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Gender Performativity Through Traditional Dance Performance

Calder Hollond

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Reflection Paper - Calder Hollond

Having taken Professor Anthony Shay's "Traditions of World Dance" class as an elective for the Gender & Women's Studies major, I knew from the beginning that I was interested in applying feminist theory to a comparative analysis of dance. During our discussions of the Moiseyev dance company and the Argentinian tango, I became intrigued by the expressions of gender present in the two, and so my paper topic was born: a performative analysis of gender representation in two different types of dance.

After having an idea of my general topic, I began my research process. For this paper, I used library research more than I have for any other paper, and I found this helpful especially due to the relative lack of online database literature for my specific topic. Professor Shay's background as a former librarian was instrumental in introducing me to more in-depth library-based research, as he scheduled class library visits and greatly encouraged library research. After meeting with a librarian who specialized in dance and learning about database search techniques, I ventured into the dance and music sections of the library. Due to the relatively understudied nature of dance ethnology, these hard-copy books were instrumental in providing historical background in topics that were unavailable on the databases. This research had a fundamental impact on the structure of my paper; as I began to peruse books about my topics, I found fascinating historical information that was intertwined with factors present in the dances I was researching. While I did not originally intend to use a strong historical background, I realized during this general research process just how important the history was to the dances I was looking at, and that history ended up becoming an integral part of my paper.

In addition to the physical component of the library, online databases like GenderWatch and International Encyclopedia of Dance provided me with a means to search for theoretical frameworks for my argument and provide me with viewpoints that I had not previously considered, and the search methods taught by the dance librarian allowed me to narrow down my results more effectively. Professor Shay's books themselves as well as his general knowledge also proved to be invaluable resources, especially for the more niche topic of the Moiseyev dance company. Finally, I turned to YouTube videos to enhance my understanding of the visual aspects of the dance and allow me to make a formal analysis of the dances themselves. This holistic approach to research, where I tied together many different forms of technology, allowed me to bring together history, politics, gender theory, and dance in a manner that I never would have previously conceptualized.

Overall, writing this paper was an educational and informative experience that allowed me to tie together many different critical lenses. Using traditional dances, which explicitly represent an area's culture and society, and tying in ideas of gender performativity, political landscapes, historical context, and media studies allowed me to create a paper over a topic I truly had never explored before. The research experience showed me that seemingly opposite things – for example, Bolshevism and dance – can be intertwined in ways one never would have thought at first glance. Before embarking on this research process, I never would have thought of folk/traditional dance as a political tool – far from it. However, the politics of folk dance – how the dances are enacted, who gets to dance, where the dances come from, where the dances are performed, and much more – reveal great amounts of information about the dynamics of an area. The performances of the Moiseyev dance company in the U.S. in the 1960s were not just a

celebration of the arts, they were a carefully calculated political tool that deconstructed decades of U.S. government fear-mongering of the Soviets. The tango is not just an aesthetically pleasing and technically intricate dance, it is the embodied expression of Argentine masculinity and femininity, colonial impact, and class stratification. Furthermore, the political and social impacts of the dances do not exist in isolation, and as I found through my writing process, comparison of dance forms halfway across the world from one another often reveals intriguing information about the similarities and differences of cultures around the globe. Additionally, aspects of appropriation and authenticity continue to play key roles in these studies.

Writing this paper helped me hone my comparative studies skills as I worked to tie together two vastly different dance forms. This research process was helped greatly by my utilization of library books, databases, and online videos. As a Gender Studies major, I enjoyed applying the theory I have read in my other Gender Studies classes to a concrete subject rather than just theorizing about it. I also learned to explore all avenues of research in order to find background knowledge that can be crucial to supporting an argument. Overall, this research paper provided me with a wealth of knowledge about the nuances and real-world impacts of traditional dance as well as how to apply that knowledge and research process to other academic subjects.

Research Paper

Gender Performativity Through Traditional Dance Performance

The curtains on the stage open onto two soloists: a man and a woman. On either side stand identical rows of male-female pairs. To the tune of light, airy music, the woman looks around the stage, smiling abashedly, as the man stomps his foot and extends his arms to her once, twice, a third time. Finally, on the fourth stomp, it appears that he has won her over, as she finally takes his hand and allows him to lead her through a series of steps. Though less than a minute into the dance, these two soloists from the Moiseyev Dance Company are already deep into reinforcing normative gender ideals. The portrayed male dominance through percussive movements, gestures, and power dynamics are merely a hint of the continued gendered undertones that saturate the latter six minutes of the performance.

Funded by the government of the Soviet Union during the Cold War era, the Moiseyev Dance Company toured the United States with performances of traditional folk dance as a political play to increase American cognizance and appreciation of Soviet (and now Russian) culture. However, an analysis of the dances shows more than simply political maneuvering and cultural representation. A viewing of the company's "Summer" suite shows obvious gender difference performed through a variety of modes. In order to fully understand the work these gender performances are accomplishing and the effects that they have, it is necessary to analyze these dances through the lens of the theory of gender performativity, adapting this theory to address the specialized performance element of world dance. While performance has largely been ignored in performativity studies in favor of more subtle iterations of gender expression, I argue that explicit modes of performance offer a valuable angle through which to study gender

performativity, since these performances constitute highly rehearsed, highly intentional formalized iterations of the ways in which gender is “supposed” to appear. Keeping this in mind, I will analyze two different types of world dance: Soviet folk dance and the tango. This analysis creates a picture of performative gender ideals across culture, time, and mode and shows the construction and deconstruction of the heteropatriarchy through performativity of costume, movement, body, and music.

While these two dances both express some degree of gender performativity, they vary widely in their methods, degrees of expression, and motives. State-sponsored Soviet folk dance has more explicitly political aims than the tango and is more governmentally-influenced, as the Moiseyev dance company aimed to normalize the Soviet Union through aesthetically choreographed and professionally performed folk dances. The two dances also have different degrees of explicit sexuality: tango is seen as an incredibly sensual and gendered dance, whereas Soviet folk dance is presented as more chaste. The discursive work that gender does in these performances highlights the pervasiveness of the gender dichotomy across a variety of genres.

Historically, the perceived “innate” differences between men and women, which differ along cultural and temporal contexts, have been explained through biological difference. Every aspect of life, from the clothing we wear to the jobs we have to the words we say, is impacted in some way by our collective perception of how our gender is supposed to act. This stark male-female dichotomy has traditionally been justified through biology; however, feminist theory has challenged this viewpoint. Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) set forth the beginning of the theory of gender performativity, the idea that gender and sex are not prescribed

biologically but rather constructed through constraints to create a normative ideal and an abjected out-group.

Since this is not, in fact, natural, the gender dichotomy must constantly be upheld through nonstop work. “Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (Butler 25). This is the essence of her theory of performativity: gender is not a natural law but rather a social construct that, by virtue of its unnaturalness, must be repeatedly acted. Theorist Sara Salih, in her writing *On Judith Butler and Performativity*, sums this argument:

All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social), which means that there is no “natural body” that pre-exists its cultural inscription. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one *is*, it is something one *does*, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a “doing” rather than a “being.” (Salih 55)

This *doing* gender rather than *being* gender is the crux of gender performativity.

Butler’s theories met with some criticism, one branch of it stemming from conflation of the terms *performativity* and *performance*. Critics argued that no one actively thinks about performing gender at all moments; therefore, they said, gender performativity must not be real. However, gender performativity does not claim that every human being wakes up and actively decides to perform their gender – quite the contrary. The theory posits that the construct of gender has such an all-encompassing role in society that every human being, at times

subconsciously and at times somewhat consciously, reinforces and reiterates their gender constantly, and this reiteration is so pervasive as to create the illusion of naturality.

Since the critics of gender performativity often mistook gender performance for staged performance and used that confusion to discredit the theory, Butler's foundational writings on the topic, such as *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, generally shied away from explicit mention of performance modes like dance and theater. She later explains the difference in a taped conversation with Julie Phelps about body-based performance art.

Performance is not restricted to the stage...when we talk about gender performance broadly, we're talking about it beyond the stage, in the audience, what we were doing before the show, on the streets and in the public, at the thresholds of public and private, within the home or within the shelter or within the privacy of one's own bathroom or somebody else's bathroom that your borrowing for the moment. (Phelps 2013)

While Butler eschews explicit performance in favor of everyday "performances," explicit performances such as dance offer a unique lense through which to study performativity due to their positioning as idealized representations of society. In stark contrast to the more subtle reiterated acts that constitute our daily lives, every aspect of a dance performance is highly intentional and, in the case of world dance especially, representative of a larger culture. Thus, an analysis of gendered performance in world dance has the potential to show the differences in this idealized gender expression both cross-culturally and also historically within a culture.

After applying these performativity theory frameworks to an analysis of state-sponsored Soviet dance and the tango, gender performativity will be shown to be uniquely applicable to

performance. The differences between the two dances provide a variety of different ways in which to analyze gender performativity through their variation in culture, religion, ethnicity, and background. For example, State-sponsored Soviet folk dance has more explicitly political aims than the tango and is more governmentally-influenced, as the Moiseyev dance company aimed to normalize the Soviet Union through aesthetically choreographed and professionally performed folk dances. The two dances also have different degrees of explicit sexuality: tango is seen as an incredibly sensual and gendered dance, whereas Soviet folk dance is presented as more chaste. I will draw from various aspects of dance, including body, music, movement, and costume, to analyze the gender ideals performed in these dances. Using that as a base, I will elaborate on the societal implications and effects of this performativity and the ideals and constructs that it upholds. This analysis will show the importance and impact of gender performativity, how that performativity of idealized gender roles upholds and reinforces the heteropatriarchy, and the role that ethno-identity dance plays in this discursive work.

Dance has always been an integral part of cultural identity. Traditional dance forms like Soviet/Russian folk dances and the tango are not simply dances; they are representations of the culture they come from. Performances of these dances display idealized versions of that culture, through measures from costume to physical appearance to precision of the dances. Through these methods, traditional dance performances perform idealized forms of gender. As sociologist Helen Thomas writes in her study of dance, gender, and culture, “The men’s dance style is a crystallisation of what it means to be a male member of their culture. The women’s dance style is a crystallisation of what it means to be a female member of that culture” (12). In these two

vignettes, gender is portrayed in vastly different ways, from gendered music and movement to clear dynamics of dominance.

In this paper, I will apply the theory of gender performativity to two traditional dances. The first is the Moiseyev dance company's productions of traditional Soviet village dances. These dances are explicitly removed from their place of origin (a village) and altered and perfected for performance to more urban elites, not just in the Soviet Union but as a tool of nationalist representation around the world. Secondly, I will look at the tango, a dance form that originated in Argentina. For the tango, I look at a range of performance styles, from street dance to low-budget video of professional dancers to famous movie scenes. For each of these types of dance, I analyze video, written accounts of the dance, and academic writing. Applying the theory of gender performativity to both of these, I look at the ways in which each of these dance forms incorporate gender – sometimes subconsciously, sometimes consciously, and sometimes in an inseparable mixture of the two. Both of these dances, in their own way, does the work of reaffirming and upholding gender norms, providing highly rehearsed, highly intentional iterations of the gender norms that exist in everyday society.

The Moiseyev dance company was formed in 1937 at the request of the Soviet government, who saw dance, especially folk dance, as “the people's art” and a symbol of ethnic identity (Ethno Identity 64). Drawing from traditional village dances and spectacularizing and perfecting them for the stage, Moiseyev created an unparalleled repertoire of Soviet folk dance that collectivized Soviet identity, which was a key goal of the emerging government, especially at a time when emerging Soviet identity and longer-held Russian identity were in tension. Dance ethnologist Anthony Shay writes that, “It was in this nationalist and political climate in which

Igor Moiseyev founded his company to celebrate both Russian and Soviet multinational identities” (Moiseyev 26). Folk dance had the additional goal of romanticizing the rural proletariat, playing into Bolshevik values. The Moiseyev company went on to a hugely successful U.S. tour in the 1950s, dispelling decades of McCarthyist work portraying all Soviets as vilified Communists. Through these critically acclaimed performances, Moiseyev and the Soviet government created an idealized version of Soviet identity. One only has to watch the Summer suite, first performed in 1958, to see that gender roles were an integral part of this identity.

The suite opens with a line of women on the left and men on the right, with two soloists in the middle: one man and one woman. As the music begins, the man stomps his foot at the woman, who smiles and looks abashedly away. The man stomps twice more with similar results, then finally stomps and extends his hand to her. The woman, having seemingly acquiesced, takes his hand as he leads her through a series of steps. The gender difference in this suite is glaringly obvious: every movement is done according to gender, with the men doing a series of steps before giving way to the women, after which the whole process repeats itself. Movement is gendered, with the men performing athletic jumps, squats, and kicks and the women doing dainty, small steps as they appear to float across the stage. The difference is not only visual; it is also auditory. The music changes to reflect each change in gender, with the men’s large movements accompanied by boisterous percussion, trumpets, and bells. The women, in contrast, dance to light and airy flutes, piccolos, and violins. The change is incredibly obvious, with the music entirely shifting as one gender makes way for the other.

These gender differences are no accident, as the Moiseyev dances have been meticulously choreographed and perfect with the express purpose of representing the epitome of Soviet identity. The gender norms reflected in this suite and in the Moiseyev dances as a whole are emblematic of Soviet constructions of gender, and seeing the dances performed in this way reiterates those constructions, doing the work of Butler's theory of performativity in a highly visual way. To understand these representations of gender, one must consider the impact of Bolshevism, which at the time influenced everything in the nation. Women's rights and Bolshevism have an interesting relationship: on the surface, Bolshevism was centered around equality as it worked to erase inequalities caused by structural class oppression. Because of this, the Bolsheviks claimed to be progressive on women's rights; however, in reality, tensions between the women's department of the government and the rest of the state were high, as the rest of the state often refused to acknowledge that solving sexual oppression required taking into account multiple interlocking systems of domination (Goldman 35).

Furthermore, attitudes towards women by Soviet officials were often outright sexist: government memos portrayed female workers as backwards and quiescent, and women were seen as the tools of reproduction, the "mother-worker" (Goldman 36). Historian S. Ashwin details this:

The Bolshevik conception of gender was [far] from any kind of feminism: all that interested the regime was that men and women serve the state in the way implied by their assumed 'natural' characteristics. Thus, it was taken for granted that mothers had a distinct biologically defined role which extended beyond birth and breast-feeding. In this

way, Soviet women were relegated to reproducing the future of the nation, creating a concrete gender difference. (11)

This can be applied to the roles of men and women in the Summer suite. All of the men do the same steps, and all of the women do the same steps, which reflects class equality. However, the movement and music for the men and women are worlds apart, performing the notion of men as athletic laborers and women as more passive mothers. The opening scene between the two soloists shows the man taking the lead, reflecting the fact that male dominance was still normative (Ashwin 12). Interestingly, while gender is an integral part of the Summer suite, the dance is almost devoid of sexuality. Dancers dance in heterosexual couples, but the dancing itself is very chaste, which reflects Bolshevik attitudes towards sex and sexuality. Love and sexual attraction were seen as “detracting from the revolutionary struggle” (Ashwin 6), and so the Moiseyev dances remained gendered yet chaste. All in all, the Moiseyev dances in the 1950s were performative of Soviet gender ideals that espoused male dominance, sexual difference, and women’s roles as worker-mothers, but shied away from overt sexuality.

The performance of these Soviet gender ideals can be compared and contrasted to the tango, an Argentine dance. Unlike with the Moiseyev company, for the tango I do not research one specific company. Instead, I look at a wide range of performance types, from dances staged for film to street performances. Similarly to the Summer suite, performances of tango have blatant gender dichotomies and normatized roles. For the Summer suite, these performances were gendered but not sexualized. In contrast, tango is often a highly sexualized dance. Dance ethnographer Anthony Shay details the origins of this, saying, “From its inception in...Buenos Aires...the tango—through its intimate embrace, the pressing of the male body against the

female—indicated and promised sexiness” (Ethno Identity 111). Even after undergoing a sanitization during its appropriation by members of the upper class, tango to many is still inextricably linked to sex and sexuality.

For my studies of gender in tango, I looked at several different videos. The first was a video aptly titled “Argentine Traditional Street Dancers in Buenos Aires,” featuring a heterosexual couple performing tango on a sidewalk in front of a small crowd. The street performance aspect of this dance as well as the fact that it is done in Buenos Aires makes it less likely to have been altered drastically to cater to an international audience, as would be the case with a movie scene of tango. This dance showcases some of the deeply entrenched aspects of tango. In it, a man and a woman slowly approach one another before embracing softly. The man wears a dress suit and pants, while the woman wears a tight two-piece dress with a slit. As the music begins, they begin to dance, pressed up tightly against one another. The man has his hand on the small of the woman’s back, leading all the steps and pressing on her back to indicate these changes (an exchange called *la marca*), while the woman follows. The dancers’ legs move in intricate footwork as the dancers fluidly move and spin across the stage. It is clearly a very heterosexual dance.

The second video I looked at is from the 2006 dance drama film “Take the Lead,” starring Antonio Banderas. In this video, the dance teacher, played by Banderas, dances the tango with a student named Morgan. This dance expressly portrays the gendered roles present in the tango: Banderas is in control of the movement of the entire dance as he lifts, moves, and spins Morgan. Meanwhile, she puts her hands around him, presses up against him, and slides her leg up his body, showing overt sexuality. The filming focuses entirely on Morgan’s body,

showing close-ups and slow motion video of her body and revealing, skin-tight dress, while failing to do the same for Banderas's character. This dance is a perfect example of the male dominance that historically has characterized the tango, coupled with both the general sexualization but also the female objectification. With over 40 million views on YouTube, this video is clearly very popular, and comments underscore the dance's sexuality. One user remarked, "Tango is sexier than sex," another said simply, "The tango is a very sexy dance," and a third said, "You know, they may as well have had actual sex in the room and the reaction would be the same." For this video, it is important to note the positionality of the film. "Take the Lead" is a U.S. film marketed to U.S. audiences, and so its portrayal of tango is going to include U.S. stereotypes about tango and Argentine culture that would not be present in an Argentine film.

The themes of gender, sex, and sexuality portrayed in these videos are emblematic of larger themes in both the genre of tango and Argentina itself. To understand the dynamics at play, it is necessary to look at the broader scope of gender in Argentina and especially *machismo*, the manifestation of masculinity in Latin America. In his chapter on the tango, Shay writes, "Machismo still constitutes the hegemonic masculine ideal in most of Latin America, against which masculinity, real and imagined, is measured." (Ethno Identity 114). While machismo itself, like masculinity in general, is hard to define, some major tenets of machismo are aggressive heterosexuality, homophobia, and dominance over women. In Samantha Boyce and Zachary Buchholz's study of masculinity, they draw upon several scholars' definitions of the subject. Main ideas of these scholars are that in Latin America, the macho represents the ideal masculine: aggressive, sexually powerful, virile, conscious of his power, and confident.

Machismo itself involves continued, repetitive assertion of domination over women. Finally, a “system of the macho” is one that men control.

Looking at the videos of tango, it is evident that machismo and the tango are inextricably linked. This can be summed up by dance historian Richard Martin, who notes, “No dance plays command against subjugation as supremely and concisely as the tango does. More than any other dance, it is gender-led” (Ethno Identity 141). The tango aligns closely with all the major tenets of machismo, being an overtly heterosexual dance where the man takes control. All of the aforementioned characteristics – aggression, virility, male dominance – are displayed full force in stereotypical iterations of the tango, like the videos of the street performers and “Take the Lead.” For example, the revealing outfits of Morgan, the physical control of her body by Banderas’s character, and the focus of the filmography on her body all show machismo and the way that tango allows Banderas’s character to exhibit virile, heterosexual masculinity. The performative aspects of this are described by researcher Jane Desmond, who wrote in her book about choreographing sexualities that “sexualities must be rendered visible through performative markers of speech, movement, fashion, or subcultural cues. They must, in a sense, be declared” (6). By declaring and performing these aspects of gender and sexuality, these performances of the tango reinscribe both Argentine conceptions of gender but also U.S. stereotypes of those conceptions.

Gender in tango can also be seen not only through the dance itself but through the manner in which partners for the dance are selected, through a process known as wallflowering, where the women sit or stand on the edges of the room and wait to be summoned by the men. This shows stereotypical male-female relations where the women remain passive until a man chooses

them, at which point they obey. (Recall the opening to the Summer suite of the Moiseyev company, where the man stomped until the woman acquiesced.) Many women involved in tango and wallflowering have remarked on how mentally and emotionally difficult and degrading the practice was, as it judged the women by how well they portrayed idealized norms of femininity and beauty. Dance researcher Marta Savigliano remarked that this shaped not only masculine identity as the macho controllers but also feminine identity through these various processes, saying, “Women’s identities were born out of the competition among men: Macho men of different colors and classes pulling at women from different directions shaped women’s nameless identities” (31). In this way, we can note an important facet of machismo and the tango: women stand quietly to the side, out of the spotlight, until summoned by a man. This was true both literally on the dance floor and metaphorically in the rest of life.

Through strict heterosexuality, aggressive sexuality, and the overarching theme of dominance over women, the tango in its most stereotypical form clearly performs traditional Argentine gender roles, in keeping with machismo. The tango itself is a place where a man can *perform* his masculinity and a woman can perform her femininity in a highly visible, prescribed manner. Drawing on Butler’s theory of performativity once more, the tango can be reconfigured as a very active place of gender performativity. Dancers of the tango are constantly reaffirming their roles: men affirm their sexuality and confidence by selecting a partner, pulling her close, and leading her around the dance floor. Meanwhile, women strive to attain ideal standards of beauty and femininity so that they are chosen, thus reinforcing the hegemony of these standards, then perform their (hetero)sexuality once they are chosen on the dance floor.

It is important to recognize that all tango dances are not sites of incredible sexism and male dominance. One specific counter to the hegemonic gender ideals is tango queer, commonly danced by two men. Sometimes, one takes the role of the leader and the other follows (Don & Agustín), and sometimes the two men take turns leading and following (Ethno Identity 109). Tango queer is an important example of gender performativity that goes *against* normative gender roles. The key components of heterosexuality and homophobia generally shown through the tango are shattered during a tango queer performance as the audience is mesmerized by this new iteration of the dance. The instability of gender norms are seen through this – when a society’s entire conception of gender and masculinity can be turned on its head through a dance performance, the true impermanence and fragility of those constructions are revealed. Through tango queer, we can see the ways that gender performativity can be used to break down gender norms, not reinforce them. This queering of traditional dance opens the gates to further sites of non-normative performativity and resistance.

The Soviet folk dances and the tango each individually show different cultures’ perceptions of gender roles and the ways in which those roles get transcribed and prescribed onto the stage, thus being reinforced and reiterated in a highly intentional, visual manner. Independently, these dances each perform different aspects of gender. In the Moiseyev dances, we saw how Bolshevik conceptions of women as worker-mothers led to strict separation of men and women where each gender performed entirely different steps to entirely different music. The men’s steps were more athletic, took up more space, and were set to loud, percussive music. In contrast, the women’s steps were dainty, light, and were set to airy flutes, piccolos, and violins.

These differences are performative of conceptions of men as hard laborers and women as reproductive tools.

In the tango, we saw how the Argentine conception of masculinity, *machismo*, shaped a dance in which women wait to be chosen by men, wear tight outfits, and are finally led around the stage by men in a tightly held, overtly sexual dance sequence. These movements are performative of macho ideals of male dominance and heterosexuality. However, we also saw how tango queer has been used to deconstruct these macho ideals.

Considered together, the two dances also interact to show how certain aspects of gender roles remain constant throughout different cultures and eras. The Moiseyev dances were the result of centuries of Soviet/Russian folk dance combined with Bolshevism and the motivations of the Soviet government, and the tango originated on the other side of the globe in Argentina, influenced by colonialism and machismo. Despite these differences, the two dances reflect some strikingly similar conceptions of gender. Both have rigidly different roles for men and women, with the men taking the lead. Both dances also involve men actively choosing the woman, as is shown through the Summer suite opening sequence and the practice of wallflowering. While the degree of expression of sexuality is vastly different, the overarching performativity of heteropatriarchal values remains the same. Although the two areas have different forms of patriarchy, parallels can be drawn between the two. It is fascinating to see that through two completely different dance forms, created with different backstories on different sides of the globe, the same general themes of gender were performed.

The Moiseyev dance company and the tango, through their usage of movement and music, show another piece of evidence that gender roles are not innate or biological; rather, they

are socially conditioned through repetition of normative ideals. As the dances are meticulously choreographed performances, their portrayal of gender is no accident. Every musical cue, every movement, every grouping is specifically thought out, and in these cases, they are thought out in a manner that purposefully reproduces gender norms, proving the validity of performativity theory. An analysis of these two types of dance shows the importance of considering performance – especially folk/traditional dance performance – in performativity theory. This analysis shows the social construction of gender, how those constructions are purposefully reproduced so as to seem natural, and the way that cultural and historical placement impacts those constructions.

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