

that he met the American farm machinery tycoon Cyrus McCormick Jr. at the Winter Palace in Petrograd in the summer of 1917? More problematically, Press sometimes relies too heavily on Prokofiev's interpretation of events. Can we be sure the composer remembered entire conversations correctly and, moreover, that these are left unmassaged? In places where Press consults other sources, the narrative feels less one-sided, as in his discussion of Prokofiev and Boris Kochno's competing claims to conceiving a ballet on the theme of the prodigal son (86).

Press's analysis of the scores remains separate from his discussion of design and choreography, most of which is embedded in his first chapter. One cannot help imagining that if the material in "The Collaboration" had been integrated into the three case studies, more resonant connections among Prokofiev's ballets for Diaghilev might have emerged. In his discussion of *Chout's* "Dance of the Seven Wives," Press notes an intriguing conflict between the "soft, smoothly gliding" (166) musical theme and the grossness of the peasant women whose dance it accompanies. The reader then must flip back a hundred pages to find a short description of Mikhail Larionov's choreography, a mix of classical steps, character dance, and acrobatics. An examination of music in tandem with choreography and design would have strengthened Press's point, as would a broader discussion of choreographic trends (this hybrid style was, after all, employed by both Massine and Balanchine) and of Larionov's faux-naïve paintings of peasants from the early 1900s (clearly an influence on the ballet). We get tantalizing glimpses of such integrated analysis in his chapter on *Le fils prodigue*. He points out disparities between Balanchine's choreography and Prokofiev's musical cues (repetitions and changes in orchestration, register, and tempo). He also

aligns the grotesque acrobatics of the revelers with humorous musical elements: "the rapid traversal of notes across a very wide range (D to d³)," "the phantasmagorical manipulation of rather slender melodic material," "unusual instrumentation and exploitation of extreme tessitura" (268).

Prokofiev's Ballets for Diaghilev hovers between monograph and integrative study. To say this is not to dismiss the important contributions Press has made to our understanding of Prokofiev and the Ballets Russes. It is simply to point out the difficulties facing all intrepid scholars who wade into such interdisciplinary waters.

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HOWLING NEAR HEAVEN: TWYLA THARP AND THE REINVENTION OF MODERN DANCE

by Marcia B. Siegel. 2006. New York: St. Martin's. 326 pp., notes, selected bibliography, acknowledgements, index. \$26.95 cloth.

Twyla Tharp has long been a prominent figure in American dance, but her current national visibility—due to the continued tour of the musical *Movin' Out* and a surge of interest in her repertory among regional ballet companies—makes now a fitting time for the publication of Marcia Siegel's biography. (The title riffs on a 1995 Tharp ballet, *How Near Heaven*.) Tharp's innovative choreographic output (and her savvy self-marketing) has vaulted her among American modern dance choreographers like Paul Taylor and Alvin Ailey. However, her place in dance history has not been thoroughly considered. Lacking a serious biography of Tharp, we have been forced to allow her 1992 autobiography, *Push Comes to Shove*, to document her artistic

development. Siegel fills this historical void, chronicling Tharp's career with an acute sense of detail. That detail makes the book an important resource for the dance scholar but may make it less accessible for the passing Tharp enthusiast.

Siegel spends little time in the book plumbing possible meanings of Tharp's work. There is no introduction, and most of the chapters begin with only a paragraph or sometimes a page-long gesture to what might be characterized as a larger argument for Tharp's place within dance history. Instead, Siegel's scrupulously thick descriptions of movement practically become the book's argument, as though she wants Tharp's work to tell its own story of why and how it is important. A portrait of an artist does emerge from Siegel's words: one of an artist stunningly astute at reconceiving her work within different historical moments and institutions and also capable of deciding what she wants to do next, then defining success in that endeavor utterly on her own terms.

Howling Near Heaven follows Tharp's shifting foci in a strictly chronological manner, methodically recounting the timeline of Tharp's career. Siegel follows the many iterations of Tharp: her days as an avant-garde downtown New York loft-dweller; the slick, image-conscious Tharp captured in photographer Richard Avedon's photos; and the versatile choreographer who launched herself from modern dance into the worlds of ballet, film, and Broadway. Twelve chapters divide Tharp's dance career into periods from her first decade in New York, "Leotard Days, 1965–1966," to the final chapter, "Near Heaven, 1995–2005," which closes the book with the Tony-award winning success of *Movin' Out*. Most chapters take smaller bites of time, following three to four years of Tharp's career. Siegel's descriptions of Tharp's artistic eclecticism firmly bolster her claim that Tharp was

one of the creators of the now familiar "crossover" phenomenon, a trend largely associated with modern choreographers making work for ballet companies.

Though interviews with Tharp clearly resonate in Siegel's construction of history, the voices of Tharp's dancers echo most loudly in the book. Sara Rudner and Rose Marie Wright, two of Tharp's first dancers, contribute considerable detail and retrospective musings. Other dancers, particularly Kenneth Rinker, Tom Rawe, Jennifer Wayne, and Shelley Washington, provide a multitude of stories and perspectives, helping to fully flesh out the reasons behind and ramifications of Tharp's forays into so many styles and genres. From the period in the early 1970s when Tharp decamped from New York City to a farm in rural New Berlin, New York, with Rudner, Wright, and others (described in the book's third chapter, "The End of Amazonia"), through the various incarnations of her permanent, then pick-up companies, one constant remains. Dancers recount long hours in the studio working meticulously to retrograde and refashion the phrases Tharp taught each morning.

Studio time is important to Tharp, and Siegel underlines that importance by allotting ample space to explain how various working environments shaped Tharp's output. The book's most emotionally heightened scenes appear in chapter 4, "The Entertainer, 1971–1973," which describes rehearsals for *Deuce Coupe* at the Joffrey Ballet. Siegel writes of confused, dissatisfied dancers, several of whom accepted Tharp's offer to abandon rehearsals if they did not want to be in the piece. Siegel's description of Tharp's work with the Joffrey and her later work with the American Ballet Theatre clearly illustrate how as a primarily modern dance choreographer she manipulated ballet technique to create a different, hybrid form.

Today many critics snub such boundary crossing as a mere dilution of balletic tradition, but Siegel's careful attention to detail displays her unabashed respect for Tharp's talent. Nonetheless, she does not shy away from discussing the choreographer's failures, building a web of explanations for less-than-successful ventures. In chapter 6, "The Big Leagues, 1975–1978," Siegel follows the making of the movie *Hair*, which Tharp choreographed with director Milos Forman. Chapter 10, "Three Way Stretch, 1983–1990," remembers the Broadway revival of *Singin' in the Rain*. Frequently Siegel uses excerpts from other dance critics' reviews, which helps draw a more complicated picture of Tharp's work, but, given Siegel's own brilliant explanations of Tharp's *Push Comes to Shove*, *As Time Goes By*, and *Deuce Coupe* in Siegel's 1979 book *The Shapes of Change*, I wished for more of her own analysis in this book. However, her clear documentation of Tharp's work will surely serve as a resource for those unable to see the dances or struggling to recall the pieces from performances long ago.

Keeping a book about Tharp focused on the work, rather than the woman, is a feat in itself. Tharp's Broadway and Hollywood career, attention to marketing, and provocative interview style have created a quasi-celebrity profile that sometimes eclipses discussions of her artistry. Siegel stresses nuances of the choreography, what it looks like and how it was made, rather than the sometimes titillating personal twists and turns of Tharp's life that have become part of the Tharpian myth. Where the *Push Comes to Shove* autobiography spends much time recalling Tharp's romantic liaisons, Siegel mentions the associations only as context for the making or reception of Tharp's work. For instance, in *Push Comes to Shove* Tharp tells of a tryst with Baryshnikov, but Siegel references the affair in chapter 11, "The Anti-Company,

1990–1995," only to discuss its effects on the marketing for Tharp and Baryshnikov's subsequent national tour. She explains that *Push Comes to Shove*'s publication coincided with the tour, providing writers at each of the tour's stops with a prepackaged preview piece, complete with mention of the affair, the dance, and the book.

After such contextualization, Siegel always quickly returns to Tharp's work. *Howling Near Heaven* never explicitly lists the characteristics Siegel considers indicative of Tharp's choreography but instead interweaves the distinguishing qualities within movement description. Siegel returns several times to the importance of "doubling"—the way Tharp uses two dancers as foils for each other, giving each similar, or sometimes the same, steps (161). She describes Tharp's movement most generally as fitting within a "slouchy, rhythmic style" (66) and notes Tharp is more likely to capture events than show how a story unfolds (179).

In the epilogue (an essay about Tharp originally written by Siegel for *Dance Ink*), Siegel describes Tharp's movement, saying it can be "planned or spontaneous, personal, funny, hard as hell, precise enough to look thrown-away. She doesn't so much invent or create it, she prepares for it" (278). Tharp herself detailed her approach to choreography first in *Push Comes to Shove* and then more prescriptively in her 2003 book *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*, but Siegel takes a wide-angle shot, showing how Tharp works as part of an artistic community. She never relinquishes her role as leader, but many others help fashion her artistic product.

Siegel explains how Tharp and designer Jennifer Tipton created lighting for *Fait Accompli* in 1983. Frustrated that dancers could emerge only from the stage's wings, Tharp asked Tipton to build an effect that would allow dancers to materialize suddenly from

upstage as well. Tipton fulfilled Tharp's request, adapting an effect from grand-scale stadium lighting. According to Siegel, that innovation resurfaced four years later in *In the Upper Room*. That Tharp masterpiece, where pointe-shoe-clad ballerinas dance alongside Reebok-clad counterparts, has a paradoxical atmosphere; the hazy stage seems beyond this world, yet the costumes (particularly the sneakers) and pedestrian movement feel utterly everyday. Siegel shows why and how Tharp achieves this sense, and also how the work fits within the choreographer's larger artistic trajectory. Siegel's attention to detail allows the history of Tharp to become a story. She ties Tharp's past to her present work, as well as the evolution of American dance. In so doing, she carves a permanent place for Tharp within written dance history.

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STAGING WHITENESS

by Mary F. Brewer. 2005. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 256 pp., works cited, index. \$24.95 paper.

In the current cultural and academic environment, which often renders Whiteness unremarkable, boring, or simply overstudied, Mary Brewer's *Staging Whiteness* serves as a vital reminder that Whiteness matters. The book is a vivid account of theatrical representations of Whiteness that tracks the emergence of

different discourses and social meanings of race from the turn of the century through the 1990s. In line with the corpus of scholarship on Whiteness, Brewer offers a detailed analysis of how Whiteness is achieved onstage in relation to the historical, political, and economic forces that condition white identity and "race." By placing close textual readings of twentieth-century British and American plays, including T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*, and Suzan-Lori Park's *The American Play*, alongside the cultural and social histories in which the plays emerge, Brewer makes the nuanced relationship between the production of Whiteness in theatrical representation and everyday life clear. She furthermore contends that live theater, as well as the textual worlds created by the playwright, are sites for the ongoing creation and contestation of the meaning(s) of Whiteness. Yet Brewer's aim is also political, to "see Whiteness in [a] critical fashion" that "can contribute to a progressive racial politics" (xi).

Seeing Whiteness *critically*, for Brewer, is not merely to describe theatrical Whiteness but, rather, to attend to how Whiteness is often accomplished in Western culture by positioning itself against a series of nonwhite Others. While Brewer is careful to track the intricate interconnections between Whiteness and Blackness (and at times Redness in relation to Native Americans in the United States), she also deftly reads Whiteness against itself at many points. As Richard Dyer contends in *White* (1997), to understand Whiteness only in juxtaposition with Blackness or various other "marked" racialities is to understand only part of how Whiteness operates and ultimately posits Whiteness as only a racial marking or category when placed against the nonwhite Other. Simply put, Brewer's move to read Whiteness against itself counters the inclination to use the word "race" as synonymous with racial alterity.