

Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton Research Seminars 2011/12

Musical Identity and Dance Classicism: A contemporary study of Sattriya performance tradition in India

Dr Menaka Bora, Wingate Scholar-Artiste in Ethnomusicology, University of Oxford, Faculty of Music

13 [or 27?] October 2011, 6pm

Blurb not found.

Choreographing Dis-Appearences in Civic Spaces

Dr Carol Brown, University of Auckland and the University of Roehampton

Thursday 15 December 2011, 6.00pm

How might narrative and ephemeral acts of performance open spaces for redefining the civic within postcolonial cities, acknowledging without appropriating the deep rivers of story and memory held in indigenous ontologies and perceptions? In acknowledging traumatic histories of place how can site-responsive choreography offer alternative visions of the lived past and present future?

Choreographer and academic, Dr Carol Brown will discuss her recent work in Perth, Western Australia and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, *Tongues of Stone*. Together with performance designer Dorita Hannah (Massey University) and sound artist Russell Scoones, she has evolved a critical practice for performing the city through the choreography of sound, movement, design and audience informed by dramaturgies of the disappeared. In revealing the history of settler based societies as forms of ecological imperialism this work seeks to resonate with the hidden nature of the city, its subterranean fluids and written-over histories. Rather than site-specific performance that addresses the locational specificity, qualities and behaviours of the contemporary city this work pays attention to absences, listening to the 'awful silence' of what is not visible, no longer heard, or palpably present. Such an approach can be considered part of a wider movement towards a loosening of Western hegemonic practices of space through the invention of new spatial practices that mark place differently.

Refining the Past: The Early Historical and Folk Dance Revivals of Fin de Siècle England

Professor Theresa Buckland, DeMontfort University

23 February 2012, 6pm

Theresa Buckland is Professor of Performing Arts at De Montfort University, Leicester. She is the author of *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870-1920* (Palgrave, 2011) and the editor of two international collections, *Dancing in the Field: Theory, Methods and Issues in Dance Ethnography* (Macmillan, 1999) and *Dancing from Past to Present. Nation, Culture, Identities* (Wisconsin University Press, 2006). The seminar explores connections in ideology and personnel between the two movements of the historical dance and folk revivals in relation to the wider dance culture of the period and to socio-cultural, political and economic developments of the late Victorian and Edwardian era. Victorian and Edwardian representations of dances from earlier times have often been ignored or dismissed by later dance historians as misguided, inaccurate or simply as fanciful invention. Architects of the English folk dance revival have similarly been criticised for their lack of understanding of context and history.

Over a hundred years later, it is time to re-examine these fin de siècle efforts to reconstruct dances of the former court and countryside.

Joan Myers Brown & The Audacious Hope of the Black Ballerina: A Biohistory of American Performance

Professor Brenda Dixon-Gottschild

10 May 2012, 6pm

Brenda Dixon Gottschild, author of 'Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance', 'Waltzing in the Dark', and 'The Black Dancing Body', is professor emerita of Dance Studies at Temple University and a former senior consultant and writer for Dance Magazine. She lectures nationally and internationally, using her own dancing/thinking body to illustrate her ideas and blur the division between practice and theory. This seminar will be about her latest book about Myers Brown. Founder of the Philadelphia Dance Company (PHILADANCO) and the Philadelphia School of Dance Arts, Joan Myers Brown's personal and professional history reflects the hardships and the accomplishments of African Americans in the artistic and social developments through the 20th century and into the new millennium. Dixon Gottschild uses Brown's career to leverage an exploration of the connection between performance, society, and race, exploring a concert dance tradition that has had no voice to tell its story. Brown's background and richly contoured biography are object lessons in survival—a true American narrative.

Making Dance Epic: Brecht, (The Royal) Ballet, Britain, and the BBC

Dr Helena Hammond, University of Roehampton

26 January 2012, 6pm

This seminar paper investigates the operation of the dancing body in establishing the estrangement effect in Brechtian epic theatre, a theatre which for Brecht scholar Sarah Bryant-Bertail revolves around the "staging of historicity itself". Especially concerned with the processes through which a hitherto overlooked but crucial strand of post-war British dance theatre has been able to establish a critical space from which to mount a Brechtian critique of dance history, and of recent British dance history in particular, this paper's particular interest is with the Royal Ballet, and with two ballets danced by the company especially: its staging of William Forsythe's *Steptext*, as part of the company's final, July 1997 performances at the Royal Opera House prior to the theatre's two-year closure for a multi-million pound millennial re-fit; and Kenneth MacMillan's spoken ballet, *Isadora*, danced by the company, at the same theatre, to mark the Royal Ballet's fiftieth birthday in 1981.

This paper proposes an interpretation of the Royal Ballet in Brechtian terms. It reads the company as in many ways a feminised, exilic body labouring at the epicentre of the Arts Council firmament, in order to argue that the Royal Ballet's privileged position of estrangement enabled it to stage the most searching Brechtian critique not only of British dance history but also, on occasion, of the British cultural establishment at the heart of which the company has operated. A special case is made by this chapter for the extra-textual properties of dance, both to circumvent British theatre censorship prior to its abolition in 1968, and as an intrinsic component of Brecht's conception of epic theatre, two aspects ignored or little acknowledged in the standard literatures on post-war British theatre and Brecht. The BBC's adaptation of the 1997 Royal Ballet Forsythe performances for screening, this paper goes on to suggest, extended and particularised *Steptext's* potential for Brechtian critique to the Royal Opera House at a discrete moment in that institution's history and - in a gesture that is also highly Brechtian - in terms that grant agency to the television audience to enter into some critical deconstruction of their own. Consequently this paper is able to argue that key strands of post-war British dance theatre amount to crucial but hitherto missing chapters in the British reception of Brecht.

Dancing in the Shadow of Death: Communication and the Incommunicable

Dr Kirsi Heimonen, Performing Arts Research Centre, Theatre Academy, Helsinki

22 March 2012, 6pm

The seminar will explore some features about the communication between a dance artist and people living with memory loss in a nursing home. The artistic research (practice based research, research in the arts, research through the arts) will illuminate some features in the long-term project. Sensibility and intimacy form a base of the communication with the residents where otherness is valued. The other always remains as the other that cannot be grasped or possessed. This has its origin in the ethics by Emmanuel Levinas, where the other always remains foreign. Vulnerability is a method of communication with the residents. Artistic actions open up in the proximity of the residents, and residents are part of the art-making, for example in dance performances or in a short film. Many questions have emerged. What are the possibilities and the meaning of art among people who live in the shadow of death? How their presence influences the works of art? How writing can tell about the communication that falls to the area of non-knowledge? Some photos and excerpts from a short film *How to exist* (2011) will be shown. Kirsi Heimonen is an affiliated researcher from the Performing Arts Research Centre of the Theatre Academy, Helsinki. In Helsinki she works as a dance artist in the social and health sector in a public foundation called Helsinki Deaconess Institute. She is also artist-researcher in an EU-project where the aim is to research the influence of art-based methods at various work places.

REGENERATION THROUGH DANCE: Nijinsky's *Sacre* (1913) with Roerich & Stravinsky for Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* and Borlin's *Creation du Monde* (1923), with Cendrars, Milhaud & Leger for de Mare's *Ballets Suedois*

Dr Millicent Hodson

8 March 2012, 6pm

Dr Millicent Hodson is an independent scholar who works on reconstructing modern ballets, using a multidisciplinary approach and working together with her husband, art historian Kenneth Archer. The seminar will explore these two ballets from just before and after World War I, based on myths of creation and renewal--Slavic and West African. The subtext of *Sacre* is anxiety about the threat to civilization an anticipated war posed and, in *Creation*, the recovery of Europe from the hostilities, especially the burnt fields of France which figure in the decor despite its African setting. *Sacre* can be labelled Russian Futurist and *Creation* Cubist. Both fused ancient myths with modernist aesthetics and both provoked in their collaborators new musical, scenic and choreographic alternatives to established dance theatre, while at the same time addressing psychological and social issues of the time. There will be a number of DVD screenings in the course of the evening.

Standing Tall, Reaching Far: an Investigation into Dance for People Living with Parkinson's

Dr Sara Houston and Ashley McGill, University of Roehampton

11 November 2011, 6pm

Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease that affects over 250,000 people in the UK alone. Symptoms include decreased proprioceptive abilities, decreased stability, stooped posture in the thoracic spine, and loss of motor control and coordination (Vaugoyeau et al., 2007; Nieuwboer et al., 1998). These physiological changes can cause not only physical pain, but also feelings of loneliness, frustration and decreased self-confidence and depression. The paper will present the triangulated analysis from research carried out from October 2010 – February 2011. The research examined an artistic project run by the Learning Department of English National Ballet. It examined the physiological effects and qualitative experience of 12 weeks of dance sessions once a week for people with Parkinson's. The only criterion for inclusion in the dance classes was that the participants be diagnosed with Parkinson's and could be at any level of disease progression.

The presentation will outline the research methods used to assess the project and the results. As a mixed-methods study, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. Methods included semi-structured interviews with participants, project leaders and carers, an analysis of participant diaries, a validated balance and stability test (Fullerton Advanced Balance Scale), a 2D postural assessment and a track of each participant's physical and artistic journey through the 12 weeks using film footage and participant-observation.

Due to the broad scope encompassed by the research methods, a number of conclusions were drawn from analysing data. It was clear from these that a dance project can aid people with Parkinson's in a variety of ways, physically, mentally and socially. The paper will discuss some of the wider implications of the conclusions drawn. It will offer ideas that explore why dance became so important to this group of people. The paper will weave ideas around forgetting or accepting illness and atypical ways of moving, together with notions of dance as 'magical', 'escapist' on the one hand, and 'creative' and 'educative' on the other. A third thread, characterised by the idea of communal identity, determination and achievement will add a further layer to the discussion.

Relationality in Ikoku Dance Experience

Dr Carine Plancke, University of Nice

27 October 2011, 6pm

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Asian Performing Arts Forum

CDR co-hosted three events with the Asian Performing Arts Forum. APAF is a strategic partnership between the Centre for International Theatre and Performance Research at Royal Holloway, University of London, Roehampton University's Centre for Dance Research and the East Asian Performance Research Group at the University of Reading, with the support of the Centre for Creative Collaboration (C4CC) on Acton Street, London WC1.

Ganga! Predicament and Opportunity for Innovating Chinese Opera in the New Millennium

Speaker not known

26 September 2011

Crossroads and Intersections

Tay Tong

30 November 2011

The representations of Korea in Japanese theatre

Carol Fischer Sorgenfrei

1 December 2011