Abstract

Dance as Culture: An Ethnochoreological Perspective on Dance Studies

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It is only within the last two decades of the twentieth century that research on ethnochoreology or dance ethnology, which is embedded in socio-cultural Anthropology through the dominant disciplinary homes of ethnology and anthropology have invariably expanded to include sub and cognate disciplines of anthropology, sociology, folklore studies, cultural studies, performance studies and history. This has brought new fields of enquiry in dance studies and has enabled ethnochoreologists to reinvent their scholarship beyond the conventional discourses of history, ethnography, notation and aesthetics. This paper will look into the issues of the dancing body while examining methodologies for contextualizing cultural and first person experiences of dancing, and analyzing and interpreting cultural representations by and for the dancing body through an evaluation and appraisal of theories about the dancing body as cultural constructs and as experience, which focus on the dances of the Malayo-Polynesian societies. It will eventually examine how structured movement systems as systems of knowledge are a product of action and interaction as well as processes through which actions and interaction take place.

Keywords: Ethnochoreology, Cultural Anthropology, Ethnology, Dancing Body, Structured Movement System.