

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Performance in Latin America

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This essay reviews the following works:

La Verdad: An International Dialogue on Hip Hop Latinidades. Edited by Melissa Castillo-Garsow and Jason Nichols. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 317. \$89.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780814213155.

On Site, in Sound: Performance Geographies in América Latina. By Kirstie A. Dorr. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Pp. vii + 241. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822368670.

Moving Otherwise: Dance, Violence, and Memory in Buenos Aires. By Victoria Fortuna. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. ix + 256. \$35.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780190627010.

Performance Constellations: Networks of Protest and Activism in Latin America. By Marcela A. Fuentes. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 164. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780472054220.

Power in Practice: The Pragmatic Anthropology of Afro-Brazilian Capoeira. By Sergio González Varela. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. Pp. viii + 166. \$135.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781785336355.

Staging Brazil: Choreographies of Capoeira. By Ana Paula Höfling. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 225. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780819578815.

Honest Bodies: Revolutionary Modernism in the Dances of Anna Sokolow. By Hannah Kosstrin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 255. \$38.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780199396931.

The Tide Was Always High: The Music of Latin America in Los Angeles. Edited by Josh Kun. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017. Pp. vii + 303. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780520294400.

The Invention of Latin American Music: A Transnational History. By Pablo Palomino. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. vii + 259. \$35.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780190687410.

Laban plural: Arte do movimento, pesquisa e genealogia da práxis de Rudolf Laban no Brasil. By Melina Scialom. São Paulo: Summus, 2017. Pp. 192. \$8.99 e-book. ISBN: 9788532310712.

The ten books reviewed examine the role of performance (broadly defined to include dance, music, and protest) in Latin America and Latin American performance in the world. Beside this point of commonality, the works vary greatly. For instance, authors analyze from different vantage points, focusing on the performances of a single person (Kosstrin), single city (Fortuna and Kun), single country (Höfling, González Varela, and Scialom), and several countries or regions within Latin America and Latin American USA (Fuentes, Palomino, Dorr, and Castillo-Garsow and Nichols). Three studies critically call into question what constitutes Latin America (Palomino, Dorr, Castillo-Garsow and Nichols), while the rest accept the category

as self-evident. Equally, scholars employ rather different disciplinary methods including those from history, dance studies, anthropology, geography, performance studies, and musicology. Nevertheless, these books share an interest in thinking about how performers use their cultural productions to *do* something. That is, performances in Latin America and beyond become powerful tools for making political statements, asserting authority, challenging structural inequalities, shaping the construct of Latin America, and destabilizing assumptions about how people move or what a place sounds like in the region.

Demonstrating the power of Latin American performances is an important contribution. These scholars build on rich precedents, but address gaps and erasures in their respective fields.¹ For instance, Fortuna brings previously overlooked contemporary dance (meaning choreographed works presented on stages rather than popular dances of ritual and revelry) into conversations about resistance to Argentinean state violence from the 1960s through the twenty-first century. Essays in the edited volume *La Verdad* attempt to counter the marginalization of hip-hop in the academy and non-English artists within hip-hop studies. Höfling restores authorship to capoeira innovators, usually picturesquely portrayed as anonymous and static purveyors of tradition. In short, the ten studies work to demonstrate the value of performance as a means for analyzing Latin American societies and the region as a whole.

The authors succeed in their goal. Whether focusing on African American dancers in Lima, enterprising musicologists in Uruguay, or Mexican hip-hop musicians in Queens, they show Latin America as a wellspring of innovative productions and cultural producers who have used their work to respond to US imperialism, racism, exploitative capitalism, and gender violence, among other historic injustices. Below, I connect different titles that resonantly examine what performances have done and continue to do: build community, circulate, and shape understandings of place.

Community

Performance provides an effectual means for constructing communities, especially for oppressed populations seeking to protect and promote their interests. In *Staging Brazil* and *Power in Practice*, Ana Paula Höfling and Sergio González Varela, respectively, examine how African-descended Brazilians have used capoeira to build communities over time. A mixture of martial arts and dance, capoeira originated in nineteenth-century Brazil when enslaved men masked their fighting practices by putting them to music. Höfling analyzes how their rebel moves developed into a codified performance genre in the twentieth century, and González Varela focuses on power dynamics in capoeira communities in the here and now.

Höfling charts developments from 1928 to 1974, decades when capoeira went from an informal, criminalized fighting practice to the present-day form of “Afro-Brazilian art” (15). In the process of defining, institutionalizing, and codifying capoeira over the years, *mestres* (master teachers) and advocates mostly in the northeastern city of Salvador, but also in the southeastern city of Rio de Janeiro, competed to distinguish their approaches. This involved claiming specific lineages and priorities. In particular, *capoeira angola* and *capoeira regional* came to signify two diverging schools, with the former supposedly representing tradition and the latter, modernity. Each respective approach became a distinct community of performers, connected across generations.

Rather than taking these designations for granted, Höfling rigorously examines them, asking how they came to be, thereby historicizing binaries that have long organized capoeira. Riffing on Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of invented tradition, Höfling argues that distinctions were intentional as practitioners of capoeira angola “invented tradition” and those of capoeira regional “invented modernity” to differentiate and legitimize their respective forms. Inventing tradition meant claiming that capoeira angola preserved African patrimony in Brazil, implying that the “folk” form was a frozen emblem of the past. Inventing modernity meant ostensibly improving capoeira, resulting in capoeira regional, an updated “folkloric sport” with elements drawn from foreign fighting practices (39). The binary of African retention or loss has framed not only how practitioners have understood capoeira angola and capoeira regional but also how scholars have analyzed them. By contrast, Höfling offers a revisionist history by showing similarities in capoeira angola and capoeira regional and by taking seriously innovators who practiced a capoeira that did not fit cleanly within these dominant categories. Höfling also aims to “restore authorship to capoeira practitioners,” who have been portrayed as anonymous stewards of capoeira angola tradition or those who strayed from it by attempting to reconfigure

¹ For instance, Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Marc Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Margarita Tortajada Quiroz, *Danza y poder* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de la Danza José Limón, Centro Nacional de las Artes, 1995).

movements in capoeira regional (14). Her work, then, shows “Afro-diasporic ‘tradition’ capable of being articulated both through and as modernity” (10). Capoeira performers and advocates wrote, maneuvered, and organized to create vibrant movement communities devoted to both legacy and reinvention. Their actions allowed capoeira to become a valued mainstay of modern Brazilian culture.

Höfling uses methods from history, dance studies, and critical tourism studies to analyze texts and her “embodied knowledge of capoeira” (14). Historical sources include capoeira manuals like those written in the 1960s by key innovators Mestre Bimba (born Manuel dos Reis Machado) on capoeira regional and Mestre Pastinha (born Vicente Ferreira Pastinha) on capoeira angola, as well as writings by folklorists, intellectuals, journalists, and affiliates of the tourist industry. Along with closely reading words and images, Höfling employs dance studies methodologies when enlisting her body to literally flesh out texts. Besides historical and dance studies approaches, Höfling dialogues with critical tourism studies to posit the concept of “staging” in order to foreground how performers purposefully presented a contrived version of their offstage behaviors in performances like folkloric spectacles for tourists and international audiences.

Embodied experience leads to a reevaluation of sources previously studied in capoeira scholarship. For instance, Höfling finds new value in the 1928 capoeira manual by Anníbal Burlamaqui (known as Zuma), particularly the thick movement descriptions that he wrote. Although critics faulted Zuma, a white man, for a verticality and lack of groundedness associated with capoeira’s Africanity, Höfling noted that in following his written instructions, she found herself “constantly rise, fall, dive, duck, and jump” (31). By using her body, she debunked dismissals of Zuma’s capoeira as somehow inauthentic and teased out a robust physicality that also characterizes other supposedly more authentic forms of capoeira.

Staging Brazil also intervenes in conversations about race and nation in Brazil and points to rich avenues for further research on gender. During the decades analyzed, racial ideologies shifted as performances associated with African-descended Brazilians went from criminalized to nationalized. Although symbolic violence continued as nationalistic state projects instrumentalized capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian men leading capoeira innovations seized on new opportunities to present their performances as part of modern Brazil. Women were less common participants in the masculinized fight-dance, but Höfling does discuss the female director Emília Biancardi, who developed successful folkloric spectacles featuring capoeira for the world to see. Images like the photograph on page 126 show exclusively male capoeira practitioners, but men and a few women watching demonstrations. Höfling’s study inspires questions about female spectatorship. Also of interest: How did women practitioners—a more recent phenomenon beyond the scope of *Staging Brazil*—navigate participation in a practice glossed as masculine? Future scholars would benefit from building on Höfling’s methods to continue analyzing the gender dynamics of viewing and doing capoeira.

Whereas Höfling analyzes the etiology of capoeira angola and capoeira regional communities, *Power in Practice* by Sergio González Varela focuses on capoeira angola and the power a *mestre* achieves within the community he leads. Using ethnography, interviews, and personal experience with capoeira, the anthropological account centers on mestres “who see that their inner magical power is responsible for the creation of a community of practitioners and its existing rules” (7). Mestres forge this power through lineage, tradition, secrecy, inscrutability, ritual, expertise, and music. In and out of a capoeira session, the mestre performs power, according to González Varela.

In sharp contrast to Höfling, González Varela accepts the trope that capoeira angola mestres are “caretakers of tradition” (58), that is, the very idea that Höfling so carefully and compellingly complicates. Although always conveying deep respect for capoeira communities, González Varela describes capoeira and mestres in a manner that borders on caricature. For instance, he perceives a “hidden spiritual and magic domain” of capoeira and describes mestres asserting their power with deceitful moves that throw opponents off guard (146). With these characterizations, capoeira becomes a product of mystical instincts rather than thoughtful authorship, and mestres, devious rather than genuine creators.

Even though *Power in Practice* falls back on stereotypes that Höfling challenges, the study moves the conversation forward by showing how these discourses provide a cornerstone for promoting mestres’ power. Moreover, the monograph gestures to future avenues of research by touching briefly on how mestres increasingly use social media to assert their authority among local and far flung digital capoeira communities. Much more could be said about the role that virtual forums have in forging capoeira legends, power, and communities. Picking up where Höfling and González Varela left off, future studies might reflect on what these new networks do to facilitate connection and to reconfigure the physicality and dynamics of capoeira practices.

While capoeira mestres built communities that nurtured their careers and Brazilian culture, Latin American activists, artists, and protestors have used performance to further political projects, challenge the status

quo, and effect social change. Marcela Fuentes's *Performance Constellations* examines how they did this by using both in-person and digital protests. Disciplinarily, *Performance Constellations* is in dialogue with dance studies scholarship on the theatrical and choreographic dimensions of protest, performance studies scholarship on dispersed but connected activist performances, and new media studies scholarship on the liveness of online technologies. Fuentes makes an important intervention by analyzing the synergy between online and off-line activism. The study convincingly shows how digital activities are crucial and robust, not peripheral and lazy activism, known as "slacktivism" (19). This reframes images, videos, and hashtags into consequential political interventions. These virtual statements contribute to a definition of "performance constellations," that is, "tactics of disruption and worldmaking enabled by activist articulations of body-based protest performances and digital networking" (3). These performance constellations forge far-flung communities of people working together, sometimes while physically apart, to challenge power imbalances and social injustices in Latin America.

Each of the four chapters examines a case study that elegantly takes the narrative forward chronologically while also building the theoretical discussion of performance constellations. The first chapter discusses the 1994 Zapatista insurgency against the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement. To respond to transnational neoliberal threats, Zapatistas and their supporters deployed an equally expansive weapon: the Internet. While masked Zapatista rebels enacted physical protests, the US-based collective Electronic Disturbance Theater organized electronic civil disobedience in the form of virtual sit-ins that disrupted business (in the form of web traffic) just as in-person sit-ins might. Even if people were physically isolated in front of their computers, they convened virtually to build a network of support for the Zapatistas internationally.

The other three chapters similarly analyze protest movements that deployed both bodily performance and digital networking to mobilize against pernicious power structures. The next chapters focus on Argentina following the 2001 economic crisis, Chile during the 2011 student mobilizations, and Mexico after the 2014 disappearance of forty-three Ayotzinapa students. Coordinated performances included a family protesting in a Buenos Aires bank lobby and an informational PowerPoint circulating by email, a flash mob of Chilean students performing Michael Jackson's "Thriller" and videos of the dancers posted on social media, and hashtags that rallied international awareness and in-person protests against the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students.

In each of these cases, physical and virtual actions worked in concert, with the latter augmenting and even sustaining the former. For instance, in addition to the "Thriller" performance, Chilean students protested the defunding of public education with a relay run, "1800 horas por la educación" (1,800 hours for education), wherein participants took turns circling the government house in Santiago for over two months. To do this, they recruited runners on Facebook and Twitter. As another example, hashtags extended the protests in Mexico by connecting them to struggles for social justice elsewhere. The hashtag #USTired2 referenced an exhaustion with state violence and misinformation in Mexico, and it allowed activists in the United States to organize and coordinate protests for missing Ayotzinapa students in over forty US cities. Northern activists also tied #USTired2 to racism and police brutality by including the hashtag in tweets about a New York march after the nonconviction of the officer who choked Eric Garner to death in Staten Island.

Like Höfling and González Varela, who both participated in the communities that they discuss, Fuentes indicates her personal connection to these performance constellations. She grew up in Argentina during a military dictatorship and recalled going with her theater teacher to her first rally in 1983 to celebrate the return to democracy. Drawing on her own activist experiences, Fuentes produced a monograph with a larger purpose beyond academic study. As Fuentes indicates in the conclusion, she hopes that the case studies will provide templates for future activists, artists, and scholars. As a result, *Performance Constellations* offers both rigorous scholarship and a roadmap of where activists have been, what they have learned, and how they adapt performative tactics to challenge any unjust status quo.

In these three works, performance encompasses physical movements like capoeira kicks and dives, ostensibly devious moves by mestres, occupying a bank in Buenos Aires to protest neoliberalism, and virtual mobilizations like hashtags. Throughout, the performances analyzed play an important role in intervening in public discourse. In the case of *Staging Brazil* and *Power in Practice*, capoeira helps to define the contours of race, nation, and culture in Brazil for both practitioners and audiences. In *Performance Constellations*, in-person and virtual protests challenge power structures for all the world to see. Building communities for Fuentes involved people both "being against" hegemonic power structures and "being together" physically and virtually to fight against neoliberalism and state violence (112–113). Focusing on what performances can do in terms of bringing people together shows how ephemeral events have lasting and expansive impacts, touching people locally and internationally.

Circulation

As Fuentes's study indicates, Latin American performances traversed borders with each click, tweet, Facebook share, or YouTube viewing. Three new studies about modern and contemporary dance also address how dancers, choreographies, and dance methodologies circulate in and beyond Latin America. With these mobilizations, Latin American performances connect meaningfully with the wider world.

To clarify terms, modern dance generally refers to an earlier generation of artists than contemporary dance. Starting in the early twentieth century, modern dancers developed their own approaches to movement in opposition to the more rigid, codified ballet, which had a set technique that had developed over centuries. The earliest centers of modern dance innovation were in the United States and Europe, and as a result, modern dancers in Latin America generally had ties to innovators from those locales. Contemporary dancers built on modern dance but wanted to distance themselves from the term, which seemed to denote the early pioneers from the global North. Regardless, both modern and contemporary dancers often placed politics at the center of their performance inquiries, seeking to convey messages about nationalism, state violence, ideology, and gender.

In *Honest Bodies*, Hannah Kosstrin focuses on the modern dance innovator Anna Sokolow, who had a transnational career in New York, Mexico, and Israel. The daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, Sokolow grew up in New York City's Lower East Side and came of age in a proletarian environment. After early training in dance classes offered at nearby settlement houses, she became a principal dancer in Martha Graham's famed modern dance company before founding the leftist Workers (later New) Dance League. Sokolow remained connected to Jewish and modernist channels of the International Left as she developed her own choreography. During the Cold War era, Sokolow would distance herself from her early political roots given the persecution of leftists in the United States. However, Kosstrin argues that communist ideology was central to Sokolow's work from the early to mid-twentieth century. By excavating Sokolow's glossed-over leftism, Kosstrin shows that "American dance modernism," often presumed to be apolitical and abstract, in fact had political underpinnings as exemplified in Sokolow's trajectory (2). Moreover, American dance modernism was profoundly transnational. *Honest Bodies* decenters the United States in modern dance history by following Sokolow as she developed her artistic voice not only in New York but also in Mexico City and Israel.

Like Höfling, discussed above, Kosstrin uses interdisciplinary methodologies from dance studies and history to analyze movement and archival materials. Kosstrin closely "reads" vibrant photographs (many of which are included in the text), critical reviews, program notes, movement scores, and film. The author also taps into her embodied knowledge of Graham's technique, which was also part of Sokolow's dance background. All of these sources allow Kosstrin to bring performances to life through thick movement description. As Kosstrin explains, "I hope to invoke in my reader the palm-clammy excitement and empowered rage that Sokolow produced in her audiences to convey the implications of spectatorship amid the time's political environment" (8). She succeeds. The compelling passages that detail Sokolow's performances support the larger argument that her choreography had a political punch.

For example, Sokolow's *Case History No. ___* (1937) generalized the plight of impoverished Manhattan youth, and her antifascist *Slaughter of Innocents* (1937) meditated on women and children who lost their lives during the Spanish Civil War. In the solo *Case History*, Sokolow danced to jazz music and portrayed the pain and despair of urban youth. Angular arms, twisting torso, frenetic footwork, and asymmetrical balances embodied the proletarian struggle of daily existence in a cold city. In the solo *Slaughter of Innocents*, Sokolow danced as a grieving mother, moving with tenderness and pain. One image shows her in a deep lunge with a fist smashed into her forehead in rage. Kosstrin provides numerous vivid examples of Sokolow's politicized art, which eventually attracted the attention of Mexican dance leaders.

In chapter 2 of five, Kosstrin focuses on Sokolow's time in Mexico from 1939 to 1945. In 1939, the official Mexican dance department invited Sokolow to work with young modern dancers. She had a short-lived company, La Paloma Azul (The Blue Dove), and presented both proletarian solos and group work that drew on Mexican folklore. Sokolow's folkloric repertory aligned with intellectual and artistic currents of the time, as Mexican visual artists like Frida Kahlo and the muralist Diego Rivera celebrated local folkways, indigenous people, and the working class as the basis of revolutionary aesthetics. Drawing on her leftist political convictions and Mexican collaborators, Sokolow choreographed *Don Lindo de Almería* (1940), which parodied the decadent prerevolutionary Mexican society under Porfirio Díaz. Another work, *El renacuajo paseador* (The Fable of the Wandering Frog, 1940) was about an itinerant frog who is lured to a party, attacked, and eaten. Mexican audiences warmly received Sokolow's proletarian and Mexican themes mounted with a modernist aesthetic. However, as discussed in chapter 3, US audiences privileged

abstraction and whiteness so dismissed her Mexican choreography as culturally marked and implicitly nonwhite “ethnic” dance.

Influenced by this US preference for abstraction, Sokolow moved away from the proletarian and folkloric themes on display in her Mexican choreography. This became a necessary choice in the context of the second Red Scare, which associated overtly political work with communistic propaganda. By the 1950s, Sokolow started “choreographing revolutionary statements in the guise of abstract modernism” (156). This shift brought her out of step with her Mexican colleagues. In 1956, there was a conference in Veracruz at which Sokolow suggested that Mexican modern dance was too concerned with nationalism, as conveyed through Indigenous and folkloric aesthetics. A debate broke out and revealed a clear divergence in choreographic preferences. Nevertheless, Sokolow continued working with Mexican dancers intermittently in subsequent years and received a cultural award for her service. Ultimately, Sokolow influenced Mexican modern dance developments, and Mexico influenced Sokolow’s artistic trajectory.

Focusing on Sokolow in Mexico, Kosstrin offers a compelling example of how choreographers circulate and to what end. In this case, a US choreographer brought choreographic priorities—an investment in exploring proletarian and political themes—to Mexico. There she collaborated with like-minded Mexican dancers, musicians, and designers to create works that reflected revolutionary commitments to popular culture, workers, and Indigenous peoples. Neither side compromised as they explored new avenues of expression. These dances also circulated across borders, revealing how spectatorship can alter a performance’s meaning. Mexican audiences read Sokolow’s work in the early 1940s as aligning with revolutionary values, while US audiences imperiously read her Mexican repertoire as picturesque. Regardless, Sokolow’s transnational performances provided a means for connecting, exploring similarities, and reveling in differences.

While Sokolow physically brought her dance innovations to Mexico, the ideas of the Austro-Hungarian innovator Rudolf von Laban traveled to Brazil by way of his students. In *Laban Plural*, Melina Scialom analyzes this circulation process. She interviewed Brazilian professionals who work with Laban’s methods and discovered not a singular Laban, but a plural one.

In the first chapter, Scialom recaps Laban’s life and work. Laban (1879–1958) spent time in Paris, where he was influenced by the modern dance pioneers Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller, and then ended up in Munich, where he started investigating expressive movement. He combined the mystical and the scientific to develop theories about movement and its capacity to reinforce the collective and foment a harmonious society. His ideas became attractive to the Nazi regime with its interest in social engineering, and Laban directed dance and theater initiatives for the government. Eventually, he had a falling out over the 1936 Olympic ceremony and escaped to England. In his adopted country, Laban trained new generations of students until his death. Of particular note, he developed a system of recording movement called Labanotation, which continues to be used today. Another major legacy was inspiring his students to expand his studies of body, motion, and space. Students have used Laban’s theories not only to choreograph and dance but also to further therapy, work, and industry initiatives.

Laban’s methods eventually made their way to Brazil, first through a number of European dancers who migrated starting in the 1940s and eventually through Brazilian students studying Laban’s ideas abroad. Characterizing these individuals as part of “a árvore genealógica” (a genealogical tree), Scialom traces teacher-student relationships, which transmitted Laban’s methods pluralistically (chapter 2). Each individual instructor touched countless students, who in turn passed on those lessons to their students. One figure of particular import was Maria Duschenes, who was born in Hungary in 1922 and ended up studying Laban’s ideas in the United Kingdom before immigrating to Brazil. For fifty years, she taught innumerable artists and educators, facilitating the diffusion of Laban’s methods in Brazil. Starting in the 1980s and into the twenty-first century, Brazilian dancers increasingly have gone abroad, mostly with scholarships from the Brazilian government, to study Laban in universities and special certification programs. More recently, Brazilian universities have also developed courses on Laban’s theories.

To better understand this process of circulation and transmission, Scialom interviewed specialists who responded to requests for interviews in 2008. She also used “prática-como-pesquisa” (practice-as-research) and “escrevendança” (writingdancing)—analytic writing informed by her embodied study of Laban’s methods (chapter 4). The select group of interviewees and Scialom’s individual experiences provide some insights into the many ways that people have understood and incorporated Laban’s ideas into their work. This plurality makes sense, Scialom argues, because Laban’s methods are open ended and encourage diverse interpretations. Rather than developing a specific technique (like other modern dance leaders such as Martha Graham), Laban created an approach to studying movement. As a result, people can apply his ideas, incorporate other priorities, and convert the amalgam into distinct movement practices. This has also made

some worry about the misuse of Laban. However, in general, this openness allows for a rich plurality. As Scialom suggests, the Laban universe includes not only what Laban did and said, but also how his students have interpreted his ideas. This has resulted in a “plural Laban.”

Laban Plural, like *Honest Bodies*, joins a growing literature on artists from traditional dance centers like New York or Europe relocating to Latin America or on Latin American dancers who circulate abroad.² Scholars show that rather than knowledge flowing from northern dance capitals to southern dance peripheries, collaborators dynamically influenced each other. Just as Sokolow's work went in new directions thanks to her time in Mexico, Laban's methods shifted as Brazilians reconfigured his ideas. Circulating dancers and dance methodologies have fomented multifaceted connections and diverse dance outcomes.

Performances help people to not only connect but also process trauma. In *Moving Otherwise*, Victoria Fortuna examines how Argentinean contemporary dancers used their art to cope during a period of violent military authoritarianism and neoliberal economic crisis from the mid-1960s to the mid-2010s. Fortuna argues that dancers in Buenos Aires “moved otherwise,” that is, performed to critique and challenge the bodily comportment expected in (violent) everyday life. As a result, contemporary dance provided a powerful means for “enacting politics in contexts of political and economic violence” (x). Her study intervenes in a large literature on politics in authoritarian Argentina by bringing in dance protagonists who were previously overlooked and by shedding light on their bold political moves.

Fortuna also contributes importantly to recent discussions in dance studies scholarship about the relationship between concert dance and so-called world dance.³ Concert dance appears on stages, like ballet and modern or contemporary dance, and is implicitly associated with the global North and whiteness. “World dance” is a problematic catchall for any popular dance like tango implicitly associated with the global South and nonwhiteness. Indeed, field-defining work on Argentinean dance has been about tango.⁴ Concert dance in places like South America presumably happened only when foreign artists inspired and trained artists in the remote locale. By contrast, *Moving Otherwise* disputes the idea of center to periphery transfer, instead examining “transnational flows” that factored into contemporary dance in Buenos Aires, and “argues for a globalized approach to the telling of contemporary dance history” (12). In doing so, Fortuna joins a number of other dance studies scholars, who have also called for new, more nuanced approaches to dance outside of Europe and the United States.⁵ According to Fortuna, contemporary dancers in Buenos Aires incorporated elements inspired by national identity, the “global cultural economy,” as well as the interaction between the two (12). Contemporary dance, like other Latin American performance practices, sprang from complex and ongoing intercultural encounters.

Like other scholars of Latin American performance reviewed here, Fortuna uses interdisciplinary methods, putting her study at the intersection of dance, performance, and cultural studies. She uses archival research (particularly in the private collections of artists themselves), fifty-three interviews with dancers and choreographers, choreographic analysis, and embodied experience as a performer in Argentina. This material allows Fortuna to examine artistic output, choreographic motivations, dancers' daily lives, and the emotions that inspired and were elicited by performances. Personal connections, empathy, and sensitivity are particularly crucial given the violent and traumatic backdrop to many choreographers' work.

Shifting political and economic regimes held different challenges for dancers. The first chapter focuses on 1960s Buenos Aires and how the influential choreographers Ana Kamien and Susana Zimmermann metaphorically critiqued the repressive government under General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970). The second chapter examines the dancers Alicia Sanguinetti, Silvia Hodgers, and María Elena Maucieri, who were militants and ended up in prison. Once there, dance helped to create community and became a pretext for a revolt. The third chapter deals with resistive contemporary dance after the 1976 military coup, which inaugurated the most repressive dictatorship in Argentine history. In the subsequent, terrifying years, some thirty thousand people became victims of state violence, and dance offered a critical refuge for practitioners.

² For instance, Michelle Clayton, “Touring History: Tórtola Valencia between Europe and the Americas,” *Dance Research Journal* 44, no. 1 (2012): 29–49; Jens Richard Giersdorf, *The Body of the People: East German Dance Since 1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 157–178; and José Reynoso, “Choreographing Modern Mexico: Anna Pavlova in Mexico City (1919),” *Modernist Cultures* 9, no. 1 (2014): 80–98.

³ Susan Foster, ed., *Worlding Dance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁴ Most notably, Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

⁵ Susan Manning, “Dance History,” in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, ed. Sherril Dodds (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 303–326; José Reynoso, “Racialized Dance Modernisms in Lusophone and Spanish-Speaking Latin America,” in *The Modernist World*, ed. Stephen Ross and Allana Lindgren (New York: Routledge, 2015), 392–400; Emily Wilcox, “When Place Matters: Provincializing the ‘Global,’” in *Rethinking Dance History: Issues and Methodologies*, ed. Geraldine Morris and Lorraine Nicholas (New York: Routledge, 2018), 160–172.

Chapter 4 discusses how contemporary dancers used tango themes to process brutal pasts and mourn lost loved ones after the 1983 return to democracy. The final chapter explores dance during the economic crisis of 2001 and its aftermath, especially how dancers connected the memory of the last military dictatorship and the slow violence of neoliberal capitalism.

In chapter 4, circulation comes up when Fortuna discusses contemporary choreographers who use tango as a trope for thinking about personal and collective traumas. Tango has a global profile, and a colonizing gaze from the outside has saddled the form with sultry connotations. Contemporary dance choreographers played with these significations, fighting “the pressure from the international scene to sell exoticized Latin passion, even as they benefitted from the air of authenticity that their inclusion of tango lent on the global stage” (113). For instance, Susana Tambutti’s *La puñalada* (The Stab, 1985) was developed with national and foreign audiences in mind and features a caricatured tango to subvert its facile legitimacy.

Through thick movement description, Fortuna recreates the production for the reader, recounting the blend of modern dance technique and theatrical conventions like parody. A solo female performer in *La puñalada* animates two bodies, a male figure by way of a trench coat and fedora on one arm and a female partner with the other half of her body. An exaggerated tango turns violent. The male half stabs the female half, referencing sexualized violence.

In conversations with Fortuna, Tambutti resisted the interpretation that *La puñalada* was simply a protest piece against sexualized violence during the military dictatorship. This was a common reading by foreign critics who saw the soloist representing violent macho men and femme fatales in Latin America. However, for Tambutti, the piece brought attention to the fact that early tango culture and more recent political violence had much in common. Fortuna argues that the work conveyed “traumatic cultural memory” by connecting the nation-building projects of the early twentieth century (when tango first developed) to the recent dictatorship. These choreographic choices also allowed Tambutti to challenge foreign expectations by using tango in a complex exploration of gender, violence, national identity, and global cultural economies.

In these studies of modern and contemporary dance, scholars uncover dynamic and complex interactions between national and international dance developments. In the case of Sokolow, she brought her approach to Mexico and embraced folkloric aesthetics given their revolutionary connotations. This resulted in canonic choreography that informed the trajectory of both the choreographer and the Mexican dance establishment. A variety of European performers brought Laban’s ideas to Brazil, where a genealogical tree of Laban adherents and a decisively plural tradition burgeoned. In Buenos Aires, contemporary dancers protested military and economic violence with aesthetics that defied expectations of a tango-dancing people. These previously overlooked choreographic interventions contribute importantly to a global history of contemporary dance. Furthermore, the three studies bring Latin America into conversations about concert dance and concert dance into conversations about Latin American politics and culture.

This exciting scholarship provides a jumping-off place for future efforts to continue rewriting a global history of modern and contemporary dance. For instance, most studies of dance circulation involve a vertical, north-south route. The northern Sokolow danced south in Mexico; Laban’s ideas from the north moved south to Brazil; Buenos Aires contemporary dancers reframe the southern tango with northern audiences in mind. This invites the questions: What do dance circulations within Latin America look like? What are the power dynamics in dance exchanges between Latin American countries? What are the politics of regional circulations? Building on the excellent studies reviewed here, future scholars can consider connections between Mexican, Brazilian, and Argentinean (or Cuban, Chilean, Colombian, Venezuelan, Uruguayan, etc.) concert dance establishments. Such inquiries will further decenter places like New York and London to flesh out the contours of Latin American performances and their intraregional circulation.

Place

As Fortuna analyzed in Tambutti’s *La puñalada*, performances like tango often evoke places like Buenos Aires. Several studies on music take such associations as their point of departure. Scholars consider how music and musicians have helped to define and defy expectations about the places they come from and sonically represent. In each case, scholars do not take geographic designations for granted and use a variety of disciplinary methods including cultural history, cultural studies, musicology, and geography to integrate a spatial dimension into their analysis of performance.

Pablo Palomino’s *Invention of Latin American Music* examines how the concept of Latin American music came to be from the 1920s through the 1960s. “Latin American music does not exist,” Palomino rightly contends (20). However, the category does, and his history explains how and why. This involves analyzing how a variety of historical figures including musicologists, music educators, politicians, commercial

entities, and performers “invented” Latin American music. Palomino takes a cultural historian’s perspective, analyzing music as labor and focusing on institutions, ideas, and economic, political, and social forces that shaped musical developments in Latin America. For instance, he examines the historical development of the field of musicology in Latin America through a close reading of key publications and institutional projects across the region. Palomino’s study shows how music factored importantly into defining Latin America as a region in the twentieth century.

To tell a regional story, Palomino uses representative cases from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina as well as sources from the United States and even the Philippines. These sites allow him to demonstrate how musical expression began the twentieth century linked to local, subnational, and transregional circuits rather than nations or Latin America as a whole. For instance, *nordeste* (northeastern) music in Brazil was subregional, and the genre *zamacueca* was transnational, spanning Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. Therefore, music presented in Latin America and from Latin American nations remained eclectic. To illustrate, Palomino examines the diverse Spanish-language music broadcast in Manila and the performances of the Jewish singer Isa Kremer both in and out of Argentina in the 1930s, for instance. Around the same time, however, governments started enlisting music in national projects to educate and unite the people and to connect with neighboring nations. Such initiatives promoted both musical nationalism and transnationalism. Musicologists then helped to solidify the notion of Latin American music with publications like a bulletin produced by the German-born, Uruguay-based Francisco Curt Lange. Moreover, during World War II, US cultural organizations supported the idea of Latin American music by coordinating transnational collaborations between Latin American music scholars who had previously worked autonomously. In the 1950s and with the Cold War, the idea of Latin American music solidified through musicology conferences, university programs, and music festivals that accepted without question Latin America as a cultural-aesthetic region. Tracing this history through selective case studies from around the region effectively knits together individual, national, and regional perspectives. Moving between these different scalar vantage points, Palomino zooms in and out to write a history featuring three-dimensional protagonists engaged in a geographically expansive intellectual and cultural project.

Palomino’s study of Latin American music engages with a larger scholarly debate over whether or not Latin America could or should be considered a legitimate construct. Although universities regularly offer Latin American history courses, scholars have pushed back on the category because of its colonial and racist roots.⁶ Palomino takes a sensible stance somewhere in the middle, arguing that “Latin America is neither a self-evident truth nor a colonial artifice, but rather a historical entity that came to be as a transnational project” (213). The history behind the idea of Latin American music shows how a place is something of a performance—a dynamic, collaborative creation.

Resonant with Palomino, Kirstie Dorr’s *On Site, in Sound* focuses on South American performances and how they have contested understandings of place. She argues “that sonic production and spatial formation are mutually animating processes” (3). In other words, sound informs ideas about place. Looking to unsettle binaries that often structure scholarship on Latin American culture—like traditional and modern, authentic and corrupted, high and low—Dorr analyzes “an unruly set of globalized musical practices and transregional cultural landscapes that stubbornly refused submission to the conventional ‘in’ or ‘out of place’ contextual framings that dominate ethnic, area, cultural, and music studies scholarship” (6). The book presents examples of South American performers and performances that exceeded categories imposed on them.

Each of the four chapters tackles a different sonic provocation. This means tracing different renditions of the song “El Cóndor Pasa” in chapter 1, transnational Lima musicians who devised unconventional performances in San Francisco and online in chapter 2, daring performances by Black women in Lima in chapter 3, and a neighborhood cultural center founded by a queer Chilean artist in San Francisco’s Mission district in chapter 4. Throughout, South American performers must contend with the pernicious “world music” industry, which remains predicated on “imperial heteromasculinist narratives of exploration, rescue, and curation—of ‘distant lands,’ ‘dusty archives,’ and ‘undiscovered cultures’” (66). By contrast, Dorr presents inventive South American cultural workers who flout presumptions that they passively transmit static music from a distant past. Migrating, singing across registers, performing on the street, posting videos online, staging works that focus on Black diasporic culture, and organizing neighborhood cultural events are examples of how South American performers “challenge and, potentially, transform raced and gendered mappings of place” (19).

⁶ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

Rigorously theorized, *On Site, in Sound* encourages interdisciplinary dialogues between ethnic, area, feminist, and queer studies; cultural, performance, and sound studies; and political and cultural geography. Dorr offers the term “performance geography” as a theoretical framework that considers sonic and spatial interaction and, therefore, points of convergence between the fields of performance studies and human geography. This approach invites the questions: What geographic connotations are attached to and in turn questioned by performances? What do performances do for the performers and the places in which they transpire?

To explore questions about place and performance, chapter 3 analyzes dance and music to present a “geohistory” of Black women and their cultural activism in Lima, for example. To begin with, the African American dancer, choreographer, and anthropologist Katherine Dunham and her mostly African-descended company members performed *Rite of Passage* in Lima in 1950. The controversial work depicted Black women’s lives and inspired the young Afro-Peruvians Victoria and Nicomedes Santa Cruz, who went on to codirect a folkloric performance collective as part of Peru’s Black Arts Revival. Also part of the chapter are the careers of the Afro-Peruvian singer Susana Baca and the drummers and sisters Carmen Petralina and María Katalina Robles Izquierdo. Through diverse performances—choreography, folkloric research and staging, singing, and drumming—these Black women disrupted official racial ideologies in Peru, which celebrated historic Indigenous pasts but downplayed, ignored, and even erased African patrimony. Their performance work challenged geographic imaginaries by including Peru in the African diaspora and making women central to this cultural universe.

Just as Palomino and Dorr account for the United States as (imperialistically) contributing to the invention of Latin American music and as a site where South American musicians troubled presumptions about their art respectively, the collection *La Verdad*, edited by Melissa Castillo-Garsow and Jason Nichols, includes the United States in a hemispheric look at hip-hop, juxtaposing artists from Panama, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Trinidad, Martinique, Jamaica, Tijuana, New York, Oakland, Los Angeles, and beyond (i.e., an essay on Chicano hip-hop in Taipei). This explicitly puts Latin American and Latina/o hip-hop in conversation. To honor this diversity and gesture to similarities, the editors chose the term “Latinidades” instead of Latin American or Latina/o. Diversity not only manifests in the geographically sweeping approach but also in the contributors’ backgrounds. Scholars from different disciplines, journalists, musicians, and multimedia artists wrote essays for the volume. The themes covered are equally wide ranging and include essays that deal with race, borderlands, gender, and activism.

Although several essays deal with performance and place, including one on graffiti and rap in Tijuana and another on Chicana hip-hop in Los Angeles, Melissa Castillo-Garsow’s essay on hip-hop in Mexican New York, provides a particularly vivid study of this interrelationship. Focusing on the New-York-based Mexican hip-hop group Hispanos Causando Pánico (HCP), Castillo-Garsow argues that their music “is a unique blend of authenticity, representing, and *mexicanidad* that can only be understood within a particular contemporary New York City Mexican context” (Castillo-Garsow and Nichols, 134). Through clothes (Yankees hats) and lyrics (“soy leal a lo que represento ... Mexicanos 100% de Corazón”/I’m loyal to what I represent ... Mexicans 100% from the heart), HCP foregrounds its 2005 formation in Queens and its Mexican roots (142). By focusing on a Mexican hip-hop group, Castillo-Garsow chooses a topic that falls outside of the more commonly studied Chicano rappers in California, Arizona, and Texas, on the one hand, and African American hip-hop artists in New York, on the other. Notably, HCP complicates understandings about Chicano and New York hip-hop. The group simultaneously highlights its relationship to Mexico and New York, acting as eloquent representative of both locales and of the unique immigrant and musical experiences that those places foster.

In contrast to *La Verdad*, which remains geographically expansive, the other edited volume on music, Josh Kun’s *The Tide Was Always High*, focuses entirely on Los Angeles and how Latin American music fit into its cultural landscape. Indeed, LA becomes a major protagonist across the essays. This emphasis makes sense given the etiology of the project. It all started with the Getty Foundation initiative “Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA,” which explored the relationship between Los Angeles and Latin America. In the fall of 2017, volume editor Josh Kun organized musical events to consider what Los Angeles/Latin America (LA/LA) might sound like. The volume grew out of these events while also offering a stand-alone contribution to the cultural history of Los Angeles. To be sure, analysis of this place—this West Coast metropolis—factors into the study. A guiding set of questions offered in the introduction include: “What is the place of Latin American music—physically, culturally, sonically, politically, symbolically—in modern Los Angeles? How has Latin American music been a method of em-placement and place-making in a city historically defined by ‘place struggles’ and the displacement of Latino/a populations ... with each new generation of urban renewals, redevelopers,

and gentrifiers?" (Kun, 21–22). The volume argues that Latin American musicians have profoundly shaped music in LA.

Although focused on a single US city, the volume ventures in multiple directions in terms of subject matter and methodology. Essays examine artists hailing from Mexico, Cuba, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Topics range widely to include Mexican musical theater, rumba dancers, Carmen Miranda, Walt Disney's *Saludos Amigos*, Latin American music at the Hollywood Bowl, the Peruvian singer Yma Sumac, clientele and performers in the Paramount Ballroom in Boyle Heights, largely overlooked session musicians who shaped thousands of canonic songs, the activist choreography of the dance company Contra-Tiempo, female directors of Oaxacan brass bands, and family fandango traditions. Musicians, journalists, ethnomusicologists, scholars (from performance studies, American studies, and dance studies), photographers, filmmakers, and a curator contribute to the volume. Authors approach their respective topics quite differently, from meticulous archival research into early twentieth-century Mexican musical theater to frank interviews with session musicians or imaginative meditations on Cuban performers appearing on LA stages.

As performances became identified with places, whether Latin America, South America, the Mexican borderlands of Queens, or Los Angeles, they made political interventions. Music, for instance, has factored into national and regional identities, thereby shaping geopolitical imaginaries. Equally, performers have used their art to forge careers when audiences and industries had trouble placing them in existing sonic categories. From hip-hop poetics to samba-inspired orchestration on a Hollywood album, the topics covered in the books examined above show how Latin American musical performances empower the people behind the sound and leave a lasting influence on the audiences enjoying their rhythmic interventions.

Conclusion

Performance in Latin America and Latin American performances in the world provide vibrant entry points for analyzing gender, race, power, and resistance. For instance, Kosstrin's examination of Anna Sokolow, Fortuna's discussion of *La puñalada*, and Dorr's analysis of Black women performing in Peru illuminate how women use performative platforms to contest gendered restrictions on their participation in public discourse. Höfling's study of capoeira and *La Verdad's* analysis of hip-hop reveal how African diasporic performances help to solidify communities and counteract anti-Black racism in the Americas. Palomino's exploration of how the imperialistic United States contributed to the invention of Latin American music reminds us that performances can be articulations of uneven power structures with suffocating implications. Finally, Fuentes's examination of Latin American protest illuminates how Mexican Zapatistas or Chilean students in debt deploy performance to resist neoliberal power structures and state violence.

These authors collected rich and varied sources to study ephemeral performances. Official and personal archives allowed Höfling, Kosstrin, Fortuna, and Palomino to examine their performative protagonists from historical perspectives. Equally, scholars utilized interviews, which in the case of González Varela, Scialom, and Fortuna provided insights into how practitioners understood their performances. Performance analysis and close readings of dance and music brought Sokolow's anguished gestures, "Thriller" protests in Santiago, and the Peruvian singer Yma Sumac's soaring vocals to life. Embodied experience also enriched analytic discussions of Brazilian capoeira, Sokolow's choreography, Argentinean protest and contemporary dance, and the transmission of Laban's methodology. The generative source bases that each scholar amassed absolutely confirms that performance can and should be studied rigorously across time and space. Although ephemeral and at times elusive, performances leave traces such as paper records and personal memories that allow us to imagine what happened and to what effect.

Future work would do well to follow the examples of the scholars reviewed here in their multifaceted approach to performances. Particularly exciting were studies that examined not just a single genre of song or dance but brought multiple media together, like Fuentes's study of live and virtual performance protest or the chapter by Dorr that considers Black female dancers and musicians together. Equally, several scholars—Höfling, Kosstrin, Fortuna, Dorr, and Palomino—importantly call into question terms that have long structured scholarship on performance such as "authenticity," "tradition," "modernism," "modern dance," "contemporary dance," "South American music," and "Latin American music." This encompassing and critical body of scholarship provides an important jumping off point for further examination of diverse performances that shape life and culture in Latin America and beyond.

Author Information

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