

English abstract

Ballet History's *Other* : Modern scenic dance in Denmark 1900 – 1975
Ph.D. dissertation by Karen Vedel

The dissertation aims to 'complicate' the unilinearly narrated history of theatrical dance in Denmark with regard to 1900 – 1975, which has until now been told exclusively as the history of Danish ballet. More specifically it proposes for historical examination the hypothesis, that the process of hegemonisation of ballet entailed an *othering* of various contemporary dance forms, many of which were introduced in Denmark by touring dancers and dance companies. The introduction presents the historiographic concerns and methodological strategies, that inform the work. Most important is the preliminary mapping of dance as a field of cultural production in four synchronic maps covering the years 1900, 1925, 1950 and 1975, which function individually as points of departure and collectively as a three dimensional 'grid' for the six thematically organized chapters, that form the bulk of the Ph.D:

The first chapter titled 'Staged modernity – dancing girls' discusses the danced representations of modernity in variety shows and revues in the first decades of the 1900's in conjunction with the contemporary debate on Americanization, 'dancing girls' and 'girls culture'.

The second chapter titled 'Antique longings – barefoot dance and plastique' examines the reception of Duncan in Denmark in 1906, showing how the ballet authority Ove Jørgensen, used her performance to motivate the construction of a national monument over August Bournonville. Based on the role of plastique in the ballet school of Jenny Møller and in Agnete Bertram's women's gymnastics, it is argued, that not only did the antique longings flourish in Denmark in the 1920's, they also contributed to a blurring of the boundaries between the otherwise discretely constituted genres of ballet and gymnastics.

The heading of the third chapter, 'The modern breakthrough – ballet à la Fokin', points towards a rupture, positioning Fokin as a potential successor to Bournonville. In the tension created between the fear of Bolshevism and the need for artistic innovation, Fokin was seen as a threat to national values by some, as a saviour of the art form by others. The chapter discusses the consequences of the exclusionary policy of the Royal Danish Ballet for other Copenhagen venues, which featured 'fokinized' dancers from the Swedish Opera Ballet. One of these was Jean Börlin, whose Swedish Ballet, when it opened in Paris in 1920, counted five male dancers from The Royal Danish Ballet in the company.

The fourth chapter 'Disillusioned expressivity - free dance' offers a comparison of the reception of the German dance artist Harald Kreutzberg and the ballet of Kurt Jooss, who appeared in Denmark both before and after the German occupation, in conjunction with a critical examination of the 3rd International Choreographic Competition, arranged by Les Archives Internationales de la Danse in Copenhagen in 1947. It is suggested that the combination of a post 1945 aversion to 'germaneness' with the socially and politically engaged choreography, that characterized the competition, contributed to the positioning of 'free dance' as 'foreign' to a Danish ballet aesthetic.

Chapter five, 'Ecstatic exotism – 'negro dance'', interrogates the subtle transformations in the meaning of 'negro dance', as seen through the reception of guest performances by Chocolate Kiddies, Josephine Baker, Louis Douglas, Talley Beatty, Keita Fodeba, Berto Pasuka, Katherine Dunham and Alvin Ailey. Based on reviews, programmes and occasional interviews, it is demonstrated, how the identity of the 'negro dancer' is linguistically constructed in an image, that gradually shifts from the primitive, unspoilt and childlike over the ecstatic, possessed and hypnotic to the authentic, in a process that results in the formation of two new genres or discursive formations around 1960: African dance and jazz ballet

The final chapter, 'Modern Dance – *the modern dance*' demonstrates how the political climate in the late 1960's and early 70's encouraged an internationalisation and modernization as well as a 'democratization' of the art form, which bore fruit i.e. in Danish TV's commitment to producing and broadcasting both domestic and international dance. Furthermore the role of dance in the cultural diplomatic relations between the two superpowers in the cold war is discussed in terms of its effect on both import and export of dance from Denmark. Finally the futility of the question 'when did Modern Dance come to Denmark' is proposed in a brief discussion of the performances by Paul Taylor (1968), Martha Graham (1954) and Ruth Page (1937). Using an array of source materials, which have not previously been treated in Danish dance history, the dissertation provides the basis for a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of the history of theatrical dance in the 1900's.