

Editor's Note

The intersection between dance and culture is a thread running through the Summer, 2001 issue of *DRJ*. Several of the essays consider the ways that dance and movement performance mobilize—in the words of dance theorist Randy Martin—the social, cultural, and political. In one form or another, these essays ask important questions about the notion of community and, in particular, the power of dance to represent and communicate the cultural traditions, values, and aspirations of a group or nation. They also ask how a group's dances respond to external forces such as physical oppression, slavery, or genocide. For instance, in her piece on powwow dancing, Ann Axtmann explores how Native American dancers maintain a sense of spiritual power and identity in the face of racism, poverty, and other social ills. Axtmann notes that “As people live and remember through the flesh, blood, mind, and soul, moving bodies express and communicate the intensity of those experiences.” In her close movement analysis, Axtmann explores how specific choreographic styles generate group solidarity that binds successive generations of Native Americans.

Ananya Chatterjea examines how *Womb Wars*, the dance piece created by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and her company Urban Bush Women, gives voice to communities of African American women physically and psychically scarred by imposed abortion. Both an act of remembrance and defiance, *Womb Wars*, as Chatterjea reveals, articulates “the historical and global contexts that have thwarted black women's experiences of themselves and their bodies.” The body in Urban Bush Women's performance, as in the powwow, becomes a repository for a culture's collective memory as well as a catalyst to challenge outworn and humiliating stereotypes.

From another perspective, what happens when a culture's dance traditions are exported and marketed on the global stage? In her piece on Irish step dance, Catherine Foley shines another light on dance and community. What happens to the stability of a form, previously considered a symbol of national identity, when it incorporates Western aesthetics or becomes judged by external standards? These are some of the questions Foley raises in her piece examining the enormous national and international impact of *Riverdance*.

In another essay in this issue, Noël Carroll (“Toward a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance”) analyzes works typically referred to as ciné or film dance. Based on his keynote talk at the 2000 Dance for the Camera Symposium, in Madison, Wisconsin (see *DRJ* Summer, 2000 issue), Carroll's essay prompts discussion on how to conceive, define, and theorize about the wide and proliferating number of dance performances that fall under this rubric. As new technologies continually emerge for creating and recreating dance, Carroll's propositions seem all the more relevant and necessary. He urges us to view his definitional categories “as a means of emancipatory creativity, at least in terms of promoting an openness to the inevitability of technological change.”

Finally, Ann Dils and Jill Flanders Crosby, in their methodologically based essay (“Dialogue in Dance Studies Research”), provide us with a challenging perspective on the dance research process. Rooted in Laban movement-based systems, methods of ethnographic fieldwork, and James Clifford's work on dialogue as a research process, Dils and Crosby develop a framework for their joint project—a movement analysis and description of the West African roots of jazz dancing. Their aim in this largely experiential piece is to “capture the

bubbling up of understanding that stems from the cooperative and confrontational exchanges of dance studies research.” In the process of their collaboration, Dils and Crosby discovered how dialogue and dialogic theory emboldened their research strategies. Hopefully their piece may serve as a model for new kinds of team-based and collaborative scholarship.

We are pleased to present a Dance Research Worldwide report on Cuba. We have paired a discussion of current research trends (Erica Angert) with an analysis of actual dance practice (Suki John), since in Cuba so much of the research process is an intertwined one shared by dancers and choreographers, as well as teachers and researchers. Culture and politics, of course, play a large role in Cuban dance and research. For instance, Suki John asks if the modern dance tradition in Cuba may weaken as the country looks to other commercial dance ventures to bolster its economy. And, as Erica Angert notes, although it is vitally important that scholars attempt to communicate with one another and share research, it has become increasingly difficult in a country where paper, supplies, let alone the Internet, are a scarcity.

Our Dialogues section features an edited version of a widely attended and hotly debated roundtable discussion at the 2000 Dancing in the Millennium Conference, “Dance Ethnography: Where Do We Go From Here?” Four dance scholars—Deidre Sklar, Joann Kealiinohomoku, Uttara Coorlawala, and Anthony Shay—consider the state of the profession today from varying perspectives. With ethnographic scholarship proliferating worldwide, new questions emerge concerning methodology, subject matter, and the role and function of the ethnographer. In an increasingly globalized field, Deidre Sklar, the moderator of the roundtable, presses for “cross cultural exchange about what it is we know when we know it in movement.” As usual, we invite readers into the exchange.

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