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Review: Dancing From Past to Present: Nation, Culture, Identities (Madison, 2006); Dance and Society: Dancer as a Cultural Performer. Re-appraising Our Past, Moving Into the Future (Budapest, 2005)

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bodies in motion and reflection to create a sense of unity in difference.

The last piece, *Abduction of Sita,* a story from *Ramayana,* is an obvious choice for the collaboration by the choreographers/dancers Sundaram and Pujawati as it is the common cultural thread that connects Bali and India. Sundaram uses the Bharatnatyam structure and Pujawati uses techniques from *Arja* theater to re-imagine this popular story in a Balinese-Indian idiom. However, it would have been more interesting if the choreographers could retell this story from a different perspective than the standard one. It was also interesting to see Sundaram, embodying Bharatnatyam, playing all the male characters while Pujawati enacts the female character of Sita and the golden deer. The documentary highlights the collaborative nature of the project and the careful negotiations and aesthetic choices that were made to make it successful. It was thoughtful and respectful of traditional repertoire as it forged new experiences for innovation and improvisation. The two striking dancers reconfigured structures of improvisation and innovation.

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DANCING FROM PAST TO PRESENT: NATION, CULTURE, IDENTITIES

edited by Theresa Jill Buckland. 2006. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. xii + 245 pp., illustrations, notes, index. $24.95 paper.

DANCE AND SOCIETY: DANCER AS A CULTURAL PERFORMER. RE-APPRAISING OUR PAST, MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

edited by Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Anne von Bibra Wharton, and László Felföldi. 2005. 40th Anniversary of Study Group on Ethnochoreology of International Council on Traditional Music. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, European Folklore Institute. 289 pp., illustrations, references, appendix. $45.00 paper.

The large international participation of scholars, many of them young graduate students, in the recent CND/CORD/SDHS conference in Paris (June 21–27, 2007), along with new publications in the field and the spread of world dance courses in colleges and universities in many regions of the world, suggest the need for increasingly sophisticated research publications. New publications featuring the works of well-known senior scholars are cause for celebration by those of us attempting to meet research and student demand for new sources of information that feature new conceptual, theoretical, and methodological approaches. In the past few years scholars have produced an exciting array of monographs and collections of essays important to the field of world dance or dance ethnology.

In *Dancing from Past to Present* the editor, Theresa Jill Buckland, has shaped a volume that "has two principal goals. First, it aims to stimulate debate on the combined use of ethnographic and historical strategies in investigating dance as embodied cultural practice. Second, it aims to expand the field of mainstream dance studies by focusing on examples beyond typically Eurocentric conceptualizations of concert dance" (vii). Buckland has gathered together the work of eight scholars investigating an impressive variety of traditional dance cultures in order to add a historical dimension to ethnographic studies, which, following some past anthropological practices, often omit the crucial diachronic element from their findings.

As Buckland notes, most mainstream dance scholarship concentrated on Western theatrical and historical dance practices: dance as an art form. By contrast, "Anthropologists sought to understand the present

of cultures as holistic systems, an aim for which the methodology of ethnography—documenting and explaining the present—was essential" (5). This was a practice that many dance ethnologists, especially in the beginnings of the field of anthropologically based dance studies, followed. Many of these senior scholars have been studying dance in the same geographical regions and continue to make frequent visits to their respective sites over many years; thus, they have gained a historical perspective that newer scholars in the field sometimes lack. Many of the studies found in this volume have been enriched by this historical perspective.

In shaping the volume Buckland notes that the essays are not characterized by "any overarching tendency toward monolithic conceptualizations of world dance cultures. . . . What brings the authors together here is less a single shared theoretical vision and more an interest in issues and knowledge gained from dancing across both pasts and presents" (ix, viii). Indeed, some of the essays presented in the volume frequently lack any theoretical perspective and constitute simple descriptions of dance phenomena through time, while others, such as those by Lynn Maners, Janet O'Shea, Deidre Sklar, and Buckland herself, are cast in a variety of sophisticated theoretical frameworks. However, even the least theoretically informed articles presented in the volume, with their rich ethnographic and historical discussions and descriptions, will provide vital ethnographic and historical information on a variety of world dance traditions and constitute an important starting point for future studies.

Some of the essays, like the introductory study by Buckland, point out the crucial differences between conceptual and theoretical approaches of researchers and scholars in the United States and Great Britain and those of Eastern Europe and Asia. In the latter regions, because of the deep-seated nationalism that characterized the formation of new states throughout the twentieth century, the collecting of folk dance, as with all folklore, constituted an element in the construction of ethnicity, identity, and the nation-state itself: "Given the significance of history in nation building and in articulating ancient ethnic identities, a diachronic perspective has been an integral part of folk studies for most of its existence" (7). The very existence of certain "ancient national" dances and music on the "national" territory provided a legitimizing raison d'être for specific groups to occupy that territory: "The anthropological similarities and differences were reshaped and re-mapped. They were, in fact, transformed into separate and 'authentic' national folklores. The different national folklores suspiciously coincided territorially with national borders and imagined homelands" (Kiossev 2002, 180). Thus, folklore with an important historical component—first in Eastern Europe and subsequently in areas of Asia and Africa—became a cornerstone of nationalism, an idea that is alien to many researchers in the United States and Great Britain who followed an anthropological, rather than folkloristic, model.

Many individuals, including dance scholars and historians, frequently believe that certain dance traditions are primordial and unchanging, and this is particularly true of classical Asian traditions, for which their practitioners, following nationalistic and political objectives, claim ancient and timeless qualities. In their important articles, Janet O'Shea, Felicia Hughes-Freeland, and Judy Van Zile show how Indian *bharata natyam,* Javanese court dances in Indonesia, and Korean dance traditions, respectively, in fact contain many elements of recent change and construction; in fact, these dance traditions are historically dynamic and contingent upon

the many political and historical changes that have occurred in these nation-states. Hughes-Freeland notes: "An effect of these uses of history is to provide myths of origin for different dance forms to give legitimacy to the Central Javanese courts, a legitimacy that has now been absorbed by the Indonesian state" (56). O'Shea notes: "One could . . . call bharata natyam an 'invented tradition.' An alternative conclusion might be that there is a single authoritative history . . . I want to suggest, however, that the actual situation is more complex. . . . Bharata natyam is neither entirely 'ancient' nor is it solely a product of the twentieth century" (125). Judy Van Zile, in her long study of Korean dance, notes:

> As I sought to understand contemporary performances, Korean colleagues and consultants continually referred me to the past. They identified events they believed contributed to the present, pointed me to historical documents and justified current practices on the basis of records of the past . . . I often became puzzled. I could not always see in them the validation of the present that my Korean associates espoused. (154)

Thus, the questioning of nationalist claims of ancient and timeless dance traditions, which legitimize the existence of a particular nation-state or ethnic group, constitutes a theme for several of the essays in this collection.

Another issue that authors confront is what constitutes authenticity. Theresa Jill Buckland came to question her own past research strategies by looking at what I call parallel traditions of Morris dancing (Shay 2002): "Revelation and re-evaluation of my past procedures as a researcher, quite obviously, make public the pitfalls of my former training in older models of ethnographic and historical inquiry" (201). In her essay "Being Traditional," Buckland confronts the past practice of privileging "the Traditional," which "designated the genuine folk, the supposedly uneducated, preferably rural, working classes," over the "Revival," which "was dominated by the educated, socially and geographically mobile members of society, whose reason for performing the folk repertoire often stemmed from a false nostalgia for a vanishing cultural past" (203). By questioning her previous assumptions, Buckland discovered that layers of dance existed and co-existed in parallel traditions that provide us with a richer, more complex picture of traditional dance and its supposed ancient and authentic qualities. Thus, these and the other authors in this collection, by rendering their studies more complex through their methodological and theoretical strategies, are providing the field with a rich trove of new ways of looking at traditional dance. This volume should be purchased widely by academic libraries.

The *Dance and Society* collection, by contrast, appears to be conference proceedings of the 22nd symposium of the International Council on Traditional Music's Study Group on Ethnochoreology. It contains several short essays that appear to be oral presentations, as well as short reports on field activities, personal recollections of past conferences, and a charming limerick by Adrienne L. Kaeppler. The editing by Elsie Ivancich Dunin and Anne von Bibra Wharton did not consist of shaping or selecting the essays to be included but rather:

> Due to the international membership of this group, where English is not a primary language, and furthermore, where there is a different standard for a style format in each country, Dunin and von Bibra became "editors" in standardizing the language use and style format. . . . The "editors" attempted not to change the content of the papers, which is considered the responsibility of

the authors and what they presented at the symposium. (11)

Thus, this volume contains a collection of highly uneven papers. While there are some worthwhile short essays—especially the article by Nancy Lee Ruyter on the problematic issues of informant memories and historical accuracy as research sources—it lacks the salience of *Dancing from Past to Present* with its unified theme. *Dance and Society* would be valuable only in highly specialized collections of world dance research.

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