

## Dance events as a new socio-cultural issue for women

Since the 2000s, dance has become a social and cultural phenomenon. Indeed, the events and places that offer a dancefloor are numerous. It is a real dancomania that animates the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. "Today, the Armenian nation dances" observes several dance professionals such as Norayr Mehrabyan, Achot Azatyan or Ani Ginosyan. After the heavy events of history, the country and its nation find the energy and the hope of better days in two different types of ball: traditional Armenian dances and couple dances. The whole event exudes a lot of human warmth and makes you want to be reconciled with the whole humanity. In these dance places, dancing is a way to flourish but also to meet people. In this craze, my attention stopped on the latin events. For fifteen years latino events have gone from a fashion practice to a social phenomenon with cultural queries. Salsa, bachata evenings can now gather easily 300 participants, in Yerevan. As for the tango, the balls appeared about 4, 5 years ago and gather around 40 people, confirms Anoush, organizer of the milonga Peticor. These latino dances are known for their ardent rhythms and the sensuality of the movements where the woman is highlighted.

Today, couples dance symbolizes a type of relationship between the sexes specific to patriarchal society and *more precisely to the bourgeois model: a heterosexual couple where the man, who must support his wife, has an active role, and the woman a passive role*<sup>1</sup>, predominantly defined by her role as (future) mother. To use the terminology of the couple dance: the man-rider guides his women-rider, while the women-rider follows him. Paradoxically, this form of gender differentiation seems to be reinforced in dances where improvisation takes precedence. This possibility gives place for dancer emancipation as an individual. Couples dances are dialogues: one proposes a theme (gesture), the other can accept to follow this theme, to modify it a little or totally to change it. Thus, as in a discussion the participants must be listening to each other, otherwise the bodies may collapse. So the responsibility for the result is shared by the two partners since it is the agreement or rather the mutual listening between the two partners that allows to "dance well".

The presence of these couples dances in Armenia makes it possible to observe new gender relations. Until then, the contact of sexed bodies in social dances (armenian dances) was hand-to-hand. With latino dances, the whole body is engaged: the breasts touch each other, the hands pass by the back, the waist, the shoulders, the legs crisscross. This bodily intimacy between a woman and a man was until then of the order of private life. Meline, a young student in lyric singing, admits to want to dance but can not imagine being touched by a man other than her (future) husband. It is a very strong discourse between individual desire, social status and cultural duty that several young girls meet today. Moreover, the look of the woman, hitherto prudish, has become frank, even ardent. The gaze becomes the trigger for a new corporality. Sitting on the chair, the women look around the room looking for a partner. For exemple, this is called in tango "la mirada" (the look in spanish); a searching and inviting look. With the eyes, the whole body is activated. The restraint and modesty of the old aesthetic of women is no longer the order of the day. The body stretched towards the dance floor, the woman's gaze bears that of the man. By the look, the dancer confirms her existence and by her body she expresses it. She assumes herself as a desiring woman and no longer desired.

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1 Sophie Jacotot, « Genre et danses nouvelles en France dans l'entre-deux-guerres », *Clio. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* [Online], 27 | 2008, on-line 05/06/2010, consulted the 03/12 2017. URL : <http://clio.revues.org/7504> ; DOI : 10.4000/clio.7504

We can observe even more advanced gender representations when two women dance together. For example, in tango, there are more women-dancer, which is why some women start to lead. This dance, perceived as the most erotic and sexual, does not yet allow two men to dance together, or even to train. However, let's remember that this dance was in essence a dance of men: the European sailors - due to the chronic lack of women - 75% of the population is male - idle men dance with each other<sup>2</sup> on the marshy banks of the Rio de la Plata, in the suburbs of Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay), during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is in the twentieth century that tango becomes a fashionable phenomenon danced in salons and sexualized. Here, in Armenia, the general challenge (beyond the latin dances) is to liberate the women's body from its religious form, it also means sexed. It is to think the body in its totality as an expressive matter and not just a "fecond object". For example, surpass the dixit that I have heard so many times in my life from my entourage and as well as a violent criticism of a light-hearted girl, that a woman must have her legs tight to not provoke the desire of the man. To re-use the words of Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>3</sup> is to leave as much space for my body "material object" as my body "object that I am".

Therefore, beyond the male myths or fantasies present in armenian discourses and representations of gender roles, these events allow us to observe the beginning of a new era between the love of our ancestors, that we can see with armenian traditional balls and the hope for emancipation, that we can see during the latin events. Thus the practices of new dances in Armenia are the perfect illustrations of women's desires for independence. The modernity to which the new generation aspires is a reasoning for a new movement and a new corporality.

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2 Noël Blandin , « Brève histoire du Tango Argentin » , on-line 10/11/2012, consulted the 03/12 2017 <http://tango-argentin.com/histoire-du-tango.php>

3 Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), « Phénoménologie de la perception », Paris, Gallimard, 1945