

Remembering folklore, staging contemporary dance

Conceptual and methodological issues about *D'après une histoire vraie* (2013) by Christian Rizzo

Susanne Franco

In this chapter, I will analyse a recent dance-music piece, *D'après une histoire vraie* (*Based on a real story*), created in 2013 by the conceptually driven French choreographer Christian Rizzo, who is also responsible for the stage design and the costumes, and two composers/musicians, Didier Ambact and King Q4, who composed the score and perform onstage for the duration of the show (about one hour) along with eight male dancers.¹ This abstract piece is based on a precise choreographic structure framed by minimalistic stage aesthetics. In addition to that, the low-key lighting designed by Katy Olive, the costumes (jeans and grey-blue T-shirts) and the dancers' look (five of them have long hair and half a dozen have beards) all clearly relate to the 1970s. *D'après une histoire vraie* – now available on Vimeo² – was created for the Festival d'Avignon and has received outstanding audience success, considered by critics to be a refined example of Western stage dance and one of Rizzo's masterpieces. This achievement is most probably one of the reasons why Rizzo was appointed director of the Centre Chorégraphique National de Montpellier in 2015. Rizzo, who comes from an Italian-Spanish family of Moroccan origins, started his artistic career as a member of a rock band and designer of a line of clothing and only later studied fine arts in Nice, unexpectedly branching out into dance.³ While continuing his career as a choreographer, he often creates soundtracks and music for other dance companies.

D'après une histoire vraie concerns memory, tradition, authenticity and community. It therefore offers the opportunity to focus on some conceptual and methodological issues that can help in verifying to what extent the artists' limited exposure to folklore, globalisation and postcolonial studies compromise the outcome of a dance piece that ends up reinforcing the obsolete way folk dance and folk music are still perceived by a large portion of the audience. In analysing the creative process and the structure of *D'après une histoire vraie*, my purpose is to consider the sets of knowledge that have been taken as the starting point of the project and those implied in its reception of the piece. I will also argue that crucial theoretical aspects

in the current rewritings and re-representations of dance history onstage by way of dance re-enactments could be made more effective by increasing the dialogue between scholars and artists. More specifically, I will point out how Rizzo, Ambact and King Q4 have conceptualised their creative process and their attitudes toward folk and pop traditions more by working them onstage and less by investigating them through the lens of some crucial cultural issues.

Over the last few years, the production of a series of dance performances based on the idea of re-enacting and citing historical pieces or traditional repertoires of different origins has become a major trend in Western contemporary dance. Fabian Barba, Boris Charmatz, Xavier Le Roy, Olga de Soto, Martin Nachbar, Jérôme Bel, Richard Move and Eszter Salamon are among the choreographers who focused on heritage and performative strategies in narrating a different dance history onstage. In both kinds of dance re-enactments (of historical pieces and of traditional repertoires), the past is considered as a playground for the present and the notion of archiving is considered as a process that transforms repertoires by actualising them. Dance re-enactments can be seen as a new contemporary choreographic trend, a performative activity set in motion to recall, evoke, critique and relive past works. These re-enactments do not simply reproduce stage dance forms, genres or techniques of the past in the present to carry them into the future. By way of this complex temporal relationship, choreographers who have made re-enactment the subject of their productions are engaged in a dialogue with the past by archiving dance pieces, dance techniques and processes of transmission performatively. The creative and reflective approaches of the choreographers to historical sources have stimulated a large debate on how our bodies function as archives of a dance legacy and on the concept of canonical dance pieces. Last but not least, we have been encouraged to challenge our sense of dance history through dance re-enactments, which resonate with current discourses in the academic field by destabilising distinctions between the intellectual and the artistic approach and by presenting dance history to a contemporary audience/readership from a new theoretical perspective (Burt 2003; Franko and Richards 2000; Lepecki 2010; Thurner and Wehren 2010; Wehren 2016). More specifically, by staging complex networks of transmission and migration of bodily cultures, dance re-enactments break the temporalities and the structures of many dance histories. By virtue of their critical attitudes, which deconstruct the 'neutral' narratives implicit in these more traditional historical approaches, they contribute to troubling the idea of a linear progression and standard genealogies of artists and genres.⁴ Dance re-enactments stage cultural and artistic identity as part of a process of historic appropriation and make us aware of the constructive character of the historiography of the performing arts by putting in the foreground the problematic role of the choreographer/dancer/composer as authors.

Choreographers who have engaged specifically with re-enactments that deal with dances defined by artists and critics indistinctly as ‘social’, ‘folk’ or ‘ethnic’ envisage these dances as traditions that cannot be reconstructed on stage as they were in the past and also as works that are consciously transformed by the contemporary choreographic strategies and by the contemporary bodies performing them. However, in some cases, dance re-enactments can also reinforce old stereotypes and historical clichés, such as the perception of contemporary and traditional dances as forms of art that do not inhabit the same temporal realms and do not share the same processes of transmission but are implicated within different historical discourses and trajectories of memory (Foster 2011; Franco 2008; Hardt 2011; Wehren 2016). Contemporary dance is generally considered as ephemeral and as part of a historical progression, whereas folk dance (and music) is perceived as the living repertoire of a local and uninterrupted memory. Thanks to early anthropological and ethnographical studies and the general rediscovery and re-evaluation of the body in non-Western cultures, until very recently, folk dance and music were perceived as expressions of purely oral traditions and as practices that created a sense of community at the performative level (Baxmann and Cramer 2005: 17; Hardt 2011; Shay and Sellers-Young 2016). This status of folk dance (and music) and the denial of the historical complexity is also the outcome of nationalism and colonialism that have strategically used folklore precisely for its capacity to provide a sense of belonging and to enable people, imagine new national communities and reinvent a tradition (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992).

An authentic folklore without culture

The theoretical lines that lead the creative process of *D'après une histoire vraie* are made explicit in the programme notes and in other texts written by the choreographer, the composers and some critics before and after the creation of the show. After a few years of intensive touring, this textual apparatus has its own impact in the reception of the piece and on how folklore is conceptualised, represented and historicised.

In the programme notes, Rizzo writes that in 2004, while attending a contemporary dance festival in Istanbul and feeling bored by one piece, he was suddenly mesmerised by a Turkish folk dance, which was included in it. This dance appeared to him as something ‘archaic’ and ‘poignant’ and as an ‘authentic’ expression of this culture (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). Later on, he observed folk dances in the Middle East, the Maghreb, France and Spain and listened to folk music. This decontextualised observation of movements and systems of composition convinced him of the similarities of especially male and Mediterranean dances. Less interested in reworking an existing folk dance of the Mediterranean area than in finding recurrent elements in

different traditions, Rizzo decided to create a new dance piece out of these multiple cultural roots. In an interview reported by the French dance critic Philippe Noisette, he affirms,

At the beginning this project consisted in questioning folklore. Folklore is tied to a culture, to a geography. I'm somehow from nowhere, and therefore the only places that I do know are the studio and the theater. This is my territory. What I'm interested to see is what are the common elements of this cultural difference. No doubt I grab the issue of folklore to recreate for myself a land and a family for the duration of a show.⁵

In describing the creative process of *D'après une histoire vraie*, Rizzo reports that his memory is related to a specific occasion (a contemporary dance festival in Turkey) and to a specific event (the irruption of a folk dance he conceptualises as the 'authentic' expression of Turkish culture). By using steps and postures from different folk dances in *D'après une histoire vraie*, Rizzo seems to deconstruct authenticity as a discursive formation. As Regina Bendix has pointed out, folklore has long served as a vehicle in the search for the authentic, satisfying a longing for an escape from modernity, but it also arises out of religious, spiritual or existential needs. As she suggests, it is the desire, not the object 'authenticity' itself, that yields existential meaning (Bendix 1997: 17). Rizzo's explicit fascination with the short folk dance that he unexpectedly watched in Istanbul reveals precisely his inability to avoid the search for authenticity and its implicit exoticisms.

The concept of folklore emerged in Europe midway through the nineteenth century, and its main feature was identified in its obscure origins due to the difficulties both in retracing the identities of the authors of folktales, proverbs, folkloric music and dances and in the processes of transmission from generation to generation (Bohlman 1988). Rizzo, as the choreographer, and Ambact and King Q4, as composers, all raise the issue of authenticity in relation to the issue of authorship. Their incursion into folklore can be seen as the consequence of the long-standing perception that folklore can be replicated and imitated less problematically than a piece of high art. Folk dance and music are considered as part of repertoires frozen in time and in local and collective memories and therefore are hardly identifiable with a specific author. The authorship, in these cases, is rather absorbed by dancers and musicians along the line of direct or indirect transmissions. Whereas Ambact and King Q4 promote a discourse that is closer to that of artists engaged in music revival who speak of 'authenticity in terms of being true to one's own creative impulse, one's own life experience, and the concern of one's own age or era' (Bithell and Hill 2014: 24), Rizzo is also stimulated by contemporary conceptual dance, in which authorship is a key issue. In this domain, the role of the choreographer has increasingly gained attention precisely because it has been critically deconstructed and presented as a powerful though problematic presence. By reiterating the demarcations

between traditional and contemporary art, where the former is roughly associated with belonging to a local cultural group and the latter with belonging to an individual author, *D'après une histoire vraie* makes the question of authorship as explosive as it is provocative. The constant presence of the composers/musicians onstage has its counterpoint in the physical absence of the choreographer, which is underlined by a few objects (a chair, a plant, three black spheres and a book) left on the right side of the stage, delimitating an intimate portion of the space from where Rizzo supervised the development of the piece during the rehearsal.⁶ This absence/presence of the choreographer is also related to the fact that Rizzo has signed the piece, which is based on a 'data bank': a series of movement sequences mainly collected and transmitted to the dancers – all trained in different contemporary techniques – by the Turkish dancer Kerem Gelebek. Rizzo has pointed out that he was not interested in recreating a pre-existing dance but rather in understanding why he empathised so much with the dance he saw in Istanbul on that particular occasion (Cabado 2013). Assuming that the act of memory is a process that reconstitutes the past by modifying it, Rizzo digs into the sedimentary deposits of his own memory and (re)contextualises it as a new experience to be shared with the dancers, the musicians and the audience. The combination of Rizzo's personal memory and Gelebek's embodied knowledge, reworked and transmitted to the dancers, makes it possible to invent what the programme notes report as 'an abstract writing debossed with fictional fragments'.⁷ The missing point is the delicate question of the act of writing and its anthropological and ethnographic implication. By mentioning only himself as the choreographer of the piece, Rizzo does not fully acknowledge Gelebek as co-author, though taking advantage of the dancer's contribution to become involved in a movement tradition that he does not master and transform this tradition into choreographic material. Gelebek's role is therefore closer to that of a native informant or someone who is seen as an expert by virtue of belonging to a specific cultural and geographic context and who can add a level of authenticity to this work (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Spivak 1999). Moreover, the choreographic structure in *D'après une histoire vraie* is the result of the circulation of different bodily knowledge, but transmission and embodiment are (re)presented here as unidirectional processes activated by Gelebek but led by Rizzo to be assimilated by the dancers rather than two components of a single and shared process, as they tend to be recognised in many recent approaches to contemporary dance.

The contemporary as traditional

D'après une histoire vraie challenges both the 'contemporary' and the 'traditional' categories and destabilises the borders between 'high' and 'low' art. Rizzo is convinced that 'to question the modernity it is necessary to look at the past' and that 'to get back to folklore is a way to re-read

the dichotomous division between popular and cultivated art'.⁸ In addition to this, Rizzo's curiosity in enquiring why folk dance had such an important influence has led him in imagining a dance rooted in folklore but also enriched by contemporary choreographic elements. Fully immersed as they are in a context of constant transformations, in this performance, music and dance seem to deconstruct the notion of tradition as the opposite of change and as belonging to the past. This perspective on folklore has also been evidenced by some new theoretical approaches that have pointed out to what extent folklore has informed both pop culture and high culture in a constant transit of styles, techniques and performative practices (Winick 2012).

Rizzo started the creative process by letting the composers/musicians improvise and suggest with their own gestures some images, as much as different ways to move rhythms from one to the other, to the dancers. The dialogue between the two drummers and their instruments – which are conventional drum kits with added bongos and small cymbals, while the side drums are always played without snares – is the leitmotiv of the piece. The drummers use the usual drumsticks or felt mallets for a softer sound with less attack. Ambact and King Q4 have been inspired by the wide variety of time signatures used in Middle East folk music and especially in Turkey, which include simple ones such as 2/4, 4/4 and 3/4, and 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, 7/4, and even 5/4. Combinations of several basic rhythms often result in longer, complex rhythms that fit into time signatures such as 8/8, 10/8, and 12/8. Ambact and King Q4 mix these signatures with rhythms from the rock and metal tradition and a way of playing drums that closely resembles the richness of sound typical of the 1970s.⁹ Towards the end of the piece, when the rhythms get more complicated, there are some delay effects in the amplification that produce artificial overlays of different rhythmic patterns. This development from what is introduced as a dialogue into something that is closer to a battle transforms the stage into an area of constant tension.

Aiming to create an acoustic and kinaesthetic dimension able to reinforce precisely this idea of 'a folklore without culture' – a definition that jars with all critical contemporary notions of culture – and to make traditions of a rural past suitable for a contemporary and urban audience, Ambact and King Q4 created a score by mixing sounds of folk and pop music with rhythms drawn from several musical genres that they name indistinctively ethnic, folk and traditional. In the programme notes, they define such a mix as 'earthy music of tribal inspiration'.

On his side, Rizzo has made Gelebek's selection of movements from dances where the performers hold hands, arms or shoulders recurrent in the piece in a variety of ways. He has also integrated these movements with improvisation and other elements, such as falling and touching, alternating this dance material with relaxing and constant variations in the quantity of performers. As Rizzo has pointed out, the choreography is based on the

idea that a folk dance 'is the result of patterns of space, lines or frameworks' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). At the same time, his own choreographic research is marked by a constant desire to connect the body to an almost mathematical and abstract environment. He has developed this concept under the inspiration of abstract American paintings, focusing particularly on 'their tangles of lines so that the eye never stops on a single point' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). In *D'après une histoire vraie*, folk dance's geometrical patterns (as they are perceived by Rizzo) resonate with the space and frame a constant skidding from rocking pelvises, Middle Eastern undulations, sirtaki-arm-in-arm style, leg work from North Africa and pliés of different kinds. The result is presented in the programme notes as an 'indistinct Mediterranean tradition' mixed with contemporary dance patterns and performance strategies.

The use of ethnic and folk music as interchangeable, synonymic categories and their linkage with the notion of traditions 'of tribal inspiration' is a clear symptom of the difficulties of the composers/musicians and Rizzo in dealing with these issues. As reported in the programme notes, they have identified a rock music envelope as a style, combing the popular with what they qualified as avant-garde and the traditional with the contemporary. Whereas the psychedelic rock, metal and the dub were chosen for their ability to federate by way of dancing (the head banging, the mosh), the other styles were selected for their potential in researching the sound and its use within different types of music. The outcome is a piece where the musicians with their rapid-fire percussion lead the audience towards a neo-traditional rock rave.

Rizzo, Ambact and King Q4 seem to further complicate these issues by presenting metal and psychedelic rock as folk traditions because of their way of being experienced and transmitted by a community of people. As reported by Antony Shay, starting in the mid-twentieth century, in many countries of the Middle East and Central Asia, a new form of popular folk music evolved from traditional folk music, sometimes called 'contemporary folk music' or 'folk revival music' to distinguish it from earlier folk forms. This new way of fashioning a specific national identity and folklore became an obvious tool for the manipulation of national symbols and for constructing a new national heritage for independent and modern nations (Shay 2006: 153). This situation has recently changed, and folk culture is more inclusively recognised as a dynamic representation of both modern and rural constituents. In Turkey, the creation of contemporary art and festivals (like the one attended by Rizzo) has received increasing incentives, which are affecting the way the audience perceives both contemporary and traditional arts (De Zorzi 2010: 181–90). Folk dance and music are here assumed not as the predominant realms of ethnology and anthropology but as relevant elements of contemporary dance-music practices. Moreover, it is the questioning and the reworking of movements and sounds that is assumed to be the most effective way to re-experience folk music and dance in

a contemporary world. New forms of folklore are thus regarded as the cores of artistic innovation, and smaller similar revivals have occurred elsewhere in the world at other times, but the term folk music has typically not been applied to the new music created during those revivals. This type of folk music also includes fusion genres such as folk rock, folk metal, electric folk and others.

Many aspects of this recent phenomenon have also received new inputs from 'world music', whose conflicting definitions are still debated by scholars and artists. At large, this term defines 'all the music in the world' or 'music that we encounter everywhere in the world', including folk music, cutting edge pop music styles and an increasing number of genres, though this broad sense tends to make the concept virtually meaningless. As a catch-all marketing term, in the 1980s, world music became a marketing category for non-Western, traditional (both secular and sacred) music and was aimed at capturing trends and styles to produce an amalgamation suitable for the global and contemporary taste. More recent historical and theoretical approaches have stressed to what extent world music is tied to globalisation as 'it represents the possibility that music and music-making bring people together' or, on the other hand, as 'it raises the fear of a strong homogenising effect of different music traditions' (Bohlman 2002: 2). In addition to this ambiguous relationship with globalisation, new critical approaches have also explored to what extent world music 'is very much a construct of modernity, which is to say the encounter with and interpretation of world that was unleashed by Age of Discovery, the Enlightenment, colonial expansion and the rise of the nation-state' (Bohlman 2002: 5). As Philip Bohlman has affirmed, 'asserting that there is music everywhere in the world is a concept that results from Western encounters with the world', even though at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can no longer speak of world music simply as the music of the exotic 'other' because 'our encounters with the world have become quotidian and the music mediates those encounters, whether we perceived that or not' (Bohlman 2002: 5). In other words, these encounters are always imagined and mediated by the West. Rizzo reveals his scarce familiarity with these cultural dynamics when he points out that he 'pinpointed effects and movements that were quite similar' and that from his perspective, 'only the choreographic expression changes, because it reflects the geography and the culture of a particular territory' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). Moreover, for him, 'it was important to give a tangible space and meaning to these movements that, once separated, have no history' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). It is from this point of view that for Rizzo, Ambact and King Q4, the creative process could start by an improvisation aiming to verifying 'what sorts of images their gestures might suggest' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.), rather than an accurate evaluation of what this dance and music material actually was, because of the many encounters shaping it along its complex history.

A male community in search of a new way of dancing together

While following the idea that the oral nature of folklore has become the touchstone of its authenticity, Rizzo is also echoing two other recurrent attributes of folklore that concern its being universal and intertwined with the attribute of communality. This idea is linked to the perception of folklore as a cultural expression of a particular community that is able to transcend the boundaries of verbal communication and therefore to emerge in diverse groups and remote places. From this perspective, universal are the relations that govern folklore, and specific are the references to culture and history. The assumption of the universalism of folklore is also related to the idea that folklore embodies the original homogeneity of human culture before the emergence of diversities and is therefore related to the idea of folklore as possessing the attribute of primariness. It is precisely this attribute that made the impact of folklore on modern thought and art so powerful. *D'après une histoire vraie* is nourished by these cultural dynamics. More specifically, Rizzo ascribes the ability to represent political positions to choreography, and in this specific piece, he does so by enquiring how the practice of a dance form can lead us to imagine a new male community. Rizzo and Gelebek started their research work for this piece in May and June 2013, at the time of the political protests that took place at Taksim Gezi Park in Istanbul against the increasing limitation of freedom of the press and of expression and the government's encroachment on Turkey's secularism.¹⁰ The programme notes do not mention either these events or the demonstrators' physical presence explicitly, but the dance piece contains the traces of this political climate, which Rizzo identifies as the starting point of his project: the staging of a group of men who battle for their future by moving together.¹¹ In his words, *D'après une histoire vraie* 'explores how dance is related to communities, and how movement ties individuals together' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.). It is also an entirely new dance that, following Rizzo's vision, belongs only to the community of dancers he has assembled for the show. The dancers put their arms on each other's shoulders, hold each other's hands, support each other, lean on each other and invite each other to dance. The slow transformation of this group into a male dancing community takes the entire length of the piece, and the dancers are connected to one another even when they perform a solo.¹²

Carefully avoiding what Rizzo identifies as gender stereotypes, the piece aims to explore the physical relationship between men and their need to hold and to touch each other and to open up to a new perspective from which to look at the world. As suggested by Ramsay Burt, to consider the ways in which representations of masculinity in dance appear to an audience implies the necessity 'to read dance against the grain of the generally accepted account of dance history' (Burt 2007: 57). With *D'après une histoire vraie*, Rizzo wants to trouble normative definitions of masculinity that have been assumed to be hegemonic, and in doing so, he makes space for

imagining ways of embodying other possibilities and of exploring, as he says, 'the degrees of male-to-male relations beyond rivalry, a fighting spirit or homosexuality' (Rizzo in Cabado 2013: n.p.).

Rizzo certainly problematises and disrupts normative conventions related to gendered behaviour by using dance as a signifying practice able 'to mediate hegemonic gender ideologies' and by dealing with dancers as embodied beings able 'to negotiate the social and cultural discourses through which gender and sexuality are maintained' (Burt 2007: 16). Inspired by the idea of masculinity as a changing and fluid phenomenon, Rizzo aims to verify to what extent the practice of a particular dance form can lead to the imagining of a new community of men willing to share the need and the pleasure of getting together: a dancing brotherhood of mutual support without any explicit sexual relationship. The dance critic Rosita Boisseau defines *D'après une histoire vraie* as 'a group of men celebrating the joy of being alive and the visceral excitement of dancing together' and qualifies Christian Rizzo as 'the bard of a new ritual in traditional contemporary dance, barefoot and in jeans' (Boisseau 2013).¹³ But does this rite really challenge the prejudices against the male dancer by staging a new way to represent a male community?

Following Burt, prejudices against the male dancer developed during the nineteenth century in response to a variety of social and historical factors, and 'effeminate' has since become a code word for homosexual (Burt 2007: 22). On the one hand, the cluster of fears associated with homosexuality are usually defined as homophobia, a concept that originated only in the 1970s as the social mechanism that prohibits or troubles the idea of intimate contact or communication with members of the same sex (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). On the other hand, homosexual men define the limit for heterosexuals, or, as Leo Bersani has put it, homosexuals are 'the internally excluded difference that cements heterosexual identity' (Bersani 1995: 36). While echoing the romantic vision of Middle Eastern folk dances as a realm of the male-to-male relations that proves an environment accepting of homosexuality (Shay 2006: 137), the male community staged in *D'après une histoire vraie* frames it with the metal tradition, which has been overwhelmingly produced by white, straight men as a form of rebellion associated with a particular construction of masculinity. This is how the piece polarises the representation of gender categories and fails in challenging them. Interestingly, the decision to have drummers and not percussionists is due not only to the necessity to avoid any immediate and obvious link with the folk tradition but also the necessity to add the virile virtuosity recurrent in the metal environment: While many metal musicians engage in head banging, a gesture often emphasised by their long hair, this practice is limited here to the dancers and performed with a reduced intensity.

The tension created around the role of the leader (the choreographer) and the other members of this group (the dancers) goes together with their slow transformation into a male dancing community. It is only in the last

two minutes, though, that a new perspective on the whole process seems to open up to the audience. The dancers, who have already removed all objects from the stage, affirm their own realm, a renovated male community, by improvising and freeing themselves from the choreographer and his dance writing, while the music continues with a fast rhythm in 9/8, which starts on drums and follows with various improvisations until the end.¹⁴

Rather than 'a new ritual in traditional contemporary dance, barefoot and in jean' (Boisseau 2013), *D'après une histoire vraie* seems to stage a limited and not innovative selection of group dynamics of a male community and does not make us aware of the possibilities of defying the gender constraints that have historically shaped the practice and the representation of dance.

Conclusion

D'après une histoire vraie presents a complex interplay between an attempt to stage a deconstructive approach to traditional narration of dance history and representation of folk dance and music and the unconscious replication of stereotypes and preconceptions that this very cultural attitude aims at questioning. In other words, this piece expresses a critical potential, but it ultimately begs the question of whether the galvanised spectators leave the show with a different understanding of concepts such as tradition and authenticity and cultural, national and gender identity. The contagious effect produced in the audience is surely the result of the kinaesthetic empathy with both the dancers and the musicians, thanks to the tremendous impact of the rhythmical structure of the choreography and of the musical composition/performance. It is not surprising that many spectators have declared they felt compelled to dance and project themselves onto the stage.¹⁵ The powerful aesthetic and kinaesthetic empathy provoked by the piece does not help to debunk these very cultural notions; rather, it allows the spectators to feel quite comfortable and more reassured than challenged in watching the piece.

On the one hand, this piece contributes by conceiving of folk dance and music as traditions that cannot be reconstructed on stage as they were but which are transformed by the contemporary choreographic strategies and by the contemporary bodies performing them. Certainly, these movement citations in the restaged sequences do also question ideas of authenticity, originality, communality and universality and link this piece to a wider (globalised) tradition of dance, but precisely the fact of considering them as a cluster sharing attributes with each other and suggesting that intrinsic relations exist between them reasserts a perspective on folklore that has largely been exceeded. In other words, any of the qualities that were and still are attributed to folklore might be inherent in some forms, in some cultures, but they are not essentially so (Bohlman 1988). This perspective also limits the potential of a dance re-enactment to stimulate new dialogues

with dance history by staging a complex temporal relationship and less traditional narratives. With this piece, Rizzo asserts that modernity should be perceived between historical heritage and visions of the future (Cabado 2013) but reduces the interplay of memory and cultural enquiry into folklore to a simplified and problematic artistic dimension. If for Rizzo to make a choreography means 'to tell something in a coherent way, something that eventually exists between you and the others, and as a way of thinking and theorising about perspective, space and narrative strategy',¹⁶ his project to stage a 'folklore without culture' fails in placing a reflective lens on his own relation to time and space and on dance's cultural function and social role, which remains explored merely as personal memory and not as knowledge.

Notes

- 1 Fabien Almakiewicz, Yaïr Barelli, Massimo Fusco, Miguel Garcia llorens, Pep Garrigues, Kerem Gelebek, Filipe Lourenço, Roberto Martínez.
- 2 <https://vimeo.com/85245355> (accessed 2 December 2016).
- 3 Rizzo, who founded the Association fragile in 1996, has performed with a number of contemporary choreographers, including Mathilde Monnier, Herve Robbe, and Mark Tompkins and has sometimes created soundtracks and costumes for them as well. He has also collaborated with other choreographers, such as Vera Mantero, Catherine Contour, Emmanuelle Huynh and Rachid Ouramdane.
- 4 The many conferences organised over the last few years have provided the opportunity to share ideas about how to rethink the history of performing arts: 'Original und Revival' (Bern, 2008); 'Tanzkongress' (Hamburg, 2010 and 2013); 'Moving Memories. Contemporary Dance in Dialogue with Memory and History' (Antwerp, 2011); 'Re-routing Performance / Re-caminant l'escena' (Barcelona, 2013); 'Rejouer la performance. De l'archive au Reenactment' (University of Strasbourg, 2013) and the second part 'De l'archive au reenactment: les enjeux de la re-présentation de la performance' (University of Rennes in collaboration with the Musée de la danse-Centre chorégraphique national de Rennes, 2014); 'Re-routing Performance / Re-caminant l'escena' (Barcelona, 2013).
- 5 'Au départ ce projet était de s'interroger sur ce qu'est le folklore. Un folklore est lié à une culture, à une géographie. Je suis d'une certaine façon à peu près de nulle part, donc le seul endroit que je connaisse c'est le studio, le théâtre. C'est mon territoire. Ce qui m'intéresse c'est de voir ce qu'il y a en commun sous cette différence culturelle. J'ai accaparé cette question du folklore sans doute pour me recréer un pays, une famille le temps d'un spectacle', Philippe Noisette, 'De Boris Charmatz à Christian Rizzo, de Gisèle Vienne à Michel Schweizer ou Kader Attou, la création se veut multiple. Extension du domaine de la... danse', Magazine du Théâtre de Lorient, 7, 2014, <http://en.calameo.com/read/0036831276d295ba690ac> (accessed 2 December 2016).
- 6 Christian Rizzo, interview with the author, 2015.
- 7 'Il s'agirait donc de remonter le cours de ma mémoire pour inventer le socle d'une écriture abstraite où de possibles bribes fictionnelles viendraient se loger en creux'.
- 8 See Rizzo interviewed by France Culture: <http://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/la-grande-table-1ere-partie/latifa-laabissi-et-christian-rizzo> (accessed 2 December 2016).
- 9 Ibid.

- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Christian Rizzo, interview with the author, 2015.
- 12 As suggested by Anthony Shay, there are dozens of each type of such dances that, depending on the region, are generically called bar, halay, horon or horo (2002: 211–2).
- 13 '[Christian Rizzo] se fait le chantre d'un nouveau rituel de danse contemporaine traditionnelle en jean et pieds nus'.
- 14 Christian Rizzo, interview with the author, 2015.
- 15 Didier Ambact and Christian Rizzo, interview with the author, 2015.
- 16 Christian Rizzo, interview with the author, 2015.

References

- Anderson, Benedict (1991) *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Baxmann, Inge and Cramer, Franz A. (eds) (2005) *Deutungsräume: Bewegungswissen als kulturelles Archiv der Moderne*, München: K. Kieser.
- Bendix, Regina (1997) *In Search of Authenticity. The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bersani, Leo (1995) *Homos*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bithell, Caroline and Hill, Juniper (2014), 'An introduction of Music Revival as Concept, Cultural Process, and Medium of Change', in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–42.
- Bohlman, Philip V. (1988) *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World Folkloristics*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- (2002) *World Music: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boisseau, Rosita (2013) 'Place au plaisir et à l'explosion physique', *Le Monde*, 10 July 2013.
- Burt, Ramsay (2003) 'Memory, Repetition and Critical Intervention. The Politics of Historical References in Recent European Dance Performances', *Performance Research*, 8/2, pp. 34–41.
- (2007) *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities*, 2nd edn, New York: Routledge.
- Cabado, Fabienne (2013) 'Interview with Christian Rizzo', Press Kit for *D'après Une Histoire Vraie*.
- Clifford, James and Marcus, George E. (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Connell, Raewyn W. and Messerschmidt, James W. (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept', *Gender & Society*, 19/6, pp. 829–59.
- De Zorzi, Giovanni (2010) *Musiche di Turchia. Tradizioni e transiti tra oriente e occidente*. Milano: Ricordi/BMG.
- Foster, Susan L. (2011) *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, New York: Routledge.
- Franco, Susanne (2008) 'Appartenere e trasmettere. Punti di vista sulla danza contemporanea a partire da Pichet Klunchun and Myself di Jérôme Bel', in *B. Motion. Spazi diriflessione fuoriedentroleartiperformative*, ed. Viviana Gravano, Enrico Pitozzi and Annalisa Sacchi, Milano: Costa & Nolan, pp. 119–33.

- Franko, Mark and Richards, Annette (eds) (2000) *Acting on the Past: Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Hardt, Yvonne (2011) 'Staging the Ethnographic of Dance History: Contemporary Dance and Its Play with Tradition', *Dance Research Journal*, 43/1, pp. 27–42.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence O. (eds) (1992) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lepecki, André (2010) 'The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances', *Dance Research Journal*, 42/2, pp. 28–48.
- Shay, Anthony (2002) *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- (2006) 'The Male Dancer in the Middle East and Central Asia', *Dance Research Journal*, 38/1–2 (Winter), pp. 137–62.
- Shay, Anthony and Sellers-Young, Barbara (2016) 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Ethnicity*, ed. Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–14.
- Spivak Chakravorty, Gayatri (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Turner, Christina and Wehren Julia (eds) (2010) *Original und Revival. Geschichts-Schreibung im Tanz*, Zürich: Chronos.
- Wehren, Julia (2016) Körper als Archiv in Bewegung. Choreografie als historiografische Praxis, Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Winick, Stephen D. (2012) 'Folklore and/in Music', in *A Companion to Folklore*, ed. Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 464–82.