

## **DANCE CURTAIN CALLS: PROBLEMATIZING THE ENDS OF DANCES**

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Bows. Applause. Standing ovations. Socio-cultural customs of bow and applause practices are so deeply enmeshed in Western performing arts that dance concerts in this context rarely operate without them; however, this tradition remains largely unexamined. In this paper I investigate curtain calls from a performance studies perspective in order to problematize undertheorized practice and invigorate dance praxis. How might curtain calls for dance function discursively as interstices of human activity, and why should those involved in dance care? I propose that these adjunct mini-performances provide illuminating arenas of inquiry not only for dance praxis but also interdisciplinary studies in performing arts and culture. In the first section, drawing upon Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, Graham St. John, and Judith Hamera, I introduce consideration of curtain calls as ritual structures, coded processes that facilitate shifting identities, social relationships, and reiterative behaviors. Then, I theorize the discursive functions of bows and applause, continuing with Hamera, Rebecca Schneider, and Diana Taylor to the meanings and implications of end-ing a dance with a movement ritual. What new perspectives on dance emerge when we question its framing devices?

First, I clarify how I am using terms and orienting my discussion. For this article, I focus on what has traditionally been called Western theatrical dance with the hope that this narrowly defined entry point will be helpful in stimulating broader discussions. My perspective is based on my experiences in modern dance and ballet as a dancer, choreographer, teacher, and audience member in conversation with other members of the dance community in the United States. Ballet and modern dance, in general, continue the tradition of taking bows, although it is important to acknowledge some stylistic variety and creativity in curtain call rituals. And, very occasionally, bows are skipped altogether, particularly in more experimental works when the bow simply cannot be managed logistically – such as when dancers might end the piece by getting in a car and driving off down the street, as in one site-specific performance I attended. For the most part, however, each dance performance in ballet and modern dance ends with a curtain call ritual that follows predictable patterns of timing, spatial orientation, dynamic flow, and negotiated behaviors.

However, despite the lengthy and pervasive tradition of taking bows, or perhaps because of it, this practice is surprisingly underinvestigated – so much so that I have only found three scholarly articles ever written in any discipline.<sup>1</sup> I have become increasingly confounded with this lack of inquiry both in practice and theory. Living in Austin, TX, I attend many postmodern and experimental dance performances; yet, even the most rule-breaking dancers usually “shift” from a dance’s moving state-of-being to iterate a more-or-less conventional bow. Often enough, a bow is simply tacked on to a dance during a final rehearsal, sometimes at the theater when lighting cues need to be established. And, as a dance history scholar, while texts often discuss the individual

dances of the canon with detail, insight, and depth, I usually search for descriptions of those dances' accompanying bows with no success. Yet, as I will argue later, those bows are part of the meaning-making of a dance.

This neglect reveals itself in the lack of adequately postmodern terminology. The phrase "curtain call" seems problematic—What if there is no curtain, and who is calling whom?—while the word "bows" technically refers to one specific category of gestural movement, leaving out all of the other things going on. However, for lack of better terms, throughout this article I will use curtain calls and bows interchangeably with this working definition: the practices of interaction, involving applause and bows, that takes place between dancers and audience after the dance choreography proper can be considered to have ended during live performance. The tensions that this definition provokes—When and how does the "dance choreography proper" end, and who decides?—constitute a focus of this inquiry. The emphasis on live performance is also key to curtain call phenomena. In contrast, video recordings of dances for public consumption do not generally include bows unless the recording itself took place in front of an audience. There would be something eerie, I imagine, in watching the dancers on video bow in silence to no one. Thus I propose that as cultural codes, bows may in unacknowledged ways assert that a dance event is "live" as opposed to a recording.

What might happen *without* the organizing processes of the curtain call at the end of a traditional Western dance concert in a theater? Eventually the audience would tire of clapping, and people would begin wandering out into the night, variously confused, amused, irritated, or unsettled from the breach of form. On the performers'

side, there might be some dissatisfaction as well; without overt reciprocity from the audience, the meanings and values of their efforts remain uncertain or unrecognized.

### **Performance Structures and Transitional States**

Theatre phenomenologist Bert States (1981) describes the curtain call as “a decompression chamber halfway between “the depths” of art and the thin air of reality” (p. 371), while theatre semiotician Martin Revermann (2008) likens the curtain call to “the end of a prolonged period of imprisonment, both emotional and physical” (p. 197), a sentiment to which most everyone can relate at one time or another. In their metaphors, both authors address states of transition facilitated by the rituals of curtain calls. In this section I introduce curtain calls as constructed phenomena that serve multiple purposes.

Rituals have long been a source for insights into performance and performativity, notably in the work of anthropologist Victor Turner (1974; 1986). Although performance theory continues to evolve and sometimes challenge his work, as I will later in this article, I begin an investigation into curtain calls from a performance studies perspective with Turner’s early influential concepts regarding how ritual structures create liminal (or in non-“sacred” contexts, liminoid) states: literally, “threshold” experiences. Turner’s (1986) theories about liminal states suggest how curtain calls might provide a ritual structure assisting the participants in transitioning through the end of the performance, providing what Turner calls “reaggregation to the quotidian world” (p. 101). Turner (1986) identifies “liminality,” an in-between quality of transitional separation, as a characteristic of performances of all types (p. 25). This liminal state is a separated time and space of transition, symbolic action, and transformation (Turner, 1986).

If the dance performance itself constitutes a liminal state, then curtain calls would fulfill Turner's (1974) criteria for the third and final phase of ritual performance, reaggregation (p. 232). The structures of bows and applause provide ways for the participants, the "liminars" in Turner's lingo, to emerge back into the outside socio-cultural world. In addition, a curtain call period could be considered its own liminal state. The words Turner uses to describe liminality—"neither here nor there, betwixt and between" (1974, p. 232)—certainly seem to describe the curtain call phenomenon in its position after the dance and yet part of the dance. And, structurally, curtain calls satisfy Turner's three phases of liminal states: detachment, in the separation from the dance perhaps signaled by blackout, curtain, and/or music ending; margin, the liminal state occurring during the action of bows and applause within which a situational sense of community arises; and reaggregation, the return to socio-cultural normalcy (1974, pp. 231-232). Assembling these two views, the curtain call could be thought of as a liminal ritual that effects the reaggregation process of a larger liminal structure.

I bring Turner into the conversation to establish a perspective from which to consider ritual and structure in theatrical practices. However, subsequent theorists have challenged Turner's essentialism and generally positive outlook. Graham St. John provides a useful summation of post-Turner scholarship in anthropology in his article "Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body" (2001). In Turner's view of *communitas* derived from initiation rituals, the liminars lose identities and experience a state of equality amongst the group (1974, p. 231-233). But St. John, working with responses to Turner, asserts that public events are not "neutral fields independent of the distribution and operations of power" (2001, p. 50). Within these events, discursive

agendas and personal desires are still at play. In other words, ritual structures do not obliterate identities nor open the possibilities of unlimited potentials.

Thus, one area where Turner and I depart ways is in *how* liminal states may be “betwixt and between” (1974, p. 232). For Turner, in-betweenness means neither here nor there, a symbolic domain that is neither the past state nor the future (1974, p. 232). Curtain calls, operating through symbolic actions, *seem* to occupy a “betwixt and between” position that is not part of the past “dance” per se, yet not part of the post-dance future. However, rather than being doubly negative, neither/nor, I tend to view curtain call liminality as multiply positive—in other words, the past, the present and the future, as well as individual desires, collective negotiations, and discursive agendas, all comingling and transforming within the ritual. In this view I am influenced specifically by Rebecca Schneider’s (2011) text *Performing Remains* as well as other sources considering time and/or interactive connections in a non-linear way. Furthermore, I postulate that the curtain call, through its contingency with the dance, has the potential to reveal larger socio-cultural assumptions and agendas about performance.

#### Performing Social Relationships through Reiterated Behaviors

I have noticed a trend growing over the past 20 years, especially in smaller theatrical dance productions. At some point after the first or second bow, the dancers gesture to the technical crew, often behind the audience and/or out of their sight, and start applauding them. Amongst the audience there is an unspoken reorientation to applause for the people behind the scenes. In larger and more expensive productions, on the other hand, the dancers generally do not applaud the lighting and/or sound crew. How might a trend of dancers clapping for others, rather than just being the recipients of

applause, reflect a broader cultural shift in social and political dynamics as compared to older Western theatrical practices? This example introduces how curtain calls, through movement, recalibrate relationships between participants.

Although in Western dance tradition having an audience is usually a condition for performance,<sup>2</sup> the nature of the relationship traditionally has not been the acknowledged focus of the event (although Brechtian theatre, postmodernism, and the internet era have opened this possibility). Curtain calls, however, provide a time and space for admitting and negotiating participant relationships. Theatre director and Turner collaborator Richard Schechner (1985) identifies theatrical interactivity as a “feedback loop” in which the audience stimulates “restored behavior” (p. 37)—in the case of curtain calls, through applause. I add that the feedback loop flows reciprocally; through bows, the dancers also stimulate the audience to applaud. Sometimes the audience and performers negotiate the duration of the curtain call by “feel” in the feedback loop, and participants who attend multiple dance events eventually experience instances where the feel was misjudged by one bow too many or too few. In cases of public, as opposed to secret, liminality, Turner (1986) advocates that we scrutinize socio-cultural processes in how they structure “ongoing reciprocal relationships” towards facilitating liminal states (p. 32). How do we engage each other reciprocally to create performance events?

The curtain call, as a ritual, functions discursively as a signal for participants to transition to the lobby and/or backstage areas, inevitably changed by the performance experience in one way or another, eventually to exit the theater towards a reintegrated sense of normalcy. Thus curtain calls work performatively as organizing processes that attempt to establish closure and dispersal. During curtain calls everyone has roles to

navigate: the performers bow, the audience claps, the technical crew go through their jobs, and even badly-behaved members of the audience, sneaking out to get to their cars before everyone else, follow well-known routines for doing so. How might the interplay of power, identities, and relationships between participants be negotiated through the deeply embedded social performance practices of curtain calls? From a perspective guided by Judith Hamera (2007),<sup>3</sup> I summarize that bows and applause function as an ecology of embodied practice enabling mutual re-generation of traditional cultural structures along with the potential for micro-tactics of improvised agency.

As cultural gestures, bows and applause are tidy examples of Turner's (1974) "standardized behavioral patterns" that, as visual and auditory (and kinesthetic) symbols, operate culturally as mnemonics that transfer cultural knowledge and values (p. 239). Diana Taylor (2003) uses similar language when she asserts: "Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated...behavior" (pp. 2-3). How Western theatrical dancers learn the nuances of curtain call practices tends to remain in the archives of oral heritage and the body, passed down from teachers and choreographers, stimulated into reiteration by necessity. The actions of bows communicate many layers of meaning that beg for future hermeneutic, historical, and critical inquiry.

Hamera (2007), in her text *Dancing Communities*, establishes how the discursive matrix of dance technique organizes bodies and relationships, and, moreover, how dance technique may serve as "alibi," "enabler," or even "escape clause" for interacting subjects (pp. 23-24; p. 208). To theorize interactions in this way reveals embodied codes of practice in their myriad labors of the moment. To use Hamera's words, bows



and applause can serve as *alibis* for the dancers and audience to establish presence, *enablers* that provide structure for production and consumption, and *escape clauses* that facilitate separation. Speaking of consuming, the containment of dance would seem to fit a consumerist agenda as well. In what he identifies as the more recent trends of “consumerist theatre,” Baz Kershaw (2001) believes that audiences are more likely to indulge in standing ovations these days as self-congratulations on money well-spent and, consequently, more reticent to acknowledge dislike of performances because to do so would admit money wasted (p. 144). Hamera (2007) reminds us, though, that it’s not just the audience consuming, but the performers as well (p. 209).

Within the discursive dynamics of curtain calls audience members and performers meet again, recalibrating through reperformance. Reperformance concerns the re-creation of past performance phenomena.<sup>4</sup> Curtain calls perform this definition in two ways: in relationship to cultural tradition and in relationship to the dance to which they are attached. First, bows and applause occur from one show to another as an embedded cultural tradition. In this case re-creation takes place between different shows, and in this perspective I have found some helpful theory in Richard Schechner’s (1985) “strips of restored behavior,” Susan Foster’s (1995) “troping bodies,” and Joseph Roach’s (1996) “vortices of behavior” and “displaced transmission.” Schechner, Foster, and Roach all address the transmission of movement practices, and, despite differences between them, all three acknowledge that movement can outlive its contextual origins in such a way that participants no longer know or only have vague, semi-mythical ideas about where the practice came from; the practices develop, in Schechner’s words, “a life of their own” (p. 35), such as in the way bows occur dance

after dance after dance. The reiterative nature of curtain calls, in how bows reperform the movements and meanings of a dance, often manifests within a fairly narrow spectrum of referential behaviors depending on how much critical thought the director has put into them. Often enough, choreographers simply piece together a curtain call at the last minute, relying on convention: In a classical ballet, the bows may occur in hierarchical order, building anticipation with the principal dancers appearing last; for modern dance, a more democratic approach with one line of dancers is often used. The dancers usually remain in their costumes, maintaining some of their dance identities. And occasionally, the bows will incorporate gestural or character-driven motifs from the dance. In contrast, imagine what it would be like to have a completely different cast from a different show perform the curtain call, strangers to the audience in every way. But bows do *not* exist on their own without the performance to which they refer, and in this way bows are entirely contingent upon the dance—the second way through which curtain calls generate reperformance.

Curtain calls resonate particularly with one of Schechner's (1985) delineated characteristics of restored behaviors: what he terms "secondness" (p. 37). Schechner defines secondness as symbolic, reflexive, and multivocal (p.37). Curtain calls are comprised of symbolic actions, such as bows and applause, which refer back to and comment upon the action of the participants through their reflexive nature. In this way, curtain calls may be a process for reflexivity as performance practice during which participants consider and integrate the immediate past experience of the dance while negotiating a shifting dynamics of meaning. But it is the multivocal nature of secondness that creates what Schechner terms "double negativity" wherein participants experience

a state of being that is “not me and not not me” (p. 110). Stated positively, performers and audience members present multiple iterations of self and situation simultaneously. Curtain calls not only disclose the shifting, situated selves of the dancers and audience members; curtain calls may even function discursively to *feature the process of shifting identities*.

What does the embedded need for such a shift reveal about Western dance discourse? The New York Times dance critic Alastair MacCauley reveals his perspective on the need for shifting identities during curtain calls in a 2012 review of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Company performing choreography by Ohad Naharin:

I find, though, that the overall theatrics of the piece are disagreeable, coldly showing off what a smart operator Mr. Naharin is. At the first performance I attended, the Ailey dancers did some aloof Naharin-style curtain calls. (You applaud us, but we don't thank you.) The second time I went, it was good to see that they responded in a more unaffected manner, bowing like honest performers. (para. 8)

While I do not wish to belabor semantics, the word “honest” here implies expectations of a social contract wherein performers relinquish at least some of the dance's embodiment for a curtain call embodiment that enacts a change, a new meeting ground, in social relationships.

In my experience, moreover, contingency in curtain calls goes beyond linear cause and effect. Lately, inspired by Schneider, I have been considering dances and their bows less in terms of their temporal order and more in terms of their connections. Bows seem like excellent examples through which to consider Schneider's ideas about

a non-linear temporal paradigm for reperformance. She writes: “The past can disrupt the present...but so too can the present disrupt the past...neither are entirely “over” nor discrete, but partially and porously persist” (p. 15). The dance choreography “partially and porously persists” in the reappearance of the dancers, sometimes with the stickiness, to employ Schneider’s term, of character relationships and movement styling. What I would like to emphasize is not just that the dance continues forward, so to speak, into the bows, but that the bows also continue backward into the dance. In other words, the meaning-making constructed in the performativity of the curtain call transforms the dance itself, becoming sticky in retrospect. The very structure of curtain calls presents values of power and discourse. One fairly well-known example within the narrow focus of this article of how hierarchical bows can instruct occurs in *The Nutcracker*. Many a child has questioned why the Sugar Plum Fairy and her cavalier get more attention by taking the last bows than the girl protagonist Clara (or Marie, depending on the production). In this case, the most important bow asserts which dance role should be valued the most or even that singular artists can be recognized for their individual contributions. On the other hand, when a dance bow of any genre employs a horizontal line and synchronous bow, the structure presents an artistic ideal of cooperative, democratic practice that reinforces a certain way of understanding the dance as a collective endeavor even if some dancers were featured more than others. Reflexivity works both ways.

Another level of meaning-making occurs as evaluation-in-the-making. There is no getting around the cultural notion in traditional Western theater that audience members *do* judge a performance, employing applause as a means of expressing their responses

to it. Given that individuals have their own experiences, in addition Bruce McConachie (2008) and others acknowledge a supplementary social dimension to processing the experience. McConachie posits that through the neuroscience behind the phenomenon of “emotional contagion,” we have more evidence to back the felt claim that the emotions of others in the audience tend to persuade us to feel the same way (p. 97). The emotional enthusiasm demonstrated by either audience members or performers during curtain calls can cause participants to re-evaluate their individual experiences, in other words re-framing, and thus re-creating, their memories of the dance as perhaps supported and in agreement with others or unshared and in disagreement. On multiple levels, then, the reperformance process in curtain calls reflexively churns, negotiates, and ultimately transforms the dance.<sup>5</sup>

The curtain calls of Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev demonstrate the transformative power of bows at work as situational meaning-making. Fonteyn and Nureyev’s partnership, which began in 1961, was legendary in the ballet world. Nureyev was an exotic, young defector from the Soviet Union paired with Britain’s reigning ballerina from a previous generation, so the public did not necessarily anticipate their charismatic synergy as partners. Their first curtain call, however, building on the established socio-cultural rites from ballet tradition, cemented their acceptance by the audience as partners. Jennifer Homans (2010) describes this moment in her book on ballet history, *Apollo’s Angels*, citing Julie Kavanaugh:

[W]hen [Nureyev] partnered Fonteyn he did so with perfect nineteenth-century manners. To the British, this mattered: Fonteyn, after all, was still “like the queen” and during the curtain call of their first performance of *Giselle*, Nureyev accepted

a rose from Fonteyn and then instinctively fell to his knee at her feet and covered her hand with kisses. The audience went wild. (p. 434)

In this example, Fonteyn and Nureyev have gone beyond the choreography of *Giselle* as their performing continues on into the curtain calls. Yet, their negotiated relationships with the audience stimulate past meanings, present agency, and future possibilities.

### **The Question of Endings**

While I have not found any existing scholarship on the origins of curtain calls, the *reverance* seems like a good place to start; the root court dances of ballet always began and ended with *reverance* to any royals present and one's partner. (And, although I have never attended a ballet with royalty, my understanding is that this custom is honored to this day with dancers taking bows to the royals before performing as well as after.) So although gestural traces acknowledging power and social status remain in curtain calls, why (with the exception of the royal presence) have bows disappeared from the beginnings of shows but persist at the ends?<sup>6</sup>

Certainly, applause can feel cathartic on both sides of the proscenium, like a giant exhalation of relief. Performance theorists Joseph Roach and Diana Taylor both discuss performance structures that allow participants to process and contain emotions, such as funerals. In *The Archive and the Repertoire* Taylor (2003) writes: "[T]he prescribed, twice-behaved nature of funerals also has another, ritual function. The formal handling of painful or dangerous transitions, or passings, helps regulate the expenditure of emotion" (p. 140). And, as Roach (1996) points out, emotion is not the only level of function: "[P]erformances marking the rites of passage from life to death represent some of the most elaborately staged occasions on which fictions of identity,

difference, and community come into play” (p. 28). Perhaps it is a bit extreme to think of curtain calls as the funeral, or maybe wake, of a dance. However, I find in my internet word searches that “curtain call” and “final bow” are popular ways of titling obituaries. Reflecting cultural views on both performance and mortality, obituaries lead me to a fundamental philosophical inquiry concerning the endings of dances. In some ways curtain calls may seem to discursively “force quit” a dance by establishing its termination through performative bracketing. From this perspective I take Diana Taylor’s scholarship very seriously. Taylor (2003) asserts that through alleging dance’s disappearing nature, Western cultural structures reiterate a colonial European agenda that disempowers movement (pp. 33-34).

Taylor builds much of her foundation with Jacques Derrida’s philosophical ideas about haunting. Derrida deconstructs the iterability of writing with inherent absences; movements, as iterations, “*are irreducible to anything that can be simply present in the present*” [emphasis original] (Glendinning, 2011, p. 73). Taylor (2003) meets Peggy Phelan’s “ontology of performance,” the ephemeral nature of pre-disappearance, with Derrida’s “hauntology” of performance: the idea that performance is also post-disappearance in the way that it evokes the invisible (p. 142). She writes:

My view of performance rests on the notion of ghosting, that visualization that continues to act...even as it exceeds the live. Like Phelan’s definition, it hinges on the relationship between visibility and invisibility, or appearance and disappearance, but comes at it from a different angle. For Phelan, the defining feature of performance—that which separates it from all other phenomena—is that it is live and disappears without a trace. The way I see it, performance

makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life. (p. 143)

In other words, all that is gone, including in the case of bows the dance just performed, is not only contained within iterations but makes them at all possible. I argue that curtain calls as performances makes the ghosts of the dance, the tropes of bows, and Taylor's scenario of *conquest* visible "for an instant, live, now."

Taylor (2003) postulates the *scenario* as a method of analysis that admits live performances along with traditionally recognized written texts as sites of cultural knowledge; she defines scenarios as "meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes" (p. 28). These metastructures inform cultures on a hemispheric scale. Taylor (2003) identifies a scenario of *conquest* that has been in effect in the Western hemisphere for centuries; one of the consequences of the conquest scenario is an ongoing privileging of written textual knowledge by European colonizers (pp. 33-34). This ideology promotes hegemonic agendas by simultaneously devaluing or erasing embodied forms of knowledge. According to Taylor (2003), performance has suffered from the resultant perspective that embodied acts cannot serve as transmitters of knowledge due to their ephemeral, or disappearing, nature; furthermore, when performances might transmit knowledge those practices must be "contained or eliminated" (p. 34).

The curtain call, then, may be a bracketing device emerging from a centuries-old scenario to contain or eliminate the value of performance through asserting the ephemeral nature of embodied acts through rituals that enact finality and closure. How



tragically ironic, if so, that a practice which participants may intend as a benign expression of gratitude between audience and dancers may, on a “meta” level, undermine the lasting power of that dancing through containment by eulogy. Along these lines, I question how bows and applause may have been added on to the ends of non-Western dance forms in contact with Western performance expectations as a kind of hegemonic trope.

But, perhaps, rather than disappearing entirely, these performances become part of our world-making. While curtain calls perform endings, loss, and disappearance, they also, paradoxically, create the means for continuance. I build upon Taylor, Schneider, and Hamera to assert that dance *does* have lasting presence. These scholars, with others, theorize how dance, to use Schneider’s words, “partially and porously persist[s]” beyond the instance of performance (p. 15). Hamera continues with her response to Phelan’s ideas about a dance’s disappearance, “her invocations of elegy, mourning, and loss” (p. 37), with theorizing that such a “tragic vision,” citing Jonathan Dollimore, may function to contain desire (p. 37):

[T]he performance, and the communal, intra- and interpersonal investments it may inspire, don’t end when the show’s over...Why, when beckoned by the emotional, transformative invitations to ‘save’ performance, *must* we deploy discipline to resist temptation? Why turn our backs on the longing to make the performance ours? Why must we abandon the desire to envelop performance and hold it to us, or the desire for it to envelop us? Such a move would disavow one powerful component of performance’s social, cohesive force. (p. 37)

In my view, bows and applause reflexively put into motion understandings and meanings of a dance as not a thing but a process wherein individuals within a community negotiate the experience's continuing integration and reintegration into their lives.

### **Encore**

Often when I discuss curtain calls, the conversation turns to encores in live music performances. Again, liveness emerges as a feature of the phenomenon in the negotiated process of ending. While I do not address music practices in this article, music encores provide an alternative point of view from which to problematize the assumptions of Western dance. And, while rare, dance encores are not impossible. A well-known example is that of Alvin Ailey's signature dance *Revelations*, which includes a built-in encore with the reiteration of "Rocka My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham." As an audience member "in the know" about the encore, when I watch *Revelations* I have a feeling very much like that of attending many music concerts: I clap heartily to induce the encore. But, who is inducing whom to do what in this structure?

Another example of a dance encore is a favorite of mine because it is so very unusual. I came upon an anecdote in an obituary for Richard Cragun, a principal dancer with the Stuttgart Ballet who died in 2012 (Vitello, 2012). This incident, as described by friend Steven Wistrich, took place in Moscow in the late 1970s after a performance of *Eugene Onegin*:

The audience went crazy, demanding encore after encore, applauding in unison...Eventually the orchestra left. But the audience kept clapping, demanding more. So Mr. Cragun and Ms. [Marcia] Haydée took another bow,

and gave them what they wanted...With the house lights up, and the audience on its feet, "They repeated an entire pas de deux. In complete silence." (Vitello, 2012)

What an extraordinary show that must have been, so remarkable as to become part of Cragun's obituary. In academic terms I might discuss how breaking anticipatory schema generates the elation of freedom mixed with the thrill of "safe danger" in the loss of predictable outcomes. But what interests me at this time is dance persisting, spilling through its container, revealing the artificiality of its brackets, and re-emerging.

From gilded theaters to site-specific sites, bows and applause re-generate structures of social and cultural relationships. These structures, in turn, re-center us in discursive frames. At times curtain calls may support the work in dance performances. Perhaps, however, at other times we may de-center an undertheorized practice of curtain calls and explore other dispersal strategies to support the work of dance. By thoughtfully considering the choreographic intent and needs of the dancers and audience, I can imagine outcomes that do not include bows and applause. If a dance has created a new world, why not let that world continue without habitual bracketing? Through initiating an investigation into curtain calls from the perspective of performance studies, I propose this one facet of current practice as a stimulus for further inquiry. My call to action is for dance scholars to mobilize their considerable expertise and areas of specialization towards exploring this aspect of performance tradition. The questions raised through unpacking curtain calls provide new opportunities for ongoing investigation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Kershaw (2001), Revermann (2008), States (1981).

<sup>2</sup> This point is debatable. I became familiar with the idea in Susanne Langer's (1953) *Feeling and Form* concerning Western performance specifically. However, such an idea unravels in the face of scrutiny such as the type stimulated by cross-cultural study. The concept of audiencing is necessarily intertwined with ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding: What constitutes the other, and how do we know?

<sup>3</sup> Hamera draws upon the scholarship of Michel de Certeau, Pierre Mayol, and Luce Giard (1998, 2002), and I have found their texts on the practices of everyday life very influential in my analysis of curtain call interactions and propriety.

<sup>4</sup> This definition comes from a symposium on Reperformance held at Washington University in St. Louis, MO in 2012 (Reperformance).

<sup>5</sup> In contrast by way of a different context, recently I have been learning more about the world of high-school and college dance teams. In competitive situations, the dancers do not take bows (nor are they allowed to look judges in the eye) but instead perform a stylized exit after the dance ends. To take a bow would put the judges in a position of having to disclose evaluation and/or participate in an evaluative practice.

<sup>6</sup> On occasion *applause* may occur at the beginnings of dances, such as upon the entrance of a star dancer. Alistair MacCauley (2012) describes another such instance in the phenomenon of some New York City audiences applauding at the beginning of each section of Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. However, I have not seen *bows* taken by the dancers.