marked, as well, the “first time in the history of the society that men appear[ed] as dancers.”<sup>22</sup> There is no record of Newman serving as ballet master past 1916, but he continued his tutelage of students aspiring to either stage or educational careers. (Figure 2) A 1922 ad for the Newman-Dancing School promised “a European education in dancing without going abroad” and emphasized “Russian Ballet, Toe dancing, and stage craft.” Further text advertised a diploma “teacher’s Course,” as well, and boasted that, “Newman graduates are teaching in the best schools and dancing in the best companies.”<sup>23</sup> While not abandoning his social dance classes, which he had previously described as “endorsed by the most prominent social leaders,”<sup>24</sup> Newman's work through the teens and twenties maintained a strong focus on formally training both professional dancers and educators. The best evidence for this is found not in the news but in his pamphlets and books published between 1893 and 1923.

His early pamphlets and his 1903 *Complete Practical Guide to Modern Society Dancing*<sup>25</sup> and 1914 *Dances of Today*<sup>26</sup> addressed the usual topics of social dance manuals. But although an overlap continued between the vocabularies of social dance and ballet, it is clear that *The Newman Catechism on Classical Dancing*, (Figure 2) revised in 1922, was meant for a serious audience interested in 'art' dancing. The book's foreword



Figure 2. *Newman Catechism on Classical Dancing*

declared that the excellence of Russian dancing was a consequence of its origins in "old French and Italian schools of Ballet," supplemented by the Hellenic, which "gave expression to execution."<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly, the Newman System of Dancing also claimed these schools as its basis. His introductory chapter argued that dance was a serious art with "inherent dramatic qualities" and in which "sentiment is expressed through the rhythmic, harmonious movement of the body," a position he defended by citing Duncan and Noverre.<sup>28</sup> He also elaborated on the history, taxonomy and elements of dance and expounded on the "vital importance" of correct technique—but not at the expense of "the expressive and emotional side of the art."<sup>29</sup> This manual is quite detailed, describing positions, poses, port de bras, barre and center work in the French and was the reference for his publications that considered other forms of artistic dance. Thus, it included, as well, examples of "interpretative" or expressive dancing, for example, "butterfly" or "swan" arm gestures, the inspiration for which he credited Ruth St. Denis. The illustrations are predominantly from ballet, but there are some from these expressive dances, a genre that was further elucidated in his book, the *Newman System of Nature Dancing*<sup>30</sup>.

Other books included *Newman Dance Phrases*, which contained, in his words, "hundreds of beautiful dance combinations" or "enchainements" designed to train the reader in the art and technique of "classical Dance Composition,"<sup>31</sup> and the similar but expanded, *Album of Classical Dances*.<sup>32</sup> But along with the *Catechism* the book that strongly suggested a studied and committed approach to sound instruction in ballet was *Newman Art of Toe Dancing*, (Figure 3) which included an illustration of the dapper



ALBERT W. NEWMAN.

Figure 3. *Newman Art of Toe Dancing*

Newman up on black pointe shoes. He advised on everything from the appropriate age to begin practice to buying and stitching pointe shoes. His full range of technical instruction, including correct execution of various pas and exercises to "strengthen and curve the arch [to] produce perfect form,"<sup>33</sup> indicate his commitment to developing sound pedagogical practices for the teaching of ballet not only to amateurs but also to those desiring a professional career.

Less known is about the exact nature and scope of training or circumstances that rendered Newman competent to choreograph ballet and other aesthetic dance and to teach and write manuals on this practice. Newman was clearly influenced by Physical Culture practices in vogue and, perhaps, by Dalcroze Eurhythmics, both of which had strong Philadelphia adherents,<sup>34</sup> and one article touted his familiarity with Delsarte's principles.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps, like Durang, he learned from observation and imitation. He would have had ample opportunities to see Bonfanti and Genee, Pavlova, Mordkin, and a string of Italians and Russians up to and beyond the 1916 arrival of The Diaghilev troupe in Philadelphia. Fuller, Duncan, and St. Denis performed multiple times in Philadelphia between 1891 and 1922 and newspapers periodically published articles by dance artists expounding on their philosophy and art. As to training, Newman is recorded as traveling at least twice to Europe to study contemporary and historical social and court dancing as well as ballet, and he references the German dancing master, Friedrich Albert Zorn with whom he studied dance and chorography, that is, notation, in the 1890s.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the lack of any significant performance career, his legitimate training and the pedagogical integrity of his books mark his authenticity as a ballet master. His status as choreographer and instructor within the social and arts circles of the time also lend support to his legitimacy. His ballet work for the Philadelphia Operatic Society consistently received praise for its "distinct originality" and the testimonials collected in *Catechism* bestowed accolades from both theatrical and educational arenas. But with all this, Newman, as well as Carpenter, disappears from the city records in the early 1920s. Why? Age may have been a factor. Both would have been in their early 50s, although their fathers pursued their careers as dancing masters well into their 80s. There is some evidence that Carpenter headed to Hollywood but uncovering Newman's fate is an ongoing research project.

Certainly the wave of European ballet dancers flooding the states and setting up shop had a profound impact on who emerged as the new instructors for the class of fledgling American ballet dancers. A 1925 *New York Times* article cited many who came and stayed including Fokine, Mordkin, Bolm, Kosloff, Albertieri, Pavley and Oukrainsky, and others.<sup>37</sup> We can add Balanchine within the next decade and Tudor not long after. As graduates of European academies and performers on the world stage, there could be no doubt cast on the ballet pedigree of this new breed of ballet masters. Short of travelling directly to Europe, as the Littlefields did, the next vanguard of Philadelphia-based ballet instructors traveled to New York to engage in either private or studio study with these expatriates. Some studied at home, in Philadelphia, with émigrés such as Vladislav Mikolaichik, likely a former dancer with Pavlova and Massine,<sup>38</sup> who opened a school in Philadelphia, or with commuters, like Antony Tudor, who taught here regularly

in the 1950s. Others sought out instructors such as Alfredo Corvino or William Dollar who were protégés of these émigré dancers and who also taught regularly in Philadelphia. The last vestiges of the successful quasi self-taught instructor and choreographer were probably Ethel Quirk Phillips,<sup>39</sup> who, incidentally patented the first support bra designed for dancers, and Caroline 'Mommy' Littlefield, matriarch of the Philadelphia Littlefield clan, who studied with one of the Carpenters—likely, Romulus.<sup>40</sup> From this period on, only "real" ballet dancers or dancers directly trained by them could muster up the necessary reputation to teach those who desired a career as a professional dancer.

Through courses of instruction at their schools and the more focused and intense dance training developed for the amateur opera companies, Newman and Carpenter accelerated the process of institutionalizing American training for the Philadelphia professional ballet and aesthetic dancer. They provided a bridge between the earlier models that depended on a critical mass of European dancers and models in which both student and instructional ranks were eventually populated with native dancers. They were the first local choreographers since the Romantic period to stage freestanding, full-length ballets. The choreographic and pedagogic practices of Newman, in particular, reflected an awareness of movement aesthetics and theory at play during the early 20th century. They helped to develop a class of well-trained theatre dancers and to secure the place of dance as an integral part of 'artistic' stage productions and made significant contributions to the growing movement to develop an "all American" professional ballet.

Copyright 2012, Linda Caruso Haviland

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ads placed in *The American Weekly Mercury* from mid-March into April of 1728 for the boarding school in Philadelphia directed by George Brownell listed dancing as one of its courses of instruction. Among others documenting early American dance and etiquette, see work by Judith Cobau, John E. Crowley and Lynn Matluck Brooks.
- <sup>2</sup> See Brooks (2011) as well as monographs on Durang by the same author.
- <sup>3</sup> Newspaper ads for instruction by Mons. P. H. Hazard can be found in Philadelphia papers as early as 1836 and continue through the 1840s and '50s with listings for separate studios after 1844 for a Mons. and a Madam Hazard, and for performances by Mons. Hazard at least until 1843. (*Inquirer*, published as *Pennsylvania Inquirer; The North American and Daily Advertiser*). See, as well, the writings of Maureen Needham Costonis and Mary Grace Swift, among others, for research on this period.
- <sup>4</sup> Moore. 1945, 132
- <sup>5</sup> Cather. 1913, 86
- <sup>6</sup> *McElroy's Philadelphia City Directory*, 1867, lists Charles Newman, "Zephyrs" at 940 Race Street but by 1890, *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory* lists his occupation as Dancing Master. However, the *Inquirer* 14 April, 1895: 5 reports on celebrations marking his fortieth anniversary of juvenile classes. It's possible that his earlier teaching was primarily among the German community. A Professor Newman is mentioned in articles (e.g., *Inquirer* 23 May, 1879:2) around German celebrations, balls, and charity events.
- <sup>7</sup> "Doings in Dancing Circles." *Inquirer* (hereafter cited as *Inquirer*) 23 December 1894: 5.
- <sup>8</sup> Newman, Albert W. "Dancing and Health. How Tripping the Light Fatastic(sic) Toe Affects Body and Mind." *Inquirer* 30 September 1894: 13.

- <sup>9</sup> "Doings in Dancing Circles." *Inquirer* 28 October 1894: 15.
- <sup>10</sup> At the Playhouses." *Inquirer* 14 April 1895: 16.
- <sup>11</sup> *Inquirer* 14 May 1902: 5. This issue of the *Inquirer* actually carried two ads: one for the summer course in theatrical dancing and general chorus work and one for his ongoing course of study for opera and vaudeville stages, the latter including a rare mention to styles such as buck and wing.
- <sup>12</sup> The Philadelphia Operatic society was founded in 1906 by Mr. John Curtis and was intended to "consist of persons who are interested in music, either as professionals or as amateurs and who are willing to give their time and their money for the gratification of their own musical tastes and for the satisfaction of a music-loving public, whose needs are not at present adequately met." (*Inquirer* 17 March 1907: 5) It produced its first opera, *Faust*, under the directorship of Siegfried Behrens, in spring of 1907. By its second production, *Aida*, in the autumn of 1907, it incorporated ballet under the guidance of Albert W. Newman. Although Behrens died in 1912, and Curtis left to found the Behrens Opera Club and society in 1914, records of the Operatic Society's productions under various directors and ballet masters continue until 1934. Curtis was devoted to the promotion of US born artists and to the production of operas in English. The POS enjoyed a good reputation and attracted some of the best amateur voices in the region and several singers went on to professional careers. Curtis also wrote a history of opera in Philadelphia from 1818 through 1918, and had started on a second volume, a project that ended with his death in 1927. This served as the basis for Frank Hamilton's index of opera performances which he has continued through 2011. See also: Balch. 1917, 47. Curtis. 1920. Hamilton. 2004. Hipsher. 1927. International *Who's Who in Music and Musical Gazeteer*. 1918, 140. *Inquirer*. Several articles, starting in July, 1906. *Stokes' Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians*. 1908, 495.
- <sup>13</sup> *Inquirer* 1 September, 1907: 11.
- <sup>14</sup> *Inquirer* 8 November, 1907: 2.
- <sup>15</sup> *Inquirer* 5 September, 1909: 2.
- <sup>16</sup> *Inquirer* 14 November, 1909: 9.
- <sup>17</sup> *Evening Public Ledger* 7 November 1914: 13.
- <sup>18</sup> *Inquirer* 4 June 1916: 2.
- <sup>19</sup> A few examples of advertisements, articles, previews, or reviews include: *Inquirer* 8 April 1871: 8. At the Walnut Street Theatre, "The young, peerless and beautiful MDLLE. Marie BONFANTI whose high reputation as a Danseuse stands upon record in every city in Europe and America." *Inquirer* 6 December 1891: 11. Loie Fuller appeared in a comedic play called "Tangled Up" at the Park Theater in which she "introduce[d] several new and unique dances which she brought from England." *Inquirer* 19 October 1910: 2. "Russian Dancers Much Applauded Pavlowa and Mordkin Score Success upon Their Philadelphia Debut." *Inquirer* 6 August 1916: 10. Preview of Albertina Rausch, Marie Gambarelli, 'assisted' by Rausch's students and coryphées from the Metropolitan Opera in ballet divertissement at B. F. Keith's Theatre. See also Dorris, 2009: 195-262.
- <sup>20</sup> "Events of the Musical Season." *Inquirer* 9 March, 1913, 10.
- <sup>21</sup> *Evening Public Ledger* (hereafter cited as *Ledger*). 22 April 1915: 7.
- <sup>22</sup> Numerous ads in both the *Inquirer* and *Ledger*. Several previews or articles including: "News of the Musical Season." *Inquirer* 23 January 1916: 9. *Inquirer* 24 January 1916: 2. "Nancy Wynne Gossips about the Day's doings in society." *Ledger* 27 January 1916: 11.
- <sup>23</sup> Advertisements. *Ledger* 16 November 1921: 15. *Ledger* 27 September 1922: 22. *Ledger* 25 October 1922: 26.
- <sup>24</sup> Advertisement. *Ledger* 23 October 1915: n.pag., amusement section.

- <sup>25</sup> Newman. 1903.
- <sup>26</sup> Newman. 1914.
- <sup>27</sup> Newman. *The Newman Catechism on Classical Dancing*. (hereafter referred to as *Catechism*)1922, 6.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid. 7.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid. 24.
- <sup>30</sup> Newman. *Newman System of Nature Dancing*. n.d., (before 1922).
- <sup>31</sup> Newman. *Albert W. Newman Dance Phrases: The Key to Dance Composition or Dance Creation Made Easy*. n.d., (before 1922)
- <sup>32</sup> Newman. *Newman Album of Classsical Dances*. 1923.
- <sup>33</sup> Newman. *Newman Art of Toe Dancing*. 1923.
- <sup>34</sup> On 2 December 1894:13, the *Ledger* carried an article under the headline "Eurhythmics, New teaching method, creates interest: System of Physical and Mental Education Demonstrated at William Penn by Bryn Mawr Instructor," as well as a photo of Mme. Montiliu and Mlle. Odier posing in a gesture sequence from the Dalcroze system of Eurhythmics. Along with M. Placido di Montiliu, they had trained at Hellerau and were teaching under the auspices of the Philadelphia Music Teachers Association and the department of Physical Eudcation of the University of Pennsylvania. They also taught at the Phoebe Thorne model school at Bryn Mawr College. Montiliu is identified as "the American representative for Jaques Dalcroze the Swiss composer who originated the system of eurhythmics." Newman was likely fully aware of the German gymnastic practices that, along with the Swedish system, constituted "physical culture" at the turn of the century in Philadelphia. However, his method had already evolved to include aesthetic and dance influences that were emerging in Europe at that time as well, although he consistently referred to dance as physical culture until the vocabulary of "classical", "nature", or "expressive" dance began to replace the earlier terminology. Physical culture in the US diverged from the European systems towards a sports oriented approach but Dance was frequently categorized under physical culture or physical education as well. A 27 February 1916: 2 article in the *Inquirer* announced a ballet to be performed by Temple University's Physical Training class, and the 26 March 1921: 1 issue of the *Philadelphia Tribune* headlines a "Demonstration of Physical Education Work" by Hampton Institute students, which was, in fact, a program of dances under direction of the 'physical directors' Miss Olive B. Rowell, Charles H. Williams, and Charles P. Howard.
- <sup>35</sup> So, for example, the *Inquirer*, 13 October, 1894: 7, predicted that "Fashion's fair followers will this season devote themselves more than ever to the practice of Delsarte exercises." The *Evening Public Ledger*, 18 November 1914: 3, carried a story on Mary Perry King, a student of the Delsarte system and early instructor of Ted Shawn who founder her own school in Connecticut and who authored *Comfort and Exercise: an essay toward normal conduct* (1900) and co-authored *The Making of Personality* (1908) as well as numerous masque and dance librettos. This "noted dance instructress and interpreter presented a novel program of "Ballad Dances" at the Little Theatre. . . under the auspices of the Philadelphia Physical Education Society of which Dr. R. Tait McKenzie is president." As early as 25 November 1894:5, the *Inquirer* reminded its readers that with "all the world raving over Delsarte" Albert W. Newman had studied the technique here and in Europe and was confident of his ability to teach.
- <sup>36</sup> *Inquirer* 25 November 1894: 5. and Newman, *Catechism*. 1922, 76.
- <sup>37</sup> *New York Times* 9 August 1925: E15.
- <sup>38</sup> Hamilton, 2009. Mikolaichik is listed as ballet master for several opera performances during the 1925 and 1926 opera seasons. Google book and some European sites list the book, *13*



*lettres et 1 carte autographes signées de W. Mikolaichick à Boris Kochno, 1922-1929.* World Cat cites five listings in the Bibliothèque nationale de France for performances of Massine's *Les femmes de bonne humeur : ballet en 1 acte* from 1919 through 1923, with Mikolaichik listed in three performances in 1922 and 1923.

- <sup>39</sup> Obituary: Miss Ethel Q. Phillips. *New York Times* 15 August 1959: 17. Hamilton, 2009. Phillips is listed as ballet mistress for several opera performances between 1925 and 1929. See also Ethel M. Quirk, Patent number 1237095, for her invention of a "breast supporter" which was "particularly adapted for theatrical use. <http://www.google.com/patents?id=SUISAAAAEBAJ&printsec=abstract&zoom=4#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- <sup>40</sup> Schmitz, 1986.

## Works Cited

- The American Weekly Mercury* accessed through NewsBank: *America's Historical Newspapers*. < <http://www.readex.com> >
- Balch, Edwin Swift. *Elise Willing Balch, In Memoriam*. Philadelphia: Priv. print, Allen, Lane and Scott. 1917.
- Brooks, Lynn. *John Durang: Man of the American Stage*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011.
- Schmitz, Nancy Brooks. *A Profile of Catherine Littlefield, a Pioneer of American Ballet*. Diss. Temple University, 1986.
- Cather, Willa. "Training for the Ballet: Making American Dancers." *McClure's Magazine* October 1913: 85-95. Accessible as well at <http://cather.unl.edu/nf004.html>
- Curtis, John. "A Century of Grand Opera in Philadelphia." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 44.2 (1920): 122-157. Published by: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20086411>> .
- Dorris, George. "Dance and the New York Opera War." 1906-1912, *Dance Chronicle: Studies in Dance and the Related Arts* 32:2 (2009): 195-262.
- Evening Public Ledger* accessed at Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress web site. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>>
- Hamilton, Frank. "Notes on John Curtis and His Work: Project Status, December 2004." < [www.frankhamilton.org](http://www.frankhamilton.org) >
- . *Opera in Philadelphia: Performance Chronology 1925 – 1949*. 2009. (Building on the early work of John Curtis, the chronologies range from 1818 – 2100, although not exhaustive, are extensive). < [www.frankhamilton.org](http://www.frankhamilton.org) >
- Hipsher, Edward Ellsworth. *American Opera and its Composers*. Philadelphia: Theodore Presser Co. 1927.
- International Who's Who in Music and Musical Gazetteer*. Ed. César Saerchinger. NY: Current Literature Publishing Co., 1918.
- Moore, Lillian. "George Washington Smith." *Dance Index* IV.6-8 (1945): 88-135.
- Newman, Albert W. *A Complete Practical Guide to Modern Society Dancing: Containing a Full Description of All the Up-to-date Round Dances and Quadrilles ... Also Embracing a New and Improved Method of Teaching the Art*. Philadelphia. 1903.
- . *Dances of to-day... an expert's full directions, with illustrations and diagrams, for*

- learning or teaching the tango, hesitation, one-step, Boston, maxixe and all other modern dances.* Philadelphia: The Penn Publishing Co., 1914. This is included in the Library of Congress' *An American Ballroom Companion: Dance Instruction Manuals ca. 1490-1920*, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/dihtml/diessay7.html>>
- . *Newman Catechism on Classical Dancing.* 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Newman Publishing Co/ Theo. Presser Co., 1922.
- . *Newman System of Nature Dancing.* Philadelphia: Newman Dance Publishing Co. n.d. (before 1922).
- . *Newman Dance Phrases: The Key to Dance Composition or Dance Creation Made Easy.* Philadelphia: Newman Dance Publishing Co. undated (before 1922)
- . *Newman Album of Classical Dances.* Philadelphia: Newman Dance Publishing Co./T. Presser Co., c1923. (Possible revision as this book is noted in the 1922 Catechism.)
- . *Newman Art of Toe Dancing.* Philadelphia: Newman Dance Publishing Co. 1923). *North American and Weekly Advertiser* accessed at *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress web site.* <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>>
- Philadelphia Inquirer.* Accessed in America's Historical Newspaper. Archive of Americana. Readex/NewsBank.
- Stokes' Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians : Covering the entire period of musical history from the earliest times to the season of 1908-09.* Ed. L.J. De Bekker. NY: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1908.

Address for correspondence:  
 Linda Caruso Haviland  
 Dance Program  
 Bryn Mawr College  
 101 No. Merion Ave  
 Bryn Mawr, PA 19010  
 lcarusoh@brynmawr.edu

## Bodies Under the Influence: Anne Bass, Sy Sar, and the Politics of Patronage

*Alison D'Amato*

University of California, Los Angeles

### **Abstract**

*This paper interrogates the role of individual patronage in choreographic production, focusing on the extent to which such support exerts a profound influence on the dancing body. It is grounded in a close analysis of the relationship between patron Anne Bass and dancer Sokvannara “Sy” Sar as represented in Bass’s 2010 documentary, “Dancing Across Borders.” By deconstructing the documentary’s themes of discovery, rescue, and elite cultural authority, this analysis lends a particular urgency to questions that dance studies scholars can and should pose more widely – namely, what dances are being made, for whom, and with what resources.*

This paper examines the 2010 documentary “Dancing Across Borders,” a film that depicts Sokvannara “Sy” Sar’s exceptional and rapid transformation from performing classical Khmer court dance in Cambodia to navigating the upper echelons of the American ballet world. This transformation is prompted and facilitated by the New York-based patron and socialite Anne Bass, who also directs and produces the documentary. The film has been widely distributed and for the most part quite well-received among dance and independent film audiences alike, heralded as a moving story of Sar’s perseverance and hard-won success. Yet “Dancing Across Borders” also tells a troubling story, one that capitalizes on well-worn tropes of third world pathos and the racially marked body. My goal is to draw attention to these themes, and to suggest a possible counter-narrative that might prompt reflection on the politics of dance patronage more generally. Taken as an illustrative, if admittedly extreme example, the story of Bass and Sar compels an evaluation of patronage as a subtly intimate relation, though one powerful enough to leave its mark indelibly on dances and dancing bodies.

Before embarking on an analysis of the film, I’d like to take a few moments to contextualize my interest in it. Though I’ve been engaged in this project for some time, my work as a whole does not directly concern the politics of patronage, nor do I work extensively with either ballet or Cambodian dance. My research focuses on scoring and notational practices in modern and postmodern dance. What led to that interest, though, was a set of questions about the way that dance performance invites bodies to interact with choreographic structure. I’m interested in how dancers comply (or fail to comply) with written records. As a result, I’ve found myself highly attuned to the question of how choreography negotiates and stages agency.

The question of Sar’s agency, though it must be acknowledged, is difficult to address. On the one hand, it would be counterproductive to posit Bass’s influence as entirely precluding Sar’s interests and motivations. On the other, though, attempting to locate the precise point where Sar’s desire distinguishes itself from Bass’s authority means denying the extremity of the power imbalance through which the relationship has been established. No matter how rigorous, a project that tracked Sar’s agency through a cinematic representation wholly devised by Bass would be fatally compromised. Thus I do not attempt to evaluate whether Sar has been “better off” as a result of the opportunities afforded by Bass, and I do not question how much control Sar has had over his own career trajectory. Rather, I focus on the film as a deliberately constructed narrative. I attempt to identify this narrative’s prominent themes, the logic that it deploys

to articulate those themes, and the ways that and Bass and Sar are positioned within its frames of representation.

Additionally, I look at the film's reception in the popular media; since Bass has been a well-known figure among New York's social elite for some time, her foray into documentary filmmaking garnered much attention. Features in *New York Magazine*, *W Magazine*, and the *New York Times* focus on Bass's perspective, and the titles of these articles underscore the degree to which the film tells not just *his* story, but *their* story: "Anne Bass and the Cambodian Ballerino," "Social Star-Turned-Filmmaker Readies Her First Documentary," "Patron Turns Home Movies Into a Feature." Unsurprisingly, these accounts are mostly congratulatory. The film has also fared well on the festival circuit, though, winning best documentary at the 2010 Seattle International Film Festival and the 2010 Milan International Film Festival. It has been well received in dance contexts, screening at the opening night of the 2010 Dance On Camera Festival, and at the venerable Jacob's Pillow. My own critical stance represents an effort to generate a more nuanced account of the relationship between dancer and patron than those presently in circulation.

The film opens by juxtaposing images of the Cambodian countryside and images of Sar – first alone at a ballet barre, then bounding onstage in a solo during a performance of *The Nutcracker*. As the introductory music fades, we see Sar at Cambodia's Angkor Wat, looking away from the camera, thinking back to the dances he performed there six years prior. The shot is a close-up; Sar's lovely face fills the screen. We hear Bass interject, asking "do you remember some of the things about your dance?" The shot widens, and Bass backs away from Sar, holding a video camera. He recounts his memories of dancing in the temple, talking about how thrilling it was to perform so close to his friends and family in the audience.

Then Bass is sitting alone, looking directly into the camera and recounting the circumstances of their first encounter in Cambodia. She talks about watching Sar with a young female dancer, performing a flirtatious duet that demonstrated his musicality and suppleness, as well as physical proportions she deemed particularly suitable to ballet. She notes that he "moved naturally," that "his body was perfect" (Bass 2010). Sar isn't asked to offer his memories of that particular performance; indeed, it may not have seemed anything out of the ordinary to him at the time. He did not know he was being watched by someone taking such a keen interest in his future.

In the film and elsewhere, that first encounter is consistently recounted from Bass's perspective, and is often referred to as a moment of discovery. A synopsis in the film's press kit states: "On a trip to Angkor Wat...in January 2000, filmmaker Anne Bass came across a sixteen-year-old boy who moved her immensely with his amazing natural charm and grace as a dancer" (Bass 2010). Bass lends the moment a heightened sense of drama by discussing their encounter as fated, meant to be. A 2010 article in the *New York Times* reports that "having spent the day climbing ancient temples in debilitating jungle heat, Anne Bass didn't want to leave her hotel room again. Not even for a dance recital at Preah Khan...at the last minute something – she still can't figure out what – sent her out the door" (Gold 2010). By depicting that first meeting as a discovery, Bass negates Sar's past; ultimately, she calls his future in Cambodia into question as well. Explaining her impulse to offer him an opportunity to study ballet, Bass mentions that "Cambodian dancers, especially male dancers, don't have much of a future" (Bass 2010). In the *New York Times* article, she reveals a deep anxiety about the possibility of Sar remaining in Cambodia "going to waste" (Gold 2010). Bass's assumption is certainly that someone who dances beautifully deserves access to ballet. Perhaps more unsettling, though, she also seems convinced that someone as talented and charismatic as Sar belongs in the West. Thus the film casts Bass's financial support not just as charity, but almost a public service. The exertion of her influence is necessary, beneficial to both Sar and the ballet world in general, a natural and deserved result of Sar's talent as opposed to an aggressive move to thoroughly reconfigure someone's life.

Bass's anxiety at the possibility that Sar might go to waste in Cambodia exemplifies the "feelings of emptiness, loss, and disaster" that Edward Said has demonstrated to be consistently associated with the Orient (Said 1979: 56). In the film, Cambodia is evoked as a landscape of peaceful countryside, lush jungle, rice paddies and small villages, distant and different from New York City. It is depicted as a beautiful country, yet scarred and still recovering from the violence of Pol Pot's regime. Bass's strong motivation to cultivate and share Sar's talent certainly leads to his displacement, yet this displacement is articulated as opportunity, never mind it was an opportunity he didn't know he wanted, an "American dream he didn't even know he had" (Eberle 2010).

By Sar's account in the film, dance in Cambodia was a hobby, not a career path. It wasn't even particularly encouraged by his parents, who admit that they needed his help at home and only grudgingly let him take lessons. After Bass contacts Sar through his dance instructor, though, he begins to see dance as a potential means of generating financial support for his family. This, combined with his evident excitement about traveling to the United States, are Sar's stated reasons for accepting Bass's offer.

Upon arriving in New York, Sar is conveyed to an audition at the School of American Ballet. Bass has struggled to arrange such an opportunity, capitalizing on her financial commitment to the school. Despite Bass's extensive involvement in the ballet world as a former dancer and patron, it didn't occur to her that Sar, who spoke no English and had never taken a ballet class, wouldn't have the skills to begin training at the pre-professional level. Why would he? In his performance at Preah Khan, Sar could not possibly have demonstrated any particular aptitude for ballet. Yet Bass intuited that Sar had the potential to become a world-class ballet dancer on the strength of what she perceived to be innate, unconscious, but as yet unpolished, attributes. Bass's cognitive leap elides any specificity within the forms, and neatly equates demonstrated talent in one form with untapped potential in another.

Sar reflects on the stress of his simultaneous transition into the United States and into ballet training, claiming that "I didn't know anything, didn't understand English...I had no idea what to do" (Bass 2010). Peter Boal, who was on the school's faculty at the time, notes that even despite the language issue "he was older than a kid could feasibly start ballet...this was impossible" (Bass 2010). Though the faculty were impressed by his enthusiastic efforts to pick up a range of unfamiliar movement through physical demonstration, his initial audition at the School of American Ballet was not a success. Bass redoubled her efforts, hiring a team of private instructors and translators to help bridge the gap between his experience and the necessary level of training.

The effects of this training are intimate, corporeal. Shedding the form he was trained in, Sar completely re-configures his body through full-time, daily lessons in ballet. His first response to the demands of this training is unequivocally negative. Sar recounts his early impression of the ideal ballet body, jokingly remembering his resistance to its turned-out stance: He says, "Why am I walking like...this, like, turned out like this? This ballet thing is going to turn me into like, a little duck...I don't think I wanna do this" (Bass 2010). Like Sar's feet, his hands serve as an index for the extent of his physical transformation. As Boal puts it, ballet training "obsesses" over the angles of the fingers. Boal goes on to say, "He hasn't studied the hand positions...on hands alone, he's not ready" (Bass 2010). Many of the key hand positions in classical Cambodian dance require the fingers to stretch away from the palm, toward the outside edge of the wrist. This is precisely the opposite of the standard ballet hand, with the fingers curled slightly toward the inside of the wrist. After demonstrating the desired balletic position, Jock Soto remembers Sar holding his second and third fingers to thumb, which he deemed "close enough" (Bass 2010).

Though Sar's feet and hands serve the film as humorous points of reference for how lofty a goal he and Bass set for his training, video footage of Sar in the studio doesn't reveal the awkwardness of his early attempts. Instead, it presents a version of Sar well acclimated to ballet, though at times comically resistant to the relentless demands of his

private instructor. The film relies quite heavily on images of Sar alone in the studio, in stark contrast to the training of most aspiring ballet dancers, which takes place in a group setting. In fact, the film makes no attempt to conceal Sar's isolation: Bass talks about what a relief it was, three or four years after his move, when Sar began to make friends. The camera also follows him to the home of a Cambodian couple in the Bronx, where he enjoyed speaking his native language and eating Cambodian food. The images of Sar dancing alone, though, serve as the most striking testament to the alienation his training demanded. Late in the film, when Sar is apprenticing at the Pacific Northwest Ballet, he admits to still struggling with partnering. In Cambodia, he says, he loved dancing with a partner. Yet as a ballet dancer, Sar confesses that he's more accustomed to solos. Not surprising, considering that the interaction most consistently facilitated by his training was with an instructor constantly evaluating his performance.

Though in some ways the most important relationship in his life, Sar's association to Bass remains ambiguous, even in the film. Sar was sixteen when Bass first saw him perform, yet she guessed he was closer to twelve. This misidentification immediately infantilized Sar, investing him with a childlike innocence that cleared the way for a very intimate form of patronage. Bass intended to take responsibility for Sar's artistic development, yet because the resources she offered took him so far from his family, she was forced to assume a role that awkwardly straddled the realms of patronage and parenting. It's a role she did not expect, and she admits that settling Sar into a life in New York required the establishment of a much more involved relationship than she initially expected: "I thought that I would announce to the school that I had found this really talented dancer, that he would move into the dorm, and occasionally I'd take him out for dinner or something" (Gold 2010).

Bass acknowledges she has been criticized, particularly by those who wonder if she's imposed her own unfulfilled ambition for ballet on Sar. She argues that she was always willing to accept that he might quit, and that she would have supported his education in America, even if not in ballet. Bass mentions that in November of 2009, Sar called saying that he did want to quit ballet, and she admits she "cried all night" (Rovzar 2010). Five weeks later, he called again to tell her that he had changed his mind.

Sar's life was transformed because Ann Bass was in a position, through wealth and important connections in the ballet world, to transform it. If, at any point, a career in ballet had not worked out for Sar, it wouldn't have made much of a difference to her. Similarly, making an effort at documentary filmmaking despite her inexperience was no great leap of faith. Though by her own account, she spent \$700,000 making the film, she admits that whether it was a success or a failure was inconsequential (Gold 2010). Bass describes the filmmaking as an almost accidental process, initiated with footage created to keep Sar's parents informed about his education and career. Bass seems to truly believe in the power of her own version of Sar's story, and she imposes moral justification on the project by expressing her desire to be a part of positive change that might benefit Cambodia as a whole. She articulates a desire to direct attention to the beauty and heritage of Cambodia, and expresses the hope that Sar's story will inspire young Cambodians to "regain their identity and hope for a better future" (Bass 2010). Yet how are we to know what a better future might look like, and by whose standards are we to judge it?

Sar currently works as a soloist with the Carolina Ballet. His resume includes a brief tenure at the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and freelance engagements in works by well-known choreographers such as Benjamin Millepied, William Forsythe and Twyla Tharp. Despite the unforgiving rigor of his training and the massive cultural displacement required by his relocation to New York, Sar has become an accomplished professional ballet dancer. When the film depicts Sar returning to Cambodia and visiting the school where he learned Khmer dance, he shows pictures to the young students, images in which he is airborne, a virtuosic emblem of the power of ballet. The implication is that anything is possible. If you work hard and make progress, no break between an old life and a new

one is too complete to imagine. His trips back to Cambodia, at least the ones filmed for the documentary, are dutiful, tinged with the exigencies of public service. Though there is always a debt to be paid to Cambodia and Khmer dance, and though he must join the ranks of Homi Bhabha's "class of interpreters," Sar's hybridity is less emphasized in the film than the thoroughness of his transformation. Bass's project was a success.

Classical dance in Cambodia comes with a centuries-old relationship to patronage and power. Prior to the period of French colonial occupation, Khmer court dance was typically limited to the royal palace, where it served formal religious and state functions. Even earlier, the dance was a central component of ritual practice at Hindu temples. In 1906, colonial leaders positioned the dance as an exotic export, arranging the transport of the king's Royal Ballet to Marseilles for the French Colonial Exposition. With the rise of the Khmer Rouge in 1975, Pol Pot sought to eradicate the form completely; countless dancers and teachers fled or were killed. Toni Shapiro-Phim has written extensively on the post-conflict dynamics of dance practice in Cambodia, noting the form's capacity to confer legitimacy on an emerging nation-state as well as its potential to root those displaced by widespread violence. Unfortunately, Sar's effacement of Khmer court dance within his own body echoes the disappearance and loss that practitioners of his form suffered to such an extraordinary degree. It makes it all the more apparent that his association with Bass offers not independence but alignment with yet another powerful agenda.

Ultimately, the story of Anne Bass and Sy Sar provides a striking example of the ways in which people in positions of power can conceive of, nurture, and mobilize a particular kind of subject through dance. "Dancing Across Borders" makes it clear that Anne Bass's money has not been disinterestedly applied to the fulfillment of a good deed begging to be done, nor has it functioned in the service of some higher and disembodied ideal of artistic progress. Bass's wealth has, on the contrary, enabled an intimate social relation between her and a person she desired to see deeply changed. This desire gave Sar a new language, a new corporeality, and a new sense of place (or displacement). Though the changes the movie documents can be understood as the means to an end – Sar's virtuosic leaps, his happy smiles at a ballet company gala – they can also be understood as ends in themselves, manifestations of what it means to wield power over another physically and psychically.

As a counterpoint to the images of Sar, we might look to the choreographer Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, who works in Cambodia and the United States to preserve and progress Cambodian classical dance:

I am a child of war and terror. Yet...I was able to rebuild my life and help rebuild my culture by studying the thousand-year-old art of *robam kbach boran*...*Robam kbach boran* has always been a possession of the powerful – in the Hindu temples of Angkor, the royal palace, the Ministry of Culture – and its stories have supported their power...I have claimed 'ownership' of my art, choreographing new work that speaks, not of the greatness of princes and the harmony of the heavens, but of the conditions of the world as I see it (Cheam Shapiro 2008: 166).

Cheam Shapiro's words remind us that choreographic production can do more than reinforce hierarchical structures that place certain bodies at the disposal of others. Dancing bodies can reflect social possibilities, but they can also create them, asserting ownership where it may not previously have been granted and proposing new ways to think about both the past and the future.

**Bibliography**

- Bass, A. (Dir.). (2010). "Dancing Across Borders." 123 Productions, Inc. [Film.]
- Eberle, Todd. (2010). "An American Dream as Realized by a Cambodian Ballet Dancer." *Vanity Fair*, March 2010. Retrieved December 5, 2010.  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2010/03/an-american-dream-as-realized-by-a-cambodian-ballet-dancer.html>.
- Gold, Sylviane. (2010). "Patron Turns Home Movies Into a Feature." *New York Times*, March 2010. Retrieved December 5, 2010.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/movies/21bass.html>.
- Reginato, James. (2010). "Anne Bass: All the Right Moves." *W Magazine*, January 2010. Retrieved December 5, 2010. [http://www.wmagazine.com/society/2010/01/anne\\_b](http://www.wmagazine.com/society/2010/01/anne_b)
- Rovzar, Chris. (2010). "Anne Bass and the Cambodian Ballerino." *New York Magazine*, March 2010. Retrieved December 5, 2010. <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/64947/>
- Said, Edward W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Shapiro, Sophiline Cheam. (2008). "Cambodian Dance and the Individual Artist." In N. Jackson and T. Shapiro-Phim (Eds.), *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice* (pp. 166-167). Scarecrow Press.

Address for correspondence:  
Alison D'Amato  
adamato@ucla.edu



## De-rat-ifying the Ballet Dancer Nineteenth-Century Paris and its *rats de l'Opéra*

**Sarah Davies Cordova**

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

### *Abstract*

*As the 2011 Carnavalet's exhibition Le Peuple de Paris au XIXe siècle; des guinguettes aux barricades indicated, most categorizations about two thirds of the population of Paris were determined by a slim group of writers, historians, sociologists and artists who highlighted the savage animal-like comportment that the working class incarnated for them. With Paris as the cultural center of Europe, why were young dancers ostracized and categorized as rats? Gautier, Roqueplan, Balzac and Véron rationalize their appellation in terms of their constant nibbling. This presentation which contextualizes the "animalization" of the young dancer within a discourse that created human monsters of "others" counters the bourgeois, misogynous stereotype of prostitute as/and rat.*

“L’histoire d’un théâtre est l’histoire d’un peuple” (Castil-Blaze, *Journal des débats*, [1855])<sup>1</sup>

“Un théâtre offre aux yeux en même temps qu’aux oreilles quelque chose de vif, de sensible, d’immédiat ; il peut en résulter des conséquences telles que les pouvoirs publics aient à y intervenir à chaque instant, comme on a le droit d’éteindre un incendie. [. . .]

Il est trois ou quatre théâtres que l’on ne conçoit pas sans protection en France : l’Opéra, l’Opéra-Comique, le Théâtre-Français et les Italiens. [. . .] Relisez [. . .] ce qu’en a dit Voltaire ; c’est encore vrai pour nous : l’Opéra représente la civilisation parisienne à ses grands jours, [. . .]. Après chaque ébranlement social, voulez-vous avoir la mesure de la confiance renaissante ? voulez-vous savoir si le monde reprend à la vie, si la société se remet à flot et rentre à pleines voiles dans ses élégances et ses largesses ? ce n’est pas tant à la Bourse qu’il faut aller, c’est peut-être à l’orchestre de l’Opéra. Quand Paris recommence à s’amuser, ce n’est pas seulement une classe privilégiée qui s’amuse, ce sont toutes les classes qui profitent et qui prospèrent. Paris alors est en bon train de se sauver, et la France avec lui.” (Sainte Beuve, 15 octobre 1849)<sup>2</sup>

Where Sainte Beuve’s suggestive commentary, coming twenty months after the February 1848 revolution, indicates how reliably the Paris Opéra serves as a weather vane for France’s political mood, Dr. Véron, who was the first entrepreneur to administer the same institution, takes these assessments of the theatre a step further when he affirms in *Paris en 1860: les*

*théâtres de Paris depuis 1806 jusqu'en 1860*, that the connections and interactions between the various French heads of state and the Opéra served the country well during the Ancien Régime and throughout the nineteenth century:

Louis XIV, Napoléon I<sup>er</sup>, Louis XVIII, Charles X, Napoléon III, ont donc tous pensé que l'Opéra ne devait le céder ni en magnificence, ni en artistes de talent aux plus grands théâtre [sic] de l'Europe ; que l'Opéra avait un caractère d'utilité publique, qu'aucun gouvernement n'a consenti et ne consentira à fermer l'Opéra, et qu'il fallait à tout prix, dans les intérêts complexes des beaux-arts, des industries que nos théâtres lyriques font vivre et prospérer, dans l'intérêt de Paris et de la France assurer à l'Opéra des ressources financières largement calculées.

A l'autorité de tous ces grands noms, je dois joindre une autorité nouvelle assez inattendue: celle de Louis Philippe (*Paris en 1860*, p. 131).<sup>3</sup>

Thus Véron (who did benefit from governmental subsidies to the tune of 600 000 to 800 000 frs) maintains that, throughout the nineteenth century, the Opéra's utility reflected its economic impact on the various trades and artists employed in the production of the operas and ballets that portrayed the aspirations of its public as well as the nation-state's internal instabilities and its colonial situation, including its ongoing conquest of Algeria.

By the mid 1850s, the Opéra's latest appellation – Théâtre Impérial de l'Opéra after having been the Théâtre de l'Académie Impériale de Musique from 1852 to 1855 – reflected France's own, by then common, post-revolutionary compromises. From Louis XVI, king of France to Napoleon I, emperor of France, the head (once lost to the guillotine) returned to rule the state, whereas from Louis-Philippe, citizen-king of the French to Louis-Napoleon, prince-president and then emperor of the French, the tenuous yet iterative hyphen of the nation-state affirms the ever-extending hand of the capital over – rather than to -- its physical and social domains at home and abroad. Like so many of its ballet-pantomimes that needed poster boards to situate the new scene in order for the spectators to follow the rocambolesque storylines, the Opéra in effect sign-posted with its nomenclature the successive governmental systems. With an emperor deposing a king by limited universal suffrage, the Académie royale de musique fronted, step by step, the changes in regime. France's cultural icon symbolically asserted the seating of the political regimes by becoming the Théâtre de l'Opéra (1848-1850), then switching to the Théâtre de l'Académie nationale de Musique (1850-1852) after its two-month closure and refurbishing in July and August 1850, before reflecting France as empire with the Théâtre de l'Académie impériale de Musique (1852-1855)<sup>4</sup> and then settling for the compromise of the Théâtre impérial de l'Opéra until the fall of the second empire in 1870 and the consumption of the Le Pelletier space by fire in 1873.

With the difference that sets Dr. Véron, the business man, apart from Castil-Blaze, the arranger of music, historian and professional music critic, the latter aligns the history of the Opéra with that of the (French) people rather than that of the ruling elite. The ballets of the second empire continued to emphasize frenetic plots that required greater suspension of belief and logic. Exiling the setting to other eras and far away locations, the staged events of such ballets as *Jovita* (1853), *Le Corsaire* (1856), or *Sacountala* (1858) bracketed reality in their emphasis of the spectacular for the duration of the ballet. Increasingly although

implicitly, they offered a simplistic kind of ethnography that reinforced the categories and rankings that scientists were developing and applying to the world's populations. They outlined the stereotypes that appeared more and more frequently in the media's pages as well as in the caricatures published in such papers as the *Charivari*, and the *Journal pour rire*.

As the historian Jules Michelet pointed out in 1846, the Romantics who went "down" (the French usage of "descendre" is telling) into the streets to "discover" the *peuple*, chose for the subjects of their literary and artistic works to focus on those with a crime-ridden background, those who would frighten their audience.<sup>5</sup> Their emphasis created a homogeneous laboring class which divided the new France in two – the bourgeoisie and the *peuple* – and typified, from their perspective, the working class even though dockers, traders, street vendors, water carriers, laundresses, haberdashers, window cleaners, messengers, porters, etc. could be witnessed hard at work, eking out an honest living in the public sphere, in the streets, along the banks of the Seine and at the barriers of the city. The two thirds of the population of Paris that constituted this new center of interest were thus categorised by a slim group of writers, historians, sociologists and artists who, as improvised ethnographers, highlighted the crime, filth, and savage animal-like comportment that the working class hordes incarnated for them. Such determinations of the *peuple* arose, in part at least, from fears about its successful insurgencies, and the perceived threat of its propensity to propagate illness and death whether they emanated from sexually transmitted disease, from the plague, or ill-defined threats of rampant criminality.<sup>6</sup> And among those so circumscribed, were the women who appeared in the public sphere and in particular those who were determined to make a living on stage.

### At the Opéra

The social origins of the majority of the children taking dancing classes at the Opéra in the 1820s, 30s, and 40s were working class. The parents who were signing the contracts with the Opéra's administrators were laundresses, concierges, ragmen, seamstresses, army widows, tailors, cobblers, or already involved in one way or another as ushers, stage-hands, musicians with the Opéra or neighboring theaters. Although such a career choice was not an easy or quick means to riches even for the most talented, should the young boys or girls succeed in graduating from the *classe des élèves* at sixteen years of age and perform in most of the ballets and operas each year, they managed to make ends meet especially if they continued to live with their parents or if they moved in with fellow dancers or their partner, a practice which was quite common and acceptable among people of the working class. Their seriousness and dedication to their dancing is corroborated in the 1821-1836 registers of the sociologist Alexandre Parent Du Châtelet, according to which none of the prostitutes was a dancer.<sup>7</sup>

As one worker's records from the 1840s indicate, a single man could with an average of four francs a day live (meagerly) in Paris.<sup>8</sup> The Opéra's contracts assured the dancers a certain security that very few other employees knew at the time. Generally the youngest children who were accepted at the age of seven to train would renew their contracts every year and as *figurants* in the ballets and operas would receive a "feu" of one franc per

performance. As soon as they graduated, they would sign on for two or three years with a remuneration of 400-500 francs the first year, and 600 francs for the second, and generally a *feu* of two francs. Ensuing contracts, for those progressing through the ranks, could amount to 1200 francs, 1400 francs, 1600 francs, until they became *double*, *second* or *premier sujet*, when the salaries doubled and tripled. The *feux* also increased to anywhere between four and ten francs, or if one accepted to “fly”, especially under Véron, up to forty francs per performance.

However the semi-privatisation of the Paris Opéra which started in 1831 gradually engendered the deratification of the dancers’ status and conditions of employment. Whereas the dancers had in effect been wards of the state, at least until the age of 16, the necessity of running the Opéra for profit tendered for the children wishing to join the beginners’ class a far more precarious present and future with the ensuing erosion over the next two decades of the employees’ status and benefits and, in particular with regards to the pay reductions, the number of free classes, and the pension plan. Even though anyone hired before 1831 was entitled to a full or half pension depending on their years of service (20 years, 15 years, or 10 years), the directors thereafter regularly attempted to have them forfeit their pension by not renewing their last contract. Constantly, the dancers sent letters to the various directors of the Opéra, with more or less success, asking for their contracts to be extended anywhere from one to five years in order to benefit from the retirement plans which were established in the early 1800s and fully funded under the régime of the Restoration until the commercialisation of the institution. Conditions improved somewhat in reaction to outcry in the press about the Opéra’s fallen prestige after 1848. To parry the falling standards and loss of talented dancers, free classes were reinstated along with the pension plan between 1854 and 1856, and salaries were readjusted upwards in 1861.<sup>9</sup>

### Who was the *Rat de l’Opéra*?

Singularly, the precariousness of the dancer’s future appeared in step with the emergence in the literature of the 1840s of the *rat*, a rather indeterminate appellation which would eventually stand in for the young girl dancers in training at the Opéra and appearing as *figurante*, or as *artiste de la danse* – as members of the corps de ballet for a measly franc or two (her *feux*). Why would the young dancers become known as *rats* – animals that carried both positive and negative connotations, and were particularly associated with the transmission of the plague, with the filth of the city, the “classes laborieuses”, the “misérables” in the literary works published in the 1840s whose chronotopes were mostly situated in the 1820s? Indeed, although the Littré dictionary attributes its etymological origins to the phonetic truncation by apheresis of “opéra” to give homophonically : ra,<sup>10</sup> the literati of the 1840s chose to emphasize the rodent-animal-like qualities of these young girl dancers.

– Nestor Roqueplan, who would become one of the least successful and most out of touch directors of the Opéra (1847-54) writes in 1840 that:

Certains gens du dehors appellent *rats* de grands êtres qui n’ont rien de l’exiguité et de l’inconsistance de ce petit animal; et il y a des jeunes gens de famille qui ne

désabusent pas leurs parents quand ceux-ci en parlant de grosses diablesses de trente ans leur reprochent: *leur rat de l'Opéra*.

Le vrai *rat*, en bon langage, est une petite fille de sept à quatorze ans, élève de la danse, qui porte des souliers usés par d'autres, des châles déteints, des chapeaux couleur de suie, qui sent la fumée de quinquet, a du pain dans ses poches et demande six sous pour acheter des bonbons ; le *rat* fait des trous aux décorations pour voir le spectacle, court au grand galop derrière les toiles de fond et joue aux quatre coins dans les corridors ; il est censé gagner vingt sous par soirée, mais au moyen des amendes énormes qu'il encourt par ses désordres, il ne touche par mois que huit à dix francs et trente coups de pieds de sa mère. (*Nouvelles à la main*, p. 42)<sup>11</sup>

– Honoré de Balzac also exposes the *rat* at length, and in particular through the eyes of Bixiou in *Les Comédiens sans le savoir* (written in 1844 and published in 1846), a text that elaborates on the popular concept of the tourist guide, and shows Paris in terms of the types – the actors of the work's title – to be found in the capital and so lines up the *Rat* next to such types as the concierge/porter, the money lender, the palm-reader, the painter, the *écuyère* etc..<sup>12</sup> Balzac returns to the *Rat* in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1845) where he reports that they existed before the Restoration (before 1815). Even though the *Petit Robert* dictionary dates to 1816 the first instance of *rat* being used to refer to boys and girls in the beginners' dance class at the Opéra, the *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* registers the first usage as “jeune élève de danse de l'opéra” even earlier, in 1725.<sup>13</sup> However historically, in the literary discourse, the term *rat* was particularly associated with poor young girls – often ambiguously androgynous – and with the dangers these “animals” posed to the young dandies about town and by extension to their families' reputation, as indeed Balzac pens them too:

“L'une des perversités maintenant oubliées, mais en usage au commencement de ce siècle, était le luxe des rats. Un rat, mot déjà vieilli, s'appliquait à un enfant de dix à onze ans, comparse à quelque théâtre, surtout à l'Opéra, que les débauchés formaient pour le vice et l'infamie. Un rat était une espèce de page infernal, un gamin femelle à qui se pardonnaient les bons tours. Le rat pouvait tout prendre ; il fallait s'en défier comme d'un animal dangereux, il introduisait dans la vie un élément de gaieté, comme jadis les Scapin, les Sganarelle et les Frontin dans l'ancienne comédie. Un rat était trop cher : il ne rapportait ni honneur, ni profit, ni plaisir ; la mode des rats passa si bien, qu'aujourd'hui peu de personnes savaient ce détail intime de la vie élégante avant la Restauration, jusqu'au moment où quelques écrivains se sont emparés du rat comme d'un sujet neuf” (*Splendeurs et misères* p. 346)<sup>14</sup>

– Théodore de Banville, in his *Odes funambulesques* (1857; mainly written in the late 1840s) also links the term “*Rat*” to a lexicon associated with women already out of date:<sup>15</sup> “ces mots déjà caducs: rat, grisette ou lorette”. *Grisettes* (who are referenced as early as the 1660s by the fabulist, Jean de la Fontaine<sup>16</sup>) were, by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, working class young women, often employed in haberdasheries or at home, being paid by the piece whereas *lorettes* tended to work less

regularly and were particularly associated with the 1820s and 1830s.

– Théophile Gautier, presumably the wit to whom Véron alludes in his *Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris*, dedicates a whole vignette to the *Rat* in the volumes that Gavarni illustrated: *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* published in 1842 in the same year that Hetzel and Granville finished their two volume anthropomorphic bestiary -- *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux – Etudes de moeurs contemporaines* (1840-42) later referred to as *Les Animaux peints par eux-mêmes*, which included a piece on the qualities of the *Rat philosophique*. Where the bestiary humanises the animals, Gautier's description of the *rat de l'Opéra* morphologises the young girl as a male rodent after noting that she belongs to Paris like the *grisette* and the *gamin* (street urchin), was born like the latter during the July Revolution of 1830, and that the term belongs to the Parisian vernacular ("l'argot parisien").<sup>17</sup>

Gautier's comments reiterate and add to those of Roqueplan who in his *Coulisses de l'Opéra* insists that the *rats* dance whereas the *marcheuses*, who are older, do not (or rarely) only work as *marcheuses* (pp. 44-46). For Gautier, the *rat* is between the ages of eight and fourteen, – a sixteen year old being an old *rat* – and is tiny. He asks: "Est-ce le rat de l'histoire naturelle si bien décrit par Buffon? – Est-ce le rat de cave, le rat d'égout, le rat d'église? Encore moins. Le rat malgré son nom *mâle*, est un être d'un genre éminemment féminin" ("Le Rat" p. 255).<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the appellation is linked to the young dancer's instincts, those of a destructive rodent ("rongeur"), nipping with his chops, and wiggling his nose like a squirrel enjoying an almond, whose little sharp teeth on the hazelnut pralines or the bread crusts sound like mice in the walls and serve to make holes in the scenery or in the stage curtains to look out on the stage or at the theatre's public. Completely at ease in the Académie royale de musique–rue Le Pelletier, he comes and goes, running along the corridors and in the stairways or climbing onto the movable scenery. His father is generally unknown or absent and his mother is often a *figurante* herself, or a porter/concierge, and the frail *rat*'s knowledge of the world is circumscribed by the theatre, the ballets and operas, and the dance class.<sup>19</sup> Although Gautier, like Balzac, does include a short paragraph about the image of the young *rats*' debauchery and forthright language, they both, like Roqueplan and Véron, agree that they work hard, understand the importance of classes and practice, and are hoping to rise up through the ranks of the corps de ballet. Véron describes them as children with lots of pranks up their sleeves, but also reading or sewing and day-dreaming as teenagers do about love, marriage, and fashionable items for their toilette.

What I would like to suggest, is that the re-emergence in the literature of the 1840s of the dancer as "rat" was linked to the increasingly prevalent resemblances established between certain classes of humans and the animal kingdom. They fall in line with the nineteenth-century renewed interest in La Fontaine's Fables, as well as the proximity between the *études de moeurs* (the study of social comportment) and the development of such fields of study as ethology<sup>20</sup> which drew upon the work of anatomists and naturalists like Etienne Geoffroy St Hilaire<sup>21</sup> and Georges Cuvier who examined Saartjie Baartman, the South African woman often referred to as the Venus Hottentot whom the French, following on the heels of the English, exhibited in one of the earliest exploitative forms of the human zoos.

It seems that the last nineteenth-century ballerina to be publicly described as a *rat* in the press, was Emma Livry who was hired at the Opéra in 1858 and died of her burns in 1862

when her tutu caught fire as she skimmed the gas stage lights. The doctor and librarian of the Académie de Médecine, Alexis Dureau who ignores the true characteristics and age parameters of the *rat* rejoins the lexical field of ugliness and the resemblance to the animal world,<sup>22</sup> in finding her too thin with too large a mouth. Another critic for her début compared her to her mother in two lines of a quatrain: “Se peut-il qu'un rat si maigre / Soit la fille d'un chat si rond?”<sup>23</sup> Indeed by the 1860s the dancer's skinniness accentuated the discourse of her ugliness as in the ironic 1868 anonymous *Physiologie de la danseuse*, where it is suggested that the boniness of the dancers who peopled the Opéra's rich collection of bones, would serve the field of anatomy well.<sup>24</sup>

Ten years after Livry's untimely death, the ugliness of rats resurges, when in 1872, Gautier dictates to Emile Bergerat “Le Preneur de rats”, the last ballet that he devised, inspired by Goethe's poem and the Grimm brothers' 1816 tale based on the thirteenth-century legend. The libretto is refused by M. Mérante the ballet master at the Opéra who found the rat too vile to put on stage, too abhorrent a mammal into which to figuratively metamorphosise European dancers.<sup>25</sup> Yet by 1867, with colonisation and imperialisation well under way, World Fairs already occupied center stage and the second Universal Exhibition in France on the Champ de Mars displayed human beings in reconstructed villages and architectural structures that reflected the exotic traditions of the French dominions creating the debut of the human zoos.<sup>26</sup>

### **History's twists and *dédoublements*: the return of the rat**

It wasn't until the move to the Garnier Theater in 1875, that the young dance students taking lessons up in the studios beneath the roof once again became *rats*. Their footsteps that sounded like rats running across attic floors brought back into common parlance their appellation, but this time without the pejorative connotation since the adjective of endearment “petit” was added to give: *petits rats de l'Opéra*. The terminology has since been ensconced and to the present day they remain as the *petits rats de l'Opéra* even though if the school, which celebrates its three hundredth anniversary in 2013, has moved out to Nanterre, to the west of Paris.

In another twist of history, an army of mice (looking more like rats!) fighting a Nutcracker premieres in 1892 at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, in a ballet based on *Casse-Noisette et le roi des souris*, Alexandre Dumas' 1844 adaptation of E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 *Story of a Nutcracker*,<sup>27</sup> both texts whose dates correspond to the ratification of the *rat de l'Opéra* in language and in literature, in statutory practice and in an imaginary caught up with the young child learning to be a dancer, and with the animalisation of the dancer at a time of expansionism, colonialism and venture capitalism when her rights were being de-rat-ified.

(Copyright 2012, Sarah Davies Cordova)

## Notes

1. “The history of a theatre is the history of a people.” Epigraph taken from the title page of Castil-Blaze’s *Théâtres lyriques de Paris*, tome II. All translations and the paraphrasing from the French are mine throughout this paper.

2. “After each social shock, do you want to have a sense of how confidence is rebounding? Do you want to know if people are picking up where they left off, if society is afloat again, and stepping into its fashionable ways and largesse. It’s not so much to the Stock Exchange that you should go, it’s perhaps to the orchestra seats of the Opéra. When Paris starts to play again, it isn’t just a privileged class that is having fun, all the classes are profiting and prospering. Paris is then on track to save itself, and France with it (Sainte Beuve, 1849) Charles Augustin Sainte Beuve, “Lundi 15 octobre 1849. De la question des théâtres et du Théâtre-Français en particulier” *Causeries du lundi*, tome I., pp. 35-48.

3. “Louis XIV, Napoleon I, Louis XVIII, Charles X, Napoleon III all thought that the Opéra should not cede magnificence nor talented artists to the grandest theaters of Europe; that the Opéra was of public utility, that no government had consented nor would consent to close the Opéra, and that at all costs, in the complex interests of the fine arts, and of the industries that our lyric theaters sustain and allow to prosper, in the interest of Paris and of France, one had to assure the Opéra of generously calculated financial resources.

To the authority of these great names, I must add a new, fairly unexpected authority: that of Louis-Philippe (Véron, *Paris en 1860*, p. 131).

4. Castil Blaze has his own shorter variation of the Opéra’s official nomenclature with the Académie nationale de Musique for the period starting in September 1850 until its change, again to reflect Napoleon III ascension to the imperial throne, to the Académie impériale de Musique on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1852 (*Théâtres lyriques de Paris*, tome II : pp. 296-97).

5. Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple*. Paris: Hachette, 1846.

6. For information on the *peuple*, see the excellent catalogue for the exhibition at the Carnavalet: *Le Peuple de Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

7. See Louise Robin-Challan’s dissertation. Her dates indicate 1821-1841. However the hygienist Parent Du Châtelet died in 1836 and his sociological investigation *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris* appeared posthumously in 1836.

8. As indicated in the Musée Carnavalet exhibition: *Le Peuple de Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (2011).

9. They will be augmented 100 francs starting Jan 1, 1861 and each year over the course of the next four years. See for example Dureau, pp. 86-87.

10. <http://books.google.com/books?id=lbwGAAAQAAJ&q=rat#v=onepage&q=rat&f=false>. Somewhat belatedly, the Littré of 1872-77 adds at entry 6 under “RAT”: “Se dit à l’Opéra dans une sorte d’argot, des petites élèves de la danse. Demoiselle entretenue. On dit que cela vient de l’habitude d’inviter autrefois aux parties fines des demoiselles d’opéra, qu’on nommait par apocope, des ra.” (p. 228). The literary figure is not however an apocope but an apheresis.

11. “Certain outsiders call grand people *rats* even though they have nothing of the smallness or the inconsistency of this small animal; some young men of good families do not correct their parents when they speak about great thirty year-old she-devils and reproach them: *their rat de l’Opéra*.



The real *rat* [. . .], is a little girl between the ages of seven and fourteen, a dance student, who wears second hand shoes, faded shawls, soot colored hats, smells of smoke, has bread in her pockets and asks for 6 sous to buy sweets with ; the *rat* makes holes in the scenery to watch the show, gallops behind the backdrops and plays all along the hallways; he (*un Rat* in French is masculine) is supposed to earn twenty *sous* each evening, but due to the huge fines he collects because of his bad behaviour, he only earns eight to ten francs a month and thirty kicks in the behind from his mother” (*Nouvelles à la main*, p. 42).

12. The Larousse *Grand Dictionnaire universel* cites Balzac after explaining: “– Théâtre. Élève de la classe de danse, qui est en même temps figurante de l’Opéra: Certes, le *RAT*, taxé de démolir des fortunes avec le castor. (Balz.) Le *RAT* est un des éléments de l’Opéra, car il est à la première danseuse ce que le petit clerc est au notaire. (Balz.); and then borrows extensively from Théophile Gautier’s “Le Rat”.

13. “5. (1816) Petit rat de l’Opéra : jeune danseuse, jeune danseur, élève de la classe de danse de l’Opéra, employé dans la figuration” (*Petit Robert* 2011). The *Trésor de la langue française* indicates: “(Petit) rat (de l’Opéra). Jeune élève de la classe de danse souvent employé comme figurante” and cites two later works by authors Willy’s 1893 *Bains de sons* and L. Daudet’s 1935 *Médée* wherein the *rats* are ravaging the fifty and sixty year old men.

14. “One of the perversities forgotten nowadays, but customary at the beginning of this century, was the luxury of *rats*. A *rat* the word is already antiquated, referred already to a ten or eleven year old child, supernumerary at some theatre, especially at the Opéra, who was shaped by libertines for vice and infamy. A *rat* was a kind of devil’s page, a female boy who was forgiven her tricks. The *rat* could take everything: and should be distrusted like a dangerous animal, it introduced into one’s life an element of gaiety [...] A *rat* was too expensive : she brought neither honour, nor profit, nor pleasure; the *rat* fell so much out of fashion that today few people knew this intimate detail of an elegant lifestyle before the Restauration until some writers got hold of the *rat as* if it were a new subject (*Splendeurs*, p. 346). The last part of the passage was added by Balzac to the second publication of *Splendeurs et misères* after Théophile Gautier’s 1842 publication of “Le Rat” in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*. By the 1840s, Balzac is using the word “rat” as a term of affection “mon petit rat” for women, and “mon rat” for men.

15. Théodore de Banville: “Dans ces pays lointains situés à dix lieues,/ où l’Oise dans la Seine épanche ses eaux bleues,/ parmi ces saharas récemment découverts,/ quand l’indigène ému voit passer dans nos vers / ces mots déjà caducs: rat, grisette ou lorette,/ il se sent vivre, un charme impérieux l’arrête,/ et, l’oeil dans le ciel bleu, ce naturel naïf/ évacue un sonnet imité de Baïf”(Odes *funambulesques*).

16. See Jean de la Fontaine’s 1664 “Joconde ou l’infidélité des femmes.”

17. A re-edition of Gautier’s “Le Rat” appeared in a one volume version of a collection of his writing entitled *La Peau de tigre* (the tiger’s skin) in 1866, a title given in the nineteenth century to such collections regrouping various genres of texts about diverse subjects. When the *Rat* joins the ranks of *sujet* or *coryphée* Gautier adds that: “il passe tigre”. Earning his stripes, the dancer becomes tiger, a wilder more exotic animal.

18. “Is the rat the one that Buffon’s natural history describes so well? Or the one that lives in the cellar, in the drains, or the church rat? Not at all. The rat in spite of its *male* name is a being of an eminently feminine gender” (“Le Rat”).

19. “Nous pensons que le Rat a été appelé ainsi d’abord à cause de sa petitesse, ensuite à cause de ses instincts rongeurs et destructifs. Approchez d’un Rat, vous le verrez brocher des babines et faire aller son petit museau comme un écureuil qui déguste une amande, vous ne passerez pas à côté de lui sans entendre d’imperceptibles craquements de pralines croquées, de noisettes ou même de croûtes de pain broyées par de petites dents aiguës, qui font comme un bruit de souris dans un mur; comme son homonyme il aime à pratiquer des trous dans les toiles, à élargir les déchirures des décorations, sous le prétexte de regarder la scène ou la salle; mais au fond pour le plaisir de faire du dégât; il va, vient, trotte, descend les escaliers, grimpe sur les *praticables* et principalement sur les *impraticables*, parcourt et débrouille l’écheveau inextricable des corridors, du *troisième dessous*, jusqu’aux frises où l’appellent fréquemment les *paradis* et les *gloires*; lui seul peut se reconnaître dans les détours ténébreux et souterrains de cette immense ruche dont chaque alvéole est une loge et dont le public soupçonne à peine la complication” (“Le Rat p. 250). Also see the anonymous “Physiologie de la danseuse”: “Elle ignore jusqu’à la forme, jusqu’au nom du gouvernement sous lequel elle vit. Cependant elle regrette jusqu’à la *Restauration* et les pensions de retraite qu’elle avait créées à l’usage de la danse” (p. 124).

20. Ethologists study and compare the comportment of animals with that of humans.

21. Etienne Geoffroy St Hilaire was part of the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt and later accompanied the giraffe sent by the Pacha of Egypt from Marseille to Paris. Balzac would dedicate *Le Père Goriot*, his 1835 novel in the vast *Comédie humaine* (The Human Comedy), to Etienne Geoffroy St Hilaire at the same time that he was contributing his *Peines de cœur d’une chatte anglaise* to the anthropomorphic bestiary collection of short animal stories mentioned earlier that animalised the types and that Granville illustrated, and which were first entitled *Scènes de la vie privée et publique*, and then for the second edition *Les Animaux peints par eux-mêmes*.

22. According to the press of the times, as Marie Taglioni’s pupil, Livry’s superlative dancing made up for her unprepossessing physical appearance.

23. “Is it possible that such a thin rat / is the daughter of such a plump cat?” Alexis Dureau wrote : “Physiquement, elle a une grande bouche, trop grande peut-être, de grandes jambes, trop maigres” (p. 85). The two lines of the quatrain are cited widely in a variety of pages on the WEB without attribution or references to the newspaper source eg.:

[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma\\_Livry](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Livry)

24. Taglioni’s skinniness was linked to her lightness and to her arms seeming like wings. The ballet that Taglioni would choreograph for Livry as Gautier chronicles in *Le Moniteur* (2 août 1863) is *Le Papillon/The Butterfly*. And the dancer is very much of the animal or insect world as Livry becomes one with the butterfly that she incarnated in the ballet in Gautier’s notice following her funeral: “elle en avait la légèreté impondérable et son vol silencieux traversait l’espace sans qu’on entendît le frisson de l’air. Dans le ballet, le seul qu’elle ait créé, hélas ! elle faisait le rôle d’un papillon, et ce n’était pas là une banale galanterie chorégraphique. Elle pouvait imiter ce vol fantasque et charmant qui se pose sur les fleurs et ne les courbe pas. Elle ressemblait trop au papillon : ainsi que lui, elle a brûlé ses ailes à la flamme, et comme s’ils voulaient escorter le convoi d’une sœur, deux papillons blancs n’ont cessé de voltiger au-dessus du blanc cercueil pendant le trajet de l’église au cimetière.”

25. Various versions of the genesis of *Le Preneur de rats* circulated and mention of the ballet appears in two or three newspapers with Ernest Reyer’s notice being the latest in the *Journal des débats* on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1873. Halanzier, director of the Opéra (first in 1871 as interim and then from 1872 to 1879, when he assumed the position permanently) asked the opinion of M. Merante who declared that: “le rat lui semblait un animal immonde et que les abonnés n’en supporteraient point la vue sous

quelques forme qu'on la leur présentât" (*Théophile Gautier, Correspondance générale 1872 et compléments*, tome XII, p. 44)

26. Such associative similarities would be literalized and exploited with the popularisation of the human zoos that the various universal and colonial exhibitions staged.

27. Émile de la Bédollière translated Hoffmann's tale "Casse-noisette et le roi des souris" in 1838.

### Bibliography

- Anonymous. "Physiologie de la danseuse" chapitre VII in *Chanteurs, Musiciens et Danseurs*, Paris: P. Lebigre-Duquesne, 1868. 117-125.
- Balzac, Honoré de. "Peine de coeur d'une chatte anglaise". Dans *Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux : Études de moeurs contemporaines* (1841-42), ouvrage collectif in 2 vols, ed. P.J. Stahl [Hetzl], illustrations by Granville.
- . *Les Comédiens sans le savoir* (written in 1844; published in *Le Courier français* in 1846, and in 1 volume [Paris: chez Furne, 1846]).
- Castil-Blaze. *Théâtres lyriques de Paris: tome II, L'Académie impériale de Musique: Histoire littéraire, musicale, chorégraphique, pittoresque, morale, critique, facétieuse, politique et galante de ce théâtre de 1645 à 1855*. Paris: Castil-Blaze, 1855.
- Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1992.
- Dureau, Alexis. *Notes pour servir à l'histoire du théâtre et de la musique en France*. 1ère année 1860. Paris: A. Varignault, 1861.
- Gautier, Théophile. "Le Rat" *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes, encyclopédie morale du dix-neuvième siècle*, 9 volumes. Paris: L. Curmer, 1841-42. 3: 249-256.
- . "Le Preneur de rats de Hameln", ballet in 2 acts, 1872.
- . "Chroniques." *Le Moniteur* (2 août 1863).
- Lacoste-Veysseyre, Claudine, ed. *Théophile Gautier, Correspondance 1872 et compléments*, tome XII. Genève: Librairie Droz, 2000.
- La Fontaine, Jean. « Joconde ou l'infidélité des femmes » (1664).
- Larousse, Pierre. *Le Grand dictionnaire universel*. Tome treizième. Paris: 1875.
- Littré, Émile. *Dictionnaire de la langue française 1872-77*.
- Michelet, Jules. *Le Peuple*. Paris: Hachette, 1846.
- Parent du Châtelet, Alexandre. *De la Prostitution dans la ville de Paris considérée sous le rapport de l'hygiène publique, de la morale et de l'administration*. (2 vols) Paris: 1836.
- Peuple de Paris au XIXe siècle, Le*. Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 2011.
- Robert, Paul. *Le Petit Robert de la langue française*. 2011
- Robin-Challan, Louise. "Social Conditions of Ballet Dancers at the Paris Opéra in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century." *Choreography and Dance* 2: 1 (1992): 17-28.
- . "Danse et Danseuses à l'Opéra de Paris 1830-50." Thèse de 3e cycle de l'Université de Paris VII, 1983. TL (1983).
- Roqueplan, Nestor. *Les Coulisses de l'Opéra*. Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1856.
- . *Nouvelles à la main*. Tome 1. Paris: Lacombe, 20 déc. 1840.
- Sainte Beuve, Charles Augustin, "Lundi 15 octobre 1849. De la question des théâtres et du Théâtre-Français en particulier" *Causeries du lundi*, Tome I. 3e éd., Paris: Garnier Frères, 1857. 35-48.
- Trésor de la langue française – dictionnaire de la langue du XIX<sup>e</sup> et du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1789-1960). Tome quatorzième. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.
- Véron, Louis. *Paris en 1860: les théâtres de Paris depuis 1806 jusqu'en 1860*. Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1860.



## Stepping into a Spiritual Economy: Medieval *Choreomania* and the Circulation of Urban Sanctity

**Kathryn Dickason**  
Stanford University

### **Abstract**

*While the numerous eruptions of choreomania (dance mania) in medieval France, Flanders, and Germany are often included in the historiography of early dance, scholars generally reduce this phenomenon to a mass pathology. Departing from a diagnostic analysis, this project localizes and historicizes choreomania by examining its impact on the religious life of medieval cities. Despite their aberrant symptoms reported by chroniclers (stomping, gesticulating, and convulsing), choreomaniacs actually participated in more mainstream spiritual economies by activating urban piety. The paper examines how choreomania enabled a mode of spiritual currency that effectively reinvigorated pilgrimage, religious tourism, and devotion to city saints.*

Writing in the late fourteenth century, the Flemish chronicler Jean d'Outremeuse recounts a peculiar event that transpired in the city of Liège (present day Belgium):

. . . on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September in 1374, there came from the north to Liège. . . a company of persons who all danced continually. They were linked with cloths, and they jumped and leaped...They called loudly on John the Baptist and fiercely clapped their hands. Such a disturbance they did create that all who heard them were afraid, their hearts trembling with fear, and so they were driven out of Liège...For the Devil in hell was their master. . . The men were without reason and the women abandoned themselves to frivolity. All these people from various parts danced with each other. The country was full of them. . . Some of them returned to Liège, shouting and bawling and making such a din that it seemed the whole world was coming to an end. . . The attacks were such that in their homes and in secret people could not help dancing.<sup>1</sup>

According to this chronicle, an itinerant mob infiltrated the streets of Liège and danced incessantly while invoking John the Baptist. Jean d'Outremeuse asserts that the clamoring crowd served as corporeal vessels of Satan. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, numerous other chroniclers of France, Germany, and Flanders recounted a dancing plague dubbed *choreomania* (from the Greek terms *choros*, or dance, and *mania*, or madness).<sup>2</sup> The dancers' unruly jig prefigured modern medicalized understandings of *chorea*, typically defined as "a hyperkinetic movement disorder characterized by excessive spontaneous movements that are irregularly timed, randomly distributed, and abrupt."<sup>3</sup>

While the eruption of *choreomania* (dance mania) is often included in the historiography of early dance, scholars generally reduce this phenomenon to a mass pathology.<sup>4</sup> Departing from a diagnostic analysis, this project localizes and historicizes *choreomania* by examining its impact on the religious life of late medieval cities. Despite their frenetic symptoms reported by chroniclers (stomping, spinning, gesticulating, convulsing), choreomaniacs actually participated in more mainstream spiritual economies by activating urban piety. This paper reconsiders *choreomania* as a

collective manifestation of religious expression that diachronically evolved from an aberrant to acceptable means of accessing the divine. In my examination of the evidence, I hope to show how *choreomania* enabled a mode of spiritual currency that effectively reinvigorated the ritual labor of local clergy, the popularity of urban pilgrimage, and the devotion to city saints.

The first ramifying, and perhaps most perplexing, outbreak of medieval *choreomania* began in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen, Germany) on July 15, 1374. Over the next four months, these dancers migrated to Cologne, Flanders, the Rhineland, Liège, and Trier, infecting others along the way.<sup>5</sup> The archival sources for 1374 portray choreomaniacs as helplessly unholy: “Thus there they danced and leaped. They had been besieged by demons. When the evil spirit descended to their legs, they could not help dancing and leaping; when it moved up into the belly they suffered great pain.”<sup>6</sup> Conversely, another chronicle claims that the dancers, following their exertion, received divine visions: “They see the Son of Mary and the heavens open.”<sup>7</sup> Perhaps more ambivalently, the Dutch chronicler Petrus de Herenthal reports that “the people danced and leaped violently. One lightly touched another’s hand, then shrieked. ‘Frisch, Friskes,’ women and men cried it with joy.”<sup>8</sup> (The word *frisk*, from the German *frisch*, referred to the whooping cough or other maladies marked by epileptic and convulsive mannerisms).<sup>9</sup> Hence, even the earliest documentation depicts choreomaniacs as (literally) dancing between demon/deity, anguish/bliss, and decay/vigor.

While choreomaniacs produced enough of an urban disturbance to appear in city chronicles, clerics did not brand them as heretics, given the apparently involuntary nature of their dancing (sin generally requires evil intent). Instead, the observers of 1374 classified the choreomaniacs as demonically possessed, or demoniacs. Demoniacs played a role in Christian history since biblical times, while cases of female demoniacs were common in the Late Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> For example, in an altar painting from the late fifteenth century, a hovering Saint Severin (Severinus of Noricum, d. 482) rebukes an impish, miniaturized demon, thereby foreshadowing the dispossession (literally a vomiting out of the demon) of the woman below. [Fig. 1]<sup>11</sup> Both demoniacs and choreomaniacs produced angular or indulgent gesticulations that served as visual signs of their interior malignancy. For medieval theologians, the outer gestures of the body formed an indexical relationship to the inner movements of one’s soul.<sup>12</sup> Exuding gestural dissonance, the 1374 dancers were held suspect by chroniclers and ecclesiastical authorities.

Moreover, these participants threatened civic grace by embodying the uncanny parallel between dancing and demons. As described in several late medieval sermons, the devil often disguised himself as an alluring woman whose sinuous gyrations tempted her dance partner into hell.<sup>13</sup> Manuals for preachers and confessors forewarn how dancing en masse in city streets empowered demons. For instance, in his preaching compendium (*Summa praedicatorum*) the fourteenth-century English Dominican John Bromyard narrates how a group of saintly men approached a certain city inhabited by dissolute dancers: “They saw a demon sitting upon the ramparts of the city, and when he was asked why he sat there alone he replied: ‘I do not need the help of anyone, because the entire city is obediently subject to us’ [the forces of the Devil]. Entering the city they found the population in a state of the greatest dissoluteness, that is to say dancing *caroles* [secular round dances] and occupied with diverse other entertainers. Terrified, they left

that city.”<sup>14</sup> In a late medieval manuscript of St. Augustine’s *Civitas Dei* (*The City of God*), a prophetic Christian figure proclaims the imminent fall of Rome, a consequence of the city’s sinful constitution. [Fig. 2]<sup>15</sup> Although dancers are not mentioned in Augustine’s text, the artist depicts a group of *carole*-ing devils encircling the pagans, a parody of the choric roundelay of angels.<sup>16</sup> A similar insidiousness laces the 1374 outbreak of dance mania. Since these dancers invoked St. John the Baptist, some sources blamed Salome, the seductive *saltatrix* (female tumbler) for inflicting *choreomania*.<sup>17</sup> Others report that choreomaniacs claimed to have beheld the head of St. John swimming in blood while partaking in their own *danse macabre*.<sup>18</sup>

As exemplars of faith, the clergy were more capable of demarcating sinful from sacred dance, and discerning (or diagnosing) spirits of divine or demonic possession.<sup>19</sup> When clerics tried to contain *choreomania* via exorcism, however, they experienced some initial resistance. According to Radulphus de Rivo (a deacon from Tongeren), choreomaniacs in Liège administered exorcisms on each other and began to devise homeopathic healing techniques to treat their aching appendages. In doing so they assumed quasi-clerical roles and even threatened to usurp their local priests.<sup>20</sup> Some choreomaniacs complained that the priests, due to their covert involvement with concubines, had botched their parishioners’ baptisms.

Yet despite the anticlericalism saturating these sources, Radulphus also recounted the successful exorcisms of possessed dancers [*daemonici tripudiantes*] on behalf of the local clergy.<sup>21</sup> (The term *tripudium* denotes a three-step dance that had both pagan and Trinitarian connotations).<sup>22</sup> An excerpt from another Liègeois chronicle frames clerics’ spiritual efficacy and demonic immunity in the form of a dialogue between a canon and the demon inhabiting a choreomaniac: “One of the canons interrogated a possessed person, saying: ‘Why do you enter in the body of so many people and not in that of rich people or clerics?’ The demon answered: ‘The clerics and the priests utter so many good words and prayers that we cannot enter their bodies.’”<sup>23</sup>

In their class essentialism, chroniclers repeatedly use terms like *vulgus* or *rustici* when referring to the choreomaniacs. This condescending terminology carries with it the culturally-constructed stereotypes of peasants as wayward and even anti-sacerdotal, thus forging a connection between the decadent dancers and the spiritually delinquent *rustici*.<sup>24</sup> By enacting exorcisms, Liègeois clerics repositioned choreomaniacs into an orthodox rite and circumvented the threat of urban depravity. Though still a far cry from sanctioned behavior, *choreomania* in Liège provided a source of spiritual currency that set mainstream religiosity in motion. However unruly, excessive, and elusive, the elasticity of dance mania reconstituted dance within an equilibrating economy of religious exchange, recalibrated the clergy’s interaction with the laity, and refined the relationship between *civitas terrena* (the city of man) and *civitas dei* (the city of God).

During the next epidemic wave, a disciplined variant of dance mania exerted a formative impact on urban piety. In the early fifteenth-century, Zabern (modern day Switzerland), Strasbourg, and Cologne, pilgrimage replaced rites of exorcism as a response to *choreomania*. The ancient martyr St. Vitus (d. 303) emerged as the patron saint of dancers, entertainers, and plague victims, as a consequence of his cultic activity at this time. (Hence another name for the dance, *chorea sancti viti*, or St. Vitus’ Dance). A German chronicle from Königshofen reports that Strasbourg was sieged by dancing mania in 1418.<sup>25</sup> “In Strasbourg many hundreds of men and women began to dance and

jump in the marketplace, the lanes, and the streets. Many of them went without food for days and nights until their mania subsided. The plague was called St. Vitus' dance."<sup>26</sup>

At first glance, the ascetic quality of the Strasboug dancers likens them to the flagellants, or the religious fanatics who processed through city streets (starting in Italy and moving northwestward) while performing acts of mortification. Active in the heat of the Black Death, the flagellants believed that they could redeem society by scourging their own flesh.<sup>27</sup> The public nature of this urban phenomenon is represented in a manuscript illumination of Tournai *flagellanti* from a Netherlandish chronicle. [Fig. 3]<sup>28</sup> The papacy eventually deemed the flagellants heretical and subsequently suppressed their practice, whereas choreomaniacs, although clearly a clerical concern, were malleable enough to partake in Christian rites.

Concurrent with the development of St. Vitus' Dance, city chronicles and confessional materials of the late fifteenth century began to trace a history of dance epidemics. In the famous legend of the dancers of Kölbick (a village in east Saxony), a group of men and women in 1027 insisted on dancing a *carole* in the churchyard during Christmas Eve mass. St. Magnus (the patron saint of the cathedral at Kölbick) cursed the disobedient dancers and forced them to dance without respite for a full year.<sup>29</sup> Another incident occurred at Maastricht<sup>30</sup> on June 17, 1278, in which two hundred dancers interrupted a funerary rite. Subsequently, the Moselle Bridge collapsed beneath them and caused many of the dancers to drown. These morbid tales stayed with the popular imaginary, as a woodcut from the *Nuremberg Chronicle* attests.<sup>31</sup> [Fig. 4]<sup>32</sup>

For the victims of St. Vitus Dance, pilgrimage emerged as the preferred mechanism of somato-spiritual regeneration. Wagons transported these restless zombies to St. Vitus' chapel in Zabern. Upon arrival, the dancers circumambulated the shrine that reportedly cured them.<sup>33</sup> Moving through sacred space reconnected choreomaniacs spiritually as well as topographically. Medieval cities typically privileged the location of churches. The geographical layout of Strasbourg, for instance, exemplifies the centrality of the cathedral as it looms over the entire city. [Fig. 5]<sup>34</sup> Choreomaniacs' corporeal re-centering often occurred in tandem with spatial reorientation. Rhythmically moving their bodies within the sanctioned space of the church, choreomaniacs underwent a shift from degeneracy to regeneration.

While pilgrimage in the early Middle Ages connoted a form of exile, over time (and especially following the Crusades) it morphed into an individual journey of penitence, healing, and self-reflection. Embracing the experience of earthly life as *homo viator* (humankind as wayfarer), the trope of traveling comprised a significant part of medieval selfhood, and, ideally, a gateway to salvation. Moreover, miracles reported at pilgrimage sites brought considerable prestige (and revenue) to medieval cities.

Rather than disintegrating late medieval religiosity, fifteenth century dance mania revitalized pilgrimage and the cult of local saints. Choreomaniacs embarked upon pilgrimages to churches associated with St. Vitus as well as the Virgin Mary, the most beloved healer. In fact, some of these saints' feast days occurred during Pentecost and perhaps fueled a belief on the part of choreomaniacs that the Holy Spirit inhabited their bodies. The sources suggest that the displacement of their dancing bodies from city streets to city sanctuaries disciplined the movements of their souls by redirecting them toward God. The choreomaniacs' display of saintly devotion is evident from reports of dancing in front of shrines and statues of patron saints.<sup>35</sup> For these choreomaniacs, urban



peregrinations not only sacralized their dancing bodies but reaffirmed the holiness of city saints and publicized the beneficent effects of religious tourism.

Thus, in spite of their marginal status, choreomaniacs fruitfully altered the religious history of medieval cities. In Strasbourg, Zabern, and Cologne, their kinetic performances participated in the creation of culture. As Carrie Noland has argued, the gestural capacity of the body mediates between vitalism (individual agency) and constructivism (social determinism): “kinesthetic experience, produced by acts of embodied gesturing, places pressure on the conditioning a body receives, encouraging variations in performance that account for the larger innovations in cultural practice.”<sup>36</sup>

An altar painting from Cologne Cathedral demonstrates the dynamic exchange between saints and dancers occurring alongside the dialectic of cultural determinism and intentional movement. [Fig. 6]<sup>37</sup> In this image, St. Vitus is paired with St. Valentine (the patron saint of the ‘falling sickness,’ or epilepsy). The painted plinths at their feet depict a group of choreomaniacs (left) and epileptics (right). The choreomaniacs’ bodies exude vigor and suppleness, while the epileptics lose motor control and gestural restraint. [Fig. 7]<sup>38</sup> While chroniclers identified *choreomania* as an involuntary affliction, the pictorialized dancers nevertheless exert a modicum of mastery over their movement. Pilgrims moving within the cathedral re-animated devotion to St. Vitus in a ritualized conflation of pilgrimage, procession, and dance. Once transformed into a mobile theater, the demonization of dance mania reemerged as a locus for urban sanctity. The choreomaniac-as-dancing-pilgrim offers penitential meanderings to the patron saint in exchange for physical and spiritual renewal. In this moment, *choreomania* enables a relational context in which the dancing body is acted upon by cultural forces, and enacts its own transformation. In fact, the very association between St. Vitus and dance was made possible by his devoted choreomaniacs. The system of spiritual exchange rids dance mania of its earlier deviance, and, by extension, recasts *choreomania* as a shaper of urban piety.

As the Middle Ages waned, *choreomania*’s omnipresence in European cities gradually faded.<sup>39</sup> The liveliness of these kinetic spectacles receded into cultural memory through the folklore and Romanticism of Hans Christian Andersen (“The Red Shoes”), the Brothers Grimm (“Little Snow-White”), Goethe and Robert Browning (“The Pied Piper of Hamelin”), and the Willis of *Giselle* – all highlighting figures who danced themselves to death. One particular appropriation brings this paper full circle in its use of urban ritual that de-pathologizes dance mania. The city of Echternach (present day Luxembourg) has adapted medieval *choreomania* into an annual liturgical rite. [see 2006 film]<sup>40</sup> Every Whit Tuesday (a Pentecostal holiday) the archbishop of Echternach, parish priests, monks, nuns, and laypeople execute a hop-like dance sequence accompanied by a marching band playing a popular *Springprozession* melody. This aerobic parade traverses the city and culminates in spirited steps around the Abbey of Echternach and the tomb of St. Willibrord (located in the abbey’s crypt).<sup>41</sup> St. Willibrord (d. 739), the city’s patron saint and first bishop, reportedly cured frenzied dancers. After Willibrord’s death, his local cult engaged in dance-like processions around his tomb for devotional and curative purposes.<sup>42</sup>

Departing from the manic prances of their medieval predecessors, contemporary Echternach dancers enact formalized and predictable choreographic sequences. Echternach, the oldest city in Luxembourg, pays tribute to its own past through a mass

dance ritual attracting thousands of tourists each year.<sup>43</sup> The re-embodiment of *choreomania* enables Echternach's history to be topographically mapped onto live dancing bodies. This dance simultaneously tells the story of a city's past and reimagines that history through festal effervescence. Memorializing *choreomania* foregrounds the mobilization of modern identity via dance's radical presence. As Peter Homans (coincidentally, the late father of Jennifer Homans) explains, "the ability to mourn [i.e. to encounter the past] foreshadows the advent of individuation because it is...the capacity to support oneself internally while recognizing in full conscious awareness both the collectivizing and individualizing realities within which one inevitably exists."<sup>44</sup> Dance mania, as excess par excellence, achieves its highest degree of sanctity retrospectively, when the 'here and now' gestures towards the 'there and then.' Though dance itself resists being captured, arrested, and immortalized, Echternach-in-motion erects a monument to dance mania accessible through kinesthetic memory. By recasting *choreomania* as civic consecration, the dance at Echternach celebrates the decadence (or *decadance*) of devotion, enlivens the trace tremors of the dead, and re-enchants a post-medieval age.

Copyright 2012, Kathryn Dickason

## Notes

1. Jean d'Outremeuse, *La Geste de Liège*, in *Corpus Documentorum Inquisitionis Haereticae Pravitatis Neerlandicae.*, ed. Paul Frédéricq, vol. 3 (Ghent: J. Vuylsteke, 1889-1906), 43.
2. Robert E. Bartholomew, "Rethinking the Dancing Mania," *Skeptical Inquirer* 24 (July/August 2000): 42-47.
3. J.G. Wild and S. J. Tabrizi, "The Differential Diagnosis of Chorea," *Practical Neurology* 7 (2007): 360.
4. The most influential of these studies include Justus Friedrich Karl Hecker, *The Black Death and the Dancing Mania*, trans. G. Babington (Boston: IndyPublish, 2009) [1832]; Eugène Louis Backman, *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and Popular Medicine* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977); John Waller, *A Time to Dance, A Time to Die: The Extraordinary Story of the Dancing Plague of 1518* (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2008). A few exceptions to the diagnostic trend are Gregor Rohmann, "The Invention of Dancing Mania: Frankish Christianity, Platonic Cosmology, and Bodily Expressions in Sacred Space," *Medieval History Journal*, 12:13 (2009): 13-45; Katharina Stoye, "Die 'Tanzwut'-Bewegung von 1374: Ein Phänomen auf der Grenze zwischen Individuellem Tanzwahn, Massensuggestiver Tanzepidemie, und Performativem Höhepunkt Emanzipativer Laienfrömmigkeit," in *Tanz und WahnSinn = Dance and ChoreoMania*, eds. Johannes Birringer and Josephine Fenger (Leipzig: Henschel, 2011), 62-82.
5. See *Chronicum Comitum Flandrensium*, cited in Madeleine Braekman, "La Dansomanie de 1374: Hérésie ou Maladie?" *Revue du Nord* 63, no. 249 (April/June 1981): 345.
6. *Liège Chronicle*, in Frédéricq, *Corpus*, 3:41.
7. Petrus de Herenthal, *Vita Gregori XI*, in *ibid.*, 1:232.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Braekman, "La Dansomanie de 1374," 345.
10. Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chaps. 4-5.

11. Master of Saint Severin, predella to disassembled altarpiece, German (Cologne?), c. 1470-1480.
12. Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The Ethics of Gesture," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, eds. Michel Feher et al., vol. 2 (New York: Zone, 1989), 130-31.
13. Jean Maillard, "Danse et Jugement Dernier au Bar-Sur-Loup," *Revue Belge de Musicologique* 34 (1980): 72-76.
14. Cited in Christopher Page, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Musical Life and Ideas in France, 1100-1300* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990), 113.
15. Maître François, French, c. 1469-1473, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms.fr. 18, folio 23 recto.
16. The cosmic dance was adopted from Platonic philosophy, see Françoise Syson Carter, "Celestial Dance: A Search for Perfection," *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1987): 3-17.
17. Braekman, "La Dansomanie de 1374," 343.
18. H.C. Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 32.
19. See Frédéricq, *Corpus*, 3:41; Braekman, "La Dansomanie de 1374," 351-54.
20. Radulphus de Rivo, *Gesta Pontificum Leodiensium*, in Frédéricq, *Corpus* 1:232-35.
21. Ibid.
22. This dance supposedly originated in the military training rites of ancient Rome.
23. *Chronicle Liègeois*, in Frédéricq, *Corpus* 5:42.
24. Braekman, "La Dansomanie," 348-50; Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 137-38; Arlene Pearsall, "Johannes Pauli and the Strasbourg Dancers," *Franciscan Studies* 52 (1992): 206.
25. Not to be confused with Strasbourg epidemic of 1518, see Waller, *A Time to Dance*.
26. Cited in F. Rust, *Dance in Society*, 20.
27. Hecker, *The Black Death and the Dancing Mania*, chaps. 4-5.
28. Miniature from *Chronicle of Aegidius Li Muisis*, Flemish, 1353, Library of Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 13076-77, folio 16 verso.
29. Ingrid De Geer, "Commentary on the Legends of Saint Magnus," in *St. Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 264-67.
30. Or Utrecht, depending on the source.
31. Cf. the Maastricht edict that forbade dancing in public, especially within the church, Frédéricq, *Corpus*, 3:44.
32. Hartmann Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle (Liber Chronicarum)*, German, 1493, folio 217.
33. Cited by Rolf Sprandel, "Tripudiabant Fortiter ad Instar Chorsancium: Ein Chronikalischer Bericht des Jahres 1374," in *Das Andere Wahrnehmen: Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte: August Nitschke zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*, eds. August Nitschke et al. (Köln: Böhlau, 1991), 779-82.
34. Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle*, fols. 139 verso/140 recto.
35. For sources on the singing and dancing of medieval pilgrims, see Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, C.700-C.1500* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 156-62.
36. Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2-3.
37. Reproduced in Waller, *A Time to Dance*, 89.
38. Reproduced in *ibid.*, 91.
39. However, the Italian offshoot of *choreomania*, known as tarantism, persisted for several centuries. See R. Bartholomew, "Tarantism, Dance Mania, and Demonopathy: The Anthro-

Political Aspects of ‘Mass Psychogenic Illness’ *Psychological Medicine* 24, no. 2 (May 1994): 281-306; Jerri Daboo, *Ritual, Rapture, and Remorse: A Study of Tarantism and Pizzicata in Salento*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); Karen Lüdtké, *Dances with Spiders: Crisis, Celebrity, and Celebration in Southern Italy*, (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books), 2009.

40. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&feature=endscreen&v=cl4PoVGFYA4>
41. It is noteworthy that a medieval manuscript from the Echternach scriptorium (affiliated with the abbey) contains the dancers of Kölbigk legend, Krack, “Relicts of Dancing Mania: The Dancing Procession of Echternach,” *Historical Neurology* 53, no. 9 (1999): 2169.
42. The story of St. Willibrord is linked to the legend of a man named Vitus (and later became conflated with St. Vitus), who cured his devotees of involuntary dancing, *ibid.*, 2169-72.
43. *Ibid.*, 2169; Matthew Russell, “The Leaping Procession at Echternach,” in *The Irish Monthly*, 14, no. 155 (May 1886): 259; Erika Bourguignon, “Trance Dance,” *Dance Perspectives* 35 (Autumn 1968): 16.
44. Peter Homans, *The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 278.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank Tanya Luhrmann (Anthropology, Stanford University), who encouraged me to explore dance mania from perspectives that go beyond a mere diagnosis of the symptoms. Max Harris (Humanities Council, University of Madison-Wisconsin) and my advisor, Hester Gelber (Religious Studies, Stanford University), provided insightful questions and suggestions during an earlier phase of this research. Wilhelm Petig (German, Stanford University) kindly assisted me in translating the German source material. Finally, I extend my sincere gratitude to Janice Ross (Dance and Drama, Stanford University), for her steadfast support and illuminating commentary as I traverse the largely uncharted terrain of medieval dance history.

### Bibliography

- Acocella, Joan. *Creating Hysteria: Women and Multiple Personality Disorder*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.
- Acting on the Past: Historical Performances across the Disciplines*. Franko, Mark, and Annette Richards, eds. Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.
- Alexander, Jonathan J.G. “Dancing in the Streets.” *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*. 54 (1996). pp. 147-162.
- Arano, Luisa Cogliati. *The Medieval Health Handbook: Tacuinum Sanitatis*. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1976.
- Arcangeli, Alessandro. “Dance and Health: The Renaissance Physicians ‘View.’” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*. 18:1 (2000). pp. 3-30.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Dance and Punishment.” *Dance Research*. 10:2 (Autumn 1992). pp. 30-42.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Dance under Trial: The Moral Debate 1200-1600.” *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*. 12:2 (1994). pp. 127-155.
- Attisani, Antonio. “Franciscan Performance: A Theatre Lost and Found Again.” House, Jane, trans. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. 25:1 (Jan. 2003). pp. 48-60.

- Aubert, Geneviève. "Charcot Revisited: The Case of Brueghel's Chorea." *Archives of Neurology*. 62 (2005). pp. 155-161.
- Backman, Eugène Louis. *Religious Dances in the Christian Church and Popular Medicine*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Iswolsky, Helene, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. [1941]
- Bartholomew, Robert. E. "Rethinking the Dancing Mania." *Skeptical Inquirer*. 24 (July/August 2000). pp. 42-47.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Tarantism, Dancing Mania, and Demonopathy: The Anthro-Political Aspects of 'Mass Psychogenic Illness.'" *Psychological Medicine*. 24:2 (May 1994). pp. 281-306.
- Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*. Goellner, Ellen W., and Jacqueline Shea Murphy, eds. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Bourguignon, Erika. "Suffering and Healing, Subordination and Power: Women and Possession Trance." *Ethos*. 32:4 (2004). pp. 557-574.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Trance and Ecstatic Dance. *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Dils, Ann and Ann Cooper Albright, eds. Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. pp. 97-102.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Trance Dance*, printed in *Dance Perspectives*. 35 (Autumn 1968).
- Braekman, Madeleine. "La Dansomanie de 1374: Hérésie ou Maladie?" *Revue du Nord*. 63:249 (Apr./Jun. 1981). pp. 339-355.
- Brand Auraban, Aron. "The History of St. Vitus' Dance." *Koroth*. 6:11-12 (1975). pp. 707-718.
- Brantley, Ben. "Dance-Struck Little Girls: Run! Run in Horror!," *The New York Times*. Nov. 23, 2010.
- Brown, Peter. *The Cult of Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Metamorphosis and Identity*. New York: Zone Books, 2001.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective." *Critical Inquiry*. 22:1 (Autumn, 1995). pp. 1-33.
- Caciola, Nancy. *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 42:2 (April 2000). pp. 268-306.
- Camille, Michael. *Images on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Cantor, Norman F. *In the Wake of the Plague: The Black Death and the World it Made*. New York: The Free Press, 2001.
- Françoise Syson Carter. "Celestial Dance: A Search for Perfection." *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*. 5:2 (Autumn 1987). pp. 3-17.
- Cartwright, Frederick F. *Disease and History*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1972.
- Charcot, J.M. and Richer, Paul. *Les Démoniaques dans l'Art*. Amsterdam: B.M. Israël, 1972.

- Choreographing History*. Foster, Susan Leigh, ed. Bloomington : University of Indiana Press, 1995.
- Cianflone, Mary. *Fear and Joy in the Dance of Death: Re-Interpreting the 14th Century Plague's Artistic Genre*. Master's Thesis, University of New Mexico, 2006.
- Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture and Power*. Foster, Susan Leigh, ed. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Corpus Documentorum Inquisitionis Haereticae Pravitatis Neerlandicae*. Frédéricq, Paul, ed. Ghent: J. Vuylsteke, 1889-1906. vols I-III.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Possession at Loudun*. Smith, Michael B., trans. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Daboo, Jerri. *Ritual, Rapture, and Remorse: A Study of Tarantism and Pizzicata in Salento*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Dance as Religious Studies*. Adams, Doug, and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, eds. New York: Crossroad, 1990.
- Dance in the City*. Thomas, Helen, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Daniels, Marilyn. *The Dance in Christianity: A History of Religious Dance through the Ages*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Dawson, Lorne. "Otto and Freud on the Uncanny and Beyond." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 57:2 (Summer, 1989), pp. 283-311.
- Debarge, Louis. "De la Danse Sacrée Aux Liturgies Dansantes." *Mélanges de Science Religieuse*. 49:4 (1992), pp. 143-161.
- Dickson, Arthur. "Browning's Source for 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin.'" *Studies in Philology*. 23:3 (1926). pp. 327-336.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003.
- Dirckx, John H. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin: A Medical-Historical Interpretation." *The American Journal of Dermatopathology*. 2.1 (1980). pp. 39-45.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006.
- Elliott, Dyan. *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture In the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Esterianna, Leah, et al. "Dancing Mania." *Letter of Dance*. 3. (1993). pp. 1-3.
- Farmer, Sharon. *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Jain, Saskya Iris, trans. Routledge: New York, 2008.
- Foucault, Michel. *History of Madness*. Khalfa, Jean, ed. Murphy, Jonathan, and Khalfa, Jean, trans. Hacking, Ian, foreword. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Framing Medieval Bodies*. Rubin, Miri, and Kay, Sarah, eds. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Freedman, Paul. *Images of the Medieval Peasant*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*. Rieff, Philip, intro. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991. pp. 161-178.
- De Geer, Ingrid. "Commentary on the Legends of Saint Magnus." *St. Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. Crawford, Barbara E., ed. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988. pp. 268-271.
- Gertsman, Elina. "Visualizing Death: Medieval Plagues and the Macabre." *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*. Mormando, Franco, and Worcester, Thomas, eds. Kirksville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2007. pp. 64-89.
- Getz, Faye Marie. "Black Death and the Silver Lining: Meaning, Continuity, and Revolutionary Change in Histories of the Medieval Plague." *Journal of the History of Biology*. 24.2 (1991). pp. 265-289.
- Gil, José. "Paradoxical Body." Lepecki, André, trans. *The Drama Review*. 50:4 (Winter 2006). pp. 21-35.
- Good, Byron J. *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*. The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1990. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Hecker, Justus Friedrich Karl. *The Black Death and the Dancing Mania*. Babington, G., trans. Boston: IndyPublish, 2009. [1832]
- Homans, Peter. *The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Isar, Nicoletta. "Chorography (*Chôra*, *Chorós*) – A Performative Paradigm of Creation of Sacred Space in Byzantium." *Hierotropy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. Lidov, Alexei, ed. Moscow: Indrik, 2006. pp. 59-90.
- Jonte-Pace, Diane. "At Home in the Uncanny: Freudian Representations of Death, Mothers, and the Afterlife." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 64:1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 61-88.
- Kleinschmidt, Harald. "The Transformation of Perception in the Early Eleventh Century: Dance Historical Records from the Village of Kölbick in East Saxony." *Perception and Action in Medieval Europe*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005. pp. 42-56.
- Kourlas, Gia. "Distorting Everyday Actions, with Movements Awkward and Active." *The New York Times*. October 20, 2010.
- Krack, Paul. "Relicts of Dancing Mania: The Dancing Procession of Echternach." *Historical Neurology*. 53:9 (1999). pp. 2169-2172.
- Kuryluk, Ewa. *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex. The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987.
- Ladner, Gerhart B. "Homo Viator: Medieval Ideas on Alienation and Order." *Speculum*. 42:2 (1967). pp. 233-259.
- Laing, Ronald David. *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1960.
- Lambek, Michael. *Human Spirits: A Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte*. Cambridge, New York, et al., 2009. [1981]
- Lilley, Keith D. "Cities of God? Medieval Urban Forms and Their Christian Symbolism." *Transactions of the Institutes of British Geographers*. 29:3 (Sept. 2004). pp. 269-313.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Urban Life in the Middle Ages, 1000-1450*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002.
- Lüdtke, Karen. *Dances with Spiders: Crisis, Celebrity, and Celebration in Southern Italy*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books 2009.
- “The Leaping Procession at Echternach.” *The Irish Monthly*. Russell, Matthew, ed. 14:155 (May 1886). pp. 257-260.
- Macaulay, Alastair. “Two Top Giselles, Back to Back.” *The New York Times*. May 29, 2011.
- Maillard, Jean. “Danse et Jugement Dernier au Bar-Sur-Loup.” *Revue Belge de Musicologie*. 34 (1980-81), pp. 72-80.
- The Makings of Dr. Charcot's Hysteria Shows: Research through Performance*. Hunter, Dianne, ed. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1998.
- Mannyng, Robert. *Handlyng Synne*. Sullens, Idelle, ed. Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983.
- Marshall, Louise. “Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy.” *Renaissance Quarterly*. 47.3 (1994). pp. 485-532.
- Martin, Alfred. “History of Dancing Mania.” *American Journal of Clinical Medicine*. 30 (1923). pp. 265-271.
- Massip, Francisc, and Lenke Kovacs. “Les Franciscains et le Genre Macabre: Les Danses de la Mort et la Predication.” *European Medieval Drama*. 8 (2004). pp. 91-105.
- McAlister, A.H. “The Dancing Pilgrims at Muelebeek.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*. 32:3 (1977). pp. 315-319.
- McCarren, Felicia. *Dance Pathologies: Performance, Poetics, Medicine*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Mews, Constant J. “Liturgists and Dance in the Twelfth Century: The Witness of John Beleth and Sicard of Cremona.” *Church History*. 78:3 (2009). pp. 512-548.
- Midelfort, H.C. Eric. *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Nicholas, David. *The Later Medieval City, 1300-1500*. London: Longman, 1997.
- Noland, Carrie. *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- O’Neill, Daniel. “Etiology of the Dancing Plague.” *InterCulture: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 2:3 (Fall 2005). pp. 7-12.
- Page, Christopher. *The Owl and the Nightingale: Musical Life and Ideas in France, 1100-1300*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990.
- Paracelsus. *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim, Called Paracelsus*. Sigerist, Henry E., et al., trans. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Park, R.H.R., and Park, M.P. “Saint Vitus’ Dance: Vital Misconceptions by Sydenham and Bruegel.” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. 83 (Aug. 1990). pp. 512-515.
- Pearsall, Arlene Epp. “Johannes Pauli and the Strasbourg Dancers.” *Franciscan Studies*. 52 (1992). pp. 203-214.



- Phelan, Peggy. "Dance and the History of Hysteria." *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*. Foster, Susan Leigh, ed. London and New York, Routledge, 1996. pp. 90-105.
- Plato. *Plato: The Complete Works*. Cooper, John M., ed. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Reynolds, Roger E. "The Drama of Medieval Liturgical Processions." *Revue de Musicologie*. 86:1 (2000). pp. 127-142.
- Riché, Pierre. "Danses Profanes et Religieuses dans le Haut Moyen Âge." *Histoire Sociale, Sensibilités Collectives et Mentalités. Mélanges Robert Mandrou*, Paris, 1985. pp. 159-167.
- Rohmann, Gregor. "The Invention of Dancing Mania: Frankish Christianity, Platonic Cosmology, and Bodily Expressions in Sacred Space." *Medieval History Journal*. 12:13 (2009). pp. 13-45.
- Rosen, George. *Madness in Society. Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness*. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.
- Rouget, Gilbert. *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations of Music and Possession*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- Rust, Frances. *Dance in Society*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Sachs, Curt. *World History of the Dance*. Schönberg, Bessie, trans. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1937.
- Schmitt, Jean-Claude. "The Ethics of Gesture." *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*. Feher, Michel, et al., eds. Part Two. New York: Zone, 1989. pp. 129-147.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries." *A Cultural History of Gesture*. Bremmer, Jan, and Herman Roodenburg, eds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. pp. 59-70.
- Schneider, Rebecca. "Performance Remains." *Performance Research*. 6:2 (2001), pp. 100-108.
- Schroeder, Jean. "Zur Herkunft der Älteren Fassung der Tanzlegende von Kölbick." *Litterae Medii Aevi: Festschrift für Johanne Autenrieth zu ihrem 65. Geburtstag*. Autenrieth, Johanne, Michael Borgolte, and Herrad Spilling, eds. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1988. pp. 183-189.
- Sear, H.G. "Music and Medicine." *Music and Letters*. 20:1 (Jan. 1939). pp. 43-54.
- Sluhovsky, Moshe. "The Devil in the Convent." *American Historical Review*. 107:5 (Dec. 2002). pp. 1379-1411.
- Sprandel, Rolf. "Tripudiabant Fortiter ad Instar Chorsancium: Ein Chronikalischer Bericht des Jahres 1374." *Das Andere Wahrnehmen: Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte: August Nitschke zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet*. Nitschke, August, Martin Kintzinger, Wolfgang Stürner, and Johannes Zahlten, eds. Köln: Böhlau, 1991. pp. 777-786.
- Stevens, John. *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050-1350*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Strasser, Gerhard F. "Sankt Vitus oder der Heilige Veit, der Veitstanz und 'die von der Tarantel Gebissenen.'" *Herrscher, Helden, Heilige*. Müller, Ulrich, Werner Wunderlich, and Lotte Gaebel, eds. St. Gallen: UVK, Fachbuchverlag für Wissenschaft und Studium, 1996. pp. 557-565.

- Sumption, Jonathan. *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God*. Mahwah, New Jersey: HiddenSpring, 2003. [1975]
- Tamm, Marek. "Saints and the Demoniacs: Exorcist Rites in Medieval Europe (11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries)." *Folklore*. 23 (2003). pp. 7-24.
- Tanz und WahnSinn = Dance and ChoreoMania*. Birringer, Johannes, and Josephine Fenger, eds. Leipzig: Henschel, 2011.
- Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Verhulst, Adrian E. *The Rise of Cities in Northwest Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Viegas, Jennifer. "'Dancing Plague' and other Odd Afflictions Explained." *Discovery News*. Aug. 1, 2008.
- Vigarello, Georges. "The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Chivalry." *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*. Feher, Michel, et al., eds. Vol. 2. New York: Zone, 1989. pp. 148-199.
- Waller, John. "Dancing Death." *British Broadcasting Corporation*. September 12, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Falling Down." *The Guardian*. 18 September 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Looking Back: Dancing Plagues and Mass Hysteria." *The Psychologist*. 22:7 (July 2009). pp. 644-647.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Time to Dance, A Time to Die: The Extraordinary Story of the Dancing Plague of 1518*. Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2008.
- Webb, Diana. *Medieval European Pilgrimage, C.700-c.1500*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002.
- Webb, Ruth. *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "'Where there is Dance there is also the Devil: Ancient and Modern Representations of Salome.'" *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World: Responses to Greek and Roman Dance*. Macintosh, Fiona, ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. 123-144.
- Wild, J.G. and Tabrizi, S. J. "The Differential Diagnosis of Chorea." *Practical Neurology*. 7 (2007). pp. 360-373.
- Winternitz, Emanuel. *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Kathryn Dickason  
Department of Religious Studies, Stanford University  
450 Serra Mall Main Quad, Building 70  
Stanford, CA 94305-2165  
[dickason@stanford.edu](mailto:dickason@stanford.edu)

## **Dancing through the archives in Reggio Emilia: tracing the heritage of Aterballetto and William Forsythe within the *Teatro Romolo Valli* Archives**

***Kathrina Farrugia***

Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance, London

### ***Abstract***

*This paper traces a personal journey through performance histories as I explore the impact of concert dances located in the archives of Teatro Romolo Valli in northern city of Reggio Emilia in Italy. The performance histories embedded in the wealth of film recordings choreograph a historical space that fosters the embodiment of ideas and philosophies of dance makers. I will explore the creative relationships between Aterballetto and William Forsythe between 1984 and the subsequent ten years. Fourpointcounter (Forsythe, 1996), performed by Aterballetto, provides insights into the heritage of (dis)placed dance heritage across the creative spaces of this city.*

### **Introduction**

The work and reputation of William Forsythe need no introduction; many scholars and critics have shaped their writing through the interpretation and critical analyses of the subject matters of his ballets, the choreographic treatment of movement and the choreographic form as well as his experimentation and deconstruction of theories and concepts within the theatricalised form (Nugent, Sulcas, Driver (ed), Spier, Gilpin etc). Nonetheless, I would like to share some hidden and unwritten histories of his association with a regional Italian ballet company and a town in Northern Italy that traces back to the early 1980s. In this way, I draw upon the epistemological points raised by the Latin(o) American scholar Diana Taylor (2003), where the invisibilised digital performances provide historiographic tensions: “Whose stories, memories and struggles might become visible? (p. xviii). Similarly, the process of retracing choreographic legacies infers what Andre Lepecki (2004) describes as “a matter of delicate excavation” (2004, p. 4). The excavation process in the research period for this paper became a personal history, moving through these archived and digital materials, as I explored the archived relationships between Aterballetto and Forsythe between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s.

### **Reggio Emilia and Aterballetto: tradition, innovation and the archive**

The tradition and passion for dance has inhabited the city of Reggio Emilia since the sixteenth century. Through its topographic location outside the academic centres of Rome and Milan, this regional town offers a favourable position amidst the surrounding

creative spaces of Parma and Modena– the hometowns of composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813 - 1901) and tenor Luciano Pavarotti (1935 - 2007). As Daniela Carnevali argues, the political reforms in Italy during the 1950s impacted Reggio Emilia as an ideal space for the emancipation of political, cultural and artistic values and practices. Named after a famous Italian actor, Teatro Romolo Valli is an eclectic performance space showcasing opera, dance, theatre dance and music concerts. I first became aware of the theatre archives in 2005 as I began researching the work of Mauro Bigonzetti and Angelin Preljocaj. The performance histories embedded in the theatre archives boast a wealth of film recordings of dance performances from the late 1970s. Throughout my visits to the archives, I began to consider the archives as a historical space, through which the embodiment of ideas and philosophies of dance makers associated with works created during the middle of the twentieth century and recent times were captured on film. I vividly remember my excitement when I discovered a recording of a 1985 rehearsal in which Glen Tetley rehearsed Italian dancers of in *The dream of the Shaman* (1985), created for Aterballetto.

As Carnevali asserts, Aterballetto's philosophy was rendered through its a pioneering spirit, away from the 'academic' centres of Rome and Milan. This geographic and artistic distance prevailed in its mission to foster and promote new choreographic identities. Moreover, the municipality of Reggio Emilia presented the new company an ideal creative space; the cultural emancipation of political and cultural regions following political reforms in Italy during the 1950s highlights the acceptance, approval and support for this small but equally eclectic ballet company. The repertoire presented by Aterballetto, steering away from the large corps de ballet productions of classics such as *Giselle* (Perrault, 1842) and *Sleeping Beauty* (Petipa, 1890) produced by Teatro La Scala Milan or the Rome Opera Ballet. Aterballetto challenged the cultural stagnation that evolved out of the post-1920s era and reinforced the 'American invasion' of the 1950s as a result of Giancarlo Menotti's Festival of the Two Worlds at Spoleto and the International Dance at Nervi in 1958.

The early repertoire of Aterballetto was choreographed by Italian choreographer Amedeo Amodio (b.1940), Aterballetto's second artistic director (1979 -1997). Amodio recreated many classic ballets such as *Pulcinella* and *The Nutcracker*. However, Amodio's momentous strategies included the importation of twentieth-century forms of ballet, modern and post-modern dance through stagings of works by George Balanchine (1904 – 1983), Antony Tudor (1909 -1987) and Hans van Manen (b. 1932). The company's invitations included collaborations with Glen Tetley (1926 – 2006), Alvin Ailey (1931 – 1989), Lucinda Childs (b.1940) and William Forsythe (b. 1949). I suspect, and hasten to add that I haven't come across any source so far, that the connection between Forsythe and Aterballetto grew out of the connections with Tetley and Stuttgart Ballet. Subsequently, Forsythe's frequent visits to Aterballetto promoted the increasingly influential sensitivity that grew out of his early choreographic practices from the late 1970s and mid-1980s and 1990s) (Anon 1989 p.3).

### An invitation to work with Aterballetto and the creation of *Artifact II* (1985)

Forsythe first staged the Joffrey Ballet commissioned *Lovesongs* (1979) for Aterballetto in 1984 and returned the following year to stage a short amalgamation of sections of duets from Ballet Frankfurt's *Artifact*, Forsythe's first major work as the company director. *Artifact 2* (1985) was first performed on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1985 at Teatro Valli, just a month following the world premiere of *Artifact* and many of you might have seen a subsequent version of this short 17minute ballet. Subsequently restaged and known as *Steptext* for the Royal Ballet (1993) and, across the years performed by other European/international companies, this 1985 ballet was created for four Aterballetto dancers led by prominent ballerina Elisabetta Terabust (b.1943) and three other male dancers including a young, twenty-four year old, Mauro Bigonzetti.



**Fig.1** Photograph of the cast in rehearsal, *Artefact II/Steptext* © Ferrari 1985

Throughout my doctoral research, I frequently argued for the connections between the work of Forsythe and Bigonzetti. During a conversation held in Reggio Emilia in May 2009, Bigonzetti outlined the impact of Forsythe's visit in the mid-1980s and the choreographic inventions that he explored the restaging and reformulating of the extracts from Parts two and three of *Artifact*. The proliferation of the creative possibilities surrounding the organisation of the choreographic form and movement vocabulary suggest the impact that Forsythe's thinking had on Bigonzetti. Of course, such a statement can be explored through the historical trajectories that lie embedded within the photographic and digital records of Teatro Valli. As I surveyed and analysed the archived documents, the process of excavating and unearthing the choreographed storied became a tangible experience.

### Ballet Frankfurt's first tour to Reggio Emilia (1986)

Forsythe first brought the Ballet Frankfurt to Reggio Emilia in May 1986; the dancers of the early company included Elizabeth Corbett, Stephen Galloway, Amanda Miller, Antony Rizzi and Ana Catalina Roman. The company presented two evenings of mixed programmes. The programme notes and recordings of the performances at Teatro Valli suggest the selection of dance works. Here are some images from an abridged version of *France/Dance* (a homage to George Balanchine and the seminal *Apollon Musagète* (1928)), *Skinny*, a collaboration between Forsythe and Amanda Miller, and a *Lovesongs*-esque ballet called *Say Bye Bye* (1980), largely a commentary on human relationships and the psychology of the frenetic lives in New York. Two other works alternated on different nights: *Time cycle*, a Tanztheater-inspired ballet for four female dancers, and *Artifact III* (extracts from the final part of *Artifact*, the full length ballet).

In her programme notes from 1986, Marinella Guatterini (1986) describes *Skinny* as a performance of “brutal energy, charged with vitality and speed” as a referent to Balanchine’s heritage. Nonetheless, it is *France/Dance* that provided the opening introductions to the homage of Balanchine’s influences on Forsythe and the concept of evolution and proliferation in the theatricality of Forsythe’s early works. Of course, many writers such as Roslyn Sulcas have accounted this homage in several publications (in Driver 2003; in Spier 2011). Nonetheless, this spectrum of works was the introduction of Forsythe the performance-maker to the audiences of Reggio Emilia and the creative artists located in this creative space in 1986. Ballet Frankfurt’s visits became a regular feature at Teatro Valli throughout the 1990s and several of Forsythe’s masterpieces, now as choreographic memories of the past, are now located in the archives.

### Ballet Frankfurt performances at Teatro Valli (mid-1980s to late 1990s)

<b>1986</b>	<i>France/Dance, Skinny, Say Bye Bye, Time cycle and Artifact III</i>	Performed on 06/05/1986
<b>1989</b>	<i>Artifact</i> <i>Impressing the Tzar</i>	performed on 26/09/1989 performed on 26/09/1989
<b>1990</b>		
<b>1991</b>	<i>Limb's theorem II : (Enemy in the figure) , New Sleep</i>	performed on 02/03/1991
<b>1992</b>		
<b>1993</b>	<i>Alie/na(c)tion</i>	performed on 07/01/1993
<b>1994</b>		
<b>1995</b>	<i>Eidos: Telos</i>	performed on 08/12/1995
<b>1996</b>	<b>première of <i>Pivot House</i></b> as part of triple bill: <i>Herman Schmerman, Pivot House</i> and <i>Quintett</i>	performed on 15/12/1994
<b>1998</b>	<i>Workwithinwork . Quartette</i>	performed on 08/11/1998

[I hasten to add that the Forsythe Company is also a regular feature in Reggio Emilia; having recently performed *Yes we can* (2008) at Teatro Valli in April 2012, Reggio Emilia was also the location where Forsythe granted me permission to bring many of the materials you see today in this presentation!]

### **Evolving, (re)connecting and (re)shaping: *Four point counter* (1996)**

During the 1990s, a second interjection of histories that shape Forsythe's choreographic career and that of Aterballetto. Forsythe staged *Four point counter* (Forsythe, 1996) for Aterballetto. Set to music by Thom Willems and costumes by Stephen Galloway, the ballet was originally created for Netherlands Dans Theater in 1996 and later performed by the Ballett Frankfurt as part of a programme called *Six Counter Points* (a mixed programme that included *Approximate Sonata* and *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*). A recording of a performance that took place at an open-air theatre in the city of Cremona in July of 1996, made its way into the archives of Teatro Valli through a donation from Aterballetto. Performed by four Aterballetto dancers, namely Stefania Brugnolini, Orazio Caiti, Giuseppe Calanni and Loris Zambon, the performance provides unique insights into the (dis)placed dance heritage across the archives and the subsequent decade of evolving and (re)shaping of Forsythe's choreographic developments as well as a (re)connection with Aterballetto.

Observing the ballet, it becomes very apparent that the choreographic tools of lines, writing and re-organisation underpin the logical structures across the 16minute ballet. Accompanied by a composition by Thom Willems and costume designs by Galloway, the ballet is infused with problem-solving and choreographic permutations: a point is established; the dancers move away in counterpoint; they return to specific moments; they agree to wait for each other; they connect, undo the material and then reconnect; and so forth. These choreographic features are elucidated in *Improvisation Technologies* CD-ROM as well as through a close analysis of early Forsythe ballets such as *Artifact*, *The Loss of Small Detail* (1991) and *Eidos: Telos* (1995).

As Dana Caspersen suggests in her contribution to Senta Driver's special edition of *Choreography and Dance* (2000), the catalytic operations are "tools which are for the playful mind" (Caspersen in Diver 2000, 28). One of Caspersen's descriptions struck me as a parallel metonymic feature: "Bill would ask us to collide specific sequences; I would try to do one while Thomas (McManus) was doing another with his arm around my arm and his right leg between my legs. The resulting movements became duets. In this case, the movement that occurred naturally from Thomas and me dancing together". As I returned to *Four point counter*, it is very tempting to view this ballet as a series of 'operations'. [VIDEO PRESENTATION]

### **Conclusions**

As I made my way through the historical spaces and depths of theatre archives, the act of 'excavating' Forsythe's legacies in the archives presented a plethora of choreographed histories of Teatro Valli and Reggio Emilia. These sources of performance histories offer unique and visibilised insights into the role of Reggio Emilia and a collision of documents that suggest the presence of Forsythe, Ballet Frankfurt and Aterballetto throughout the last two decades of the twentieth century. Through the archives of Teatro Valli, the dance and the city have rendered a multi-layered set of histories that tap into the performative and topographic space. My journey through the archives highlighted the trend-setting and trend-following characteristics across the last two decades years in

contemporary ballet. In this context, the digitalised performances allowed me to resource these histories through the archived performances. As Taylor suggests, performance “has a history, it *tells* a history and it *embodies* a history” (Taylor 2003, p. 94). Amidst the many histories associated with the work of William Forsythe, I hope that these ‘Italian narratives’ offer new insights into some of the hidden ‘stories’ that link the early years of Forsythe’s choreographic histories and the continued presence of Reggio Emilia across the last three decades of his choreographic career.

Copyright 2012, Kathrina Farrugia

### **Acknowledgements**

William Forsythe for his permission to loan copies from the Teatro Valli Archives; Dorsey Bushnell at The Forsythe Company, Stefania Catellani at Aterballetto for their assistance. A special acknowledge for Lilliana Capuccino, Theatre Archivist at the Romolo Valli Theatre, Reggio Emilia, for her support in digitising the photographic materials that lay hidden in the theatre archives.

### **Bibliography**

- Bigonzetti, M. & Farrugia, K. (2009) Conversation held on 30th May 2009 at Aterballetto Fonderia Reggio Emilia (Italy).
- Anon. (1989) *William Forsythe: Reggio Emilia Festival Danza*. - Volume 1 No 4. Reggio Emilia Archives.
- Carnevali, D. (2001) *L’Aterballetto di Amadeo Amodio*. Unpublished MA thesis. University of Studies, Parma: Faculty of Linguistics and Philosophy.
- Farrugia, K. 2012. *Transmodern Dance Practices: Mauro Bigonzetti, Angelin Preljocaj and revisions of Les Noces (1923)*. PhD thesis submitted at London Metropolitan University.
- Programme Notes (1985) *Agon, Artifact II, Pulcinella* (Balanchine. Forsythe. Amodio). Teatro Municipale Valli, Reggio Emilia.

### **Videography**

- Artifact 2* / Aterballetto choreography by William Forsythe ; musica di Johann Sebastian Bach ; costumes and design by William Forsythe ; dancers: Elisabetta Terabust, ... [et al.]. As part of *Pulcinella . Agon . Artifact 2* Performed on 12/01/1985 at the Teatro Municipale Valli
- Four point counter/* Aterballetto choreography by William Forsythe ; music Thom Willems ; lights William Forsythe ; costumes Stephen Galloway ; interpreti: Stefania Brugnolini, Orazio Caiti, Giuseppe Calanni, Loris Zambon. As part of *Bejart, Forsythe, Parsons for Aterballetto* Performed on 04/07/1996 at the Teatro Municipale Valli.

### **Address for correspondence**

Email: kfarrugia@rad.org.uk



***Hyperdance* in Tokyo:  
Urban Space as Subject in Tanaka Min's Solo Dance Practice; 1975-  
1977**

**Zack Fuller**

CUNY Graduate Center

*Tanaka Min's declaration "I don't dance in the space, I dance the space," was made in the context of his 1824-Hour Hyperdance, a series of solo dances where he explored nakedness and bisoku (extremely slow movement). In 1977 Tanaka traversed the entire length of Japan, improvising four or five performances per day in some 170 different spaces, indoors and out. While the spaces where he danced included universities, temples, gymnasiums, art galleries, tent theatres, and riverbanks, in this paper I focus on Tanaka's dances from the Hyperdance series that took place as unlicensed street performances where the audience included people who were not aware that they were watching a dance performance. These dances, which frequently resulted in police intervention and arrest, tested the limits of pedestrian "tactics" as defined by Michel De Certeau. In this paper I describe and analyze Tanaka's solo practice of developing spontaneous choreography deeply informed by the body's exposure to different physical environments, and assess the potential for improvised dance to disrupt and defamiliarize daily urban life. My paper is accompanied by video footage of Hyperdance and informed by extensive personal interviews with Tanaka himself.*

Tanaka Min's declaration "I don't dance in the space, I dance the space," emerged from a practice of site specific, solo performance that he began engaging in during the nineteen seventies. While the title of my paper refers to the *Hyperdance* series, which took place in 1977, Tanaka was actually engaged in the type of activity that he came to call *Hyperdance* as early as 1973, a turning point in his life as a dancer. There is in fact, in light of his personal philosophy, an inherent irony in singling out the dances danced under this title as being of greater significance than any of the thousands of other improvised site-specific solo dances Tanaka has performed. In the mid nineteen-eighties he was quoted as saying "For me, the life of a dancer is an uninterrupted process of performing just one endless dance."<sup>1</sup> In an interview I conducted with him in August of 2011 Tanaka stated

I have no concept of "the piece." Dance piece... Sometimes people ask me, for making a profile,<sup>2</sup> 'What is your most important *dance piece*?' Everything. I have an impression, a strong impression about this experience for example. But it's not a *piece*, it's not *finished*.<sup>3</sup>

Given both this philosophy and the embodied practice which it informs, rather than attempt to recreate or fully describe specific performances, my aim here is to identify specific tactics that Tanaka was engaged with in his *Hyperdance* period, tactics that he

has continued to deploy throughout his career. Central among these is an engagement with space, through dance, as an experimental practice.

Born in 1945, Tanaka Min trained in ballet, yoga, and the modern dance technique of the Martha Graham.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1960's and early 70's he had a successful career in Tokyo as a modern dancer with the dance company of Hiraoka Shiga.<sup>5</sup> In 1974 he abandoned this career and began a new kind of dance, using *bisoku* (extremely slow) movement, in non-traditional performance spaces, naked save for an ace bandage wrapped around his genitalia. During this time he was often arrested, though never formally charged with any crime. In 1975 he danced in this manner under the title *Dance Doings: Grassy time II*, in an unlicensed performance in the entrance passageway to Kunitachi Train Station, and was warned by police to stop dancing naked. Not heading this warning, he was arrested on numerous other occasions, including in 1976 at the West Gate of the National Sports Stadium,<sup>6</sup> and in 1977 on a street in Ginza, one of the busiest shopping areas in Tokyo.<sup>7</sup> In 1977 the editors and staff of the avant-garde magazine *Yu*, including Kobata Kazue and senior editor Matsuoka Seigo, assisted him in realizing a series of performances throughout Japan. Tanaka began calling his dance *Hyperdance*, and from October 8 to December 22, 1977, he danced his 1824 Hour *Hyperdance* series, improvising four or five performances per day in some 150 different sites across Japan, indoors and out.<sup>8</sup> Some of these were done with the permission of an individual in charge of the space; many were in public spaces with no official permission. As noted by Odette Aslan these spaces included college campuses, temples, gymnasiums, art galleries, tent theatres, and riverbanks.<sup>9</sup> They also included stairways and city streets, a factory, an old train station, a hotel dance hall, a lumber yard, many public parks, a bulldozer, a truck, an airplane at a local airport, and *Yume-no-shima* (Dream Island), a small island in Tokyo bay that was used as a garbage dump. Approximately eighty percent of these dances took place in the Tokyo *Shuto-ken*, the greater metropolitan area of Tokyo.<sup>10</sup> While some of these were in spaces such as galleries or private apartments where people were at least expecting to see some kind of performance, many took place as unlicensed street performances where the audience included people who were not aware that they were watching a performance at all.

I would like to consider *Hyperdance* in relation to Michel de Certeau's concept of pedestrian "tactics." De Certeau proposes that while urban space is organized by the "strategies" of the local governments and technocrats who design and/or map it, those inhabiting that space are able to "reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production"<sup>11</sup> by using it in ways that it was not originally intended to be used. While De Certeau's consumer employs pedestrian tactics in ways that contest or elude the strategies imposed by those in power, obtaining a degree of personal agency through spatial practice, he is not fully aware that he is doing so. Tanaka, however, is quite conscious of the hegemonic forces that condition and restrict the body. While skeptical of the idea of dance as a practice of personal "freedom," he has often expressed his concern with what he described to Bonnie Sue Stein in 1986 as "how our bodies are controlled historically."<sup>12</sup> He has described himself as "engaged in a secret operation so that I will not be eaten up by society."<sup>13</sup> His personal philosophy and embodied practice demonstrate a belief in rigorous experimentation with the relation between the body and space, as a means of developing consciousness and personal agency.

Critical reception of Tanaka's work has been tainted by assumptions regarding his relation with the *butô* movement. Because of the context in which I am presenting this<sup>14</sup> I feel it is important to note that however we view or categorize *butô* today, in Japan in the nineteen-seventies these performances were *not* seen as *butô*, either by those who identified as *butô* dancers, or by intellectuals in Tokyo. They were seen as something quite new and distinct. At this time Tanaka had no group, he had not worked with Hijikata Tatsumi, and was in no way associated with *butô*. Harada Hiromi, in her *Butô Taizen* (*Butô Encyclopedia*), writes that Tanaka Min introduced "contemporary dance" to Japan, comparing his work to that of Anna Halprin and Judson Dance Theatre. In one of my dialogues with him, Tanaka stated that when he did eventually work with Hijikata in 1984 many people were shocked because they saw him as being "against *butô*."<sup>15</sup> Kobata Kazue, who was in 1975 one of the editors of *Yu* magazine who organized the Hyperdance tour, relates that she met Tanaka before seeing him dance and was interested in how he spoke and thought about dance. Although she knew that he was not associated with Hijikata, she still had some vague preconception that his dance might look something like "*butô*" but when she saw him "Very quietly, subtly going up the stairs" in a back bend/bridge position, it was clear that this was "a totally new kind of dance or performance."<sup>16</sup>

Something very similar to what Kobata describes is documented in Imuru Toru's film *Kodai Ryokuchi* (*Ancient Green Land*), a film that incorporates segments of different dances by Tanaka from 1975-1977. The title is from a 1958 essay by Yoshida Issui, a section of which appears in "Bodyprint: Min Tanaka; Media Information," a booklet of photos and quotations related to Tanaka's solo dance published by Body Weather Laboratories in 1981. The locations in the film include a staircase that appears to be in an apartment building, a street in front of a train station, and another street in front of or near a University. The film begins with Tanaka slowly descending an indoor staircase moving from a base position similar to a yogic bridge pose (that is, a backbend with the arms extending over the head, body supported by the hands and feet). The soundtrack is an electronic, pulsing score by Noguchi Minoru, combined with the clacking shutter sound from the film camera. Later in the film Tanaka is seen dancing in a public street, sometimes in a sitting position, sometimes lying on the ground, sometimes standing arched in a backbend.<sup>17</sup>

In *Hyperdance*, Tanaka utilized tactics previously employed by both the New York and Tokyo avant-gardes of the nineteen-sixties: minimalism, a questioning of the normative relationship between performer and audience, and the use of non-traditional performance space. In addition he was interested in developing a kind of limb independency<sup>18</sup> that he associated with the body of an infant. This combination was unprecedented in dance, as was the number and variety of different spaces explored.

Tanaka's minimalism is apparent in both his lack of costume and in his use of *bisoku* (extremely slow) movement. According to Tanaka the word *hyper* was not well known in Japan at the time. He learned it from Kobata Kazue, the aforementioned editor of *YU* who would later become his manager. Kobata explained it to him as a medical condition (as in hyperactive). When people asked him what "hyper" meant he told them (as a kind of joke) "more than super."<sup>19</sup> So for Tanaka, the name has connotations of both incredibly fast dance (as in the way "hyper" is used informally in the U.S. to mean "hyperactive") and in the more formal definition of a prefix meaning over, beyond, or above: a dance beyond dance. In

seeming contrast to the title of the dance, Tanaka appeared to be moving extremely slowly most of the time. However, his own experience was that while he seemed from the outside to be moving very slowly, inside he was moving very fast. While his outer speed seemed excruciatingly slow, he had an inner speed, not readily apparent to the average spectator, which contributed to the uncanny quality of his presence.

It is in this manipulation of time in social space that Tanaka's spatial practice differs from that of de Certeau's consumer. The pedestrian walking in the city alters space but does not alter time; he or she is in step with the proverbial hustle and bustle of urban life. For de Certeau, "The functionalist organization, by privileging progress (i.e. time), causes the condition of its own possibility-space itself-to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology."<sup>20</sup> Hyperdance alters urban time as well as space: *bisoku* movement interrupts the flow of urban life. While de Certeau makes a clear distinction between time and space, Tanaka's relation with space is deeply informed by the Japanese concept of *Ma*, in which time and space are conflated. Regarding this, Tanaka states:

Space is from time for me. That is why imagination is the history of time. Or the history of the human being is our imagination. Even if I have no (common) experience (with you), our brains have the sensation of space, I'm sure...So space is not only "space." We have many many aspects of space. Space has everything. Even if nobody is there, we have somebody. Because you watch the space, right? I watch the space ...Because my imagination does not start from me.

The manipulation of time is also apparent in Tanaka's conceptualization of the infant body. In my discussions with Tanaka in August of 2011 he stated that in the *Hyperdance* period he was interested in moving like a baby. He associates infant consciousness with the ability to move the limbs in different rhythms. This independency informs his relation with music as well. In the modern dance style that Tanaka was trained in, the dancer generally moves in time with the music. Tanaka was initially encouraged by the composer Noguchi Minoru to break that relationship, to have a rhythm independent of the music. When I suggested to Tanaka that his relation with music (in reference to a later dance with the percussionist Milford Graves) might be that of counterpoint, Tanaka referred to the term polyrhythm, which he learned from Graves: "Maybe I have a kind of polyrhythm in my body." He then related this to the idea he was developing in *Hyperdance*: "I dreamed I'd like to move my body like a baby. That means the right hand and the left arm have to have a different movement. The head has to have a different movement, the legs, the torso. I wanted to go into much more complex, complicated occasions."

Some of the *Hyperdance* performances had audiences that included people who had learned by word of mouth that Tanaka would be dancing at a certain place, as well as those who came upon the dance by accident and had to create their own context for what they were witnessing. Tanaka was interested in engaging the audience, making them active participants in the performance. He did this in part by confronting basic assumptions of the relationship between audience and performer. For a performance at an art gallery he took out all the chairs, faced them in one direction and started dancing behind them, forcing the audience to choose how to watch the dance. They were forced to

either actively move their chairs, or to stay and watch what they considered to be “the front.”<sup>21</sup>

Tanaka’s frequent arrests during this period also served to engage the audience. He would generally have at least one compatriot to witness the dance and to deal with police in case of arrest. On the occasions when he was arrested he would continue dancing, observing the conversations between the police and the onlookers.

Sometimes people would say, “that is bad,” or telephone the police. I would observe their reactions while I was dancing. Sometimes they (the police) would come and some people would say “Why is this wrong? Why is this illegal?” and they would argue about it. It was *very* interesting. ...And I kept dancing of course. Sometimes they (the police) would roll me up in a sheet and put me in the van. This itself was a *very* interesting dance.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious tactic in *Hyperdance* was the use of non-traditional performance spaces. In this practice Tanaka privileged space over his own individual creativity. He is against the idea of using the space as a background or to support the dance. Felix Guattari described Tanaka as “totally folded into his own body and, however, hypersensitive to every perception emanating from the environment.”<sup>23</sup> His practice of dance is itself a research, a way of acquiring information, experience, and stimulation from the physical environment. Referring specifically to *Hyperdance*, Tanaka wrote in 1981: “Dance is not only a medium of the place, but also its stimulator...We moved without a stop and I danced at 4-5 places a day. On my body were engraved the memory of such places. I learned a lot about the relationship between language and body—about science, phenomenology, philosophy and sociology of the body. Thus I came to know more about dance.”<sup>24</sup> The statement “I don’t dance in the space, I dance the space” privileges space itself over individual creativity. For Tanaka, exposing the naked dancing body to a variety of spaces marks the body. Knowledge of things normally considered to be in the realm of the intellect is acquired through the body. Dance is not a practice separate from science, phenomenology, philosophy, and sociology, it is both informed by them and is a means of researching them. On a more practical level this practice frees him from relying on existing institutional structures to present his dance. With *Hyperdance*, he clearly wanted to dance as much as possible, and this could not be accomplished through traditional venues.

It is clear that when considered in the larger context of his personal philosophy and embodied practice, Tanaka’s oft-quoted statement that he “dances the space,” refers to more than the observable physical environment. Like de Certeau’s concept of space as “practiced place”<sup>25</sup> Tanaka’s notion of space includes human beings and their activity, hence the need to engage them in the performance. The practice of treating space as subject subverts authorial intention in a way similar to the aleatory methods developed by John Cage and Merce Cunningham. Through the utilization of quotidian movement (sitting, standing, walking, crawling) suspended through the manipulation of time, speed, and rhythm, *Hyperdance* defamiliarized daily movement, making pedestrian tactics visible.

Copyright 2012, Zack Fuller

Zack Fuller  
 224 Hungry Hollow Rd.  
 Chestnut Ridge NY  
 10977  
 E-mail: zfuller1@verizon.net

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Sea Inside The Skin/Moře Pod Kůží*, Ondřej Hrab, Kobata Kazue, and Tsuda Yoriko, eds., (Prague: TORST, n.d.), n.p.

<sup>2</sup> Or what we would call a “bio” in the U.S.

<sup>3</sup> Tanaka Min, interview by Zack Fuller, August 8, 2011, Dance Resources on Earth, Honmura, Japan.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Marshall, “Dancing the Elemental Body: Butoh and Body Weather; Interviews with Tanaka Min and Yumi Umiumare,” *Performance Paradigm 2* (March 2006), 57  
<http://www.performanceparadigm.net/category/journal/issue-2/>.

<sup>5</sup> Harada Hiromi, “Min Tanaka (Tokasan),” in *Butoh Taizen*, (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 2004), 330.

<sup>6</sup> “Dance Log: Min Tanaka,” in *Min Tanaka: Between Mountain and Sea: Photographs by Masato Okada*, Kuniichi Uno, Kobata Kazue, and Matsuoka Seigo, (Tokyo: Kousakusha, 2007), 92.

<sup>7</sup> Misaki Eri, “Min Tanaka, ‘What is Dance?,” New York Dance Fax (September 2000), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Tanaka Min, Kobata Kazue, ed., “Bodyprint: Min Tanaka; Media Information,” (Bodyweather Laboratory: Tokyo, 1981), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Odette Aslan, “Tanaka Min,” in Odette Aslan and Béatrice Picon-Vallin, ed., *Butô(s)*, Arts Du Spectacle, (Paris: CNRS editions, 2002), 178.

<sup>10</sup> Tanaka Min, “Bodyprint, 38-41.

<sup>11</sup> Michel de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, trans., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Bonnie Sue Stein, “Min Tanaka: Farmer/Dancer or Dancer/Farmer. An Interview.” *The Drama Review 30*, No. 2 (Summer, 1986), 147.

<sup>13</sup> Tanaka Min, “I Am an Avant-garde Who Crawls the Earth,” in Ethan Hoffman, Mark Holborn, Yukio Mishima, Tatsumi Hijikata, and Haven O'More, *Butoh: Dance of the Dark Soul*. (New York: Aperture, 1987), 64.

<sup>14</sup> This paper was originally presented as part of a two-part panel on *butô*.

<sup>15</sup> Tanaka Min, interview by Zack Fuller, August 9, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Kobata Kazue, interview by Zack Fuller, October 15, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Imura Toru, *Kodai Ryokuchi (Ancient Green Land) 1975-1977*, n.d.

<sup>18</sup> Limb independency is a term normally used in reference to a percussionist’s ability to play different rhythms simultaneously using different limbs.

<sup>19</sup> Tanaka Min, interview by Zack Fuller, August 8, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 95.

<sup>21</sup> Tanaka Min, interview by Zack Fuller, August 8, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Felix Guattari, "The Architectural Machines of Shin Takamatsu," trans. Tim Adams and Catherine Howell, <http://www.jya.com/takamatsu.htm> (Accessed April 25, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Tanaka, *Bodyprint*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 117.





## **Buenos Aires is everywhere – subjectivities and territories in *TANGO ARGENTINO***

*Melanie Haller*  
*Universität Hamburg/Germany*

### *Abstract*

*Buenos Aires is, first and foremost, a city and the capital of Argentina. Within the context of the global mythologisation of danceculture, however, it is primarily the place of origin of TANGO ARGENTINO.*

*One of the principal authorities for body sociology is the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who states that body techniques are cultural techniques. What happens, however, if a cultural technique, such as TANGO ARGENTINO, spreads all over the world and no longer pertains to only one culture?*

*TANGO ARGENTINO is danced in New York, Hamburg, Istanbul, Tokyo, Seoul, Moscow, Beirut and Buenos Aires. TANGO ARGENTINO as a body technique has no territorial history, but within the context of mythologisation, it has a place of origin. In other words, TANGO ARGENTINO is a cultural hybrid, which simultaneously serves to mythicize Buenos Aires as the place of its origin (Savigliano 1995). During this mythologisation, the territory of Buenos Aires is symbolically transferred to other countries, cities and places. The key theme of this lecture is the thesis that the (de-)territorial (García Canclini 1995) transfer of tango produces de-territorialised subjectivities which are effectively a continuation of Goffman's "territories of the self" (1971).*

### **The hybrid history of *TANGO ARGENTINO***

*TANGO ARGENTINO*, this name of a dance promises a cultural and territorial origin – but in its historical lines and in the examination with the literature on tango it quickly becomes obvious, that Argentine tango always was and is a cultural hybrid. Its genesis is a constant back and forth between people, nations, continents and cultures – and for that reason alone it is from its very beginning a globalised dance. The genesis of tango is controversially discussed in the according literature, just like Marta Savigliano writes:

*“I have been struck by the very existence and magnitude of the controversy over the origins of tango. No other aspect of tango has received nearly so much local attention.” (Savigliano 1995: 159)*

Already in the beginning, tango was traversed by an interplay of different national and cultural influences. At the Río de la Plata with all the Immigrants from different countries, nations and cultures, it was only a dance in the barrios of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The global success of tango started by its export to Europe and its recognition by the upper class as an exotic dance and then only in the middle and upper class of Argentine, like Savigliano accents:

“Although tango originated in the Río de la Plata region (ca. 1880), it was only after it achieved success in the main capitals of the world (ca. 1911-1913 and again after world war I) that it gained full popularity in its original setting.” (Savigliano 1995: 137)

Again, in the beginning of the 1980ties, Argentine tango experienced a worldwide renaissance starting in Europe, Japan and almost in every country affected by the Broadway show “Tango Argentino” from Claudio Segovia & Hector Orezza in 1983 (Savigliano 1995: 190).

Due to this transfer to Europe and later to other countries, tango became Argentine tango and its suppression of the Uruguayan origin as part of the history (Savigliano 1995) made it possible to instrumentalise tango by efforts of nationalisation (Barrionuevo Anzaldi 2011) in Argentine.

Today, tango is used, sold and commodified – mostly as a tourist consumption – as a national cultural heritage. In 2009, this cultural heritage was validated by the UNESO – requested by Argentina and Uruguay – who put TANGO ARGENTINO on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. The word “intangible” here means that tango has no “material manifestations, such as monuments and objects that have been preserved over time” (Unesco). Never the less – beside the fact that tango also includes music, poetry and literature – TANGO ARGENTINO is a dance, which refers to the circumstance that tango is materialised by moving and dancing bodies at very special and materialised framed places all over the world.

In the hybrid history of tango and in its global mythologisation, the city Buenos Aires is the *place of origin*, but tango as a body technique or as a dance practice has no territorial history. In other words, TANGO ARGENTINO is a cultural hybrid and simultaneously, it refers to a mystified history of Buenos Aires as a *place of origin* (Savigliano 1995).

In this mystification of tango, the territorial place Buenos Aires is symbolically transferred to other countries, cities and places. But HOW can a territorial place, like Buenos Aires be transferred in a dance culture – what is the linking between “dance and the social city”? Are there any signs for the fact that Buenos Aires is everywhere, as I claimed in the headline?

Let me give you some short, empirical examples to prove the de-territorial existence of Buenos Aires in the global tango dance culture.

Let us first take a look on the announcements of international tango festivals.<sup>1</sup> There are only some examples that can speak respentatively of the imagery of the global tango culture. The teachers of tango festivals are always announced as being “Argentine natives”<sup>2</sup>, “Argentinian”, or at least “grew up in the heart of Buenos Aires.” The argentine nationality seems to legitimise being a good tango teacher, or what Pierre Bourdieu would call “the legitimate speaker,” who is – in an alteration to Bourdieu: “authorized to speak [teach] and to speak [teach] with authority” (Bourdieu 1991: 41).

One other main aspect is the naming in the global tango scene: Locations get Spanish names referring to classical tango songs (for example: tango malena<sup>3</sup>, Mala Junta<sup>4</sup>, Amarras), events are called milongas and Spanish terms are used for the dance practices (for examples: the closed position as “el abrazo” – Spanish for a hug or an embrace). Using Spanish terms for almost everything conveys authenticity and a discursive knowledge about tango.

Furthermore, the style of the venues refers to the tango culture in Buenos Aires: they are either ballrooms with chandelier and velvet or they are old industrial areas with a shabby

chic look and pillars –both in black and red, with background lighting and candlelight, a central dance floor in the middle of the room surrounded by chairs.

On the one hand, these global processes of an authentication and mythologisation of the tango culture tell the de-territorial history of the global dance culture tango. On the other hand, they abet the relocalisation of the tango culture as a tango Argentine tango culture. The Latin American cultural studies researcher García Canclini and his study of hybrid cultures and their “strategies for entering and leaving modernity” described this process as follows<sup>5</sup>:

“With this [and he means: With this de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation] I am referring to two processes: the loss of the “natural” relation of culture to geographical and social territories and, at the same time, certain relative, partial territorial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions.” (Canclini 1995: 229)

However, in which relations lays the fact of the tango as an attribution to one, origin culture – which can be described with Foucault as a discourse of the tango culture – so in which relation lays this discourse to the practice of tango dancing and the dancing subjects in the tango.

### **Cultural techniques and practices**

Body techniques are always cultural techniques, as the cultural anthropologist Marcel Mauss shows in his work on the “Technique of the body.” Tango as a dance technique is spread all over the world and pertains no longer to only one culture. The question appears, how to explain a cultural technique, or as I would prefer to say: how to explain a cultural practice if it is being danced in “different cultures” as for examples in the cities of New York, Hamburg, Istanbul, Tokyo, Seoul, Moscow, Beirut *and* Buenos Aires.

Before starting to explain the complex relations between a cultural technique and a de-territorial practice, I find it necessary to outline why I prefer the term practice to describe tango. I am not referring to tango as communication, interaction or action, as all of these sociological concepts are always anticipating the result of the analysis: they postulate a concept of subjects, that are always acting intentionally – as Max Weber emphasised in his theory of action. The advantage of a concept of tango as a practice allows us first of all to focus on the results of the analysis and to understand the dance practices in tango as an implicit bodily knowledge, which is to be revealed by analysing the dance. Secondly, it allows us to recognize the dance culture as an entanglement of practice and discourse at the same time. The term practice is based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu, who showed that acting is more often not an intentional, but a tacit knowledge of the body. The knowledge of a movement culture like TANGO ARGENTINO is a conglomerate of dance techniques, rituals and rules, that was incorporated into the body and embedded in what Bourdieu calls the ‘habitus’: of a cultural field. In that sense, it is not an available knowledge of the mind, but a tacit knowledge of the body, which acts and dances in line with the claimed rules of this field. TANGO ARGENTINO is at first sight a mostly improvised dance, because the order of the steps follow no repeated structure. For example, there are eight basic steps for the leader and the follower, but most of the time the steps are not danced in that kind of order. Therefore, in the tango scene, it is common sense that tango should be an interaction of two dancers. This is pointed out in the German tango culture by the term ‘amalgamation’. On a micro-sociological level, the

dancing couple acts in every little movement in a correlating process with each other – even when they do not finish the closed position until they really face each other. This works without words or looking at one another – it is a process of tacit knowledge, a practice.

### **De-territorialized subjectivities**

The key question of this lecture is: Does this (de-)territorial transfer of TANGO ARGENTINO as a cultural product of Buenos Aires produce de-territorialized subjectivities? By dancing tango, thus by learning the structural elements of this dance culture the “tangeras and tangueros” – as they call themselves worldwide – learn to take over a special subjectivity, which is bound to specially framed places: the venues of tango events are extraordinary and they must to be extraordinary in every way:

The structural elements of the tango which determine this processes of subjectivisation include the rituals (Tanda<sup>6</sup>, Cortina<sup>7</sup>), the rules (there are a lot of tango etiquette, tango manners or codigos (spanish code) on websides or bloqs), the dress code, the dance practices<sup>8</sup> as closed position, steps and figures and the structure of leader and follower as a gender code. Simultaneously, the structural elements exclude other movements and dance technics, for example the movement of the hips, breaking the pivot or resolving the closed position. At the same time, all these references to an origin of tango culture in the city of Buenos Aires is shown in the framed places.

TANGO ARGENTINO is a very complex, versatile movement culture, in which subjectivization arises in the sense of Michel Foucault, who focused on the processes of becoming a subject in his late works, by the interest “to create a history of the different modes, by which in our culture human beings are made subjects.” (Foucault 1983: 208f.) I would add: not only in our, but in a lot of different cultures! To dance tango is a “mode of subjectivisation”, that emerges in different, so called ‘cultures’ all over the world and produces de-territorialized, tango dancing subjectivities.

I would like to label this kind of a de-territolised subjectivity intersubjectivity by also explaining them with concepts of intersubjectivity.

A concept of intersubjectivity is based on the philosophy of the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Alfred Schütz – one of the classical authors not only in German sociology – tried to transfer this concept into sociology.

In Alfred Schütz’ contentions and until today, intersubjectivity is reduced to “the problem of intersubjectivity.” This problem is based on the fact that most authors declare that there could not be a kind of intersubjectivity, because in the philosophic history of the subject (Descartes) there is always a dichotomy between “ego” and “alter ego” – me and you. The solution that Schütz found lies in his subsidence of intersubjectivity as a constitutive condition of the lifeworld [Lebenswelt]. In his analyses of Husserl, Schütz distinguishes between a transcendental intersubjectivity of the ego – which he declares as failed – and an intersubjectivity of the lifeworld – on which he based his later works. The intersubjectivity of the lifeworld means that every human has to assume, that he/she can understand the interaction partner – in theory this is called the reciprocity of the perspectives.

Most of the concepts of intersubjectivity (here, I only refer to Husserl and Schütz) never consider the body or a kind of bodily knowledge as a tacit knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

The main theorist for my argumentation is George Herbert Mead, who unfortunately never mentioned the word intersubjectivity. It was a German sociologist, Hans Joas, who in 1989 in his book about Mead named “practical intersubjectivity”, but he never elaborated this concept.

George Herbert Mead postulates that the self is constituted in an interrelationship between self and the other and this is the requirement of a self-consciousness. So the self – or as I prefer to say with Foucault: the subject – is related to the other, it is intersubjectiv and not autonomous and intentional – and in this perspective the subject is de-territorial. With this subsidence, intersubjectivity is based in processes of social practices – dancing tango at extraordinary places for example emerges as a result of these practices.<sup>10</sup>

This emerging of intersubjectivity coheres with the transcultural, de-territorial and relocated dimension of the TANGO ARGENTINO. These dimensions of the tango lie in the seemingly paradox of the mystical origin of tango in Argentine – its reterritorialization as a process of the growing tango Argentine scene all over the world. And simultaneously in the fact of TANGO ARGENTINO as a globalized, and commodified dance and movement culture in its de-territorialization all over the world. Nevertheless, in this attributed cultural otherness of the tango lies its dynamic for processes of subjectivation: As tango is “the other”, it offers a different kind of subjectivation, a de-territorialized subjectivity, as intersubjectivities can show. Precisely because tango is the assigned and “exoticised other”, this exotisation of the tango refers to the fact of colonisation and enables other kinds of subjectivity – other than western forms of subjectivity in the dualism of body, mind and static territories of the self!<sup>11</sup> Thus, a paradoxical feature determines the world of TANGO ARGENTINO: exoticised by the West, the adoption of the tango enables an anti-western position and an identification with “the aesthetics logic of exoticism” (Savigliano 200). The consequence is that tango is “the other” – or as Stuart Hall would point it out “the rest”.<sup>12</sup>

Copyright 2012, Melanie Haller

## Notes

- 1 As you can see on <http://www.tangofestivals.net/>
- 2 As you can read in the announcement of the Boston Tango Festival: <http://bostontangofestival.com/instructors/jeremias-massera-and-mariela-barufaldi/>
- 3 A song by Homero Manzi, an argentine poet.
- 4 A song by Osvaldo pugliese, a famous argentine musician.
- 5 This is the subtitle of his book Hybrid cultures.
- 6 A tanda is a set of three or four songs of either tango, vals or milonga\* (style of tango music) played at a milonga\* (a tango party)” - [http://tandaoftheweek.blogspot.com/2010\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](http://tandaoftheweek.blogspot.com/2010_08_01_archive.html)
- 7 “A cortina is a short piece (about 30 seconds) of non-tango music that tells the dancers the tanda is over and a new tanda is about to begin. The next tanda will be a different style of music and is normally danced with a new partner.” [http://www.tejastango.com/faq\\_tango.html](http://www.tejastango.com/faq_tango.html)
- 8 As for example close position, closing eyes, wearing high heels for the follower; for the leader: wearing low heels, looking forward.

- 9 The only author who refers to the body is the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who also quarrels with Husserl. From his point of view, intersubjectivity is always a “carnal intersubjectivity” (Merleau-Ponty: 173). His concept of “intercorporeality” refers to the fact that perception is always a process of the body: “It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive “things”. (Merleau-Ponty: 216) For him, bodies are simultaneously subjective and social. Nonetheless, inter-corporality for him is a human precondition, not a result of social processes – it is an anthropological concept. From my point of view, intersubjectivity is a result of social situations and an incorporated knowledge of the body.
- 10 This theoretical basis applied to TANGO ARGENTINO, shows, that this dance is a tacit knowledge of the body – including the materiality of movement structures (the close position and other structural elements like basic steps or rules of proximity) as a correlating practice which relate to the discourses in the tango scene as a culture of negotiating the roles of leading and following. In this context and with the questioning of subjectivisation in Tango – in this moment when the moving works on its own –the possibility of intersubjectivities as a result of Tan-go-ing emerges.
- 11 A western discourse of “Othering” – which exoticises the tango – is widely globalised, as Martha Savigliano shows with the example of Japan in her book: “Tango and the political economy of passion”: “Tango Argentino [...] sought by those Japanese who view themselves as different from both the aristocrats and the masses, is a phenomenon tinged by nationalistic (anti-western, anti-american occupation) feelings.” (Savigliano 198)
- 12 This is a similar shift to what you can see in the black power movement or the “Kanaksation” in Germany: the ascribed exoticised positions (and the subjection of it) will be accepted, reframed and enable a new position of subjectivity.

## Bibliography

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1991): *Language and symbolic power*, Cambridge.
- Butler, Judith (1997): *The psychic life of power: theories in subjection*.
- Butler, Judith: *Bodies that matter* (1993): on the discursive limits of sex, 1993.
- Foucault, Michel: *Afterword: the subject and power*, in Hubert L. Dreyfus/Paul Rabinow: *Foucault, Michel: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago.
- García Canclini, Néstor (1995). *Hybrid Cultures. Strategies for Entering and Leaving*
- Goffman, Erving (1971): *Relations in Public: microstudies of the public order*, New York.
- Hall, Stuart: *The west and the rest*
- Mauss, Marcel (2006): *Techniques of the body* (1935). In: Nathan Schlanger (ed.): *Techniques, technologies and civilisation/ Marcel Mauss*, New York, pp. 77-95.
- Merleau-Ponty (1964): *The philosopher and his shadow*, in: *Signs*, Northwestern, p.159-181.
- Merleau-Ponty (2002): *Phenomenology of perception*, London/New York.
- Savigliano, Martha (1995): *Tango and the political economy of passion*, Boulder.

Address for correspondence:

University of Hamburg  
 Department of Human Movement Sciences  
 Mollerstrasse 10  
 20146 Hamburg  
 Melanie.haller@uni-hamburg.de

**Their Hands in the Dirt:  
How Kazuo Ohno and Stephanie Skura  
Cultivate Dance Practices from Nature**

*Amanda Hamp*  
Luther College

**Abstract**

*As city-based artists, Kazuo Ohno and Stephanie Skura have each created for themselves experiences of “nature.” Skura’s suburban garden and Ohno’s rural excursions are individual pursuits, but each fits into larger environmental movements. Like contemporary sustainable agriculture, their work yields such themes as interconnectedness, non-separateness and abundance. Ohno’s and Skura’s respective cultivated and visited natural environments are mapped onto their bodies and artistic practices. From the environments, each artist harvests, relates to and embodies non-human images and processes. They seek relationship with other, and cultivate alterity in themselves, as ways to expand sense of “self” and place in the world.*

**Introduction**

Kazuo Ohno, with Tatsumi Hijikata, is one of the founders of the first-Japanese, now-global dance form, butoh. Ohno’s distinction as a “world-friendly” spiritual dance artist has Sondra Fraleigh asking if his dance is actually something other than butoh.<sup>1</sup> Performing internationally during his nineties, and dancing past his hundredth birthday, Ohno resided and worked in the Hodogaya Ward of the port city of Yokohama. Stephanie Skura, a contemporary dance artist, currently lives in Auburn, Washington, a suburb of Seattle, but for a time lived, and has made much of her career, in New York City. She is the founder of Open Source Forms, a physical, improvisational practice for developing personal, energetic, and imaginative awarenesses. Ohno and Skura come from distinct time periods, cultural contexts, and life experiences, yet their artistic practices and aesthetic philosophies bear lucid links. Among them: as city-based artists, Ohno and Skura have each created for themselves experiences of “nature,”<sup>2</sup> which are departures from their daily modern, urban lives, plus fecund sources for their artistic practices.

During Ohno’s recess from performing, he traveled with film director Chiaki Nagano to sites throughout Japan, delving into rural scenes and wildernesses. Nagano documented the explorations, culminating with three films, *The Trilogy of Mr. O* (1969, 1971, 1973). This excursion was especially fertile; it was followed by Ohno performance of *Admiring La Argentina* (1977), which made him a beloved international dance figure. Perhaps less apparently an artistic venture, Skura’s entire suburban yard is a food-producing garden. It’s a palliative to the hustle of touring, but Skura’s commitment to permaculture is integral to her artistic practices. In an interview, Skura explains that her interests and methods, for both gardening and facilitating dance, developed gradually, seemingly independently, but that “lately some of the connections have been more apparent,” and that “sustainability [...] is the way I’ve been working my teaching and my

performance from day one.”<sup>3</sup> From their visited and designed natural environments, each artist harvests and relates with non-human vistas, plants, creatures, and objects, producing a cornucopia of imagery, ripe for embodiment. In doing so, they develop a sense of “self” that has both artistic affect and social implications. I’ll discuss later in the paper. First, I hope to show that while these endeavors with nature are individual (personal and artistic) pursuits, they connect, and are in tension, with larger sustainable agriculture movements and philosophies.

### Art-Ecology Connections

One movement, “new agrarianism” involves community supported agriculture, resource use, land restoration, individual and collective healing, relationship between local and global economies, materialism, and family.<sup>4</sup> Environmental scholar David Orr observes “a gradual resurgence of agrarian values and practices,” and explains, “[a]grarianism as a state of mind, as a cultural perspective, is rooted in land and respectful of fundamental ways of the land’s possibilities, mysteries, and limits.<sup>5</sup> Orr considers it implausible to return to traditional agrarianism – a farming and homesteading skillset that is largely forgotten, and an economic and cultural structure with its own set of problems.<sup>6</sup> Instead, he calls for “the marriage of urban-industrial and rural-agrarian perspectives,”<sup>7</sup> and asks, can we “make our cities sustainable?”<sup>8</sup> “Can we put agriculture back into an urban fabric?”<sup>9</sup> Masanobu Fukuoka, a muse for the permaculture movement in Japan, recently paid tribute in the U.S.,<sup>10</sup> was not interested in intertwining urban and rural. A former plant and food lab scientist, he envisaged all citizens as natural farmers.<sup>11</sup> On his farm, in Iyo, he executed his method of “do nothing,” and wrote *The One-Straw Revolution*, which is at once farming manual and philosophical treatise.

There are many shared micro-themes and larger acting philosophies among these four artists’ and ecologists’ work, situated in both Eastern and Western settings.<sup>12</sup> It’s an intriguing coincidence that Ohno’s life, training, career, and resulting philosophies closely parallel Fukuoka’s.<sup>13</sup> But more significantly, Ohno’s devotion to the flower as a “mode of existence” – for it allows the dancer to “arrive at a physiological level of awareness where his or her physical responses are no longer shackled by deliberation. [...] a flower simply reaches upward without the slightest hesitation”<sup>14</sup> – corresponds with Fukuoka’s conviction that “crops grow themselves.”<sup>15</sup> Skura’s garden project exemplifies David Orr’s vision for the integration of agrarianism into urban life. And she reflects permaculture’s esteem for small-farm biodiversity.<sup>16</sup> She describes four newly-matured stellar jays in her garden:

flying around [...] eating a lot of worms and insects [...] [the now dead] corn and artichokes, [...] can be stems for mason bees [...] the bees are all over the completely dry 10-foot high artichokes and [...] they don’t seem like dead things to me anymore. [...] this red bud tree that I planted, half of it died [...] and I wanted to get rid of the dead half, but the birds are using that tree to roost in all the time.<sup>17</sup>



The theme of biodiversity is where the artists' philosophies-in-practice are in tension with new agrarianism's, which I'll return to shortly – but it is also a theme which lends itself to discussing how Ohno's and Skura's work yields a range and diversity of aesthetics.

### Diminishing and Diversifying the “Self”

Of course, many artists in the history of dance have endeavored toward expanding aesthetics and, with them, subjectivity as it can be asserted via dancing, choreographing, and performing. Rebekah Kowal provides a particular precedent, discussing how Paul Taylor's and Merce Cunningham's “kinesthetic acts of the imagination [...] licensed art making and subject formation in ways that troubled artistic and social status quo.”<sup>18</sup> She finds that “foundness,” as it manifested in their various choreographic strategies (found structures for dances by Cunningham, pedestrian postures and gestures for Taylor's), “contributed to emerging formations of counternormative subjectivities, albeit under cover of stylization.”<sup>19</sup> Cunningham performs alterity in *Antic Meet* (1958) when he positions himself among a female corps of satirized Graham dancers, “[w]earing an oversized sweater with many long sleeves but no exit for his head.”<sup>20</sup> This action, Kowal observes, “allowed Cunningham to present himself, as he had in his solos [*Untitled Solo* (1953), *Lavish Escapade* (1956), and *Changeling* (1957)], as an other.”<sup>21</sup>

Ohno and Skura physicalize alterity differently – I argue more deeply – by taking the image of nature *into* the body, and merging with it. This diminishes, or loosens, the identified self, which, paradoxically, at the same time expands the self, increases its scope. The identified self is one's conception of oneself, in relation to sociopolitical categories of gender and race; status categories of class, education, and profession; and personal histories and experiences. By embodying and merging with imagery, new or alternative experiences and self-conceptions arise. *Portrait of Mr. O* (1969), one of the films in Nagano's triptych, opens with Ohno crouching, and gently scrubbing, one at a time, a small collection of large turnips. His hair resembles their leafy tops, his face is lightly caked and earthy. When he walks away with the turnips, which are the size of his forearms, they seem like parts of his own body.<sup>22</sup> While we cannot see Ohno literally integrating the plant into his body, we learn from Yoshito Ohno, Kazuo's son, that, in exploring various natural settings and forms, Kazuo Ohno was exploring himself.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Skura continuously seeks and collects imagery, describing that she's accustomed “to finding imagery, and allowing it to really affect me.”<sup>24</sup>

The practice of embodying imagery – as elucidated by Joan Skinner, who developed Skinner Releasing Technique, a predecessor to Open Source Forms – works this way: “The individual receives the image and the energy inside it, and then eventually one merges with an image and becomes transformed by it. This becomes another reality. It becomes so real that one can become the image.”<sup>25</sup> This resounds Fraleigh's experiences “of *butoh-fu* [visual and poetic images] as explorations in ‘becoming an image.’”<sup>26</sup> She designates “metamorphosis” as *butoh*'s signature, and says *butoh* dancers, or *butoh-ka*, “consciously morph [...] transfiguring from male to female, from human to plant life, disappearing into ash, animals, bugs, and gods. [...] This ability to inhabit an image and to change is basic to *butoh*.”<sup>27</sup> A poem by Ohno, given as instruction for students during a workshop, captures this blurring between self and other:

My soul is turning to ashes.  
 If I breathe out  
 They spill from my body.  
 I breathe myself in and out.  
 My soul floats throughout the sky  
 As it turns to ashes and falls.”<sup>28</sup>

The edges of Ohno’s self soften, and he becomes ash. In these practices, something – that, when viewed objectively, is identified as “not me” – is integrated into the self, and directly or immediately experienced. The physical practice of blurring boundaries between what-we-identify-as-“self” and-what-we-identify-as-“other” effects that “self” and “other” themselves become less solid – more fluid, atomized, or able to dissolve.

And it’s significant that the embodied images are found in the natural world, because they are not static. They have their own dynamics and processes: growth and decay, spirals, suspension and falling, the ebb and flow of the sea. We could say the images have agency. In *Open Source Forms*, “we can move with the image, or the image might move us.” This is conveyed, too, in Ohno’s merging with ashes: as the ashes fall, he does. In kind, Fukuoka doesn’t distinguish himself from his ecological surroundings; he calls himself a “thinking reed.”<sup>29</sup> Seeking, including, and cultivating the other or the unfamiliar in ourselves makes it more familiar, reduces sense of “otherness.”

### Diversifying Aesthetics

To begin to conclude: Fraleigh synthesizes *butoh*’s aesthetics and politics as global, and while they can serve culture-bridging or therapeutic purposes, they are not utopian.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, they aren’t, and *butoh* and *Open Source Forms* don’t seek utopian human dynamics; Ohno’s and Skura’s practices do suggest an overarching politics of inclusion, of various aesthetic, personal, and sociocultural differences. David Orr’s new agrarianism, by contrast, demonstrates tension between social progression and social stagnation. While he suggests the need for more gender diversity and equality within the movement,<sup>31</sup> he reiterates the movement’s privileging of heteronormative family structure,<sup>32</sup> and, out of that, – recall his phrase: “the marriage of urban-industrial and rural-agrarian perspectives,”<sup>33</sup> – uses the metaphor of marriage as the solution to what he deems the problems caused by the modernism-urbanism-industrialism triad.<sup>34</sup> *Butoh* and *Open Source Forms* don’t propose any particular family shape, but their methods for assimilating differences into themselves intimates a social perspective of not just inclusiveness, but genuine integration of human diversities.

However, these artists and ecologists do share a moral stance on modernism, as it manifests in industrialism, commercialism, and market-based values (both economic and aesthetic). David Orr loathes, “Agrarianism simply doesn’t compute with the experiences of people whose lives are shaped by malls, highways, television, and cyberspace.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, dance scholars have critiqued commercial, competitive dance broadcast on television – its cow to and shaping of the public’s understanding of dance as an art form, and its depiction of the dancer as practitioner, performer, and person.<sup>36</sup> Though Hijikata is

regarded, rightfully, as the founding butoh artist who makes artistic, social, and political criticisms through his work – particularly of Western capitalism and emphasis on productivity,<sup>37</sup> Ohno, too – however gently – embodies a critique, a refusal. Performing into agedness, Ohno subverts expectations that dancers display youthful vigor and attractiveness. His flesh insists there is beauty beneath and beyond the flesh; it beckons that we pay attention to the “unlimited, immaterial body” that Fraleigh draws from philosophers Yasuo Yuasa and Hiroshi Ichikawa.<sup>38</sup>

Earlier this month, in a *Huffington Post* blog entry – about money dancers (don’t make – dancer and NEA fellow, Lightsey Darst states, “Dance’s capital is its sensual appeal; it has little other resource.”<sup>39</sup> To be fair, Darst is empathetic with dancers, with dancers who don’t aspire to the ideals put forth by *So You Think You Can Dance*, and with aging dancers who can carve out only occasional spaces for themselves in a scene dominated by the young.<sup>40</sup> Yet, Darst speaks to – and I think the statement validates, if reluctantly – an aesthetic milieu of youthful athleticism and sexual allure. It is this environment that Skura refutes, and she’s blunt, if not blithe, about it: “Rather than a circus attitude, like, ‘these are marks, and were going to do these things, and really wow them. [...] it’s not about having [the audience] say, ‘Wow, I could never do that.’”<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, Skura says her work has always aimed “to create an atmosphere where [students and artists] can find their own path, discover their own, be empowered creatively.”<sup>42</sup>

Commercial, competitive, and market-based dance aesthetics are limited and limiting. Ohno’s and Skura’s connections to nature provide alternatives, create places for themselves in the dance world, and in the world at large, for dancers are not the only ones subjected to narrow standards of beauty and social propriety. Orr calls new agrarianism’s a “moral kind of aesthetic,” one that looks, figuratively and literally, “upstream” and “downstream,” one that has a wider lens regarding affects on humans and ecosystems in other places and times.<sup>43</sup> Ohno’s and Skura’s practices reflect and expand this regard for biodiversity to aesthetic and sociocultural ends. Their seeking and embodiment of other – image, plant, creature, object, landscape – practices alterity in oneself. Thus, the ways that nature is mapped into Ohno’s and Skura’s artistic practices sows unfamiliarity and alterity within the practitioner, cultivating a “self” that permits and desires more diversity in an aesthetic and social world. Fraleigh knows, “*Butoh-ka* hold onto something that is preciously fragile: emptiness and dimming light, the invisible inside of ourselves in our human multiplicities.”<sup>44</sup> For Ohno and Skura, the social city, the whole world, looks as it feels: an ebb and flow, a spiraling – of flowers, of deceased plants and spirits sustaining life – an ongoing dance of all kinds of energies.

Copyright 2012, Amanda Hamp

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 2010), 96.

<sup>2</sup> Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution*, trans. Larry Korn, Chris Pearce, and Tsune Kurosawa (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2009). What constitutes “natural” is defined and interpreted in various ways for different interests and purposes. In light of Masanobu Fukuoka’s stance – that 1) the “understanding of nature lies beyond the reach of human

intelligence” (25), 2) that “That which is conceived to be nature is only the *idea* of nature arising in each person’s mind” (25), and 3) that “the word ‘nature’ as it is generally spoken, denotes nature, as it is perceived by the discriminating intellect” (124) – I place “nature” in quotation marks here to indicate that Ohno’s and Skura’s pursuits, are, to begin with, perhaps not actually with nature but with *ideas* or denotations of nature.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Skura, personal interview, 17 Nov. 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Erik T. Freyfogle, ed. *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life* (Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> David W. Orr, “The Urban-Agrarian Mind,” in *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life*, ed. Erik T. Freyfogle (Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001), 93-94.

<sup>6</sup> Orr discusses the tenuousness of farming in the context of capitalism and governmental farm policies, as well as unjust gender roles and displacement of native peoples. 96-97.

<sup>7</sup> Orr, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Orr, 105.

<sup>9</sup> Orr, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Fukuoka’s book, *The One-Straw Revolution*, originally published as *Shizen Hono Wara Ippon No Kakuemi* by Shunju-sha Publishers in Japan in 1978, and in Emmaus, PA by Rodale Press in 1978, was published again in the U.S. in 2009 by the The New York Review of Books press.

<sup>11</sup> Fukuoka, 109.

<sup>12</sup> Examples include abundance; deep connection to soil; nonlinear or elastic sense of time; sense of community which involves nature; capacity for healing; allowing versus forcing; less interference with or less control of natural and physical processes; comfort with paradoxes; sense of local action with global effects; and reference to universals. These fold into three larger “acting philosophies”: accepting and enacting change, including an integration of death into life; diminishing, and at the same time expanding, the identified self; and relating with other through perspectives of web-like interconnectivity and non-separateness.

<sup>13</sup> Ohno lived from 1906 to 2010, and Fukuoka from 1913 to 2008. Ohno studied German Expression dancing while Fukuoka held a plant inspection position in the Yokohama Customs Office. Both integrated Christianity into their lives: Ohno converted, Fukuoka sent his two daughters to a mission school. Both were involved with the war: Ohno as a soldier, and Fukuoka as a scientist charged to increase food production, and briefly as a laborer for building mountain redoubts. Both of these men became international figures and teachers, gurus to whom students travelled to learn both skill and philosophy. Both were recognized with awards for their cultural contributions.

<sup>14</sup> Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno’s World: From Without and Within*, trans. John Barrett (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 90-91.

<sup>15</sup> Fukuoka, 13.

<sup>16</sup> See Orr and Fukuoka. Also see David Kline, “Great Possessions,” in *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life*, ed. Erik T. Freyfogle (Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001), 181-195.

<sup>17</sup> Skura, interview.

<sup>18</sup> Rebekah Kowal, *How To Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2010), 151.

<sup>19</sup> Kowal, 152.

<sup>20</sup> Kowal, 174.

<sup>21</sup> Kowal, 174.

<sup>22</sup> Chiaki Nagano, dir. *A Portrait of Mr.O*, DVD (Canta Ltd., 2004).

<sup>23</sup> Ohno and Ohno, 144-145.

- <sup>24</sup> Skura, interview.
- <sup>25</sup> Joan Skinner (2005), "The Kinaesthetic Imagination: An Interview with Joan Skinner," *Contact Quarterly Online Journal*, Interviewed by Bettina Neuhaus (July 2010). <<https://community.contactquarterly.com/journal/view/skinner>> accessed May 31, 2011.
- <sup>26</sup> Sondra Fraleigh and Tamah Nakamura, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 54-55.
- <sup>27</sup> Fraleigh, 45.
- <sup>28</sup> Ohno and Ohno, 227.
- <sup>29</sup> Fukuoka, 164.
- <sup>30</sup> Fraleigh, 74.
- <sup>31</sup> Orr, 97.
- <sup>32</sup> See Orr and Kline. New agrarianism visions family as a traditional nuclear household – which extends to grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and sometimes neighbors – for the purpose of agricultural productivity. Promotion of heteronormative family structure, sexual dynamics, and relationships for (re)productivity is where butoh and Open Source Forms depart socially, politically, and ethically from new agrarianism. Of course not all people invested in sustainable agriculture buy into this vision of family, and indeed some pose and live alternative structures for living and laboring together, such as in cooperative housing and live-work farm scenarios, like Fukuoka's.
- <sup>33</sup> Orr, 106.
- <sup>34</sup> Orr, 98.
- <sup>35</sup> Orr, 97-98.
- <sup>36</sup> Alexis Weisbrod, "Creating Spectacle: The Rhetoric of So You Think You Can Dance," Conference paper, Society of Dance History Scholars Conference (The Place, London, England), July 10, 2010.
- <sup>37</sup> Fraleigh and Nakamura, 44.
- <sup>38</sup> Fraleigh, 67.
- <sup>39</sup> Lightsey Darst, "The Poorest Art: Dance and Money (I)," *The Huffington Post* (01 Jun 2012) 6 Jun 2012 <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancer-income-wages-lifestyle-\\_b\\_1556794.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancer-income-wages-lifestyle-_b_1556794.html)>.
- <sup>40</sup> Lightsey Darst, "Dancing Offstage," *The Huffington Post* (22 Feb 2012) 6 Jun 2012 <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancing-offstage\\_b\\_1294770.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancing-offstage_b_1294770.html)>. In this earlier post, "Dancing Offstage," Darst reflects on conversations she's had with a 60-year-old dancer about sustaining dancing and performance while aging, and says "*So You Think You Can Dance* is a challenge answerable only with a big leap or a triple pirouette -- not with a sensibility or a gesture or a motion consciousness like a bird's knowledge of wind."
- <sup>41</sup> Skura, interview.
- <sup>42</sup> Skura, interview.
- <sup>43</sup> Orr, 103-104.
- <sup>44</sup> Fraleigh, 35.

## Bibliography

- Darst, Lightsey. "Dancing Offstage." *The Huffington Post*, February 22, 2012. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancing-offstage\\_b\\_1294770.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancing-offstage_b_1294770.html)> accessed June 6, 2012.
- Darst, Lightsey. "The Poorest Art: Dance and Money (I)." *The Huffington Post*, June 1, 2012. <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancer-income-wages-lifestyle-\\_b\\_1556794.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancer-income-wages-lifestyle-_b_1556794.html)> accessed June 6, 2012.

- Fraleigh, Sondra. *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Freyfogle, Erik T, ed. *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001.
- Fukuoka, Masanobu. *The One-Straw Revolution*. Larry Korn, Chris Pearce, and Tsune Kurosawa, trans. New York: The New York Review of Books, 2009.
- Kline, David. "Great Possessions." *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life*. Ed. Erik T. Freyfogle. Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001: 181-195.
- Kowal, Rebekah. *How To Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America*. Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2010.
- Nagano, Chiaki. dir. *A Portrait of Mr.O*. DVD. Canta Ltd., 2004.
- Ohno, Kazuo, and Yoshito Ohno. *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*. Translated by John Barrett. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
- Orr, David W. "The Urban-Agrarian Mind." *The New Agrarianism: Land, Culture and the Community of Life*. Ed. Erik T. Freyfogle. Washington, DC: Island Press: Shearwater Books, 2001: 93-107.
- Joan Skinner (2005). "The Kinaesthetic Imagination: An Interview with Joan Skinner." Interviewed by Bettina Neuhaus. *Contact Quarterly Online Journal*, July 2010. <<https://community.contactquarterly.com/journal/view/skinner>> accessed May 31, 2011.
- Stephanie Skura, personal interview, 17 Nov. 2010.
- Weisbrod, Alexis, "Creating Spectacle: The Rhetoric of So You Think You Can Dance." Conference paper, Society of Dance History Scholars Conference, The Place, London, England, July 10, 2010.

Address for correspondence:  
Amanda Hamp  
Theatre/Dance, Luther College  
700 College Drive  
Decorah, IA 52101  
hampam01@luther.edu

## Dance as a Cross-Cultural Media: Xiao-bang Wu's life between Tokyo and Shanghai in the 1930s

*Yukiyo Hoshino*  
Nagoya University

### *Abstract*

*This paper focuses on the Chinese modern dancer Xiao-bang Wu, who studied German modern dance in Tokyo during the 1930s. It analyzes the reasons for Wu's three visits to Tokyo. Xiao-bang Wu decided to become a dancer in order to strengthen Chinese resistance against Japan through his dances. In spite of this aim, he continued to study in Japan, which he considered an enemy nation because there were more advanced opportunities for the study of dance in Tokyo than in Shanghai at the time. Furthermore, Xiao-bang Wu was a witness to part of the modern sphere of the Western world; the auditoriums in Tokyo.*

### **Introduction**

When discussing the Sino-Japanese war in relation to the Chinese dancers, we must mention the Japanese invasion of China and the anti-Japanese activity. Keeping with this perspective in mind, this paper focuses on the Chinese modern dancer Xiao-bang Wu (1906-1995), who studied German modern dance in Tokyo from 1929 to 1935. We will first provide a brief overview of the Sino-Japanese war situation. Further, we will describe certain notable modern architecture in Tokyo during Xiao-bang Wu's stay. Next, we will analyze the reasons for Xiao-bang Wu's three visits to Tokyo. To conclude, we will explore the personal influence of the city of Tokyo on Xiao-bang Wu.

In 1928, Zhang Zuo-lin was killed by a bomb planted by a Japanese Army Officer at Manchuria. Consequently, the Special Higher Police force, which was set-up all over Japan and the country began total mobilization for war. In the year following the Manchurian incident in 1931, Japan created a puppet state, called Manshukuo. The country also withdrew from their membership in the League of Nations.

During the spring of 1929, Xiao-bang Wu went to Tokyo to study Japanese at a language school near Waseda University. In June of that year, the Masao Takata Memorial Dance and Movie Recital were held in the Okuma Auditorium at the Waseda University. Masao Takata (1895-1929), a famous dancer, who studied at the Denishawn School of Dancing and Related Art. Before this recital, Xiao-bang Wu had never seen this type of modern dance, and he was very inspired by this means of expression.

Waseda University's symbolic Okuma Auditorium was completed in 1927. It was designed as a lecture hall as well as a theater, by Koichi Sato, who established the Department of Architecture at the Waseda University, along with Tachu Naito, the foremost authority on the earthquake resistant structures. The auditorium had a seating capacity of 1435, which was the largest theater in Tokyo at the time, and functioned as a mecca for the performing arts.

Another Masao Takata Memorial Dance Recital was given in August 1929 at the Hibiya Open-Air Concert Hall. This concert hall had once been destroyed by the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923 and had been reconstructed. There, Xiao-bang Wu watched the performances of Baku Ishii, Eliana Pavlova, and many of the best dancers in Tokyo at the time. Seiko Takata (1895-1977), who was the successor to Masao Takata, performed a dance recital in 1929 at the Hibiya Civic Auditorium. This auditorium was similar to Okuma Auditorium that had been designed by Koichi Sato. It was completed in October 1929, and up until 1961, it was the sole concert hall in Tokyo. Further, in an era with no radio or television, an elegant form of entertainment, that is, the large and small music and dance recitals were very popular in Tokyo. This was a golden era for dancers.

Xiao-bang Wu decided to become a dancer as a way to serve his country. He began to study classical ballet and modern dance at the Masao Takata Dance Institute. In 1931, he returned back to Shanghai and established the Xiao-bang Dance School. The following year he returned to Tokyo and continued his study at the Dance Institute. But why did he return to Japan in spite of the strong anti-Japanese mood in Shanghai? It is interesting to note that, after the Sino-Japanese war broke out, the number of Chinese students in Japan actually increased, because they felt they needed to know and understand Japan to attack it.<sup>1</sup>

In 1934, Xiao-bang Wu returned back to China for his mother's funeral, after which he performed his first recital in Shanghai. The Chinese people, however, did not understand his art. The following year he returned back to Tokyo for his third visit with a clearer goal in mind. Misako Miya (1902-2009) and Takaya Eguchi (1900-1977), students of Masao Takata, who studied at the Wiegmann School in Germany for a year, returned back to Japan to establish their own dance school in Ginza. Xiao-bang Wu wanted to study German modern dance from them. Wu studied at their dance school for two years and performed his own repertory at a recital of Masao Takata Dance Institute dancers at the Hibiya Civic Auditorium. In 1936, he returned back to China where he spent the rest of his life, working hard and donating to anti-Japanese associations and educate Chinese people through his dance.

### ***The Takatas in the Denishawn School***

Masao and Seiko Takata studied at the Denishawn School in New York from 1922 to 1923. In addition to taking the school's classes, they studied jazz dance and Russian ballet under other teachers.

However, Seiko Takata said, "At that time we studied most eagerly at the Denishawn School, for we were very impressed by Denishawn's character and his knowledge of Eastern arts".<sup>2</sup> After she returned back to Japan, she left show business, but continued her exploration in spiritual and artistic dances. Critics often comment that Takada style excels in narrative and lyricism.





Figure 1: From the left, Seiko Takata, Ruth St Denis, Ted Shown and Masao Takata.(1925). Photo: Takada-Yamada Dance Institute.

### *Xiao-bang Wu “The Puppet”*

This is a photograph of one of Wu’s performances titled “the Puppet” that he choreographed and performed for the first time in Tokyo. In “the Puppet” Wu played the part of Pu Yi, who was the last emperor of China. In the dance, Wu’s movement mimic those of a puppet as if his arms and legs were bound by strings. He also, imitated the movement of a dog as a satire on Manchuria.

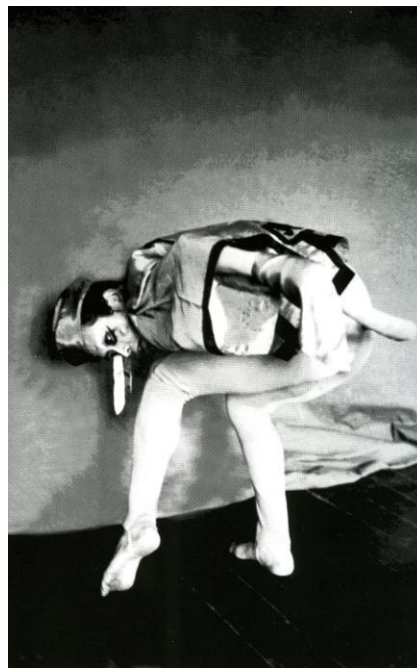


Figure 2: Xiao-bang Wu “The Puppet” (1935)  
Photo: China Dancers Association.

In the last scene, the strings were cut and “Pu Yi” could not move any more. In the choreography, we can find themes that were paralleled to the Takata and Eguchi-Miya styles, the latter one always tries to choreograph original modern themes, such as “a corporation” or “a surgery”.

### **Conclusion: A Witness to Part of the Modern Sphere; Auditoriums**

In conclusion, Xiao-bang Wu decided to become a modern dancer to strengthen Chinese people’s resistance against Japan through his dances. In spite of this aim, he continued to study in the enemy nation of Japan, because it was a more advanced nation for modern dance than Shanghai at the time. Furthermore, Xiao-bang Wu was a witness to the first modern equipment in Tokyo; auditoriums. His various experiences influenced him to choreograph the Chinese Dramatic Ballet.

Copyright 2012, 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 authors would like to thank Enago ([www.enago.jp](http://www.enago.jp)) for the English language review.

### **Notes**

1. Kusaka, Shiro. *Modern Dance Shukkoh: Takata Seiko to tomoni*. (Tokyo,1970. Mokuji Press), 152.
2. Shen, Diancheng. *Zhongguoren Liuxue Riben Bainianshi1896-1996*. (Shenyang, 1997. Liaoning Jiaoyu Press), 475-480.

### **Bibliography**

- Kusaka, Shiro. *Modern Dance Shukkoh: Takata Seiko to tomoni*. Tokyo, 1970. Mokuji Press.  
 Miya, Misako. *Michako ga Iku*. Tokyo, 2004. Bungei Press.  
 Murakami, Mitiya. *Watashi no Buyo-shi*. Tokyo. 1985. Ongaku Shinbun Press.  
 Shen, Diancheng. *Zhongguoren Liuxue Riben Bainianshi1896-1996*. Shenyang, 1997. Liaoning Jiaoyu Press.  
 Wu, Xiaobang. *Wo de Wudao Yishu Shengya*. Peking, 1982. China Drama Press.  
 Yu,Ping. *Bainian Wu Xiaobang*. Peking, 2006. Culture and Art Publishing House.

Address for correspondence:

Yukiyo Hoshino  
[hoshino@lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp](mailto:hoshino@lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp)

## Dancing with a Vengeance: Ritualized Sexual Aggression in Social Dance of the Ragtime Era and Beyond

*Eden E. Kainer*

### **Abstract**

*What is partnered social dance but a ritualized embodiment of the battle of the sexes? Social dance in America has long been a site of contested ideas about gender and sexuality. The inevitable symbolism of women and men moving and touching, from 18<sup>th</sup>-century cotillions and reels, to 19<sup>th</sup>-century European style waltzes, to the ragtime dances of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has repeatedly ignited accompanying public discourses rife with vexed questions about sexuality, gender roles, class, race, morality and modernity.*

*The dramatic metaphoric possibilities of social dance reached one extreme in the Apache dance circa 1908-14, evolved from the body of urban ragtime dances called “tough dances”, and which was a stylized imagining of the violent lifestyle of Parisian pimps and prostitutes. Here a male and female dancer participated in a dummy display of violence and sexual attraction, combining one-step dancing with gymnastics and theater. This dance was appropriated by professionals, often as a cabaret act, and was interpolated into several films—sometimes mistaken for real violence by other characters that try to intervene to comic effect. Pretense or not, the footage of this dance displays an alarming level of violence that makes us fear for the dancers’ wellbeing. This paper analyzes contemporaneous public discourse about the Apache dance and draws connections to the level of physical and sexual aggression that we see in the dancing tableaux presented in videos produced by several popular contemporary vocal artists.*

I like thinking about partnered social dance as a dynamic encoding of relations between men and women that we can read in many ways, moving tableaux saturated with many possible meanings at any given time. It isn’t surprising that, whether dancing reels in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, waltzes in the late 19<sup>th</sup>, ragtime animal dances at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>, or the Freak in the 1980’s, the sight of men and women moving and touching has repeatedly ignited vexed public discussions about morality, sexuality, and gender roles, and corollary worries about class and racial transgression and ultimately musings on the construct of modernity itself.<sup>1</sup>

One point in time in the history of social dance, for which these discussions were particularly rich, is the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when embraces for dances engendered by American’s fascination with Ragtime music grew closer. With men and women dancing “chest pressed to chest” as in the Grizzly Bear, shoulders wriggling and hips rocking as in the Turkey Trot and the Bunny Hug, the potential to make dance a metaphor about sexual relations became ever more possible. Dance and Theater history scholar, Nadine George-Graves suggests that the Bunny Hug was literally about the wriggling and hopping of bunnies fornicating<sup>2</sup>; certainly the Black Bottom of the 1920’s, despite its origin story of dancers mimicking a cow stuck in mud, the racialized double entendre right in its name, and the dancer slapping her behind, didn’t leave very much to the imagination as to the dance’s referent.<sup>3</sup>

But early 20<sup>th</sup>-century professional dance performers and instructors, the famous Vernon and Irene Castle, Maurice Mouvet, and others less well known, Albert W. Newman, Henry Coll, Caroline Walker and many others, strived to rescue dance from these associations. Newman in his 1914 manual, *Dances of Today*, observed that every new dance is always controversial, including the waltz, as they often bordered on the “grotesque, abnormal, inartistic” ...yet “with the best teachers and their patrons as safety-valves, as it were, sanity and decency have prevailed along with the innovations; and it is evident that a strong tide has set in toward the artistic and graceful as against the freakish and bizarre.”<sup>4</sup> Arguing here explicitly for the role of the dance instructor as a guardian of the dance who acts responsibly to guide the public, enigmatically referred to here as “safety valves,” from straying too far into the realm of indecency.

When we see what footage there is of some of these excoriated dances such as the Bunny Hug, the Grizzly Bear, the Turkey Trot, and the Texas Tommy, which needed such strict reigning in, they often seem surprisingly tame. Perhaps this is because only dancers who were doing it right when “everyone was doing it” were filmed, and what we see doesn’t completely reflect what people were actually doing in the dance halls. Yet The Apache dance (here pronounced with the French pronunciation of two unaccented syllables, rather than the American pronunciation with three syllables, A-**pa**-che), a stylized imagining of the violent lifestyle of Parisian criminals, pimps and prostitutes, appropriated by some of these guardians of dance, and perhaps never really danced by anyone but professionals, is a dance on the wild side: an enactment of overt erotic attraction mixed with dummy violence, combining one-step dancing with gymnastics and theater, this dance required an intense level of skill and theatricality usually only available to professionals. It was literally too physically dangerous for the public to dance. Maurice Mouvet, a professional dancer who made the Apache one of his signature dances, in fact crediting it with launching his career, described it also as such strong dramatic stuff that he and his partners could only perform it in Cafés in the smoky wee hours of the night, long after the regular entertainment had ended.<sup>5</sup>

As Mouvet described it, the dance often started with a slap on the face by the man (read pimp) demanding the woman either for money (perhaps from her tricks), or to give up a competing love interest, the dancers alternate between anger and attraction, featuring the physical domination of the man over the woman, (although often not without a fight), the dance concludes with the man whirling the woman around her holding her by her hair, her arms around his neck, legs around his torso, and suddenly dropping her to the floor.<sup>6</sup> Many staged versions (and later film versions) involved two men and a weapon (and as one character in a 1914 Vaudeville skit says, “in the real Apache dance, the girl gets killed”<sup>7</sup>); however, exhibition dancers like Mouvet and his first wife, Florence Walton, distilled the dance down to the quarrel between the man and woman.

At this point, let me show you this 1902 clip from the Library of Congress, which actually precedes more stylized versions of the Apache dance circa 1908-1914, as well as Mouvet’s claim to having “discovered” the dance in a hellish underground cabaret in the *Les Halles* district of Paris circa 1908. [SLIDE ONE can be viewed at <http://memory.loc.gov/mbrs/varsmv/1894.mpg> in *The American Variety Stage: Vaudeville and Popular Entertainment, 1870-1920*, Library of Congress Digital Collections.]: Here are Vaudeville entertainers Kid Foley and Sailor Lil, dressed in rags. While this is a less polished, and commodified version of what dance exhibitors would do later, there are

noticeable equivalent elements. The man rushing in and slapping the woman, she lifting her skirt to display her garter empty of money, the male whipping the woman away and back, with her hand remaining pinned behind her back when she returns. And by the way, this is the same Apache whip that you see in West Coast Swing. Rather than doing the final whirling, the couple tumbles to the ground and rolls around.

Other characteristic elements could include the man grabbing the woman with a garroting hold around her neck, the man flipping the woman up and sometimes over the man's back, and the man kicking the woman, with her getting him back in some versions. The man's cap is an important Apache costume element, often replicated—and you can see that in this photograph of French performers Mistinguett and Max Dearly [SLIDE 2 can be viewed at <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Photographic-presented-Mistinguett-Mary-Evans/dp/B008R3TFS0>], whom Mouvet credits as having introduced him to the authentic Apaches of Paris and their dance; and Mouvet on the right with Leona (last name unknown), an early dance partner who, according to Mouvet, died very young of tuberculosis.

For those of you who do not know the origin of the term Apaches, it was in already in use by French newspaper journalists by 1900, to describe a growing class of youth who lived on the outskirts of Paris in lower-working-class neighborhoods who were associated with crime and gang warfare. A sensational murder trial in the winter 1901, of one pimp Joseph Pleigneur who brutally stabbed another, Dominique Leca, in a dispute over a woman who was both girlfriend and prostitute to each. There was enormous, sensational media coverage of this trial, and the lifestyle of the Apaches became headline news.<sup>8</sup> The name Apache was borrowed of course from a romanticized ideal imported from America of savage Native American Indians and the Wild West—images prevalent in popular novels from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and America. And according to cultural historian Jon Savage, criminals in Paris had been called “Peaux-Rouges [Red-skins]” for some forty years prior to that scandalous trial.<sup>8</sup> The widespread association of Apaches with lawlessness, cunning, raw male sexuality and female submission, perhaps as an refreshing antidote to circulating ideas of the liberated “New Woman”, and paradoxically both primitivism and modern technology, as British Art Historian Lisa Tickner notes, caught the imagination of not only the dancing public, but the musicians and intellectuals of composer Maurice Ravel's circle who decided to call themselves *Les Apaches*, as well Dutch artist Kees van Dongen, and English artist Wyndham Lewis, who both produced paintings of Apache dancers in 1906 and 1913 respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Here is Van Dongen's 1906, *La Valse Chaloupeé (The Swaying Waltz)* with what looks to me could be Mouvet as a model. [SLIDE 3 can be viewed at <http://www.artnet.com/artists/kees+van-dongen/la-valse-chaloup%C3%A9e-mistinguette-et-max-dearly-o6fDgH3e4dXD4Gcg7hWcsw2>] Clearly at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Apache dance was a novel way to make an inscription of otherness on the dancing body, a transgression of race and class (racial otherness translated from Native American Indian to the Parisian lower-class criminal and at least once equated with blackness.)

This dance was once indeed shocking, described as “A Dreadful and Demoralizing Dance for Decadents” in a review of the 1908 New York musical revue, “Queen of the Moulin Rouge,” into which an Apache dance was interpolated.<sup>11</sup> When

producers wanted to bring the show up to Boston, after a successful four-month run from December 7, 1908 to April 24, 1909 at New York's Circle Theater, the Boston Mayor decreed that this show could not play there, because it was worse than "Salomy [sic]."<sup>12</sup> But by August 1909, Hammond of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* mentions the Apache dance as something we were "regaled with in Vaudeville a year ago... "and is somewhat tiresome now."<sup>13</sup> By 1919, the Apache dance had become so mainstream, it was incorporated by acrobatic ice dancers Elsie and Paulsen at the Golden Glades rink in New York as part of their ice dance show.<sup>14</sup>

While theater audiences may have grown tired of it before 1910, The Apache dance began a surprisingly long second life encapsulated on French, British and American film through at least the 1960's—and at least one version as recently as 2011 by dancers from the Atlanta Ballet. Charlie Chaplin, Jimmy Durante, Shirley MacLaine are some of the most famous performers to incorporate this dance into film.

The earliest, French Pathé films of 1912 and 1913, depicted Apaches performing class transgression on their part, dressing up for fancy-dress balls.<sup>15</sup> A 15-hour film serial, made in 1915, titled *Les Vampires* (The Vampires), revolved around a band of Parisian Apaches, included characters enacting the Apaches dancing the "dance of the Underworld." Here I'll show you the dance seen in the 1925 silent film, "The Rat," which was written and produced by Welsh performer, Ivor Novello, with Novello starring as The Rat and Mae March as Odile, his girlfriend. [SLIDE 4 can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky5cs5e1l0k>] The dance begins with the woman showing that her skirt is too tight to dance, which he promptly rips wider to allow for more movement [please see Acknowledgments], the flipping up of the woman with her legs flailing, the whipping the woman out with her hand held behind her back, and the signature conclusion of whirling the woman around while holding onto her hair with her legs wrapped around the man's torso.

What struck me about this clip in addition to the highly dramatic expressions of the two performers, was the stagy insistence of the filmmaker on recording the gaze of the woman seated at the table watching the performance. She looks a bit older and more upper-class than the woman dancing but in this movie, she is not actually much different than the prostitute--she is a *demi-mondaine*, meaning than rather being a streetwalker, she lives off of the generosity of her wealthy lovers. The filmmaker clearly wants us to believe that the Rat is very enticing to her; he has something to give her she does not have. Her excited watchfulness signals the enticement of masquerade, a desire to see and perhaps emulate the "other" that represents, in the words of scholar Edward Said, "a surrogate and even underground self."<sup>16</sup> And much like the history that Mouvet recounts about his "discovery" of the Apache dance, as something new to save society (and his career) from the tedium of *passé* dances, this woman is seeing something that clearly excites her desire and promises to provide her with a transformative experience. Becoming the "Other" by participating in the masquerade figures very strongly in Mouvet's biography. He wrote: "for a little while I was an Apache, more savage, more violent, more fearless than any of them. The sensation astonished even myself."<sup>17</sup> In a very deliberate manner, Novello wants us to know that we should desire this experience for ourselves too or at least to watch it. In watching different filmed versions of the Apache, I was intrigued not just by the consistency of the elements of the dance whatever its context, but also that most versions include multiple cuts to people watching the

dancers, unsure of how to read what is happening. What ties all of these watchers over the decades is their sense of unease: They are unsure if they are seeing real aggression and real violence, they are wondering if the woman in danger, if the man in danger, do they want to participate, or to intervene---is what they are seeing funny, scary or exciting, or all three? Most film viewers in the audience cannot dance this dance to become an Apache themselves, however like the observers on the screen they can watch. We may or may not like watching it, but the abruptness and tension between the man and the woman inherent in the dance draws our attention.

One could write a paper simply describing the number of filmed iterations of this dance up until the present. But although it might be tempting to spend the rest of this session marveling at Jimmy Durante with his gigantic nose, dressed as a Parisian streetwalker in woman's blond wig and skirt, striped blouse and scarf round his neck, being flung about in an Apache dance and muse on what this cross-gender parody meant in 1940's America,<sup>18</sup> I'd like instead to talk about the Apache dance as a persistent visual trope. A trope that has frozen in the respect in that it has become so recognizable, its meaning is no longer questioned. Despite the virtuosity that the dance requires of the dancers there is an element of familiarity (even boredom) in its stylized back and forth between the man and woman. I don't mean to suggest that image of the Apache dance is as powerful an image as say Madonna and child, or the Adam and Eve story, but its stubborn persistence and readability into this century is equivalent in some way. It is polysemic, meaning that it has many possible readings so that it potentially has both mass appeal and a metaphorical usefulness. And we can see in the various film version that the dance has been used for purposes dramatic, comedic (slapstick) ironic, and nostalgia in the most recent case of the Atlanta Ballet. But why this battle? What story are we trying to act out in this dance—and why do we continue to need to act it out? I have a suspicion that we can read the Apache not only as a fluid, flexible metaphor for the battle of the sexes, but an ongoing saga about dominance and submission that has a particularly satisfying appeal to our Western perspective.

And although the literal Apache dance itself may or may not have finally exhausted its useful life by 2012, as well as its political correctness, whatever the dancers and filmmakers are trying to act out by presenting the Apache again and again, whatever its meaning, we are made to participate in it by watching it time and again, and it continues to entice us. I believe that beyond the actual reprisals of the Apache on film, we see echoes of its essence in Brittany Spear's music video, "Oops, I Did It Again," in the angular, aggressive almost martial-arts type moves that she performs with her dance ensemble, and her steady, unsmiling gaze boring at us through the camera; or the underlying threat of retributive violence by cast-aside lover, Justin Timberlake, who strikes his own angular attitudes in "Cry Me a River;" the promise of violence for enhancing sexual excitement in Rihannas's song and accompanying video, "S and M", even the stylized dancing/sparring in a now three-year-old Target commercial, of two female college roommates as they decorate their room to the song *Calabria*, remind us of this drive to act out our aggressive instincts but only as they are tightly contained within a highly controlled narrative format, and only by proxy.

The ongoing desire to play out this drama, and our continued unease with our participation in it, could be read into an incident that happened last spring at Princeton University, at a Special Event weekend honoring distinguished women alums, which

include Supreme Court Justices, Sonia Sotomayor, some members of Congress, and other elites. On the first night of this celebration, male and female student a-cappella groups performed for this audience. In one song, the all-male group, called the Nassoons, “serenaded one lone member of the all-female Tigerlilies, who pretended to have wandered, lost, onto the stage. Keeping the rhythm, the men pantomimed unzipping their flies and thrusting their pelvises,” effectively pantomiming a gang rape.<sup>19</sup> According to New York Times writer, Lisa Belkin, who was at the performance, audience reaction ranged from horror to laughter, herself filled with enough dismay to write about it--in the New York Times. Besides the colossal failure of judgment on the part of the students--would you really act out a gang rape in front of your parents, let alone a Supreme Court Justice?--this happening shows the powerful but sometimes unquestioned urge to play on this trope of sexual violence between men and women, the dance of the Apache, and it still draws our fascinated gaze.

Copyright 2012, Eden E. Kainer

### Acknowledgments

Thanks to conference participant Melanie Haller for correctly noticing in the clip from the film *The Rat* that the woman is showing her skirt is too tight to dance, rather than showing her garter to the man, which I had originally thought.

### Notes

1. One useful discussion of the intersections of race, class and gender with social dance is by Susan C. Cook, “Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform: Respectability, Modernism, and the Social Dancing of Irene and Vernon Castle,” in *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. William Washabaugh (New York: Berg, 1998), 133-50.
2. Nadine George-Graves, in “Just Like Being at the Zoo: Primitivity and Ragtime Dance,” in *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy, Sham, Shake : A Social and Popular Dance Reader*, Julie Malnig, ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2009), p. 61.
3. *America Dances! 1897-1948: A Collector's Edition of Social Dance in Film*, Carol Teton, ed., (Dancetime Publications, 2003).
4. Albert W. Newman, *Dances of To-day* (Philadelphia, PA: Penn Publishing Co., 1921), 16-17.
5. Maurice Mouviet, *The Art of Dancing*, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1915), p. 35.
6. Mouviet, p. 28.
7. Junie McCree, “The Russian Emigrants: A Satirical Dancing Skit” (1914) in *The American Variety Stage: Vaudeville and Popular Entertainment, 1870-1920*, Library of Congress Digital Collections.
8. Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2007), 46.
9. Novelistic explorations of the American “Wild West” were already wildly popular in Germany via the novels of German Karl May; one of his series was specifically about an Apache Indian named Winnetou, published in the 1890’s (thanks to German Studies



- Scholar Julie Sneeringer for pointing this out). France had its own Western novels even earlier than May's by Gustave Aimard; Buffalo Bill came to Paris in 1889 to perform at the Paris Universal Exposition, and cowboy and Indian movies were popular in France between 1907 and 1914.
10. Lewis painted a wall mural titled "Lovers" at the London Cabaret Theater Club which British art historian Tickner argues depicted a man and woman dancing the Apache. Lisa Tickner, "The Popular Culture of *Kermasse*: Lewis, Painting, and Performance, 1912-13," *Modernism/Modernity* 4/2 (1997): 67-120.
  11. *Tatler*, 7 April 1909, 26-7.
  12. Special to the New York Times, *New York Times*, May 20, 1909, p. 9. There was a "Danse des Apaches" interpolated earlier into a ballet, *A Day in Paris*, which opened in London in October 1908 at the Empire music hall. Tickner, p. 71.
  13. Hammond, "News of the Theaters," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 30, 1909, p. 7.
  14. "Display Ad 105-No Title," *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1919, p. 11.
  15. Tickner, p. 33, n. 39.
  16. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.
  17. Mouvet, p. 30.
  18. *You're in the Army Now*, Feature Film, directed by Lewis Seiler, Warner Bros., December 25, 1941.
  19. Lisa Belkin, "After Class, Skimpy Equality," *New York Times*, August 28, 2011, Style Section, p. 1.

### Selected Bibliography

- Allen, Robert C. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- America Dances! 1897-1948: A Collector's Edition of Social Dance in Film*. Carol Teton, ed., Dancetime Publications, 2003.
- Belkin, Lisa, "After Class, Skimpy Equality," *New York Times*, August 28, 2011, Style Section, p. 1.
- Castle, Irene and Castle, Vernon. *Modern Dance*. New York: World Syndicate, Co., 1914.
- Cook, Susan C. "Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform: Respectability, Modernism, and the Social Dancing of Irene and Vernon Castle." In *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexuality*, edited by William Washabaugh, 133-150. New York: Berg, 1998.
- Erenberg, Lewis A. *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Kainer, Eden. "Sophie Tucker (1884-1966) and Elsie Janis (1889-1956): Masked and Unmasked Performances of Blackness on the Early Vaudeville Stages." Paper delivered at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Los Angeles, CA, September 2003.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Mouvet, Maurice. *The Art of Dancing*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1915.
- Newman, Albert W. *Dances of To-day*. Philadelphia, PA: Penn Publishing Co., 1921.
- Peiss, Kathy. "Commercial Leisure and the 'Woman Question.'" In *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption*, edited by Richard Butsch, 105-17. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
- Robinson, Danielle. "Performing American: Ragtime Dancing as Participatory Minstrelsy." In *Dance Chronicle* 32 (2009): 89-126.
- Savage, Jon. *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2007.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Tickner, Lisa. "The Popular Culture of *Kermasse*: Lewis, Painting, and Performance, 1912-13." *Modernism/Modernity* 4/2 (1997): 67-120.

Address for correspondence:

Eden Kainer  
8514 Ardleigh Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19118  
ekainer87@gmail.com

## Meet the Flintstones: A New Generation of Community Dance Artists Renews a City Given up for Lost

Elizabeth Kattner and Emma Davis  
University of Michigan-Flint

### *Abstract*

*In the last decade, a new generation of independent community artists in Flint, Michigan has been working to revive a city devastated by the loss of the manufacturing industry. Collaborative projects in art, music and theatre engage members of the community, address relevant issues and explore viable solutions. To illustrate how communities can redefine themselves, this paper will examine four projects in which dance is playing a vital role. Movement and choreography illuminated the stories citizens shared about the rash of arsons in Flint in “Embers: the Flint Fires Verbatim Project.” “Dance in Schools” introduces dance as a form of expression to elementary students whose schools are no longer able to offer art programs. Finally, the collective efforts of dance and community artists in the Flint Public Art Project’s “Lighting the Towers” and Buckham Gallery’s “On the Line” will be examined for the change stimulated in the downtown area and the social issues these projects has addressed.*

Flint, Michigan the “Vehicle City” and birthplace of General Motors, is a paradigm of the deindustrialization that has devastated countless cities and towns in the past decades. While thousands have left the city to pursue the American Dream elsewhere, many self-proclaimed “Flintstones” are resolved to remain in Flint and create a new identity for themselves and their city.

In recent years, Flint has been redefining itself through arts and education. A new generation of independent community artists is determined to change the face and the reputation of the city. More than a means of self-expression, art is their vehicle for urban transformation. On site dance projects are being implemented with other grassroots visual art, music and theatre projects to engage members of the community, address relevant issues and explore viable solutions.

The following report will examine four community art projects in which dance is playing a vital role. We have worked directly on *Dance in Schools* (2012) (Kattner), which introduces dance as a form of expression to elementary students whose schools are no longer able to offer art programs, and *On the Line* (2012) (Davis), which examined the rights of workers past and present. The other two projects were directed and choreographed by Andrew Morton, Desiree Duell, and Jessica Back, who provided interviews for this presentation. Their projects, *Lighting the Towers* (2010) and *Embers: the Flint Fires Verbatim Project* (2011), addressed the issue of property abandonment and subsequent problems of decaying buildings and arson. Websites from these artists and projects have been used as a source, as have local news reports. The importance of these sources lies in that they describe Flint as it is perceived by residents and

resident artists and journalists. Each of these projects addresses urgent issues faced by the Flint community, offering the possibility of change and renewal, albeit not from the anticipated resurgence in manufacturing. This report will illustrate how a city with very few resources, wide spread poverty and a crime rate unusually high even for an urban area, can redefine itself through the collaborative work of artists, students and members of the community.

### **Renew, Recycle, Reuse: *Lighting the Tower***

As depicted in Michael Moore’s documentary “Roger and Me,” changes in the automotive industry, including GM’s move to Detroit and loss of manufacturing jobs, caused Flint to experience extreme unemployment, followed by a massive decrease in population (Moore). The 2010 Census recorded 102,434 residents (2010 Census Data), almost half as many as called Flint home during its height in the 1960’s. This rapid decline has led to wide spread property abandonment, ranging from small family homes, to toxic factory sites, to high rise buildings. In the downtown area, perhaps the most prominent of these is the Genesee Towers (figure 1).



Figure 1: *Lighting the Towers*.  
Photo: Sean Ryan, mlive.com.

Once a symbol of Flint's prosperity, the Towers has become a constant reminder of the decay that began decades ago. Built in 1968, the Tower was home to the prestigious male only University Club. Vacated in 2001, it was condemned in 2004 and in 2007 the city was forced to permanently block off parts of the street due to falling concrete ("Flint Closing Streets"). After a decade of vacancy, the building was identified by the collaborators of the Flint Public Art Project be used in a happening that would in their words, "broadcasting the image of this new city to outsiders to support and help propagate new ways of living in the city (Kovacev)." Under the direction of community artist Desiree Duell, this program aims to "coalesce the emerging identity of Flint" by "giving greater force to essential features of the urban cultural landscape by recognizing them and connecting them to a larger narrative. A new city is emerging in parallel with processes of economic restructuring (Kovacev)." *Lighting the Tower* became the inaugural happening for the Flint Public Art Project, and was conducted during the monthly Flint Art Walk, when artists open their galleries and studios for the evening to encourage people to visit the downtown area and patronize the shops and restaurants.



Figure 2: Jessica Back, choreographer for *Fischer Bodies*.  
Photo: Sean Ryan, mlive.com.

Great effort was involved in creating this happening, including securing entrance permits and gaining access to electricity in a building that had been abandoned for ten years. Not until the day of the performance were the artists able to set up the floors and staircases used by the dancers. The style of dance chosen for this project was inspired by the building's former reputation. In a previous visit to the site, Duell discovered what became the inspiration for the dance portion of the project: dozens of vintage Playboy magazines in the rooms of the University Club (Duell Interview). To represent the former glory of the Tower, choreographer Jessica Back staged burlesque dancers from *Fischer Bodies Dance Troupe*. As darkness fell, the dancers became visible in the windows of Genesee Towers and the public gathered below to watch from a parking lot across the street (figure 2). The dancers were displayed in an aura of pink light where they created the visual effect of walking up and down the stairs of the Towers, reviving the building's chic and sexy past. The project, however, was not meant to linger in the past, but was intended to direct the audience to the future. Duell, who hand-lit every room, chose the color pink for the lighting, representing rebirth and hope. In addition to the dancers, a

video projection was shown on the building, displaying words such as “reclaim,” “recycle,” and “reuse.” To conclude the performance, the dancers led an improvised movement procession down the city sidewalks to the nearby Riverbank Park where the crowd was met by live music. A victim of decay like the Towers, the Grand Fountain at the Park was turned on for the evening. As this project evoked memories of Flint in its heyday, it also sent a clear message of hope and progress to the audience, attracting attention from local artists, the public and the media (Duell Interview).

### Rising from the Ashes: *Embers*

Abandoned homes represent one of the most pressing issues in Flint. Census data reports approximately 10,000 empty houses, providing a feeding ground for crime (Harris, “Arsons on the Rise”). In June 2012, the FBI has once again given Flint Michigan the dubious title of Arson Capital of the US (a number which contributes to it also having the most violent crimes per capita). The Flint fire department reports an even higher number than the FBI: according to them in 2010 and 2011, there were 840 arsons. This is an extraordinarily high number considering that Flint has a population of approximately 100,000. The problem is clearly not one that the understaffed and underfinanced fire and police department can keep under control (Harris, “Flint Holds Dubious Title”).

During a particularly devastating rash of arsons in 2010, playwright Andrew Morton asked himself; *why does a city burn itself up, literally?* Together with students from his playwrighting class at the University of Michigan-Flint, Morton began to interview members of the community who had been directly affected by the fires. The class worked the interviews into a script, and *Embers: the Flint Fires Verbatim Project*, performed in August and September 2011, was born. Together with theatre and dance students from the university, community members ranging from young teenagers to senior citizens performed on various sites in Flint. Dance played a vital role in the performances, on the one hand providing a “break” from a simple storytelling format (figure 3). More importantly, choreographer Jessica Back provided visual pictures of the stories.



Figure 3: Rehearsal for *Embers*. Photo: Matt Morgan.

This project was vital in that it began conversation in the city. Why does a city burn itself up? Why did it seem that many members of the community were complacent about the situation, feeling that burning down the abandoned houses may be a viable solution to the vast number of empty residences? Why did so many citizens fall into believing the wide spread theory that the Flint firefighters could be behind the fires? What could the mayor and the city council have done differently in the situation? Community members were given the opportunity to discuss their past, their present and their futures, to begin to look for solutions together in a difficult situation, one in which the city authorities do not have the resources to combat alone. Through the interviews, the rehearsals and the performances, hundreds of members of the community became engaged in looking for solutions (Morton). The performances were particularly compelling in that they were performed throughout the city, with one notable performance happening in front of a house that had been set on fire only a week before the scheduled event (Morgan and Prince).

Some of the most satisfying results of the production were responses from UM Flint students who participated only as audience. Students, many of whom had little knowledge of the city itself beyond its “bad reputation,” responded with a deepened understanding of the issues that face the city and many made the decision to participate with the community for the years that they will spend studying in Flint (Morton). Their active engagement is a growing force in the transformation of the city, and one of the most important missions of the university.

### **Remember the Past: *On the Line***

It is clear that a city with such drastic issues such as violent crime and arson has a plethora of social issues as well. Not only the birthplace of GM, Flint was also the birthplace of the United Auto Workers (UAW). The artists who worked on the project *On the Line* described the 1936-37 Flint Sit-Down Strike as changing the UAW “from a collection of isolated locals on the fringes of the industry into a major labor union (Duell *On the Line*).” Responding to unfair working conditions and devious payroll practices, automotive workers conducted a 44 day strike, which resulted in the widespread unionization of manufacturing in the US. In honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the strike, Buckham Gallery, an artist-run, non-profit space presented *On the Line*, an interactive performance exhibition that addressed the rights of workers past and present and the role of labor unions, while at the same time emphasizing the strong labor force of the current artistic community. In light of recent developments of anti-union legislation in several states, including Michigan, this theme is particularly relevant in 2012.

*On the Line* brought together a collaboration of Flint artists embodying dance, film, music, writing, performance, and visual art. In preparation, the participants estimated that there are 15,000 working artists in Flint and created a number of interactive stations that identified art as a labor force (Duell Interview). The audience was immediately involved upon entering the gallery: audience members (laborers) were confronted by a Foreman with the decision to either enter the factory, which stationed the dance choreography, film and live music, or to join a group of protesters chanting poetry and carrying signs with phrases like “Have Courage To Make” and “Fight Difficult Battles” (figure 4).



Figure 4: Sit down strikers in *On the Line*. Photo: Desiree Duell.

I (Davis) staged the dancers to represent the repetition of the assembly line. The dancers were placed in a straight line while each one flowed through a chain of mechanical movements that passed down to the next dancer. Behind the dancers footage from the original Sit-Down Strike was projected as contemporary live, electronic music played in the background. Towards the end of the performance, the protesters interrupted the assembly line choreography by sitting down in between each dancer. The entire audience joined the protesters in the “sit down strike” on the floor, and the final moments of the video played a jingle from the UAW strike of 1936-37: “...Sit down, sit down. Sit down, just take a seat. Sit down and rest your feet. Sit down, sit down” (Sugar).

The interactive exhibition sought to create a parallel identity between the struggles of the early Flint autoworkers and today’s artistic labor force in Flint. After the performance, audience participants joined the artists for a meal and discussion, to address problems and look for solutions in subjects such as access to resources, identification as a component of community development, accessible gallery and performance space, and the need for a greater voice in Flint’s Master Planning process (Duell 2012).

### **Looking to the Future: *Dance in Schools***

Dance has played an important role in the art community in Flint for decades. Remaining from the days when GM poured millions into creating an artistic infrastructure in the community, the Flint Institute of Music at the Flint Cultural Center provides professional dance training to students of all income levels from Flint and the surrounding communities. However, despite scholarship money, lack of transportation and the inability of many parents to provide the large amount of support required by a program such as this, prevent it from being accessible to most of the children of the community of Flint itself. In 2012 I (Kattner) founded the *Dance in Schools* program through the Department of Theatre and Dance at UM Flint to provide access to dance to some of these students. The calendar year 2012 presents this project in its pilot phase. Between February and April approximately 500 school children from local elementary schools participated in the program. The concept is simple and follows a typical lecture demonstration format: college students give a short performance at the elementary schools. Directly following the demonstration, they do movement activities with the children. In spring 2012, these



performances consisted of contemporary and classical dances, including the fairy tale dances from the third act of *Sleeping Beauty* in full classical costumes. While the opportunity for these children to be exposed to classical dance and music is clearly beneficial, the future aim of this program will be to bring students and faculty from the University to the same schools to work with classes of elementary children on a long term basis. These goals have been set in response to Flint's financial problems: the Flint Community Schools no longer have the resources to include most of the arts in their programs. Dance is offered as an extracurricular activity in some schools, and music remains in most grade levels, but visual art was permanently removed in the 2011/2012 school year.

Among the arts, dance provides an opportunity particularly relevant in our day: it offers children a physical means of expression, an alternative for young people who find verbal and written communication difficult. In addition to the creative and emotional benefits, dance can be an important component in solving one of the largest crisis in American society, childhood obesity, and in Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* program, is presented as a something to which children should have access (*Let's Move*). Singer Beyoncé has also been an active part of the *Let's Move* program, notably through her *Move your Body* video created to encourage children to become more active (Beyoncé).



Figure 5: Elementary students at Eisenhower Elementary in Flint learning Hop-o'-My-Thumb children's dance from the third act of *Sleeping Beauty*. Photo: Sarah Reed.

Because the schedule of the university and the elementary schools coincide, *Dance in Schools* is able to come to young people during regular school hours, and is the only program in Flint that brings dance to the local schools in this way, making this program the first time many of the children have been exposed to creative movement as well as structured dance. In direct feedback from the teachers, the young people, as well as audience observation, the response to this initial program was resoundingly positive (figure 5). Most surprising was the children's response to that paradigm of classical ballet, the tutu. Without exception, each of group of young people reacted audibly as either Aurora or the White Cat stepped on stage (figure 6). After each performance young people gave spontaneous hugs to the college students, and not only

Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, and Aurora. Students who had taught dance combinations to the children in their practice clothes were also honored by this spontaneous outpouring of joy. Teachers also expressed their gratitude that their students, “who have nothing,” many of whom come to school without breakfast, who live in homes that have been condemned and are boarded up and who live with crime, violence and insecurity in their neighborhoods had this opportunity.



Figure 6: UM Flint students performing for students from Durant Tuuri Mott Elementary School.  
Photo: Mark Chopski

## Conclusion

Using art to facilitate change is a notion that, while natural to artists, is not self-evident to everyone, including, and perhaps especially to those in positions of authority and government service. The question rightly arises: is it working? The four projects discussed here are very recent and this report presents only anecdotal evidence to the success of these programs. Statistical evidence of their impact is not yet available, and would be very difficult to collect. Yet, the hundreds of participants and audience members who belong to the community of Flint will attest that the city is changing, and that this change is moving in a positive direction. The impact and the importance of the work of the artists in Flint has also reached the office of mayor Dayne Walling, who is actively working alongside the artists in the city to give the arts a prominent role in the City’s Master Plan. Moving forward, the Mayor believes that: “Flint is transforming into a sustainable 21st Century city (Walling),” and artists of all kinds, including dance artists are playing a pivotal role in this rebirth.

## Sources

- AlHajal, Khalil. "Art Display at Condemned Downtown Flint Building Draws Crowd despite Electrical Problems." *mlive.com*. 9 June 2012. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Atkins, Scott. "Flint Public Art project returns to downtown Flint for Art Walk with 'Ground Breaking Art Party'" *mlive.com*. 13 July 2012. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Beyoncé. "Move your Body (Music Video)." *YouTube.com*. 26 April 2011. Web. 12 June 2012.
- "Crime Statistics." *Federal Bureau of Investigation*. Official government website. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Duell, Desiree. Interview conducted by Emma Davis and Elizabeth Kattner at University of Michigan Flint 23 April 2012.
- Duell, Desiree. *On the Line: Art & Labor in Flint*. Flint: Michigan. Buckham Gallery, 2012. Print.
- "Flint Closing Streets around Genesee Towers." *WNEM.com*. 9 Nov 2007. Web. 12 June 2012.
- "Get Active." *Let's Move: America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids*. Official government website. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Harris, David. "Arsons on the Rise again in Flint; Neighbors of Abandoned Homes Fear Those Homes Could Be Next." *mlive.com*. 1 April 2012. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Harris, David. "Flint Holds onto Dubious Title of Arson Capital of the Nation, Despite Downturn in Fires." *mlive.com*. 13 June 2012. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Kovacev, Cedomir, web designer. *Flint Public Art Project*. Copyright 2012. Web. 12 June 2012.
- Moore, Michael, dir. *Roger and Me*. Dog Eat Dog Films, 1989. Film.
- Morgan, Matthew and Prince Marwan. "Embers: The Flint Fire Verbatim Project." *YouTube.com*. 4 Nov 2011. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Morton, Andrew. Interview conducted by Emma Davis and Elizabeth Katter conducted at University of Michigan-Flint 23 April 2012.
- "On the Line Promo." *YouTube.com*. 6 Feb 2012. Web. 12 June 2012.
- Strachan, Jessica. "Art Groups to Light up Genesee Towers at Dusk During this Week's Downtown ArtWalk." *mLive.com*. 5 June 2011. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Sugar, Maurice. "Sit Down." *Arts Labor*. Web. 1 Sept 2012.
- Walling Dwayne. "Mayor's News." *City of Flint Official Website*. 24 April 2012. Web. 12 June 2012.
- "2012 Census Data." *U.S. Census Bureau Homepage*. Official government website. Web. 1 Sept 2012.

Addresses for Correspondence

Elizabeth Kattner: [ekattner@umflint.edu](mailto:ekattner@umflint.edu)

Emma Davis: [emmada@umflint.edu](mailto:emmada@umflint.edu)

***The Sleeping Beauty Wakes Up in Philadelphia:  
Classical Ballet in the American City  
Laura Katz Rizzo  
Temple University***

***Abstract***

*Princess Aurora, the charming protagonist of the classic 17<sup>th</sup> century fairy tale and 19<sup>th</sup> century classical ballet awoke to find herself in the gritty and poverty-stricken industrial city of Philadelphia during the Great Depression. In 1936, Philadelphians witnessed the premiere of the first full-length American production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, a performance choreographed and performed by the Philadelphia Ballet Company, under the leadership of American ballet pioneer, Catherine Littlefield. Using a cultural studies methodology, I examine the historical artifacts remaining from this performance, including newspaper reviews, the playbill and still photographs. Reading for discursive trends in these documents, I discover themes that emerge from the critical discussion around the ballet. Analyzing the journalistic writing about performance, I conclude that in her staging of *The Sleeping Beauty*, as well as her establishment of a professional ballet company in Philadelphia, Catherine Littlefield struggled with tensions that perpetually surround classical ballet: tradition and innovation.*

*Because of *Beauty's* strong place in the classical canon of the genre, Littlefield's staging of the ballet allowed her to claim legitimacy for her company as an authentically classical company. America in the 1930s lacked a classical ballet tradition, and the Philadelphians who attended performances of the work were a largely untrained audience. Therefore, while Littlefield worked to establish the Philadelphia Ballet Company as an elite institution with the cultural capital associated with European training, she also struggled to make the company and its performances accessible and interesting for her modern American audiences.*

*In examining Littlefield's strategy for Americanizing ballet, I make connections between the grandiosity and prosperity displayed on stage in *The Sleeping Beauty*, and in popular films like those of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers as well as the lush shows that took place at movie halls like the Roxy Theatre in New York City, where Littlefield worked for a time. Despite the difficulty of American lives in the 30s, in these performances lavish dance and music scenes transported depression era audiences from the poverty and insecurity of their daily lives.*

*In exposing the concept of authenticity as central to Littlefield's project, I also connect this study to a larger body of postmodernist philosophy that describes how this often unarticulated desire for an authentic artistic representation is both hollow and unachievable. In addition, I draw associations between Littlefield's work in ballet and shared societal trends of the period, situating her work within a larger cultural context of American society in the 1930s. In doing so I work from a critical historiography that works to demonstrate how ballet is a fascinating and useful lens with which to examine the intricacies of contemporary culture.*

## ***The Sleeping Beauty* Wakes Up in Philadelphia: Classical Ballet in the American City**

This paper celebrates the achievements of the dancer, teacher and choreographer Catherine Littlefield, focusing on the first American full-length production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, which took place in Philadelphia in 1937. Danced by the Philadelphia Ballet Company, under Littlefield's directorship, the production was largely responsible for establishing the Philadelphia Ballet Company as a legitimate artistic institution producing a uniquely American form of classical ballet. These performances of *The Sleeping Beauty* are a metaphor for the classical balletic genre. Through both their canonical status and narrative content, the performances acted as a vehicle of change for the balletic form in its new American context, while simultaneously creating a staged representation of stability for audience members, critics and performers.

The primary documentation surviving from the production is a group of several newspaper reviews. The reviews circulate around thematic tensions surrounding both Littlefield's 1937 *Beauty* and classical ballet itself: tradition and innovation. Littlefield successfully navigated these tensions, establishing herself and her company as leaders in the field of dance. In 1937, the well-known dance critic Arnold Haskell, a distinguished authority on ballet, spoke of Littlefield's significance writing, "Fokine, Massine and Balanchine have been working for considerable periods in America, but it has taken an American woman to produce the first American works for American dancers to find favour both in Paris and London."<sup>1</sup> Littlefield's efforts shaped the trajectory of ballet as it emerged in the United States, not only in Philadelphia, but nationally. It was from Littlefield's school that George Balanchine took many of his original dancers, and her sister Dorothea was the first American to be on the faculty of his School of American Ballet.<sup>2</sup>

Littlefield's ideas, and her company's touring schedule, also fostered a new international understanding of ballet as a dance form able to transcend its European identity. One critic said of the company, "The Philadelphia Ballet stands for American creative efforts and it is this that has won it fame."<sup>3</sup> Littlefield prophetically stated in 1936 that, "there is a great future for ballet in this country, and eventually large cities will have repertoire ballet organizations of their own as they now have symphony orchestras."<sup>4</sup> The work of Catherine Littlefield's Philadelphia Ballet Company and its large-scale production of *The Sleeping Beauty* attest to both Littlefield's importance as a strong foremother of classical ballet, and Philadelphia as an important artistic hub with an active dance community throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. In this way, her story complicates and enriches the meta-narrative of ballet history, so often centered in New York City around George Balanchine.

In 1930, approximately two million people lived in the city of Philadelphia.<sup>6</sup> In 1934, three years before the premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty*, eight in every one thousand homes in Philadelphia had no running water, 3000 homes had no heat, and 7000 homes were considered unfit for occupancy.<sup>7</sup> In the same year a housing survey showed that almost 24,000 families were doubling up and sharing quarters to make ends meet.<sup>8</sup> During this time, many people living in Philadelphia were hungry, cold, and living in circumstances of dire hardship. Despite the adversity and poverty of their everyday

experiences, however, Philadelphians turned out in the thousands to see *The Sleeping Beauty*.

In the 1930s, many Americans seeking entertainment desired an escape from the bleak realities of life during the Great Depression. Popular venues for an evening out included Hollywood films, musical theater, and mixed bill revue shows including comedians, magicians and dancers trained in tap, soft shoe and ballet. Classically trained ballet dancers had no professional American ballet companies with which they could work, but instead had to work from job to job dancing in operas, musical theater or revue shows. As Lynn Garafola has written:

Although Americans filled the lower ranks of the Metropolitan Opera ballet, most ballet-trained dancers found work on the popular stage- in Broadway musicals and revues and in the ballet troupes attached to the Radio City Music Hall and the Roxy...Many shuttled between the commercial and concert realms...<sup>9</sup>

Like other American dancers of her time, Littlefield bridged the worlds of popular entertainment and classical theatre dance in her training and performance career. At ten years old, Catherine saw Diaghilev's Ballet Russes perform at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York as well as Anna Pavlova's last Philadelphia performance at the Academy of Music in 1920.<sup>10</sup> She also saw the companies of Serge Denham and De Basil perform in Europe in the 1930s. Littlefield also trained with these European dancers, studying in Paris every summer with influential teacher and well-known former member of the St. Petersburg Maryinsky Ballet and Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, Lubov Egorova, who had a studio at Place de la Trinité.<sup>11</sup> Littlefield also studied in New York with Russian émigré, Mikhail Mordkin.<sup>12</sup> Mordkin, formerly of Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet, also performed with Diaghilev's Ballet Russes, later forming and dancing in several companies<sup>13</sup> and teaching ballet in New York City and across the United States. In addition to Mordkin, Littlefield studied intensively with Luigi Albertieri<sup>14</sup> and Ivan Tarasoff, who sent his own son to study and perform dance with Littlefield's Philadelphia Ballet Company later in life.<sup>15</sup>

Her teachers from the Maryinsky and Ballet Russes companies showed Littlefield the exciting, transformative, and transporting power of Russian classical and neoclassical ballet. However, Littlefield also understood ballet as a commercially viable and approachable form of entertainment; something appropriate for not only kings and queens, but also popular society, allowing her to package her company and its performances as uniquely American, vital and enjoyable. Littlefield herself performed in many operas and musical revues and took part in the Ziegfeld Follies, eventually becoming a star.<sup>16</sup>

Littlefield studied with the most well qualified international coaches of her time, learning from them a unique mixture of Russian, Italian, French and American styles of dance, with a focus on clean clear technique and the basic foundations of the *danse d'ecole*. However, she added to the traditional training of her instructors describing the style she taught as, "modern in the best sense of the word—I mean that it is free and fresh in approach and viewpoint. We use classical ballet technique, but only as a means to the end of unhampered esthetic expression."<sup>17</sup> Her dancers were noted for their fresh American spirit, as in the comment from a 1935 review in which the dancers are noted for, "not only ...the technical accomplishments of the group but also by a certain

character and spirit which distinguish their organization from other groups of dancers...”<sup>18</sup>

Littlefield was able to implement her modern interpretation of classical style with the establishment of her own company in 1935. In their second season, the company premiered *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia on February 12, 1937. In keeping Tchaikovsky’s score of the ballet intact, the Philadelphia Ballet became the first American company to perform the full-length ballet.<sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> Catherine choreographed the entire ballet with the exception of the *pas de deux* in Act III, which was attributed to Marius Petipa and set by Madame Lubov Egorova, while Catherine was studying in Paris the previous summer.<sup>21</sup> In what follows, I sketch the production from details discovered in clipping files in New York and Philadelphia.

Littlefield described her choreography for the ballet as done in the style of the original work by Marius Petipa.<sup>22</sup> Some reviewers reported that the costumes were sumptuous, citing the European woolens and furs used, while others remarked that, “the production would naturally have been enhanced by richer costuming.”<sup>23</sup> Janic Scenic Studios designed and executed the sets, and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra of eighty-five men accompanied the first presentation.<sup>24</sup> One hundred students from the Littlefield School of Ballet augmented the Philadelphia Ballet Company for the production.

Littlefield’s husband invested \$10,000.00 for mounting the ballet.<sup>25</sup> This was a tremendous cost in the midst of the Depression, and it signifies the weight that Littlefield and her husband felt the ballet carried. Many critics spoke about the company’s triumph in staging the ballet, welcoming them to the international ballet scene. Embarking upon the elaborate and traditional work, Littlefield successfully established her company as an authoritative institution worthy of respect. The well-known dance critic John Martin, for example, wrote about the Philadelphia Ballet,

But with all due allowances, it has done a good job of this tremendously ambitious project. It gives a consistently better account of itself at each of its presentations and shows that its approach to its work is soundly based, and that it is not concerned with faddism and sensation. The very fact of its revival of this ballet in the old romantic tradition testifies to this in a degree, and the straightforwardness of both the choreography and the performance add further evidence.<sup>26</sup>

Speaking about the company’s later performance of the ballet at the Hollywood Bowl, writer Dorathi Bock Pierre commented,

If there is a doubt in anyone’s mind that an American ballet company can not match any European company, the Littlefield Ballet should make them change their opinion...the choreography showed her {Littlefield’s} love of the traditional ballet, with a fine sense of theatrical pageantry and democratic ideal...<sup>27</sup>

Yet another writer commented,

With the company’s American premiere of Tchaikovsky’s, ‘The Sleeping Beauty,’ last week it brought the group yet wider recognition as the leading organization of its kind in the country. No one argues that ‘The Sleeping Beauty,’ was a faultless production, but there has been general agreement that for technical finish and for its qualities as a composition it represented an extraordinary



accomplishment. In the work of the company and in the interest and enthusiasm displayed by the audiences at each of the two performances one sensed the sturdy healthy growth of the organization and a public awakening to the potentialities as well as to the accomplishments of American dancers under capable supervision.<sup>28</sup>

This same sentiment, in which the Philadelphia Ballet is heralded as American's first **classical** ballet company, is evident a review published in the Philadelphia Inquirer, in which the writer commented,

The Philadelphia Ballet, which is to the dance art in this city and America what the Philadelphia Orchestra is in its field, added a few more feathers to its already well-decorated cap with the American premiere of Tchaikovsky's fairy tale, 'The Sleeping Beauty' last night.<sup>29</sup>

Littlefield, however, smartly billed her company not only as a bastion of classical Western European tradition, but also as something fresh, modern and American. It is the combination of freshness and lineage, or tradition and innovation that is so often mentioned by newspaper critics. In a public relations statement Littlefield described the company as, "The first purely American ballet company to translate into the American idiom the glamorous traditions of a thrilling stage art...an art finding an exciting renaissance in the superb vitality of young America."<sup>30</sup> In framing her work as contemporary, Littlefield successfully, as Lynn Garafola has noted, "uncouple(d) the aspiration to creative excellence from wealth and social snobbery,"<sup>31</sup> a trend Garafola believes was a political move that had to be made in order for concert dance to establish itself in the United States. This proletarian vision of an authentically American classical ballet company was well received by the public.<sup>32 33</sup>

Another article reviewing *Beauty* remarked on the novelty of the American nationality of the Littlefield's dancers stating, "In the performance, over 100 dancers will appear in various scenes of the ballet. All of these except two are Philadelphia born."<sup>34</sup> Writers immediately responded to Littlefield's emphasis on her company's young American identity. Janet Gunn, a newspaper critic for the Philadelphia Herald and Philadelphia Examiner wrote, "If there is an all-American rating for contenders in the art of dancing, this company holds it by an overwhelming number of points."<sup>35</sup> Littlefield underscored the youthful dynamism of her company by repeatedly stating in the press that "she did not believe that ballet had to be dull or slow." She said, "We gave it pace and life and snapped it up without sacrificing technique or true ballet tradition."<sup>36</sup>

Looking at her staging and coaching of Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty*, then, provides a window into the ways Littlefield enacted and embodied her fresh understanding of ballet. Bridging European tradition with American freshness, she forged an identity for her company that embraced both its classicism and its modernism. Littlefield's hybridization of ballet as both a high and low art, and her negotiation of these realms of cultural discourse allowed ballet to develop a foothold in the United States as it emerged in the 1930s.

In addition to the modernization of choreography and costuming, Littlefield's modern approach to gender roles certainly influenced her own interpretation of the Aurora role. Several articles describe her style as brash and surprisingly un-ladylike. One, for example states, "Catherine Littlefield, ballet choreographer, director and prima

ballerina of the Philadelphia Ballet Company, shook hands in Brussels with King Leopold, King of the Belgians, and wore slacks on the occasion.” And although there is no video available from these important performances, we can assume from *Beauty’s* popularity as well as from descriptions of her approach detailed by newspaper writers, that Littlefield was able to modernize the choreography of the ballet while keeping true to its essence. John Martin wrote about the 1937 performance, “In the reviving of an old work of this kind...it is almost essential to preserve something of its stuffiness in order to give it its true flavor.”<sup>37</sup> Like Littlefield, Martin wavers between desires for tradition and a contemporary compelling work. He describes his feelings about the ballet in the following statement from his review:

Here is really a grand old work, a ballet with a large B. Its lovely score, its foolish fairy-tale plot in which nothing ever happens, the inherent quality of bravura which its scenarist and composer have instilled into any possible choreographic arrangement, all proclaim unmistakably the year 1890 in which it was created.<sup>38</sup>

Littlefield, unconsciously or not, tapped into *Beauty’s* representation of stability, opulence and order. The world enacted on stage in *The Sleeping Beauty* emerged from the imaginations of pre-revolutionary Russians, and their anxieties around the impending revolutionary changes about to crash upon the shores of aristocratic society. There are many similarities between the on-stage world of *Beauty* and the on-screen world in the films of actors like: Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Greta Garbo and Shirley Temple so popular in the 1930s. For people facing poverty, social change and the stresses of war, depictions of rich and beautiful people living lives of ease and prosperity provided a comforting respite.

As a matriarch of American classical ballet, Littlefield used her well-trained dancers to depict the old and lovely world of the classical ballet, and the court of Louis XIV, taking her audiences to a place of calm symmetry and stability. Her dancers carried on the grand tradition of the art form, while allowing for subtle shifts and changes in their contemporary embodiment of classical choreography. Littlefield re-established the underpinnings of the classical aesthetic of order, symmetry and balance at the very foundation of classical ballet as part of educating an American ballet audience and proving the technical excellence of the Philadelphia Ballet Company. Established as “one of the country’s foremost dance organizations,”<sup>39</sup> the Philadelphia Ballet Company was largely responsible for creating the genre of an **American classical** ballet. In addition, Littlefield brought ballet to larger and more diverse audiences through her establishment of a genuine American ballet company fulfilling her desire to, “give performances not only in large but also in small auditoriums at popular prices, in order to develop in all sections of the city and its vicinity a ballet-conscious public.”<sup>40 41</sup>

Choreographically, thematically and artistically, any staging of *The Sleeping Beauty* struggles with the push-pull of tradition and modernity. As *The Sleeping Beauty* woke up in Philadelphia, it embodied the complexities of the modern woman of the 1930s, and the genre of classical ballet as it began its American emergence. Littlefield herself also exemplifies the genre of ballet and how it emerged in American cities. In her own persona, she contained all of the same tensions surrounding ballet as it emerged at this time. She was both a hard-talking, hard-working public woman, and an emblem of

ethereal femininity that wore pointe shoes and tutus and portrayed fairy tale princesses on stage. She could create kick lines and Broadway revue choreography suited to movie halls, as well as classical ballet choreography derived from the nineteenth century repertory. She struggled to balance the finances of an emerging arts institution (through both fundraising and marrying into a fortune) during the Great Depression while displaying opulence and prosperity on stage in her company's concerts. Littlefield's ability to negotiate these contradictions in herself and her work allowed her to become a catalyst for the creation of a new form of classical ballet, an indigenous American art form that spoke to the unique contradictions inherent in the American spirit of the times. Copyright, Katz Rizzo, 2012

<sup>1</sup> "A Bouquet for the Ballet," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 15, 1937

<sup>2</sup> "Eight of the 12 scholarships available at the American Ballet four years ago went to Catherine Littlefield's girls. Her sister, Dorothy, was the only American teacher on the faculty of the American Ballet. Of 18 dancers taken to Hollywood for a ballet feature, four were from the local troupe." From Norman Abbott, "Terpsichore, Thy Last Name Is Littlefield," *Philadelphia Record*, October 11, 1937, Temple University Urban Archives Clipping Files.

<sup>3</sup> "Meet Men of the Ballet—He-Men at That," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Dec 10, 1937

<sup>4</sup> "Catherine Littlefield Muses About the Muse," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, March 29, 1936, Temple University Urban Archives Clipping Files

<sup>5</sup> Philadelphia had actually been an important dance city throughout the nineteenth century as well.

<sup>6</sup> Sam Bass Warner. *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968, p.178.

<sup>7</sup> "Housing Problems in Philadelphia," *Monthly Labor Review*, 37, Sept. 1933, pp. 626-631.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, Vogel and Davis, *Philadelphia Stories*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p.46

<sup>9</sup> Lynn Garafola, "Lincoln Kirstein, Modern Dance, and the Left: The Genesis of an American Ballet," *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 23, No. 1, p.20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Egorova performed Aurora for both the Maryinsky Ballet in 1911 and the Ballets Russes in 1921. <http://www.ballerinagallery.com/egorova.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Doris Herin, "The Rise of Littlefield Ballet," *Dance Magazine*, August 1993, p. 43

<sup>13</sup> including American Ballet Theatre

<sup>14</sup> Nancy Brooks Schmitz. *A profile of Catherine Littlefield, a pioneer of American ballet*. Philadelphia: Temple University, Dissertation, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> "Terpsichore, Thy Last Name is Littlefield," *Philadelphia Record*, October 11, 1937, Temple University Urban Archives Clipping Files

<sup>16</sup> Nancy Schmitz, "The Contributions of the Littlefields to Concert Dance in Philadelphia," New York Library Clipping Files, p.135.

<sup>17</sup> "Catherine Littlefield Muses About the Muse," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, March 29, 1936, Temple University Urban Archives Clipping Files

<sup>18</sup> "Littlefield Ballet," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 11, 1935

<sup>19</sup> "Philadelphia Ballet Gives Famous Work an American Premiere," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 12 February 1937, 22. Urban Archives, Paley Library, Temple University.

<sup>20</sup> "Philadelphia Ballet to Give First American Performance of Tchaikovsky Work" *The New York Times*, 8 X.

<sup>21</sup> "Dance in Review" *Dance Magazine*, April, 1937, New York Public Library Clipping files

<sup>22</sup> Littlefield Ballet, *Sleeping Beauty* program notes, 1937, Philadelphia Free Library Clipping Files

<sup>23</sup> Alberta Vitak, "Dance Events Reviewed," New York Public Library Clipping Files

<sup>24</sup> John Martin, "Tchaikovsky Work is Given as Ballet," *New York Times*, February 14, 1937

<sup>25</sup> "Chicago cheers Ballet," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, December 5, 1938, Philadelphia Free Library Clipping Files

<sup>26</sup> John Martin, *New York Times*, Feb 14, 1937

- <sup>27</sup> Dorathi Bock Pierre, "Dance Events Reviewed" November 1939, New York Public Library Clipping Files
- <sup>28</sup> Henry Smallens, "Music in Review" *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, February 20, 1937, Clipping Files, Temple University Urban Archives
- <sup>29</sup> "Philadelphia Ballet Gives 'Sleeping Beauty'," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, New York Public Library Clipping Files
- <sup>30</sup> Publicity Brochure, New York Public Library Clipping Files
- <sup>31</sup> Garafola, "Lincoln Kirstein, Modern Dance and the Left," p. 25
- <sup>32</sup> "Miss Littlefield Kisses Mayor: Ballet Head Happy Over Ovations Received on European Tour," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 23, 1937, Clipping Files, Urban Archives, Temple University
- <sup>33</sup> Another way in which Littlefield achieved this status was by creating American themed dances choreographed and danced by Americans. In this regard, the other dances the Philadelphia Ballet Company premiered that season are quite significant. After *Beauty*, Littlefield created two short ballets to show throughout the 1937 season. These dances, *Barn Dance* and *Terminal* were groundbreaking in their embrace of a modern American aesthetic. In Littlefield's push to establish the Philadelphia Ballet as a truly "American" company, therefore, she took on the creation of new ballets with American themes, music and choreography
- <sup>34</sup> "All Philadelphia Dancers List 'Sleeping Beauty'," *Camden Inquirer*, January 29, 1937, New York Public Library Clipping Files
- <sup>35</sup> "A Tale of Two Cities: Philadelphia Supplies the Ballet for Chicago's City Opera," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 17, 1938
- <sup>36</sup> "Catherine Littlefield Dies, Noted Ballet Dancer Was 46," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov 19, 1951
- <sup>37</sup> John Martin, "Sleeping Beauty Given At Stadium", *New York Times* 30 July 1937, 22,L.
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Edwin H. Schloss, "Philadelphia Ballet to Tour Europe this Summer, First Company to Go in Immortal Duncan's Footsteps", *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, February 2, 1937, Clipping Files, Urban Archives
- <sup>40</sup> "Quarter Century Old Dream Comes True in Littlefield School of Dancing," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 18, 1929
- <sup>40</sup> For example, the Robin Hood Dell summer performances of *Beauty* were completely free.

**Address for Correspondence**

Laura Katz Rizzo  
127 Birch Avenue  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004  
[lkatz@temple.edu](mailto:lkatz@temple.edu)

## “A Different ‘Special Relationship’: Martha Graham and the British Cultural Luminaries John Gielgud, E. M. Forster, and Henry Moore”

*Camelia Lenart*

*State University of New York at Albany*

**Abstract:** *Martha Graham started building her international fame with European tours during the fifties, which were not a success. The limited scholarly work dedicated to Graham’s presence in Europe led to the conclusion that the dancer had only a negative relationship with the European audience, and its intellectual and social circles. Focusing on the artistic friendship between the dancer and the three British luminaries, and based on newly found primary documents at the British Library, King’s College (Cambridge), and the Henry Moore Foundation, my paper shows that the intersection between Graham and the European audience is more nuanced and rich.*

*The paper demonstrates that their special friendship was not a coincidence, but a complex cultural development, which played the role of a bridge in the internationalization of Graham’s art, fully accepted by the Europeans only in 1963, first in Edinburgh and then in London. Related to the cultural diplomacy of the Cold War - with its restructuring of the dynamics of power, including in the cultural field – my paper is also the story and history of a special artistic kinship, linked to the unlimited boundaries of the human spirit and body.*

Martha Graham’s dance and artistic innovations were a phenomenon, which combined with the story of her life and persona created an enduring legend. But as the making of a legend is an intricate and laborious process, its maintenance is not less demanding; not seldom, moments of one’s life and career – considered not glamorous and successful enough - are sidelined or little discussed for helping the preservation of the mystique and “wholeness” of a legend. In Graham’s case this applied to the way in which her relationship with Europe was included in, or better said, excluded from her story and history, and to the way her biographers, scholars, Graham herself, and the collective memory managed it.

Martha Graham visited Europe briefly while she was dancing with Ruth St. Denis. She refused two invitations to Europe during the 1930s, one from Hitler and the other from Dorothy Elmhirst. Her relationship with the German dance innovator Mary Wigman was minimal,<sup>1</sup> and the case was the same with the intellectual emigration which brought significant names of European intelligentsia to America. The opposite looked similar, if not identical: European artists were not much interested in Graham either, except for Frederick Ashton, who like a Don Quixote fighting the windmills, convinced his friends not to leave the theater where the dancer was performing.<sup>2</sup> Graham’s first tours to Europe during the fifties were not a success; this, added to the fact that Graham, her company, friends and biographers spoke limitedly about this moment of her artistic career, led to the conclusion that the American modern dancer was unknown to the European public

and artists prior to her triumph at the Edinburgh festival in 1963, and that Graham's relationship with the European public started only then and there.

As my paper shows, this was not the case. Focusing on Graham and her relationships with the actor John Gielgud, the writer E. M. Forster and the sculptor Henry Moore, it demonstrates that already before her first tours to Europe, Martha Graham had friends and admirers among the British intellectuals. It was a reality which had important consequences, as Britain was not by coincidence the country which opened the door for "Martha-Graham-the-artist" and "Martha-Graham-the-cultural-diplomat" during her European tours of the fifties and sixties, culminating with a special Gala dedicated to the artist at Covent Garden in 1976 and attended by the Queen Mother in person.

The relationships Martha Graham had with the three British luminaries was linked to the cultural exchange between the British and the Americans, a complex relationship started already prior to the Cold War, and continued and enriched during it. The British-American cultural exchange was by no means an enterprise which lacked tensions,<sup>3</sup> but in the context of the very diverse rainbow of cultural relationships within the Western bloc, it was by far the best organized, the most functional, and the one which had the most palpable cultural outcomes.

Even if officially only the Cold War transformed arts into diplomatic weapons, already prior to and during the Second World War culture was seen as an export product, meant to enhance a country's image abroad. Between the wars the cultural diplomacy was mostly an "internal affair" of the Europeans, who were pursuing it since before 1914,<sup>4</sup> with the French, next to the Germans the most driven to "export" their country's culture.<sup>5</sup> The British officially enrolled in the cultural exchange only in 1934, the birth year of the British Council,<sup>6</sup> which aimed to support the foreign policy through the velvet glove of high culture,<sup>7</sup> helping "to spread far and wide" the fame of the British artistic luminaries.<sup>8</sup> Developing a cultural "special relationship"<sup>9</sup> with the Americans, already prior to and during the Second World War, the British Council facilitated the presence of British artists on American stages. John Gielgud first visited the USA in 1928, but came back in 1936, with the official help of the British Council. Compared to the Europeans, the Americans were even more isolated, considered newcomers in "the battle for people's minds."<sup>10</sup> Their cultural diplomacy started only during the Second World War and designed in the "good neighbor" terms, and only after the war, with the creation of the USIA and its auxiliary offices, did American cultural diplomacy come into full swing.

Once the Second World War started, the British cultural diplomacy was maintained under the mantle of the patriotic duty, and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA,) was appointed to help promote British culture abroad.<sup>11</sup> Henry Moore, a very active member of its Art Panel,<sup>12</sup> exhibited in 1943 in New York.<sup>13</sup> After the war, the Cultural Relations Department was created within the British Foreign Service, while the Americans founded an Educational Commission in Britain,<sup>14</sup> whose Advisory Commission on Educational Exchange monitored the "foreign opinion regarding American cultural achievements," as the US was seen as a "mechanical-minded, materialistic, and essentially uncultured" country.<sup>15</sup> "With a country like Great Britain which has many relationships with USA and a highly developed culture, the emphasis will fall on the mutual advantages of the cultural exchange,"<sup>16</sup> considered the members of this committee. Thus, due to the continuous preoccupation of British officials

with the export of their culture, and the welcoming attitude of the Americans, even more numerous British personalities went to the USA. In 1946 Gielgud was invited again on Broadway,<sup>17</sup> Henry Moore had a new exhibition organized the same year in New York, and E. M. Forster came to the USA in 1947. They would all meet and befriend Martha Graham.

The story of the *mélange* between artistic life and cultural diplomacy, and the way it helped the meeting of artists and the construction of artistic collaborations and friendships would not be complete without bringing into analysis its human component. The circumstances of cultural diplomacy created the conditions for artists to meet and to extend their special relationship(s), but the dynamics of their personal lives, their personal feelings and sympathies were the ones which enriched, completed and strengthened the special relationship between artists in general, and between Graham and the three British luminaries, in particular: Gielgud met the actress Katharine Cornell and her husband, the director Guthrie McClintic, Graham's friends, already in 1936 in London;<sup>18</sup> the art dealer Curt Valentin was one of the personal friends and connections Henry Moore had in New York, while the actor Bill Roerick and Lincoln Kirstein helped E. M. Forster connect to the artistic and social life of the USA.

Martha Graham's friendship with John Gielgud, started the earliest, in 1947, was the longest and the most active, as it was also the most documented one,<sup>19</sup> and both of them expanded their relationships into the other's circle of friends and collaborators. Their relationship, which lasted more than three decades, during a time when they moved from the status of national artistic glories to the international one, was the most representative in demonstrating the "special relationship" crafted at an official level between the British and American artists, and doubled at the unofficial one by a personal friendship the two artists shared.

John Gielgud's professional visits to the USA were accompanied by a certain degree of political exposure. He was often invited to the British Embassy to lunches and parties,<sup>20</sup> but also by American political personalities. Eleanor Roosevelt invited him to the White House, first in 1937,<sup>21</sup> and the second time in 1947.<sup>22</sup> His professional and official presence was completed and enriched by his love for the country: "My times in America have brought me so many cherished moments and I always feel it is my second country."<sup>23</sup> He also participated in American social life, meeting celebrities, from "Stravinsky, Ina Claire, Dorothy Swanson"<sup>24</sup> to Kit Cornell, a friend and supporter of Martha Graham.<sup>25</sup> After his first encounter with Graham's art, whenever Gielgud was in New York, "he did not miss any occasion to attend her shows again."<sup>26</sup>

He first saw Graham on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947: "I am going to all the musicals and to see Martha Graham dance. Many people think that she is the one genius of America – she is fifty I believe and very 'modern'. I am most curious to see her and her Company. She makes no money and has only a couple of short seasons every year in New York, but has a great cult among the intellectuals. I met her and she is interesting and striking looking – a great friend of Kit Cornell,"<sup>27</sup> he informed his mother. One can see that, even when attending a performance of another artist, John Gielgud analyzed it from a professional point of view. However, the comments on Graham, regarding her age, her limited financial resources and professional success showed the tendency towards prejudice in Gielgud's personality, a human falling brought up by his biographers.<sup>28</sup>

On February 22, 1947, shortly after the week in New York during which he went twice to see the modern dancer, he wrote again to his mother about Martha Graham. His letter entirely focused on the modern dancer was a complete and attentive analysis of Graham's art, and of the impression Graham made on him; located at the Manuscript Collection of the British Library, it has never been published, analyzed, and discussed, so I will reproduce it entirely: "I also saw two evenings of ballet with Martha Graham, who is the modern equivalent of Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, and the barefoot, realistic, mime school. Her work is strikingly original, and her productions brilliantly simple and imaginative, both in comedy and tragedy – quite a small company and they dance against black velvet props, costumes, and details are quite inspired, and she herself, a little woman of over 50 with a marmoreset (sic) like face and no particular beauty except in her shifts and acting and managing her body makes an amazing effect of whatever mood she wishes to suggest - something of Beatrice Lillie in her lighter movements, she can also be terrifying and poignant in her ballet of Jocasta and Oedipus, and I was only able to see 5 of her performances, out of a repertoire of 10 or 12, and some of her best ones are said to be the one I did not see. I was greatly impressed with the white setup, and it gave me a very new feeling about the possibilities of combining tragedy with stylized movement, which I should try to experiment [...]. The Graham ballet have much of the suggestive quality which the Quinze achieved so wonderfully in the Obey plays and I feel from the way that Noah succeeded to some extent (was in the rather poorly executed English productions I was in) that with care and simplification though out beforehand it might be possible to do Shakespeare play without front scenes and set pieces of scenery in seminalistic décor. It is something to think anyway."<sup>29</sup> In the light of the interest obviously sparked by Graham, it was not a surprise that the two artists would continue to meet and befriend each other; as Stuart Hodes remembered, Graham's liking of Gielgud was genuine.<sup>30</sup>

Graham performed in London for the first time in 1954, and her performances received a lukewarm reception. It is not certain if John Gielgud attended them, as the actor was going through a very difficult personal time. He was accused of soliciting a man in a public lavatory in 1953,<sup>31</sup> an event which was splashed across the nation's newspapers and caused a national furor.<sup>32</sup> However, contrary to his and his friends' fears, he was not denied entry to the USA for his upcoming tour; and surely not to the circle of Graham's friends and collaborators. If not at her performances, the two artists met at the party of Dr. Patrick Woodcock, the celebrities' psychiatrist in London, himself part of a milieu which at that point was forced by society norms to hide their personal lives from the public eye.<sup>33</sup> But there were little chances that Gielgud did his impersonations of the dancer, which usually greatly amused Graham!<sup>34</sup>

It is very interesting that, during the fifties, both Gielgud and Forster felt the USA a less repressive place in terms of sexual codes and mores, compared to their own country, in which there was an increased campaign against what Oscar Wilde called the "love that dare not speak its name:" the court cases against homosexuals rose, the papers warned about the "evil [homosexual] men" who "infest London and the social centers," and due to the competition with television they covered eagerly sensational breaks of morals in a society which emphasized a refreshed stability and cleanness.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, America of that time was very conservative too,<sup>36</sup> but it is also true that, while before the mid fifties



the sexual outcasts were “the most happy in London, Berlin, Rome, Petrograd, or Paris,” in the postwar period the American cities were becoming the gay metropolises.<sup>37</sup>

After the prosecution, Gielgud was welcomed at his first performance in London with standing ovations,<sup>38</sup> but it changed little the humiliation and pain he was feeling, as Dr. Patrick Woodcock informed Graham’s entourage.<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, the actor felt even more welcomed in the USA (“I am greatly enjoying being here again,”)<sup>40</sup> compared to Britain, where “it seems to be a bit of resentment and envy.”<sup>41</sup> And, one can add, more emotional and social discomfort.

However, Graham helped in his recovery, as her visit ignited in Gielgud an older interest in her art and in Isamu Noguchi. In 1955, the actor was supposed to direct *King Lear*, a story which also inspired Graham when creating the dance *The Eye of Anguish*, presented on the Parisian stage in 1950.<sup>42</sup> Gielgud left for New York in order to meet Isamu Noguchi, about whom he had a good opinion (“everyone tells me that he is the very man,”<sup>43</sup> “his designs are most original and exciting, and hope devotedly I shall go on. It will be an interesting collaboration, I am sure,”)<sup>44</sup> and later hired him, a collaboration which was in Gielgud’s mind for years (“I had a sort of hunch for him for the play since I first saw Graham Ballets in 1947.”)<sup>45</sup> The collaboration was not highly successful, but did not end in bitterness and with hard feelings, and did not affect the Graham-Gielgud friendly relationship.

In 1959, while John Gielgud was playing on Broadway, Graham attended the opening night next to Anna Magnani, Simone Signoret, and Marlene Dietrich, “all of them making the first and second nights glamorous,”<sup>46</sup> a presence reciprocated after Graham’s grand success at the Edinburgh Festival in 1963, where Gielgud admired the “nice sexy selection” of her works, which brought “not such a camp audience as in London, but a good many duos of gentlemen and loads of ladies.”<sup>47</sup> That Gielgud went to Edinburgh in order to see Graham, and did not wait in London, where she danced after the Festival, was a gesture which spoke for itself.

They met again in London in 1967, both at the height of their success as artists and as cultural diplomats of their countries.<sup>48</sup> A picture from Gielgud’s personal albums shows him and Martha Graham at the American Embassy in London, at a picture exhibition organized by the Embassy and the USIA, and dedicated to Graham’s career. However, it was not the first time Graham was invited to visit her country’s Embassy in London, as both in 1950 and 1954 the soon to be successful cultural diplomat of her country was “rehearsing” this new role in an official atmosphere.<sup>49</sup> The picture shows them in a semi-official pose, rather formal but friendly, Gielgud holding a hat and a cigarette, listening attentively to Graham, wonderfully attired in a black dress, wearing exquisite jewelry and hat.<sup>50</sup>

One cannot know for sure when the parameters of their friendship, even if it did not cease to exist, changed and why. In 1976 Gielgud preferred not to participate in the White House celebration of Graham because, “not having dinner jackets with us, we decided to make our excuses. I’m sure it would have been a great bore and we did not want to seem rudely conspicuous, arriving when it was half over.”<sup>51</sup> One cannot say if it was just a circumstantial situation which led to Gielgud’s decision not to attend, or it was more, as during that time, due to important changes in Graham’s professional and personal circle of friends, some of her older ones decided to limit or to end their relationship with her. However, during the same year, John Gielgud participated in the

New York celebration of the dancer,<sup>52</sup> a year short of three decades, as the two major artistic personalities met and started their friendship in 1947.

My interest in Graham and E. M. Forster's friendship was sparked by a couple of letters discovered at the Library of Congress, never mentioned by any of Graham's or Forster's biographers. In a letter with the King's College letterhead,<sup>53</sup> the writer wrote: "My dear Martha Graham, I wonder whether you remember meeting me in the late forties and driving with me one evening towards New York. I remember well, and also the pleasure I had from your work, and I am delighted at your outstanding success in Edinburgh." He expressed his desolation about the impossibility to see her dancing again, because of health related problems. The letter ended with: "my kudos and respects, yours very sincerely, E. M. Forster." The second letter reflected that, having received a warm response from Martha Graham, he changed his mind and planned to go to London.<sup>54</sup>

The novelist met Martha Graham in 1947, when invited by Harvard to give a series of lectures.<sup>55</sup> He arrived in New York, where he lived with the family of William Roerick, an actor he met in Britain,<sup>56</sup> also a friend of John Gielgud and Kit Cornell.<sup>57</sup> Beside Bill Roerick and his partner Tom Coley, Forster met again Lincoln Kirstein,<sup>58</sup> his wife Fidelma, and friends from the group of British intellectual émigrés, such as Christopher Isherwood and Wystan Auden. Forster also loved his "dear America,"<sup>59</sup> and the personal liberty he could enjoy here, and liked Greenwich Village - one of the most visible locations in the country of homosexuals, artists, and other "refugees from America" -<sup>60</sup> which he compared favorably with the "stuffed atmosphere" from home.<sup>61</sup>

While participating in the Harvard symposium, he met Martha Graham during the final evening - a moment also remembered by Stuart Hodes -<sup>62</sup> when *Night Journey* was premiered.<sup>63</sup> The impression the work had upon him was compared by the writer in his diary to a "catheter,"<sup>64</sup> an interesting but not an unexpected metaphor. As Judith Lynne Hanna observed, while there is a relationship between modern dance and feminism, there is also one between modern dance and the presence of the male homosexual dancer on stage. The explanation she gave was that, while on the fringe of society and also receptive to the unconventional, the male dancer finds in modern dance a space where he can both act and be himself.<sup>65</sup> It made me wonder - in the light of Gielgud and Forster's interest in modern dance - if this emotional, cognitive and cathartic mechanism did not affect in the same way the homosexual viewer in the audience, and I plan to research this in the future.

Forster came again to the USA in 1949, his "annus mirabilis,"<sup>66</sup> accompanied by his partner Bob Buckingham,<sup>67</sup> and they met again Martha Graham. They spent a weekend at Bill Roerick's vacation home in the Berkshires<sup>68</sup> and rode back to New York.<sup>69</sup> On the occasion of Graham's presence in Edinburgh in 1963, Forster wrote and reminded her of their acquaintance and of his admiration for her.<sup>70</sup> This was while living a secluded life in Cambridge and being reluctant to leave his place, but it is significant that he changed his decision and greeted Graham in person in London: "Thank you so much for your kind wire. I am better and shall be able to come up tomorrow (Wednesday for the performance). I will come round to see you afterwards, as you suggest," Forster wrote. He died at the beginning of the seventies, when Martha Graham, forced by age and complicated health and emotional problems, had to stop performing. As Forster did not travel to the USA again, there are chances that they met again on the occasion of Graham's 1967 tour to Britain, but this remains to be researched more in the near future.

Already in 1946, on the occasion of his retrospective exhibition in New York,<sup>71</sup> Henry Moore met Graham, his first memory of her being “falling asleep in a taxi with his head in her lap.”<sup>72</sup> His presence in the USA was strongly supported by the British Council and Kenneth Clark,<sup>73</sup> but he also had “local” friends, such as the art dealer Curt Valentin,<sup>74</sup> who organized for Moore “an exhausting round of parties;”<sup>75</sup> however, it is most likely that Moore knew about Martha Graham previously from the Elmhursts.<sup>76</sup> After they met, pictures with Moore’s sculptures appeared on the bulletin board, his sculptures became Graham’s favorite visual images meant to inspire her dancers, whom she asked to make their contractions as the “scooped” women from Moore’s sculptures. Not surprisingly, her favorite sculpture was *Madonna and the child*, because as she explained, Moore’s Madonna did not enclose the child but “thrusted” him into the world.<sup>77</sup>

As I intend to describe at length in the future the relationship between Graham and the developments of modern dance in Britain, including the connections to Henry Moore’s art and persona, it will suffice to say now that, during the decades following their acquaintance, Henry Moore would be constantly linked to Martha Graham when invited to performances at The Place,<sup>78</sup> or when receiving letters to support modern dance in Britain.<sup>79</sup> In 1967, the sculptor became officially a member of the board of the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, next to Martha Graham and John Gielgud, and remained an active member of the board until the end of his life.<sup>80</sup>

Martha Graham, her staff, and friends (including a letter from Francis Mason)<sup>81</sup> contacted Moore on the occasion of Graham’s 1975 Gala in New York, and asked to create “a signed colored lithograph for the anniversary.”<sup>82</sup> Moore’s answer was: “terribly sorry, but I have to end a sculpture before I go abroad,” but he wished a terrific success for the Gala’s performance, and signed with “affectionate regards.”<sup>83</sup> It was not a surprising answer from a person who even turned down a knighthood because he felt that the bestowal would interfere with his work. One year later, in 1976, Moore was asked to contribute to the event with some posters and a lithograph, being assured that “Ms. Graham will be very pleased.”<sup>84</sup> Henry Moore was part of the committee created for the Martha Graham Gala at Covent Garden, while being also a member of the Anglo-American Exchange Committee meant to help the organization of the festivities which celebrated in Britain the two hundred years of American Independence, and the “special relationship” the British and the Americans claimed to have developed.

Over the centuries and decades, and at different points of their history, the British and the Americans reflected on their relationship, whether diplomatic or political, often using the term “special.” Analyzing “another special relationship,” namely between the American modern dancer Martha Graham and three British intellectual luminaries, my paper completes separately and together their biographies, while proving that, unlike it was assumed so far, Graham was not unknown to the European public. Demonstrating that “the special relationship” Graham had with British luminaries was facilitated and furthered by the cultural exchange of their countries, my paper also reflected on the fact that the “special relationships” are in the end the creations of humans, who personalize, refine and complete what history begins.

**Acknowledgements.** Research for this paper was partially supported by the generous help of a Mellon Fellowship from the Institute of Historical Research in London. I am indebted to the amazing scholars I met at the IHR, to the archivists and librarians who guided me in my work, and last but not least to Dr. Victoria Thoms for her advice and care. Not only did they make this paper possible and better, but they also made my stay in Britain unforgettable.

Copyright, 2012, Camelia Lenart

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Agnes De Mille, *Martha. The Life and Work of Martha Graham* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p.69

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p.77

<sup>3</sup> Ted R. Bromund "This Somewhat Embarrassing Ship": The British Foreign Office and the Mayflower II, 1954-1957 *The New England Quarterly* Vol. 72, No. 1 (Mar., 1999), pp. 42-60

<sup>4</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, (New York: Penguin Press HC, 2005), p.33

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Haigh, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (New York: Manhattan Pub. Co, 1974), p.34; the French created a government office called "Cultural Relations;" the Soviet Union created the "Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Nations" in 1925

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p.76

<sup>9</sup> Mark Mazover, *Dark Continent*, (New York ,Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p.309

<sup>10</sup> John W. Henderson, *The United States Information Agency* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc, 1969), p.45

<sup>11</sup> The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, BW/120/1

<sup>12</sup> The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, BW/120/1/3

<sup>13</sup> William Packer, *Henry Moore. An Illustrated Biography*, p.143

<sup>14</sup> The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey FO 924/794, CRL 25/31

<sup>15</sup> The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, FO 924

<sup>16</sup> The British Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, FO 950

<sup>17</sup> Sheridan Morley, *John G. The Authorised Biography of John Gielgud* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2001), p.191; he played in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

<sup>18</sup> Sheridan Morley, *John G. The Authorised Biography of John Gielgud*, p.131. The couple invited Gielgud to play *Hamlet* in New York; it was not uncommon for the British and American actors to play and develop their careers on both American and British stages: Kit Cornell and John Gielgud were just one example; Irene Worth, a close friend of Gielgud and also a promoter of Graham, is another one.

<sup>19</sup> John Gielgud was an avid letter writer, during his life writing around three thousand letters.

<sup>20</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81310, John Gielgud letter to his mother, no date, 1955

<sup>21</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81309, Letter to his mother, February 1, 1937; in this letter he said that when "he met important people from the British Embassy."

<sup>22</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81310, John Gielgud letter to his mother, November 17, 1947 (“she [Eleanor Roosevelt] had aged considerably, but she has charm and dignity.”)

<sup>23</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81310, John Gielgud letter to his mother, November 17, 1947; he loved also the American cities such as New York and Washington: “Washington looked wonderfully, spacious and green,” British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81309, Letter to his mother, May, 14<sup>th</sup> 1947.

<sup>24</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add. 81309, Letter to his mother, February 1, 1937

<sup>25</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add 81309, Letter to his mother, February 15, 1947

<sup>26</sup> Sheridan Morley, *The Authorized Biography of John Gielgud* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2001), p.197

<sup>27</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, add 81309, Letter to his mother, February 15, 1947

<sup>28</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add 81309, Letters of Gielgud to his mother: April 9<sup>th</sup>, “I had a box at Metropolitan to hear Marian Anderson, the Negro singer. She had a crammed house;” April 15: “I had a long talk with Garbo, who is the most extraordinary individual; Greta Garbo, Ingrid Bergman, and even his best friend Vivien Leigh received from him limited words of praise, and some unpleasant comments about their physique, manners, and artistic skills.

<sup>29</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add 81309, Letter to his mother, February 22, 1947

<sup>30</sup> Email to the author, October 4, 2011

<sup>31</sup> It is very interesting that sometimes the year of the incident is given as 1952 (Gregory Woods, *A History Of Gay Literature. The Male Tradition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.) The correct year is 1953.

<sup>32</sup> During the same year his colleagues Ralph Richardson and Laurence Olivier were knighted but not him.

<sup>33</sup> Letter of Patrick Woodcock to Lee Leatherman, May 28, 1954, Martha Graham Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Folder 47

<sup>34</sup> Email to the author, October, 4, 2011

<sup>35</sup> Matt Cook, “Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914-1967” in *A Gay History in Britain. Love and Sex Between Men Since Middle Ages*, edited by Matt Cook ( Oxford: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), p.168-169

<sup>36</sup> Gregory Woods, *A History Of Gay Literature. The Male Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p.299

<sup>37</sup> Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers. The Homosexuality of the Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.XIII- XVII

<sup>38</sup> Matt Cook, “Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914-1967” *A Gay History in Britain. Love and Sex Between Men Since Middle Ages*, edited by Matt Cook (Oxford: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), p.171

<sup>39</sup> Letter of Patrick Woodcock to Lee Leatherman, May 28, 1954, Martha Graham Collection, Music Division, Library of Congress, Folder 47

<sup>40</sup> John Gielgud, *Gielgud's Letters*, edited by Richard Mangan (Orion Paperbacks, 2005), p.407

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem

<sup>42</sup> Vincent Persichetti, *A Bio-Bibliography*, by Donald L. Patterson and Janet L. Patterson, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem

- <sup>45</sup> John Gielgud, *Gielgud's Letters*, edited by Richard Mangan (Orion Paperbacks, 2005), p.179
- <sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p.238-239
- <sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p.296
- <sup>48</sup> Sheridan Morley, *The Authorized Biography of John Gielgud*, p.335, it was one year after Gielgud tours to South America and the USA organized by the British Council.
- <sup>49</sup> More on this topic was discussed in my paper "Turning the Tide and Reconstructing the Spectacle - A New Perspective on Martha Graham's Tours to Britain and the Response to Their Artistic and Political Complexity," presented at "Dance & Spectacle" SDHS Annual Conference", University of Surrey, Guildford and The Place, London, UK, 8-11 July 2010, and it will be discussed in my paper "Rehearsing American Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Martha Graham's Tours to Europe during the Fifties," to be presented at NYSAEH conference, SUNY Oswego, 5-6 October 2012.
- <sup>50</sup> British Library, Manuscript Collection, John Gielgud Archive, Add 8146, Photo Album
- <sup>51</sup> John Gielgud, *Gielgud's Letters*, edited by Richard Mangan (Orion Paperbacks, 2005), p.230
- <sup>52</sup> Library of Congress, Martha Graham Archive, Clippings, Folder 7
- <sup>53</sup> EM Forster Forster was elected an honorary fellow of King's College, Cambridge in January 1946 and lived for the most part in the college. He declined a knighthood in 1949 and was made a Companion of Honour in 1953.
- <sup>54</sup> Library of Congress, Martha Graham Archive, Letter from E.M. Forster to Martha Graham, September 1963
- <sup>55</sup> William Roerick: "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E.M. Forster* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p.62; As officially one cannot call E. M. Forster a cultural diplomat, as there are no proofs which would indicate a direct relationship between the British Council and the reputed novelist, it would be also hard to believe that his trips were solely a personal venture with no connection to the cultural politics of the British. Even more so that, since the Bloomsbury Circle years, the writer was a friend of John Maynard Keynes (and also of his wife, the former ballerina Lydia Lopokova), the first Chairman of the Arts Council of Britain, which supervised the cultural diplomacy of the country after the Second World War.
- <sup>56</sup> William Roerick, "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E.M. Forster* p.64
- <sup>57</sup> William Roerick, "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E.M. Forster*, p.66
- <sup>57</sup> William Roerick, "Forster and America," p.64; Roerick played with Sir John Gielgud in "Hamlet" and with Katharine Cornell in "Romeo and Juliet."
- <sup>58</sup> They met for the first time in Britain
- <sup>59</sup> Wendy Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded Story. A New Life of E.M. Forster* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), p.259
- <sup>60</sup> Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers. The Homosexuality of the Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.187
- <sup>61</sup> William Roerick: "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E.M. Forster*(London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p.62
- <sup>62</sup> Stuart Hodes, *Part Real, Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham* [Kindle Edition]
- <sup>63</sup> Marian Horosko, *Martha Graham, The Evolution of her Dance Theory and Training* (Gainesville: Univeristy press of Florida, 2002), p.266
- <sup>64</sup> Wendy Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded Story. A New Life of E.M. Forster*, p.269
- <sup>65</sup> Judith Lynne Hanna, "Patterns of Dominance: Men, Women, and Homosexuality in Dance," in *Greenwich Village. Studies in Homosexuality*. Edited by Wayne R. Dynes, and Stephen Donaldson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p.189-224
- <sup>66</sup> King's College Archive Center, Cambridge, Edward Morgan Forster Diary, p.91
- <sup>67</sup> William Roerick: "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E. M. Forster*, p.67
- <sup>68</sup> King's College Archive Center, Cambridge, The Papers of Edward Morgan Forster, Letter from E.M. Forster to Lincoln Kirstein, no date, 1949

<sup>69</sup> Ibidem

<sup>70</sup> E. M. Forster fell off the chair and a wall in his apartment fell and was in need to be replaced; he also had a minor accident which was causing him pain.

<sup>71</sup> Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London, New York: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.207

<sup>72</sup> Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London, New York: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.204; Falling asleep he remembered in 1972, when confessing this to Alan Wilkinson.

<sup>73</sup> Kenneth Clark was the second president of the British Arts Council, and a very close friend of Moore

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Dorothy Miller, Courtesy of The Henry Moore Foundation Archive; Curt Valentin was an art curator who fled Nazi Germany and knew about Moore since his time in Europe.

<sup>75</sup> Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London, New York: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.204

<sup>76</sup> Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London, New York: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.195; the Elmhirsts commissioned a “Memorial figure” supposed to celebrate the life of Cristopher Martin, the head of the Arts Department at Dartington Hall

<sup>77</sup> Stuart Hodes, *Part real, Part Dream: Dancing with Martha Graham* [Kindle Edition]

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Contemporary Ballet Trust to Henry Moore, 26 April 1968, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive

<sup>79</sup> Letter from Robin Howard to Henry Moore, 26 April, 1968, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive: Henry Moore was assured by Robin Howard himself that the endeavor for which help was required was supported by Martha Graham herself and Martha Graham Foundation; Letter from Robert Cohan to Henry Moore, 21 March 1969, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive: Bob Cohan wrote a letter “under his American Graham hat, rather than his Contemporary Dance one,” underlining that “Miss Graham and all of us would be most grateful.”

<sup>80</sup> Letter from the Contemporary Ballet Trust to Henry Moore, June 1969, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive: invited to the performances of the Contemporary Ballet Trust. On this occasion, Moore was again informed that “three of well-known Graham’s movies, *Dancers’ World*, *Night Journey*, and *Appalachian Spring*”, as well as three films “of earlier American dance, including Martha Graham’s *Lamentation*;” Letter from Robin Howard ( signed Annette Massie) to Henry Moore, 4 May 1970, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive: In May 1970, Robin Howard himself wrote to Moore again, inviting him in person to see Graham’s famous work *El Penitente*, performed at The Place.

<sup>81</sup> Letter to from Alexander Racolin to Henry Moore, April 6, 1976, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive

<sup>82</sup> Telegram from Martha Graham to Henry Moore, April 3 1975, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive

<sup>83</sup> Telegram from Henry Moore to Martha Graham, April 1975, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive

<sup>84</sup> Letter from Alexander Racolin to Henry Moore April 6, 1976, The Henry Moore Foundation Archive

## **Bibliography (selected)**

### *Primary sources:*

*The British Library (Manuscript Collection):* John Gielgud Manuscripts

*King’s College, Cambridge, Archive Center:* The Papers of Edward Morgan Forster

*Henry Moore Foundation Institute, Hertfordshire:* Henry Moore Library and Archive

*Library of Congress, Washington, USA*

Martha Graham Legacy Archive

Martha Graham Collection

- Erick Hawkins Collection  
*London, Private Collection*  
*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)  
*Interviews and correspondence:*  
 Pearl Lang, October 2008, New York, tape recording  
 Stuart Hodes, April-May 2009, email correspondence
- Secondary sources:*  
 Sheridan Morley, *John G. The Authorised Biography of John Gielgud*, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001)  
 John Gielgud, *Gielgud's Letters*, edited by Richard Mangan (Orion Paperbacks, 2005)  
 William Roerick: "Forster and America", in *Aspects of E.M. Forster* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969)  
 Wendy Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded Story. A New Life of E.M. Forster* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010)  
 Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London, New York: Faber and Faber, 1987) Frances Donaldson, *The British Council. The First Fifty Years* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984)  
 John Drummond, *Tainted By Experience. A Life in the Arts* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2000)  
 Jonathan Colman, *A "Special relationship? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American relations "at the summit", 1964-68* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004)  
 Agnes DeMille, *Martha. The Life and work of Martha Graham* (New-York, First Vintage Books Edition, 1992)  
 Lorraine Nichols, "Fellow Travelers: Dance and British Cold War Politics in the Early 1950s" *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol.19, No. 2 (Winter, 2001), pp.83-105  
 Ernestine Stodelle, *Deep Song: the Dance Story of Martha Graham* (New York: Schrimmer 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)  
 Judith Lynne Hanna, "Patterns of Dominance: Men, Women, and Homosexuality in Dance," in *Greenwich Village. Studies in Homosexuality*. Edited by Wayne R. Dynes, and Stephen Donaldson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999)  
 Matt Cook, "Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914-1967" in *A Gay History in Britain. Love and Sex Between Men Since Middle Ages*, edited by Matt Cook ( Oxford: Greenwood Publishing, 2007)



Gregory Woods, *A History Of Gay Literature. The Male Tradition* ( New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

Julie Abraham, *Metropolitan Lovers. The Homosexuality of the Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)

Address for correspondence:

Camelia Lenart  
History Department  
State University of New York at Albany  
1400 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12222, USA  
Email: [ilenart@albany.edu](mailto:ilenart@albany.edu)



## Mary Ann Lee: Philadelphia's Bridge to the Romantic Era

*Barbara Ferreri Malinsky*

### *Abstract*

*The career of Mary Ann Lee (1823-99) mirrors social developments in Philadelphia. So important was dance to the city's social fabric that audiences and press took sides in the rivalry between ballerina Augusta Maywood and the endearing Lee, who earned the sobriquet, "Our Mary Ann." In 1844, Lee left Philadelphia to study in Paris and returned with improved technique and authentic versions of French Romantic ballets never yet seen in the United States – *La Fille du Danube*, *La Jolie Fille de Gand*, and *Giselle* – her great contribution to American dance history. Partnered by George Washington Smith, she performed these ballets in Philadelphia and beyond.*

Mary Ann Lee was destined to be on stage. When she took her first tentative steps on the boards of Philadelphia's prominent theaters no one could have foreseen that she would become an iconic figure in the history of American dance.

Her father Charles Lee was a minor actor and circus performer. Charles Durang, in the *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, mentions him at the Olympic Circus there in 1822. "Charley was a general favorite – a reward due to his very obliging and honest good nature. He was the father of Mary Ann Lee, who, for many years, was our city's favorite – a graceful and agile danseuse. The winning arch smile that wreathed her features, while reclining into attitudes at the end of every strain, ever won applause, and harmonized with the excellence of her very neat pas."<sup>1</sup>

When her father died, she became the sole support of her mother. With theater already part of her experience, it seemed the likely place for her to earn their keep. As early as eleven years of age, she played the roles of Francie in *Guy Mannering*, Eustache in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and a page in *Romeo and Juliet*. She officially debuted as a dancer at the Chestnut Street Theatre on December 30, 1837 as Fatima in *The Maid of Cashmere*, an English version of Auber's opera-ballet *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*.

Augusta Maywood, the stepdaughter of the theater's manager, played the principal role of Zoloe. About the same age as Mary Ann, Augusta appeared to have been the superior technician. This performance was not very significant for Maywood who soon left the United States to attain stardom abroad. For Lee, however, it provided an incentive to improve her artistry that would eventually take her to the school of the Paris Opéra.

Dance was so important to the cultural life of Philadelphia that there was intense rivalry among the theaters, plays, and players. Critics and audiences were ardent adherents. Both Lee and Maywood had received their early training from a former member of the corps de ballet of the Paris Opéra, Paul H. Hazard, who staged their performances. The young dancers performed together in a famous pas de deux, the Trial Dance, which

created tremendous enthusiasm. The *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* gave an account of one performance. "As the opera proceeded bouquets and wreaths were literally showered upon the stage by the admirers of both Augusta and Miss Lee. We never saw so much enthusiasm as was exhibited: peals followed the bestowal of each present, and it kept poor 'Brahma' all the time walking from side to side of the stage gathering up the trophies, until he entirely forgot the bestowal of the stage wreath which in his character he should have awarded to Fatima.... We counted twenty wreaths thrown while Augusta was dancing, besides sundry bouquets - in one garland glittered a splendid diamond ring. Miss Lee also had her fair share of the honors." <sup>2</sup> The *Maid of Cashmere* played to packed houses for over three weeks.

The competition between the two ballerinas created widespread excitement. On January 5, 1838, manager Robert Campbell Maywood announced a performance for the benefit of his stepdaughter. Audiences demanded a benefit for Mary Ann. On January 12, she danced the role of Fatima as well as that of Little Pickle from a farce called *The Spoiled Child*. Each dancer received flowers and tokens of appreciation. The following day, the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* carried critiques of both performances. "Miss Lee is a clever little girl enough in her place and we are glad the excitement caused a crowded house, but no one in their senses pretends seriously to compare her forced and trembling performances to the finished, graceful, flexible, and confident figures of the astonishing Augusta." <sup>3</sup> Another critic wrote: "We are heartily glad it was a triumphant overflow, a deserving tribute to merit, and a handsome offering to an orphan daughter. Miss Lee deserves all praise for her improvement." <sup>4</sup>

The contest continued. In February, Maywood arrived in Philadelphia fresh from a New York engagement. She brought with her copies of the delightful lithographic portrait that had just been published there. Lee's supporters promptly arranged to have her portrait as Fatima published in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* on March 22.

Mr. Maywood then staged a new ballet for Augusta. Titled *The Dew Drop* or *La Sylphide*, it was probably a derivative of the Taglioni ballet *La Sylphide*. Augusta Maywood danced the title role; Mary Ann Lee danced the role of Flora. It premiered on March 17, 1838, was received with great enthusiasm and played to crowded houses until early April. However, in the spring, Augusta Maywood and her entire family relocated to Europe. Mary Ann Lee must have seen her future before her and realized that she too would have to go abroad to refine her technique. For the time being, she remained in Philadelphia dancing and acting at the Chestnut Street Theatre where she eventually did dance the title role of *La Sylphide*.

Francis Courtney Wemyss, manager of the Walnut Street Theatre, was a great advocate for Mary Ann Lee and paid tribute to her in his book, *The Life of an Actor and Manager*. In the autumn of 1838, Lee had transferred her allegiance to him. On September 13, 1838, he produced a new ballet for her, *The Lily Queen*, in which she had the title role of Queen Lily of the Silver Stream. Throughout that winter season, she remained a member of the Walnut Street Theatre Company and continued her lessons with Hazard. Her perseverance was rewarded on April 27, 1839 when she was allowed to perform the

leading role of Zoloe in *La Bayadère*. Her outstanding success led to an engagement at the Bowery Theatre in New York. Her fame began to stretch beyond Philadelphia.

She debuted in New York on June 12, 1839, in the dependable *La Bayadère*. A few days later, a new ballet, *The Sisters* was choreographed for her but little is known about it except that Mary Ann Lee played the role of Fanny, one of the sisters, and the American trained Julia Turnbull that of Laura. Although the new ballet ran for only a week, there was also rivalry between those two young dancers. In July, Lee performed Hazard's version of the famous cachucha for the President of the United States, Martin Van Buren. Her appearances contributed to the animation of the Bowery season. She returned to New York in June 1840. P. T. Barnum recognized her talent and invited her to perform at his venue, the Vauxhall Gardens. Fanny Elssler had just made her American debut at the Park Theatre in New York. Lee took this opportunity to study with her partner, James Sylvain, who taught her all of Elssler's famous dances: La Cracovienne, El Jaleo de Jeres, La Smolenska, and the famous La Cachucha.

Now at age seventeen, she had matured and had become more emboldened. She made extensive tours throughout the United States venturing as far south as New Orleans and Mobile. In Boston, Cambridge students were enthusiastic admirers. During one engagement in the spring of 1842, she coached some local dancers and produced *La Sylphide*. In addition to Elssler's dances, she performed the Tyrolienne that had made Taglioni famous. She also began to choreograph, creating The Opium Dance for a play *Life in China*. There was a performance of a burlesque version of *La Bayadère*, *Buy It Dear*, *'Tis Made of Cashmere* in which she played the title role of Soloe.

Her successful tours and welcoming receptions throughout the major cities of the United States never diminished her love for her native Philadelphia. She was now the established favorite daughter, earning the sobriquet "Our Mary Ann". Still dissatisfied with her technique, she finally arranged to study in Paris. In 1844, she and her mother sailed from New York to Paris. She was admitted to the ballet school of the Paris Opéra where she enjoyed daily lessons from the great Jean Coralli who had choreographed *Giselle*, *Le Diable Boîteux*, and *La Péri*.

Although she was no longer performing in Philadelphia, she was not forgotten. On May 31, 1845, *The Spirit of the Times* carried an account of her progress. "Our Mary Ann," better known as Miss Lee, is demonstrating to a perfect mathematical nicety that Native American legs are on an equal footing with the imported article even in its native state. ...In addition to letters from foreign correspondents we have authority for saying, that she bids fair to rival the most accomplished in her profession. She is in no way connected with the Ballet at the Opéra, although she enjoys all the advantages of receiving her lessons in the Opéra building and of a seat in the director's private box on each Ballet night."<sup>5</sup>

Mary Ann Lee wrote: "Notwithstanding the charms and pleasures which are to be met with in Paris, I much prefer my own dear country. One can hardly appreciate the worth of home, until after having been in a foreign land...but give me the politeness of my own

countrymen, who have sincerity in their words and will accompany them with polite actions.”<sup>6</sup> Obviously more comfortable in America than Europe, Lee, unlike Maywood, chose to return home.

In September 1845, she arrived in New York returning with tremendously improved technique and a thorough knowledge of *Giselle*, Taglioni’s ballet *La Fille du Danube*, and Carlotta Grisi’s *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. None had yet been seen in New York. She quickly ventured to Philadelphia for a second transformed debut in *La Jolie Fille de Gand*, a three-act ballet choreographed by Ferdinand Albert, with music by Adolphe Adam.

The premiere was held at the Arch Street Theater on November 24, 1845 with Mary Ann Lee as Béatrix. This work contains the classic, *Pas de Diane*, which supplied Lee with the perfect opportunity to display her newly acquired skills. The theater manager staged it in its entire length and grandeur, not surprising since Philadelphia once the nation’s capital was the cultural center of the United States and possessed some of the finest theaters outside Europe. She was welcomed with crowded theaters every night. This was probably when Francis Davignon lithographed his portrait of her in the leading role of Béatrix, the image that adorns her tombstone.

On December 1, 1845, She premiered *La Fille du Danube*, renamed *Fleur des Champs*, the name of the heroine. Choreographed by Filippo Taglioni, the ballet was created by his daughter Marie at the Paris Opéra nine years earlier. Before Lee’s production, it had been seen only once in the United States in New Orleans. Adolphe Adam composed the music. George Washington Smith who seems to be the only American premier danseur noble at the time danced the principal role of Rudolph.

After the close of her Philadelphia engagement, Lee quickly assembled a small company of about six trained dancers including Smith. She trained local talent for the larger ensembles, which enabled her to present grand ballets requiring larger casts. Loyal fans welcomed her in Boston. On January 1, 1846, partnered by Smith, she performed *Giselle*; the first American production of this enduring opus that is in the repertoire of all the major ballet companies in the world and is the oldest continually performed ballet.

Although there is no account of that production, a subsequent performance prompted the *Boston Courier* for 1846 to publish the following account: “The production of *Giselle* attracted on Monday evening a full and fashionable audience, who testified their delight by loud and continued plaudits at the grace and agility of the beautiful heroine, who evinced a truthfulness of action that conveyed ... the feelings and passions of the character. We think that we are not exceeding the boundary of truth when we aver that no ballet of action has ever been produced in Boston that could bear comparison with *Giselle*...”<sup>7</sup>

Lee and her company toured extensively during the 1846-47 season. The repertoire included *Fleur des Champs*, *La Bayadère*, and *Giselle*, as well single dances like the bolero, the mazurka, and a *grand pas russe*. *La Jolie Fille de Gand* was too elaborate a

production to take on tour but she often danced the popular *Pas de Diane* as well as the *grand pas de deux*. During this tour, reports indicated failing health forcing her to cancel engagements. In May 1847, she returned to Philadelphia. Her last appearance was at the Arch Street Theatre on June 18. Although she was officially retired from the stage, she did dance again on various occasions in her familiar Philadelphia Theaters – the Arch Street Theatre, the Chestnut Street Theatre, and the Walnut Street Theatre. Of these three, the Walnut Street Theatre continues as the oldest, continuing, playhouse in the United States.

Undoubtedly exhausted from a hectic touring schedule, perhaps Mary Ann Lee sought a personal life. Only five months after her retirement, she married William Furniss Van Hook on November 11, 1847 in St. John Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She soon bore three children Marie Elizabeth Van Hook, born before 1850 and died before 1935, Charles Van Hook born in 1851 and died on July 27, 1853, and Mable Van Hook, born on January 11, 1855 and died on December 13, 1912. There are five generations of descendants.<sup>8</sup>

These dates coincide with her health issues, her subsequent retirement, and sporadic onstage appearances thereafter. She was undoubtedly managing domestic responsibilities while trying to continue her artistic career. Had she been allowed to continue dancing without interruption, she might have become a great ballerina. She retired at the young age of twenty-four while critics continued to note her improvement. Though her technique seems to have demanded further development, her winsome personality endeared her to audiences. Her contribution to American ballet is her importation of the great Romantic Ballets of the nineteenth century that would influence the development of ballet in America. She died on January 25, 1899 and is buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>9</sup>

Mary Ann Lee's grave had been unmarked for over 100 years. In 2011, the author, in cooperation with Laurel Hill Cemetery, initiated a fundraising campaign to create a headstone. .

Copyright 2012, Barbara Ferreri Malinsky

## Notes

1. Paul Magriel, Editor, *Chronicles of American Dance*. Lillian Moore, *Mary Ann Lee: First, American Giselle*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1978
2. Ibid, 104
3. Ibid, 106
4. Ibid, 106
5. Ibid, 111
6. Ibid, 111
7. Ibid, 114

8. Michael Gray, Lee Family genealogist
9. Archive, Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### **Bibliography**

Barker, Barbara. *Ballet or Ballyhoo: The American Careers of Maria Bonfanti, Rita Sangalli, and Giuseppina Morlacchi*. New York, 1984.

Farrell, Rita Katz. *Star-Spangled Giselles*. *Ballet News* 6 (September 1984): 15-20.

Maynard, Olga. *Barbara Weisberger and the Pennsylvania Ballet*. *Dance Magazine* (March 1975): 45-60.

Ludlow, Noah M. *Miss Lee, Danseuse*. In *Ludlow's Dramatic Life as I Found It*. St. Louis, 1880.

Moore, Lillian. *Mary Ann Lee: First American Giselle*. *Dance Index* 1 (May 1943): 60-71.

Swift, Mary Grace. *Belles and Beaux on Their Toes: Dancing Stars in Young America*. Washington, D. C., 1980.

Archive. Dance Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Archive: Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Archive: Gray, Michael, Lee family genealogist.

Address for correspondence:

barbara.malinsky@yahoo.com



## New York – Haiti – Riverside: The Triangular Route of a Bicoastal Collaboration

*Ann E. Mazzocca*

Christopher Newport University

### *Abstract*

*The traces of interactions across cultures – in city, countryside, and suburb – are marked by intimacy and distance, center and periphery, appropriation and nostalgia. I intend to trace the genealogy of my MFA choreographic project *Kolaborasyon | Haiti* through my experiences within Haitian cultural communities in New York City, trips to the countryside of Haiti – perhaps considered peripheral in relation to the concept of the urban “center” yet central to my personal imaginary in the creation of choreography, coalescing within the suburban retreat of the Academy while simultaneously calling upon collaborators from the urban center, resulting in a bicoastal triangularly constructed choreography.*

The material for this essay is taken from a larger paper analyzing the creative process of my evening-length MFA concert *Kolaborasyon | Haiti*. For this paper, I am applying Joseph Roach’s concept of the disparateness of bodies interacting across locations and cultures out of which my work has emerged. I hope to have made visible, in his words, “the play of difference and identity within the larger ensemble of relations.”<sup>1</sup> My work has also focused on the intimacy and distance, or difference, I have experienced within Haitian folkloric communities in Haiti and its Diaspora. I include Michel De Certeau’s thoughts on travel and the juxtaposition of memories within the specificity of stories that are told to further analyze this process of choreography and collaboration.

As a white American woman I came to be enraptured by Haitian folkloric dance in the context of a big city – New York – in primarily the boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Brooklyn and Queens have the largest Haitian communities in the city and Manhattan was the location of a particularly popular African Diaspora dance and drum studio where many Haitian folkloric choreographers taught weekly classes and, for many participants it became a home away from home. While it was in academic settings where I was first introduced to West African dance and then to Afro-Caribbean folkloric dance – at Amherst College as an undergraduate and UCLA as a graduate student – it was in the city where I could devote years to participating in a Haitian folkloric performance community dancing in nightclubs as the act between sets of *konpa* and *rasin*, or roots music bands, at black tie fundraisers and benefits for Haitian and Haitian aid organizations, at summer music and dance festivals, and also in the academic settings of colleges and universities.

I am listing performances as the primary aspect of “participation” in this Haitian folkloric community during the period from 2002-2008 when I was primarily working with the Mikerline Pierre Haitian Dance Company. However, so much of what participating meant for many of us also included the parties, the relationships – friendships and love affairs – traveling, rehearsing, taking class, going to ceremonies, and

hanging out around the *rara* and *rasin* music in Central and Prospect Park on Sunday evenings in the summer.<sup>2</sup> But it was on my first trip to the Haitian countryside where I experienced quotidian as well as ceremonial phenomena that contributed to what I might describe now as my own break with the folkloric tradition as it had been taught to me in New York by Haitian choreographers and performers who had come from Port au Prince – the vibrant, crowded, now devastated yet still bustling urban center of Haiti. My experience in Haiti and in particular the countryside of Haiti at two places/events – Sodo (Saut d’Eau) a multiple-day pilgrimage to sacred waterfalls and at Souvnans (Souvenance) a well-known weeklong Vodou ceremony celebrating the traditions from Dahomey – changed my relationship with the codified folkloric form coming out of Port au Prince and taught in the dance studios and apartments of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. While I felt a disconnect with the codified form and their presentation on stage, these experiences simultaneously deepened my understanding of the upbringing and background of my Haitian friends. Indeed I felt it deepened my understanding of the larger context of the Haitian cultural community within which I had participated in both New York and Miami, which caused me to want to explore those experiences from a personal perspective.

My first trip to Haiti was in July 2007 and it was that fall that I applied to graduate MFA programs. By the following spring, I had decided to attend the University of California at Riverside – a long way from New York and Haiti. Ideally I wanted to stay in New York – or at least within range – but the program in Riverside spoke strongly to me. I was interested in creatively exploring my interest in Haitian folklore while also addressing my white American-ness in dialogue within the rich scholarly tradition of UCR’s Dance Department.

The culmination of my MFA degree was an evening-length concert entitled *Kolaborasyon / Haiti* in which I choreographed collaboratively with dancers and musicians as well as, I felt, with the traditions of Haitian folkloric dance and my memories and experiences in Haiti. This evening-length work was a culmination of my knowledge of Haitian folklore (i.e. the codified dance forms) gathered in New York dance studios and on the stage, and the memories of the Haitian countryside that I carried with me back to the ivory tower of academia in the literal desert of southern California – a symbolic desert as well, as I was away from the Haitian cultural communities so prominent in NY. I remember questioning this aspect of location and lack of Haitian presence as I was making my decision to attend UCR but ultimately reconciled with the thought that I was carrying my experiences with me and years in graduate school would be a kind of retreat or, in retrospect, an incubator for my ideas, experiences, and memories to coalesce.

In tracing the genealogy of my MFA choreographic project *Kolaborasyon / Haiti* I consider both politics of location and personal knowledge and experiences offered via participation by my performers. This would include my experiences within Haitian cultural communities in New York City and Miami, trips to the countryside of Haiti – perhaps considered a peripheral location in relation to the concept of the urban “center” yet central to my personal imaginary in the creation of choreography – merging within the suburban retreat (or, I’ll argue later, liminal space) of the Academy while still calling upon the knowledges held within those collaborators from the urban center, resulting in a bicoastal yet triangularly constructed choreography.

In his introduction to *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach discusses genealogy of performance through an investigation into ritualized performances of Mardi Gras. In responding to Foucault's *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* he states that rather than making the search for origins null and void, the knowledge of the uncovering of disparateness through genealogy advises a course of action, i.e. performance. In the context of performance, in addition to Foucault's "body" as subject, Roach highlights that it is multiple bodies – bodies in relation to each other that create meaning.<sup>3</sup> I intend to argue here that my MFA choreographic project and performance was created via this disparateness of bodies in relation to each other, which was in various ways emerging from a lack while revealing my ambivalent positionality as insider and outsider within moments of intimacy and distance in my experiences with Haitian culture.

I begin by thinking about Haitian Vodou in relation to Roach's arguments for the disparateness of embodied memories as opposed to an essential origin within the geo-historical context of the black Atlantic as conceived by Paul Gilroy.<sup>4</sup> Souv'nans (Souvenance Mystique, as it is written atop the *peristil* or central house of worship, translates as Mystical Remembrance and references both location and event) is the weeklong public Vodou ceremony honoring the African traditions from Dahomey at the *lakou*, or family compound, outside of Gonaives in the Artibonite Valley. While the description of this event as such points to a seemingly pure origin, in the context of Vodou in a circum-Atlantic intercultural society like Haiti, it is clear that the bodies performing the ritualized actions are performing, as Roach articulates, "the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions – those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded."<sup>5</sup> For example, the clothing the practitioners wear are full of colonial signs such as lace fabric, ruffled skirts, and scarves. The practitioners are divided into two camps or battalions called Grenadye and Chasè mimicking the names given to Napoleon's infantry and later, the infantry of Jean-Jacques Dessalines.<sup>6</sup> Souv'nans coincides annually with Easter on the Christian calendar. And yet, this ritual event is given status as one of the most authentic sites for Vodou in all of Haiti. Yes, it is, and the traces of the interactions of multiple cultures and reflections upon the performing bodies are visible.

I would like to bring attention to my own choreographic process and genealogy of that process as reflecting a disparateness of embodied memories as well. Although, in the process of remembering, what is forgotten? The traces of interactions across cultures – in the city, countryside, and suburb – are marked by intimacy and distance, center and periphery, appropriation and nostalgia. In Roach's definition of the circum-Atlantic as "a vortex in which commodities and cultural practices changed hands many times,"<sup>7</sup> I can't help but see my own triangular route as a complex series of interactions across and between people of various identities, locales, and access to mobility.

I find location to be integral to a genealogical consideration and critical understanding of this performance and process in working across cultures and traditions. When and *where* did the process to create *Kolaborasiyon / Haiti* begin? It was based on information I had been gathering for at least ten years – since I had first been introduced to Haitian dance in 1999 at UCLA. However, it is also based on information I have been gathering my entire life that was emerging via memory, imaginary and fantasy. And from a more immediate perspective, the pieces that ended up in the concert were initiated up to one year previous to the performance with guidance from the chair of my MFA concert

committee at UCR, Professor Wendy Rogers. As I consider these elements that led to the creation of *Kolaborasyon / Haiti*, I place importance on a video project that I created in the fall of 2008 in which I explored my experience in the Haitian countryside at Souvnans and included themes of intimacy and distance for the first time.

The title of the video, *Souvnans: Embodied Remembrance*, references the bodily remembrance of the Vodou participants while simultaneously self-reflexively acknowledging the embodied remembrance that I have carried with me from the moment I pulled out of the driveway at Souvnans. I carry the memory traces of the embodied enactments at Souvnans with me, and choreographed them into a ten-minute digital memory. Through this digital manipulation of images, I intended to portray the moments of personal contact and proximity present in my experience at Souvnans. I was struck by the intimacy between the Vodou practitioners, or *ounsi*, as well as the fervor and intimate expression of their spiritual practice. Witnessing the sensations of Vodou for five days in addition to having everyday intimate experiences such as communal bathing, sleeping, and meals for example, motivated my project. In Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner's, "Introduction: The Global and the Intimate," they write about intimacies as a way to disrupt the grand narratives of globalism by focusing on "the specific, the quotidian, and the eccentric."<sup>8</sup> While Souvnans maintains a reputation as one of the most well known sites for Vodou, much of what Souvnans is and how it resonated for me is in the specificities of daily life in the *lakou*.

But my own difference embodied in my identity as *blan*, as foreigner, in Haiti and in the *lakou* is also represented in the video as well as in *Kolaborasyon / Haiti*. The two dimensional aural and visual representation of the subject matter through video immediately signified a distance that is counter to the intimacy of sensation and close proximity. But I believed this distance must also communicate something. Alison Mountz and Jennifer Hyndman, in "Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate," define the intimate as "embodied social relations that include mobility, emotion, materiality, belonging, [and] alienation."<sup>9</sup> I therefore attend to the ambivalent aspects of intimacy in my work, which might include belonging and alienation to use Mountz and Hyndman's language, but that could be called distance or perhaps difference.

In Michel De Certeau's essay on walking, what he calls a "space of enunciation,"<sup>10</sup> in "Walking in the City" from *The Practice of Everyday Life* he likens travel to a walking exile. Travel becomes "the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places."<sup>11</sup> He asserts that walking and travel "substitute for exits, for going away and coming back, which were formerly made available by a body of legends that places nowadays lack....Travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different."<sup>12</sup> Certeau's discussion of travel as establishing difference and a further appropriation of space that moves toward exoticism and fantasy also brings attention to the "heterogeneous and even contrary elements [that] fill the homogeneous form of the story."<sup>13</sup> I see a correlation between his definition of story to choreography. "Things extra and other (details and excesses coming from elsewhere) insert themselves into the accepted framework, the imposed order."<sup>14</sup> In explicating the disparateness and specificity of stories he attributes them to a more private space as opposed to the rumors propagated by the media, for instance. He states, "stories diversify, rumors totalize."<sup>15</sup> Certeau emphasizes the private space that stories inhabit. It is this

aspect of specificity of the quotidian and intimate that exists along side my own distance and difference that I seek to reveal in my own story.

Luce Irigaray's work has been my methodological model in approaching this ambivalence of intimacy and distance/difference. In excerpts from *I Love to You*, Irigaray explores an approach to sexual difference that includes the act of seeing as a recognition that the object exists, that it becomes, and that it is acknowledged as different and therefore unable to be completely understood.<sup>16</sup> Within this recognition both subjects are marked with incompleteness. The marking of incompleteness on both sides resists the reduction of difference to oneness of hierarchy, history, or genealogy.<sup>17</sup> Instead, it opens up the possibilities for the details and heterogeneous elements of the story, of the disparate interactions of bodies, histories, and locations to unfold.

Boys walk toward the camera at the end of the video in order to communicate more about my position of distance, created through being behind the camera and from my place of privilege, rather than being just cute or sentimental. However, while I am aware of the potential distancing inherent in video, my goal was ultimately to create a scene of sensations and proximity for the viewer and I was interested in creating a similar effect with *Kolaborasyon / Haiti* and choreographies since.

The problem of desiring to re-create a feeling of connection within the simultaneous acknowledgement of loss points to performance as surrogate and the existence of nostalgia. The MFA concert was created within a lack and while I'm not dealing with a societal lack via violence or death, in the suburbs I was and continue to be faced with a lack of performers with both postmodern and Haitian aesthetic and experiential knowledge that is found in larger more diverse communities in urban centers. As Roach suggests, surrogations further a lack or create a surplus and attempts to fill the lack represent a powerful and dynamic force driving cultural reproduction. Certainly my work emerges from a lack, and perhaps also attempts to draw attention to this within my own identity – an outsider within Haitian culture – and this loss that I feel is choreographed and represented as nostalgia.

A feeling of nostalgia, or what I called "Longing" for a piece I choreographed summer 2008, has existed in me since my first trip to Haiti in summer 2007. I think it's important to understand that any nostalgia I feel in relation to my experiences in Haiti is not so easily separated from a colonial narrative and the violence that exists in the United States' relationship to Haiti. It is on my return to the United States that I feel a culture shock rather than the inverse and I feel saddened by the abundant private space and focus on consumerism and materiality that characterizes our society. However, I also know that I am comfortable in my privileged status as US citizen and all the amenities my middle class upbringing and current lifestyle affords.

One very important element of my lifestyle would be access: Access to higher education on the west coast (where I was first introduced to Haitian dance), a life in NYC (where I came to know the folkloric repertoire and engage in events and relationships within the Haitian diaspora), and visits to the Haitian countryside. This is my triangular route and *Kolaborasyon / Haiti* is the story I am telling from this circulation of place, interactions, experience, and memory. During summer 2009 I worked in New York City with three friends – two dancers and one drummer – that I knew from the Haitian dance community, and we created and performed a piece entitled "Arc of Night." After our collaborative experience over the summer it became clear to me that we could continue

working and I invited one of the dancers, Jennifer Brogle, and drummer Rodolphe “Neg Mawon” Pierre to perform in my concert in California in the spring.

The collaboration with Neg Mawon was mutually engaging. Neg Mawon’s excitement around experimentation and improvisation gestured toward his interest in, and the uniqueness of, the opportunity to do something different within the typically presented staged folkloric genre. Neg Mawon and I have known each other for years – since I first started working with Mikerline Pierre in 2002. He and our friend Jude “Yatande Boko” Sanon accompanied my Haitian dance classes when I first started teaching a community class in Brooklyn and we have visited Souvans together. This long-term relationship cultivated a sense of trust on both our parts and so I felt I was honoring the Haitian tradition by working so closely and sharing the artistic space with Neg Mawon’s ideas. After Yatande saw our performance in Manhattan, he told me that what I was doing was a “tchaka.” Tchaka is a traditional Haitian dish created by mixing different ingredients together that one has on hand. This approval, trust, and communication created an environment for improvisation in which there was a direct conversation happening between dancer and drummer. “Arc of Night” became part of *Kolaborasyon / Haiti*, and during the three nights it ran, Jen and I could do a different version each time because Neg Mawon was following us and we were following him.

Collaborating bi-coastally was an adventure and, while it caused a little bit of uncertainty in the couple of weeks approaching the concert, ultimately worked out smoothly and satisfactorily. The concert became multi-layered through so many people’s contributions and connections and my own performance in it moved to the periphery as a solo at the beginning and end. It was performed in the Performance Laboratory at UCR – aptly named since creating and presenting work within the context of an MFA program holds different stakes than presenting in a non-academic context. The program functioned as a laboratory for exploring and experimenting with possibilities whose outcomes were always on display for feedback and critical engagement. The issues that I continue to grapple with will be exposed to a larger audience and may be read differently in the context of professional dance presentation. The space of academia could be read perhaps as liminal in this process. Roach references the liminal as “the less stable stage of transition between more clearly defined conditions.” The liminal state is a place to disrupt the conventional categories by which subjects and societies come to know themselves. In the integration of Haitian folklore and Western contemporary approaches to dance-making, these two genres are often presented as two fundamentally disparate forms of dance and performance. There has been a lack of consideration of contemporary “tradition” and African innovation in dance and it has been important to explore the disruption of these connoted dichotomies within the liminal space of my graduate program.

I recently took a seed idea from my concert to expand and create a 14-minute piece for the series “Crossing Boundaries” at Dixon Place in Manhattan. I focused on the meanings held within, expressed through, and projected upon the folkloric skirt and only had two weeks to work on the piece with the dancers – again, negotiating a politics of location between my academic life in the suburbs and the cultural/artistic capital I find and am part of in the city. Nostalgia, fantasy, memory within Cuban Yoruba, Haitian Vodou, and contemporary “Western” symbolism, vocabulary, and methods of composition emerged due to the “disparateness of embodied memories,” the traces of

interactions across cultures and between locations in the city, countryside, and suburb.

Copyright 2012, Ann Mazzocca

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), 4.

<sup>2</sup> This point is illustrated in photos published on the Mikerline Haitian Dance Company' website titled "The Dance Company on the Road & Just Having Fun" at <http://rockmasters.com/mikerline/pictures9.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Roach 25+.

<sup>4</sup> I'm referencing Paul Gilroy's influential chapter "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity" in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

<sup>5</sup> Roach 5.

<sup>6</sup> David Yih, *Music and dance of Haitian Vodou* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1995) 126-127. Yih refers to the *chasseurs* and the *grenadiers* as French soldiers. Light infantry included *chasseurs à pied* and *chasseurs à cheval*. The *grenadiers* "were taller men and were used as shock troops." Haitian leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines' infantry also had *chasseurs* and *grenadiers*. Yih posits that just as Dessalines was immortalized in Vodou folklore so perhaps was his army. About thirty-six *lwa* belong to the  *ekip* (teams), *kan* (camps), or *batayon* (batallions) of *Chasè* and *Grenadye* at Souvenance. Each has its own leader or *chef*, as well as its own rhythms and dance steps.

<sup>7</sup> Roach 4.

<sup>8</sup> Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner, "Introduction: The Global and the Intimate," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34 (1/2), (Spring, 2006), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Alison Mountz and Jennifer Hyndman, "Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34 (1/2), (Spring, 2006), 447.

<sup>10</sup> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press), 98.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 106+.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>16</sup> Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*, translated by Alison Martin, (New York; London: Routledge, 1996), 116.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 105.

## Bibliography

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001.

Certeau, Michel de. "Walking in the City." *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: UCP, 1984. 91-110.

Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977. 139-164.

Gilroy, Paul. "The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity." *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996. 1-40.

- Irigaray, Luce. *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*. Trans. Alison Martin. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Mountz, Alison and Jennifer Hyndman. "Feminist Approaches to the Global Intimate." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34 (1/2), (Spring, 2006): 446-463.
- Pratt, Geraldine and Victoria Rosner. "Introduction: The Global and the Intimate." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34 (1/2), (Spring, 2006): 13-24.
- Roach, Joseph. "Introduction: History, Memory, and Performance." *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996. 1-31.
- Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.
- Yih, David. *Music and dance of Haitian Vodou*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1995.

Address for correspondence:

Ann E. Mazzocca  
Christopher Newport University  
1 Avenue of the Arts  
Newport News, VA 23606-3072  
ann.mazzocca@cnu.edu



## Bennington, Vermont: Unlikely Hot Spot for Modern Dance

*Elizabeth McPherson*

Assistant Professor, Montclair State University

### **Abstract**

*During the Great Depression, in the town of Bennington, Vermont, the Bennington School of the Dance (1934-1942) began. The artistic climate present in a concentrated manner for six weeks each summer meant no worries for anyone except study of new forms and creation of dances. Physical education teachers traveled across the country to learn, returning home with knowledge that laid the groundwork for modern dance in higher education. New York based choreographers Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman created numerous works, building their repertory and choreographic expertise. This confluence of people and place ignited the modern dance movement, from Bennington across America.*

The Bennington School of the Dance was born during the Great Depression in the small town of Bennington, Vermont, an unlikely time and place. The school and festival, which ran from 1934-1942, flourished with more than 800 students and over 40 important dance premieres in the nine summers of its existence. Physical education teachers from across the United States came to study at the school, and went home taking their new knowledge with them, creating the foundations of modern dance in higher education. Martha Graham, Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman premiered new works. Free from the chaos and summer heat of New York City, with housing and food provided for themselves and their company members, creativity flowed. As the director of the school Martha Hill described: "We were living and dying by what we believed in those days, and we who had our dreams could maybe dance our dreams."<sup>1</sup> That passion would infuse the modern dance movement with unstoppable energy, from Bennington to cities and towns across the United States.

Mary Josephine Shelly, the administrative director of the school remembered the first day of arrival in 1934:

"The daily northbound passenger train of the Rutland Division of the New York Central was due in North Bennington in the afternoon. It doesn't run anymore, but it did on July 7, 1934. The Up-Flyer, as all good Benningtonians called it, got to North Bennington by tailing behind the Empire State into Albany, being hauled out backwards across the Hudson River, and after a discreet pause, puffing leisurely by itself up the Vermont Valley."<sup>2</sup>

Shelly continued:

"The students did not all come by train. Two even came on a motorcycle. Most, however, came on the Flyer, pouring out onto the platform as excited as the reception committee but not as scared. It took longer to load the buses than it did to make the short run to campus. Dancers carry a great deal of luggage although they end up in no more than skin-tight work clothes."<sup>3</sup>

Former Graham dancer David Zellmer recalled the arrival day some 6 years later:

It is mid-day, July 1, 1940, as I step down from the bus while it hesitates at the curb of a downtown street, its engine still running. The driver assures me this is, indeed, Bennington, Vermont, my destination. He retrieves my heavy, leather suitcase from the luggage compartment. (It contains all my worldly possessions, except the Corona typewriter, which I hand-carry.)

The bus departs with an explosive snarl. I am left alone on the sidewalk of this unfamiliar town. A factory whistle stirs the summer heat with its noontime blast.

I am armed only with a letter assuring me I am expected and will be met here at the bus stop and driven to the college. And congratulating me for having won a dance scholarship. Still, I wonder and worry, waiting, clutching the stub of a one-way bus ticket that has stranded me here.<sup>4</sup>

Zellmer gives the sense of being in the middle of anywhere and nowhere. And that is a crucial part of the Bennington School of the Dance story. Why such an important dance festival and training ground in a small town in Vermont?

The answer begins with Bennington College, which opened its doors in 1933, a challenging time, as it was during the Great Depression. The founding president Robert Devore Leigh asked Martha Hill to join the faculty. She hesitated because she was teaching dance at New York University, and did not want to leave the city. Leigh insisted that she visit the campus that was then very much still a farm with barns and chicken coops. Hill fell in love with the beauty of the landscape and the progressive philosophy that would drive the college's curriculum. She worked it out to spend half the week in Bennington and half at NYU, which she would continue for 16 years.

During her first year at Bennington College, Leigh asked her for ideas of how to utilize the college's physical plant during the summer months. Hill suggested a dance school and thus the Bennington School of the Dance was born and would run from 1934-42, with one summer 1939 spent at Mills College in California. Hill knew it would be crucial to get main players in the burgeoning modern dance field to agree to be faculty, and was successful in securing the services of Graham, Holm, Humphrey, and Weidman. Shelly recalled these primary goals in planning: "Awesomely simple specifications – secure only the then acknowledged greats, not one, but all of them; and figure out how to pay the bills. The first task was Martha [Hill's]; the second, Dr. Leigh's."<sup>5</sup> Hill knew Martha Graham because of having danced in her company, but was acquainted with the others only passingly. The timing played into their acceptance. It was the Great Depression – there was scant work in any field but particularly little work in dance in New York through the summer. Bennington offered the choreographers salary, meals, and housing the first year. In subsequent years, they began to bring the choreographer's companies to Bennington, and gave full support for new works to be presented in the performance festivals.

From the beginning, the school was popular with physical education teachers who wanted to learn about modern dance to add it or enhance it in the curriculums of their schools. It also attracted pre-professional students into the professional track or workshop programs where they had the opportunity to work with one of the major choreographers as they created new choreography.

Bennington became "the place to be" for dance during the summer. Eva Desca recalled: "I heard about the Bennington School of the Dance, just from being around and taking classes. It was the *crème de la crème* of modern dance."<sup>6</sup> However, the attraction was not just the dancing but also the physical atmosphere. Bennington's stunning landscape influenced the overall feel of the summer program enormously. The rural locale, and the proximity of the buildings to each other played a major part, and in these pre-air-conditioning days, Vermont was cool compared to many of the locations from which participants came. Joseph Gifford described:

Bennington was thrilling. Having been in the Midwest all of my life, I remember my first view of the green in front of the Commons where we ate and where the little theatre was. The physical plant itself was so charming, and so New England. I was just thrilled to be in the midst of all of this extraordinary dance energy. After lunch, we would all sit on the green – the Graham Company, the Humphrey-Weidman people. From that marvelous view, looking toward the Green Mountains, we'd watch Martha Graham with her parasol and her funny little walk going down to her house where she was staying. I remember watching the Graham dancers do phrases across the green, for photographs probably. I was in love with dance and the Green Mountain air.<sup>7</sup>

Helen Priest Rogers recalled:

My first impression of being here [at Bennington School of the Dance] was of buildings that stood way up in this hill with these huge views. Because at the beginning, the buildings were very large and trees were very small and there were hardly any bushes [because they had been newly planted]. You had this row of stark houses in a line and this big Commons that overlooked everything. It was a very beautiful setting. I enjoyed that part of it very much.<sup>8</sup>

She continued:

One of the lighter moments of the early years at Bennington was the memory of gatherings that happened spontaneously on the marble under the balcony in Commons; the porch below was marble. There was a piano out there and the Lloyds [Norman and Ruth] used to sit and play duets, everything under the sun, wonderful, wonderful pieces – some popular pieces, and some improvisations. That was a wonderful thing after meals to gather there and hear them. It's a memory you don't forget."<sup>9</sup>

Another student at the school, Theodora Wiesner, noted about those gatherings: "I know that in Connecticut [at Connecticut School of the Dance/American Dance Festival] after the war, the people that had been at Bennington, that was what they missed the most, this gathering together on the green in front of the Commons Building."<sup>10</sup>

By the third year, the performance festival was in full swing using the Vermont State Armory in the town of Bennington as a theatre, re-designed for dance by Arch Lauterer. Hill described that people came from all over the United States to see the performances and had to reserve rooms to stay in way in advance.<sup>11</sup> The performances often had more audience than there were seats. Shelly recalled one particular stormy performance night: "So I, flanked by a loyal band of strong-arm helpers, literally drove the excess audience back out into the rain."<sup>12</sup> From this information, one can imagine that the town of Bennington would have been bustling, full of people during the festivals, which would have brought in revenue to the townspeople and town. Local residents such as Mary Shaw Schlivek also worked at the summer school in a variety of jobs.

The summer dance school and festival also brought much attention to Bennington College. Martha Hill explained:

[Dr. Leigh] used to tell with much enjoyment about traveling in Europe where people would say, "Oh, you're the president of Bennington. Bennington College, yes. That's that American college where they do so much with dance," and he would tell this and enjoy it, whereas most college presidents would have perished at the thought, when you think back to the thirties.<sup>13</sup>

Louis Horst further stated, "Robert Leigh was very smart because nothing could have put a young college on the map as well as something like this."<sup>14</sup>

Although the school's effect on the town of Bennington and Bennington College was certainly significant, its effect on the rest of the nation, in terms of dance, was perhaps even more stunning. Students came to the Bennington School of the Dance from half the states in the Union in the first session, and by the end represented all 48 states (Alaska and Hawaii were not yet states.) They also came from Europe, Latin America, and the Far East. The physical education teachers from across the United States, had somewhat of a shock as to how hard they would be working their bodies. From the advance promotional materials, they thought they would be having a kind of vacation while learning some dance, but found out very quickly how much physicality was involved in learning modern technique. More than one remembered having to go down the stairs by sliding on their "rears" for the first week because their legs were so sore. However, they were not deterred from spreading word of the school to their friends and colleagues or from returning. The repeat rate was about 15-20% from year to year, indicating a high level of satisfaction. They took their knowledge home with them across the United States introducing it into higher education particularly. While starting in physical education programs may not have been the most auspicious manner for dance to get its toe in the door of academia, it was a beginning. The exposure the physical education teachers had to modern dance also created longer and more sustained touring opportunities for modern dance companies. These tours became known as the gymnasium circuit because the performances were often in gyms, which were the spaces controlled by the Physical Education departments. It took time, however for people to acclimate to modern dance, which is still an ongoing challenge. May O'Donnell described from an early tour with Martha Graham in the 1930s: "I remember the first concert we did was, I think, in Greeley, Colorado. People didn't know you were supposed to watch the stage. My god was that torture! I think at the end of a write-up in the paper the author said, "Boy, we'll put them on the football team!"<sup>15</sup> At least we have come somewhere since then.

Joseph Gifford had the opportunity to visit Bennington College around the year 2000 after not having been there since he was a student in the summers of 1940 and 1941. In his words: "There was nobody around. I saw that little place where I used to stay, the small dormitories. And I stood in front of the Commons there. It was interesting, but I was a little bit detached at the same time. You move on, but I stood there all those years later. I thought wow this is still as it was before. Amazing."<sup>16</sup>

Although the school ended some 78 years ago, the history lingers in the buildings and on the grounds and in the college dance major. An unlikely hotspot for modern dance, Bennington College in Bennington, Vermont holds critical importance in our dance legacy. As Hill recalled about the summer school and festival: "It was the right time and the right place, and people felt the need for it."<sup>17</sup>

[This paper draws on the author's research on the Bennington School of the Dance for a forthcoming book that focuses on participants' personal recollections. The sections of video footage shown at the conference were from the in-progress documentary on Martha Hill being produced by the Martha Hill Dance Fund.]

Copyright 2012, Elizabeth McPherson

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Clive Barnes, Hortense Calisher, Martha Graham, Martha Hill, Hanya Holm, Lincoln Kirstein, Anna Kisselgoff, Murray Louis, and Sybil Shearer, "John Martin: A Tribute," *Ballet Review* Volume 16, Number 1, Spring 1988: 48.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Josephine Shelly, "Bennington and the Dance in America or The Dance and Bennington (The Improbable Made Real or Turning Point)," Unpublished Manuscript, c1970s.

- <sup>3</sup> Shelly.
- <sup>4</sup> David Zellmer, *The Spectator: A World War II Bomber Pilot's Journal of the Artist as Warrior* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999) 92.
- <sup>5</sup> Shelly.
- <sup>6</sup> Eva Desca Garnet, Interview by Elizabeth McPherson, 7 Dec. 2011.
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph Gifford, Interview by Elizabeth McPherson, 14 July 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Reminiscences of Helen Priest Rogers (May 13, 1979), p. 4, in the Columbia Center for Oral History Collection (hereafter CCOHC).
- <sup>9</sup> Reminiscences of Helen Priest Rogers (May 13, 1979), p. 14, in the CCOHC.
- <sup>10</sup> Reminiscences of Theodora Wiesner (June 27, 1980), p. 32, in the CCOHC.
- <sup>11</sup> Martha Hill, Audiotaped Interview by Billy Nichols, National Education Network, New York Public Radio c1965.
- <sup>12</sup> Shelly.
- <sup>13</sup> Reminiscences Martha Hill (March 21 and 29, 1979), p. 85, in the CCOHC.
- <sup>14</sup> Louis Horst, José Limón, Pauline Limón, Norman Lloyd, Ruth Lloyd, and Bessie Schönberg, Group Discussion on the Bennington School of the Dance, Connecticut College, Moderators Jeanne Schlottman and Martin Masters, 1959.
- <sup>15</sup> May O'Donnell, Interview by Dawn Lille, 9 Sept. 1999.
- <sup>16</sup> Joseph Gifford, Interview by Elizabeth McPherson, 14 July 2008.
- <sup>17</sup> Martha Hill Video Project, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, 1990.

## Bibliography

- Barnes, Clive; Hortense Calisher; Martha Graham; Martha Hill; Hanya Holm; Lincoln Kirstein; Anna Kisselgoff;; Murray Louis; Sybil Shearer. "John Martin: A Tribute." *Ballet Review*. Volume 16, Number 1. Spring 1988: pp. 44-54.
- Garnet, Eva Desca. Interview of Eva Desca Garnet by Elizabeth McPherson by telephone, December 7, 2011.
- Gifford, Joe. Interview of Joseph Gifford by Elizabeth McPherson by telephone, July 14, 2008.
- Hill, Martha. Audiotape. Interview of Martha Hill by Billy Nichols for The National Education Network- "Four Pioneers." New York Public Radio, c1965.
- Hill, Martha. Reminiscences Martha Hill (March 21 and 29, 1979), p. 85, in the CCOHC.
- Hill, Martha. Martha Hill Video Project. Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, 1990.
- Horst, Louis; José Limón; Pauline Limón; Norman Lloyd; Ruth Lloyd; Bessie Schönberg. Group Discussion on the Bennington School of the Dance, 1959. Held at Connecticut College. Moderators Jeanne Schlottman and Martin Masters.
- O'Donnell, May. Interview of May O'Donnell by Dawn Lille on September 9, 1999 in New York City. Personal collection of Elizabeth McPherson.
- Rogers, Helen Priest. Reminiscences of Helen Priest Rogers (May 13, 1979) in the Columbia Center for Oral History Collection (hereafter CCOHC).
- Shelly, Mary Josephine. "Bennington and the Dance in America or The Dance and Bennington (The Improbable Made Real or Turning Point)." Unpublished Manuscript, c1970s.
- Wiesner, Theodora. Reminiscences of Theodora Wiesner (June 27, 1980) in the CCOHC.
- Zellmer, David. *The Spectator: A World War II Bomber Pilot's Journal of the Artist as Warrior*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1999

Address for Correspondence:

Elizabeth McPherson  
Department of Theatre and Dance, Life Hall  
Montclair State University  
1 Normal Avenue  
Montclair, NJ 07043

## Power, Class and the Late-Georgian Ballroom

*Karen Millyard*

York University (MA Student)

### *Abstract*

*Late-Georgian London boasted of balls virtually every night during The Season, offering a unique venue for the reinforcement of class-based social arrangements. The discipline of the Baroque form helped to sustain social order, while the changing nature of country-dancing helped to subvert it. Using late-18th and early 19th-century fiction and life-writing texts, I propose to examine the urban ballroom as a microcosm of late-Georgian society: social dances, the structures and norms they embodied, and the gradual disruption of those forms that accompanied the socio-political upheavals of the late 18th century.*

There is ample evidence that the body and its physical attitude or position, clothing and handling in the world send clear signals to people trained by their society to read and interpret them. As a child I was fascinated to read Dumas' description of the character Athos in *The Three Musketeers*: he "savoured of the noble a league off."<sup>1</sup> At such a distance – even if a league (a term whose definition is inexact but always means at least three kilometres) is being used fancifully,<sup>2</sup> obviously no details of clothing, ornament, arms or honours could be made out, and the meaning is that something else about him stood out clearly and unequivocally. Could one, then, identify someone's class by the body alone? Evidently one could. Through a variety of sources, I will look at how class and the body, including dance practices, are handled in some texts of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a time of extreme social change.

During the late Georgian period, virtually all members of the upper classes took private lessons with professional dancing masters, either in their own homes or at boarding school. The untutored body was at this period regarded with some suspicion (in spite of the early Romantic belief in the essential "innocence" of the body uncontaminated by society's teachings); the higher one's rank, the more thoroughly it needed to be schooled. Dance instruction was regarded as a perfectly normal and crucial aspect of education, and part of one's preparation for full and correct participation in social life (social dance being one of the most common and central activities of that life); it was thus actually normative. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Collins's profound impropriety of mind and behavior is illustrated in his poor dancing, whereas Mr. Knightley, the hero in *Emma*, is noted for his gentlemanlike and "naturally" graceful movement<sup>3</sup> – even though, as Austen was fully aware, grace was a bodily quality now easily purchased by anyone able to pay. He is an example of the careless entitlement of the nobleman utterly comfortable in his body and inherited status, as discussed by Paul Connerton in *How Societies Remember*.<sup>4</sup>

Dancing masters gave instruction in basic Baroque dance as well as English Country Dancing: competence in both was expected, Baroque for manner and polish, ECD for full and appropriate participation in society. They also taught children (and

social-climbing adults) what Connerton would call the proprieties of the body:<sup>5</sup> basic good carriage, how to bow and curtsy, stand and walk gracefully, even how to enter a room. Connerton's intriguing exploration of table manners, appetite and control applies equally to dance practices (the "appetite" or instinct being for free, unconstrained movement) and the social body in general in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Those who did not have the resources for private lessons went to public dancing schools, if they could possibly afford to; dance lessons were equally important for members of these classes (for example, impoverished gentry; men climbing the ranks in the army or navy; prosperous merchants' and bankers' families; and the relatively nouveau riche whose fortunes had been made a generation or two back in trade) – possibly even more so, because the way the body was dressed, carried and conducted was crucial in a rapidly changing society where the merchant classes and other prosperous people had increasing access to gentry status. This socioeconomic mobility was significantly accelerated during the late-Georgian period, for many reasons. Among them were the Industrial Revolution; the Enclosure Acts of the 18<sup>th</sup> through the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (which enriched the local squires as well as the aristocracy, thus significantly expanding the class of "gentleman-farmers"); the vast British expansion in colonies such as India and the Caribbean; the French Revolution, with its disruption of traditional hegemonies; and ongoing wars in which a great many hitherto unremarkable naval officers gained handsome fortunes through prize money, and even occasionally titles, which earned them a previously unlooked-for standing in "polite society".

Jane Austen's novels prominently feature characters, both male and female, who do not belong to the gentry by birth, but who have received "a superior education" (which, as I have said, included training in social skills) and who therefore have risen into it; Fanny Price, Mr. Wickham, the Bingleys, and Charles Hayter are notable examples of this phenomenon, and the theme generally is explored again and again throughout her work. Austen is very explicit on the role of "manner" – i.e., the handling of the body – in this transformation and its role in maintaining – or betraying – the social position, reputation and even deserts of these arriviste characters. There is a suggestively fluid, liminal quality to their social position, and Austen makes fascinating use of them in her books as a way of examining the meanings of profound changes occurring in her increasingly shifting world.

People at this period were expected to be complicit in maintaining the existing social order through points of etiquette, such as the ranking of dancers in the ballroom. In the country dances, the highest-status couple stood at the top of the set (literally higher up the room), and led off the dance. Only the most outrageously vulgar and pushy would even consider violating this custom, the only exception to this rule being a newly married woman, who was treated for the first phase of her marriage as "always the first in company, let the others be who they may."<sup>6</sup> (A bride, i.e., a woman at the threshold of fulfilling her biological function and thus her place in the world, was offered a delusive but persuasive temporary social power.)

At public balls, the ranking was determined by the Master of Ceremonies, who vetted all ticket-holders and introduced men in need of partners to "suitable" – meaning socially equal – women. Public balls were held in venues with different degrees of gentility, as we will see in Fanny Burney's 18<sup>th</sup>-century novel *Evelina*. Again, attendees were expected to keep to their station in life and observe the niceties of social



differentiation; upper class people could go “slumming” and attend whichever balls they chose, but only an exceptionally ill-judging person would have stepped *above* their rank to attend one of the more exclusive public dances, even if he or she could afford a ticket (and the appropriate clothing).

A revealing scene in *Evelina* takes place in one of the barely genteel ballrooms of London, the Long Room at Hampstead (the only sort that the Branghton family can afford: ball tickets ranged during this period from a few pence or a shilling to at least one guinea, roughly \$100 in today’s currency). Evelina’s grandmother, an obtuse and mortifyingly vulgar woman whom Evelina is compelled to accompany, insists on dancing a minuet. The performance of minuets at the balls was governed by rules even stricter than those of the country dances: only the most accomplished, and most elegant, among the company were to dance one, and were expected to rigorously self-select; it was completely unacceptable to attempt one if you were below standard either socially or technically. Madame Duval, with her heavy rouge and outré clothes, offends in both respects. She violates both socially – as a both vulgar and lower-class woman dancing a minuet in mixed company – and in terms of the body as expressed through taste and artistry – by dancing it badly – but lacks the sensitivity to realize that she has blundered. In other words, she sweeps aside what Connerton calls the “choreography of authority” and “ceremonies of the body.”<sup>7</sup> The company laughs at her and Evelina is ashamed, but her grandmother’s vanity is satisfied.<sup>8</sup> The scene is an illuminating example of the apparatus of *participatory* social repression intended to operate through the body and bodily etiquette, or decorum. Madame Duval is attempting to perform an identity that she does not in fact possess; therefore, in Burney’s fictional world, she fails. However, even those in true possession of their status were sometimes aware of the performative nature of its bodily declaration through public enactment: in a diary entry for 1798, Caroline Powys describes going in to dinner with Prince William: “When dinner was announced, he took my hand and led me down to the eating-room, which was rather a long promenade, but we had room sufficient to show how we perform’d, as the staircase, and approach to it is spacious.”<sup>9</sup> Typical of her voice throughout the letters and diaries, there is certainly a playful, good-humoured irony at work here, but simultaneously a strong consciousness of appearance and ceremony; the fact that they went first; how genteel people were to move in public; their audience; and the type and amount of credit attached to these things in society. In fact, it amounts to nothing less than a statement of the performativity of social position through the body.

One of the spaces that challenged and disrupted accepted modes of social position was the public pleasure garden. Some, like Ranelagh, were expensive and elegant, and thus were patronized largely by the middle and upper classes, but the cheaper, less exclusive but hugely popular ones like Vauxhall (often hosting thousands of visitors in a single evening) were attended by people from almost every level of society, including prostitutes, which meant that people of virtually all classes were probably dancing together, a promiscuous mingling of otherwise socially distinct bodies almost unheard-of elsewhere. (Though common prostitutes were unlikely to dance – they frequented the shadowy, unlighted walks or alleys in the further reaches of the grounds – the courtesans, queens of the demimonde, might have.) The lack of strict boundaries in a public garden, where all the buildings were open pavilions and doorways in the usual sense did not exist past the entry booth, is hugely suggestive. The liminality of the shared space at Vauxhall

is full of discomfort, danger and social threat.

As a corollary to this, the physical nature of the dance experience was in flux as well: even the clothing and hair were different. The Duchess of Devonshire introduced the less structured, simpler (and, significantly, far less expensive) muslin gown to England in the 1780s, high heels were fading out, three-foot teetering headdresses were gone: the latest wave of neo-classical frenzy had reinvented English fashion and, all round, the experience of the dancing body had changed radically by the beginning of the 19th century. The people who had earlier done English Country Dances to a stately bourée travelling step were now doing the lively, free-flowing Regency skip-change. At the ball in Austen's novel *Emma*, Harriet's joy is expressed through her dancing: "she bounded higher than ever, flew farther down the middle, and was in a continual course of smiles"<sup>10</sup>— something that earlier in the period was simply impossible: the bourée step just did not permit that latitude of personal expression, the sheer physical flexibility of individuality and choice. In the wake of the French Revolution and the influence of the early Romantics, the cult of sensibility and the individual, and the rapidly expanding middle class, a new democracy of the public body had arrived.

Copyright 2012, Karen Millyard

## Notes

1. Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*. George Routledge and Sons, 1878. p. 59. Google eBook.
2. Something or someone "savouring of" a particular quality "a league off" was a popular expression in French.
3. Jane Austen, *Emma*. London, Richard Bentley, 1886. p. 279
4. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 90
5. *ibid.*
6. Austen, p. 239
7. Connerton, pp. 74, 84-7
8. Fanny Burney. *Evelina: or The history of a young lady's entrance into the world*. London, T. Lowndes, 1779. p.171
9. Caroline (Mrs. Philip Lybbe) Powys. *Passages from the diaries of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys, 1756-1808*. p. 318.
10. Austen, p. 281

## Bibliography

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. London: Richard Bentley, 1886 (1815). Google eBook.  
 —*Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion*. vol II. London: John Murray, 1818  
 —*Pride and Prejudice*. The Modern Student's Library (Philosophy Series). Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918 (1813). Google eBook.
- Burney, Fanny. *Evelina: or The history of a young lady's entrance into the world*. London: T. Lowndes, 1779. Google eBook.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Dumas, Alexandre. *The Three Musketeers*. George Routledge and Sons, 1878. Google eBook.
- Harder, Tim. "Master of Ceremonies". Originally published in the *Encyclopedia of Brighton*,

1990. Found at  
[http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/page\\_id\\_\\_8296\\_path\\_\\_0p116p1491p.aspx](http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk/page_id__8296_path__0p116p1491p.aspx)  
Powys, Caroline (Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys), *Passages from the diaries of Mrs. Philip Lybbe  
Powys, 1756-1808*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899.

Address for correspondence:

Karen Millyard  
75 Ulster St.,  
Toronto, ON  
M5S 1E8  
CANADA

E-mail address

millyard at yorku dot ca



## **Popular dancing in Peru's late eighteenth century: the dances in the Martínez Compañón Codex**

Peggy Murray, Ph.D. Candidate  
Ohio University

### **Abstract**

*In the late eighteenth century the Bishop of Trujillo, Peru, Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón, toured the extensive northeastern portion of the Viceroyalty of Peru to acquaint himself with his jurisdiction. The Bishop compiled illustrations and data to document the sights and sounds of the region in a collection known today as the Martínez Compañón Codex or Trujillo del Perú Codex. Among the over 1,400 images contained in this compilation are 36 renderings of dances, and scores for 20 pieces of popular dance music. I explore the Codex's dances using an historical ethnographic approach (including learning contemporary traditional dances) and primary and secondary texts.*

### **Preliminary note**

At the 2012 Society of Dance History Scholars Conference I was able to show web images from the manuscript under study via the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes website. At the time of this writing, permission to use images in print is pending. I encourage readers to go to the web addresses provided to reference the Codex's plates of watercolors and musical scores.

### **Introduction**

This is a basic introduction to a primary resource that I will be using in my larger study of dance and culture in eighteenth-century Peru. The Martínez Compañón Codex is rich in dance information, and is particularly important because it focuses on the rarely documented popular culture of Peru's late colonial period. I will address more theoretical issues related to this manuscript in my forthcoming dissertation and will consider the differences, similarities and roles of dance in the popular world and in the official culture of Church and Court in Peru at this time. In this presentation I give background information about the manuscript and its compiler, offer some observations on a few of the dances the Codex depicts, and discuss the kinds of evidence the Codex provides about those dances. Besides the Codex and supporting primary and secondary sources, my presentation draws on recent interviews and tutorials with Peruvian specialists and informants in anthropology, musicology, music and dance.

### **Martínez Compañón and his district**

Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón y Bujanda, a well-educated Spanish priest, moved to Lima, Peru in the 1760s, where he worked as director of music at the Cathedral and held other Church posts before being named Bishop of Trujillo in 1778 by Spain's King Charles III. The following maps survey the area of Peru at the time of Martínez Compañón's appointment:

[On a projected map of the Viceroyalty of Peru in 1776, I identified the capital, Lima, and the northern region of Trujillo. (Wikimedia Commons File: “Mapa del América del Sur con el Virreinato del Perú desde 1776 con un virreinato.jpg:” [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mapa\\_del\\_Am%C3%A9rica\\_del\\_Sur\\_con\\_el\\_Virreinato\\_del\\_Per%C3%BA\\_desde\\_1776\\_con\\_un\\_Virreinato.jpg#filelinks](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mapa_del_Am%C3%A9rica_del_Sur_con_el_Virreinato_del_Per%C3%BA_desde_1776_con_un_Virreinato.jpg#filelinks))]

[The next projected map, this one from the Codex, showed the bishopric with its cities and towns. (Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes: *Trujillo del Perú*, Vol. II, Estampa II, “Obispado del Truxillo:” <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0002.htm>)]

The bishopric at this time comprised 150,000 square kilometers (93,000 square miles); 12 provinces; 5 cities; 151 towns; and 250,000 inhabitants (of these, half were characterized as indigenous; 10 percent were listed as Spaniards; and the remaining 40 percent were categorized blacks and *mestizos* (people of mixed indigenous and Spanish heritage)).<sup>i</sup>

### The Bishop’s trip

Almost immediately upon assuming his new role, Martínez Compañón began planning an in-depth tour of his jurisdiction. *Visitas* made by religious authorities to sites within their purview were not uncommon, but Martínez Compañón’s tour seems to have been on a much larger scale than was typical.<sup>ii</sup>

On his three-year tour, during the years 1782 to 1785, the Bishop and his entourage covered almost 3,000 kilometers (almost 1900 miles).<sup>iii</sup> The often difficult terrain included all three of the geographic zones that continue to define Peru and its cultures today: the coast, the highlands or mountains and the jungle (*costa*, *sierra* and *selva*). These regional designations describe not only geographic topography, but also distinct cultural practices largely determined by climate, available resources and inhabitants’ livelihoods. Martínez Compañón’s territory was not only expansive, but also diverse.

On its expedition the Bishop’s group performed religious functions such as serving mass, teaching plainchant, and assisting local priests. They also repaired churches, built seminaries and “Indian” schools, founded towns, and constructed hundreds of miles of roadways and ditch systems.<sup>iv</sup> The infrastructure repairs addressed some damage caused by two strong earthquakes earlier in the century and also created favorable conditions for producing and exporting cacao from the area.<sup>v</sup> Civil and economic development projects seem to have been as important as the ecclesiastical ones.

### The manuscript

In addition to carrying out religious and public works on the trip, the Bishop and his collaborators, who included artists, cartographers and musicians, amassed an extraordinary amount of graphic information about the region—its geography; flora and fauna; its human inhabitants; their work; food; pastimes; and importantly for us, their dances and music.<sup>vi</sup>

Martínez Compañón’s original intention was to produce a comprehensive *historia general*, or major general history chronicle of the region—a task he never completed.<sup>vii</sup> In 1789 the Bishop was tapped for a new post, this time as Archbishop of Bogotá, at which point he shipped the raw information he had compiled to Charles IV in Spain. The compendium, now known as the *Trujillo del Perú* Codex (or commonly as the Martínez Compañón Codex), consists

of more than 1,400 images, including charts, maps, watercolors and musical scores. Interestingly, this collection of images has no accompanying descriptive narrative.

The collection's paper pages measure about 6 ½ by 9 inches and are decorated with watercolors and/or inscribed with ink and are bound into nine volumes.<sup>viii</sup> These reside in the Biblioteca Palacio Real in Madrid, but fortunately, all of the images from the facsimile edition are available digitally online through the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes in its Manuscritos de América en las Colecciones Reales section.

[To access the online version of the *Trujillo del Perú* Codex go to <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/portal/patrimonio/catalogo.shtml> and scroll down the listed manuscripts to find each of nine volumes of the work (twenty-five manuscripts precede these).]

### Codex images

A survey of the topically organized nine volumes points us today to Volume II because of its dance and music information. The Codex, however, boasts a treasure trove of botanical and zoological illustrations as well as archeological, ceramic, textile and linguistic information about different ethnic groups of the area. A total of eight languages, some of which are extinct, are represented in the Codex's charts and song lyrics. The compilation includes the following subjects:

- Volume I: Maps; statistical charts; portraits of colonial personages; bishops; symbols (seals, coats of arms)
- Volume II: Maps and charts; symbols; colonial personages; local peoples categorized by type in their costumes; work activities; machines and instruments; games and pastimes; **dances; music;** illnesses and ailments
- Volume III: Plants (trees, fruit, shrubs, vines)
- Volume IV: Plants (trees for fruit, resin, palm, wood; non-tree herbs; flowers)
- Volume V: Plants (medicinal herbs)
- Volume VI: Animals (quadrupeds; reptiles; vermin)
- Volume VII: Animals (birds)
- Volume VIII: Animals (fish; mollusks; crustaceans)
- Volume IX: Maps; architectural ruins; ceramics; and textiles mainly of the coastal region and its pre-Incan (and pre-Columbian) Moche and Chimú cultures.

Thirty-six watercolors in Volume II (*Estampas*, or plates E. 140-175) directly depict dances in the types of settings in which they might have been observed, with what may have been their typical costumes and musical accompaniment. Titles of the *Estampas* found in the volume's index (E. 205r-207v: *Índice de las ilustraciones*), as well as the skin color and dress of those depicted help us associate the dances and dancers with ethnic groups. Some titles allow us to deduce that the dances were performed for festive occasions (like Corpus Christi, Christmas or *Carnaval*).<sup>ix</sup>

I think it would be a shame not to show dance images, but for time reasons, I will comment on these in passing, and go into depth with just a few.

[Please see E. 140-175. For quick access go to <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0145.htm> (this is E. 140) and advance using the “*siguiente*” button at the lower right of the screen.]

The dance watercolors represent dancers of a variety of ethnicities performing mostly group dances (rather than solos or hetero-social couple dances). Some dances are masked and many depict the use of handkerchiefs, and some, swords or staffs. Most of the musical instruments pictured--various types of harps, guitars, violins—are of European origin (although in some cases these instruments have been modified in local use).<sup>x</sup> But a good number of the dances are accompanied by pipe and tabor, which seems to be an equally European and indigenous convention.<sup>xi</sup> Also, we have a variety of dances with dancers dressed as animals. So, pictorially, we have some idea of the dances the Bishop's group observed.

Following the dance watercolors are musical scores for twenty dance tunes preserved in European notation, and calling for a characteristic Baroque bass line (that is, a lower continuous note-and- rhythm pattern below a higher melody).

[Musical scores are found on E. 176-193. For quick access go to <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0181.htm> (this is E.176) and advance using the “siguiente” button at the lower right of the screen.]

Seventeen of these pieces are dance songs which include lyrics, and three are instrumental. Most of the scores do not directly or obviously correspond to the dance watercolors (though we will discuss a few cases where we can draw some logical connections). In a few examples, the scores provide brief descriptions about the dances. This information, along with indications of tempo (*allegro*, *andantino*, etc.), meter, lyrics (in different languages), and occasional references to locations in the titles of the pieces all contribute to overall dance information.

### ***El Chimo***

I have selected two types of dances that have special social/historical significance—one references a pre-Columbian culture and the other, the Afro-Peruvian culture. In each case we can deduce fragments of information from both dance watercolors and musical scores. The first, are dances presented as being of the “Chimo.” The Chimo culture (or Chimú, as it is better-known) existed along the northern Peruvian coast between about 900 and 1500. Descendants of the Mochica, the Chimú, were overrun by Inca and, were virtually extinct by the time the Spaniards arrived. Nevertheless, vestiges of the Mochica and Chimú were apparent in their archeological ruins, pottery and textiles throughout the colonial period (-and we saw earlier that volume IX of the compendium is almost entirely dedicated to the artifacts of this pre-Incan group).

[See dance watercolors E. 147: *Ydem [Danza] del Chimo* (Ibid (anterior reference is to dance) of the Chimo)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0152.htm>;  
 E . 151: *Ydem del Chimo* (Ibid of the Chimo)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0157.htm>;  
 and E. 153: *Ydem del Huaco* (Ibid of the Relic/Temple)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0158.htm>.]

In each of the images there are two dancers and we can note that the headdresses here feature moons and suns—very common symbols in Andean cosmology. The dancers carry battle



axes, which we might assume signal a type of combat dance, and they also have handkerchiefs, which we commonly associate with festive dancing. Both are common tropes in popular dances, but it is rare to see both weapons and handkerchiefs being used simultaneously. The dancers in the first two images are accompanied by some European, or modified European instruments, and in the third, by a simple played by a more indigenous-looking musician.

One of the *Estampas* that contains music for the Chimo is E. 180: *Tonada del Chimo a dos voces bajo y tamboril, para baylar cantando* (Tune of the Chimo for two voices, bass and tabor, to dance singing).

[See E. 180: *Tonada del Chimo a dos voces bajo y tamboril, para baylar cantando*  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0185.htm>.]

This piece contains lyrics (transcribed phonetically) in the pre-Columbian oral Mochica language. There is no known total translation of this dance song, and it is probably the only written example of this extinct language.<sup>xii</sup> The text includes Spanish or Latin-derived words that signify things like sin, the body, Jesus Christ, and forgiveness, and perhaps signals hybridity in terms of language and religion. We do have to consider that a Spanish religious transcriber might have interpreted the dance song's words and significance correctly or incorrectly, according to his own Spanish Catholic perspective. However, it is more feasible that the Bishop's entourage would have been witness to Christian-themed presentations than to officially-prohibited "pagan" ones. The music itself is solemn and has a slow march-like or processional quality consistent with a religious rite.

[Here we listened to a recorded version of this music. That I know of, there are three modern recordings of the complete music from the Codex. Several other recordings reconstruct selected pieces. Tempos and instrumentation vary slightly between recordings. I chose to play cuts from the 1992 CD, *Virreinato del Perú de la serie Música del Pasado de América* (track 20) by Camerata Renacentista de Caracas, Isabel Palacios, Dir., Banco Mercantil Caracas. Versions of this music are also found on youtube.com at this writing.]

As this group's language has been lost, so too has much information about the formal characteristics of its dances. Today, anthropologists and traditional dancers are trying to recover this information that has been obscured by time.

### ***El Congo***

Other dance traditions have maintained a stronger presence in Peruvian culture. The first three dance watercolors of the Codex (*Estampas* 140 through 142) represent dances of the African population, and to be sure, this group had a profound influence on the dance and music aesthetics of (particularly) the coastal region almost from the beginning of the Spanish conquest, and more profoundly as the organized slave trade took hold. Many movement conventions in today's traditional coastal dances are traced to characteristics considered to be African-influenced. Some examples include vertical hip movements (as opposed to more twisting horizontal hip action associated with the *sierra* (highlands) and *selva* (jungle) regions) and *zapateos*, or percussive footwork, where the feet are lifted higher off the ground, and with more leg crossing and brushing steps than the *zapateos* from other regions.<sup>xiii</sup>

[See dance watercolors E. 140: *Danza de Bailanegritos* (Dance of *Bailanegritos*—it is unclear whether this is the name of a specific dance or a more general reference to a Black/Negro dance)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0145.htm>  
 E. 141: *Ydem de Negros* (Ibid of Negros)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0146.htm>  
 E. 142: *Negros tocando Marimba y bailando* (Negros playing marimba and dancing)  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0147.htm>.]

In the first of these images we see a European-looking fellow (with shoes) watching, as the barefoot African men dance with handkerchiefs, and in the latter two images we have men and women dancing together. In the coastal region we do find more traditional dances for couples--especially male-female couples--than in other regions where group dances are much more prevalent.<sup>xiv</sup>

The watercolors show a variety of musical accompaniment--in the first image we have a pipe and tabor; in the second, a guitar-type instrument and a large drum that ethnomusicologists have not identified with certainty. In the third image we see what is clearly a marimba (considered to have its origins in Africa), and the women have *tejoletas* or *palillos*--a kind of clapper or castanet.

*Estampa* 178 provides the musical score for (*Allegro*) *Tonada El congo a voz y Bajo para bailar Cantando* ((*Allegro*) Tune *El congo* for voice and Bass to dance singing). Latin American popular music frequently makes reference to African place names, and here, *el congo* likely refers to the homeland of many African slaves brought to Peru. Although this piece is marked “*allegro*”, its lyrics directly relate a story of slavery.

[See E. 178: (*Allegro*) *Tonada El congo a voz y Bajo para bailar Cantando* ((*Allegro*) Tune *El congo* for voice and Bass to dance singing).  
<http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/patr/80771096008914356746280/ima0183.htm>. A recording is available on the 1992 CD, *Virreinato del Perú de la serie Música del Pasado de América* (track 23) by Camerata Renacentista de Caracas, Isabel Palacios, Dir., Banco Mercantil Caracas, or via youtube.com.]

This song’s lyrics lament having being taken to the sea and leaving a dear mother behind because the Congo mandated it. The words go on to reference punishment with a stick—a common phallic euphemism, which actually lightens the song’s tone if interpreted figuratively.<sup>xv</sup> The dance’s lively rhythm if coupled with the dynamic movement characteristics associated with the coastal region would make it a probable forerunner of the later *zamacueca*, and Peru’s national dance, the *marinera*.<sup>xvi</sup>

In conclusion, this manuscript provides rich fodder for explorations of a large variety of dances--either individually, or by geographic region, by ethnic group, or by type of festive occasion. We might also use the dances to investigate political and religious history, diasporic influences and hybridity in the popular world of eighteenth-century northern Peru.

Thank you.

## Acknowledgments

I owe my thanks to musician and musicologist José (Pepe) Quezada Macchiavello in Lima and to traditional dancer and choreographer José Luque and his company PERUDANZA in Cusco for thoughtfully indulging my questions (and to the dancers for patiently demonstrating and correcting my dancing).

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> Pablo Macera et. al., *Trujillo del Perú: Baltazar Martínez Compañón acuarelas siglo XVIII* (Lima: Edubanco Banco Continental (Peru), 1997), 19. This work compiles and concisely lists data from throughout Daniel Restrepo Manrique, *La Iglesia de Trujillo (Perú) bajo el episcopado de Baltazar J. Martínez Compañón (1780-1790)* (Bilbao: Victoria-Gasteiz. Bilbao. Departamento de Cultura. Gobierno Vasco, 1992). A very useful, primary source that describes part of Martínez Compañón's territory in 1763 is Miguel Feyjoo de Sosa, *Relación descriptiva de la ciudad y provincial de Trujillo del Perú con notas exactas de su estado político*. (Lima: Banco Industrial del Perú, 1984).

<sup>ii</sup> Macera et al., *Trujillo del Perú*, 19. informs that at least three other bishops during the 18<sup>th</sup> century organized less ambitious visits within the bishopric.

<sup>iii</sup> José Quezada Macchiavello, Part II “La música en el virreinato,” Chapter III “Decadencia y ocaso de la cultura musical en la colonia (1760-1823),” in *La música en el Perú*, eds. César Bolaños et al. (Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía, 2007), 95.

<sup>iv</sup> Macera et al., *Trujillo del Perú*, 23.; Quezada Macchiavello, “La música en el virreinato,” 95.

<sup>v</sup> Macera et al., *Trujillo del Perú*, 23.

<sup>vi</sup> Macera et al., *Trujillo del Perú*, 51-52. points out that because of their detail and precision, many of the maps and charts included in the compilation appear to have been executed by experienced unknown cartographers, and that analysts disagree as to the origins or styles of the unnamed artist or artists of the watercolors. The watercolors, criticized by some experts for their poor technique and lack of perspective, may have been contributed by as many as three different artists, though the dance watercolors were likely produced by the same person.

Quezada Macchiavello, “La música en el virreinato,” 95-96. alleges that although Martínez Compañón had significant musical training and experience, musicologists suggest that he probably had help producing the musical scores included, perhaps from Pedro Solís, the choir master at Trujillo Cathedral.

<sup>vii</sup> Quezada Macchiavello, “La música en el virreinato,” 95.

<sup>viii</sup> Baltazar Jaime Martínez Compañón, *Trujillo del Perú*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/portal/patrimonio/catalogo.shtml>. The *nota previa* before listed comments on formatting and presentation.

<sup>ix</sup> An example is E. 144 titled “Doce pares de Francia”—a dance derived from a story of the European Crusades commonly performed in Moors and Christians celebrations at Corpus Christi

festivities. One of several sources that comment on such popular festivals is Bernardino Ramírez Bautista, “Danza de moros y critianos en Huamantanga (Canta). Tradición y teatro popular en la sierra de Lima,” *Anthropologica* 19, no. 19 (2001): 195-215.

<sup>x</sup> Ethnomusicological sources that address music and instrumentation before and during the Peruvian colonial period include César Bolaños et al., *La música en el Perú* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía, 2007) and Raúl Romero, ed., *Música danzas y máscaras en los Andes* (Lima: Instituto Riva-Agüero-Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1998).

<sup>xi</sup> César Bolaños, Part I “La música en el antiguo Perú:” “Danza e instrumentos musicales antiguos,” and “Música y danzas en el antiguo Perú,” in *La música en el Perú*, eds. César Bolaños et al. (Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía, 2007), 5-64.

<sup>xii</sup> Franco Daponte, liner notes to *Codex Martínez Compañón*, Capilla de Indias (Chili), Le Couvent K617, CD, 2005, 9; Quezada Macchiavello, “La música en el virreinato,” 97.

<sup>xiii</sup> José Luque, interviews/coaching sessions with author, Cusco, Peru October 29, 30, November 8, 9, 15, 2010. rehearsals and performances of traditional dance group PERUDANZA October 27, November 6, 13, 24, 2010; Alex Álvarez, interviews with author, February 18, 25, 2012, via skype from Mexico City, Mexico (author) to Lima, Peru (A. Álvarez).

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs, “Música y comportamiento festivo de la población en Lima colonial,” *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 451-452 (1988): 164.

<sup>xvi</sup> Peruvian traditional dancers and musicians accept that the Afro-Peruvian traditions of music and dance gave rise to these, more widely recognized later dance styles, as do several dance historical texts. Carlos Aguilar Luna-Victoria, *La marinera: baile nacional del Perú* (Lima: Ministerio de Educación. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia /Tecnología CONCYTEC. 1998). provides an in-depth treatment of the *marinera* and its origins.

## Works cited

Aguilar Luna-Victoria, Carlos. 1998. *La marinera: baile nacional del Perú*. Lima: Ministerio de Educación. Consejo Nacional de Ciencia /Tecnología CONCYTEC.

Álvarez, Alex. 2012. Skype interviews by the author, 18, 25 February. Unpublished, transcribed.(Peruvian dance specialist) Lima, Peru.

Bolaños, César. 2007. La música en el antiguo Perú. In *La música en el Perú*, eds. César Bolaños et al., 3-64. Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía.

\_\_\_\_\_ et al., eds. 2007. *La música en el Perú*, Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía.

Daponte, Franco. Liner notes to *Codex Martínez Compañón*. Capilla de Indias (Chili). Le Couvent K617, CD, 2005.

- Estenssoro Fuchs, Juan Carlos. 1988. Música y comportamiento festivo de la población en Lima colonial. *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 451-452 (1988), 161-166.
- Feyjoo de Sosa, Miguel. 1984. *Relación descriptiva de la ciudad y provincial de Trujillo del Perú con notas exactas de su estado político*. Lima: Banco Industrial del Perú.
- Luque, José. 2010. Interviews/coaching sessions with author, 29, 30 October, 8, 9, 15, November. Unpublished, videoed, transcribed. (Peruvian dance specialist) Cusco, Peru.
- Macera, Pablo, Arturo Jiménez Borja and Irma Franke. 1997. *Trujillo del Perú: Baltazar Martínez Compañón acuarelas siglo XVIII*. Lima: Edubanco Banco Continental (Peru).
- Martínez Compañón, Baltazar Jaime. *Trujillo del Perú*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/portal/patrimonio/catalogo.shtml>. Accessed June 16, 2012.
- PERUDANZA. 2010. Rehearsals and performances observed by author, 27 October, 6, 13, 24, November. Unpublished, video recorded, annotated. (Peruvian traditional dance group) Cusco, Peru.
- Quezada Macchiavello, José. La música en el virreinato. In *La música en el Perú*, edited by César Bolaños et al., 67-102. Lima: Fondo Editorial Filarmonía.
- Ramírez Bautista, Bernardino. Danza de moros y critianos en Huamantanga (Canta). Tradición y teatro popular en la sierra de Lima. *Anthropologica* 19, 19 (2001): 195-215.
- Restrepo Manrique, Daniel. 1992. *La Iglesia de Trujillo (Perú) bajo el episcopado de Baltazar J. Martínez Compañón (1780-1790)*. Bilbao: Victoria-Gasteiz. Bilbao. Departamento de Cultura. Gobierno Vasco.
- Romero, Raúl, ed. 1998. *Música danzas y máscaras en los Andes*. Lima: Instituto Riva-Agüero Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú.

### Address for correspondence

Peggy Murray: pm663106@ohio.edu



## Urban Encounters and Collective Intimacy in Rosemary Lee's *Square Dances*

***Katja Nyqvist***

University of Roehampton

### ***Abstract***

*This paper explores the sensory encounters involved in Rosemary Lee's large-scale outdoor work Square Dances, in which I performed in the green squares of Bloomsbury in October 2011. I seek to reveal how this quietly intensive performance challenged common urban attitudes of dissociation and deadening of the senses, and provided a blueprint for how urban space can facilitate collective intimacy. In particular, I will shed light on Square Dances' creative process and how it gave rise to the attentive and sensory relations between performers, audience and the urban landscape.*

### **Introduction**

This paper explores sensory urban encounters through choreographer Rosemary Lee's large-scale outdoor work, *Square Dances*, in which I performed in October 2011. I seek to reveal how this quietly intensive performance challenged common urban attitudes of dissociation and deadening of the senses as described by Georg Simmel, and provided a blueprint for how urban space can facilitate *collective intimacy*.<sup>1</sup> The perception of London evoked through this paper thus centers around the subject - the city as an experienced, embodied and shared space, a site for relatedness.

*Square Dances*, commissioned by Dance Umbrella festival, was a large-scale production featuring around 200 professional and non-professional dancers of various ages. The performances materialised in four different public squares in the Bloomsbury area of central London over a weekend. The four squares were inhabited by four distinct groups (men, women, dance students and children) repeating a series of twenty minute performances each day. Using a phenomenological approach, I will trace my lived experience and embodiment as a performer in Gordon Square and shed light on *Square Dances*' creative process and how it gave rise to the attentive and sensory relations between performers, audience and the urban landscape.

### **Historical Bloomsbury**

I begin by considering how the enclosed but publicly accessible spaces of green city squares, specifically those of Bloomsbury in London, have historically choreographed spatial behaviour and framed social interaction. The area of Bloomsbury is notable for its collection of Georgian garden squares, its literary connections (the Bloomsbury Group in particular) and numerous cultural and educational institutions including the British

Museum and the University of London.<sup>2</sup> Its garden squares have their beginning in the early nineteenth century when the fifth Duke of Bedford tore down his mansion and garden in order to build his Bloomsbury development consisting of seven squares and connecting streets.

Green spaces in London, like Bloomsbury squares, have gone through various transformations both in appearance and function since their origin in the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> In his study on the greening of urban squares, cultural geographer Henry Lawrence demonstrates how “the squares reflected and responded to changes in ideas about the use and control of land, about nature and its role in urban life, and about the shape and form of city.”<sup>4</sup> The eighteenth century saw wealthy residents’ empowerment at the expense of old common rights and access for all: many of the open squares of the seventeenth century were fenced and later locked. Meanwhile, a distinctly British way of designing rural landscapes started shaping the garden aesthetic of the city. This design was influenced by continental landscape painting, and emphasised picturesque composition and visual openness; the aim of this new design was to display and frame architecture and to show *who* walked in the squares. Thus, the purpose of a city square was for people variously to be seen, to promenade and *assemble* together, and also sometimes to be framed out of view. In contrast, the nineteenth century saw these visually open squares transformed into shady parks allowing the density of vegetation to be increased to evoke an image of nature. Visual privacy also became crucial in these shady parks: the squares became extensions of the private, domestic lives of the residents rather than places to assemble and be *seen*.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of the century, many residential squares were also opened to public use alongside the new large shared parks that were created to promote health and social and political stability. Sara Blair describes how Bloomsbury’s snug middle-class population started shifting to include culture workers, foreign students, activists - the radical, marginal and progressive. Bloomsbury became a new site for not only the University of London but also for the emergence of feminist cultures and other forms of alterity, especially racial and ethnic. According to Blair, it is this *otherness* that marks Bloomsbury as a distinctive urban space - “a space of urban polyphony... far from generically metropolitan, Bloomsbury's particular modes of cultural critique, progressive practice, and modern lifestyle were unique to that site.”<sup>6</sup>

A century later, performing on Gordon Square, I find myself returning to the life of the squares, to the enclosed and shared spaces, to the assembling of people, the spaces of privacy and sites of polyphony and radical otherness, and see not only parallels with the past but also a new collective intimacy emerging through *Square Dances*. Despite the large scale of the work, the ordinary life of the squares became integral to *Square Dances*; the work intensified and celebrated this life, rather than disturbing it with spectacle. In this way, the epic became something which could be experienced as “meaningful and intimate.”<sup>7</sup> I found this *shared intimacy* (achieved not as much through touch as through simple presence) pivotal in my experiencing of the dance, and of London.



## Perceptual awakening

The process of rehearsing *Square Dances* involved various movement tasks, partner and somatic work, and improvisation, as well as the learning of dance material, indoors and outdoors, in small and large groups. However, the essence of the work became about our *attention*. What do I pay attention to? Specifically, *how* do I pay attention and, through this, how do I take part in directing the attention of the audiences? Stillness provided us a way of sharpening our perceptions and noticing more detail around and within us - something that forms an essential part of my and many others' on-going dance practice. Now, however, the experience of stillness and awareness was shared with a group of a hundred people. This collective attention and coming together of the group of various ages, professions and ethnicities required us to set aside our egos and to create for each other a safe and non-judgemental space. Working with touch in partners and trios led to flocking together in small groups, which in turn progressed to finding a sense of the whole group through a shared stillness and presence and through the sounding of handbells. Practical exercises which heightened our sensitivity to the different layers of the body in the moment of contact (air, skin, muscles, bones) as well as to the different ways of being in contact (touching, sharing weight, surrounding, approaching) prepared us for the intimacy of the performance. In the performance, our connections were created and maintained through closeness and shared attention without the physical proximity of touch.

The movement imageries used in *Square Dances* appealed in particular to the audience's sensory experience. After our initial rapid, sweeping entrance to the square, we quietened to a small dance of bouncing against the earth with little gestures which acted as a welcome to the park and to our sensory world: smelling the air, shivering in the spine, listening to the sound of bells against the street noise, touching the earth through stamping, and visual scanning around the park. The design of Gordon Square promoted flexible attention to space. The meandering and circular paths urged us to linger rather than hastily cut across, and the openness of the space allowed our sight to spread out to the periphery. Our use of peripheral vision enabled us to experience what we saw as part of our bodies, rather than as something exterior to them. Our engagement in *Square Dances* showed how stillness and awareness can provoke a change in how we encounter ordinary urban life, revealing the city, not only as a backdrop for daily activities, but also as a site of change and activity.

## Connecting to the place of the performance

Rosemary Lee's performance which transforms the quotidian experience into something more aesthetic resembles Anna Halprin's concept of ritual as "a slice of ordinary experience, framed, intensified, and set out for aesthetic regard".<sup>8</sup> *Square Dances* was created out of physical images of everyday life, events and occurrences common to both the performers and the audience but transformed to create new significance. The performance site literally shaped *Square Dances* and the movement qualities and imagery used in the construction of the work. The sources of the dance material were, in particular, drawn from *actions of forming relations to others*, such as gathering,

embracing, saluting, diving through, glancing, scanning around, flocking, following, as well as *imagery from nature*. For example, our movement tasks included ringing the ground; casting forward with an anchor; eddying in river paths; gliding; scattering seeds from the bell; flicking and sweeping the sky; popping open like seeds; creating gossamer threads between different body parts; and sending a light beam through the bell like the scanning beam of a lighthouse. These images acted as sensuous, tangible and associative metaphors that served “not to escape reality but to throw light upon it”.<sup>9</sup> They connected back to the original motives of green city squares, as Lawrence’s study demonstrates, both as places where nature and city meet and as places for forming relations with others.

### Gathering of diverse people

Rather than forming an expression of Benjaminian *flânerie*, *Square Dances* revealed the “city as a site of exchange”.<sup>10</sup> The performance mirrored, intensified and investigated our existing relations with the environment in the garden squares of Bloomsbury, which have evolved from the various movements, patterns and modes of relating that have historically occurred in them: assembling, loitering, promenading, enclosing in privacy, and meeting the ‘other’. The act of gathering, even if fleeting, became a significant part in the choreography. *Square Dances* shifted between the gathering and accumulation of people (performers and spectators alike) from the nearby streets and squares, and gathering as a quality of movement and presence. Gathering and scattering (its intimate opposite) became the underscore and narrative of the work, developed through the various versions of gathering in and dispersing out of the square – for example, when the performers ran in rows through Gordon Square and then marched away in unison - and through movement rituals with images of greeting and embracing. At times, there was also a sense of a shared intention with the audience which resulted in their formation into a “community of watchers” or “a flock of people” making their journeys through the different squares together and alone.<sup>11</sup> With these fleeting exchanges, I draw a parallel with the eighteenth century practice of assembling within the enclosed squares; however, the previously segregated sense of community now opened up to embrace more diversity. The embracing of diversity and the ability to see people afresh form key elements of an urbanity in which, to use Richard Sennett’s words, people “can act together, without the compulsion to be the same”.<sup>12</sup> *Square Dances* provided an example both for its performers and its audience of how public space can facilitate and inspire these collective encounters.

Copyright 2012, Katja Nyqvist

### Notes

1. Tonkiss, 2005
2. In early twentieth century, Gordon Square housed the Bloomsbury Group, the influential collective of English writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists, including Virginia Woolf, John Keynes and E. M. Forster, who reacted against the social rituals and habits of Victorian life in favour of a more informal, and private-oriented focus.

3. The residential squares of Britain have been very influential also on the formation of urban squares in cities outside of England, for example in Munich, Paris and Boston. Also some of the squares in Philadelphia modelled on those of Moore-fields in London, and a more direct copy, a Bloomsbury Square, was planned but never built in Annapolis.
4. Lawrence, 1993: 90-91
5. Lawrence, 1993
6. Blair 2004: 821-822
7. Lee, 2009
8. Ross, 2004: 59
9. Tufnell and Crickmay, 2003: 289
10. Shields in Tiwari, 2010: 144
11. Lee, 2012
12. Tonkiss, 2005: 25

### Bibliography

- Blair, Sara (2004) 'Local modernity, global modernism: Bloomsbury and the places of the literary', *ELH*, Vol. 71, No.3 (Fall, 2004), 813-838
- Lawrence, Henry W. (1993) 'The Greening of the Squares of London: Transformation of Urban Landscapes and Ideals', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 83, No. 1 (Mar., 1993), 90-118
- Lee, Rosemary (2012) interview by Rachel Gildea, <http://walkingpiece.blogspot.co.uk>
- Lee, Rosemary (2009) interview by Londondance.com, <http://www.londondance.com/content.asp?CategoryID=3474>
- Tiwari, Reena (2010) *Space-body-ritual: performativity in the city*, Plymouth: Lexington Books
- Tonkiss, Fran (2005) *Space, the City and Social Theory: social relations and urban forms*, Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press
- Tufnell, Miranda; Crickmay, Chris (2003) *A Widening Field: journeys in body and imagination*, London: Dance Books Ltd
- Ross, Janice (2004) 'Anna Halprin's Urban Rituals', *TDR*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), 49-67

Address for correspondence:

Katja Nyqvist  
k.nyqvist@roehampton.ac.uk



## ***Paris Dansant? Improvising across urban, racial and international geographies in the early cancan***

***Clare Parfitt-Brown***  
University of Chichester, UK

### ***Abstract***

*This paper addresses the cancan - not the familiar choreographed performance, but the improvised social dance that emerged among working-class dancers in 1820s Paris. Sources from the period reveal working men and women traversing not only a complex Parisian landscape of popular dance spectatorship and performance, but also taking advantage of Paris's status as an international metropole to consume non-French movement. After observing performances of 'national' dance forms (such as the Spanish cachucha and the Haitian chica) at the popular theatres of the Boulevard du Temple in north-east Paris, working-class dancers incorporated these movements into their dancing at the suburban guinguettes (dance venues) outside the city walls. These variations became known as the cancan or chahut. In the early 1830s, the cancan became popular at the mixed-class masked carnival balls that took place in central Parisian theatres, such as the Paris Opéra. By the 1840s, the dance had come to embody the pleasures and dangers of a Parisian nightlife based on class and gender confusion, subversion and deception, documented in books such as Physiologie des bals de Paris (1841) and Paris au bal (1848). As the cancan was increasingly incorporated into the mythology of July Monarchy Paris, the class and gender subversions of the dance obscured the international and racial ambiguities that haunted its inception. This paper therefore focuses on the tensions between the cancan's status as 'Parisian', and as an embodiment of a popular culture based on fascination with France's European and colonial others in the 1820s.*

The cancan has been intimately associated with the city of its birth since its first emergence in the 1820s. From the 1840s onwards, this association was reinforced further by a raft of popular literature about Paris and its nightlife which both celebrated and critiqued the cancan as a unique feature of the Parisian urban landscape. These books, including several titled *Paris Dansant*, reconfigured the geography of Paris around its public balls where dances such as the cancan were performed. However, I will argue in this paper that the cancan's Parisian status was complicated by a number of other geographical and cultural associations, including racial, national and international identities. Furthermore, as the geography of Paris was physically altered over the course of the nineteenth century, its relationships to notions of race and nation also shifted, changing the identity of the cancan significantly. Ultimately, I will argue that the cancan's early racial connotations were gradually overwritten by an increasingly dominant discourse of national identity. Gender is clearly another factor that intersects with those I will be analysing here, but there will not be time to draw out these connections in this paper. Rather, I hope to uncover aspects of the cancan that have become less visible in twentieth and twenty-first century manifestations of the dance.

Before I commence the main part of the paper, a short description of the early cancan will be helpful. The cancan emerged in the late 1820s as an improvised variation on the set figures of the quadrille, a dance performed in four couples. Many of the earliest dancers of the cancan were male, although a few female dancers are also documented in the late 1820s. Working-class men and women were early performers of the dance, as well as bourgeois male students, who sought dancing partners amongst the working class women, or *grisettes*. The dance consisted not only of kicks, but of various improvised leg, arm, head and torso movements that deviated from the quadrille's graceful deportment. A variety of terms were used for these improvisations other than cancan, including the word '*chahut*', meaning uproar, which was applied to particularly wild variations. In this paper the terms cancan and *chahut* will be used interchangeably, as their boundaries were somewhat fluid at this time.

In the late 1820s and early 1830s the cancan was sometimes found at public balls in the centre of Paris, such as the Salon de Mars. But it was more often danced in this early period at the working class *guinguettes* – dance halls established beyond the city walls, or *barrière*, to avoid the tax on goods coming into the city. These areas beyond the *barrière*, called the *faubourgs* or *banlieue*, had an ambiguous status, not quite urban and not quite rural. They are described by historian John Merriman (1991) as countercultural, associated with working class revelry and carnival, but also crime and subversive politics. Ordinances issued by the Prefecture de Police sought to control the establishment and running of these public balls. This included the prohibition of indecent dancing, and the posting of police officers at the balls to arrest those found performing it. But the prefects of police also thought that the entertainments at the *barrières* diverted revolutionary energies away from the centre of Paris. Therefore, the cancan had an ambiguous relationship to Paris from the start – it existed on Paris's boundaries, both geographically and legally, and was considered to both threaten and stabilise centre of the city.

The balls and social types of the *barrière* were a popular topic for the literary *flâneurs* who documented Parisian life in the 1830s and 1840s. One such writer was Auguste Luchet, a republican journalist. Luchet identified the centre of Paris with spectacular pleasures, conspicuous consumption and capitalist excess – the shop window of modernity (Green, 1990). He contrasted this with the working-class areas on the margins of the city. For Luchet, the *faubourgs* and their inhabitants were raw and honest, but crude and uncivilized. If the attraction of the centre of Paris was its glossy modernity, the attraction of the *barrière* was its exotic primitivism. This is evident in Luchet's description of a performance of the *chahut* he witnessed on Mardi Gras night, at the Grand Saint-Martin, the most famous ball in the Courtille area of Belleville.

Well, the forty masked dancers of the Grand Saint-Martin were all dancing the *chahut*: not that corrupted *chahut*, that approximate '*rose-water*' *chahut*, little coxcomb of students – but the real one, the primitive one, born of the Spanish fandango and the Negro *chica*. What I say to you about the mothers and fathers of this so libertine a daughter will not teach you much if you know but the fandango of the Opéra, or the *chica* from the *Bug le Javanais*. Rather, ask those who have

travelled in Spain and Africa, and you will see! As for myself – I declare it quite frankly – before visiting la Courtille on Ash Wednesday, I had only a very imperfect knowledge of this incredible dance; up till that moment I had only seen the *chahut* diluted, modified, stifled by the presence of the police men, troubled by the menacing guards; but there she was at home, in her boudoir, in her bedchamber. Only there was I able to admire her – bold, undressed, naked...! (Luchet, 1833: 30-31, translated by Anna Davies)

Luchet draws a number of distinctions here. He contrasts the *chahut* he witnessed with the *chahut* performed by the male students who visited balls such as the Grande Chaumière to dance with the working-class women. The cross-class spectre of the student dancing with the *grisette* was intimately associated with the cancan and the *chahut* in the 1830s and early 1840s, and this is depicted in many of the earliest images of the cancan. La Grande Chaumiere, a ball located beyond the *barrière* at Montparnasse, to the south of Paris, was famed for hosting these encounters. But for Luchet, the student was a fake in this environment, indulging in a performance of liberal politics, before retreating back to the luxuries of the city. Instead, the *chahut* that Luchet witnessed at La Courtille was danced by what he considers to be more ‘authentic’ inhabitants of the *faubourgs*: a man of about twenty dressed as Pierrot, the clown associated with working-class values in melodramas of the time, and a tall Cauchoise girl from Normandy, who “affect[ed] ravishingly the naïve ignorance of a village girl” (Luchet, 1833: 31, translated by Anna Davies). For Luchet, the ‘true’ *chahut* is danced by the working class and the peasant. The *chahut* that *they* perform is, he says, “born of the Spanish fandango and the Negro *chica*” (Luchet, 1833: 30-31, translated by Anna Davies). These were dances regularly performed on the stages of the Parisian popular theatres in the 1820s and 1830s.

Dances from Europe and France’s colonies or former colonies, were regularly used in popular melodramas, and ballet-pantomimes, as spectacular representations of national types. Choreographers such Frédéric-Auguste Blache and Louis Milon blended exotic movements from these dances with romantic ballet choreography to create a palatable spectacle of national otherness. Numerous accounts in this period, including Luchet’s, state that the cancan and *chahut* are *versions of or related to* these dances. Elsewhere I have argued that this may indicate that *barrière* dancers drew on their observations of national dances at the popular theatres when creating cancan improvisations in the *guinguettes* (Parfitt-Brown, 2011). Luchet alludes to this influence, but he also distances the *chahut* he witnessed from what he regards as the balletified versions of the fandango and the *chica* presented on the Parisian stage. Instead, he aligns the *chahut* with the unrefined versions of the fandango and *chica* that he imagines would be found in Spain or Africa. For Luchet, the *chahut* is an unmediated embodiment of the characteristics of its local performers – an ‘authentic’ performance of ‘primitive’ identity.

But what is the identity that Luchet claims is performed in the *chahut*? On one level it is class identity, as suggested by his dismissal of bourgeois student performers and his adulation of working-class and peasant performers. But it also has two other distinct characteristics. His comparison of the *chahut* with the ‘Negro *chica*’ suggests a racial component to the identity these dancers perform. This is congruent with the widespread

racialisation of the French working class in early nineteenth-century literature, although it normally had a more negative connotation of barbarism and criminality conveyed by the phrase ‘the dangerous classes’. In the nineteenth century, the notion of race was often used to explain perceived similarities between members of groups that today would no longer be regarded as racially homogeneous or distinct, in this case the French working class. Elisa Camiscioli (2009: 12) argues that in the mid-nineteenth century race shifted in French discourse from being primarily a marker of class, to being a marker of nationality, evident in the emergent notion of a ‘French race’. Luchet’s account seems to connect with both of these conceptions of race as class and race as nationality. As well as comparing the *chahut* with the Negro *chica*, he also aligns it with the fandango, considered at the time in France to be one of the Spanish national dances. The latter comment lays the foundations for an argument that would increasingly be made about the cancan in the nineteenth century – that it was becoming the national dance of France. The following year, in 1834, an anonymous journalist in *La Revue de Paris* would euphemistically refer to the cancan as the “cachucha Française” (Anon., 1834: 297) – the French version of Spain’s other characteristic dance, the cachucha. Theophile Gautier stated it more explicitly five years later in his Review of 1839 when he noted that the Spanish cachucha “is danced at Musard’s ball under the prohibited and Frenchified name of the chahut” and that the latter, “in spite of the municipal police, will end up as the national dance” (Gautier, 1858: 350). A similar prediction was made thirty years later by the famous Second Empire cancan dancer, Rigolboche. However, in this case, the national character of the cancan is seen as *replacing* its previous racial character. Rigolboche, wrote in her memoirs of 1860, “Scholars specialising in etymology have claimed that the cancan derived from negro dancing. This is a mistake. Negroes make hand movements, but they do not cancan. The cancan is an essentially French step and it will end up as the national dance of the country” (Blum, Huart and Rigolboche, 1860: 68-69).

The shift in Rigolboche’s writing from a racial identification of the cancan to a national one, can be interpreted in relation to her historical context. Rigolboche was writing in the middle of Baron Haussmann’s complete restructuring of the Parisian landscape, which changed Paris’s relationship to its *faubourgs*, and to the working classes who occupied them. Between 1853 and 1870, the process of Haussmannisation, commissioned by Napoleon III, destroyed the network of *barrières* separating central Paris from the *faubourgs*. Paris expanded beyond its city walls and working-class communities were redistributed to the areas that had been less developed. According to W. Scott Haine, this brought an end to the carnivalesque atmosphere that had existed in the *faubourgs*, and the cafes and *guinguettes* previously outside the *barrière* became less effective as centres of political agitation and cultural subversion. Indeed, one of the purposes of Haussmannization had been to bring the margins under the political control of the centre. However, a by-product of this shift was a changed conception of the Parisian working classes. The notion of ‘the dangerous classes’ was replaced by both a more paternalistic attitude and a nostalgia for and glorification of working-class culture which became central to artistic and literary avant-gardes, as well as the entertainment industry in Montmartre. While the working class was still sometimes racialised in late nineteenth-century literature, their ‘savagery’ was perceived more as a source of



fascination than of threat. In line with these changes, the racial connotations of the cancan and *chahut*, so evident in Luchet's account, became submerged beneath a developing discourse of nationalism as the century progressed. The cancan's European and colonial influences were forgotten as the dance became increasingly associated with Frenchness.

The Republican French governments of the late nineteenth century sought to unite the workers and the bourgeoisie through the nationalistic concept of the French 'people' (Magraw, 1983: 285). With the establishment of France as a Republic in 1880, the nation gained a national emblem, a national anthem, a national holiday and a national motto (Nora, 1998). Maurice Agulhon (1989) has argued that national identity solidified around previously marginalized republican symbols, such as Marianne and, I would argue, the cancan. Six days after the opening of the Paris Exposition of 1889, a sketch by Ferdinand Lunel published on the cover of *Le Courrier Français* visualised the Eiffel Tower, the new icon of central Paris, and the cancan, performed nightly at cabarets by paid dancers, as parallel participants in a new French national identity. Luchet's personal exploration of the working class world beyond the *barrière* had, by the 1880s, become an essential Parisian cultural experience for artists, Parisians and tourists, one that could be packaged and sold by establishments such as the Moulin Rouge, which opened later that year. The geographical focus for these staged cross-class encounters was Montmartre, once outside the city walls like Belleville, but by the late nineteenth century, merely a more northerly part of Paris itself. Although the cancan dancers at the Moulin Rouge often came from working-class backgrounds, and were sometimes referred to as 'savages', their performances were now inseparable from the cross-class milieu in which they performed, a milieu which was increasingly framed by its promoters as distinctly French.

Between the 1820s and the 1890s, the geographical landscape of Paris had radically changed, and with it the relationships between categories of class, race and nation. In the 1820s and 1830s, the physical and social barriers between the centre and the *faubourgs* had contributed to the racialisation of the working classes, and of the cancan and *chahut*. But comparisons between the cancan and other European and colonial national dances in literary descriptions of the time, already pointed towards the eventual nationalisation of the cancan. But this was not fully realised until Haussmannisation demolished previous racial distinctions between the centre and periphery of Paris, and republicanism built a new national identity between workers and bourgeoisie. The cancan re-emerged from these changes as a performance that played on both the nostalgic spectacle of class difference, and the possibility of class transgression through national unity. Throughout this time, the cancan remained a form through which urban, racial, national and international identities could be continually improvised in relation to the rapidly changing geographic, political and economic landscapes of Paris.

Copyright 2012, Clare Parfitt-Brown

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to my research assistant on this project, Dr. Anna Davies, for her detailed translations of the primary sources and stimulating discussion of our discoveries.

## Bibliography

- Agulhon, M. *Marianne into Battle: Republican imagery and symbolism in France, 1789-1880*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Anon. "Avares de Paris," *La Revue de Paris*, Vol. 2, 1834: 297-298.
- Blum, E., Huart, L. and Rigolboche, M. *Mémoires de Rigolboche*. Paris: Chez tous le libraires, 1860.
- Camiscioli, E., *Reproducing the French Race*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Gautier, T. *Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans*. Paris: Magnin, Blanchard et compagnie, 1858: 349-350.
- Green, N. *The Spectacle of Nature*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Luchet, A. "La Descente de La Courtille en 1833" in *Paris, ou Le livre des cent-et-un*, Vol. 11, 1833: 21-36.
- Lunel, F. *Le Courrier Français*, 12 May 1889: cover.
- Magraw, R. *France 1815-1914: The Bourgeois Century*. Oxford: Fontana, 1983.
- Merriman, J. M. *The Margins of City Life: Explorations on the French Urban Frontier, 1815-1851*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Nora, P. *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Volume III: Symbols*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Parfitt-Brown, C. 'First Kicks: translating early sources on the cancan' in *Dance Dramaturgy: Catalyst, Perspective, Memory*, Proceedings of the Society of Dance History Scholars Conference, York University, Toronto, 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June, 2011.

Address for correspondence:

Clare Parfitt-Brown  
Dance Department  
University of Chichester  
College Lane  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 6PE  
UK  
c.parfitt-brown@chi.ac.uk

## Interacting Bodies in Sports Dance and Argentinean Tango

*Susanne Ravn*

University of Southern Denmark

### **Abstract**

*The aim of this paper is to explore how interactions are shaped and connections given life in two different kinds of couple dancing; the improvised Argentinean tango danced at the tango salons (the Milonga) and the choreographed sports dance performed in competitions. Focus will be placed on how the sense of movement in tango and sports dance takes shape and how the interactions of the dancers can be understood as presenting 'micro levels' of socializing processes. The histories and cultures of the dances are expected to be mapped onto, and created in, the practices of the dancing.*

### **Introduction**

As indicated in the title the paper is focused on discussing embodied interaction. From a perspective of dancers' lived experiences, dancing tango or sports dance, the aim of the paper is to exemplify and discuss how the dancers' sense of movement becomes shaped in and through the interaction with their dance partner. Methodologically speaking, the practices in sports dance and in recreational Argentinean tango are used as cases to highlight how the dancers' sense of their bodies might include 'the other' (their dance partner). So, in relation to the conference theme the analysis and discussions deal with micro-levels of socializations.

The data and theories presented are related to a current project on talent development in elite sports and the analysis of the data is still to be considered in a preliminary phase. However, despite being in the immature phase of analysis in which we are currently only 'scratching the surface' of phenomenological discussions of how interaction shapes the subjects' sense of their movement on pre-reflective levels, I hope this paper might focus attention on some of the promising phenomenological explorations of value for analyzing the practices of interaction.

### **Methodology**

In keeping with my studies developed over the last 5 years, the generation and analysis of the dancers' description are based on a combination of ethnographical related research methodologies and phenomenological insights (Legrand and Ravn, 2009; Ravn 2009; Ravn and Hansen, 2012). Empirical data has been generated based on participant-observation and interviews. Passive and active participant observations have in different ways formed the background for preparing the interview guides for the semi-structured interviews (Ravn and Hansen, 2012; Allen-Collinson, 2009)

To put phenomenology to work in experimental science, philosopher Shaun Gallagher introduced the concept of 'front-loading' phenomenological insights into the

design of the experimental setting (Gallagher and Sørensen, 2005; Gallagher and Zahavi, 2008, p. 38-39). I take the same kind of approach and use the idea of actively front-loading phenomenological insights and conceptual clarifications, concerning interaction and social perception, into the analysis of data generated based on ethnographical related methods. One might also say that the frontloaded approach implies an abductive generation and analysis of data; i.e., letting the phenomenological insights frame the process of generating and analyzing data, while continuously being aware that it might 'be otherwise' than what becomes explicated in the fore-fronted phenomenological descriptions.

### **The frontloaded phenomenological insights**

In their description of the lived body Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) brings to the forefront of their discussions how the body is to be thought of as a body that transcends itself. Bodies are in a lived sense best described as *mutual incorporating bodies*. When incorporating new skills the body of the others, as well as the contextual settings, are to be thought of as actively involved in the process of incorporation. As specified in an earlier work by De Jaegher and Paolo (2007) "the coupling between the emergent process and its context leads to constraints and modulation of the operation of the underlying levels [of perception and experience]" (ibid. p. 487). In direct connection to this description De Jaegher and Paolo present the concept of *coordination* as: "the non-accidental correlation between the behaviors of two or more systems that are in sustained coupling, or have been coupled in the past or have been coupled to another, common, system" (ibid. p. 490). Their concept of 'coordination' is in the work of Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) as well as in the work of McGann and De Jaegher (2009) used as a central term for describing how dynamical and situated whole body actions form the presupposition for embodied intersubjectivity .

It is of special relevance for this paper that Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009) further specify their descriptions to include *coordination to* and *coordination with*. 'Coordination to' is unidirectional and refers to different kinds of tool use. 'Coordination with' entails co-regulation and is interactively achieved between two or more bodies. It is the latter description ('coordination with'), which is of specific interest for the analysis and discussions related to sports dance and tango in this paper.

### **Sports dance versus recreational dancing of Argentinean tango**

The observed and interviewed dancers represent two different genres and contexts of dancing and as such two different ways of being passionate about dancing. That is, Argentinian tango works as a recreational activity taking place worldwide while at the same time remains strongly related to the history – and stories – of Buenos Aires (Savigliano, 1995, 2010; Olszewski, 2008). Sports dance works in a competitive environment and is performed according to standardized rules agreed on by national sports federations. In the present case the sports dancers are international elite athletes, training several hours (4-10) every day with their dance partner.

There is an implicit comparative aspect present when involving two different dance genres and two different contexts. However, I want to emphasise that the intention is not to make a comparative study. Rather the intention is to take sports dance and tango as two cases, which in different ways might highlight the processes of coordination.

### Tango dancers

The following tango descriptions are based on interviews with five different male tango dancers, between 53-70 years of age. One interview, lasting about one hour, was carried out individually with each of the dancers. As male dancers they all dance the leader role when improvising the movement pattern in the recreational practice of tango. The five dancers represent some of the experienced leaders, dancing at the Milonga (places where tango is danced) in my hometown Odense in Denmark. In the following presentation their names are fictional. I might further add that when dancing at Milongas, dancers are expected to dance with different and if possible, new partners throughout the night.

The five dancers' descriptions of leading and improvising are centered round descriptions of how to form a shared body when moving from the connections as created in the embrace. They all emphasize that it is important for them to make her "feel safe" so she can move in a relaxed way. Further on, they all refer to their role in the improvisation as taking form depending on how they sense the relaxation, tension and/or resistance in the follower's movement through the embrace. In different ways they emphasize how they sense that their leading 'moves' through her upper body and into the figures of her feet and how the relaxed (and good) follower's movement appears to be related to a sense of soft inertia directly connected to their own movement.

The five dancers emphasize that there is a great change in how they are aware of their body and movement when trying out the steps of a new figure on their own compared to when being able to also lead the follower through the figure. They stress that their ability in leading their follower in the same figure is a kind of second phase of learning the steps. When working with the leading they specifically focus on working their connection to the follower. Tim explains that he senses the presence of the follower in his torso. "All her steps, I feel here [in the torso] – and if she steps out of line I can feel it here immediately". He also explains that the way he finds out "if the communication works is via her body – her reactions."

When they experience what they refer to as 'a good dance' they describe that they feel their movement through the movement of her body. Carsten describes: "My awareness on my own body is not present the same way – if I have this kind of contact – then I do not really think about my own body but primarily sense my partner's reactions". Or – as phrased a bit shorter by Per, when leading "I am also in her body". Per continues to describe that when the good dance happens: "I have the experience that 'it dances me' ... my experience of my own now sort of follows after how the movements move. And anyway, these movements are at the same time also me [mine]".

The tango dancers' descriptions resonates descriptions of tango dancing as presented by philosopher Erin Manning (2007, 2009). Accordingly, the five dancers exemplifies how bodies might compose and recompose through their "coupling or conjoining" with others (Manning, 2009 p. 137) and how the interaction between leader and follower in tango dancing is not be reduced to a spatio-temporal system of actions and reactions of individual bodies. The dancers' descriptions bring attention to how their sense of the actual movement going on includes the movement of their partner. That is, their sense of movement does not begin nor stop at the limits of their physical body but rather goes beyond their physicality, in which sense their feeling of the actual movement is to be understood as based on an experience of their body extending.

### Elite sports dancers

On different occasions, over a period of two month, I followed two Danish couples in their daily training: Bjørn Bitsch and Ashley Williamson, (World champions in 10 dances in 2010 and 2011) and Michelle Abildtrup and Martino Zanibellato, (competing in the Latin dances and ranked top three to five in the world). In total I followed each of the couples in their training on 5-7 days and performed two interviews with each of the couples – every interview lasting about an hour.

These dancers are trained in describing, for example, specific nuances of movement qualities and specific detailed aspects of how movements are timed. In any part of their dancing they are very aware of what their own body should feel and look like when moving. In different ways they also emphasize that this overall sense (of what their body should feel like) is something they might purposely change in between the different dances. So, for example, when dancing samba versus cha cha cha, Martino describes how he has to shift his sense of how his center is placed and moves in his body. Martino: “the centre of gravity in the low part and the centre of levity in the top part. They push against each other. Yeah, and that point is the centre in our body, in dancing at least. And that centre it change in every dance ...”

In many ways all four dancers describe that their sense of their own body moving is connected to their sense of the movement of their partner. They emphasize the importance of dancing with and also from the “connection.” The intention is to create dancing which is as if performed from a shared body – one connected unity. Martino describes it this way in relation dancing the rumba:

“For me it’s very important, that she feel all the bodyweight that I’m using. Because then she feel how much I want to get out of the step. And that’s what I always ask her, to make me feel where she is, at all time. So I can tune in with her own bodyweight.”

A bit later in the interview he continues to describe:

“Now from here, she’s telling me that she want to stay and she put the bodyweight there, and I receive the bodyweight. I can do this without connection, so I make it look like there is a connection, but there is not. She is doing it by herself. And some couple dance like this, [...] There are no pain, you go through five rounds, and you move yourself, she moves herself.”

Bjørn and Ashli describe that if they feel that the connection is missing, for example when working on a new part of their choreography, then they usually go back to dancing basic steps together – steps which they have trained thoroughly for years. When dancing these basic steps they focus on finding the feeling of connection and when they have ‘found’ the sense of connection (again) they return to train new part they were working on.

The sports dancers in their descriptions and practices bring attention to that their sense of their bodies includes both an awareness of their body as individual and as

extending. Said in another way, they present descriptions which indicate that shaping interaction is not about being extending or not extending in the feeling of the body. Rather the body can be experienced as individual and extending – at the same time. Said in another way, when they dance together they combine and use both what their own body and what the connection should feel like.

### **Discussion: mutual incorporating bodies**

As presented in the methodological considerations Fuchs and De Jaegher's (2009) concept of 'coordination with' entails a co-regulation of interacting bodies. In their phenomenological exploration of the interactive process they specifically bring attention to how the process is driven forward by a continuous fluctuation between synchronized, de-synchronized and in-between states between the moving and acting bodies involved. The process also includes that subjects involved experience that the interaction process gains a 'life of its own' (ibid. p. 471). As Fuchs and De Jaegher explains, in the course of interaction two 'centres of gravity' oscillate between activity and receptivity and are in a continuous process of centering and decentering. This includes that the unity of centering and decentering becomes the source of the operative intentionality of both partners. Following Fuchs' and De Jaegher's explorations the meaningful connection between perception and movement cannot be reduced to an affair of singularized bodies. Meaningful connections already take shape in pre-reflective dimensions of experience, and can be understood as a kind of social perception (McGann and De Jaegher, 2009).

Turning to our two cases, the dancers' descriptions indicate that their movement in the actual interactions works through and with their partner's movement. As described, when dancing together the feeling of the body moving extends and includes the body movement of the partner. However, De Jaegher et al. further emphasize that the sense of an extended body moving also takes form in pre-reflective dimensions of the dancers' experiences. If interaction is also to be thought at as an operative intentionality this must necessarily include that the dancers' feeling of connection is also based in an *incorporated* sense of how the body (and the other) should feel like in the interaction. To incorporate 'the right' sense of what the body should feel like in the dancing is, for example, what the tango leaders focus on learning when describing how they work on their leading and what Bjørn and Ashli focus on when working their connection. In both cases the incorporated sense of how the body should feel like is deeply connected to movement of the partner. At the same time, different and incorporated sensations of how the body (as an individual body) should feel and move like, might also be used to purposely modify or change the way the connection with the partner becomes shaped. This is what Martino exemplifies when he describes how he shifts his sense of center in between the different dances. That is, the sports dancers exemplify how the connectedness or sharedness in the dancing might be modified and might change depending on how they work their feeling of their own body.

### **Conclusion**

I contend that the phenomenological descriptions of De Jaegher and her co-writers present valuable description and conceptual clarifications, which help elucidate further how the sense of movement when dancing together includes the 'other' also on a pre-reflective level of subjects' sense of movement. At the same time, the experiences of the

recreational tango dancers and elite sports dancers comes to exemplify what it might mean in the actual practice of dancing that the sense of the other is incorporated, so that the sense of movement extends beyond the physical limitations of the body.

Copyright 2012, Susanne Ravn

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Danish Research Council, who has supported the study of the elite sports dancers.

### Bibliography

- Allen-Collinson, J. "Sporting embodiment: Sports studies and the (continuing) promise of phenomenology." *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*, 2009, 1(3): 279-296.
- De Jaegher, H. and Paolo, E. D. "Participatory sense-making – An enactive approach to social cognition". *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 2007, 6: 485-507.
- Fuchs, T. and De Jaegher, H. 'Enactive intersubjectivity: participatory sense-making and mutual incorporation'. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 2009, 8: 465-486.
- Gallagher, S. and Sørensen, J. B. "Experimenting with phenomenology." *Consciousness and Cognition*, 2005, 15(1): 119-134.
- Gallagher, S. and Zahavi, D. *The Phenomenological Mind*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Legrand, D. and Ravn, S. "Perceiving subjectivity in bodily movement: The case of dancers." *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, 2009, 8: 389-408.
- Olszewski, B. "El Cuerpo del Baile: The Kinetic and Social Fundaments of Tango." *Body & Society*, 2008, 14(2): 63–81.
- Manning, E. *The Politics of Touch: sense, movement, sovereignty*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Manning, E. *Relationescapes: movement, art, philosophy*. Cambridge and Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009.
- McGann, D. and De Jaegher, H. "Self-other contingencies: enacting social perception". *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 2009, 8: 417-437.
- Savigliano, M. E. *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. Westview Press, 1995.
- Savigliano, M. E. "Notes on Tango (as) Queer (Commodity)." *Anthropological Notesbooks* 2010, 16(3): 135–143.
- Ravn, S. & Hansen, H. P. "How to explore dancers' sense experiences? A study of how multisited fieldwork and phenomenology can be combined". *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 2012, DOI:10.1080/2159676X.2012.712991.
- Ravn, S. *Sensing Movement, Living Spaces – An investigation of movement based on the lived experience of 13 professional dancers*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009.

Address for correspondence:

**Susanne Ravn**

Associate Professor, Ph.D, Institute of Sports Science and Clinical Biomechanics



Email [SRavn@health.sdu.dk](mailto:SRavn@health.sdu.dk)  
Web <http://www.sdu.dk/ansat/sravn>  
Addr: Campusvej 55, DK-5230 Odense M, Denmark



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN DENMARK.DK

---

Campusvej 55 · DK-5230 Odense M · Denmark · Tel. +45 6550 1000 · [www.sdu.dk](http://www.sdu.dk)



## Taubert in Danzig

*Tilden Russell*

### *Abstract*

*Gottfried Taubert (1679-1746) wrote his encyclopedic magnum opus, the Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister (Leipzig, 1717), mostly in Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland), where he lived and worked from 1702-15. While there, Taubert became interested in the dances of foreign lands and peoples, and especially in the local (predominantly Polish) dance culture. Of central dance-historical importance, it was probably in cosmopolitan Danzig that Taubert first encountered Feuillet's Chorégraphie and made his crucial decision to translate it into German for incorporation in the Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister, and thus introduce it in fact and not merely through hearsay to the German-speaking world.*

Gottfried Taubert (1679-1746) lived most of his professional life in two cities, Leipzig and Danzig, 335 miles apart: a journey of twelve days on horseback in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> His encyclopedic magnum opus, the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* (published in Leipzig, 1717), was mostly written in Danzig, where he lived and worked from 1702-15.<sup>2</sup> While it is full of dance-related information about distant lands and peoples, its sense of place is most solidly anchored in Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland). Danzig was a bustling, wealthy, international port city, multilingual and religiously diverse—in a word, cosmopolitan, and probably even more so than Leipzig, with relations—whether geographic, commercial, political, or martial—dating from the early era of the Hanseatic League and extending across the entire breadth of northern Europe from England to Russia. During his twelve years there, Taubert's interest in the dance of different nations and cultures grew, while focusing particularly on Polish dance, which he experienced firsthand. It was here, too, that he may first have read Feuillet's *Chorégraphie*, an encounter, obviously, of crucial significance in German dance history and the dissemination of Beauchamps-Feuillet notation.

From 1697-1763 Danzig was part of the Kingdom of Poland. During this period Poland's system of government, with a monarch elected by the nobility, was fundamentally unworkable, and exposed the nation to the predations of surrounding powers. As a result, two rival kings in alternation attempted to rule over Poland: the Elector of Saxony (Augustus the Strong) was King Augustus II of Poland; and, in 1704-09 and 1733-34, Stanislaus Leszczyński, a native Pole, was King Stanislaus I. Augustus was supported militarily by Russia (under Czar Peter the Great); Stanislaus was supported by Sweden (under King Charles XII).<sup>3</sup>

At no time during these alternating regimes was there any semblance of a stable political authority in Poland. While Taubert was resident there, coinciding mostly with the first episode under Stanislaus, each side was constantly trying to undermine the other.

To maintain its political neutrality and lucrative economy, Danzig was forced to buy protection from both sides through heavy taxes, levies, loans, and outright gifts, initiating a long decline in its wealth and autonomy. The plague of 1709, in which almost 25,000 Danzigers died, was an additional, brutal blow.<sup>4</sup> Taubert gives no indication of the direct consequences for the inhabitants of Danzig of any of these events except the plague, which forced him to flee with his family to the country estate of his patron, a Danzig patrician (<1034>). Otherwise he seems to have built a successful, respectable career working for the best merchant and patrician families, which enabled him after only twelve years to return to Leipzig in semi-retirement.

A good way to gauge the growth of the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* in Danzig is to compare it with Taubert's first book, written and apparently self-published after his arrival there: the *Kurtzer Entwurff*, or short sketch on the noble, natural, and artistic exercise of dance (1706).<sup>5</sup> It is a tiny book of nine chapters in 54 pages, in comparison with the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister's* 96 chapters and 1231 pages. The *Kurtzer Entwurff* is essentially a first draft of the first third of the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, which deals with the history, morality, and usefulness of dance. This means that the major sections on theory, practice, and pedagogy were mostly written in Danzig. Therefore, the conception, scope, and size of the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* expanded considerably in Danzig, and Taubert must somehow have gained access there to many of the 450 books he used to realize his increasingly ambitious project, since it is unlikely that he personally owned so many books and brought them with him from Leipzig.<sup>6</sup>

Without enjoying the luxury of travel for its own sake, Taubert was able to broaden his knowledge of foreign dance practices in two ways. First, he pored over travel journals and scientific works in the fields now known as anthropology and ethnography.<sup>7</sup> He documents as fully and authoritatively as possible dance practices from other parts of Europe, the Middle East, China, India, southeast Asia, and the Americas. These include the dances of natives, cannibals, missionaries,<sup>8</sup> trained animals, and even magical plants. A sense of the catholicity of his interests can be gained from an excerpt of his Index, a remarkable text in itself (see Appendix 1).

Appendix 1 contains all of Taubert's headings that refer unambiguously to contemporary (or at least nonhistorical) and nontheatrical dances, excerpted and expanded from my translation of the entire Index. Only very few of the topics indexed in Appendix I exist in parallel passages in the *Kurtzer Entwurff*, indicating that most of this material originated in Danzig.<sup>9</sup> The original headings are editorially supplemented, in capital letters, to bring Taubert's indexing procedure more into line, for comparison's sake, with modern practice, and also to give a truer impression of the depth of Taubert's treatment of a subject that is, in fact, only tangentially relevant to the book as a whole. Taubert's idiosyncratic obsessions are noteworthy, for instance his five references to beheaded Indian women dancers. It should also be noted that his page references for abuses or errors in German and Polish dancing are identical (<40, 108, 1154, 1158>), indicating that he showed no bias with regard to national styles.

Despite his curiosity and wide reading, however, Taubert reflexively shared the national stereotypes of his time. He uncritically quotes "a certain author": "The Turks saunter, the Moors fast, the Germans drink, the English gorge, the Dutch spit, the Spanish strut, the Italians sleep, and, finally, the French dance" <1011-12>. These traits carry over

into national styles of movement and hence into national dance types. He writes:

... a Spaniard usually dances heavily, a Frenchman passionately, and a Lapplander sluggishly and slackly... And this is precisely the reason why a Spaniard easily learns the sarabande and 'Folie d'Espagne,' and dances them well, a Frenchman does the same with the minuet, an Englishman with the gigue, and a German or Pole with the bourrée; for the normal fundamental steps of these dances have a close conformity and affinity with the native walking styles of these peoples <1008-09>.

Taubert's second kind of information was gleaned firsthand. In Danzig, Taubert became an interested, sympathetic observer of local dance practices, and frequently compares them to German and English folk dances he was familiar with, as well as to his universal standard of perfection: French artistic dance. What he writes based on personal experience is of quite a different nature—balanced and engaged—than that based on his reading.

Of central dance-historical importance, there is evidence—albeit circumstantial—that it was probably in cosmopolitan Danzig that Taubert first encountered Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* and made his crucial decision to translate this seminal source into German, to incorporate his translation as a centerpiece in the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, and thus introduce it in fact and not merely through hearsay to the German-speaking world.

Until 1705, there is no published indication that the Beauchamps-Feuillet notation system was known in Germany. Indeed, Samuel Rudolf Behr (b. 1670) and the writer known only as "I.H.P." published their own notation systems in 1703 and 1705, respectively; there is no evidence that either of these systems found favor with other dancing masters.<sup>10</sup> The earliest published mentions of Feuillet in Germany are found in two sources from 1705. The first is a dance source: the *Abregée des principes de la dance*, by Huguo Bonnefond (d. before 1711), court dancing master at Wolfenbüttel. Of French descent, he had his small treatise translated into German to create a bilingual volume. (See Appendix 2 for the original German texts.)

They [i.e., the Masters of the Royal Academy of Dance in Paris] do not content themselves just to give good principles, but the illustrious Monsieur de Beauchan has also invented the Characters, Figures and demonstrative signs, which are so well-known through the cares that Monsieur Feuillet has taken to publish them in 1699, under the name *Chorégraphie, ou de l'Art de la Dance*, which one can presently see in three different editions, and a very great quantity of dances for Balls that are printed annually, as well as a *Recueil de Dances* dedicated to His Royal Highness Monsigneur the Duke of Orleans, containing many of the best Entrées of the Ballet, by M. Pecour, as much for men as for women, engraved in 1704.<sup>11</sup>

Bonnefond's description is fuller than all the subsequent German descriptions until Taubert. It covers five main points: (1) Beauchamps by name and significance; (2) Feuillet by name and significance; (3) publication information; (4) annual additions to the

repertoire; and (5) the *Recueil* of 1704.<sup>12</sup> The *Abregée* is hardly more than a 20-page pamphlet outlining the rudimentary elements of French dance, summarized—and occasionally copied—from Feuillet’s explanatory paragraphs while omitting practically all his choreographic notation. In fact the only notation in the book consists of simplified versions of the five true positions and of the *pas rond en dehors* and the *pas rond en dedans*, but lacking the signs for the beginning and end of the step.<sup>13</sup> Clearly this book aims neither to teach choreography, nor to give any but the slightest impression of what it actually looks like.

The second source—and the first that Taubert certainly knew—was a book on courtly conduct that he frequently quotes, *Von Erziehung eines jungen Printzen* (on the education of a young prince), by Johann Christof Wagenseil (1633-1705):

Every year at Carnival time in Paris newly composed dances are notated and published by M. Feuillet. For M. Beauchamp, the oldest and most experienced Parisian dancing master, invented a way to notate dancing in the same way as is done with music. The aforementioned Feuillet stole this art and published it under his own name. From him one can obtain the latest for oneself.<sup>14</sup>

This description covers essentially the same points as Bonnefond, except that the 1704 *Recueil* is omitted, and, more interestingly, the manner in which choreography functions is characterized by analogy to musical notation.

Taubert’s *Kurtzer Entwurff*, published in 1706, does not mention Feuillet or the subject of choreography (hence it is not quoted in Appendix 2). Indeed, it gives no indication that Taubert even conceives of a dance treatise as having anything to do with dance practice. It would be impossible to conjecture from this book that Taubert had yet heard of Feuillet either directly or indirectly.

Johann Pasch’s *Beschreibung wahrer Tanz-Kunst* (description of the true art of dance) appeared the next year. Like all the other pre-*Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister* German dance treatises (except “I.H.P.”), Pasch’s book offers no practical dance instruction. Pasch (1653-1710), however, had travelled one or more times to Paris to study with Beauchamps, and Taubert may have studied with Pasch in Leipzig. Whether as his student or only his colleague, Taubert could have been exposed through him to Beauchamps-Feuillet notation in some form or another. Yet in his book, Pasch gives less information about dance notation than Wagenseil.

Also it should not be forgotten that in composing [dances] one can make use of the symbols invented by M. Beauchamps, with which one is just as capable of dancing while holding a piece of paper in his hand as if he were singing a piece of music from notes or reading a speech from letters. These [symbols] have great use in composition and communication, for “sounds heard or thoughts cogitated perish, while the written word endures!” And the same now demonstrably holds true for [dance] composition, as long as it is done rationally and not in fanciful disorder.<sup>15</sup>

Beauchamps is mentioned, but not Feuillet. Also there is no mention of the publication of the *Chorégraphie* or the subsequent annual installments by Dezais. It is hard to believe

that Pasch, than whom Taubert respects none other more, both personally and professionally (<1035-37>), never discussed choreography with Taubert, or indeed that Beauchamps never discussed it with Pasch. And yet, if Taubert had learned of it from Pasch, why, with his mania for thoroughness, did he not refer to it in the *Kurtzer Entwurff*?

Louis Bonin (dates unknown), a native Frenchman who made his career teaching in Germany, gives the most metaphorically colorful but least informative reference in his book, *Die Neueste Art zur Galanten und Theatralischen Tantz-Kunst* (the newest style of the art of ballroom and theatrical dance), published in 1712:

The father of all dancing masters, who was, so to speak, the icebreaker of this exercise and of whom practically all other masters are the progeny, is the famous composer Monsieur Beauchamps, a man who was not prepossessing to look at, and yet France herself must acknowledge that he was the kind of subject whose like will not easily be met with again.

This man can almost be said to have rescued dance from the ashes, and to have contrived through untiring industriousness a method that cannot be admired enough.<sup>16</sup>

Here only one topic is mentioned: Beauchamps.

Finally we come to Behr's last publication, *L'Art de bien danser*, or *Die Kunst wohl zu Tantzen*, published in 1713. It will be recalled that in his first book, discussed above, he showed no familiarity at all with Beauchamps-Feuillet notation and in fact presented his own choreographic system. Now, ten years later, his system is absent and instead he shows some familiarity with the new one from France:

(21) Furthermore it should be mentioned that for many years now, and still today, new dances are created in Paris at Carnival time. M. Beauchamps, the oldest and most experienced Parisian dancing master, discovered [how to] write down dances in symbols just as music is written in notes; M. Feuillet then used [this technique] to notate the dances of his time. Now, these two being deceased for several years, this work is carried on by M. Dezais, formerly M. Feuillet's principal dancer.

(22) Also, finally, several years ago a book by a certain dancing master (whose name just now escapes me), titled *L'art d'ecrire les Danses*, or *The Art of Notating Dances*, was dedicated to a prominent person in France.<sup>17</sup>

The information is superficially comprehensive: both Beauchamps and Feuillet are named, and publication information, including the ongoing work of Dezais, is given. However, the information on Feuillet is confused. In paragraph 21, which seems directly based on Wagenseil, Behr seems to know who Feuillet was and what he did, but in paragraph 22 the name of the author of the *Chorégraphie* "escapes" him! This passage suggests that Behr's knowledge of the *Chorégraphie* was gathered only from previous authors and hearsay, and that he had never actually laid eyes on the physical document itself.

In conclusion, there is no solid evidence in any of these treatises, including

Taubert's *Kurtzer Entwurff*, that the *Chorégraphie* was available in Germany in a complete and published form. Therefore it is very likely that Taubert's first real encounter with the *Chorégraphie* occurred in his early years in Danzig, as the grand plan of the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* was taking shape, and the bulk of the writing was underway.

The treatises show that the concept of a dance manual as a work treating both the theory and practice of dance, in addition to other dance-related topics, was unknown in Germany until the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* was published in 1717.<sup>18</sup> Taubert's exhaustive treatment of both theory and praxis represents a cosmopolitan conjunction of two national traditions. Dance theory or prosaic dance, as Taubert presents it, reflects the religious, moral, and ethical emphasis of the German tradition. Dance practice or poetic dance—i.e., how steps are made, notated, and combined into dances—reflects the French tradition from Beauchamps and Feuillet. The two traditions came together for Taubert in Danzig. How might this encounter have come about?

A copy of the *Chorégraphie* could have been brought to Danzig by any one of the 21 dancing masters Taubert mentions who could not compete successfully with him. Taubert also relied on a network of direct or second-hand connections, people who sent or brought back dance items and information from Paris (<408, 572-73, 577, 618, 623>). During Taubert's entire time in Danzig, furthermore, the French ambassador to Poland was also stationed there.<sup>19</sup> It can be assumed that French dance played a part in both official and household embassy activities, in which Taubert, with his well established connections within the Danzig patriciate, would have had some involvement. It can also be assumed that the ambassador possessed a library of French books.

As we have seen, Taubert continued his researches while in Danzig, and they account for the dramatic expansion that took place between the *Kurtzer Entwurff* and the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*. If in fact he also first encountered the *Chorégraphie* there, the Danzig experience was indeed a turning point both for Taubert and for dance history.



## Appendix 1

- ABYSSINIA, DANCES AT MASS, <28>  
 AMADABAD (E. INDIA), HOOP-DANCES, <60>  
 Americans, CANNIBALS, idolatrous dances of, <66>; MASKED DANCES (VIRGINIA AND PERU), <86–87>  
 ANIMALS, TRAINED TO DANCE, CAMELS (ARABS), <73>; ELEPHANTS AND SNAKES (INDIA), <74–75>  
 ape AND BEARS  
     trained to dance, <74>  
 Arabs, train their camels to dance, <73>  
 artistic  
     English and Polish dances are also a., <39>  
 baked apples, thrown at naked dancing girls, <79>  
 ballet  
     on the progress of the Christian church, presented by the Jesuits in Goa, <935>  
     at an annual fair, <938>  
 BATAVIA (E. INDIA), DANCES OF WEALTHY CHINESE, <66>  
 beheading [T: *Decolliren*]  
     of twelve naked women dancers, by the East Indian *cham*, <79>  
 BRAZIL, *GUAU*, <37>  
 butter-wives, elderly, annual dance without men at the public Buttermarket in Danzig, <122>  
 cake, crumbled over the bridal bed, <32>  
 camels, taught to dance by the Arabs, <73>  
 carnival (see: masquerade)  
 Catholics  
     dance in church to honor their saints, <28, 68>  
 children  
     in Spain, prominent people endanger general welfare by daily dancing, <138>  
 Chinese, religious dances in honor of the moon and Devil, <66>  
 cleric(s) [T: *Pfaffe(n)*]  
     Turkish, dance at worship, <67>  
     heathen, dance to honor their idols, <68>  
     Catholic, dance to honor saints, <68>; dance in procession of the sacraments, <69>  
 confusion, how it arises at wedding dances (see: wedding dances)  
 CROATIA, EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60–61>  
 dancers, [female]  
     1200 in the Great Mogul's harem, <59>; Indian wives who refused to be buried alive with their husband, forced into wantonness, <59>; twelve beheaded in Amadabad, <79>  
     in Antwerp, naked, pelted with hot baked apples, <79>  
 dances  
     folk and artistic, <33>

- naked (see: naked d.)  
 military (see: military d.), <42 *et seq.*>  
 miraculous (see: miraculous d.), <69 *et seq.*>; arise from sickness, <69>; or  
 performed by horses, camels, bears, dogs, apes, elephants, etc., in a  
 marvelous way, <72>  
 with hoops and lanterns, <88>
- dancing  
 errors in German and Polish d., <40, 108, 1154, 1158>  
 DANCING MASTER, THE (PLAYFORD), <52>  
 dangerous, tightrope walking, fire-dances, and witches' dances, <75>
- Danzig  
 Buttermarket, public, annual, elderly butter-wives dance without men <122>;  
 seven male couples danced naked, <62>
- doctorate-treat [T: *DOCTORAT-SCHMAUß*], academic rule in many universities that the  
 dean must dance with his colleagues and new doctoral graduates IN  
 THEOLOGY, <125>
- doctors of theology, some seen dancing at the doctoral ceremony in Rostock, <125>  
 English dances, popular everywhere, <52>; PLAYFORD "SIXTEENS" [T: *SESJEN*],  
 <52>; PROBLEMS WITH ENGLISH DANCES AT WEDDINGS, <1144, 1158–  
 59>
- entrée  
 of the Lutheran Reformation, <937>
- EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60–62>
- fire-dances  
 in Sweden around a bonfire, <77>; IN GÖTALAND, <77>  
 in the kingdom of Pegu [Myanmar], of the deceased priest's widow, <77>
- German dances, many errors, <40, 108, 1154, 1158>
- GERMANY, SPIEL-TÄNTZE, <52>; EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60–61>; HOOP-  
 DANCES, <87>
- GOLCONDA (E. INDIA) (SEE: NAKED DANCERS)
- GÖTALAND, SWORD-DANCES, <46–47>; FIRE DANCE, <77>
- Great Mogul, the, had 1200 dancing women, <59>
- GUACONNES* (PERU), <87>
- GUAU* (BRAZIL), <37>
- HOOP-DANCES, AMADABAD, <60>; GERMANY, <87>
- Hottentots, dance to praise the moon, <66>
- HUNGARY, EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60–61>
- idoltrous dances  
 of present-day pagans such as Hottentots, Chinese, etc., <66>  
 of Papist Christians in Spain and Italy, <68>  
 of Turkish monks, <67 *et seq.*>
- INDIA (SEE: beheading, dancers [female], Great Mogul, ANIMALS TRAINED TO  
 DANCE, naked dancers, prostitute, snakes, woman)
- ITALY, TARANTELLA IN NAPLES AND SICILY, <71–72, 228–29>; ORGIASTIC  
 CARNIVAL DANCING IN VENICE, <85>
- Italy and Spain, dancing Catholic priests in procession of the sacraments, <28>; TO

- HONOR SAINTS <68>
- Jesuits  
 in Goa, presented a ballet on the progress of Christianity, <935>  
 in Poland, presented the sword-dance, <45>
- jumping ahead, cutting in  
 should not be done in common dancing, <109, 1158>
- KEHRAB-TANTZ WITH HANDKERCHIEFS (SAXONY), <87-88>
- lantern-dance (DANZIG), organized by high-ranking persons, <88>
- legate, Turkish, considered Polish dancers mad, <62>
- LITHUANIA, EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60-61>
- man (men)  
 eight with a combined age of 800, danced, <127>
- masquerade(s)  
 in Virginia, how organized at the annual celebration, <86>  
 in Peru, how done, <87>
- mistakes  
 in German and Polish dances, <40>
- money  
 tossed by a merchant at the feet of naked dancing whores, <79>
- MUSCOVY, EROTIC OR LEWD DANCES, <60-61>
- naked dancers  
 the whores of Golconda, for the king, <59>  
 some students in the village inn, <63>  
 the Great Mogul has 1200, <59>  
 Indian women forced to become n.d. if they refused to be buried alive with their  
 dead husbands, <59>  
 in Amadabad, twelve beheaded, <79>  
 in Antwerp, pelted with hot baked apples, <79>
- nation, why one is more disposed than another to this or that dance, <1008>
- NATIONAL DANCES, ORIGINS, <369-70>; STYLES, <1008-09, 1011-12>
- old  
 ENGLAND, eight men, whose ages totalled over 800 years, danced, <127>  
 ELDERLY DANCERS IN TRIER, <128>
- PEGU (MYANMAR), (SEE: PROSTITUTES)
- PERU, GUACONNES, <87>
- POLAND, JESUIT SWORD-DANCING, <45>; SCANDALOUS PRE-LENTEN  
 DANCING <60>
- Poles, dance properly and modestly with their women, <39>
- Polish dancing, often abused, <40, 108, 1154, 1158>
- priest(s) [T: *Priester*]  
 heathen, held sword-dances, <45>
- prostitute(s)  
 Indian (IN PEGU [MYANMAR]) women forced to become p. if they refused to  
 be buried alive with their dead husbands, <60, [77-78]>  
 INDIA, eight, beheaded, <79>  
 ANTWERP, naked and pelted with baked apples, <79>

- ROUND DANCE, DANZIG BUTTERWIVES, <122>  
 SAXONY, WEDDING DANCES, <32>; SWORD-DANCES, <47>; *KEHRAB-TANTZ*  
 WITH HANDKERCHIEFS, <87–88>  
 “SIXTEENS” [T: *SESJEN*], <52>  
 snakes, made to dance for money in India, <74–5 [T: 73]>  
 Spain  
   tarantula’s [bite] causes furious dancing, <71>  
   and Italy, Papists dance in processions, <28>; TO HONOR SAINTS, <68>  
 SWEDEN, SWORD-DANCES, <46–47>  
 sword-dances, weapon-dances  
   Jesuit students in Poland, <45>  
   modern Götalanders and Swedes, <46>; THURINGIA, <47>  
 SYRIA, EASTER SUNDAY DANCES, <28>  
 tarantula, bite of, causes uncontrollable dancing, <71>; TARANTELLA, <71–72, 228–  
 29>  
 theatrical representation  
   of the growth of the Christian Church, <935>  
   of an annual fair, <938>  
 THURINGIA, SWORD-DANCES, <47>  
 tightrope-dancer, broke his neck, <76>  
 tightrope-dances  
   dangerous, <75>  
   common in the New World, GERMANY, TURKEY, CEYLON, <76>  
 Turkish  
   DERVISHES OR monks OF PERA, WHIRLING dance at worship, <67–68>  
   legate, considered dancing Poles insane, <62>  
 wedding dances  
   how praiseworthy organized and conducted by hosts, <1140>; by dancing  
     masters, <1142>; by guests, <1147>; by [uninvited] observers, <1161>  
   how abused by hosts, <1143>; by guests, <1143, 1147>; by dancing masters,  
     <1144 *et seq.*>; by observers, <1163>  
   SAXONY, <32, 1142>; POLAND AND PRUSSIA, <1141>; PROBLEMS WITH  
     ENGLISH DANCES, <1144>; AMONG VARIOUS PEOPLES <1152>;  
     PROBLEMS WITH GERMAN AND ENGLISH DANCES, <1158–59>  
 woman (women) [T: *Frauen, Frauenzimmer*]  
   in India, must either be buried alive with their dead husband, or become  
     voluptuous dancers, <59>  
   eight Indian voluptuous dancers beheaded, <79>  
   in Pegu, wives of the priests burned alive after their husband's death, <77>  
   in Danzig Buttermarket, annual public dance of elderly butter-wives without men  
     <122>

## Appendix 2

### **Bonnefond 1705 (fols. 3A-4A [German]; 3B-4B [French])**

Diese haben sich nicht begnügen lassen/nur gute Principia und Anweisungen zu geben/sondern es hat der fürtreffliche Monsieur de Beauchan die Caracteres, Bezeichnungen/Figuren/und beweisende Zeichen erfunden/welche durch die Sorgfalt/so Mons. Feuillet genommen/sie unter dem Namen einer Choregraphie oder Tantz-Kunst/A 1699. heraus zu geben/fast bekandt ist/und siehet man jetzt deren 3. unterschiedene Editiones, und eine nicht geringe Anzahl der Bal-Täntze/die all-jährlichen gedruckt werden. Über dieses hat man einen Außzug einiger Täntze/welcher seiner Königl. Hoheit/dem Hn. Herzoge von Orleans dediciret und zugeschrieben ist/in sich haltende viele der besten Entréén von Monsieur Pecours Balletten/so wohl für Mannes- als Frauens-Personen/welche Ao. 1704. in Kupffer-Stich herauß-kommen.

Ils ne se sont pas contenté seulement de donner des bons principes, mais l'illustre Monsieur de Beauchan a inventé les caracteres, figures, & signes demonstatifs [*sic*], qui sont si connus par les soins que Monsieur Feuillet a pris de les mettre au jour en 1699 sous le nom de Choregraphie, ou de l'Art de la Dance, dont on voit à present 3. differentes editions, & une tres grande quantité de Dances, de Bal, que s'impriment toutes les années, outre cela un Recüeil de Dances dedié à S. A. R. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orleans, contenant un tres Grand nombre des meilleures entrées de ballet, de Monsieur Pecour, tant pour homme, que pour femme qu'on a gravées en 1704.

### **Wagenseil 1705 (p. 76; see <300; quoted 739-40>)**

Es werden alle Jahr in Franckreich zu den Carneval in Paris/ neue Täntze erfunden/welche Mr. Feuillet in characteren setzet und heraus giebt. Denn auch das Tantzen hat Mr. Beauchamp. der älteste und erfahrenste Tantzmeister in Paris gleich wie die Music in noten zu setzen erfunden/ welche Kunst ihm besagter Feuillet abgestohlen/ und unter seinem Nahmen publiciret. Von diesen kan man sich also erholen was das neueste ist.

### **Pasch 1707 (pp. 81-82; quoted partially <740>)**

Auch ist nicht zu vergessen/ daß man sich bey der Composition der gründlichen von den H. Beauchamps erfundenen Characteren/ dadurch man das Pappier in der Hand führend/ die Täntze/ so viel möglich tantzen/ gleichwie man in Noten ein Stück singet/ und eine Rede durch Buchstaben lieset/ mit Nutzen bedienen kan. Sie haben in Compositione und Correspondence sehr grossen Nutzen/ dann *res audita, aut cogitata perit, litera scripta manet!* und so viel vor jetzo von der Composition zu erweisen/ wie sie mit Vernunft geschehen müsse/ und nicht in blosser ungeordneter Phantasie bestehe.

### **Bonin 1712 (p. 74; quoted <740>)**

Der Vatter aller Tantz-Meister/ welcher diesem Exercitio gleichsam das Eiß gebrochen/ und von welchem fast alle andere Maîtres erzeuget worden/ ist der berühmte Componist, Monsieur Beauchamps, ein Mann/ der dem äusserlichen Ansehen nach für so geschickt nicht kunte gehalten werden; Doch muß Frankreich selbst gestehen/ wie es an ihm ein solches Subjectum gehabt/ daß seines gleichens/ so leichte nicht wieder anzutreffen.

Dieser hat das Tantzten fast aus der Asche wieder hervor gebracht/ und durch unermüdeten Fleis/ solche Anweisungen ausgesonnen/ daß man ihn deßwegen nicht genugsam loben kan.

**Behr 1713 (pp. 123-24)**

(21) Ferner wird gemeldet, daß schon vor langen Jahren, und noch biß jetzo zu den Carneval in Franckreich zu Paris neue Tántze erdacht worden. Wie denn auch der verstorbene Mons. Bauchamp, der älteste und erfahreste Tantz-Meister in Paris, so wohl die Music darzu in Noten, als auch das Tantzten durch Characteres aufzusetzen erfunden, und deren sich Mons. Feuillet in Aufzeichnung derer Tántze auch jederzeit bedienet; weiln nun aber dieser vor etlichen Jahren ebenfalls verstorben, so geschicht es anjetzo von Mons. Dezau, so vormahls bey Mons. Feuillet Vor-Tántzer gewesen.

(22) Letzlichen, so ist auch nicht vor allzulangen Jahren einer [*sic*] vornehmen Person in Frankreich von einem gewissen Maître de dance (dessen Nahme mir jetzo nicht gleich beyfallen wollen) ein Buch, welches *L'art d'ecrire les Danses*, oder die Kunst die Tántze aufzuschreiben, betitelt, dediciret worden.

Copyright 2012, Tilden Russell

**Notes**

1. Calculated on the basis of Daniel Chodowiecki's 9-day journey from Berlin to Danzig (250 miles) in 1773; see Daniel Chodowiecki, *Von Berlin nach Danzig: eine Künstlerfahrt im Jahre 1773*, ed. W. von Oettingen (Berlin: Amsler & Ruthardt, [1895?]).
2. Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* (Leipzig: Friedrich Lanckischens Erben, 1717; facs. ed. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, and Munich: Heimeran Verlag, 2 vols., 1976). Trans., with introduction and annotation, by Tilden Russell, *The Compleat Dancing Master: A Translation of Gottfried Taubert's Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister (1717)*, 2 vols. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011). Taubert was born in 1679 in Ronneburg, near Meissen; attended Leipzig University; worked in Danzig (now Gdansk) from 1702–15; returned to semi-retirement in Leipzig; moved in 1730 to Zerbst to take up the position of Anhalt-Zerbst court dancing master; and died there in 1746. Biographical outline based on the "Nachwort" by Kurt Petermann in: Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, Documenta Choreologica XXII (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR; Munich: Heimeran Verlag, 1976); vol. 2, pp. XVII–XXIV; and Giles Bennett, "Taubert, Tauber, Gottfried," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd, revised ed., ed. Ludwig Finscher, *Personenteil* 16 (Kassel, Basel, London: Bärenreiter, 2006), cols. 551–52. For further background on the main topics of this paper: see *The Compleat Dancing Master*, vol. I: biography (chap. 2), sources (chap. 3), and the Index (chap. 8).
3. These events occurred in the context of the Great Northern War (1700-21), and the (second) War of the Polish Succession (1733-38).
4. For a detailed examination of the situation in Danzig under the two periods of Stanislaus's reign, see: Alfons Michał Wodziński, *Gdańsk za czasów Stanisława Leszczyńskiego (1704-1709, 1733-1734)*, Prace Krakowskiego Oddziału Polskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego 6 (Kraków: Skład Główny w Księgarni Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1929), here pp. 28-93. I am very

- grateful to Dr. Krystyna Gorniak-Kocikowska for reading and interpreting these pages for me.
5. Gottfried Taubert, *Kurtzer Entwurff des edlen, so wohl natürlichen als künstlichen Tantz-Exercitii* (Danzig, 1706), abbreviated hereafter “KE.” I am grateful to Giles Bennett for providing me with his transcription of the text of this book.
  6. The commonplace book of the composer Johann Sigismund Kusser (1660-1727), compiled ca. 1690-1720 (Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Osborn Music MS 16, p.168), a remarkable compendium of all sorts of musical and personal information, contains a catalogue of his personal property, including a book collection of only 46 titles.
  7. E.g.: n.a., *Atlant. tect. relect.* (on Brazilians, Icelanders, etc.); Peter Della Velle, *Reiß-Beschreibung*; Godofred, *Historia antipodum*; Lerijs, *Brazilianische Schifffarth*; Joh. Albrecht von Mandelsloh, *Morganländische Reise-Beschreibung*; Moncony, *Reise-Beschreibung*; Neuhoff, *Sinesische Reise-Beschreibung*; Olearius [Oliarius?], *Persische Reißbeschreibung*; n.a., *Orientalische Indien*; Vanus Pucellus, *Persico*; Abraham Roger, *Asiat. African. & Americanisches Heydenthum*; Arnd Gebhard von Stammer, *Morgenländische Reiß-Beschreibung*; Joh. Ulr. Wallich, *De religione Turcica*; Zeiller, *Hispanische Reise-Beschreibung* and *Itin. Germ.*
  8. On missionaries, see: Jesuit ballet in Goa <935-37>.
  9. The exceptions are: <61-63> (= KE, pp. 16-18), on erotic or lewd dancing in various nations; <108-109> (= KE, p. 21), on errors in German and Polish dancing; and <1008-1012> (= KE, pp. 35-37), on stereotypical national temperaments and dance styles.
  10. Samuel Rudolf Behr, *Andere Theil der Tantz-Kunst, oder Ausgesiebete Grillen* (Leipzig: Christoph Heydler, 1703), 9. Grille; “I.H.P.,” *Maître de Danse, Oder Tantz-Meister* (Glückstadt: Johann Friedrich Schwendimann, 1705; facs. ed. in *Barocktanz/La danse baroque/ Baroque Dance*, ed. by Stephanie Schroedter, Marie-Thérèse Mourey, and Giles Bennett [Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2008], pp. 54–112).
  11. Huguo Bonnefond, *Abregée des principes de la dance...Verzeichniß Der vornehmsten Grundsätze vom Tantzen* (Braunschweig and Wolfenbüttel: author, 1705; facs. ed. in *Barocktanz/La danse baroque/ Baroque Dance*), pp. 11-43; English translation by Bennett, p. 45. On Huguo (or Hugues) Bonnefond, see Marie-Thérèse Mourey, “Dancing Culture at the Wolfenbüttel Court,” *Barocktanz*, pp. 409–11.
  12. Bonnefond’s reference to an earlier edition of the *Chorégraphie*, supposedly published in 1699, is unsubstantiated in the sources known today. The *recueil* referred to is the *Recueil de dances contenant un tres grand nombres [sic], des meillieures entrées de ballet de Mr. Pecour* (Paris: author, 1704; facs. ed. Westmead, Hants.: Gregg International Publishers, 1972), which also contains the “Traité de la cadance.” Taubert’s translation of Feuillet is based on the second edition: *Chorégraphie ou l’art de décrire la danse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., augmentée (Paris: author, 1701; facs. ed. Bologna, Arnoldo Forni Editore, 1983), and incorporates the “Traité.”
  13. Compare Feuillet, p. 10; and Taubert, <747>, nos. 30 and 31.
  14. Johann Christof Wagenseil, *Von Erziehung eines jungen Printzen* (Leipzig: Johann Heinrichens Wittwe, 1705), p. 76; quoted by Taubert (<739-40>). See Appendix 2 for original texts. On Wagenseil, see Harry Zohn and M. C. Davis, “Johann Christoph Wagenseil, Polymath,” *Monatshefte* 46/1 (January 1954), pp. 35-39.
  15. Johann Pasch, *Beschreibung wahrer Tanz-Kunst* (Frankfurt: Wolfgang Michahelles und Johann Adolph, 1707; facs. ed. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR; Munich: Heimeran Verlag, 1978), pp. 81-82; quoted partially by Taubert (<740>).
  16. Louis Bonin, *Die Neueste Art zur Galanten und Theatralischen Tantz-Kunst* (Frankfurt and

- Leipzig: Joh. Christoff Lochner, 1712; reprint ed. Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1996), p. 74; quoted by Taubert (<740>).
17. Behr, *L'Art de bien danser, Die Kunst wohl zu Tantzzen*, (Leipzig: Martin Fulde, 1713; facs. ed. Munich: Heimeran Verlag, 1977), pp. 123-24.
  18. Whether Feuillet or Taubert was the first to realize this concept is a subject for debate. It depends on whether one interprets the *Chorégraphie* as a work of theory or practice. On the basis of Taubert's definition of theory, the *Chorégraphie* could be considered purely devoted to practice; however, its mode of incorporation within the *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister* leaves the question unresolved.
  19. F.-U. Wrangel, *Liste des diplomates français en Suède 1541-1891* (Stockholm: Imprimerie Royale, P. A. Norstadt & Söner, 1891), pp. 43-45.



## The Development of Lakhon Nai

*Manissa Vasinarom*

Suan Sunandha Rajabhut University

### **Abstract**

*Lakhon Nai is a form of classical court-style dance drama from Thailand, the original concept of which started during the court tradition of Ayutthaya period. It later evolved with the social, economic, and cultural influences of several subsequent periods. These resulted in changes of performing styles and decreasing productions under the royal patronage. It is currently under the supervision of the Fine Arts Department, the Ministry of Culture. Despite its modifications, this theatre form still retains its original aesthetics as well as reflects the way of life, culture and history based on the perspective of Thai courtiers.*

### **Introduction**

The performance is related to Thai life on the beliefs, the society, as well as the cultures which are inherited from the past unto now. The performance was shown in various styles, and developed by the royal as it was the rulers of the kingdom. Thus, the royal becomes the center of cultures and the customs which later are developed to be Lakhon Nai.

In this paper, I focus on Lakhon Pu Ying Khong Luang (Female royal court dance drama). Because, they are under patronages by king and courtier which influent on the national identity, adaptation for style dance and education performance in Thailand to heritage in the old time to presents.

Lakhon Nai is a traditional royal court dance; in addition, in the past the performers were the women in the palace. The show is related to the ceremony of life, entertainment, celebration, education, and was used as the article of classification. The show is divided into the short chapter, as well as bringing the stories from Ramakien, Anurut, Inao, and Dalang. Because Thai people respect in Rama and Indra as same as the king. Likewise, the show is very neat. Every detail takes long time to view--2 hours for just one chapter.

Likewise, this paper was to describe the development of Lakhon Nai which can be divided into four periods:

1. Pre-LakonNai
2. LakonNai (Ayudhaya period - King Rama IV Rattanakosin period)
3. LakonNai (King Rama V - VI Rattanakosin period)
4. LakonNai (King Rama VII - present)

### *Pre-Lakhon Nai*

Long time before Lakhon Nai was existed, there were many ceremonies related to the living and working of people on agricultural cultures in Kingdom of Siam; in addition, both male and female actors performed in these performances which later were called Rabam. Then these kinds of performances were divided upon the beliefs in Bharam-Bhuddism in order to indicate the classes of the troupe owners since at that time, for female troupe, only the king could afford.

By the same time, Khon (Mask Dance), Lakhon (Dance-Drama), Nang (Shadow Play) and another performance were also used to perform in these ceremonies.

### *Lakhon Nai : Ayudhaya Period – King Rama IV in Rattanakosin Period (the structures of Lakhon Nai)*

Firstly, the word “Lakhon Nai” still was not existed in any historical documents; however, there was some development in the structures of this performance from Rabam to Lakhon Puying Khong Luang as the following:

- In Ayudhaya period, the king himself did develop Rabam Puying by bringing how to sing and dance mixing with the Khon’s characters in Ramakien which later became the dance drama. After that, it was mixed with the Lakhon to be performed about love stories. Moreover, all of those performances were used to show in Anurut Story which later became Lakhon Puying Khong Luang. These mixes were effected the structures of Lakhon Puying Khong Luang which was developed to become Lakhon Nai [Chart 1] as there were the main characters, chorus dance, and the performance in chapter similar to Lakhon Puying Khong Luang. Then the stories of Inao and Dalang, newly written for only used in Lakhon Puying Khong Luang, were performed. The purpose of this performance was to be used in the royal ceremonies, the entertainment, the things that showed the power of the king, and the royal education.

- The performance was widely spread from only performed in royal ceremonies, exchanging the performance instructors, including the wars which were the reasons of similarity in this kind of performance in the region.

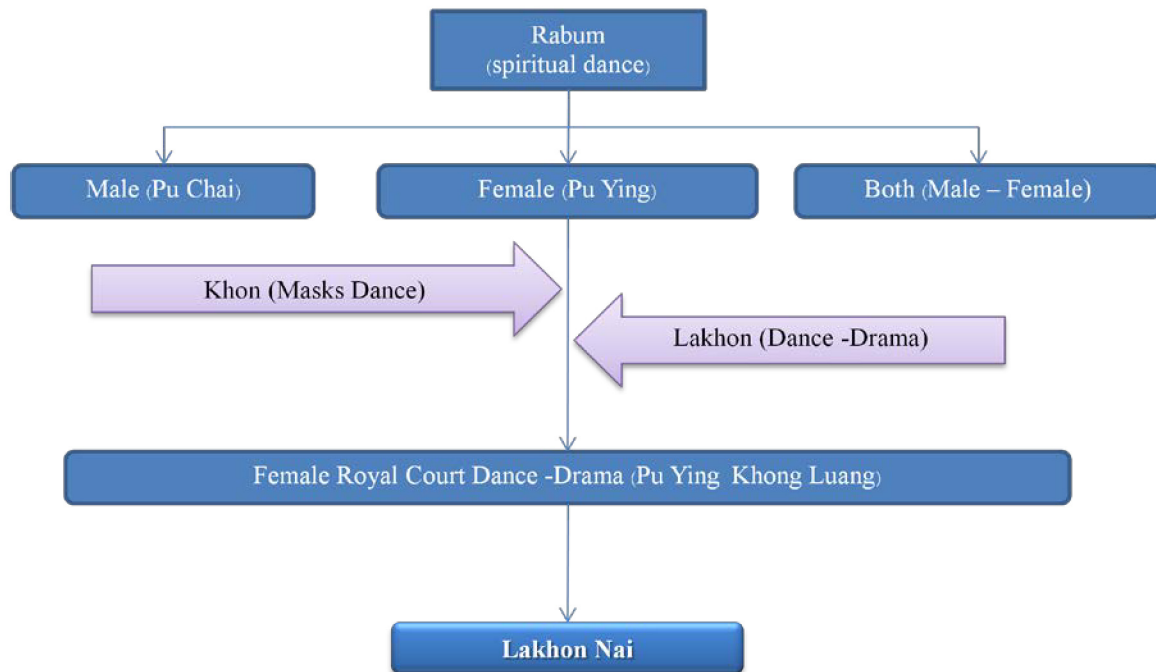


Chart 1 : Development Performance of Lakhon Nai (Female royal court type)

- In Rattanakosin period, the ideas of restoring the kingdom resembling to Ayudhaya era created the similarity in the society, economy, administration, and cultures in this period. Lakhon Puying Khong Luang was restored and continuously developed. The king set up the standard by creating sketched dance figures to help practice dancing, as well as designed the choreography in order to make it suitable to perform. He also revised the literatures, the setting, and adjusted the costumes and props to imitate royal costumes. Thus, Lakhon Puying Khong Luang was the gather of the Thai cultures which was done by the royal, as well as was used as a tool to pass out the king words to his people through the performance. The real performance was shown in detail neatly in order to be the model of royal performance.

- In King Rama III period (1824-1851), there was the creating of identity of royal performance according to the widely spread of Lakhon Puying Khong Luang among the royal family and courtier. Since the cancelation of the king troupe, the standard of performance was set up. Even though there was some difference in the quality of performance, the number of the performance was sharply increased which translated to the identity of Lakhon Nai in the future.

- In King Rama IV period (1851 -1868), the king tried to make the kingdom survive the colonization from the westerns so that this caused to the restore of Lakhon Puying Khong Luang in the palace. Lakhon Puying Khong Luang had determined the identification of Lakhon Nai, this influenced on the development of other royal Lakhons too as can be seen in the literatures for the performance, and official documents also defined the meaning of Lakhon Nai.

- Furthermore, the king allowed female actors to perform in Lakhon generally which created the freedom and the equality in the society on works for women. This also created the performance business by used women in order to cut the cost which helped the performance be widely performed since then. In this period, there were taxes for the performance to control the quality and the quantity so that it was separated into the royal type, the courtier type, and the ordinary people type respectively.

The importantly continuous effect in the development was the usage of Lakhon Nai as the basis of development in other royal Lakhons, as well as the change in other performances to create the national identity. [Figure 1].



Figure 1 : Lakhon Nai before the reign of king Rama V<sup>1</sup>

***Lakhon Nai : King Rama V,VI -Rattanakosin Period (The popularity, the identity and the written document)***

In this period, the kingdom needed to be developed to keep the pace up with the westerns so that the kingdom was more civilized than the previous period particularly in the infrastructures such as electricity, communication, and commute so the lifestyle changed. The performances were performed in the theater, and there were many new techniques used in the performances such as back-dropped screen and special effect [Figure 2] to make the performance be more realistic which made the performance understandable. There was make-up similar to the genuine color of human skin as well as the costumes which shows the lines of women' s bodies such as the short sleeve shirt.

For the identification in the performances, it became various both similar to the previous period and the newly adjusted performance such as having the adjusted scripts and music for dance drama which made it be more interesting. There was the speed, rhythm, tone of sound, as well as the newly developed presentation in tragic styles [Figure 3] which was not popular among Thai people as it was bad luck since people believed that the main character was related to the king himself. The other performance occasions as mentioned above were for the reception purposed for greeting the ambassadors from other countries, or the king's friends.

In the period of King Rama VI, students who were practicing Lakhon had to study general education which then became the curriculum for studying in Dramatic Art Colleges, Fine Art Department, Cultural Ministry, and Institute of Performing Arts. In this period, the publishing was well developed so that there were many books published which were the sources for the later researches.



Figure 2 : Back-drop screen, Lighting and Special effect Lakhon Nai from Lakhon Dukdumbun<sup>2</sup>



Figure 3 : *Dorasa Bae-la Dance*--Tragedy style in Lakhon Nai<sup>3</sup>

***Lakhon Nai : King Rama VII,VI - Present (The decline in the number of performances and the preservation)***

After King Rama VI, the number of Lakhon Nai decreased as the performance took long time in practicing in order to achieve the high quality, as well as the high cost so that this performance was not popular among people. In addition, the country was in the war time so that the economy was stagnated, together with the Absolute Monarchy changing to the Constitutional Monarchy and the instability in the government policy. The performance was limited only in the importantly royal ceremony, education, and cultural tourist purposes although there are three organizations (Royal Property Bureau, Fine Arts Department, Cultural Ministry, and Education Institutes) supervised this performance.[Chart 2]

The Specialized Schools were set up to teach from the primary level until the doctor's degree both in general and specialist.[Figure 4]. By the way, this causes the publications in textbook and electronic media more that before both in Thai and in English. In addition, there is some fund to support the study and the research. Mostly, the teaching is to study Lakhon Nai as most students are familiar with it in their curricula; however the current curricula are used credit systems, as well as the large number of students in one class cause the decline in quality of the performers' skills. In the historical angle, the lack of understanding in the social role, economy, cultures, and the study--which emphasizes on the memory — causes people, see unclear pictures of contents of Lakhon Nai. Together with the lack of development in new design by using Lakhon Nai as the basis, it causes people see no values of Lakhon Nai as well.

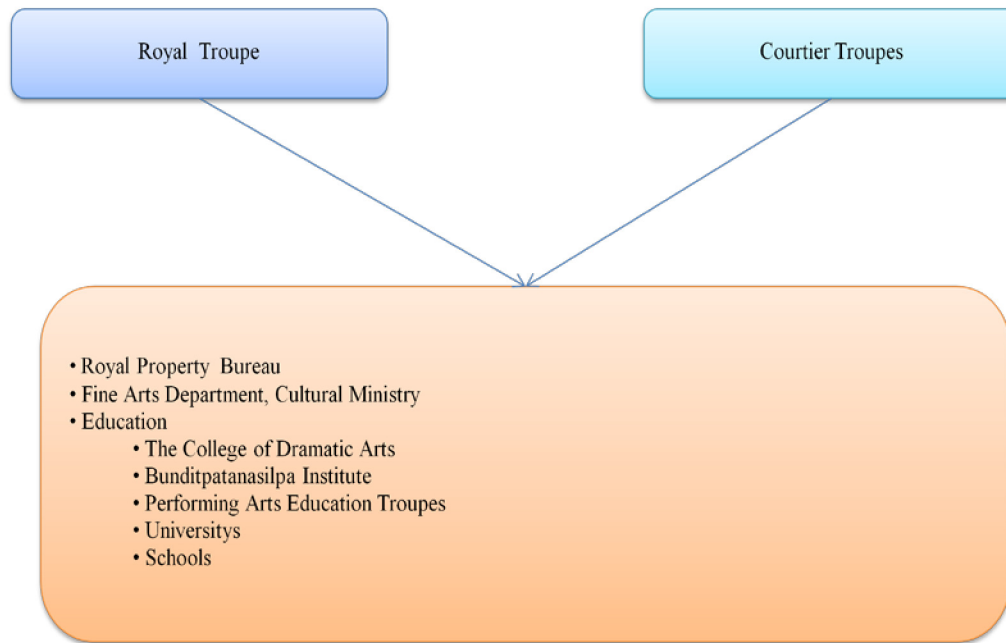


Chart 2 : Organizations supervise Lakhon Nai



Figure 4 : Basic skills and individual study for Lakhon Nai<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion and conclusions

Lakhon Nai is the traditional royal court dance-drama which was developed from Rabam in ceremony to lakhon Puying Khong Luang and becomes Lakhon Nai after. Under the patronage of the king, the performance was for celebrate in the beliefs, entertainment, the things that are used to show the classes, and education. The performance is performed continuously, and becomes the basis of Thai performance currently. The changes in the society, economy, policy, and cultures which influence on the change in identity, quality, and the number of the performances are the mirrors of the changes in the beliefs and the trends of people in each period so that this becomes

the historical record as well as influences on the survival of the royal as the center of the administration and cultures. These effected to the determination of national identity.

Copyright 2012, Manissa Vasinarom

### Acknowledgements

This paper has been completed with the assistance of several departments. We thank the investigators at this; I would like to thank my teachers who teach me for theoretical and practical knowledge, acting skills, knowledge transfer, research in the Performing Arts, as well as providing useful information to guide further research; and, to make it inherit the knowledge of the ancestors. In addition, I would also like to thank Performing arts Department, Fine and Apply Arts Faculty, Rajabhut Saun Sunandha University and my family for advices, assistance and encouragement throughout the duration of the operation, Performing Arts (Thai dances) students, the co-operation to achieve the objectives. Moreover, there are many thanks for Coordinator of the research budget of the National Research Council in 2011, and Rajabhut Saun Sunandha University for funding of my research and this presentation. Finally, it is importance thing to thank for SDHS for opportunity and new experience in this presentation. It will benefit whatsoever. I was devoted to the king, royal family, courtier, and other persons who help and support for my research paper.

### Notes

1. The Foundation of the Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand, *Wiwattanakarn krangtang kai Khon-Lakhon samai krung Rattanakosin* [The development of Khon –Lakhon Costume in Rattanakosin Era]. Thailand: Plan motive co., 2009. pp.35.
2. Narissaranuwattiwong, H.R.H. Prince. *Chumnum bot Lakhon and bot Concert*. Thailand: Fine Arts department. 1963. pp.72.
3. Saun Sunandha Rajabhut University, June 2011.
4. Saun Sunandha Rajabhut University, June 2012.

### Bibliography

- Damrong Rajanubhab, H.R.H. Prince. *Tum nan Lakhon Inao* [The origin of *Inao* play]. Thailand: Khlung Witthaya. 1965.
- Dhanit Yupho. *Sillapa Lakhon Rum/ Ku mae Nattasil Thai* [An explanation of Thai dance]. Thailand: Fine Arts Department. 1988.
- Kukrit Pramroj, Mom Ratchawong, and others. *Lakanathai: Performing Arts* [The Identity of Thai Dance and Music]. Thailand: Bangkok Bank Public Company Limited. 1998.
- Literature and history, Fine Arts Department, Cultural Ministry. *Tumra Rum* [Thai Dance Textbook : Dance Figures]
- Manissa Vasinarom. *Choreography of Chao Chom Manda Khien*. (Master degree in Thai Dance, Thai Dance Department, Fine and apply arts Faculty, Chulalongkorn University, 2006).



- Mattani Moj dara Rutnin. *Dance, Drama, And Theatre In Thailand: The process of Development and Modernization*. Thailand: Silkworm Books Press, 1993.
- Mongkut, King (Rama IV). *Ruam Phraratchanipon Somdaj Prachomklao Chaoauhao Raeng Chumnum Praboromrachatiby and Prachum Phraratchanipon nai Ratchakan thi 4* [An explanation and Literatures' King Rama IV]. Thailand: kruruspha, 2004.
- Narissaranuwattiwong, H.R.H. Prince. *Chumnum bot Lakhon and bot Concert*. Thailand: Fine Arts department. 1963.
- Sujit Wongthes. *Rong Rum Tum Pleng: Dontri and Nattasilp chaosiam* [Music and Dance of Siamese]. Thailand: Matichon Press. 2008.
- Surapone Virulrak. *Nattayasilpparithad* [Introduction to Dances]. Thailand: Hong Pab Suwan. 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Wiwattanakarn Nattayasin Thai nai Krung Rattanakosin* [The evolution of Thai theatre in Bangkok during 1782 – 1943]. Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Nattayasin Ratchakan thi 5* [The Thai Dance in the Fifth Reign]. Thailand: Suksaphan Press, 2011.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Nattayasin Ratchakan thi 9* [The Thai Dance in the Nineth Reign]. Thailand: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2006.
- The Foundation of the Promotion of Supplementry Occupations and Related Techniques of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand. *Wiwattanakarn krangtangkai Khon-Lakhon samai krung Rattanakosin* [The development of Khon –Lakhon Costume in Rattanakosin Era]. Thailand: Plan motive co., 2009.

Address for correspondence:

Name: Manissa Vasinarom

Full postal address: 1 U- thong Rd. Performing Arts (Thai Dances) Department, Fine and Apply Arts Faculty, Suan Sunandha Rajabhut University, Bangkok 10300.

E-mail address: Vmanissa@yahoo.com



## **“Pagaentry, Prosthetics and Performative Acts of Walking at Fresh Kills”**

**by Kathy Westwater  
Sarah Lawrence College**

*Note: While this paper was presented, an experiential video simultaneously played of a choreographic wandering score occurring amidst a no longer active landfill. The video is an excerpt from a hybrid program of research and performance-based acts at Fresh Kills on Staten Island in New York City, part of the interdisciplinary performance project PARK. To see an excerpt go to <http://vimeo.com/39557167>*

At Fresh Kills, my collaborators—poet Jennifer Scappettone, architect Seung Jae Lee, trailbuilder Leigh Draper, and a cast of dancers—and I explored acts of trailbuilding through our respective disciplines and their convergences. We approached trailbuilding liberally, in speculative, imaginative, as well as functional ways.

When it closed in 2001, Fresh Kills Landfill was the largest landfill in the world. The twenty-two hundred acre site took over fifty years to create and comprises four mounds—North, South, East, and West—that together total 150 million tons of garbage. The four mounds are massive; the East Mound alone is over 2 ½ miles long.

In addition to the four landfill mounds, the site contains marshlands and waterways—the word “kills” is Dutch for stream—and it is described by landscape engineers and architects as a hybrid landscape; part natural and part man-made. Projected to take thirty years, when complete, Freshkills Park will be three times the size of Central Park in Manhattan.

No longer active landfill and not yet parkland, our goal was to both record and create—to sketch into the landscape the current conditions that characterize the translation of this monument to consumption, from a site of trauma to a commons. The encounter we set out to create between an audience and Fresh Kills, between a community and its trash, was one that re-connects us to that which we are all intimately, however blindly, tied to in our daily lives. Through my own encounter with this monumental by-product of each of our daily discarded material waste, I came to conceive of the paths of those discards, by virtue of their ceaseless repetition, as material extensions, thus prosthetics, of our bodies, and the landfill as a prosthetic of the city.

While the master plan for the emergent Freshkills Park contains paths and trails of all recreational types, the only actual paths at the site today are those made by workers of the New York City Department of Sanitation who engineer and monitor daily the infrastructure of the landfill, and to a lesser extent, by the deer and occasional trespasser who roam Fresh Kills.

Throughout two artistic research residencies in 2010 and 2011, access to the chain-link and barbed wire enclosed landfill was always highly restricted as a result of

the dangers inherent in any landfill. Of particular concern is methane gas, a natural product of the decomposing organic matter. Before I applied for a residency, I visited Fresh Kills on a public tour conducted by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. For a typical tour of the mounds, visitors enter the site on a bus passing through a guarded, unmarked entrance. The bus travels throughout the site to designated points where visitors disembark and move only within the vicinity of the bus. All visitors are required to stay on the gravel roads and off the grasses that cover the mounds.

Amidst these many restrictions, a strong impulse to walk across the grassy mounds palpably emerged in me. And in the months that followed, two potent images came to mind. One was of hikers on a wilderness trail in Yosemite. The summer before, I'd visited the iconic National Park and remembered standing at the base of one of the trails, looking up to see a continuous, uninterrupted line of human bodies scaling a towering cliff. Positioning Yosemite alongside the future Freshkills Park delineates a distinction between archetypal 20<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century parks, the former often representing a societal act of preservation of wilderness, and the latter the collective re-purposing of despoiled post-industrial urban sites.

The other image that came to mind was of Trisha Brown's "Man Walking Down the Side of a Building." Instinctively my psyche correlated traversing the landfill terrain with Brown's vertical descent of the multi-storied building. In both scenarios there were implicit dangers, and walking was framed or experienced as a performative act.

On the mounds of Fresh Kills, I would be walking high above the natural ground, inhabiting contoured garbage-structured space where methane-fueled fires had once spontaneously ignited, and packs of wild dogs had roamed until the EPA threatened to close the landfill down. A community of activists finally achieved the closure, and later marshaled the political will to commit the city to an unprecedented municipal, alchemical re-purposing through landfill engineering and landscape architecture, so that it might yet one day be experienced as a park, but more importantly, as something other than a horror.

While no longer posing the risks it did in the 70s, Fresh Kills nonetheless remains a dangerous site, as the mandatory signing of a liability waiver by all who visit immediately signifies.

The stated goal in my proposal to the Parks Department was to walk across the grasses. Within this context, wandering emerged as a methodological "entry point." Wandering through woods and fields and the construction sites that evidenced an advancing suburban sprawl was something that I had done regularly and intuitively as a kid growing up in Kentucky. Later when I moved to NYC after college, as a means to orienting to the urban landscape, I instinctively began wandering.

Strangely, after the concerted effort it took to be granted access to the Fresh Kills site, when I got there on my first residency day, there was an immediate aversion – possibly an actual revulsion. There was sadness at confronting what stretched all around me. To dance there on top of 150 million tons of trash, what would that be? What would

it mean? Or look like? My instinct drew me in the opposite direction of codified movement. Improvisation, as well, seemed inadequate in the vacuum I felt in the aftermath of the enormity of trauma, although that would later change.

When I'd taken that initial tour of Fresh Kills, there was a very specific "frame" given through which to experience the site—through the conventions and rituals of the Parks and Recreation culture, including the ranger uniform, the rhetoric, the rules, and even the restrictions. When that culture no longer mediated between Fresh Kills and me, the thing from my movement background I felt confident calling upon when confronted with this post-apocalyptic-like environment was wandering. It became the known amidst the unknown, the universal amidst the particular, the everyday amidst the alien; and upon it I built my research and performative practice at Fresh Kills.

We set out alone to wander in silence for a half hour, thinking that our perceptual responses to the site would register more clearly without the pretense of dialogue with one another. In case it isn't already clear, at Fresh Kills there wasn't the infrastructure we normally employ when we dance. No dance floor – no floor at all in fact, and no roof or walls. Because the ground of the landfill mound is settling, as the contents decompose, and will for a couple more decades, it can't be built upon. Without cover from architecture or trees, the exposure to the sun and wind was at times intense. There were also fumes: part methane, part mercaptans—the chemical component to garbage that gives it its smell—and airborne toxins from the industrial plants in New Jersey.

Wandering brought forth discussions about the remarkably few landmarks, relative to what you'd find in a natural environment. Yet within this limited palette, there was a vivid set of apprehensible natural and engineered environmental gestures. The mounds are mowed two times a year in the spring and fall. Standing in silence on the recently shaven moundscape in the early spring, it felt bald and grey and wet. I might very well have been on another planet, so far removed from the everyday world as its known, but paradoxically, at the same time, made up of the discarded matter of our everyday world.

Inscribed amidst this barren backdrop are the methane-capture infrastructures, the wells and pumps, and the quirky topography that directs the flow of water down the slope to the collecting ponds at the base. There are the grasses that are the final cover of the "capping" process, growing above the dirt layer that rests on top of the enormous plastic sheeting sewn and welded together ... miles of panels ... entirely enclosing each mound. The trees, all volunteers (not planted), springing from the seeds encased in the droppings of birds, are very prominent as there is so little biodiversity.

We would develop other ways of apprehending the site, but wandering was the activity I intuitively returned to repeatedly more than any other. I still wanted to wander there after the residency ended, and requested to return.

In the interim I'd thought about wandering as a form of unstructured walking, in contrast to the structured walking that occurs on urban sidewalks and streets, on wilderness trails, in Brown's score, and that I'd initially conceived doing at the landfill. I

learned that in wilderness practices, wandering is a precursor to trailbuilding.

As the second residency progressed, energy coalesced around inviting an audience to wander across the mounds with us, girded by having learned that no one from the Parks Department had walked across the grasses until participating in our wandering practice. Wandering with an audience, however, would require a specific formulation because the Parks personnel would only agree to it if we monitored the audience as they wandered.

For the score, the audience is asked to wander for thirty minutes. A performer (one for every two audience members) had to be able to see their two audience members at every moment throughout the score. The score produced overlapping wandering clusters.

When I see the moundscape, either in the video or in real time, it can strike me very much like any other rural landscape. On the late fall day that the score was enacted, memories of walking through recently mowed hay fields in Kentucky were triggered. Yet the physical sensation of my feet on the moundscape always brought me back to the knowledge that this was not the ground I knew or remembered. This ground, even after accounting for the squish of the mud from the recent rain on this particular day, was less stable than that. I feel certain it was not the knowledge of the tonnage of layers of landfill beneath my feet alone that told my brain that this ground was unlike the ground that I knew.

When you're standing on, say, the tenth floor of a building, and you focus on what your feet feel like on that surface, you instinctively know that you do not feel your feet the same way that you feel them on the street. And you don't feel them the same way on the street that you feel them on dirt. I had a dance teacher who once said she could feel the ground when standing on elevated floors of buildings (though not in the same way as when standing below).

When I interviewed him, the Fresh Kills Director of Waste Management, Ted Nabavi, made a comment suggesting that the inside of the landfill is like the inside of a camel's belly. While Nabavi's comment seems metaphorical, he was referring to the anaerobic digestion that occurs when organic matter breaks down within a capped landfill, which mirrors the anaerobic digestion in the stomachs of mammals, including us. This comment became a catalyst for a somatic line of inquiry—a score called Belly.

Standing on the summit of the North Mound, we closed our eyes and placed our hands on our stomachs. In stillness, we allowed ourselves to both imagine and sense the movement occurring in that part of our body. We let that movement flow throughout the rest of the body. Later, we placed our hands on the surface of the landfill to sense, and then move in response to, the movement occurring within the mass. A nuanced layer of somatic integration, that of correlating an unstable ground with the internal processes of my digestive system and, by extension, my body was occurring.

Since the 70s, I'd known about Fresh Kills, having seen the unforgettable, even

for a child, photos of the backhoes, the mounds of detritus, and the scavenging seagulls. But it wasn't until I was sensing through my feet on top of all the tonnage—now covered in monolithic color and texture—that I understood when I threw something *away*, it went to a place like this. From that moment on, my bodily processes of consuming connected me not just conceptually, but materially and somatically, in time and space, to this site, thus concretizing the notion of the landfill as prosthesis of my body.

As I assembled the improvised walking articulations from *Belly* in the most fundamental spatial patterns—that of lines—pageants, parades, chorus lines, and runway walking were immediately evoked. I wonder, is it coincidence, projection, or design that these cultural manifestations have powerful linkages with acts of consumption, and often excess? Italian carnival, for example, comes to mind.

I continue to explore with dancers this formal content, relocating the exploration from Fresh Kills to studios, theaters, and outdoor sites in the city—such as an abandoned lot in downtown Manhattan where Occupy Wall Street briefly located after Zuccotti Park—doubling back on the trajectories of the garbage that makes up Fresh Kills, returning the landfill, reconstituted in the dancer's body, to the people who made it. Thus the trailbuilding continues.

I created the *Wandering* and *Belly* scores to illuminate and document Fresh Kills in its current liminal state – no longer active landfill, not yet parkland. *Wandering* asks participants to “get lost” on a pathless landfill mound. While championing subjectivity, wandering becomes a means of trailbuilding, self-discovery, and spatial production. The physical sensations of negotiating the precarious landfill site, embodied in *Belly*, correlate a contemporary landscape and body, made and remade, and thus contingent and unstable. In the midst of urban environmental trauma, these combined scores extend wilderness and post-modern pedestrian practices, conceptually and practically, and speak to the ability of the individual to discern and adapt to a precarious environment.

Copyright 2012, Kathy Westwater

#### Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Rose Anne Thom, Sarah Rudner, Associate Dean of the College Mary Porter, and Dean of the College Jerrilynn Dodds. My deepest appreciation goes to Raj Kottamatsu and Eloise Hirsh of Freshkills Park, NYC Department of Park and Recreation, and Jennifer Monson of iLAND.

#### Address Correspondence:

Kathy Westwater  
140 East Hartsdale Avenue #2  
Hartsdale, NY 10530  
kwestwater@sarahlawrence.edu

