

Editor's Note

The first article by Harmony Bench, “Mapping Touring: Remediating Concert Dance Archives,” presents an ongoing project that seeks to examine the growing interest in combining the field of digital humanities with dance studies.¹ The case study for this article involves mapping and analyzing Denishawn’s touring before and after the company’s tour of Asia in 1925–1926. This project, as the author notes, is positioned “within the archival turn in dance,” and as such, it builds on recent digital archival projects in this area that involve dance. At the same time, however, Bench sets out the differences and the potential of Mapping Touring’s “spatial analysis” approach from the more common digital archival projects that focus on an individual choreographer’s work or that of a group, or of particular archives.

The following article, “A Dance of Resistance from Recife, Brazil: Carnavalesque Improvisation in Frevo,” by Kathleen A. Spanos, is based on ethnographic research, which included taking classes and learning frevo, attending carnivals, interviewing teachers and practitioners, and observing. The origins of frevo stem from the Brazilian martial art *capoeira*, and it is from *capoeira*, Spanos notes, that frevo derives its “form of resistance.” She also argues that frevo is fundamentally “carnavalesque,” inasmuch as it is performed in the heavily packed carnival streets, which can frequently erupt in violence, and (following Bakhtin 1984) “when hierarchies are disrupted.” Spanos uses the term “carnavalesque improvisation” to describe this engagement of frevo practitioners. She also notes that the frevo practitioners did not like the word improvisation due to its negative associations in the Portuguese language (*improviso*), as lacking in “preparation” and “technique,” along class and race lines. However, Spanos discusses how the term “carnavalesque improvisation” dislocated those negative linguistic connotations.

Amy Swanson’s article “Gender and Sexual Transgression in Contemporary Dance Works by Senegalese Men,” which is also based on ethnographic research, focusses on three dance pieces by contemporary Senegalese choreographers whose work develops out of the spaces between the “local” and the “global,” and which are set against the expectations of cultural values that are associated with gender and sexuality. Swanson draws on the knotted relations between the local and the global as an “analytic tool” for her analysis of the choreographic works, which reveal the artists drawing on “gender and sexual transgressions” on the one hand, and what appears to be verbal intonations that go against that reading on the other. Swanson considers that these contemporary dance works suggest “ambiguous assemblages of masculinities” that confront the notion of masculinity in Senegal.

The penultimate article by Daniela Perazzo Domm, titled “Im/possible Choreographies: Diffractive Processes and Ethical Entanglements in Current British Dance Practices,” centers on an analysis of particular dance works performed in the past five years in the UK, which, she argues, take on “ethical possibilities” that can contribute to a rethinking and opening of “difference and boundaries” through what she terms “ethico-aesthetic” practices in the current unstable, precarious political environment in the UK and Europe, for example. The theoretical framing and analysis draw on Karen Barad’s construct of “intra-action,” which, as Perazzo Dome notes, is formulated in

discussion with Donna Haraway's notion of "diffraction." The analysis of the dance performances in question are examined in terms of their inherent "materialist" ethical practices, which Barad's construct offers. The materialist stance adopted here also builds on other dance scholars' approaches, whose discussions of choreographic practices analytically engage with "the complexities and contradictions of the present."

In "Choreographic Ghosts: Dance and the Revival of *Shuffle Along*," by Joanna Dee Das, as indicated in the title, considers the remaking of a 1921 popular musical which was noted for its all-black cast and the team that created it. The remake in 2016, with George C. Wolfe as director and Savion Glover as choreographer, took the form of a backstage musical and was titled *Shuffle Along, Or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed*. Dee Das notes that, despite the fact that the 2016 director announced that dance was the principal component of the original musical, the choreographer of the 1921 production, Lawrence Deas, was not given a byline, nor did the production consider the dancers' contribution. Indeed, as she shows, dance did not play such a large part in the 2016 musical. These omissions, Dee Das argues, reveal how dance "remains subordinate to other aspects of a musical" which in turn replicates "racist and embodied sexist logics about embodied performance."

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Note

1. The British Academy considers that the field of digital humanities is at "the leading edge of applying computer-based technology in the humanities" (The British Academy, [n.d.](#)). This relatively new field has developed over a period of forty years and has generated new methods that can be applied to, for example, archives.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- The British Academy. n.d. "What Are the Digital Humanities?" Accessed September 18, 2019. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/what-are-digital-humanities>.