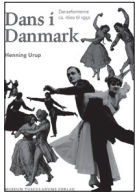


convinced that it is necessary. Indeed, given the weight of suffering around us, on the one hand, and the amount of knowledge available to us, on the other, it may not be morally viable to let our respective disciplines remain opaque. With a bit of clarity and study from each side to the other, we may be able to crosstalk and counterpoint our way towards a multidisciplinary approach to music and medicine' (p. 20).

*Tore Tvarnø Lind*



Henning Urup

*Dans i Danmark. Danseformerne ca. 1600 til 1950*

Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2007

417 pp., illus.

ISBN 978-87-635-0580-2

DKK 298

also available as e-book, ISBN 978-87-635-0932-9, DKK 180



Karen Vedel

*En anden dans. Moderne scenedans i Danmark 1900-1975*

Copenhagen: Multivers 2008

394 pp., illus.

ISBN 978-87-7917-175-6

DKK 328

To date historical studies on Danish dance have primarily been narratives of the Royal Danish Ballet, its chief choreographers, and dancers. Two recent books, *Dans i Danmark* (Dance in Denmark) and *En anden dans* (Another Dance), both challenge this concept, and they do so quite differently.

Henning Urup's *Dans i Danmark* provides an overview of the historical development of dance in Denmark from around 1600 until 1950 and includes descriptions of social as well as theatrical dance forms. A dance form, the author explicitly states in the introductory chapter, is to be understood as a characterization of patterns of movement in interplay with musical structures.

The text is based on historical source material, primarily from Denmark but complemented with material from abroad which includes various written accounts and descriptions, musical scores, dance notations, and miscellaneous visual depictions. The source material is presented in the beginning of each main chapter in approximate chronological order; then the period's dance forms are described and summarized according to typological divisions (distinguishing between social dance as opposed to theatre dance and group dances in contrast to couple dances and to some extent solo dances). The book concludes with an English summary, notes, bibliography, list of illustrations, and name and subject index.

Sectioned off in four parts, the book divides the development of dance in Denmark in neatly delimited time periods: 'Dansen før år 1700' (Dance before 1700); 'Dansen i 1700-tallet' (Dance in the 18th century); 'Dansen i 1800-tallet' (Dance in the 19th century); and 'Dans i Danmark i 1900-tallet' (Dance in Denmark in the 20th century). In the late 16th- and 17th-centuries long chain-dances were performed with many dancers moving forward behind a lead dancer. Couple dances could also be found, for example the solemn procession-like *pavane*. In the 18th century the 'sophisticated' minuet and the 'simple' Polish dance were favoured couple dances, whereas the designated English dances were popular group dances

(the term covering both the *anglaise* form with the dancers arranged in rows of men and women, and the French *contredanse* form with the pairs arranged in squares). The 1820s saw the introduction of a dance form composed of a set of contredances, now called *Quadrille* or *Française*; *Les Lanciers* is such a quadrille dance that reached enormous popularity when it was introduced around 1860. Also the new round dances of the waltz family were hugely popular. Around 1900 Danish folk dances were (re-)discovered and danced in many folk dance associations. Meanwhile new couple dances like the Tango, *Hesitation*, and Boston Waltz were imported from abroad and successfully established in the Danish society.

As mentioned, the text presents a lot of source material. It refers to and even quotes longer excerpts from the written sources. Clearly, Urup is very keen to show the wealth and richness as well as the ‘imperfections’ and shortages of the source material, which comes as no surprise since he is the founder and leader of Dansk Dansehistorisk Arkiv (The Danish Dance History Archive). The underlying purpose of the study of the source material appears to be reconstruction. It also seems obvious that Urup’s ambition is to contribute to the academic research on dance history, and the meticulous and thorough presentation and documentation must be applauded. The book should be treasured for its catalogue-like characteristics or reference book qualities. However, to me it also seems to be the main weakness of the book; the almost overwhelming attention to the formal content of source materials leaves little space for in-depth analyses, let alone discussions. The information on movement and music remains quite descriptive and formal in nature and is partly inaccessible to readers without some knowledge of (music) theory.

The second book, Karen Vedel’s *En anden dans*, is only concerned with theatre dance during the period c. 1900–75 – omitting performances by the acclaimed troupe at the Royal Theatre on Kongens Nytorv. The national ballet is, Vedel declares in the introductory chapter, very much *the* theatre dance that all other theatre dances in the given time period is judged against, implicitly or explicitly. This has given the book its title, and the interrelationship between the Royal Danish Ballet and the other theatre dances is a recurring theme throughout the book.

Six chapters constitute the main body of the book, each of which discusses a phenomenon or theme of theatre dance. They do not, however, follow or attempt to follow the existing dance history canon which is usually divided in chronologically successive genres. The chapters cover the *dancing girls* as part of the popular entertainment in the music halls in the first decades of 20th century; the *barefoot dancing* and *plastique* during the 1920s in Denmark that Isadora Duncan represented; the reformed Russian ballet of Mikhail Fokin centred around his guest performances in 1918 and 1925; the ‘free’, early German modern dance and its influence in Denmark during the late 1920s until the 1950s; 40 years of diverse dance performances with the common denominator that they were performed by darker skinned dancers – the so-called ‘nigger dance’; and *modern dance* in Denmark in the 1970s as it eventually was accepted as an art form.

Regardless of the focus of the different chapters, they are based on written source material – mainly press coverage such as reports and reviews from the performances as well as articles preceding the performances, interviews, feature columns, etc. In some cases, Vedel also examines theatre programmes, advertisements, or other tangible material from the printed media. Here it is important to note that the purpose of the text is not to reconstruct or preserve the different performances for posterity; rather, the mission is the analytical treatment of all the ideas and conceptions, thoughts, and feelings that make up the discourse on theatre dance.

In addition to the thematic chapters, Vedel has created four so-called ‘dansekort’ (dance maps), entitled ‘1900’, ‘1925’, ‘1950’, and ‘1975’. These are shorter texts with a brief snapshot of the theatre dances’ interconnection with a larger dance-field (following Bourdieu’s use of the term) around the year in question, and they are meant to put on display the various profes-

sionals (e.g. dancers, choreographers, teachers, and critics), institutions (e.g. theatres, dance schools, and other educational institutions), and communicative elements of the time (e.g. journals, organizations, books, film). Furthermore, the book is richly illustrated with photographs and other illustrations of the artists of the time, and a bibliography, a list of sources, and an index are to be found at the end.

In all, the chapters, dance maps, and pictures give the reader an impression of some of the ('opinions' about) dance genres being performed in Denmark during the first three quarters of the 20th century. It should be stressed, however, that the book is not an exhaustive record of all dance performances given by others than the Royal Danish Ballet. It is a selection of – mainly female – artists highly concentrated on the performances at venues in Copenhagen. One might say that the linear development (as well as a male dominated perspective) typical of canons of dance history are left out, and the clarity of a general outline sacrificed for a broader perspective. No clear-cut definitions or simplistic explanations are offered here.

Both books are highly valuable and quite exceptional in examining parts of Danish dance history which have not been given adequate academic attention. *Dans i Danmark* is remarkable because it deals with social dance as well as theatre dance and *En anden dans* is exceptional in studying performances of artists not permanently employed at the Royal Danish Ballet as well as non-elitist genres, thus acknowledging theatre dance in a broad sense. The books' approaches to the chosen topics are quite different. The underlying aspiration for Urup is reconstruction, and his text is a detailed and substantial presentation and documentation of Danish (and to some extent foreign) source materials and an examination of the formal content in movement and music. Vedel's discursive approach is much more concerned with the context in which the dance is found, that is the interconnection between dance and the rapidly changing society and how people thought, felt, and fought for certain dance genres. Anyone interested in Danish cultural history – and/or in dance, obviously – will gain new knowledge and perspectives from studying these books.

*Mie Lotte Ajspur*