
Nordic Dance Spaces investigates how different dance phenomena have shaped notions of Nordicness. Arising out of the collaborative work of dance scholars from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, the book examines social dancing, theatrical dance and popular dance to illustrate the power of dance in the formation and imagining of a region.

In an earlier edited volume by Vidal, Dance and the Formation of Norden: Emergence and Struggles (2011), the role of dance in the formation of the geopolitical region known as the Nordic countries or Norden was examined. This volume was the first result of the collaborative work of Nordic scholars involved in the project Dance in Nordic Spaces. The volume contextualised the wider historical, cultural and political formation of the Nordic region focusing on notions of emerging nations, canonisation, cultural flows, and individual and institutional contributions to discourses surrounding the project of nation building. This present volume extends the earlier work by looking at the global flow of cultural practices, folk dance competitions, mobility within the Nordic countries, ethno- and movementscapes, and the import and export of dances between Nordic countries and elsewhere. Spanning a period of more than a hundred years, the book comprises nine chapters. These are based on contemporary and historical data and are focused on interconnected themes.

In the opening chapter, Vedel and Hoppu note that all contributors to the volume follow Lefebvre's notion of space (1991) and have dance space as their shared point of theoretical departure. In 'Rock Around the North', Inger Damsholt examines the impact of Americanisation in the Nordic region in the 1950s and suggests that the arrival of rock 'n' roll and swing dances changed public space creating a domain where social values associated with youth culture were asserted and contested. Damsholt examines the reception of films such as Rock Around the Clock. She engages discourses on moral panic and pinpoints that a comparative analysis of rock 'n' roll riots in Scandinavian capitals in 1956 and '57 located in the Nordic Journal of Criminology produced and practiced Nordic space. Using primary, secondary and internet sources, this chapter is an interesting read that engages the reader in discourses surrounding popular youth dance, social and competitive dance spaces, agents of rock 'n' roll, Nordic morality, the media as moral entrepreneurs, and the creation of Nordic dance space.

In the following chapter, 'Strategic Mobility and Wayfinding Artists', Vedel examines dance artists of today who are, of economic necessity, flexible, adaptable and navigate “a liquid modernity that fixes neither space nor time”. Vedel examines issues relating to European funding and strategising and links these to discourses on cultural cohesion and intercultural dialogue and competencies. She explores transnational mobility and argues that this condition contributes to, and contests, the production of the Nordic region. Using three perspectives – an examination of policy papers, interviews with artists, and a localised case study in the Barents-Euro-Artic region, she examines the impact of the mobility of artists on the processes through which the Nordic region is shaped and states that dance performances constitute “representational spaces” while professional dance infrastructures constitute “spaces of representation”. The chapter highlights the role of dance and professional dance artists in the dynamic unfolding of Nordic and Barents spaces.

In 'Folk Dance Competitions in the Twenty-first Century' Mats Nilsson suggests the 'dual face' of such dance categories as 'folk', 'social' and 'popular' – the presentational and the participatory. Within competitive contexts it is the presentational aspect that dominates and Nilsson investigates five folk dance competitive events in four Nordic countries between 2009 and 2011 and looks at dancing, costume, music, gender and place. He discusses in detail their similarities and differences
and suggests that although the folk dances presented at these events have been transformed from their locally situated 'participatory' precursors in preindustrial rural society, it is precisely these dance forms that unite the different Nordic regions. Nilsson mentions the decline in participating dancers at the Halsinghambon (World Championships in Hambo) in 2010, which in the 1980s had to have a cap of 1,500 couples due to its popularity; it would have been interesting to know why this decline occurred. In 'Dancing Africa-American Jazz in the Nordic Region', Lena Hammergreen looks at how African-American and Caribbean jazz dances from North America from the 1960s had a corporeal impact on cultures in the Nordic region. She reveals nuances of reception and dissemination patterns and interrogates how these dance forms, as movementscapes, interacted with infrastructures and existing embodied experiences in different Nordic countries. Following Appadurai, she notes that these dance forms generate 'variable geographies'. She argues that issues relating to cultural diplomacy and the Cold War, pedagogues and dancers – native Nordic and American, postwar cultural policies and cultural diversity and its articulation and negotiation in dance, were important in the history of jazz dance in Nordic countries. She highlights 'arrival narratives' and embodied experiences in different Nordic countries and examines the power of the media in popularising jazz dance.

In 'Class Dimensions of Dance Spaces', Egil Bakka surveys dance activities in Nordic countries from 1900 to 1930. The survey is based on a class reading with the intention of understanding the interrelationship between social structures, values, and dancing. Folk, ballroom, theatre dance and dancing crowds are examined and leading individuals, their parents, and their social backgrounds in each dance genre are identified and discussed. Based on findings, Bakka purports that the social background of dancers in a specific dance genre was not the same across all Nordic countries. He examines venues for dancing, movements and organisations involved in building dance venues and analyses his source material using Lefebvre's conceptual triad of the production of space. The data in this chapter will undoubtedly allow for further research in the future to be undertaken. In 'Nordic Dance Performances in the North American Marketplace', Inka Juslin looks at the reception of Nordic contemporary dance exports between 2007-'11 in the North American press. This is juxtaposed with the Scandinavian Art Exhibition (1912-1913), which toured many cities in the US and which according to Juslin, established a “Nordic or Scandinavian 'moodiness'” for North American audiences. She argues that from analysing press reviews of contemporary Nordic dance that some of these ideas still apply today. Juslin uses Pine and Gilmore's idea of 'economy of experiences' to situate the media and arts fields within the context of cultural and global economic exchange and argues that Nordic artists today situate themselves nationally and interculturally within a globalised world.

Anne Margrete Fiskvik examines social space and hierarchical working relations as represented by serious and popular dance cultures in 'Working in Nordic Dance Venues'. She argues that spaces serve as “tools of thought, action and power”. Critically engaging with relevant dance scholarship in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, she examines the professional careers of dancers in Norway and suggests that the versatility of these dancers in the early decades of the twentieth century allowed them to move across the different hierarchical spaces or institutions thereby building dance spaces and working cultures. Within these working cultures, which typically supported existing power relations, she argues that these professional dancers negotiated the spoken and unspoken cultural codes and rules around behaviour, movement, clothing, and social and artistic hierarchies. While Fiskvik examines professional dancers in the early 1900s, Petri Hoppu's concluding chapter 'Together and Apart: All-Nordic Folk Dance Events before 1975' examines amateur dancers and the impact the production of folk dance spaces had on embodied regional presentations and representations. He examines transnationalism, ethnoscapes, and the importance of Nordic cooperation to reinforce nationalist tendencies. Looking at event programmes, minutes of cooperative meetings, newspaper articles and folk dance publications, he discusses the Nordic folk dance movement and the cooperation and tensions that existed from 1920 to 1975 between
Nordicness and nationalism. He suggests that Nordic folk dance cooperation delivered “a transnational ethnoscape that is affiliated and differentiated at the same time” and that participation in Nordic folk dance events allowed for the imagining and practising of the Nordic region.

This volume richly contributes to knowledge and literature in the field of Nordic dance. It will be of particular interest to scholars in the field of ethnochoreology and dance studies and, indeed, anybody interested in learning more about dance, dancers, and dance institutions in the Nordic countries in the twentieth and early-twenty-first century.

Catherine E. Foley
University of Limerick, Ireland