



Dancing Archives: A Transnational Perspective of Dance Archives from Argentina and Brazil

Arquivos dançantes: uma perspectiva transnacional dos arquivos de dança a partir da Argentina e Brasil

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Abstract: The article deals with the concept of dance archive from a transnational point of view with the intention of provincializing the term and making reflections from the Global South. The starting point is the common thoughts that have crossed our training and career as dance scholars, researching in a specific place –Brazil or Argentina– and studying dance history in connection with local artists whose conditions of access to documents are precarious. Aware that the archive is not homogeneous, we systematize and show how dance archives are adopted in Argentina and Brazil, respectively. The article argues that archives dance, are in motion, are choreographies and can be choreographed (in the organization of the past and through new research). Therefore, the strict separation between a fixed archive and the ephemerality of dance is questioned.

Keywords: Archives, Dance history; Transnational; Practice.

Resumo: O artigo aborda o conceito de arquivo de dança de um ponto de vista transnacional com a intenção de provincializar o termo e fazer reflexões a partir do Sul Global. O ponto de partida são os pensamentos comuns que atravessaram nossa formação e carreira como estudiosos da dança, pesquisando em lugares específicos –Brasil e Argentina– e estudando

a história da dança em conexão com artistas locais cujas condições de acesso a documentos são precárias. Conscientes de que o arquivo não é homogêneo, sistematizamos e mostramos como os arquivos de dança se configuram na Argentina e no Brasil, respectivamente. O artigo argumenta que os arquivos dançam, estão em movimento, são coreografias e podem ser coreografados (na organização do passado e por meio de novas pesquisas). Portanto, a separação estrita entre um arquivo fixo e a efemeridade da dança é questionada.

Palavras-chave: Arquivos; História da dança; Transnacional; Prática.

In Argentina and Brazil, we have no textual documents to help us understand our dance history prior to the 19th century. This is not surprising considering that the Latin American countries as nation-states are only just over 200 years old. Therefore, what the different local communities defined as important was transmitted through the body, and the apprentices tell our stories performed in their bodies and orality, forming the embodied knowledge that Diana Taylor (2003) calls ‘repertoire’. As a result of this colonial process analyzed by Taylor, the emergence of the practical concern to archive dance in these countries on fixed supports is a recent phenomenon that responds to the homogenizing norms of modern processes of sovereignty that allowed these countries to insert themselves into a global dimension. From a place of dependency, however, all constructions of institutional action were problematic. Documentation and dance archives are no exception. We often find aspects, problems and questions similar to those in international debates. This shows us that, despite the few cases, the understanding of existing archives in South American countries such as Argentina and Brazil largely has a colonial epistemological legacy.

First, we would like to make clear the difference between our thinking and Diana Taylor’s (2003) understanding of the term archive as something that stores only material elements, as opposed to the notion of performance as that embodied knowledge that cannot be archived, by calling it repertoire. According to Taylor (2003, XVII), “Is performance that which disappears, or that which persists, transmitted through a non-archival system of transfer that I came to call the repertoire.” To support the concept of repertoire, the author reinforces the sense that the archive is something fixed by affirming the dichotomy between what is archived and what is not by separating “textual knowledge” from “embodied knowledge,” thus reinforcing a modern epistemology that insists on making human experience and its traces objectifiable.

Even though the theory is based on an analysis of the colonial project in the Americas, while making its important diagnosis that the historical importance attached to written knowledge was constituted by the annihilation of the importance of bodily and oral knowledge practices, the explanatory solution Taylor chose to give visibility and relevance to the repertoire is to reiterate the same arguments that cemented the supposed superiority of the texts she wants to critique, by understanding the notion of archive as something that has a certain security over time. She expressed, “The rift, I submit, does not lie between the written and spoken word, but between the archive

of supposedly enduring materials (ie., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual).” (Taylor 2003, 19) Critical comments on this argument have already been made by Rebecca Schneider (2011) and Mark Franko (2017), for example, from the standpoint of repertoire. However, we would like to argue from the archival point of view.

First of all, a text has no more endurance or fluidity of content than a dancing body. Traditions that persist in time through their embodied knowledge, as well as the perpetuation of textual records, have to do with reliance on their development prior to encountering a researcher. Thus, what we can perceive is also forbidden and allowed, depending on who is looking and what other documents, texts, and bodies we have been able to dialog with in order to understand: What were the practices of power of the repertoires or archives chosen in their time to create and maintain collections? We will discuss this topic using the example of the Ballet Stagiun archive in Brazil and the documents on dance and Peronism in Argentina. In general, it must be pointed out that the practices of power over repertoires and archives in our countries are characterized by state violence and dictatorships, as we will show in the examples analyzed.

We propose that the dance archives in Argentina and Brazil do not enjoy security, but that there is an epistemology that insists on seeing the archive as a place of custody and preservation, where the idea of “permanence” is an epistemological heritage that guides a way of perceiving things as fixed or ephemeral, while everything that remains is paradoxically both at the same time. Thus, we are inclined to believe that the body and dynamics of archiving knowledge in dance function similarly to archiving documents in other carriers, and that it is not possible to draw a clear line between the two in terms of certainty, so that procedures are necessary to relearn how to perceive what endures in time, how it does so, why it remains, and where. Furthermore, maintaining the dichotomous understanding of archive and repertoire for Latin American dance historiographic practices contributes to perpetuating the idea of “underdevelopment.” If what we have for transmitting memories are not archives –in whatever form– we have no power (governability?).¹

Our starting premise is that the differences between archives and repertoires are not always as easy to distinguish as they are in the dichotomy. And even when critiquing the colonial project in the Americas, this definition loses sight of the interactions between these forms and traditions of heritage preservation. If we look at the present and the interactions between dance and modes of recording heritage, there is a multi-layered order of interactions between modes of archiving. Or do not the Eurocentric

¹ According to Taylor (2003, 19), the archive, by definition, consists of material documents that are supposedly immutable, transcend “life,” and are closely related to the power structure, because etymologically the word archive (from the Greek word *arkhē*) refers to the house of the archons, a public building where records were kept, but at the same time it represents the beginning of government.

heritages archived in documentation centers also have their traditions in bodies and orality?

When we hear or read the term dance archives, we feel a mixture of excitement and a sense of indeterminacy. The excitement stems from the fact that as college professors of dance, we research the dance history of our countries. Therefore, the conversation about dance archives is very stimulating for our profession, which has documents as a privileged resource for analyzing the past. The uncertainty stems from the fact that we do not have a clear picture or empirical relationship to the idea of how dance is archived or how institutions archive dance, based on our previous research. The initial discussion of the text will be this lack of definition, in the sense that we understand the different organizational formats of documents that allow us to label their series of testimonies as archives; so that we can then understand that this curatorial plurality of how to collect documents shows us a choreography of specific movements in archives as well as politics of memory.

To discuss these questions and their epistemological implications for both archival processes and historians' treatment of archival material, we will introduce and characterize archival formats that we have identified in Brazil and Argentina based on our own experiences in previous research. We attempt to answer the question of the status of the document and testimony (and memory) in a dance archive when analyzed with a historical epistemology from specific places.

Finally, we address the problem of the politics of memory in constituting dance heritage and attempt to answer questions such as these: How and why does the way of archiving in our countries constitute an act of provincializing? What kinds of knowledge/practices emerge that challenge the Eurocentric Western archive?

DANCE ARCHIVES IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL

As we are talking about a wide range of archives, in this section we begin by describing aspects of our individual research, writing in the singular, Rafael Guarato on archives in Brazil and Eugenia Cadús on archives in Argentina. Only at the end of this section do we bring our experiences together and return to writing in the plural.

In Brazil, the main dance archiving activities are carried out by dance companies associated with public institutions or theaters. For example, there are records of dance pieces by the São Paulo Municipal Ballet kept at the São Paulo Municipal Theater; documentation of the ballet of the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater at the Documentation Center of the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Theater Foundation, as well as the ballet of the Guaíra Theater in the city of Curitiba, the ballet of the Castro Alves Theater in Salvador, and others.²

² For a first account of dance archives in Brazil, see Guarato (2020).

In order to talk about Brazilian archives, I (Rafael Guarato) have chosen to report on two episodes that occurred during my research, conducted between 2012 and 2015, on Ballet Stagium, the first private professional group in the country to maintain its activities over time, founded in 1971 and still active in the art scene. I chose to report on situations from this process because it is an investigation of a group that enjoys the greatest visibility, projection and recognition both in the field of dance art and in the official history of dance in Brazil, among the dance history research I have conducted. And therefore, it is a group that has a larger structure to organize information about itself and that considers itself important enough to preserve its achievements for the future –something that is not easy to find in dance history.

When I turned my attention to investigating Ballet Stagium, I was concerned with finding sources that would confirm the previously dominant official version of the group, whose narrative characterized it as a dance that resisted the civil-military dictatorship while also distinguishing itself by its ability to “dance Brazil,” which is why I was specifically interested in the 1970s (Guarato 2019a). At Ballet Stagium’s headquarters in São Paulo, I was graciously received by choreographer Décio Otero, who, upon learning that this was historical research, explained that: “Ballet Stagium has its permanent place in the history of dance in Brazil. And no one can take that away from it.” So there was a certainty about the group’s past achievements, guaranteed by its longevity and importance, already recorded in the history books.

However, when I came across textual documents (plays files, personal letters, and newspaper articles) arranged in not very neat folders and separated by year of origin, with many documents in the wrong folders, I found a great deal of information that provided enough subsidy to stretch and, in some cases, challenge assumptions that had hitherto defined the group and its past in official narratives about Ballet Stagium. And these were documents that had always been there, meaning that Ballet Stagium was never concerned with selecting particular documents that would only reinforce the narratives to which it was consecrated.

In contrast to the existing literature on the archives of artists who manage themselves, Ballet Stagium has not made a process of a *curatorial practice of the self* that not only corresponds to the format of the archive, but also intervenes in the content of what artists keep of themselves. When Sarah Whatley wrote about the digital archiving of choreographer Siobhan Davies’ rehearsal process on the Siobhan Davies RePlay platform, she highlighted that after filming the rehearsals, in addition to Sarah Whatley herself, Siobhan Davies and Deborah Saxon (Davis’s former dancer) were involved in selecting what to save. This shows us the censorship aspect that artists make of themselves, bearers of a decision-making instance “about what to include and what to leave out if the film was unsympathetic, unrepresentative or unsuitable” (Whatley 2013, 147). On the contrary, for the researcher –the historian– no information about the past should be treated as “unsympathetic, unrepresentative, or unsuitable” (Whatley 2013, 147). This curatorial sieve, its motivations and guidelines that encourage abandonment, constitute and show us themes that the artist wanted to erase in the process

of self-archiving. Consequently, when people involved in dance create archives, the documents take on the aspect of a 'trace' of the past more clearly than a 'reflection' of an era (Ginzburg 1991). Dance archives from personal archives create self-collections organized in a dynamic similar to that of autobiographies told through documents. In this type of archiving, representations of the self in the present and projections for the future (desires, fears, affections, material interests, concerns, aspirations) play a crucial role in the process of documentation.

In contrast to Whatley's account of the participation of Siobhan Davies and Deborah Saxon, however, a review of the Ballet Stagium archives reveals that choreographer Décio Otero and director Máríka Gidali are accumulative rather than selective. Thus, there is a guiding principle in the process of preserving documents based on the premise of quantity rather than content. This shows that the Ballet Stagium was also guided in its preservation by the lack of historical records and writings about dance in Brazil at that time, which led those in charge to opt for the diversity of their actions over time rather than the specialization of artistic creation. The practice of power in which this archive is involved is thus not based on a choreography of selection, but on one of accumulation. Probably aware of the power structures of erasure (let us recall the context of dictatorship when the company developed), it was above all a question of enduring rather than censoring.

Nevertheless, an interesting event was the disappearance of the audiovisual recording of the choreographic work *Quebradas do Mundaréu* (1975), which was considered an aesthetic symbol that made it possible to associate the group with the resistance against the civil-military dictatorship. I searched the closets, boxes and drawers in the headquarters of Ballet Stagium, but I could not find it. So it is a dance document that no longer exists or has not been available for some time. Perhaps it is somewhere in the group's headquarters or in the hands of dancers or researchers who visit the group's headquarters.

This state of existence and decay is also a feature of the Ballet Stagium archive, such as it is. The organization of the documents and their changes over time due to previous research, lack of structure and technical know-how for archiving, and physical changes in the place where they are located promote a history of its own and of a performative character of the documents. The presence and disappearance of documents constitutes an existence of documents, a history that is told and undone before the historian arrives, capable of creating different narratives, nexuses, and explanations as they exist or cease to exist. And in this sense, it creates a choreography of information flow that the historian can access when confronted with information about the past.

In the case of Argentina, the dance archives, that is, the documents about dance that are under the supervision of third parties, with the organization and support of public or private institutions and specialized work, are scarce and generally linked to the institutional place where the dance companies are located. These archives are mainly associated with theaters (e.g., Teatro Nacional Cervantes, Teatro Colón, etc.), but they are not specific to dance. The only one that could be considered a dance archive—although it includes theater—and bears the name of an important Argentine choreographer is the

Centro de Documentación de Teatro y Danza “Ana Itelman,” part of the Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires and attached to the Municipal Theater General San Martín in the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. It is also worth mentioning the recent acquisition of the National Audiovisual Archive of Dance by the National Library in January 2022.

However, in my research on dance, I (Eugenia Cadús) turn to different corners to find information. In the case of my research on dance during Peronism (1946-1955), the search for documents that provided information about that period led me through journalistic archives, theaters, museums, libraries, copyright institutions, and even the police band of the province of Buenos Aires (which I reached through a Facebook post). This fact deserves to be mentioned because it exemplifies the way archives work and are built, and in relation to the practices of power associated with archives and repertoires, the problem of documentary sources on Peronism becomes clear. As Carolina Barry (2009, 71) has pointed out, the lack of documentary sources is no small problem.

After the fall of Perón in 1955, the vast majority of archives relating to this period were destroyed or simply disappeared, making research virtually impossible. A greater awareness of the need to preserve the national historical heritage and the reduction of the fear of possessing papers from this period have made it possible to find new reservoirs of documentation.³

In the course of my research, I came across a ballet piece (actually, more than one) that no one had written about yet: the ballet *Tango* by Sebastián Lombardo and Roberto Giachero, premiered in 1955 by the Stable Ballet of the Teatro Argentino de La Plata. Until then, official dance history assumed that the first concert dance piece that combined tango music and movements with an academic dance language was *Esta Ciudad de Buenos Aires* by Ana Itelman, premiered in late 1955; however, Lombardo’s ballet *Tango* preceded this piece. Moreover, Itelman’s work did not achieve greater prominence until years later, in 1968, with its revival at the Municipal Theater General San Martín. On that occasion, she used music by Astor Piazzolla rather than the 1955 version (Cadús 2020).

This realization aroused my curiosity and I began to track down information about Lombardo’s ballet (a task I still continue). I searched in different institutions and also consulted the Internet regularly to see if new information emerged. One day I saw a photo on Facebook thanking Lombardo for being the teacher of many musicians in the Buenos Aires Provincial Police Band. I contacted the police and found out that the musician had finished his career in that place and therefore his archives were located there. This was the first clue I had about his life after the military coup of 1955, which defeated Perón and began the persecution of his supporters and civil servants. After some bureaucratic formalities that dealing with such an institution requires (for example, I had to send a fax for the first and only time in my life), they kindly scanned and sent me the sheet music of the piece. A musician friend (the pianist Santiago Torricelli) digitally reconstructed the piece and so I was finally able to hear a piece of history.

³ Translation by the authors.

I also went to several homes during my research.⁴ In these homes, the homes of an amateur dance historian or some of the dancers, I was able to approach their memories. Here the documents took a different shape. They were the hands of old men and women of almost 90 years old, who showed me their scrapbooks and held the pages so that I could photograph them. They made their clippings explicit and told me gossip in between, or they told me that they had kept something but considered it unimportant. These spaces were extremely rich and allowed me to walk through these archives accompanied by first-person narrators or “choreographers.”

In this way, I built an archive that could be call “Concert Dance and Peronism.” As Mara Glzman (2020, 7) suggests, an archive is built, it is assembled:

Any production that works with discursive material employs a form of montage, that is, a practice that involves the relationship between the parts and the whole. Analysis always involves procedures of cutting and selecting, relating and hierarchizing. Even when drawing on previously edited documents (in an anthology, in the bulletins of a particular institution, etc.), the privilege granted to certain materials, selected from a vast and heterogeneous universe, is in fact a criterion of editing. Thinking about the problem of montage thus becomes a fundamental question constitutive of the analytical toolkit.⁵

In the former examples of my research, but also more generally in the way I work on the Argentine dance history, the performative character of the documents becomes evident. In the sense that they create worlds, create things (facts) with documents or not. Through the dialog that arises from following and analyzing the documents, a certain archive (a world) is created, without which the movements and choreographies mentioned no longer become explicit. This is a challenge to the established power structure, because research creates the object of research itself: Concert dance and Peronism.

Something similar happens in the dance pieces that deal with local history. It should be clarified that these pieces in Argentina are not strictly reenactments, but rather what I would like to call “danced historiographies.”⁶ For example, together with choreographers Carla Rímola and Laura Figueiras, we have created a piece that deals with the history of one of the most important hegemonic companies in Argentina: the Ballet Contemporáneo del Teatro General San Martín. The piece, titled *Bajo el signo de Saturno* (2020) [lit. *Under the Sign of Saturn*], was performed in the same institution, danced by the ballet, but in a space peripheral to its physical structure: the hall of the Teatro San Martín. Particularly noteworthy is the result in this piece, in which the history of this company is problematized by questioning the notion of origin and its

⁴ I have discussed this topic extensively with researcher Victoria Fortuna, so this paragraph is based on those conversations. Fortuna refers to a particular ethnographic approach to the archive that comes into play in this situation.

⁵ Translation by the authors.

⁶ I am currently working on this notion in my research “Historiografías en movimiento. Archivo, recreación y nuevas metodologías para abordar la historia de la danza argentina”.

use in history. Through this means, an institutionally little-discussed subject is brought into play, namely the date of the founding of this ballet, and thus the question of who is its creator.⁷ In this case, other power politics related to the dictatorship of Onganía and the last Argentine civil-military dictatorship and the resistance to it interfere and are challenged by the play choreography of documents and memories (Fortuna 2019).

In this way, as we said earlier, the piece creates a critical historiography through the language of art and does not respond to a “will to reenact” (Lepecki 2010) or to an “archival impulse” in the sense of Hal Foster’s proposal. According to Andrés Tello (2015), art is not only a practice that draws on the archive, but also intervenes in the social configuration that the archive helps to shape. In these artworks, we must understand the archive as a place for dispute, a dimension enclosed by the idea of “trend” or “paradigm” (Tello 2015). Attributing heterogeneous works to an art historical moment and turning them into a label reduces the critical potential of artistic strategies in the face of the stylistic homogenization of narratives in the history of dance as art. This is what the local dance pieces that deal with history are resisting.

Based on the experience of previous historiographical research in our (Rafael Guarato and Eugenia Cadús’) countries and current archival practices and theories, we can draw some transnational conclusions. Dance archives are, to some extent, always artist-driven archives,⁸ having emerged from the awareness that dance-related

⁷ It could be said that the Ballet Contemporáneo del Teatro General San Martín has two possible foundations. The first in 1968 by Oscar Araiz and the second in 1977 by Kive Staiff. This internal dispute within the institution is reflected in the publication of the book *Ballet Contemporáneo 25 años en el San Martín* in 1992 (Falcoff 1992), referring to 1968, and in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the ballet in 2007 (referring to 1977). At that time, the company’s director at the time, Mauricio Wainrot, said, “We need to mend fences... This company of today has nothing to do with the earlier one. The first contemporary ballet was founded in 1969 and unfortunately disbanded in 1971. The contracts were not renewed and after three years of intense work under the direction of Oscar Araiz, the company disintegrated and we continued to struggle to survive. In 1977, seven years later, at the request of Kive Staiff, Ana María Stekelman founded the Group and the Contemporary Dance Workshop. Therefore, they are two very different things. We are now celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of this company, which consisted of nine dancers. It was first called Grupo de Danza Contemporánea and then Ballet Contemporáneo” (Wainrot 2007, n. p., translation by Eugenia Cadús).

⁸ The dance that archives itself, is an archive composed mainly of collections of dance practitioners and private archives. They are the clearest example of the peculiarities that characterize these archives. Researcher Rosemary Candelario (2018) has highlighted the various facets and problems associated with artist-driven archival projects that foster significant changes in the formats of what we understand as archives, and for the author, these changes are taking place because artists archive in similar ways that they choreograph. With this observation, Candelario asks an important question to understand that an archive guided by artists’ decisions is always political and artistic. It is permeated by relations of authority and positions of power within the field in which they participate, as they represent themselves in this context and thereby intervene in the production of possible knowledge about themselves. In Brazil, examples of this process are the Gouvêa-Veneau archive, which includes audiovisual material, drawings, printed texts, photographs, hand programs, and reviews of the production of Célia Gouvêa and Maurice Veneau (Gouvêa 2015), and the “Carne Digital” project developed by researcher Mônica Dantas (2018) on the archive of artist Eva Schul; both projects declare that they are not just disinterested documents, but that they are dedicated to the legacy of pieces and trajectories in dance.

materials need to be preserved and that there is a lack of institutional support for this task, as in the case of Ballet Stagium, or from the institutional violence that erases documents, as in the case of the dictatorships in Argentina. There are no archives created for the preservation of documents *per se*, but archives created through personal donations from artists, journalists, or researchers. The practice of making archives from private collections challenges us to consider the practice of archiving as inherent to the craft.

In this format we find archives of artists and dance makers who have not received regular public support over time, as well as the private collections that various artists, critics, journalists and researchers have accumulated over time. These archives involve a variety of documents consisting of newspaper articles, dance journals, diaries, notes, sketches of costumes and sets, letters, scripts, drawings, hand programs, sheet music, photographs, and audiovisual material carefully selected to be preserved over time. So there is a fine line between archiving and telling one's own story through documents that have accumulated over time. And there is also a very narrow boundary between personal archives and institutional archives. In this sense, it is not the figure of the archivist who decides what and how documents are kept, but the protagonists themselves. It is not the state that develops a memory policy, but the fear of disappearance in the face of the state's policy of erasure or the personal need to preserve what someone considers important from their own life and their personal and public history.

The relationship between the dance-related professions (choreographers, directors, producers, dancers, critics, etc.) and the profession of dance history researcher is therefore more comprehensive and complex. Dance history has been and continues to be ascribed the pedagogical task of passing on artistic knowledge and demonstrating to new generations the achievements that underlie debates and theories that mobilize the field. A hegemonic dance history exercises a siege power, a power to select the present and leave it to the future, generated by a personalist historiography of artists as heroes of their time who survive history after their physical death. Thus, Dance History—with a capital H and D—⁹ by telling us only about names, dates, people, and institutions that were portrayed as significant in their time, teaches us that the important artists are those who survive in the history books. History not only tells us about the past and how it interacts with and influences the present, but it also haunts the artists of today who, through their archives (Appadurai 2003), strive to have their names written in the stories about dance in the future, as their significance in the present will be mediated through historical texts after their physical deaths. Given the close relationship between historiography and access to archives (Certeau 1982), self-archiving represents a sophisticated tactic for leaving memories for future histories.

⁹ A critical understanding based on the specificities of Argentine dance history(s) can be found in the text by Tambutti and Gigena (2018) and by Eugenia Cadús (2019). In the same critical perspective, an analysis from the historiographical specificities of dance in Brazil but looking for similarities in Latin America can be found by Guarato (2019b).

In this sense we can say that archives, their formats and contents dance. There is an invisible (because virtual) dance of testimonies and memory material that escapes the objective presumption of fixation on supposedly stable supports. Moreover, this dance is a performance that produces history, memories, and a particular kind of storytelling, that is, an archive.

LEARNING FROM THE DANCES OF THE DANCE ARCHIVES IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

In addition to the difference between our thinking and Diana Taylor's understanding of the archive presented in the introduction to this text, there is another learning experience or conclusion, namely that of understanding archives as something living and under construction, i.e. not neglecting their historically acquired power to contribute to the constitution of the dance heritage, which leads to a problem related to the politics of memory. We understand memory in terms of the cultural memory proposed by Aleida Assman (2010) as something that is politically contested in a social context. And once contested, the archive as a practice of organizing historical evidence is at the center of debates about the politics of memory, whether of dance practices in particular or of archiving dance practices, and offers us important clues about possible histories in the future.

For the construction of these histories in our countries, it seems urgent to recognize that these memories trigger a specific dance politics that requires dancers to make choices that involve complex decisions in their time and space. Thus, there is a politics that politicizes and moves within a dynamic of politicization that is fostered by memory. This raises the following question: If the archives dance, is it more urgent to insist on the creation of institutional archives or to abandon the institutions in order to free the memories and let them dance with themselves? Here we encounter social inequalities (class, gender, ethnicity, coloniality) that affect which social groups already have resources that guarantee them the archiving of their history and which do not. This has been shown in the previous examples. In particular, the case of Ballet Stagium points to the dimension of who can and who cannot create a legacy, who becomes a "monument" with greater chances of becoming hegemonic in its context (Guarato 2019a).

Dance archives in our countries are paradoxically envisioned as something to be achieved at the institutional level, while they already exist at the domestic/private level. The institutional apparatus often appears as a model for secure memory, showing that in the struggle for memory, public institutions are recognized as privileged agents, although, as we noted above, the state has also often been guilty of erasing parts of history or determining the way history has been written, and thus what or who is worthy of having an archive. Similarly, recording dance through a text assumes that dance

theory is a tool that unfolds its full potential in arguments about the construction of different dance legacies and inheritances.

In our view, this zeal for institutionalizing dance archives brings with it the challenge of constantly thinking about what is not included in the archives. We are convinced that a politics of memory for dance archives in our countries cannot be limited to the recovery of archival content, but must make the institutional archive a place of generosity and announced contestation, a place for the exercise of democracy. To this end, we believe that the institutional policy of dance archives must deal with the testimonies of different kinds, different dance traditions, and not be content with suggesting legacies so that we can think about ways of archiving that overcome inequalities and do not perpetuate them. How can we imagine a dance archive that engages politically with the politics of memory and practices democracy in our contexts marked by dictatorships and economic and state violence? We do not intend to answer this question now, but want to encourage reflection on the subject.

THE DANCE OF ARCHIVES OR WHAT MAKES AN ARCHIVE WHAT IT IS

All historical research deals with fabricated archives and produces private archives in which it organizes and articulates possible relationships between materials. Archiving, then, also presupposes a method, a dynamic practice of “doing with” the materials, which is a creative movement that elaborates possibilities and leaves its traces to change the starting point, for it implies “dealing with the apparent entities and the effects of transparency that are inevitably part of the analysis” (Glozman 2020, 10).

Following this thought, the concept of dance archives is not neutral or descriptive of an objective practice, they no longer serve as a report or finding, and therefore are no longer dependent on the criterion of verifiability (they are neither false nor true). This recognition of the choreographic or performative aspect of the archive¹⁰ gave rise to a variety of possibilities and disputes around its definition, but with the awareness that archives do not only inform but also do something.

What we propose is the recognition that archives, in their various constitutions, promote dances of testimonies about dance, and choreographies from various materials. The proliferation of dances among textual documents, memories, audiovisual media, and the production of histories shows us that it is not only the body as an archive that can recreate the past through reenactment and tell what happened in new ways. Dance archives also dance and present multi-layered aspects.

¹⁰ The variations of language that John Austin (1962) analyzed as performative utterance conceives utterance as an action and provides us with a basis for understanding that archives and their systems of utterance are not merely descriptive, but rather are inserted into a complex and tense social interactional structure.

For the research on concert dance and Peronism, for example, given the lack of institutional dance archives and documents on Peronism, Cadús searched for traces of dance teaching, performance and aesthetics in various sources and locations. The result of the research was an archive of dance and Peronism that choreographs plays, films, advertisements, oral testimonies, etc. through the lens of categories such as ‘popular culture’ or ‘national identity’. And Cadús, Figueiras and Rímola’s research for the piece *Bajo el signo de Saturno* choreographed –in this case literally– photographs, oral testimonies, found costumes from the theater’s costume department and the embodied memory of the company’s dancers.

In the research on the constitution and history of street dance in the city of Uberlândia (Brazil), Guarato (2008) faced the challenge of making urban folk dance that had no written sources, dealing with advertisements, flyers for local parties, private photographs, costumes and interviews that also constitute an archive produced during the course of the research. Historiography these conditions does not show us a possible precariousness, but rather a condition that characterizes the act of researching dance history in our countries, which simultaneously deals with multiple archive formats and produces archives. In this way, these examples question not only the dominant history of dance, but also the archives themselves and their power structures and politics.

Although the trigger of this article is localized, we believe that the debates proposed here can be generalized. We recognize something that often runs through historical texts, artists’ opinions, and articles on dance studies in Argentina, Brazil, and abroad, namely, the treatment of archives as referents of a discourse that can strive for truth by establishing a material connection with the past. In this sense, we are interested in initiating a process of provincialization (Chakrabarty 2000) of archival studies, questioning the universality of these concepts and rethinking them from a local point of view, which means that in our research we reflect on the local politics and power structures that have organized (or not) an archive, or the archive that we build or choreograph as researchers.

Provincializing the dance archive debate does not mean seeking a uniqueness that does not exist elsewhere. Provincializing is an adaptation of dance archive debates to practices elsewhere. Because archival debates in the global North are simultaneously treated as “indispensable and inadequate” (Chakrabarty 2000, 6), they deserve to be renewed from other contexts and for other contexts. Just as we learn from other places and experiences. The act of provincializing, then, consists in an articulation that is simultaneously political and conceptual, not in the sense that it offers or excludes a new dimension, but rather as something dialogical from within practice, since from here we recognize it not as something provincial but as a process.

The provincial dimension proposed here is meant to offer a view of places where the practice of institutionalizing dance archives has not found political and/or institutional support, as is the case in the countries of the Global North. Thus, the procedure of starting the debate with the aspects of interactions between dance and archive in the geographies of Brazil and Argentina is not done with the intention of distinguishing

ourselves from other geographies because of our specificities, but with the intention of providing common aspects found in these places that are not exclusive and can be extended to other geographies where the tradition of dance archives is not present and active, as a kind of *transprovincialization*. And in this sense, it allows us to question the credibility and status of the archive as an institution, as projected on the globe by the Eurocentric model of historiographical dance research. The archives dance, for they are slippery, they move, change houses and hands and are passed from body to body. In this sense, the archives in our places gradually lose their authorship. In this way, the state of fixity and archons is being called into question. And although the dance community in our countries is calling for more state presence in the preservation of dance heritage¹¹, it is also aware that it has often been the same state that has violently tried to erase memories. Nevertheless, we are aware of this and continue to envision more inclusive and democratic archives. And researchers move within the archive dance and perform other pasts, presents and futures together.

In conclusion, we must say that the first step is to recognize that there is a history of documents before there is a history of dance. And this is not just a history of descriptive documents, focusing on the almost mythical difficulties that allowed the testimonies to remain. They are where they are today because people acted, made decisions, burned them, threw them away, cataloged them, rejected them, selected them, and so on. In this sense, Eric Ketellar (2006, 68) defines archival work as a ‘régime de pratiques’ that oscillates with time and space.¹² Thus, we recognize that the archive is organized to leave the present as a legacy for the future, and that the process of archiving not only intervenes in what remains in an archive and what leaves it, but also functions

¹¹ As an example, we can mention that the long-awaited Argentine National Dance Law, whose first draft dates back to 2012, provides for the creation of the Centro Nacional de Documentación de la Danza. And in Brazil, the “creation, maintenance and preservation of dance collections” was one of the main themes of the National Dance Plan published in 2010. The National Dance Plan is a guiding document for the implementation of the National Cultural Plan (Law 12.343 of December 2, 2010). It was drawn up by representatives of elected civil society and members of the federal government, whose task is to make diagnoses and propose guidelines and objectives to be implemented over the next ten years (2010-2020). However, due to the turnaround in public power, its applicability did not materialize. The first version of the National Dance Plan can be found at the following link: <https://danca.cnpc.cultura.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/05/plano-setorial-de-danca-versao-impressa.pdf>. On the other hand, all drafts of the Ley Nacional de Danza in Argentina can be consulted at the following link: <https://www.leynacionaldedanza.org/> On April 29, 2021, a day of reflection and struggle for the law took place, including a round table specifically dedicated to the future Centro Nacional de Documentación de la Danza. The video of this event can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsXvK3RjGTQ>. Although the law was about to be passed by Congress in December 2023, current political events in Argentina have unfortunately made this goal impossible for the time being. Both examples once again show the political problems and power structures surrounding archives in the south.

¹² The proposal to understand archives as a “regime of practices” is to recognize that the processes of selecting, cataloging, and organizing documents create meanings by collecting testimonies in one dynamic rather than another and by making regroupings that, although determinative, contribute to the understanding of the past generated by historians accessing archives.

as a regrouping of the meanings of testimonies. In the cases we have analyzed, this fact was also linked to a political and governmental dimension.

The point, then, is to recognize that there is a dance of archives that deals with the available physical materials of their time and place, the methods of archival craft, the theories of the field, and the political orientations of the people or institutions that archive—in relation to the political orientation of the government of the time—, and which fills the documents with aspirations related to the present of the archival process, showing us that the management of archives is also creative and that in our time it is as naïve to assume that it is possible to fix the dance in an archive as it is to assume that an archive is not in motion. It also shows that an archive is performative in the sense of creating worlds, things and possibilities of understanding.

We note that at the international level in the field of dance studies there is an inflationary movement dedicated to the study of reenactment and the body as archive, insisting on treating the moving archive only in the phenomenological phase of the creative process of the artist, or studies that acknowledge the moving archive in situations where artists are involved in the management of archives, and both show difficulty in recognizing that any archive has always been in motion and that there is a Eurocentric paradigm that cannot learn to see this dance of documents.

Archival practice shows us that we have no connection to the past, but to what remains of the past in the present, mediated by a process that represents what Mattia Scarpulla (2016, 31) describes as the “hierarchization of memories” In this sense, according to Andrés Tello (2015, 136), “it is not possible to imagine an archive without archons, but at the same time there are no absolute archives that can complete or abandon once and for all the becoming of the traces they seek to preserve.”¹³ Accordingly, we understand the political aspect related to memories, which shows that any archive is a place of contestation in which testimonies are organized (choreographed) according to a certain predetermined stability and according to principles of periods, authors, disciplines, etc., applying inclusion and exclusion criteria.

If we assume that archives dance—an invitation to us to notice how much our history depends on what we do not want to leave in our historical memory—we are ready to acknowledge the existence of a specific choreography of documents. Artists, archivists, objects, institutions and historians, they all practice the selection and abandonment of information about the past. And the history we have access to is the set of what has been selected, what has been chosen or what has been abandoned due to the conventions of time and place and socio-economic-political-cultural context. By understanding the archive as choreography, we want to challenge both established power (a political dispute) and the notion of a Eurocentric Western archive that insists on seeing it as a guarantee of a secure connection with the past.

¹³ Translation by the authors.

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