

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

cordially invites you to a workshop on

Writing of a Faun. A Signature Piece of 20th Century Dance and its Scripting

Friday, 18 June, 2021, 02:00pm-05:00pm CET

Zoom-Meeting

Vaclav Nijinsky (1889-1950) is one of the outstanding figures in the history of dance. His choreography “The Afternoon of a Faun”, premiered in 1912, is a signature piece of dance in modernity. The shape of the ‘original’ choreography, however, was lost over the decades, also because Nijinsky's own idiosyncratic dance writings could not be deciphered until 1989. Since then, numerous restagings and reconstructions have been presented worldwide. The workshop looks at the intricate interrelations between writing, scripted movement, passing on and performance of this dance piece over a period of roughly 100 years.

Programme

02:00 – 02:15	Introduction by Gabriele Klein (Hamburg)
02:15 – 03:00	Franz Anton Cramer (Hamburg): <i>Writing what cannot be said: Dance Testimonies and the Trope of the Unsayable</i>
03:00 – 03:45	Claudia Jeschke (Munich): <i>Writing Dance and Dancing –Vaclav Nijinsky's Notation Manuscripts</i>
03:45 – 04:00	Break
04:00 – 04:45	Sonia Tinnes (Hamburg): <i>Reading Dance – an Introduction to the Secrets of Dance Notation</i>
04:45 – 05:00	Final Discussion

Abstracts and Contributors

Gabriele Klein is professor of sociology with focus on Human Movement Science, Dance and Performance Studies at Universität Hamburg. She has been director of the research group “Translating and Framing. Practices of Medial Transformations”, deputy speaker of the graduate school “Collectivity in Urban and Digital Spaces” and PI of the graduate school “Virtuality of the Aesthetic” (HFbK). She is PI in the Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts” realised within the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Universität Hamburg.

Writing what cannot be said: Dance Testimonies and the Trope of the Unsayable

Franz Anton Cramer (02:15-03:00 pm CET)

Abstract: The early 20th century sees the advent of modern dance as a new art form that is claimed for its speechlessness and its highly experiential qualities. In parallel to this trope of an art beyond speech, a culture of writing evolves that shrouds the bodily appearance of dance works with an enormous body of written testimony, ranging from enthusiastic praise to social Utopianism. The contribution draws a picture of this paradoxical and yet highly performative cultural setting.

Franz Anton Cramer, Dr. phil., is a dance scholar specializing in archival research and research on archives. Currently he is Research Associate in the three-year project “Choreographies of Archiving” directed by Gabriele Klein, as part of the Cluster of Excellence “Understanding Written Artefacts” realised within the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Universität Hamburg.

Writing Dance and Dancing –Vaclav Nijinsky’s Notation Manuscripts

Claudia Jeschke (03:00 - 03:45 CET)

Abstract: During Nijinsky’s formational years in St. Petersburg, he gained insights into historical choreography-as-dance-scripts and became familiar with the then most recent system by Vladimir Stepanov, Alphabet of Movements of the Human Body (1892). Historically, notated dance texts have aimed at the independence of dance works from their performance, they enabled their dissemination and allowed the creators a certain authorship over their compositions. In 1915/16, Nijinsky himself developed a latent system that he used – without further explication – for writing the full score of his first ballet L’Après-midi d’un faune (1912). What kind of ‘originality’ can be ascribed ex post to this document that would not exist without Nijinsky’s outstanding performance as Faun and his profound knowledge of dance writing systems? Ann Hutchinson Guest and myself deciphered the ‘language’ of Nijinsky’s Faune score in the 1980s, transposed it into another notational language (Labanotation), and re-constructed as well as restaged the work.

Claudia Jeschke is professor emerita of dance studies, historian, reconstructor, choreographer, curator. Along with her studies of Theaterwissenschaft at Munich University and a doctoral dissertation on the history of dance notation systems Claudia Jeschke was professionally trained in various dance forms. Her academic respectively practical expertise allows her to approach dance heritages 'in actu' on stage, as a curator of exhibitions, as an author of television programs on dance and in academic writing. From 2004 to 2015, she joined the faculty of the Department for Studies in the Arts, Music, and Dance at Salzburg University and became head of the Derra de Moroda Dance Archives. Having retired at Salzburg, she teaches at Anton-Bruckner-Privatuniversität in Linz (Austria) and the Wydział Teatru Tańca PWST Krakow/Bytom (Poland). Her extensive body of publications focuses on dance historical and theoretical issues as well as on movement analyses and notation – and the discursive transfers between these fields of research and knowledge production.

Reading Dance – an introduction to the secrets of Dance Notation. Benesh Movement Notation

Sonia Tinnes (04:00 - 04:45 CET)

Abstract: This talk offers a short introduction to Benesh Movement Notation: how it works, how to notate a new choreographic creation and – vice versa – how to reconstruct it from the notation score. To illustrate this process, we will be using examples from John Neumeier's ballet "Nijinsky".

Sonja Tinnes received her education in dance and ballet pedagogy at the Royal Ballet School in London and was awarded the "Benesh Prize for Dance Notation". She took over the position as choreologist at the Hamburg Ballet in 1996 and since then oversaw the staging of John Neumeier's ballets with major companies worldwide: Royal Danish Ballet Copenhagen, Finnish National Ballet in Helsinki, Ballett der Deutschen Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf, Stanislavsky Ballet Moscow, Het Nationale Ballet in Amsterdam, Semperoper Ballet Dresden, National Ballet of Canada Toronto, Vienna State Ballet, Australian Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet Moscow.