

Pop Moves

Document 1

Shapeshifters: Self-organising systems, migration and repetition at the intersection of folk and popular dance

This lecture demonstration works across practice and theory to explore how the migration of movement from popular and folk dance, into improvisation and choreography, are self-organising systems that generate new understandings and iterations of what can be considered folk dance.

Reductive definitions of folk dance have focused on the preservation of 'traditional' cultures from an unchanging (often rural) past. While it has been acknowledged that folk and popular dance share certain social and pedagogic practices, there is scope for further discussion of how such practices shapeshift between individual and collective experiences and forms.

Using examples from Mobile Dance's 'Junction' project (Berlin) which works with refugees and asylum seekers, we will discuss the collective creation of their regular 'dance party' which reiterates versions of the Dabke interjected with Street-dance, as well as contemporary dance. We invite consideration of how the experience of sharing space, music and movement vocabulary, as part of a trauma sensitive approach, unites/divides/breaks open and reforms both the dancing itself and the dancing groups from different countries.

We will also refer to a recent choreography by Rosemary Lee (UK), which drew on Breton dancing, usually performed in popular social settings, to create an abstract repetitive vocabulary, which performed a collective contemporary experience of 'folk' in a high art context; migrating movement from one cultural context to another. These examples arguably facilitate fluidity between the folk/popular/classical triad.

The speakers will interconnect ideas in a participatory presentation founded on the characteristics of complex systems exemplified by the spiral. Proposing that a process of remembrance and forgetting through dynamic repetition provides a sense of possibility and/or healing. The mobility of folk into, and out of, popular and contemporary dance point to possibilities for a multiplicity of forms and applications.

Indicative Bibliography

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