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Dance Education Around the World; Perspectives on dance, young people and change

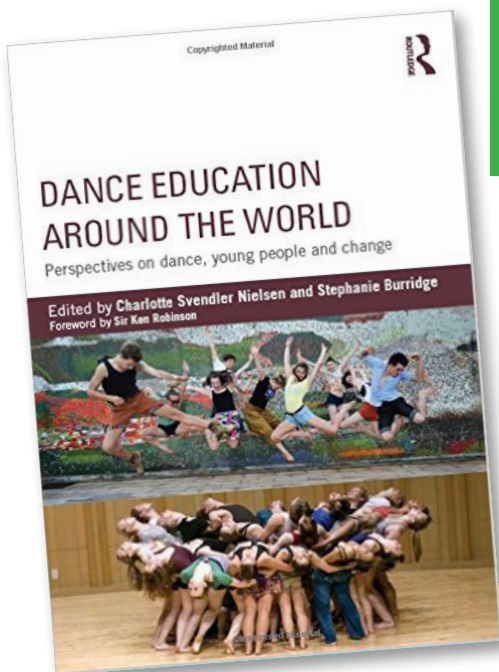
Authors: Svendler Nielsen, Charlotte & Burrige, Stephanie (Eds). London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

Dance Education Around the World; Perspectives on dance, young people and change reviews dance from several different perspectives. As editors, Charlotte Svendler Nielsen and Stephanie Burrige have made a valuable contribution to dance education through this book that treats dance in a comprehensive manner. Dance education is seen as an essential part of life and not as an isolated area.

The title not only expresses the content of the book, but also informs readers about the authors, who come from different continents and countries. The majority of the articles were written by native English-speaking and Western authors, but the perspectives come from worldwide sources. The different cultural and professional backgrounds of the authors bring diversity and different kinds of theories and pedagogical approaches to the book. Among the 30 authors, there are experts from many dance education areas, such as professors, lecturers, writers, dance educators, researchers and choreographers. Many authors are both teachers and researchers, which is quite common in the field of dance. *Sir Ken Robinson* wrote an interesting foreword to the book. Although there are numerous articles within the book, I have limited space in this review. Therefore, I have chosen to describe the different sections in general terms rather than in detail.

The book is divided into five sections. Each section includes chapters and case narratives on a key area:

- 1) Curriculum developments worldwide,
- 2) Empowering communities through dance,
- 3) Embodiment and creativity in dance teaching,



- 4) Exploring and assessing learning in dance as artistic practice and
- 5) Imagined futures for dance education.

These sections are interconnected in many ways and some themes recur, such as reflective discussions on the new role of teachers and on the objectives of current dance education. Whereas the different issues and themes concerning dance education are discussed on a more theoretical level within the chapters, the case narratives offer concrete examples of pedagogical cases within different social, cultural, philosophical or sociological frameworks in different countries. The theoretical chapters and case narratives work together to form a whole by complementing each other.

Section I, *Curriculum developments worldwide*, leads the reader to ponder the place of dance in curriculums and schools. The authors of this section are *Susan R. Koff*, *Jeff Meiners*, *Robyne Garrett*, *Adrienne Sansom*, *Sharon Friedman*, *Liz Melchior* and *Lim Mei Chian*. In the first chapter, *Susan R. Koff* asks a relevant question, «Who shall decide what to teach?» This question is also discussed in the other articles within this section. It is interesting to read about the current state of dance education and the place of dance in curriculums in different countries. For example, in several countries, dance is taught in schools as part of physical education. It would have been interesting to learn more about the subject and also about the positive aspects and challenges associated with dance when it is taught as part of physical education in schools.

In the first section, the articles highlight what kinds of educational change are going on in different countries and what kinds of possibilities dance education can offer to diverse learners. The authors critically reflect on whether dance curricula can offer access to meaningful dance content and practices for everybody. They also concretise how strongly local history, for example the history of Indigenous people in Australia, is related to dance education. Social justice in dance curricula is open for discussion within the field of dance education.

Section II, *Empowering communities through dance*, shows how dance practices can be adapted to many kinds of environments, including extremely difficult circumstances. *Mary-Elizabeth Manley* describes a project that explores links between arts education, rights education and indigenous pedagogy as they relate to the empowerment of First Nation's children. Reading about the impressive community project in the occupied Palestinian territories by author *Nichola Rowe* left me in awe. Politics are also strongly present in *Rosemary Martin's* text about

dance education in Cairo. *Beatrice Ayi* discusses the significance of dance in Ghana, including how dance constructs national identity and is at the centre of life. Also *Catherine Limbertie* emphasises that dance plays an important role in helping Torontonians embody their diversity.

Section III, *Embodiment and creativity in dance teaching*, focuses on the appreciation of dance as a creative practice and a personal and subjective experience. Collaboration and dialogue are also significant pedagogical approaches for the authors. *Eeva Anttila* introduces a long-term school project related to embodied learning, and she also discusses topical concerns related to the increasing physical passivity of children. Based on her research project, the next writer, *Alba Pedreira Vieira*, also highlights the centrality of the body in dance. *Isto Turpeinen* describes «the raw-board», which is his working method of teaching boys, and how love is the basis of his pedagogy. Dance as an educational tool to empower young people is the focus of *Carolyn Russell-Smith*, who writes about various possibilities to use dance in a child-centred way in Jamaica. Finally, *JuanAnn Tai* illustrates how the annual workshops in dance education for children organized in Taiwan, give confidence to local student teachers and dance instructors to focus on the creative process instead of the product. In these workshops, the knowledge and experience in creative dance are linked between the Eastern and the Western world.

Section IV, *Exploring and assessing learning in dance as artistic practice*, includes reflective thinking on how and why we assess dance and dancers. In the first chapter, *Susan W. Stinson* focuses on standards and assessment in dance education. It is easy to agree with her that assessment is very much an ethical question that inevitably challenges us as dance educators. In the next chapter,

Svendler Nielsen writes about the role of the body in education and about excessive sitting during school lessons. Her thoughts are closely related to *Eeva Anttila's* article, which was presented in the previous chapter of this review. According to *Svendler Nielsen*, our ways of thinking about learning in schools are gradually changing. In the future, we will hopefully be increasingly aware that learning does not only take place in our heads, *Stinson* writes. In the case narratives, *Kristen Jeppsen Groves* and *Marin Leggat Roper* focus on empathic pedagogy, and *Marc Richard* describes how learning could potentially be made visible in creative dance education through documentation. The considerations of *Liesbeth Wildschut* on how children can discover new things and enlarge their worlds by watching dance conclude this section, and like the previous case narratives, the author offers pedagogical examples for educators.

Section V, *Imagined futures for dance education*, *Ann Kipling Brown* explores what kinds of possibilities digital technology offers when integrated in dance education. The examples highlight how technology can enhance learning in the twenty-first century as an integral part of dance education. *Kerry Chappell* and *Veronica Jobbins* outline their concerns about diminishing art education offerings and about the current political education climate in the United Kingdom which is dominated by core skills. Based on their research, they also introduce principles for creative partnership practices. *Ralph Buck's* article offers personal, life-tasting reflections on the future directions of dance education. The author reviews dance education, the role of the teacher and the role of dance communities through his own experiences. Dance education is introduced by *Maria Speth*, who highlights the *Twinning* project, a concept that started in a dance context in 2006. The *Twinning* project brings people together from different countries to create

dialogue and new kinds of knowledge. *Cynthia Ling Lee's* case narrative concerns a web-based coalition of women dance artists from different countries who are engaged in South Asian dance; her narrative shows how the Internet can be a tool for bridging geographical isolation.

Dance Education Around the World; Perspectives on dance, young people and change is a book that I would recommend to people who work with embodiment, creativity and bodily expression in schools or elsewhere. The book offers readers thoughts on how dance is an area that can contribute to learning in many ways and can offer everybody useful skills, such as body consciousness. *Dance Education Around the World; Perspectives on dance, young people and change* can also be a catalyst for new ways of thinking for those who are not as familiar with dance. Dance is more flexible and adaptable than most people can even imagine.

Mariana Siljamäki.