

Choreology (Dancology) – Theory of Dance: 20 Years in Ukraine and the Challenges of Dissemination

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Abstract

In 2024, it has been 20 years since the choreology course was introduced into the curriculum of the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture. Since then, this science and academic discipline has been studied in scholarly circles and incorporated into university programs. However, fundamental challenges regarding its understanding and further promotion still persist. Based on the study of choreology under my guidance since 2004, a scientific choreological school has been formed, resulting in the successful defense of seven dissertations related to dance theory between 2009 and 2019. This includes ethnic choreology, which is currently considered the most promising branch of general dance theory. During the dissertation work, all candidates applied choreological methods, including the use of sign systems — i.e., semiotics (the decoding of metaphors and the plastic codes of body language). My book *Choreology* evaluates the contributions of each dance theorist from Noverre to Lifar to the theory of dance and includes a glossary of choreological terms. The book also contains a section dedicated to the traditions of Eastern dance, particularly Chinese dance, which is now making itself known through vibrant artistic events and outstanding figures. Renowned Chinese dancer and choreographer Yang Liping confirms that the Chinese people possess a rich dance culture that nourishes both mind and body, providing a means of communication with the world. Interest in Chinese dance continues to grow, fueled by innovations such as the acrobatic version of *Swan Lake*. Yet this also calls for theoretical understanding. As early as 2011, Alla Vats published the book *The Dance Art of China: History and Modernity* in Russian. The book argues that, contrary to popular belief that dance holds a secondary place in Chinese culture, its formation began as early as the Neolithic period. However, in terms of choreology, there are still few answers to the fundamental questions of theory. Interest in studying Chinese dance outside of China is further confirmed by the publication of Feng Shuangbai's book *A Hundred Years of Dance in China (1900–2000)* by the Shans publishing house four years after Vats' book. The author convincingly argues that the 20th century was indeed a period of flourishing for Chinese dance beyond the country's borders. Yet again, only a brief mention of the theoretical foundations of national dance is made. Finally, Feng Shuangbai, Liu Xiaozhan, and Wang Ningning jointly created *An Illustrated History of Chinese Dance*, which was also published in Russian in 2022. This historically rich and engaging book is written in a popular science style and likewise lacks theoretical generalizations regarding the origins, structure, and cultural roots of ethnic dance. Meanwhile, such work has already been done in Ukraine, many European countries, as well as in Georgia and Armenia. It is perhaps time for Chinese theorists to join choreological research — especially in the area of ethnic dance.

Keywords

Choreology in Ukraine, Ethnic Choreology, Eastern Dance, Dance Theory, Chinese Dance as a Research Subject