Heike Walz (ed.)

Dance as Third Space

Interreligious, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Debates on Dance and Religion(s)

V&R

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

Research in Contemporary Religion

Volume 32

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

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Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: https://dnb.de.

Cover image: Inga Scharf da Silva, “Auflösung” (2021, Öl auf Leinwand)

Typesetting: le-tex publishing services, Leipzig
Cover design: SchwabScantechnik, Göttingen

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | **www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com**

ISSN 2197-1145
ISBN 978-3-647-56854-6

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Acknowledgements

This volume is the result of a dream that came true. The idea of the international and interdisciplinary Conference *Dance with God or the Devil? Interreligious and Intercultural Debates on Dance and Religion(s)* matured for a long time in both my mind and body. It would finally be realized from 1st to 7th of March 2020 at the *Augustana-Hochschule* in Neuendettelsau, the Theological Divinity School of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Bavaria in Germany.

First of all, I would like to thank all the contributors to this volume, especially for their diligence in preparing the manuscripts and for their enthusiasm to share their expertise and learn from each other, and last – but not least – to dance together.

It was fortunate that the Dance Conference could take place shortly before the shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic closed down the universities in Germany and other countries. Therefore, I am grateful that the contributions and essays could still be completed under corona conditions despite the temporary closure of university libraries and the difficult research conditions during the year 2020.

I would like to extend special thanks to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria for financing the conference and this volume, especially to Chief Church Administrator Stefan Reimers, permanent representative of the Regional Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, for his support to realize the Dance Conference during my turn as President of the Augustana-Hochschule in Neuendettelsau from 2018 to 2020.

I wholeheartedly thank PD Dr. Markus Mülke from the International Office at the Augustana, who not only managed the travel and accommodation organization for the guests, but also supported the special theme of this conference with great commitment from its first moments.

This volume would not have been possible without Andrea Töcker, who proofread the manuscript in an excellent manner; nor without Sarah Friedrich-Bernhardt, who passionately edited the manuscript in the first phase before her maternal leave. We owe special thanks to Raphael Sartorius, teaching assistant at my Chair for Intercultural Theology and Religious Studies, for his cooperation in unifying the manuscript, with Annika Knapmeyer, student of Protestant Theology, at our side. Andrea Töcker and Raphael Sartorius have thankfully spared no effort in creating the indexes.

In particular I would like to thank Dr. Brandon Sundh for his excellent proofreading of the English language, considering that almost all authors are non-native English speakers.

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

Finally, I would like to convey my thanks to the editorial board of the *Research in Contemporary Religion (RCR)* series or their great interest, support and positive feedback, with which they included this volume in their series. In a special way, I am grateful to the lovely cooperation with my colleague, Prof. Dr. Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, and for sharing the vision to deepen the field of Religious Studies with research on dance.

And our gratitude goes to the publishing team of Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and Brill/Böhlau, especially to Dr. Johanna Körner and PD Dr. Izaak de Hulster, for the very good cooperation. It is our great pleasure that the artist Dr. Inga Scharf da Silva, one of our authors, created the oil painting "Resolution" especially for the cover of our volume. She deserves our heartfelt thanks. Hopefully this volume will reach interest both of readers and dancers.

Heike Walz, Neuendettelsau, March 2021

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

Heike Walz

Introduction

The international 'Dance Conference'[1] from which this volume emerged, was entitled: *Dance with God or the Devil? Interreligious and Intercultural Debates on Dance and Religion(s)*.[2] The motto 'Dance with God or the Devil?' alludes to the warnings against dance in the history of Christianity, and to a tension between divine and through the course of history *so called* 'diabolic' dances, which is quite common in Christianity. It also refers to theological controversies and disputes about dance throughout the history.

Does this observation also apply to other religions? Dance plays an important role in most religious traditions, for example in rites of passage, processions, shrines and sacred spaces, healing, hunting and fertility rituals, festivals for divinities, martial arts, ceremonies, or ancestor worship. Evidence is found in indigenous religions, forms of Shamanism, African religions, Egyptian and Greek Antique religions, Judaism, Asian religions (for instance Indian Hindu, and some Buddhist, Daoist, Confucianist, and Shinto traditions), Afro-Brazilian Religions, and Islamic Sufism (cf. Beaman: 2018; Gaston/Gaston: 2014, 182–192).

In many countries such dances were changed, suppressed and even forbidden through (mostly European) colonial domination and missionary activities (cf. Beaman: 2018, xix; LaMothe: 2018, 31–33). Though dance is "A Way to be Religious" (Gaston/Gaston: 2014), the "attitude of formal religions towards dance is more ambiguous than toward almost any art" (2014, 183). Hence, is it correct that "positions of religions on dance and its potentialities are adversarial in the extreme", as the Brill Dictionary of Religion says as well (Neitzke: 2006, 477)?

1 Cf. my reports on the Conference (Walz: 2020a; Walz: 2020b).

2 It took place from 1st to 7th of March 2020 at my Chair of Intercultural Theology, Mission Studies and Religious Studies at the "Augustana-Hochschule" in Neuendettelsau in Germany. The "Augustana-Hochschule, Theological Seminary of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Bavaria" offers undergraduate and graduate programs for the studies of Protestant Theology on par with the theological faculties at the state universities and the right to award doctoral degrees and habilitations (cf. www.augustana.de). The park-like campus, surrounded by forest and green floodplains, is one of the few real campus universities in Germany.

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This volume addresses such controversies around 'dance' and 'religion(s)'[3] as they have not yet been studied much from 'interreligious', 'intercultural'[4], and interdisciplinary perspectives. Rather the meaning and role of dance was examined from a religious-comparative perspective.

These considerations led to my invitation to the international 'Dance Conference'. Experts on dance and religion from various disciplines, countries and cultural-religious backgrounds came together to share their knowledge with each other and to discuss it with young researchers and students of theology and religious studies. My aim was to explore the controversies surrounding dance and religion(s) as well as the potential and limits of dance in different religions and spiritualities; furthermore the significance of dance for interreligious and intercultural encounters.

Results of this 'invitation to dance together' – in the double sense of 'dance as thinking' together – are available in this volume, which is entitled *Dance as Third Space. Interreligious, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Debates on Dance and Religion(s)*. This volume now bears that title, because, in my opening keynote at the Conference, I challenged the experts and participants to reflect about dance as "Third Space", using a metaphor of the postcolonial thinker Homi Bhabha (Rutherford: 1990), in order to overcome dichotomic discourses on dance and religion.

In my chapter on "Dance as Third Space. Interreligious, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Debates on Dance and Religion(s) in the Perspective of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology" in this volume, I will provide an overview to research questions on dance and religion(s), explain the theoretical approach of this volume and the choice of the metaphor of the Third Space.

A specific 'Third Space thinking' shaped the design of the Conference as well, called the 'Inter-Dance' approach.

3 I propose to work with a discursive approach to the definition of 'dance', which includes a minimal working definition that understands dance as 'rhythmic body movement, mostly to music'; and I suggest to work with a discursive approach to 'religion' as well, using a 'working definition' of 'religion': it places basic human experiences in a broader horizon of interpretation of reality that transcends them. With respect to the difference between 'religious' and 'spiritual', cf. in more detail my chapter on "Dance as Third Space. Interreligious, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Debates on Dance and Religion(s) in the Perspective of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology" in this volume.

4 In my chapter on "Dance as Third Space" in this volume, I will unfold in more detail, in which way the terms 'interreligious' and 'intercultural' (and sometimes 'cross-cultural') are used here.

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1. 'Inter-Dance' Approach: Third Space Thinking through Dance

My "inter-dance"[5] approach is connected to the idea that dance creates knowledge and is a form of thinking through the body. The Dance Conference's aim was to open up a Third Space between between experts and students, between researchers of different ages and genders, countries and disciplines, and between different cultural-religious backgrounds. The same applies to this collection: the attribute 'inter' or 'in-between' fits in several ways, as the approach is *international*, *interdisciplinary*, but also *inter-generational*, as it includes articles and essays from younger researchers and excellent students that emerged from the discussions during the Conference.[6]

This volume explores *intercultural and interreligious* aspects of dance and religion(s), something that has rarely been done before. My aim is to foster the *connection between theory and practice.* For this purpose, I combined theoretical reflection in lectures and discussions with experiences in dance workshops during the conference. In addition, almost all authors have dance expertise themselves, some are even professional dancers and choreographers.

In addition, as part of the program during the conference as well as in Nuremberg, we learned about *interreligious dance projects*. *Ángel F. Méndez Montoya's* dance & body workshop motivated everyone to dance, and *Kimerer L. LaMothe* let us feel the expressive dance in her modern dance workshop. Jesuit Pater *Saju George SJ* gave a wonderful performance lecture about the *Bhāratanāṭyam* dance style. In India, he offers a Third Space in his education center Kalahrdaya for young people (most of them come from poor Dalit families) in Kolkata. They are introduced to the high art and hard training of classical Indian dance. It is an inter-dance space that crosses the rugged divide between slums and the highest Brahmanic caste in India and is open to young people of different religious backgrounds.[7]

We were impressed by the inter-religious women's project in Nuremberg, organized by *Gülsan Çiçek* and *Thomas Amberg* from the Center for Christian-Islamic Encounters (Brücke-Köprü)[8] of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria. Here women from Turkish, Afghan and German families with Islamic and Christian backgrounds dance belly dance with their teacher *Feride Akgül*. In our conversation they interpreted the belly dance both as an expression of joy about God's creation and as a balance to the stressful everyday life.

5 I owe the term 'inter-dance' to Franka Plößner, one of my Protestant theology students, who created it while preparing for the Dance Conference.

6 Cf. the contributions of Riyako C. Hikota, Jasmine Suhrer, Dominika Hardrysiewicz, Iris B. Steil, and Raphael Sartorius.

7 Cf. https://www.jesuitenmission.at/kalahrdaya.html [14/1/2021].

8 Cf. https://www.bruecke-nuernberg.de [14/1/2021].

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Moreover the Mevlana Order e.V. in Nuremberg[9] invited us to their center, where dervishes from all over Germany are trained. Under the guidance of *Sheikh Süleyman Bahn* (cf. 2018), who introduced the Sema Ritual, we felt the radiating power of Sufi mysticism in Islam to unite with the love of God in dance; women as well as men were dancing. Several times a year this Sema ritual in Nuremberg attracts people of all religious or secular backgrounds.

Tatjana Schnütgen and *myself* offered an Argentinian tango & spirituality workshop. Due to its transcultural origins in the migration milieu in the slums of the *Río de la Plata*, Argentinian tango offers a spiritual body language that has found acceptance in tango services in Germany as a medium for existential and spiritual themes. Tango is a danced embrace, which may be experienced as the touch of Transcendence by dancers. Finally, we experienced an *African Dance Workshop* with *Elliot Mohlamme,* and *Samuel Odai Mensah* playing the drum.[10] We learned to dance a choreography that also contained elements of a rain dance.

The Conference was conceived as *research-based teaching and learning*, as students challenged the keynote speakers with their questions and insights during the final panel session. The students were invited to present their reflections as dance-creative inputs at the end of the Conference. The results really surprised me positively. In addition, student Franka Plößner shot two videos, a trailer and a documentary film about the conference, both are available on YouTube.[11]

Now I turn to the 'Choreography' of the contributors in this volume. The keynote speakers and the papers collected here in this volume[12] took up this impulse of the 'Third Space' in different ways.

2. The Choreography of the Contributors in this Volume

The volume is organized into five main sections.

Part I: "Dance in Interdisciplinary Approaches" concentrates on theoretical questions in Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology, in Dance Studies and Philosophy of Religion.

9 Cf. http://www.mevlana-ev.de/cbcms/ [14/1/2021].

10 Cf. https://www.movingpoint.de/elliot-mohlamme [15/10/2020].

11 Cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnvdTCy05_M [15/10/2020].

12 Karin Schlapbach (Switzerland), Shahzad Bashir (Pakistan/USA) und Nkosinathi Sithole (South Africa) unfortunately could not attend the Dance Conference and deliver their keynotes, but kindly provided their contributions for this volume. During the Dance Conference I invited younger researchers such as Riyako C. Hikota (Japan/Germany), Jasmine Suhner (Switzerland), Dominika Hadrysiewicz, Iris B. Steil and Raphael Sartorius (all from Germany) to submit essays.

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Heike Walz, a scholar of religious studies and intercultural theology, provides an overview of discourses on 'dance and religion(s)' in religious studies and intercultural theology. Her chapter "Dance as Third Space. Interreligious, Intercultural, and Interdisciplinary Debates on Dance and Religion(s)" can also be read as extended theoretical introduction to the volume. Under the motto "Dance with God or the devil" she outlines dance controversies in Christianity. For the use of the terms 'dance' and 'religion(s)' in culturally-religiously plural contexts, she proposes a discursive approach. Her mapping of discourses on dance in religious studies and intercultural theology leads to a typology that reveals a dichotomous Eurocentric and Christian view of dance and religion. Dance is thus a 'burning glass' for the need of a decolonizing epistemology. Walz proposes to renegotiate and rethink dance, religion(s) and spirituality in different contexts within the horizon of the Third Space. And the aim is to explore the capacity of dance as an artistic medium for interreligious and intercultural encounters. Finally, she invites to an interdisciplinary dialogue about dance, because dance creates body knowledge and inspires new forms of Christian theological thinking.

Stephanie Schroedter, a music and dance scholar from Austria (and Germany[13]) responds to one of the central questions of this volume, "What is 'dance'?" In her chapter "Intertwinements of Music/Sound and Dance/Movement as a 'Third Space'", she describes the profound changes that dance studies has undergone in relation to this question. Boundaries are blurring, for example between dance theory and dance practice, as embodied knowledge comes into play. Through postmodern aesthetics, the audible and the visual become interwoven. Schroedter reads these 'intermediate spaces' as Third Spaces: musicians and dancers are connected through a 'kinesthetic hearing' that perceives music as movement. As a music and dance scholar, she also finds herself in the Third Space between the two disciplines.

Following Nietzsche, the US-American philosopher of religion, dancer and choreographer *Kimerer L. LaMothe* asks "Does Your God Dance?". From the perspective of Philosophy of Religion, she explores "The Role of Rhythmic Body Movement in Friedrich Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values". Nietzsche found Christian values to be hostile to life, because the sensory entanglements of the physical self were seen as the source of evil, LaMothe explains. On the other hand, he pleaded for dance as a paradigm for sensory education, because it helps to resist 'ressentiment'; i.e. feelings of despair over one's own powerlessness, which can lead to violence and

13 In the following, I refer to hybrid identities as follows: First, the country in which the author works at the moment and, if applicable; in brackets (family) connections to other countries; and sometimes it applies the other way round.

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

hatred towards other people, ethnic groups and religions. According to LaMothe, Nietzsche drew on the Attic tragedy, which developed from orgiastic feasts in honor of the ecstatic god of wine and fertility Dionysius. The dance provokes a magical transformation, as Nietzsche believes, because dancers and spectators come into contact with their own kinetic creativity during the spectacle.

Part II: "Dance in the History of Christianity: From the Early Church to World Christianity" provides contributions to the controversies about dance in the churches, especially in the early church and late antiquity, in the Middle Ages in Europe, protestant churches in Germany since the 20th century, and in the independent South African church *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*.

In early Christianity, the critical voices of the Church Fathers prevailed, as the classical philologist and bible scholar *Camille Lepeigneux* from France demonstrates in "The Indictment of the Dance of Christian Authors in Late Antiquity: The Example of the Dance of the Daughter of Herodias (Mt 14; Mk 6)". Drawing on sources from the Church Fathers Origenes, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan and Chrysostom, Lepeigneux identifies a dichotomy of two types of dance: sacred biblical dances as true devotion to God, and bad dances, associated with theatrical performances or private festive events. The latter was ascribed silly behavior, pleasure, immorality, shamelessness, drunkenness, fornication, female seduction and devil's work. Chrysostom, using the biblical story of the dance of the daughter of Herodias, warns of the spiritual dangers of dance as such leading to sin. However, already in Roman society, dance and theaters were considered as indecent. The condemnation of dance served moral purposes and as 'Christian' identity marker against Greek and Roman religions and Judaism.

In contrast, the New Testament exegete *Martin Leutzsch* from Germany offers a kind of counter-narrative by revealing the hidden treasure of the sources that describe "Dances of the Virgin Mary, Second to Twenty-first Century", found in the Apocrypha, and also in church songs, dramas or sculptures. The dancing Mary is part of monastic theology, as Leutzsch reveals, in which Mary is dancing in heaven or on earth, solo or in duet with Christ, God the Father and other humans. She also appears as leader of a choir dance with virgins, chaste women, children and angels, etc. However, the idea of the dancing Mary is not generally known compared to the motif of the dancing Christ. Mary dances, so to speak, in the Third Space between heaven and earth.

The historian *Philip Knäble* from Germany also deconstructs the myth of a 'non-dancing' church in "Canons & Choreographies: The Myth of the Dance-Hostile Medieval Church". He argues that medieval councils did not prohibit dance, but im-

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

posed selected regulations to clerics, especially to nuns, in order to prevent sin and a profanation of churches. For Bernhard of Clairveaux dance even served as symbol for monastic life. Examining French medieval ecclesiastic scriptures, Knäble shows that the clerics danced during mystery plays, the initiation of clerics or processions. The Pelotte of Auxerre was even part of a broader religious dance culture in France. This dance was combined with a ball game on the cathedral's labyrinth in the Easter liturgy. Symbolically the defeat of the devil and the resurrection of Jesus Christ was celebrated and described as a successful inculturation of a pagan ritual into Christianity. The French orchésography of Thoinot Arbeau, a dance manual from the 16th century, blamed the Protestant Reformation, especially the Calvinists, for the decline of dance. However, Knäble gives examples, how dancing was connected with hymns in Protestantism of the 16th and 17th century.

While Catholic male clergy danced in the Middle Ages, a sort of 'church dance' women's movement appeared in Protestant churches in Germany in the 20th century, as *Tatjana Schnütgen*, a Protestant practical theologian from Germany shows. In "Dance and Gender in Churches in Germany since the 20th Century: Insights and Conclusions for Church Dance Today," she asks: Has 'church dance' become a women's issue? Karl Barth (1886–1968), for instance, asked what to make of 'serious men' who consider introducing church dance? Schnütgen describes how women have been experimenting with meditative and sacred dance (including under the influence of US American modern dancers) in feminist liturgies since the 1970s. She argues for open spaces for all genders that allow for individual experience and expression.

The last chapter in this section is an example for 'dance revivals' in World Christianity. Literary scholar and writer *Nkosinathi Sithole* from South Africa, in "The Sacred Dance as a Miraculous Practice in Ibandla lamaNazaretha", shows the controversies about 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' ways of the *umgidi* (sacred dance) in one of the largest independent South African churches in KwaZulu-Natal. The founder Isaiah Shembe (1867–1935) fused African and Christian forms in an innovative way, as the dance is accompanied by cowhide drums and hymns composed by him. This sacred dance was devalued by the European mission churches as 'uncivilized' and 'anti-Christian'. Sithole refutes the position that the sacred dance served as a mere reaction of resistance to challenge colonialism, apartheid and oppression. By examining oral narratives of dreams and miracles, he found that *umgidi* is a miraculous practice, because both watching and dancing is said to have healing powers. Moreover, the Nazarite members manage their daily life by dancing for God, Shembe and for the ancestors in the service, but also by dancing for entertainment. *Umgidi* serves as a medium between heaven and earth.

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Part III: "Dance in Different Religious Traditions: Historic and Contemporary Perspectives" delves deeper in the specific role of dance in various religious traditions such as Hasidic Judaism, Ancient Greek Mysteries, Islamic Sufism, African Religions in Togo as well as in Afro-Brazilian Religions.

Jewish scholar *Susanne Talabardon* from Germany unfolds the connection between dance and mystics. In Hasidic Judaism, an originally Eastern European reform movement since the 18th century, dance is deeply rooted in mystical kabbalistic theology. Israel b. Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (1699–1760), the founder of the Hasidim, uses the panentheistic argument that the divine presence fills the whole universe, so that the dance, like any human action, can become a service. The kabbalistic "tree of life" (*Etz Chajim*) reflects that everything is connected: God, the cosmos, and human beings. Body movements, such as dance, can be a prayer lost in the happiness of God. Nahman of Bratzlav (1772–1810) emphasizes the potential of singing, clapping hands and dance as uplifting the spirit. In Hasidic tradition, the dance, music, and melodies of the Rebbes belong to *Shabbat* and festivals, as Talabardon explains. Many types of dance are common, but not all branches of Hasidism value dance in the same way, some prefer movements that are more moderate.

Karin Schlapbach, a scholar of Classical Philology, shows in her chapter "Dance, Experience and Cognition in Greek Mysteries" that ancient writers in the later Graeco-Roman world, considered dancing as an essential part of mystery rites. Initiation, in fact, meant choral dancing. Dance was ascribed a strong emotional impact on the psyche of the initiates. Moreover, in the eyes of antique authors, experience and cognition cannot be severed. Some even consider initiation as an alternative to philosophy. Thus, dance was understood as a specific mode of expression, though having similarities with texts, images and music. Furthermore, Schlapbach illuminates the dancing Christ with his disciples in Acts of John as deeply influenced by the ancient tradition of mystery rites.

In "Dancing the Sufi Way: Two Famous Masters of Dervish Dance" *Shahzad Bashir*, a scholar of Islamic studies from USA (and Pakistan), translates excerpts from Persian hagiographies: one from the Sufi Master Jalāloddīn Rūmī (died 1274) from what is now Turkey and the other from Sheikh Safī from Ardabil (died 1334) from what is now Azerbaijan, Iran. The dance ritual *samā* means both dance and audition, because the body, according to Bashir, is activated by auditioning the Quranic recitation or music. However, not all Sufis allow *samā'* as a dance, some only accept the remembrance of God through music. For Rūmī whirling means serving God as during ritual prayer, affirming God's oneness and indicating that his soul has won the victory over evil. In the stories on Safī, dance serves as a link

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between the members of the community, but access is also limited, for example, to women. Both masters reject dance as a carnival pleasure, but it must be undertaken as a divine calling.

Amélé Adamavi-Aho Ekué, a Protestant theologian and ethicist from Switzerland (Germany and Togo), presents a micro-study in "Moving with the Sound of the Story: Dance and Religion in West Africa with Special Consideration of the Epe-Ekpe Dances in Togo". She emphasizes the importance of semiotic, materialistic and ethnographic methods in religious studies. Ekué argues that creative potential is inherent in West African religions, focusing on both the past and the future. Epe-Ekpes' dance performances (for example of the New Year) serve as a collectively embodied memory of the painful and often silenced colonial history of enslavement and deportation from *Elmina* (today's Ghana) in the 17th century. Through the dances, the community receives the ancestors' New Year's message about the future, and the dancers connect with the kinship, the ancestors, the divinities, and the land. Dancing was part of a sharp conflict with the missionaries in the 19th century, who associated it with the devil. In contemporary Protestant worship, a slow dance during the offering has become common.

Inga Scharf da Silva, ethnologist from Germany, in "Beyond the Gaps of Archives. Transfer and Transformation of Knowledge in Ritual Dance in Afro-Brazilian Religions" illuminates a similar controversy about *Umbanda*, having its origins in *Bantu* and *Yorúbá* religions, indigenous Shamanism, and European *Kardecism*. *Umbanda* has been stigmatized as 'devilish', e.g. by the Christian majority in Brazil, since the colonial era, but in Scharf da Silva's view ritual trance dance is an embodied postcolonial memory practice. The dancing body serves as a mediator between the material and immaterial worlds and Umbandistic states of trance, are a living archive of experienced emotional knowledge, also in *Umbanda* communities in German-speaking Europe. The 'gaps' refer to the unspeakable memory of violence through the history of Atlantic slavery, but also to the lost memory, since many documents of the slave trade were destroyed.

Part IV: "Dance in Christian Theologies" provides three attempts to do constructive theology of dance, both from Roman-Catholic and Protestant perspectives.

In "Flesh, Body, and Embodiment: Surplus of Corporeal Becoming. Theology and Dancing Bodies" *Ángel F. Méndez Montoya*, a Roman Catholic theologian and philosopher of religion, dancer and choreographer from Mexico, criticizes the conditioning of the body by colonial history and sexual violence. He develops a 'poetic body theology of dance', as a form of resilience and resistance. For Montoya, dance is movement that becomes flesh, based on the New Testament idea of incarnation:

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

The Word of God became flesh. The flesh of Christ becomes bread and food, and the death of Christ transforms death into eternal life. Against the feminization and rejection of the 'dancing flesh' as sin, Montoya therefore calls on theology to learn the body discourses from the dance sciences and from the phenomenology of the body, which say that we as human beings *are* bodies, and finally from sociology, which says that the body reflects the beliefs of society. Montoya poses the fundamental question: What can theology learn from the dancing body? Since dancing means to fiction the body, dance can be seen as a queer intra-trinitarian movement within God, and human beings become co-creators of the divine act of creation.

Riyako C. Hikota, a Roman Catholic theologian from Japan (and Germany), approaches dance in a very different way. In "Dancing to the Rhythm of Analogia Entis: Exploration of Dance as a Christian Theological Category" she confronts the fear in Christian theology that believers might be tempted to feel like God through the experience of the divine in dance. Hikota takes up the famous reproach of the Reformed theologian Karl Barth that the principle of the *Analogia Entis* (i.e. the analogous relationship between God the Creator and the creature) of the Jesuit Erich Przywara is a 'natural theology', which emphasizes the similarity, rather than the dissimilarity between God and creature. Hikota argues that the delicate dynamic tension between divine transcendence and immanence can be maintained if the abstract scholastic-theological term *Analogia Entis* is understood as rhythm. If inner-divine, divine-human, and inter-creature relationships are seen as rhythmic movements, dancers could experience their creatureliness as a dance with God.

Jasmine Suhner, a Practical Protestant theologian from Switzerland, takes up Nietzsche's idea of the body as 'great reason' and contemporary bodily paths of knowledge in embodiment theories (like Ingo Peyker's idea of 'foot truth') in her essay "From Doing Theology to Dancing Theology. Dance-theological Sketches Based on Tango Argentino". Starting with her experience as an Argentinian tango dancer and teacher, she underlines the specific tango 'philosophy' as walking together in an unlimited improvisation and creating a Third Space (beyond the space of each dancer of the couple), which can be understood as 'the unknown', theologically as something divine. As a result, in the sense of 'doing theology', Suhner advocates for a theology that understands itself as a dancing one. She makes a plea for an embodiment-oriented interreligious education based on improvisation or creative dance. In this way Suhner's essay is closely linked to the next part.

Part V: "Inter-Dance: Interreligious and Intercultural Dances in the Third Space" contains three essays of the young generation reflecting creatively on the Third Space of interreligious and intercultural dance projects offered during the Conference.

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Dominika Hadrysiewicz, a doctoral student for religious studies from Germany, analyzes the performance lecture "Indian Hindu Dance" given by Father Dr. Saju George SJ during the Conference. In her essay "In-between Śiva and Jesus: Indian Dance as Interreligious Encounter – and a Third Space?" she works with the method of participant observation and draws on additional material, among others the videos of the Conference. George's presentation of the classical Indian dance *Bhāratanāṭyam* is interpreted by her through the lens of the Third Space concept. In her view, the ambivalence of the categories of 'religion' and 'culture' are negotiated with respect to the 'sacrality' of this dance, in relation to the category of 'Hindu', and finally in the interpretation of *Bhāratanāṭyam* as a universal human 'language', which serves George as a medium for Christian prayer and symbolism.

Iris B. Steil, student of Protestant theology from Germany, applies Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space to interreligious encounters. In her essay "Dancing in Between Religion(s). Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space and its possibilities of interreligious encounters" she reads Bhabha's concept of 'cultural difference' as 'religious difference', taking in account his critique of unjust power structures and inequalities. Since language is often a problem in international interfaith encounters, she imagines the hybrid and liminal Third Space as an 'interreligious dance floor' – with dance as an alternative form of communication. Based on the philosophy of embodiment, she proposes an embodied dance spirituality that could also open up a Third Space between body and spirit in Christianity.

In his essay "The Alchemists' Dream: Dance as a Laboratory for Intercultural Theology" *Raphael Sartorius,* research assistant for Intercultural Theology from Germany, understands dance as fusion of cultures, and compares it with the alchemists who intended to create gold with different alloy. Dance can have a laboratory function, Sartorius argues, and dance has the potential to decolonize 'extractivist epistemologies' of the global North, because it bases on oral knowledge and enables 'corazonar', i.e. 'reasoning with the heart', as Boaventura de Sousa Santos says.

3. First Findings

Let me stand still after musing over these thoughts on dance and religion(s) to mention a few insights that can be gained in this volume. The motto *'Dance with God or the devil'* fits to quite many dance traditions, because they have been considered as 'devilish' in the respective colonial European-Christian framework. Several contributions show that various religious traditions dispose criteria for 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' dances. Dancing, in some case-studies, should be done only in reverence of the Divine, such as in the history of the early Church, the medieval

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

Church, the South African independent church *Ibandla lamaNazaretha*, and in Islamic Sufi hagiographies. A 'profanization' of dances is rejected here.

However, the medieval Church transforms the motto 'Dance with the Devil or God' into dance as victory over the devil and symbol for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The strongest pair of opposites is probably the position of Chrysostom and Nietzsche: While, in the eyes of the Church Father, dance and theater are indecent and sinful, Nietzsche emphasizes the positive and life-giving character of any dance, and its ability to resist 'ressentiment'.

Discourses on the very *notion of 'dance'* move in the interstice of music and sound, dance and listening, dance and musical instruments, and between theater and play. The attributions that qualify dance as 'sacred', 'religious' or 'entertainment' tend to be rather fluid, but are also triggers of dance conflicts. Dance remains equally suspended between culture and religion, as for example in classical Indian dance.

The *leitmotif 'Dance as Third Space'* is interpreted in creative ways that deconstruct binary dichotomic thinking. *Epistemologically* it shifts boundaries, between music and dance as well as between sound and movement. The dance of the Sufi dervishes also moves in the space between dance and audition. In the ancient Greek initiatory mystery cults, dance oscillates between experience and cognition, becoming the Third Space between spiritual experience and rational thought. Dance can hover between body and mind, not only in theories of embodiment, but also in spiritualities and body theology.

Dance as Third Space can serve as a *spiritual mediator*, moving up and down between heaven and earth, like the dance of the Virgin Mary or the sacred dance *Umgidi* in the South African Shembe tradition. Dancing bodies in the Afro-Brazilian religion *Umbanda* serve as medium between the material and immaterial worlds. Dance can reflect and reinforce gender boundaries, but sometimes it transcends gender binaries. Argentinian tango creates a Third Space between the tango dancers, the music, and 'the unknown', which can be the transcendent. Dance can also become mysticism, as in Jewish Hasidic Kabbalistic mysticism and Islamic Sufism. Dance can contribute to postcolonial embodied memory work, both in Epe-Ekpe dances in Togo and in the Afro-Brazilian religion *Umbanda*.

Dance can help to decolonize thinking, and especially religious studies. It is a 'laboratory' for intercultural theology and, as body language, can open up an 'interreligious dance floor' where language barriers are overcome.

The Choreography of the Contributors offers many more insights than these preliminary findings, and certainly, it raises new questions.

ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

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ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546

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Part I
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ISBN Print: 9783525568545 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647568546