

Vicky Kämpfe, *Dance practices as research: approaches to the safeguarding and transmission of the intangible cultural heritage of dance*,

Springer (2023),

ISBN 978-3-031-30580-1 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978-3-031-30581-8 (eBook)

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This study by Vicky Kämpfe is addressed to researchers, practitioners and teachers who engage with questions and matters related to intangible cultural heritage. The author takes the ambiguous term and concept of *intangible cultural heritage* as the starting point for her reflections. In doing so, she aims to provide a theoretical foundation for the objectives of raising awareness of the diverse forms and expressions of cultural heritage, safeguarding and communicating them as living heritage, and researching and continuing to develop them in a contemporary way. The legal framework for the UNESCO World Heritage concept is provided by the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), and the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). In the 2003 Convention, the manifestations of intangible cultural heritage are described as follows:

- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a carrier of intangible cultural heritage (songs, legends, fairytales, dialects);
- performing arts (music, dance, various forms of theatre);
- social customs and practices, rituals and festive events (parades, processions, carnivals, games);

- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe (healing methods, agricultural knowledge); and
- traditional craftsmanship.

Furthermore, these forms and expressions of intangible cultural heritage are characterised by the fact that they are primarily passed on from one generation to the next through physical practice and by oral transmission. In this process of transmission, they are continuously changed and reshaped. Within the practising communities, these processes also convey identity and continuity.

Kämpfe starts by retracing the discussion regarding cultural heritage within UNESCO. In doing so, she reveals how in approaches to praxeology and in aesthetic-performative artistic practices performed with the body, as well as for the thereby acquired knowledge and skills, the intangible and tangible aspects and components are intertwined and inseparable from one another. In order to provide a theoretical framework for the concept of intangible cultural heritage, the author draws on approaches in cultural sociology that are relevant in the discourse of dance studies, including Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The author uses concepts of performance and language theory to discuss

and elaborate in more detail on the mostly implicit knowledge contained in dance heritage. Performative empirical methods are seen as significant instruments of knowledge acquisition and are discussed with regard to their relevance for artistic and scientific research practice. In dance studies, these methods have mainly been explored in the context of 'Practice as Research' and are increasingly finding recognition and application – at least as complementary and exploratory research tools – in combination with methods of qualitative social research and historical-critical methods of analysis. In the highly multilayered academic discourse of the field, these methods are described and justified in more detail. With the help of these theoretical building blocks and lines of argumentation, Kämpfe supports not only her further discussion of and observations on the definition of the concept of intangibility, but above all her own research in the context of classes taught as part of the complementary studies programme offered at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany.

The recently successful application for the inscription of Modern (Expressive) Dance in the German-speaking countries on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity serves as an example to explain the provisions of the 2003 UNESCO Convention. In this context, several additional projects are discussed that were developed and implemented as cooperative, interdisciplinary practice-based research. The aim of those projects was to research the transformations over time of the teaching concepts, methods and techniques of modern dance that had emerged in the 1920s. Some artistic research projects on approaches to modern dance that were made possible by *TANZFONDS ERBE* funding or that took place in the context of dance symposia are also included in these considerations. Here, Kämpfe emphasises that dance and movement cultures are inherently capable of change. The implicit and tacit knowledge they contain and their potential for experience are then generally considered to be intangible aspects.

The second case study summarises the results of an evaluation conducted by the author on the effects of the rise in popularity of the South American tango and its designation as intangible cultural heritage (2009). The study looks at the different developments in the dance scenes around the world and at the institutional settings of this popular dance form. The author describes not only the processes of differentiation of various forms of style

and stage performance, but also its economic exploitation. Furthermore, she analyses the changes in the discourses, narratives and attributions of meaning that stakeholders ascribed to tango and that ultimately led to new formats of production and performance. Kämpfe critically examines and reflects on not only the discursive equation of tango with national 'folklore' during the application process and the accompanying processes of institutionalisation, standardisation and codification, but also on the cooperation of selected protagonists with cultural institutions, the role of cultural policy, and the influence of the *Academia de Tango*, authorised and mandated by the State. These processes, however, also stimulated the creation of collections and archives of materials and media associated with tango, and thus the academia became a living place for a culture of remembrance of tango. In her conclusion, however, the author also warns of the danger of appropriation for political and economic interests that could result from the status of a cultural heritage officially recognised by UNESCO.

Following this introductory description of specific, and in some cases controversial, issues and developments in the courses of the current UNESCO nominations, chapter 2 examines different perspectives on intangibility, based on the discussion of the term surrounding and leading up to the 2003 UNESCO Convention. While intangible cultural heritage may have initially been seen as the antithesis of tangible cultural heritage, it soon proved to be its complementary, supplementary and inseparable side. The dependence of intangible cultural heritage on the human body as a medium becomes evident in the practice itself, in the act of exchanging experiences and ideas about intangible cultural heritage with others, and in its transmission from one generation to the next, because all of these actions are reliant on physical and sensory-aesthetic processes, which also include mimetic imitation. These activities ultimately influence personal and social identity while giving people a sense of continuity. Using the practices of dance as an example, the already mentioned connections between incorporated abilities, skills and specific implicit knowledge are then presented and reflected upon. The characteristic features of performative processes are also discussed, since, on the one hand, they create realities and, at the same time, are to be understood as changing and constantly evolving.

Combining the conceptual and theoretical framework of UNESCO positions with assumptions derived from

theoretical approaches to performativity provides new spaces of thought for the academic and practical study of traditional cultures of expression and movement. It reveals new perspectives that can then also be decisive for national and international nomination procedures. Kämpfe's study can therefore be considered an important starting point for specifying or redefining selection criteria, if necessary. Furthermore, the study can serve as a resource to justify follow-up or comparative research activities and considerations – for example, regarding the transmission, transformation and change of meaning of forms of expression, and practices of movement and the body.

This becomes even clearer in chapter 3, which begins by reviewing key findings in the sociology of the body and of movement. These theoretical approaches suggest that performative acts are also to be interpreted as a living archive of cultural practice. Especially in the sense that the practice of dance movements, whether in everyday life or specifically in the arts, is understood as a space for experiencing, as well as a representation of the zeitgeist, and a critical commentary on the respective present. Explicit reference is also made to the term 'knowledge culture of dance'. In this context, several concepts for archiving movement and dance are examined and notation systems from different historical periods are discussed. (They include the *Feuillet-Beauchamp notation* as a tool for recording and collecting court dances [17th/18th century], the *Sténochorégraphie*-concept developed by Arthur Saint-Léon [around 1852] and Albert Zorn [1887], as well as the *Benesh Movement Notation* [1955] for recording ballet compositions, the *Eshkol-Wachmann Movement Notation* [1958] and the *Labanotation/Kinetography* [1928] for recording, observing and analysing, as well as for generating movements.) The chapter also looks at digital methods and programmes for video recording and analysis that are predominantly used today (including *Motion Capture*, a tracking method that translates human movements into computer-generated 3D models). The author points out that the use of each of these analogue tools or instruments also requires detailed knowledge of the dance form, and that the possibilities of digital recording and analysis offered by the 'new media' provide new opportunities for the reconstruction of dance forms and choreographic works.

This discussion is followed by an introduction to the pedagogical concept of *dance literacy*, which is widely

used in the English-speaking world and which aims, in a way, to achieve an 'alphabetisation of dance'. The author identifies the following areas of competence:

- knowledge and use of the specific dance vocabulary, its terminologies, and the corresponding notations;
- practical experience of dance; and
- contextual knowledge about dance styles, works and artists for their analysis, critical reflection and discussion of dance works.

In outlining this concept, the author primarily draws on the analytical results of the media scientist Dieter Mersch, who especially emphasises the stubbornness of the materiality of the body as well as its mediality. She also uses Nana Eger's remarks on the concept of '*Tanzliteracy*' (2011) – here the term is used more in the sense of an extended learning concept and serves as a basis for cultural-aesthetic education – as a reference for the identification of the above-mentioned areas of competence. This ties in with the previous explanations in chapter 2.3, 'Movement material in performative processes of becoming', as well as in chapter 3.2, 'Archiving incorporated knowledge'. At this point, the concept of *aesthetic education* would have deserved more emphasis, especially as it would have complemented the presentation of the concept of dance literacy. This is because the conscious perception of cognitive, aesthetic, emotional and physical experiences, as well as the ability to articulate, interpret and reflect on these in a specific context and environment, along with the aspect of 'experiencing difference', are to be considered in the concept of *dance literacy*. This is especially relevant when, as in the next chapter, the focus is on processes of education and transmission in and through dance.

In chapter 4, Kämpfe then focuses on the question of why performative methods can be considered an adequate scientific approach to researching dance practices and the knowledge contained in these practices. The author uses the positions discussed in the context of dance studies in order to justify this research approach and, in particular, highlights and discusses the perspective and ideas of 'dance knowledge' and 'danced knowledge'. In this context, the consideration of research conducted on the sociology of movement and on movement studies, as well as phenomenological analyses and approaches, proved to be insightful in order to further specify and more clearly contour the theoretical foundations for discussing concepts of the body and the knowledge that is immanently

transmitted through cultural practices of movement.

The author discusses and reflects upon the question of the significance of cultural dance practices in the social context using three examples: discussion of the effects of globalisation and the consequent confrontation with and recognition of diversity; the question of the identity-forming and identity-strengthening effects of dance activities; and the example of specific concepts for education and the teaching of dance in schools. Two case studies are used to critically question learning (in schools) in general and to argue that sensorimotor–kinaesthetic ways of learning should be given greater importance. First, the anthroposophical concept of eurhythm is presented; this is followed by a report on the use of contact improvisation in a school setting. Here, the focus is not only on learning how to dance alone, but also on exploring new approaches that emphasise learning through the body and through movement. The selected case studies certainly illustrate this fundamental concern, which is also the motivation behind the campaign '*Tanz in Schule*' (Dance in Schools), an initiative that has encouraged dance projects in schools and other educational institutions for the past 15 years. However, in view of the lively professional discourse and the increased research activity in this field, it is inconclusive, from a perspective of dance pedagogy, why the current state of discussion and research in educational theory was not taken into account. Since the fields of cultural education and dance education are undoubtedly central to the promotion and transmission of the cultural heritage of dance, it would be desirable to use the discussion presented here as a starting point for a reflective review and evaluation of studies conducted on educational concepts for teaching dance in schools and on the 'spaces of possibility' that dance projects aim to provide for aesthetic experiences, the development of general key competences and the acquisition of dance skills. This review and evaluation should be carried out from the specific perspective of dance as cultural heritage.

As the next step, the (in)tangible implications of dance experiences (which have already been discussed several times) are reflected on in a systematic manner. Here, the author considers aspects of the cultural materiality of bodies, along with the ephemerality of dance experiences and their presence in the present, as well as the question of change and authenticity of dance cultures. In this context, the fundamental question of the limits of 'reconstructing' historical dance forms is also raised. The physical–

aesthetic dimensions of dance experiences are addressed with the concept of expressiveness as a special quality of dance movements. In addition, the characteristic of the ideal of the body and movement, which is acquired as a habitus through training the body and learning movements and which is virtually inscribed in the body of the dancer or the dancing body, is mentioned and described in more detail in this context. Furthermore, dance can also be seen as a space for thinking, which allows for a 'different' way of thinking, not least because of the sensory accesses it provides, and which also has the potential to criticise.

In a concluding step of the chapter, the author outlines how this multidimensional and complex intellectual construct of dance experiences and dance knowledge can be appropriately preserved and passed on in the sense of a dance heritage. Once again, Kämpfe refers to the importance of the knowledge acquired through practical performative activity and then presents some relevant institutions and their concepts for archiving performative acts and practices. In addition to the approach of the *Archives Internationales de la Danse* (est. 1931), Susan Melrose's concept of *performative–artistic archives* (since ca. 2000) is briefly introduced, along with the reconstruction project *Temporary Museum* initiated by Claudia Jeschke (2009), the *Oral History* projects and the idea of the *Living Archives* of the Swiss *SAPA Dance Archive*, and the *Tanzplan Germany* projects with an artistic focus on the *TANZFONDS ERBE* programme, the research project *Dance Techniques 2010* and the exhibition project *The Century of Dance*. New research initiatives of dance archives on digital media documentation and archiving are also mentioned.

In chapter 5, Kämpfe presents and discusses her own seminar concept for a *Performative Dance Archive*. The seminar was developed as a research laboratory to provide students in the complementary studies programme at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg with an empractical and explorative experience. It covers research methods from cultural studies as well as content relating directly to dance (historical and traditional dance forms, classical and contemporary dance techniques). In this seminar format, students had the opportunity to explore dance reconstructions – for example, with the help of archival materials and audiovisual media. Students can use methods of movement analysis according to Laban or the *Choreographic Tool Box* of Gabriele Klein, Gitta Barthel and Esther Wagner (2011) in order to explore different

dance forms and practices; they can also engage in artistic research by creating choreographic–creative seminar projects. As an integral part of the seminar, the empractical aspect is accompanied by a written critical reflection using a matrix. The chapter closes with some theoretical considerations and an assessment of the presented approach.

In the concluding chapter 6, Kämpfe summarises the main ideas and findings of her work. A number of conclusions regarding the approach to cultural heritage are reiterated in a more pointed manner. The author also argues for the integration of performative concepts and empractical research methods in the field of dance studies. She concludes with a reminder (to all of us) that the present has a responsibility for a living culture and heritage:

The present decides what is to be remembered and how it is to be shaped, designated, and communicated. Thus, the present has the task of constituting cultural

heritage by naming it, remembering it, practicing, and communicating it. (2023, 150)

In her publication, Vicky Kämpfe has succeeded brilliantly in combining the positions, guidelines and discourses on intangible cultural heritage formulated in UNESCO documents with the research findings she has presented from the perspectives of historical and cultural studies, the sociology of the body, movement studies and, not least, dance studies. Overall, the individual thematic components follow a comprehensible structure and inner logic. Thus, this volume provides important foundations and theoretical building blocks for future work on the issues and tasks that need to be addressed in connection with the contemporary safeguarding, transmission and communication of the (in)tangible cultural heritage of dance. Kämpfe has thus created an accurate compendium that summarises the current state of the discourse and can therefore be recommended to anyone interested in the practice of or theoretical reflection on intangible cultural heritage. 🇩🇪