

been destroyed in the earthquake, seeing the ruins of that theater at the edge of the Champs de Mars was unbearably sad. It will not be rebuilt. Not far from the Rex lies an empty lot where the *Bureau d'Ethnologie* was located. Nearly everything it contained has been lost.

Despite the devastation, Haiti, and with it Vodou and Haitian folkloric dance, remain as persistent as ever. In the days when the *Bureau d'Ethnologie* was established, many feared that ethnology in Haiti, particularly with regard to Vodou, was a salvage operation. Common knowledge at the time was that Vodou was destined to die out, much as early U.S. ethnographers feared the total extermination of Native American cultures. Today Haitian folkloric dance has strong centers in Miami, New York, Boston, and San Francisco, among other cities. In Haiti, dancing continues to flourish—in dance studios, in homes, fields, and religious spaces throughout the nation. In her book, Ramsey shows a keen passion for the rights of Haitians to live and dance as they wish, to embody their spirits as they will. Her profound respect for and deep solidarity with Haiti resonates through every sentence and chapter. As Haiti continues to recover from the earthquake, and continues to recover from the many failures of the international response to that earthquake, Ramsey's history reminds us (yet again) that Vodou has not held Haiti back: it is the very force that has allowed Haiti and Haitians to survive through the most terrifying disasters again and again. "*Ayi Bobo!*" is a Kreyol exclamation of approval and delight. A hearty *Ayi Bobo!* to Ramsey for this excellent book.

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## The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945

by Jens Richard Giersdorf. 2013. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 248 pp., illustrations, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paperback.  
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Jens Giersdorf's *The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945* is a much needed study that is mostly absent from the standard writing of dance history. It takes this absence as a starting point from which to reflect on the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that structure dance historical writing in Germany. As such, the book is also of value to those who might not be primarily interested in post-war German dance history, but who are concerned with issues of dance and politics, historiography, and dance in a globalized world. Giersdorf manages to simultaneously address two potential groups: one more interested in knowledge about dance in the former GDR (while actively expanding what may be included under such an umbrella of dance history) and/or a more academic audience focused on the discourses that shape and construct history and memory. Though the latter idea is especially intriguing to me, I feel troubled in writing a review of this book because I am made aware of the power of evaluation it brings with it. Am I not in danger of perpetuating hierarchies between East and West German perspectives that are revealed in the book? I am part of the same West German dance studies "clique" that is critiqued for its structuring powers and perspectives of the field. My position raises the question: what are the measures of my evaluation? what strategic considerations shape my review? While I momentarily ponder these considerations, I realize that it is exactly this enjoyment of the troubled response and precarious task ahead that I see as an important effect of the book. It encourages a discourse in German dance historical writing. This writing has been predominantly distanced from a reflection of one's own position and identity (except a trend toward phenomenological approaches that are hardly historicized). Consequently, my review cannot be anything but highly subjective; however, it tries to take its structural inspiration from Giersdorf's methodology.

Now let's back up. Giersdorf presents an interesting scope and understanding of what a dance history of the former GDR is. He neither strictly follows a chronological nor a stage production historical narrative (while these are nonetheless present), but he rather analyzes a number of different dance forms and aspects including folk dancing, dance theater, performance art, everyday choreographed resistance, and representations of East German identity/history as well as transnational influences. As such, he does not restrict the book to the time span of the existence of the GDR (1949–1990), but he also looks for the country's (historical) representation and influences of its culture after it ceased to exist. Along with a few well-known names like Gret Palucca, Tom Schilling, and Jo Fabian, the reader will discover many lesser known artists and developments, such as the folk dance ensemble of the National Army (NVA) or the inter-medial productions of Fine Kwiatkowski. The individual chapters are linked through an overarching interest in how the organizing principles of dance concurrently shape, and are shaped by, social and political structures (8). This focus on shaping, renegotiation, and bodily empowerment are of central importance for Giersdorf.

Each of the chapters is structured around a discussion of the theoretical implications (more broadly) involved, a definition of the relevant terms, and providing a context for East German history. The latter has the effect of making the history of the GDR more generally accessible to an audience not familiar with it and/or showing how it may be related to a wider field of theoretical discussions currently pertinent to the dance studies field. For instance, the first chapter, "Dancing National Identity in Daily Life: A New German Folk," provides a discussion of general theories on folk dancing and the "imagining of community" (Anderson 1991) as well as how the state worked to shape and mold *sozialistische Persönlichkeiten* (socialist personalities). The flexibility regarding the purpose of *Volkstanz* in different contexts becomes obvious when Giersdorf not only traces the problems of redefining a dance tradition for the Socialist project (which was so much instrumentalized by the Nazi system before it), but also when he demonstrates how definitions and form could vary over time within the GDR. For example, what began as a staging for a unique East

German national identity later changed to a means for international collaboration. Focusing his analysis on the Erich-Weinert-Ensemble of the National Army (NVA), Giersdorf also traces the increasing professionalization of the field, which allowed the ensemble to win international dance competitions. Since his general thesis makes it clear that these folk dance practices were not just references to an idealized past, but were made to shape the national body and citizenship through strictly choreographed practices (33–4), one longs to know more about how official concepts were actually felt and realized within different contexts. That this remains somewhat ambiguous might be based on a very reduced inclusion of citations from the source material that has been described in enormous scope in the Introduction. Considering that Giersdorf aims at writing a book that focuses as much on personal agency as on systemic structures, empowerment, and alternatives to the official realm of dance history, one wonders through which sources one could access and analyze a dance form that is also practiced in very different contexts, with very different purposes, and through the engagement of very different people. While the omission of this taste of historical documents through very few citations might be due to a publishing policy in the U.S. book market that wants to address a more general audience, its inclusion would have provided the grounds for further discussion in the field, especially in comparison to the extensive research and documentary material that Hanna Walsdorf provided several years ago in her *Bewegte Propaganda: Politische Instrumentalisierung von Volkstanz in den deutschen Diktaturen* (2010).

Giersdorf tackles the question of agency more concretely in the next two chapters, in which he demonstrates more overtly an alternative history from those who focus predominantly on the repressive aspects of GDR culture. In "East German *Tanztheater*: Reconsidering Socialist Realism and Modernism (1960s and 1970s)" and "Resistive Motions in the East: Rechoreographing Opposition (1980s)," he suggests that there was the potential for artistic independence even within the parameters of a politically ordered dance field, and explores how different strategies of resistance were possible.

Structuring his second chapter around an analysis of choreographer Tom Schilling and

his development of a specific form of German *Tanztheater* (Dance Theater) at the Komische Oper in Berlin, Giersdorf demonstrates that modernism and Socialist realism were not mutually exclusive. Contrasting the main Socialist argument that modern art was a capitalist endeavor without (political) content with the Greenbergian contention that modern art needed to be self-reflective and independent of politics, Giersdorf shows how both concepts not only share an essentializing argument and similar interpretations about modernism and politics, but how modernism was very much present in the choreographic work of Tom Schilling and challenged both perspectives. This chapter is intriguing in the way it links a thorough theoretical discussion of the altering understandings of Socialist realism in the contexts of “the changing political landscapes” (51) of the GDR with an extensive description and analysis of Tom Schilling’s work. Those not familiar with Schilling’s work will come away with a good sense of it, as well as the context in which it took place. It also allows for the re-writing of the history of *Tanztheater* in a united Germany.

At the heart of the book and probably closest to Giersdorf’s wish to show how resistance was possible within the GDR is his discussion in Chapter 3 of artists as different as Arila Siegert, Fine Kwiatkowski, and Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. And, because they represent such differing aspects of dance aesthetics and options for dissent, Giersdorf is able to open the chapter out into a wider context. He includes a discussion of the status of *Ausdruckstanz* in the GDR in comparison to West Germany, shows how a multidisciplinary art scene developed in the 1980s, and discusses gender and queer theory in relation to a political system that officially valued the emancipation of women as laborers yet stuck to traditional concepts in its gender images and its standard for norms of heterosexuality. For instance, Giersdorf demonstrates that Arila Siegert deserves historical attention for not only introducing a unique model of an independent artist and company within the GDR system but also for being critical toward mainstream political art by taking up the *Ausdruckstanz* tradition in restaging Dore Hoyer’s *Humanos Affektos*. In the context of Socialist realism, *Ausdruckstanz* had been discredited as too “formalistic” and accordingly banned from the list of officially sanctioned

expression in the GDR. It is important that Giersdorf points out how Siegert has been left out of the canon of German dance history, thus demonstrating how the norms and standards of West German scholarship function. And I have to admit I feel guilty, as Giersdorf correctly presents a perspective of disinterest in her by West German scholars. His description of Siegert’s work was revealing to me personally, because when I saw her as a young dance student in Hellerau after the Fall of the Wall—not familiar with many of the discourses of dance history (except that I was interested in *Ausdruckstanz*)—I felt her work physically so distant, belonging to a ballet tradition, and at that moment, I found it difficult to appreciate her. I mostly rejected her body tone and physicality; I longed to see heaviness and groundedness. Still later, when I became more interested in scholarly pursuits, she did not seem relevant because I perceived in her a lack of self-reflection on the art of “reconstruction” as it is currently hyped in Western scholarship—and also because—as I need to admit—I was clueless about her history. By adding a different context, Giersdorf gives me a chance to re-evaluate her work: what did it really mean for her to smuggle the video of the dance into the GDR and to present access to a modern tradition where none was possible before? More so, he allows me to become aware of my own standards and personal interests that structure my historical perspective. What are my ideological underpinnings when writing about dance? Such questions are urgently needed in an academic field that is mostly interested in the avant-garde, self-reflective art, and dance that challenges modes of knowledge. As such, I think the omission of Arila Siegert in the canon of West German dance studies leads us to even further ponder the question of inclusions and exclusions that structure academic reflections.

It also becomes apparent that much more research could be done on more recent dance history in Germany more generally. By comparing artists such as Sasha Waltz to Jo Fabian and Nejla Yatkin in the following chapter, “Border Crossings and Intranational Trespasses: The Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989–2009),” Giersdorf analyzes different modes of representation of East German identity and the experience of the Fall of the Wall after the GDR had officially ceased to exist. It is very revealing

how, when viewed from a post-colonial perspective, Sasha Waltz's celebrated piece, *Allee der Kosmonauten*, can be severely criticized as part of a wider consumerist appropriation of an East German past that is present in the so-called *Ostalgie* (playing with the word ost = east) and the lack of true investigation and interest in GDR identity. Nonetheless, as I am made aware throughout the book of the parameters for evaluation and the importance for contextualization, I also stumble over Giersdorf's set of references, which critiques Waltz for both: being on the one hand not self-reflective and on the other hand formalistic. Clearly one can follow Giersdorf's argument that Sasha Waltz does not present a self-reflective art, as does Jo Fabian (with whom she is compared in this chapter). But if we take seriously what he does for Ariela Siegert, where he explicitly argues against such standards of reference as a sole ground for analytical worthiness, I wonder if there might be more asked about Waltz's work: what are the historical and artistic references surrounding her work? Giersdorf describes her apparently static family image. This image may actually evoke and parody through a slapstick mode—not only life in the GDR but also critical/leftist art from the 1970s in West Germany (e.g., the work of Rainer Werner Fassbinder as well as of Pina Bausch, from whom Waltz wanted to emancipate herself). Interestingly, the now internationally renowned artist Pina Bausch faced a similar critique when she first toured in the U.S. as Giersdorf now voices against Sasha Waltz. Bausch's female dancers repeatedly performing the violence and restriction of their lives were deemed not at all empowering. So what are the contexts and modes of how family and daily life are presented in art in Germany before and after the Fall? Of course it is not Giersdorf's task to analyze all these aspects. But the fact that Waltz's work is rather absent currently from dance scholarship may evoke even more questions about the parameters that structure academic interests. Are questions concerning the representation of family life currently not interesting for dance scholarship because they would gear the focus too much toward questions of "representation" that are deemed "outdated" in dance scholarship? Interestingly, Giersdorf dislikes the rather slapstick character of family representation for reducing the dancers

to puppets—making him criticize *Allee der Kosmonauten* as a "formalist" exploration. The use of the word "formalist" is surprising here, considering that Giersdorf presented so clearly how it shaped the standards of evaluation of East German Socialist discourse that he critiqued before. All of this, however, should not distract from the importance that a post-colonial focus fosters in analyzing and understanding the hierarchies of power relations between East and West German access to "making" and representing their history. And it is always rewarding when a book leads one to aspects in need of further research. Giersdorf's book definitely encourages this—especially in regard to how best to trace and write about the history of the German dance tradition abroad.

Ending his book with a reflection on the biography, choreographic, and pedagogic work of the Chilean artist Patricio Bunster, Giersdorf makes it clear that dance histories cannot be written as national histories and that political and artistic means may travel and assume different meanings over time. Nonetheless, I am still wondering why the most recent scholarship on dance in the GDR withholds tackling the personal involvement of artists with the system. While Giersdorf, drawing on Michel Foucault, describes, especially in Chapter 3, how the supervision and espionage system led to a specific kind of self-regulation and the (active) staging of an identity, he remains here—while very convincing—on a structural level, focusing on the power mechanisms rather than on personal involvement (something similar to the book by Ralf Stabel, *IM "Tänzer." Der Tanz und die Staatssicherheit*, 2008). But maybe this is yet another book to be written, now that Giersdorf's study has presented East German dance as an artistically and theoretically interesting ground for investigation.

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## New German Dance Studies

edited by Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht. 2012. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 283 pp., notes, works cited, index, illustrations. \$80.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

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Following the turn in the mid-1990s among American and British dance scholarship toward cultural studies and new historicism, one of the central preoccupations among scholars on dance has been to show the rest of the humanities just why dance is so important. In Germany after reunification, a similar turn occurred among German dance scholars, from an earlier, literary-critical orientation of *Germanistik* (German studies) toward a more interdisciplinary and methodologically expansive field of *Kulturwissenschaft* (cultural studies). Now, roughly twenty years later, the contours of this change come into focus.

*New German Dance Studies*, edited by Susan Manning and Lucia Ruprecht, shows the effect on dance scholarship in Germany as a result of the transition from dance framed in the context of philology to the study of dance as a part of the study of culture. Manning and Ruprecht's aim with *New German Dance Studies* is both straightforward and in step with the mission of dance studies more generally: to show how thinking about dance enriches cultural studies.<sup>1</sup>

The shift from *Germanistik* to *Kulturwissenschaft* has led to many important changes among dance scholars. Prior to its cultural turn, dance scholarship in Germany operated vis-à-vis written language and under assumptions of the physical body as something "pre-discursive": weighted down by textual analysis, such scholarship largely subscribed to "dance's association with the unspeakable in the sense of that which must not be expressed—the socially or politically censored—and that which

cannot be expressed—the ineffable" (3). In the process, dance had become something untouchable, mystical, anti-intellectual. More importantly, moving bodies as objects of study found themselves locked inside a maze of assumptions, which remained unexamined by the discipline that purported to unlock its power for other disciplines.

Enter *Kulturwissenschaft*. Understood less as a theoretical or methodological trend in German (or European) scholarly debates of the late twentieth century, German cultural studies formed a discursive space to show "how current research operates both informed by and 'after' theory" (2). Such space, Manning and Ruprecht note, has enabled dance scholars to work against traditions of anti-intellectualism and exceptionalism about the body generated by earlier historiographies rooted in *Germanistik*. In the past few decades, dance scholars have successfully stepped beyond the shadow of the "dualisms of mind and body, page and stage" and the "melancholic awareness of the impermanence of the dancing body" that limit understandings about the body, dance, and movement (3–4).

As the fifteen essays collected in *New German Dance Studies* show, contemporary scholars on dance in the German-speaking world continue to carry the banner of both cultural studies and new historicism. Excavating conceptual origins and "ideological contexts that insist on dance as fleeting, indescribable movement," this wide-ranging collection of essays embraces interdisciplinarity, critical self-consciousness, sensitivity to power-structures undergirding scholarship and history, and a resistance to claims of inherent or essential truths. All of the essays in the volume operate on "the assumption that any type of cultural enunciation can be approached like a (polysemous) text" (9). Incorporating ideas of embodiment and embodied knowledge crucial to the foundation of dance studies as a field, these contemporary German dance scholars have begun to comprehensively consider the meaning and function of discourse based on the claims we make about the relationship between dance, knowledge, culture, and history.

At present, dance researchers on both sides of the Atlantic are in a position to make unique claims contributing to a wide body of scholarship in the humanities. Under the more general goal of showing how dance studies enriches