

DSA 2024 – Roundtable Series
REMAPPING DANCE MODERNISMS
Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, organizers

Abstract:

While many of us have been working on transnational approaches and multiple modernities, questions and issues remain. “Remapping Dance Modernisms I and II” gathers scholars from all career stages to establish a transatlantic research network on global histories of modernist dance. Questions include: How do we integrate the possibilities and pressures of the local and the national with the impacts of global flows? How do we highlight the exchange between the Global South and the Global North without reinforcing the narrative of the West and the Rest? How do we recover the subtle changes that ideas and methods undergo as they move from one local or national context to another? And how do we teach the histories of multiple modernities?

“Remapping Dance Modernisms I” will focus on pedagogical questions as well as on critiques of national(ist) histories of dance in the Global South. Case studies will examine the comparative survey course, modernist concert dance in the West Indies, Hijikata’s notations, exotic subject matter in Korean modern dance, and settler/ indigenous dance modernisms. Moderated by Susan Manning.

“Remapping Dance Modernisms II” will focus on (post)nationalist histories of dance modernism in Europe, post-decolonial perspectives on religiousness in both Jewish and Christian modern dance, transnational (mestizo) modernisms in Mexico and other Latin American countries, concepts of race, nation and “environmental dance” in Brazil. Moderated by Lucia Ruprecht.

REMAPPING DANCE MODERNISMS I **Friday, July 26 at 9:00**
Susan Manning, moderator in person

Remapping Dance: South Asia
Ameera Nimjee in person

What is the function of the undergraduate survey course in dance studies? As an ethnomusicologist, I often arrange courses in world musics and dance cultures in which I present them as case studies to discuss issues like “gender” and “caste.” My most immediate experience, however, was different. In a collaborative course titled “Remapping Dance” my co-instructors and I approached dance studies by leaning into the specific inhabitation of our research-practice areas in the Black diaspora, South Asia, and the Japanese avant-garde. In my contribution to this roundtable, I’d like to discuss the possibility of re-mapping the survey course away from perceived comprehensivity and expectations of global expertise. What happens when we declare a regional or contextual specificity to teach dance studies? And when these specificities provincialize Euro-American dance? How might this “re-map” disciplinary expectations? How does a collaborative teaching model support these ends?

Bio: Ameera Nimjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Music and in South Asian Studies at Yale University. Her work focuses on the study of citizenship, race, and gender in transnational South Asian performance cultures. She is currently at work on two larger projects: on creativity in contemporary dance economies and performance cultures that have accompanied the migration of Muslims through South Asia, East and South Africa, and North America. Her essays have been published in *Ethnologies* and the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* as well as volumes on music, dance, and diasporic performance.

Remapping Dance: West Indies

Amanda Reid in person

My work on modernist concert dance in the West Indies explores the beautiful failures of dancers' attempts to embody the project of post-colonial national sovereignty. This project is always doomed, I argue, because mapping the ideals of liberal personhood onto black and brown bodies indexes the limitations of the post-colonial imaginary to envision true liberation. Teaching with scholars who work on South Asian contemporary dance and Japanese avant-garde performance has oriented my exploration toward a different vector and away from a linear trajectory towards national freedom. It has allowed me to discover the intimacies and otherwise worlds that emerge when we dance our common subjugations and entanglements with empire. The Caribbean serves as a useful site for mapping these particular 20th century counterpoints; it shares with Japan the experience of violent confrontations with US Empire and the British commonwealth experience with India. I employ the Caribbean as a cipher for thinking about the particularities of how United States and British post-war imperialism rests in the body, in order to share comparative strategies for both ingesting, creolizing, and transforming trauma. I ask: how can danced intimacies across imperial modernities alert us to different scales of freedom within and beyond the nation?

Bio: Amanda Reid is an assistant Professor of Theatre, Dance, and Performance at Yale University. She is a dance historian who writes and teaches about queer of color critique, West Indian migration, and post-colonial Caribbean Black radicalism. Her current manuscript project, *Smaddification: Dance and Decolonization in the West Indies*, explores maximalist queer diaspora aesthetics in Jamaican concert dance to theorize West Indian regional visions of blackness, bodily freedom, and cultural autonomy. Her writing can be found in *Theatre Journal* and *The Oxford Handbook of Black Dance Studies* (forthcoming). She received her PhD from the Department of History at the University of Michigan.

Remapping Dance: Japan

Rosa van Hensbergen in person

A large part of my research on butoh and its founder Tatsumi Hijikata has been motivated by the attempt to translate its elusive language: whether through translating notational/historical documents and butoh workshops, or through translating butoh into terms that resonate with those of western dance theory. I have found myself looking to western dance and the theoretical models it fosters as a *lingua franca* to make legible butoh's contribution to the dance studies discipline. Teaching alongside scholars of South Asian dance and Caribbean/diaspora dance became a way to unfix and reroute some of the vocabularies and modes of conceptualizing that the academy had

led me to take as given. In my contribution to this roundtable, I will think through questions of how we teach (and learn) new languages for talking about dance that can become shared while retaining the particular residue of the localities and histories they emerge from.

Bio: Rosa van Hensbergen is Assistant Professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale. Her research focusses on experimental dance notation of the 1950s-80s, and specifically the work of butoh founder Tatsumi Hijikata. Her first book, *Moving with Words*, theorises Hijikata's poetic notation, and is under contract with Oxford Studies in Dance Theory Series (OUP). She has publications out or forthcoming on butoh dance, Samuel Beckett and contemporary dance, as well as Beckett's stage directions and Billie Whitelaw's annotated scripts. Alongside her academic work she writes and publishes poetry and works with artists and academics to create performance works.

“So Many Differences”: Theorizing Modernist Aesthetics in Korean Dance
Soo Ryon Yoon in person or remote?

For a long time, modern dance in Korea was thought to have been introduced for the first time in 1926, when Ishii Baku performed in colonial Seoul. While researchers have recently challenged this account, this critique only amplifies the need to theorize modernity, modern dance, and modernism in Korean dance. How does the conceptualization of modernism in Korean dance highlight unique methods developed in the first half of the 20th century? What are the examples that complicate the assumed dominance of Japanese and Western aesthetics? Researching transnational relations of Korean dance, I ask these questions to discuss dance between the 1920s and 1960s inspired by non-white-European cultures including African American spirituals and South/Southeast Asian dances. While the extant body of research on Korean dance has seen this as Korean modern dance's fascination with exoticism, I propose to reconsider this a basis for a distinct modernist aesthetics.

Bio: Soo Ryon Yoon is an NRF Academic Research Professor at the Institute for East Asian Studies, Sungkonghoe University, Seoul. Her research on race and performance in South Korea has appeared in a number of venues, including *positions: asia critique*, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, and *Performance Research*. She recently co-edited *Inter-Asia in Motion: Dance as Method* with Emily Wilcox (Routledge 2023) and the Cultural Constructions of Race and Racism Research Collective Forum issue on East Asia for the *Lateral* journal forthcoming in January 2024. She previously taught at Northwestern University, Yale University, Lingnan University, and Ewha Womans University.

Settler / Indigenous Dance Modernisms: Some problems and an approach
Lindsey Drury in person

In this presentation, I discuss the networking of dance modernisms with settler colonial contexts and the problems that thus arise for research of global dance modernisms. How might researchers get beyond discussions of settler modernist appropriation from Indigenous dance to address Indigenous dance modernisms on their own terms? How can dance studies scholars disentangle research on global dance modernisms from the settler modernist legacy, and its vision of global dance that ascribes each nation its representative national dances? What does it

mean if current research of global and Indigenous dance modernisms still depends on the contributions of modernist dance anthropology?

What I propose in this presentation is a method of intertextualism that aims to situate modernist dance histories within the complex (and often troubling) networks of colonial relations through which both settler society and anti-colonial Indigenous movements take shape.

Bio: Lindsey Drury holds a PhD in early modern studies and currently works as a Postdoc within Critical Dance Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, where she researches, teaches, and organizes the Valeska Gert Visiting Professorship program. She is currently and affiliated researcher with metaLAB (at) Harvard & FU Berlin, the Cluster of Excellence "Temporal Communities", the Nordic Summer University, and the project MUDANZA (Dancing women, idolatry and rituals) organized within the Iconodansa international research group. She is the 2022 Honorable Mention for the Gertrude Lippincott award for best article in the field of dance studies, was previously awarded a prestigious Erasmus Mundus Fellowship (2015-2019) for her PhD research and was the first MFA student in dance at the University of Utah to be awarded a Graduate Research Fellowship (2007-2008).

REMAPPING DANCE MODERNISMS II

Friday, July 26, 11:00

Lucia Ruprecht, moderator in person

(Post)nationalist histories of dance modernism: the case of Vaslav Nijinsky

Wojtek Klimczyk in person or remote?

While acknowledging his Polish parenthood, dance historians tend to consider Vaslav Nijinsky as Russian because of the language he spoke best and the company he rose to fame in: Ballets Russes. And yet in his notebooks the dancer wrote: "I am not a Russian and not a Pole. I am a man, not a foreigner and not a cosmopolite." Apparently the exclusive, singular national identity was too narrow for Nijinsky whose dancing has been on many occasions nationalized and racialized, quite often along the orientalist lines, not only in his time. Why this need to squeeze art into national categories? How nationalism has co-shaped dance modernism in different geographical contexts and periods? What are we to do with this often uncomfortable heritage when writing global histories of dance modernism. These are the questions I want to address in my talk in reference to the existing and possible histories of Nijinsky, Ballets Russes and dance modernism at large.

Bio: Wojciech Klimczyk is a professor in the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. His research interests include dance theory and sociopolitical history of dance. He wrote, among others, *Wizjonerzy ciała. Panorama współczesnego teatru tańca* (Visionaries of the Body. A Panorama of Contemporary Dance Theatre, 2010) and *The Virus of Mobilization. Dance and the Shaping of Modernity, 1455-1795* in two volumes (2020, available in open access from the Jagiellonian University Press). With Julia Hoczyk he co-edited the bilingual collection *Prze-pisać taneczny modernizm: sieci/Re-*

Writing Dance Modernism: Networks (Jagiellonian University Press 2022) and with Agata Świerzowska Music and Genocide (Peter Lang 2015). As dance dramaturg, he for many years was co-running Harakiri Farmers collective and now works as independent dance artist.

Towards a Post-Decolonial Perspective on Religiousness in Modern Dance Alexander Schwan via Zoom

The beginnings of modern dance in Central Europe and Northern America were particularly rich in implied religiosity and embodied theological arguments. Instilling modern dance with religious ideas reflected the Jewish and Christian backgrounds of many of modern dance's protagonists. Sometimes, however, projects of religiously charged dance modernism were tied to appropriation of religious otherness in the Global South or Northern American indigenous contexts. How can we analyse such practices of religious exoticising and orientalisering in dance modernism without reverting to anti-Jewish and anti-Christian ideologies? How can we achieve a post-decolonial perspective on religiousness in modern dance that not only criticises practices of religious appropriation in dance modernism, but goes one step further: To avoid antisemitic and antitheological interpretations of Jewish and Christian modern dancers, we need to acknowledge the liberating decolonial potential within Christian and Jewish modern dance traditions themselves.

Bio: Alexander H. Schwan is a dance scholar and theologian with a research focus on spirituality, religion, and ethics. In his current book project "Theologies of Modern Dance," he researches theological implications in the works of modernist choreographers in Europe, Israel, and the US. He has been a Visiting Lecturer at UC Santa Barbara and has held visiting fellowships at UC Berkeley, Princeton University, and Harvard University. His article "Queering Jewish Dance: Baruch Agadati" (DRJ 54:2, 2022) was awarded an Honourable Mention for the 2023 DSA Gertrude Lippincott Award for the best English-language article in dance studies in 2022.

Transnational (Mestizo) Modernisms José Luis Reynoso in person or remote?

Responding to a South American graduate student's research, a U.S.-based dance studies scholar said that "we have way passed critiques of modernity." The generic "we" implies people who share a collective consciousness and/or experience beyond modernity's conditioning ways of thinking, being, feeling, etc. However, that such a statement *still* needs to be enunciated suggests that not everyone's life experience in different countries, people outside the "we", exists "passed" the conditioning logic of modernity, thus the need for its critique. The scholar's statement implies notions of linear time where "we" move forward toward progress while others are left, lagging behind theoretically and methodologically, unable to *properly* assess the postmodern, contemporary, (*post*)human condition in which "we" live. I will discuss this assumed temporal linearity as a form of epistemological imperialism manifested while researching, writing, talking, and teaching about transnational (mestizo) modernist practices developed within Mexico's and other Latin American countries' rhetoric of modernity.

Bio: José Luis Reynoso (Bello) is Associate Professor of Critical Dance Studies at the University of California Riverside. He was the Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Dance Studies in/and the

Humanities at Northwestern University (2012-2014). He completed his doctoral degree in Culture and Performance (specialization in Dance Studies) and Masters of Fine Arts in dance and choreography at the University of California Los Angeles. José Luis also earned a master's degree in Psychology from California State University Los Angeles. His research interests include how narratives people create about their dance and performance practices serve to form a sense of who they are, to distinguish themselves from others, and to position themselves and others within social, artistic, and academic hierarchies. He has published articles on dance and performance in Latin America, the United States, and Europe. His book, *Dancing Mestizo Modernisms: Choreographing Postcolonial and Postrevolutionary Mexico* was recently published by Oxford University Press.

Dancing Brazil's Other: Modernism, Race, and Nation

Ana Paula Höfling in person

My second book project focuses on the work of three mid-century Brazilian choreographers whose work remains marginal to Brazilian concert dance historiography. These women—Eros Volusia, Felicitas Barreto, and Mercedes Baptista—have been historicized, and dismissed, as directors of folkloric ballet companies. Rather than staging Brazilian folklore, however, these choreographers sought inspiration for their dances in the dances of Brazil's "folk"—dances that were other to the urban, erudite, and modern dances they choreographed. By appropriating and de-contextualizing the dances of Brazil's periphery, these three women asserted their respective positions in the country's intellectual and artistic center. My analysis draws on the idea of multiple modernisms in claiming that these women did not simply borrow modernist ideas developed elsewhere, but instead inaugurated Brazil's own dance modernism, in dialogue with modernists in Europe and the United States.

Bio: Ana Paula Höfling is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Dance at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She is the author of *Staging Brazil: Choreographies of Capoeira* (Wesleyan UP, 2019), winner of the 2021 Dance Studies Association Oscar G. Brockert Book Prize. She was a Trustee's Fellow at the National Humanities Center (2021-22), where she worked on her second book manuscript, *Dancing Brazil's Other: modernism, race, and nation*. She was an Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the Americas at Wesleyan University (2012-2014) and she holds a PhD in Culture and Performance from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Environmental Dance in Brazil

Elizabeth Schwall via Zoom

In this presentation, I focus on how ideas about modernism and the environment manifest in Brazilian concert dance. I consider how Indigenous and Afro-descendant philosophies (rather than "Western modernisms") inform environmentally inspired dances in this particular site and invite broader reflection on how alternative worldviews and ecological sensibilities profoundly shape art that might appear modernist.

Bio: Elizabeth Schwall is an assistant professor of history at Northern Arizona University and author of *Dancing with the Revolution: Power, Politics, and Privilege in Cuba* (UNC, 2021), winner of the 2023 Oscar G. Brockert Book Prize for Dance Research. Previously, she held a

Mellon Dance Studies in/and the Humanities Fellowship at Northwestern University, was a fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, and taught at University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University. Her research has appeared in the journals *Dance Research Journal*, *Dance Chronicle*, *Investigaciones de danza y movimiento*, *Gender & History*, *Studies in Musical Theatre*, *Cuban Studies*, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, and two edited volumes.