

Undergraduate Research Symposium MAY 21, 2010 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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NEW PERSPECTIVES IN PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Session Moderator: Betsy Cooper, Dance

Meany Studio Theatre

1:00 PM to 2:30 AM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Egyptian and American Belly Dance: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Historical Differences and Social Roles

Farah Abdul, Senior, Biology (Molecular, Cellular & Developmental)

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

Since its introduction to the U.S. and Europe at the turn of the 20th century, belly dance has become a global phenomenon that has gained a large following of practitioners internationally, as well as pervasive media exposure. With the spread of this dance form, different countries and regions have developed their own styles based on their unique histories of belly dance. In the U.S., its uses have ranged from exercise to erotic performance to a platform for explicitly and implicitly addressing women's issues and sexuality. American and European dancers frequently view Egypt as a central "hot spot" and ancient birthplace of belly dance. Consequently, the popularity of belly dance has created a thriving Egyptian tourist industry. Despite constant travel and keen interest in this region, there remains confusion among many U.S. practitioners about current roles of belly dance in Egyptian culture. These practitioners often naively assume that American and Egyptian belly dance have similar historical significance and political roles. For example, many U.S. feminists emphasize heightened sexuality as a means of female empowerment. In my research, I analyze interviews of individuals who have experienced belly dance in both the U.S. and Egypt in order to identify points of difference in attitudes towards belly dance in these two cultures. I also examine historical changes in class, women's social roles, attitudes towards Europe, and the rise and overlapping of the Egyptian Nationalist and Feminist movements to look at how these factors influence the ways belly dance is used socially and politically in Egypt. I will show that recognizing the impact of these historical factors is essential for American belly dance practitioners who wish to engage with Egyptian communities and instructors who teach this dance form and its history in the U.S.

Reliving Modern Dance History in the Seattle and Global Communities

Alethea Alexander, Junior, Dance, Environmental Studies

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Hannah Wiley, Dance

Unlike the tangible records of artists like Shakespeare, Picasso, or Beethoven, historical dances exist in the intangible media of time and space. Many dances created at the beginning of the modern dance movement have been lost to audiences across the globe. Literally thousands of influential works exist now only in the minds of few remaining people who may have witnessed original performances, and in the bodies of artists who worked with influential choreographers. These lost works make up the valuable collection of historical "literature" from which current dance movements have grown. Through an internship with Hannah C. Wiley's Chamber Dance Company, I have begun to aid professor Wiley in her interactive research of modern dance history, preserving and revitalizing these influential works. Careful study of the eight historic dances that will comprise the 2010 Chamber Dance Season has facilitated personal growth and learning for me as a student and will continue to enrich the Seattle, University, and global communities. My presentation will address the complex social, cultural, and political issues surrounding reconstruction of historical dance works. I will undertake questions such as: How can we accurately reconstruct works that exist only in the bodies of dancers and choreographers?; What if these bodies no longer exist, or cannot move in the way that is necessary to relate movement? Sharing with the audience a live performance of one of the many historical works that has so far been set on the Chamber Dance Company (and that now exists in its invaluable database), I will directly communicate the unique product of CDC. Drawing from the database, Thomas Van Doren will perform Daneil Nagrin's 1948 *Strange Hero*.

Movement Logic

Alexa Lee (Alexa) Laycock, Sophomore, Comparative History of Ideas

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Ileana Rodriguez-Silva, History

Through the medium of dance, this performance analyzes the imperial field as a problem of embodiment. The imperial field in this context is viewed as the multiple sites that are contained within an imposed unity of an empire. The consensus of this analysis is that it is not an empire's totality but its ability to manipulate, mobilize and embody its multiple forms that ultimately construct new power relations. The process is never total, but it is necessarily left open in order to allow for negotiation. Creating power structures within an imperial field often hinges on the appropriation of ideologies onto bodies, both individual and collective and the construction of these bodies as such. Through dance, the articulations of these appropriations can be performed. If we visualize the Imperial Field as being on one plane and dance on another, this project intersects these two planes and forms an analysis from the point of crossing. By developing a theory about dance as it relates to the imperial field, the movements between the different sites or constructed bodies of the performance articulate the flow of the imperial field and its reconstitution across different conceptual bodies.

Production and Circulation of Dance Knowledge: Implementing Diversity in University Programs

Brittney Lyn (Brittney) Patterson, Senior, Economics

McNair Scholar

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

For many cultures dance provides a basic framework for life. For many minority communities, it is an integral part of how we learn to speak, remember our history, and develop bonds within our community. Surprisingly, this aspect of dance is rarely represented in University dance curricula. As with many disciplines in higher education, the hierarchical structures of power are also represented through University dance programs where the majority of classes offered are in the white idioms of ballet or modern, leaving many minority students feeling disenfranchised. While many minority students will assimilate, there are many others who exclude themselves from dance programs and are never able to reach their potential as dancers. Within the last thirty years, several scholars have published literature about the need to diversify dance programs caused by the belief that colleges and universities need to start adapting their coursework to reflect the interests of all students on campus. My research focuses on how dance forms that are considered "ethnic" dances are negotiated in a westernized instructional setting, focusing on Salsa as a case study, and how minority students negotiate their culture with their instructors. I will examine instances in which salsa has been incorporated into a university dance

curriculum and compare it with how salsa is learned outside university settings. The comparison will enable me to explore the benefits and difficulties of integrating culturally embedded dance forms into university dance curricula. This research could not only be a model for dance programs to develop an enriched dance curriculum, but for other University programs to take initiative to diversify and draw in students who will promote a stronger curriculum.

The New Kings of Bachata: Articulations of Dominican Nationalism and Racism through the Music of Aventura

Laura Elizabeth Pierson, Senior, International Studies, Spanish

Mentor: Jonathan Warren, Jackson School of International Studies

Since its formation as a genre in the 1960's, Dominican bachata music has been associated with the poorest, blackest sectors of Dominican society, particularly rural migrants who brought the music from the country to the city. Recently, however, young Dominican music groups in New York City, most famously Aventura, have popularized the genre and turned it into a symbol of Dominican national pride. Some have argued that Dominican migration to North American cities, particularly New York, has led to a change in post-colonial racial attitudes in the Dominican Republic and an increased sense of black consciousness and pride. While the change in attitudes towards bachata music might initially suggest this trend, this paper argues that Aventura's bachata articulates traditional racist ideas of Dominican nationalism that have circulated since the founding of the nation in the 19th century and reveal the nation's colonial legacy. In particular, articulations of machismo and modernity in the music echo longstanding white supremacist ideals, which emphasize Spanish heritage and attempt to disguise or deny African traditions. Rather than breeding a sense of black consciousness among Dominicans, migration has provided another forum for Dominicans to symbolically whiten themselves and the nation through an emphasis on traditional patriarchal values and Euro-centric ideas of modernity and progress. The analysis draws on interviews with young adults in the Dominican Republic concerning Dominican music and migration, lyrics from popular Aventura songs, and Internet discussion posts about Aventura's music. By examining discussions of modernity, family values and gender relations, the paper demonstrates how Dominican nationalism articulated by Aventura reinforces historic ideas of racism and exclusion in the Dominican Republic in new, transnational spaces.