

The rebel ladies: insurgent pedagogies in social dancing

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Resumo

The article has the objective of registering and analysing five trajectories of social dancing women teachers engaged in insurgent pedagogical proposals. It presents the image of the “rebel lady” as a provocative device that helps to think about the cisheternormative-patriarchal and colonial patterns in social dance. Through the voices of these teachers, I present how the education of women in this environment has been approached and what are the pedagogical alternatives created by them to promote more plural, egalitarian and diversified experiences in such space. Thus, we discovered unique propositions being created that believe in dance for two as a practice of social transformation. Disentangling the roles in dance from a correlation with the participants’ genders, deconstructing heterosexual dramaturgy, promoting processes of autonomy and respect for the participants’ singularities, and pointing to a dance conduction based on the principle of listening instead of action.

Palavras-chave: social dance; gender; rebel lady; dance pedagogies.

Rebel ladies are known in conservative social dancing circles as women who throw themselves into transgressive dances, especially because they confront male superiority by breaking with conduction, and proposing unsolicited dance steps. They were so-called with the intention of being controlled, in order to become examples for other ladies of what not to be and what not to do. In this research project¹, the term “rebel lady” comes as a political appropriation, just like the term “queer” was used in the late 1980s by the LGBTQIA+ community, which used this insult as a form of political invocation. All the strangeness and mockery of these “strange”, “rare”, bodies started to be used, as Guacira Louro points out, “precisely to characterize their perspective of opposition and contestation” (LOURO, 2001, p. 546).

This is how these rebellious women are, who promote insurrections when they perceive themselves submerged in this process of domestication in social dances and manage to

¹ An initial version of this work was published in the annals of the Anda Congress in 2020. However, this article presents the final result of the analysis of the collected material.

recreate actions for the bodies in this practice. They are able to dance the existing shadows in their bodies from this life process by experiencing training in social dancing through conservative ways. Thenceforth, they also intuited that their battleground was in the ways in which they were dancing and provoking other people's dancing. As proposed by Hakim Bey, an "eternal rebel, the dark that reveals the light" (BEY, 2003, p. 32).

In this paper, I propose a look at the life-dance trajectory of five social dance teachers who have rethought their social dancing pedagogies as strategies for social transformation. In view of this, there is a need to question the current conduction system in social dancing practices, which is organized through a cis-heteronormative, colonial and patriarchal perspective, built on two roles: that of gentleman-conductor, which proposes the dance; and the lady-conducted, who receives the leads and executes the movements.

Thus, I choose the pedagogical propositions of these women as a focus of investigation of how they experienced this role of the lady in social dancing and how they managed to reinvent this practice through other principles. The methodological approach of this study is situated in the field of dance research. Based on that, I seek to apply an expanded methodology that encompasses the subtleties present in the act of dancing.

I approach the notion of kinaesthetic empathy as a proposition unfolded in the field of art research (FORTIN, 2012; FROSCHE, 1999). Through this operational concept, I have been developing research in dance in other previous research projects (SILVEIRA, P. V., 2012, 2015). I also resorted to poetic reports that emerged in the logbooks that I keep along this path. These are texts that portray experienced situations; that, in the case of this paper, describe the encounters with each one of these interviewees, as well as the dances shared with them in the dance classroom and at the balls we attended. They are micro perceptions of the act of dancing, notes on the intervals of breathing, the tonal intensity and its variations during weight transfers, the exchanges of looks, among other things.

I believe that it is important to point out that the theme of this research affects me directly, as I am a teacher and practitioner of social dancing, where I develop an artistic-pedagogical proposal for queer social dancing. It is important to stress that the knowledge that emerged in this text also came from the dances shared with these women. As Dantas well explains: "the universe of ideas of dancing exists in and through body movements and is manifested in the dancing body" (DANTAS, 1999, p. 9).

Besides, I also resorted to interviews, which were conducted in a semi-structured manner. The exception was the interview with one of the teachers, which I ended up transcribing in a public lecture where she explained her trajectory in dance and methodology. In my view, the interview is a possibility to exercise listening and enables the emergence of other experiences. According to the researcher Edson Luiz André de Sousa, this device would be a "scenario that highlights a desire to know and a listening that gives the interviewee the

chance to narrate what he/she experienced but did not yet find its precise contours” (SOUZA, 2012, p. 87). Moreover, it makes room for these teachers to tell their versions of how these life dances were being woven and perceived by them.

This material was transcribed and analysed by the researcher from two main axes, which are guided by two questions. How did the training experience in social dancing affect these women in relation to cis-heteronormative roles? What were the rebellious procedures and thoughts in their insurgent pedagogies? Thus, the speeches presented by these women and the kinaesthetic data recorded in the logbook wove a sensitive writing, thereby constituting a report of plural voices that materialize women’s experiences in social dancing. The choice of these interviewees was due to their performances in the field of social dancing, as all of them had the understanding that their pedagogies had political implications on the bodies that experience them and on how they provoked this practice.

Hence, I present these dance partners: Brazilian teachers Anna Turriani², Carolina Polezi³, Laura James⁴ and Luiza Machado;⁵ and the Argentine Mariana do Campo⁶. I consider them precursors of alternative pedagogical proposals in the scope of social dancing. They are women who subvert and transform their practices based on their discomfort and propose alternatives. They are warriors and rebels, as they failed to impose the role of the lady but found in their own dance the battlefield to think of strategies to teach in a more plural, democratic and egalitarian way.

I choose the figure of the teacher in order to give voice, in this work, to these women activists of gender equality agendas and in the processes of heteronormative deconstruction. I only choose women because I want to legitimize the effort and work developed by them; for wanting to repair the history that, at times, tends to place women in the background as dance partners of male teachers. Finally, as I believe that the teacher’s role⁷ is decisive in changing social dances since she not only disseminates ways of dancing but also articulates ideas and enables experiences that interfere in people’s lives.

² Anna Turriani is the founder of *Dançarilhos* – space for the moving body. Since 2011, she has developed her own methodology for teaching dances for two, based on eutony. Graduated in psychology and a member of the collective *Margens Clínicas*, she develops methodologies for deconstructing relationships of oppression and confronting violence.

³ Carolina Polezi has been a dancer, choreographer and ballroom dance teacher for over 20 years. She developed a teaching approach called shared leading. She is a doctoral student in education at UNICAMP where she studies shared leading and ballroom dancing.

⁴ Laura James is a queer ballroom dance teacher, creator of *Ata-me* dance school. She has been developing a queer and feminist pedagogy in ballroom dancing since 2015.

⁵ Luiza Machado is a teacher and artist of dances for two with an emphasis on forró and zouk genres, graduated in pedagogy from UNINTER.

⁶ Mariana Docampo is an Argentinian teacher of Queer Tango and one of the organizers of the International Festival of Queer Tango. She wrote the Queer Tango Manifesto in 2005.

⁷ This does not mean that there are no initiatives being developed by men and that they are not an important part of changing this reality. As is the case of mutual leading, a technique developed by Samuel Samways in partnership with Debora Pazetto.

Being a lady: the implications of gender beyond the way of dancing

The interviewees, like me, had access to this dance system in adolescence or when they were young adults, a period of life in which we are subjectively emancipating ourselves from our initial models and come to understand ourselves as subjects in the world. Thus, we can think that early contact with this practice generated crossings in our lives. Mainly causing questioning from this model of the lady, which presupposes a femininity conduct.

The lady in the dance is linked to a certain condition of woman, composed of a triad articulated between the social role, the moral image, and the myth of beauty. These three spectrums will be tensioned and fluctuated by the experiences lived by the interviewees in the venues of social dancing. This role is taught as a universal proposition that all women who practice this dance should aspire to.

However, it seems interesting to me to think that this ideal of the lady was based on a very specific condition, guided by the values of the bourgeois, white and heterosexual woman. I bring this reflection after understanding the differences present in feminist agendas and in the different experiences that run through women's bodies. Angela Davis (2016) addresses how the claims of North American white feminists – the insertion of women in the labour market and birth control – were considered universal for all women. Conversely, the reality of black and poor women was quite different. Regarding birth control, Davis points out: “What was claimed as a ‘right’ for privileged women came to be interpreted as a duty for poor women” (DAVIS, 2016, p. 213, author's emphasis). In other words, most black women already worked in addition to their domestic chores and many of them were practically obliged to carry out birth control processes by the state.

This discussion helps us to understand that the imagery that composes the lady in social dances corresponds to a specific place of the woman's condition. The ballroom dancing lady is white, has a middle or upper-class social status, and must be secured in the submissive structures of her husband or father as being heterosexual. This is not to say that women who dance are just like that, as there are countless black women who dance in the *gafieiras* (popular ballrooms) in the city of Rio de Janeiro. However, I understand this place of the good lady as an ideal imagery model hegemonically constructed in this context of social dancing.⁸ There is a training process that corroborates so that all women need to fit within this scope in search of this ideal. From this, we have this articulation between this place destined in dance with its social and moral attributions and in dialogue with an aesthetic standard.

⁸ The process of schooling ballroom dancing in Brazil presents racial tensions, with a whitening of ballroom dance genres such as *tango*, *forró*, among other practices. Shifting focus and referentiality to a single version of the history of ballroom dancing as a practice that was consumed and legitimized by the court alone. Erasing the influence of African and indigenous cultures, and popular knowledge which directly constitute these practices, thus maintaining the privilege of whiteness in the face of positions of power in the teaching and referentiality of these dances.

The lady in social dancing would have a role to fulfil that would be linked to the gesture of being led by her partner, she would have to watch over her moral image by being delicate, emotional, polite, understanding and, finally, she would have to be beautiful. There are some discourses in dance that say that the gentleman would be the frame and the lady, the painting; or even that the conductor would be responsible for the progress of the dance and the one guided by the expressiveness of the movements. All of this is behind the dance exercises, the steps performed, the speeches in the classroom and the conduct of the participants in this practice.

Mariana Docampo highlights that traditional tango is intended to reference gender stereotypes, stating the following: “As a woman, you have to wear high heels, you have to behave in a certain way, you have to act like a woman, who socially and culturally understands itself as a woman.” (DOCAMPO, 2017, n.p.). We see in this speech the articulation I previously mentioned, in which there are elements of clothing, ways of behaving and being. In this case, she also states that, from this perspective, “women who had to dance traditional tango, and who did not respond to this stereotype, had to stylize their bodies in a way for it to work” (DOCAMPO, 2017, n.p.). This statement reiterates that this dance process also teaches women a way of being.

Kind, polite, light, delicate, charming, and friendly are adjectives used when referring to this learned role of lady. In this regard, Luiza Machado points out the following:

When I started dancing, I remember taking private lessons, and basically what I learned was to be charming and light. So, I had to have very delicate and precise movements with my hands, legs, and head. The hair had to be long, flowing and hand clothes that gave movement, and in the *zouk* I didn't even wear heels, but when I went on stage it had to be in heels. So, there was this whole place of this lady who must be kind, who must smile. In one of the gyms I attended, I stopped evolving as a monitor, because I didn't smile anymore. (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

We see in this speech how this triad must work in this role of lady, even so, that the person can progress inside the social dancing. Thus, at balls and dance classes you would need, as a lady, to support these qualities all the time. The point is that this is basically impossible; even if you meet these requirements, it only ensures the support of this system that makes women submissive to men. After all, the lady can only be that; as Mariana Docampo comments: “the classes were simply of passivity, I took the classes to follow” (DOCAMPO, 2017, n.p.).

Carolina Polezi comments that, in a way, she managed to achieve this triad: “I was the diva, the girls wanted to dance like me. That image of what it's like to be a woman, what it's like to be feminine, what it's like to dance well for a lady in ballroom dancing. I had all of that” (POLEZI, 2019, n.p.). Nevertheless, she realizes that being defined only by this role of a lady did not exempt her from experiencing macho situations within this context. Mostly, it did not

allow her to be recognized for her authorial research, because as a woman she could only occupy the role of the lady in the relationship with a partner. This ideal of the lady is extremely harmful to all women because, combined with this need for body adaptation, there is also comparison and competitiveness among the participants.

Thus, it is created the desire to be able to become that lady as a way to belong to this practice, which means that you will be a good dancer too. Evidently, it is not only the technique that counts but also those qualities that must be acquired. Anna addresses in her story how important it was, in a sense, to want to occupy this place:

It is an important space for healing, among many quotes. Because it was an alienated cure, in the sense that I remember seeing an elderly woman, sixty-five years old, hyper-docile, a lady. And me saying: “wow, I want to be like her”; “I want to be a woman like that”; “I want to be able to walk in high heels”. But what was important was being able to authorize this desire because it was a completely repressed desire. I was just a hyper-kid girl, who hid my body all the time and was very afraid of not being desired. [...] It wasn’t even close to a cure, but it was the beginning of the process, and it was there that I could recognize that I wanted to come to terms with my place as a woman in the world. (TURRIANI,2019, n.p.).

However, she reports that it was an alienated process precisely because this place of femininity in ballroom dancing, as it stands, is limited. In the sense that femininity is categorized, and if you are outside of any of these requirements you will probably feel out of place. This is very evident concerning the pattern of bodies that need to be thin, and have certain models of hair and clothes, to the point of sickening those who do not fit. Anna Turriani’s account follows: “I remember the New Year’s Eve presentations, the clothes didn’t fit me [...] Anyway, so it was also something that caused me a certain discomfort, because it took me to a place of body comparison” (TURRIANI, 2020, n.p.). Or even as Luiza Machado reports:

In this process of learning to be a lady, I lost a lot of weight in a very wrong way. I didn’t get thin by society’s standards, but I got thinner and sicker. Thus, even psychologically for trying to occupy a place that I did not belong. (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

We can clearly see how the search for this ideal role does not fit the reality of all women. This process only imprisons subjectivities, directly influencing physical and emotional health; crossing people’s lives, because there are no separations: the dancing body is the same one found in other spheres of existence. The same is true for the ideal of the gentleman in dance, no matter how much it triggers other castrations. As Laura James reports her experience beginning her studies in ballroom dancing when she still identified herself as a cisgender man:

When you have to dance within a criterion, within a male stereotype. When you don’t feel comfortable doing these things it’s horrible [...] The impossibility of expressing myself as I was or wanted to be. Strong internal conflict, in the assimilation of what is considered proper of man in dance, which also came to unfold in my life. I mean, I learned all those masculine patterns, lived them, and

that repetition made me a more masculine person both in dance and in life... And that wasn't good. (JAMES, 2018, n.p.).

Regardless of the role in dance, when it is grouped with these binary gender stereotypes, it calls participants to adapt restrictedly within this creative expression that should be the dance for two. Furthermore, when we support these teaching propositions in social dancing from these places, we evoke that there is always something to be achieved in these roles, in addition to the acquisition of dance techniques. We enter into a logic of consumption experienced daily in the current capitalist system; according to which the way of life itself is the target. We are always needing to adjust something in this triad of values, morality and beauty, consuming dance classes, products, and ideas. Regarding women, this seems to me a logic that has been proposed for years through this patriarchal system. This system places them as submissive, always needing to adapt so that this validity continues to be sustained.

This model of a good lady, which is allied with the proposition of the woman in the seventeenth century in Europe, is described by Silvia Federici as: "a model of femininity of a woman and ideal wife: passive, obedient, parsimonious, chaste, of few words and always busy with her tasks" (FEDERICI, 2017, p. 205). This only occurred due to a state terrorism policy manifested through a witch hunt. This destroyed the collective ways of maintaining knowledge destined for women; in addition, writers and thinkers of the time criticized women's insubordination, discrediting their speeches.

All these provocations somehow populate social dancing, as Anna points out:

The way social dancing embodies this contradiction is very dialectical. Because, in fact, social dancing manifests a great deal of patriarchy, as the most important figure is the lady. But then it builds a structure in which it is subject to man; that's society. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

Thus, we see once again this correlation between dance and social structure being presented. One of the means of sustaining this hierarchy between men and women is through competition among women, making them to remain individualized. Patriarchy fears the collective that emerges from the power of communication between women, similarly to what happens within social dancing.

In the conduction system, the role of the gentleman has an importance and a hierarchy that overlaps the body of the lady who is led. The testimonies of the interviewees show that, in their first experiences in ballroom dancing, conducting was a role destined for men. This implies a series of discourses that corroborates for the conductor (the man) to keep orbiting in this centrality, even if he is not materially present in ballroom dancing spaces.

In this logic, it is as if the presence of a male referentiality, a master, was mandatory. Thus, when we see a female teacher in a classroom, it's mostly as if we need to group her into

a male partnership. Or, when there is a male teacher in the classroom, the female teacher ends up just being positioned as the dance partner, as he would be the holder of knowledge.

It is evident that this has been changing over the years, as a result of much demand from women in this area. Mainly when teaching alone, or prioritizing partnerships in dance with other women, precisely to destabilize this dominant structure. However, we know that the absence of this male figure can create a distrust of the efficiency of these pedagogical propositions. This stems from this hierarchy of legitimacy which usually places women in subjection to male figures. After all, the logic imposed by this system is that, for the dance to take place, it needs a conductor, and the conduction is intended in the ideal field for the male figure.

We observed in the reports the difficulty faced by the interviewees, who were constantly being tested in relation to their actions. There is a confrontation to be able to legitimize themselves and be recognized as professionals in the area. We realized how much it was necessary to understand that the insecurity that hovered over the pedagogical actions of these women was simply due to the fact that they were carried out only by women.

Carolina Polezi mentions that when she ended her partnership with a male colleague, her access to certain spaces and events was interrupted. This demonstrates how much recognition of the work was linked to this male figure. She reports that when they went out to dance, and they called attention for dancing well, people asked if he was the teacher, but no one asked if she was the teacher. "I got a lot more recognition when I danced with him than I do now that I have my own research" (POLEZI, 2019, p. 196).

This place of non-access is also related to the teaching proposition that makes it impossible for women to learn to conduct. Often, the exclusion of prominent spaces occurs because the entire structure of the dance excessively emphasizes the leading figure. Therefore, who is led ends up having less prominence. This is also reflected in the male teachers' strangeness when these female teachers chose to take classes as conductors. Mariana Docampo says that there was a bit of resistance on the part of the teachers so that she could attend classes as a conductor. Just like Luiza Machado mentions, after the class, a teacher asked if she really wanted to be doing the class in the role of conductor.

Even when they manage to explore this possibility in dance, they end up facing situations of depreciation. Luiza Machado says she received compliments like "you conduct well for a woman" (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.). This example is excellent because it reiterates this culture of referentiality in dance to the male figure. A good female conductor is something that surprises, therefore, she needs to be compared to a man.

There are still other ways to delegitimize the provocations and stances of these women, as is the case brought by Anna Turriani who, when confronting a male teacher at a ballroom dancing event, was called a lesbian. According to her: "that was the vision, this girl is here because she is a lesbian, she is talking like that because she is a lesbian, she has a fight

because she is a lesbian” (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.). Any confrontation with these hegemonic male figures can only be done because this body points to a deviation from the norm, or because they don't like men.

This is one of the attack mechanisms of the dominant regime: pointing out what is different. It marks the deviation so that there can be an appropriate way for that environment. The lady in ballroom dancing can only exist if she is the opposite of what she should not be: lesbian, crazy, rebel, whore, and witch, among other attributes. Hence, the female body that positions itself in a combative way, tensioning the discourses, will confront the figure in crisis, which is masculinity.

Judith Butler (2019) mentions that the construction of this figure embodied in the male body is operated by the notion that it would not be within its competence to be linked to the work processes of private life, being associated only with rationality. That is, “the man as the one who exists without childhood; one who is not a primate, and so is free from the need to eat, defecate, live, and die; like one who is not a slave, but always a landlord [...]” (BUTLER, 2019, p. 94).

In this sense, following Butler's thought (2019), it is as if rational masculinity needed other bodies so that they could perform bodily tasks, that their status of unshakable reason would not permeate. But this figure is in crisis. First, because it can't control everything. Second, because it can only be constituted to the extent that there are these others. And, finally, because its very existence is possible through this phantasmatic quest since gender is always this association with something that doesn't actually exist.

As much as there is an effort to embody a certain genre that is imposed on us, it will always hover from an ideal mode of existence. In other words, there are conflicts between what it is necessary to be and the expectations of others in relation to the understanding they have about this genre. For example, when we take some action and question whether we are acting like a girl, or sufficiently like a girl. We can think of the case of roles in dance when the participants keep trying to fit into these places of lady and gentleman.

In this sense, what interests us is to think about how these women experienced these deviations, especially in relation to these roles in dance. All of them managed to access this conduction technology, destabilizing the imposed norms. They provoked, and continue to tense, this field of ballroom dancing. However, this was not without pain and suffering. Because the current power has violent mechanisms to ensure these processes and, for the most part, they are imposed from the naturalization of certain behaviours.

Anna Turriani recounts a situation in which the male teacher who was giving her tango lessons was offended by the fact that she had said that she was a teacher. “He kept calling me unbalanced, that as long as I couldn't have balance, I would never be able to dance. That was it, he belittled me, he spoke in such a way that it was as if I didn't know how to dance.”

(TURRIANI,2019, n.p.). We know that there are many teaching processes that only reinforce processes of domination, as Bell Hooks (2017) addresses, in which knowledge is reduced to information and what is expected of students is only the desire for obedience and not the desire to learn.

This is a mistaken discourse that sometimes permeates dance classes, as if, to learn something, it was necessary to suffer; which are aspects that are widely discussed and problematized in the field of dance pedagogy. However, in this case, this is also accentuated because it was a woman who was taking a class, and she had become a teacher. She dared to place herself as an equal in the relationship with this man.

In addition to the sexist comments in classrooms, there are also practices at dances that reinforce these behaviours by not asking women to dance because they dance with other women or because they convey an attitude of insubordination. This also occurs when there is an interruption of women who are dancing together by other men. Sometimes, the names of the women who will teach are not mentioned in the publicity of the event; or else, they appear only as assistants or partners, not being recognized as teachers.

Lastly, we have numerous cases of moral and sexual harassment in these spaces. Recently, there was a launch of a page on social networks made up of complaints from women from all over Brazil that exposed on a large scale this reality within ballroom dancing. The Instagram page “Chega de Assédio na Dança”⁹ (Enough of Harassment in Dance), presented these women’s reports and offered psychological support to the victims. The repercussion of this movement encouraged several posts by renowned teachers who felt embarrassed, but after the first few weeks, many of them deleted their apologies from the networks.

I believe in the relevance of these massive movements for women to feel encouraged to denounce their aggressors. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that, sometimes, these actions do not result in processes of real accountability of these figures and in many cases, the aggressors remain unharmed. Thus, the importance of training processes so that these guidelines are discussed from the beginning during ballroom dancing classes. In addition, it is important to highlight the creation of debates on these themes within ballroom dancing.

In view of these issues, this was one of the first guidelines claimed by the teachers: equality between the genders in this space. Not that the agenda is limited to just this one, but it is a point that has sparked numerous discussions and that has been deepening and expanding this scenario in an attempt to change this disparity. When Mariana Docampo mentions how important it was for her to detach gender identity from roles in dance, it was precisely to create a more flexible space for women to exist in tango beyond stereotypes.

⁹ Instagram’s webpage. Available at: www.instagram.com/chegadeassedionadanca/. Accessed on April 06, 2022

It means, yes, if I want to dance in high heels, low heels, or whatever I want I could, that didn't imply a decrease in the role. That was my personal work. This is now a rule, but it was a battle for most women, especially women more than men. (DOCAMPO, 2015, p. 160).

To unlink the role of conduction from male referentiality, and ensure the legitimacy of that role when exercised by a woman or a non-binary person. These are two decisive points to change ballroom dancing and are guidelines that generated significant changes, demarcating one of the first tensions when rethinking this structure of dance related to gender. This made it possible to form these hugs that lead from other body structures, lower or more delicate bodies.

The hug in ballroom dancing starts to gain other symbologies. Its communication extrapolates the marking of the traditional construction of this movement. In the conduction system, the person who leads normally hugs with the right arm closest to the dance partner and the left arm holds the right hand of the dancing pair. This demarcated who led, generating different qualities of movement for the two roles. In rebellious pedagogies, this is no longer so strong, because the whole body of the participants is communicating, for example, even maintaining the traditional figure of the hug. For those who watch the dance, it becomes more complex to define who among the duo is leading. The information on tonus exchange and weight transfer becomes very refined, resulting in the construction of a body capable of conducting and being conducted.

We see a rooting at the base of the body: feet that dialogue with the ground through the expansion of their base of contact. The trunks are assets of these dancers; they have activation and resistance capable of proposing movements, but what is interesting is that they do not over-tension. They don't get rigid, allowing agility in modulating muscle tone when dancing with other people. The perception and response of the movement of the body with which one dance are amplified. Other references began to emerge on what it would be like to propose a movement; there are dances in which the conduction becomes very subtle, almost as an indication of the synchronized breathing between the bodies. Some bodies modulate more energetically when they are dancing; this can also be influenced by the style of music that is playing.

We perceive, from this, the importance of the deviations caused by these women in the environments in which they are inserted. They are the ones who manage to find the gaps to question the sexist structures that permeate dance, enabling the creation of safer spaces for all women. It is evident that non-access is not restricted to women only. We can think about how this practice also makes a series of corporeities unfeasible, such as, for example, people of different sexual orientations, people with disabilities or how few black people are being referenced and recognized. Again, directing the questioning gaze to this field of

tensions that are social dances and its organizations. Therefore, I present, below, striking elements in these proposals that changed the practices of ballroom dancing through the work of these women.

Rebels take the lead: subversive ways of teaching

The rebels went through countless situations which, almost, made them give up dancing. However, it was from these concerns that the power of resistance of these pedagogical proposals emerged. They kept dancing. Luiza Machado comments: “my place goes much further than a person who managed to dance with my body, but a person who could already be an example a long time ago, just by not stopping dancing” (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.). Thus, they resisted staying in these spaces but understood that there was an urgent need to promote alternative experiences for themselves and other people.

Armed with this desire for reinvention, they are in tune with the proposition of the artist-activist Nadya Tolokonnikova “do it yourself” (2019), in which the author argues that there is nothing in the world that cannot be discovered and the power that exists in the action of creating. Without losing sight of the broader scenario, keeping a critical eye, because, according to Nadya, “the most beautiful and decisive events in life do not follow the logic of large institutions” (TOLOKONNIKOVA, 2019, p. 35). The power of action is in the act of being alive. Therefore, despite the challenges, these teachers placed themselves as protagonists of their lives. Women aware of their role as teachers, believing that dance is capable of promoting this space of transformation, both for them and for other people.

These agents in ballroom dancing are responsible for creating spaces for the circulation of other modes of existence. They are engaged in channelling the power of dancing to disrupt knowledge fixed in their bodies, including theirs. They also aim to bring the participants’ awareness to an intuitive listening of their bodies. They are dance practices that start from desire, they are not reproductions of movements, they are life propositions. They believe in education as a choice to increase our ability to be free, as Bell Hooks (2017) brings. Knowledge relating to ways of living and behaving, not just summed up in information.

The first converging point in these pedagogies is the awareness of one’s own body and its relations in social and cultural spaces. There is recognition of the “places of speech” of these five women who have different experiences, and we could never understand these experiences as universal. Thinking together with the proposition of the feminist philosopher Djamila Ribeiro (2017), when we summon multiple voices, we want to break with the authorized discourse that intends to be universal and unique.

All begin to locate what needs to be modified initially in themselves so that something is proposed differently. This includes realizing where one is being oppressed and devising strategies to access the mechanisms of power, through learning to conduct, for example.

Mariana Docampo (2017), to satisfy her discomfort of not being able to dance with other women, sought to learn to lead and, strategically, began to teach what she was learning to other women. In turn, Luiza Machado (2020) states that she started taking classes as a conductor from the moment she realized that she would not be invited to dance at balls since her body was excluded for being different from the expected standard.

We still have other processes going on, such as recognizing certain privileges, perceiving borders and engaging in processes of change or creation that make it possible to change this logic of oppressor-oppressed. In this sense, we can think of the case of Carolina Polezi (2019) who was considered the “good lady” of ballroom dancing, but occupying this place did not exempt her from situations of sexist oppression. So, for her, it was necessary to let go of this place of privilege and allow herself to experience unknown places in her dance. To experience that her dance would be considered ugly, or that, because she was questioning this dance, she would not have certain access to ballroom dancing venues.

Laura James (2018), in turn, had to face the sexist constructions that permeated her speeches in the classroom, seeking alternatives for her teaching. Upon confirming that her school’s methodology would be through a queer approach, her entire team working in the space decided to withdraw. Finally, we can see that four of the interviewees are white, which also points to a discrepancy in the ballroom dance scene concerning the legitimacy given to black bodies.

Consequently, it is important to highlight that any insurgent pedagogy implied by queer and feminist perspectives needs to go through processes of investigation of the self, of its ways of life. As Carolina Polezi (2019) highlights that one of the principles of shared leading is to deconstruct one’s own patterns. Converging with Bell Hooks’ ideas: “those of us who are trying to criticize prejudices in the classroom have been forced to return to the body to talk about ourselves as subjects in history. We are all subjects of history” (HOOKS, 2017 p. 186).

Understanding that these social markers constantly cross us and that this promotes different experiences in ballroom dancing and life, it is up to each of us to place ourselves where we are and understand the possibilities of action that we have to promote, in fact, spaces of equality. Therefore, I will bring some of the principles present in these pedagogies which aim to promote other experiences for this practice:

- Destitution of gender roles in ballroom dancing
- Deconstruction of heterosexual dramaturgy
- Autonomy and Respect for bodies’ singularities
- Listening
- Transforming through affection

Destitution of gender roles in social dancing

One of the first practical points that emerge in these pedagogies is the destitution of roles in dance and their direct correlation with the gender of the participants. This is present in all practices, that is, the participant can choose any of the functions in the dance: to lead and to be led. In some of these proposals, as is the case of the shared conduction followed by Carolina Polezi and Luiza Machado, these roles are more fluid, therefore, there is no need to identify with only one function during the dance.

Nevertheless, Mariana Docampo's queer tango propositions, Laura James' queer social dance and Anna Turriani's dance classes for two – except for *forró* class, where everyone learns everything – have structured activities for these roles. There will be someone who leads and someone who is led, at least during one song. Regarding queer tango classes, Mariana mentions: “The classes are not that different from the traditional tango in the sense that we teach a role. The only difference is that if the role is played by a man, a woman or a trans person, it is indifferent” (DOCAMPO, 2017, n.p.).

For her, Laura James and Anna Turriani, the importance would be to separate these dance roles and the gender of the participants, but without losing the qualities of movement in each of these functions. Thus, the one who leads would have the responsibility of proposing the displacements through space, being connected with the pulse of the music. On the other hand, the one who is *conduzide*¹⁰ (led) may develop his/her committal skills by following the prepositions of others; and, in this way, dialogue with other spheres to compose his movements without having to worry about the displacement of the dance.

Despite these demarcations, all of them understand that it is an improvised dance, organized by the participants. Recognizing that there are times when these roles can be blurred or there are deviations because they are interested in this dialogue for two. According to Mariana Docampo, “tango came from a hug. All the movements would take place from there, and they are improvised movements based on the structures of this dance [...], but during the tango, the whole time you don't know what is going to happen, neither who guides nor who is guided” (DOCAMPO, 2017, n.p.).

Anna Turriani is the only one who maintains the terms lady and gentleman, as she believes that it is necessary to maintain the history of ballroom dancing by problematizing its structural issues:

I don't think we have to erase these stories. I think we must be aware that they exist so that we can do other things with them. And don't just say it doesn't exist. This is history erasure. So, I don't reinvent those names. What I say is: look, for me the lady's place is a place that is linked to commitment. “Ah, but doesn't the

¹⁰ Here, it is important to note that in Portuguese, in relation to the gender of the person being led, I use the term “*conduzide*”, in order to reinforce that anyone, regardless of gender, can be led in such situations.

gentleman give himself up too?" He gives himself up, but the gentleman has to pay attention in the hall, the gentleman has to listen to the music. "Ah, but doesn't the lady have to listen to the music?" The lady listens if she wants to. [...] Got it? My problem is not that the lady is obliged to do this and that. It is precisely that when she chooses to do something else, she is attacked, she is left, she is expelled, she is no longer invited to be part of this place, and the same with the gentleman. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

Although these terms exist, they do not need to be occupied by their correlation with gender. In Anna's classes, women learn to play the role of the gentleman, and men to play the role of the lady. Furthermore, these dance places are not hierarchical, as Anna puts it: "For me, there is no hierarchy, in both roles, who plays the gentleman and who plays the lady, they are fulfilling different functions for a different existential experimentation. But I don't think ballroom dancing needs a gentleman" (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

The terms gentleman/lady, for Anna, are performative places which would promote different tonic experiences. The gesture of leading a proposition that would require assertiveness and being led (*conduzide*) a softness tonus. The use of these terms would then be, for her, a form of claim, resignifying these places:

We're talking about an oppressed woman, a cloistered woman [...] I think there's a power to empower yourself of the word too. And not just being slaved by it, you know? Instead of it putting us in a subjugated position. And for boys this is very powerful; they understand that being a gentleman has nothing to do with being a man. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

The terms lady and gentleman occur more in *samba* classes, *gafieira* and *salsa*. In the *farró* modality, according to Anna, it has already been deconstructed, occurring only by level. After two months of classes, the person would also occupy the leading role. This occurs, in my view, because the movement structures for both roles in *farró* are similar, and there is no need to demarcate these places. However, in other dances such as *samba* and *tango*, this is not always the case and there are different movement qualities in the dance step composition.

Despite this disagreement from the other interviewees, Anna Turriani mentions that nowadays she has rethought these tonic functions. Especially when recognizing other possibilities, when dancing with people who are researching contemporary ballroom dancing, experimenting with intermediate muscle tonus. Extrapolating the oppositions of these two functions. This points to how these pedagogies are constantly changing. Thus, the exchange promoted between these teachers triggers other questions about their practices.

Laura James, in turn, maintains the dance structures, but opts for a neutral language in the classroom, trying to bring together non-binary people. This was observed in the work carried out by dance researcher Marina Coura (2017): she researched the queer ballroom dance methodology developed by Laura James.

Regarding Laura James' class proposal, Marina Coura states:

When starting each new class, she explains the methodology of Queer Ballroom Dancing and proposes the use of this tool: students choose whether to lead or if they will be led, and thus the classes are developed. The school has a team of students and scholarship students to complete any partnerships that may be lacking. As an incentive, Laura offers the possibility for each student to attend another class of a similar or more beginner level, learning the other function of leading. (COURA, 2017, p. 57).

To find out who will lead or be “conduzide” led (i.e., my term for neutral leading), Laura opts for questions that do not have a specific gender, such as: “who will lead?”; or using the term “conduzide” instead of putting some genre at the end. There is also the intention that students learn both functions. For a while, people were given another class, in addition to the one they already attended, in order to perform it in a different role. Recently, Laura James attended a live stream¹¹ and mentioned that she had slightly changed this proposition, that “today I no longer split these functions and in the same class the participants experience both roles” (JAMES, 2020, n.p.).

When taking a class by Laura James at the contemporary ballroom dance congress in Belo Horizonte in 2017, I remember an exercise that left it open for participants to choose how they would dance. Facing each other, the pair should approach and hug. This was repeated several times, and the repetition, combined with her and her partner Marina Coura’s propositions, called for different forms of this same gesture to be tested. In this way, participants would have the opportunity to pay attention to their dominant impulses and see if they related to their gender identities.

We have, therefore, three possibilities that reiterate these two distinct functions in dance, but which are independent of the genre. In the case of the other two interviewees, there are other options for rethinking these roles in dance. The practice of shared conduction proposed by Carolina Polezi, which directly influences the work of Luiza Machado, proposes that another corporeality be thought of for dance for two. The participant experiences leading and being led simultaneously, with qualities of movement such as density and lightness. The exercises in the class are already built from this intention and not from two different qualities supposedly existing in each of these roles.

Shared leading invites bodies to experience other possibilities of movement, expanding communication strategies. Opening dancing to the deconstruction of already established movement structures. In the sense that a dance step will not have just one way to happen, because both participants learn the principles that summon that movement, being able to establish it from different points of the dance. There won’t be, for example, a single way to

¹¹ Live Stream by Laura James, in the project organized by *Grupo Dois em Um*, which invited several professionals who are rethinking the practices of ballroom dancing. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYrQSTHwicg&t=4s>. Accessed on 22 March. 2022.

enter a spin. Participants bodily understand how the spin works and begin to discover ways to get in and out of this movement together.

In addition, the practice proposes some reflections on what kind of movements are significant for each dance or if they would just reiterate certain stereotypes. For example, it is perhaps not fitting for a woman to have to make legs or arms movements to demarcate a supposed femininity, proving to be interesting for a body identified as a man to be able to use this performativity as a form of expression, breaking with these binarisms. Provocations in this sense that are beginning to be thought, without aiming to seek definitive answers. The challenge at stake in these proposals is precisely to summon bodies to move out of their comfort zones.

Luiza Machado states the following:

I don't believe in this place that in dance there should be these so-called feminine and masculine roles. We talk a lot when a man is going to play the role of the one being proposed that he changes it completely. In short, it is because it is still understood that being led means being delicate or fragile. Today, I have already changed this conception a lot. In contemporary ballroom dancing, I took many classes on body types and we've talked a lot about it, right? So, I remember a lot of the first classes I took on shared dance, where the relationship of conduction in dance was not about this role of the tough and the fragile, but with the connection between people. (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

I believe that these proposals are interested in investigating the movement principles that permeate ballroom dances. Thus, although in different ways, it is understood that the experiences in dance do not concern the gender of the person who dances. This is independent, there is no determined way of dressing or a way of behaving directly linked to the binary places of men and women. Therefore, all of them are interested in breaking with this correlation between dance function and gender.

Deconstruction of heterosexual dramaturgy

Another element developed in all approaches is the deconstruction of the heterosexual narrative in ballroom dancing. Since any participant can occupy both roles, they dance with people of the same gender. The exercises are proposed in ways where students can experience both functions in the same class. Or even, this is suggested as a choice: the person chooses where they want to dance, but always being encouraged to experience the other place as well.

There is an initiative to naturalize these combinations of pairs of the same gender. Laura James, by proposing that people choose where they wanted to dance, without mentioning the roles of lady or gentleman, generated the possibility of composing pairs of men with men and women with women. It was a strategy, precisely so that, in case there was any discomfort in someone, it could generate a debate in the class. She also mentions that she

prepared her scholarship holders to pick up people of the same gender. Carolina Polezi also carries out, in her classes, exercises to acquire certain principles, calling for a constant exchange of peers so that these meetings can take place. All the interviewees use strategies so that other configurations of pairs are formed in the classroom.

Another point of deconstruction is that from this greater flow between the pairs, other narratives are created for these dialogues for two. There is a break with the ballroom dancing dramaturgy as a practice of heterosexual conquests and romances that permeates the hegemonic imaginary. In traditional classes, this sometimes becomes a topic to develop the expressiveness of the students' movements. We noticed that these teachers began to develop other approaches to expand expressiveness in ballroom dancing.

Carolina Polezi was addressing the principle of hugging in her class, where participants would explore the countless possibilities of performing this action in music. Before starting, she suggested that they think about the different ways to make this gesture in their lives. She mentioned different proposals for hugs between friends, family, humans, and pets, opening the way for her students to start from these contexts at the time of improvisation. This expanded these participants' exploration and many unusual and creative propositions emerged. Therefore, accessing playful principles in classes enables other relationships between bodies during improvisations.

Another decisive element to break this scenario is the creation of balls organized by these teachers, such as *milonga* and queer *farró*, in which people of different sexual orientations can attend. This says a lot about how heterosexuality is compulsory: balls don't have to be branded as heterosexual proms. This possibility is already established.

That's why creating these dance spaces is so important. They establish other collective conducts for the practices of ballroom dancing. Laura James addresses:

The ball should be a welcoming environment. Done! Everyone has to feel free to invite people to dance, without prejudice. People have to feel integrated and comfortable to express themselves freely. A safe environment, above all, right? We seek this safe environment; women can dance without being harassed. I mean, I'm not going to say that this won't happen in queer *farró*, but I'm going to say that we work to make sure that never happens. (JAMES, 2018, n.p.).

The creation of these spaces of socialization, through these contemporary approaches, is therefore of paramount importance. They ensure that there are socially safe spaces for dance practice so that people of different gender and sexuality orientations feel belonging and can attend them without fear. As well as the creation of a space for conviviality based on respect and freedom of expression, which can even be attended by heterosexuals.

The same occurs in the context of queer milongas that guarantee a tango dance in which heteronormativity does not dictate the rules, functioning as a provisional space for those corporeities that want and can dance freely, expressing in dance what mobilizes them; being

able to even demonstrate other possible sexualities in addition to this dominant one. Overall, we can think of gay milongas or queer milongas as possibilities of temporary safety spaces for bodies to dance in other ways.

Ramón H. Rivera (2011) proposes in his study, when observing Latino gays and lesbians at salsa balls in the United States, that clubs' dance floors would be one of the ways of building a queer-Latin identity for these subjects. A possibility of collective existence in a society ruled by racism and heteronormativity. Even though Latin music still has a heterocentric narrative, the subversion in this case takes place through the dance and the performances of the couples on the dancefloor. Bringing examples of how these bodies are related to this element: "His identification is with the feeling of the song. He reveals that the romance performed and the mimics [between him and another man] are more important than the narrative of the music" (RIVERA, 2011, p. 29).

The author also brings the example of a couple of women who dance *sa/sa* together and share the lead during the dance. They would be breaking with the logic of *sa/sa*, of the song, publicly bringing their affective option. He then mentions that "these changes are only possible due to the safety of the club and this community of equally passionate dancers who embrace them while they publicly embrace each other on the dance floor" (RIVEIRA, 2011, p. 31).

The existence of these safe spaces calls for changes in the reality of ballroom dancing and expands to other ways of life. We see, then, collective creations in dances for two being experimented in these balls. After all, it's not just some couples dancing in a transformative way, but a group of people who freely exercise their possibilities and rearrange themselves through other relationships on the dance floor. This does not necessarily mean that people need to exercise their affections at dance balls, since, above all, they meet to dance. But that there is the possibility of creating safe spaces beyond the dominant heterosexual representation.

It is also interesting to note that, in the example discussed by Rivera (2011), we are talking about a broader territory of a Latinity within the United States. Even though the songs are extremely sexist, they represent this sense of belonging for the LGBTQIA+ community, as they are not necessarily places that are discussing the issue of heterosexuality in this cultural production. When these events are organized in Brazil, in the *fórró* queer organized by Laura James, for example, there is an especial care with the musical selection. "Music selection is a difficult thing. Sometimes I still make mistakes, but, hey, I keep hearing that there are still a lot of stupid lyrics, [...] It must be... and, so, we can even play if it's in the sense of problematizing" (JAMES, 2018, n.p.).

There is, therefore, an increasing concern about composing these balls with songs that are in dialogue with this space of freedom and respect. We see these balls being created to enable other forms of existence and definitively breaking with the exclusivity of this heterosexual dramaturgy in ballroom dancing. Promoting healthier spaces for these practices,

avoiding certain situations of violence and oppression experienced in balls that continue to be governed by heteronormative hierarchies.

Autonomy and respect for the singularities of bodies

These teaching approaches are engaged in promoting dance experiences that awaken the autonomy of each body. In addition to respecting the singularities of the bodies present, they do not aim for students to simply learn a dance step through the reproduction process, in which the teacher must be the model. They understand that each body carries an experience and that it must be respected based on its possibilities.

Luiza Machado discusses how her experience at the Contemporary Ballroom Dance Congress made her notice differences in traditional and contemporary approaches:

The way of classes was different. There weren't many specific roles, they talked a lot about the body, many of the classes we started alone, like, discovering our own body first. For me it was amazing. It was something that we didn't do in the traditional way, which was always in contact with someone else. We didn't think much about how the body could balance itself, for example. So, figure it all out yourself and then transform it with another. Discover this real conversation that everyone said is dance. Something I didn't feel much about in traditional ballroom dancing. That was it, and then the way of teaching changed instead of reproducing things, of researching more to understand how I do it, what the technique is like, in addition to what I do to facilitate and how this exchange can happen. So, it made me a more studious person. (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

We are faced, then, with teaching processes that summon active participants willing to investigate their own bodies. They would not be consumers of dance steps and consequently of ways of life. This is present from the moment these people arrive in the sharing spaces, through questions such as: what role do you want to play in this class today? Or: where is yourself in this dance? Going through the body awareness exercises for the acquisition of a particular dance step, or through the improvisation experiments in relation to the other participants. All experiences give voice to these bodies that are understood as singular and that need to find strategies to dance together, looking for ways that are not imposing.

Anna Turriani developed her dance methodology for two from this articulation with the Eutony practice, a somatic approach. According to her:

Eutony is a pedagogy whose structural foundation is the bone, consciousness in the bone. It has as a consequence or what it seeks, as its name says, is balanced tonus. So, what is a balanced tonus? It's a tonus that doesn't get hardened into a single pattern. A balanced tonus is a tonus that circulates between the hypotonus and hypertonus, based on the needs of one's activity. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

She manages to do this bodywork from the different types of ballroom dancing, which will summon different tonic experiences; for example, dancing a *xote* is different from a shuffle. In addition, there is a lot of care when receiving bodies in dance classes, which first begin to

investigate their bone body structures and then go on articulating how they engage in dance steps. The movements are developed from those bodies. The structure of the class begins with body awareness exercises individually and collectively. Only then does one enter the structures of the dance steps.

For Anna, in her classes, autonomy is presented as follows:

I find it much more interesting to give this student a huge range of bodily possibilities so that he can find his authentic spaces. What is the response he will give to a given stimulus from the range of repertoire he has? I like doing research a lot more. It is not like “look, this step is done like this”. It’s “there are three possible ways you can put your left leg behind your right leg.” You can do it like this, you can do it like that and the variations in between. Shall we play with it? (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

In the proposal developed by Luiza Machado, autonomy also permeates understanding what your place in the world is. Self-knowledge permeates bone structures but unfolds into these social relationships in which bodies are immersed. After all, in her experience in ballroom dancing, this practice would be like a magnifying glass of the social crossings that permeated her body. Thus, in her class, the principles that guide her work are self-knowledge and connection.

Understanding how to speak, self-knowledge, understanding your place of speech, how my body can behave, is because sometimes the way I behave is not comfortable for all bodies. So how do I adapt? How to create a connection with this other body that is different? (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

This point is interesting because it also dialogues with the proposals of Carolina Polezi, who states that one of the principles of shared conduction is the questioning of the self in this dance for two. In the sense that the participants ask themselves what their desires are while they dance, taking responsibility for their dance when they become aware that they are creative agents. She shows how this principle was greatly expanded in her work with dance, including shared conduction:

So, for example, in the case of inclusive dance, when I arrived in this group, I realized that they were people highly dependent on their guardians, their parents and caregivers. To the point where those who could push their own chair wouldn’t want to. They were people who were not encouraged to have an initiative, a decision of their own. I identified that through shared conduction I could stimulate the autonomy of these people, an independence, an autonomy in the sense of asking what I want now. (POLEZI, 2019, n.p.).

In dialogue with the passivity imposed on the role of the lady, this lack of initiative is aimed at women. Therefore, it is important to propose questioning practices that allow participants to perceive what is happening in the body at that moment, instead of insinuating that nothing is happening, to get carried away; it’s just the opposite: there’s a lot going on in

the body. Therefore, when I perceive what is happening in my body, I can dance with it, even allowing myself to move through the suggestion of the other's movement.

Instead of just reproducing a dance step chosen by the teacher and repeating it several times in the music, they reorganize this experience by promoting access to this dance step from the body of each one. Not that repetition in music is not an important point for acquiring rhythm and relating to this element. The point is that the gentleman normally has this place of autonomy, of understanding the paths of movement through conduction. In this way, the experience in these classes reorganizes this notion and promotes access to exercises in awareness and elaboration of movements by all participants.

In *Ata-me's* methodology proposition in queer ballroom dance, by Laura James, and in queer *tango*, autonomy is present in the possibility of playing the role in the desired dance. This is done through open-ended questions to find out which role in that exercise or in that class the person wants to try. Furthermore, there are proposals that have managed to reach people with non-binary gender performances in dance spaces. They are engaged in promoting their classes to other social groups and achieve this reach in the LGBTQI+ community.

All pedagogies stimulate research processes of their practitioners so that they perceive themselves dancing and, consequently, pay attention to the relationships of their bodies with the world. We see this when in most of these teachers' classes there are conversation spaces to dialogue with their participants. Dedicated moments in class to question how the experience is going, how they are perceiving the exercises, what they feel, if they have difficulties. Individual perceptions are brought and discussed collectively so that the group can see the plurality of bodies and assimilate the relationships of these dances with other contexts. Thus, as we saw in the report by Carolina Polezi and her inclusive dance students, this autonomy extrapolated the reality of the dance class and started to be established in the lives of these participants with their parents and caregivers in other contexts.

Another important point is that they are dance proposals that do not require participants to fit into certain models. They see roles in dance as possibilities for movement and not as models to be followed, allowing participants to develop dance steps based on their bodies and their desires. It is not a question of looking for an efficient body, which is often guided by the generalist teaching of dance steps based on the reproduction of what is proposed. They are interested in sensitive and critical bodies that perceive themselves as active agents of their lives and relationships.

The listening

This word, listening, permeates all reports, whether in the experience of being led or in the notion of a self-listening while dancing. This is an interesting point because as a principle of dance pedagogy, it ends up changing the objectives of these practices. Normally, ballroom

dancing classes start from the action of leading, that is, from who makes the movement, which ends up reinforcing this male sovereignty when this role belongs only to men. In addition, the classes gain a content focus since – as the dance step is the central element of the dynamics – there is always a new movement to be learned.

This place of action, of needing to produce, of being rational, permeates several principles in the society in which we live and, sometimes, they are considered superior in relation to emotions, feelings, and body knowledge. To shift communication from dance to the act of listening is to destabilize this system. In these pedagogies, self-listening and of other's bodies are exercised. For Bell Hooks, "One of the responsibilities of the teacher is to create an environment where students learn that, in addition to talking, it is important to listen to others respectfully." (HOOKS, 2017, p. 201). It's not just about knowing how to propose movements or perform them but understanding your body when dancing.

We could think that the practices proposed by these teaching approaches in ballroom dancing will use the perception of the body in movement as a way to guide the study of these dances. As pointed out by dance researcher Jussara Muller, who reflects on listening as one of the resonators of the Klaus Vianna Technique in the process of building a body present in dance: "the training of body perception through minimal detailed and evident sensations, as a magnifying glass effect – amplifying what is felt – developing the ability to internalize the details and open the channel of small perceptions when dancing" (MULLER, 2012, p.49).

We can, therefore, relate this proposal from the moment that we see in these practices a provocation for their participants to perceive the body structures in movement. Bringing to consciousness information regarding transfers of weight, axis, intensity of touch, rhythm, among other elements that permeate the person who dances and the kinaesthetic data that emerge from the relationship with whoever is dancing.

This perspective of listening also dialogues with André Lepecki's (2017) provocation that the "stopped act", the pauses, the processes of deceleration of the temporality of the productive body promote a suspension, a corporally seated interruption of the modes of flows' imposition. "The pause acts because it questions time savings because it reveals the possibility of agency even within the authoritarian regimes of capital, subjectivity, work and motility" (LEPECKI, 2017, p. 45). In this case, the action of listening as a principle to elaborate communication in dances for two, even when leading, is a subversive process. She promotes dances that can establish powerful moments, giving vent to lines of flight, to non-hierarchical connections between bodies, to openings to unimaginable futures in dance for two.

Music and the relationship of a pair transform the way a person listens to oneself, listens to the world, and listens to others; this is very potent. So, this is one of the main reports I have of how people changed their ways of relating to people through dancing together. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

Anna Turriani believes in the plasticity that her dance work can promote by proposing experiences that make her students perceive themselves physically and musically. She believes that the refinement of musical listening would be a possibility to help listen to the world and its structures.

When you tell him “Stop and listen to the guitar, listen to the deaf, listen to the *zabumba*”, you are working on his mental plasticity, you are expanding his ability to perceive the structures of the world, right? He will most likely start to listen more to the factory noise, or the car noise, of the things that happen in his house. (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.).

Luiza Machado also emphasizes that, in her teaching proposal, listening is one of the principles of the class. Especially when learning to lead the movements. Instead of being always reacting and being reactive, creating spaces of silence so that bodies can perceive themselves in suspension before something can happen.

We return, then, to the importance of connecting with one’s own body and dismissing that there must be only one way to dance. Carolina Polezi comments that in the shared conduction labs she insisted on experimenting with activities and movements based on questions about ballroom dancing. This sparked different responses from the participants, and it was this sharing that helped her to compose this approach. In this sense, we can think broadly about this notion of listening, because when these teachers teach their classes, they are constantly being crossed by this information that comes from the students.

Furthermore, the third element addressed by Carolina Polezi in shared conduction is the need to deconstruct the patterns that inhabit her body. Going in search of what needs to be modified, listening to each other, and realizing what their relationships are in this dance. For example, the lady also needs to want to leave this waiting space and, with that, take responsibility for her body and not delegate it to someone else. Or again, we can think that, in order to experience a more shared movement, men, in dance, need to renounce control, and with that the privileges that this position generates. It is only by understanding what our comfort zones are that we are able to seek some transformations.

Transformation through affection

Finally, I bring up the last point that converges in these teaching proposals. These teachers understand that their practices go beyond learning to dance and can summon transformation processes. This change takes place through this investigation of bodies, these relationships that are established in these spaces of sharing and through the affections between the teachers and the participants in their classes. Dance, for Luiza Machado, is political, because it entails a meeting and organization point with people who want to question the world we live in, and because it would transmute pain into provocation processes.

Dance today, for me, is gone, but today it is stronger in the sense of discovering myself. So, through dance, I was able to discover my ancestry, how my body can move, how my body can adapt to styles, rhythms, steps, [...] And then dance becomes a place of resistance for me [...] having assumed this place of representation, in order to use dance to reach other people, to use dance to talk about issues that cannot be mentioned socially of the fat person, the black woman's fat body, the difficulties and how this dance can help these people to express themselves. (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

This speech by Luiza invites us to think about how the transformation processes also permeate the stories of these teachers. That's what makes them so powerful because they are also questioning and discovering themselves thanks to the dance for two. We see how the dance summoned different looks for each other. Luiza Machado has dedicated herself to rethinking racism within these dances through an investigation of retelling their stories: "it is very much part of my dance to understand that most ballroom dances are black, *samba*, *zouk*, and *forró* are *nordestino* (the cultural and geographical Northeast region of Brazil), black, but people cannot identify this as a source of roots, structure and way of communicating" (MACHADO, 2020, n.p.).

Understanding these other origins, we see that it is not just the Eurocentric influences that, for the most part, constitute this dance and that make up the historiography of this practice. This even defines how these dances were absorbing more of this reference; to the point that, as Luiza mentions, we almost don't even recognize these influences in *forró*, for example. In this sense, her presence in this space is essential to generate body and thought references different from what we are used to having; thinking about which principles of these dances were left out. For example, the occupation of streets instead of halls. Touching the ground, understanding this element as a place of ancestry, changing the whole step of a dance when we think about this relationship.

Laura James, on the other hand, calls for cisgenderism to rethink the spaces of dance and life. Her entire gender transition process took place while she was teaching ballroom dancing classes. This showed her how affection can summon paradigm shifts. She mentions how she was warmly welcomed through a round of applause by her students when she assumed that, from that moment on, she would like to be called Laura. This reaction surprised her to the point that she came to believe that, little by little, changes can happen. According to her, there may be resistance at first, for example, from men wanting to dance with each other. However, little by little, they became more relaxed in the class process, and they started not to feel uncomfortable. Or even, women who did not want to lead and started to enjoy dancing, starting to feel able to invite other people to dance.

It is these small revolutions that unfold in the bodies of these teachers, the students who meet them, and this is reflected in larger contexts. For Mariana Docampo, the *tango* scene in Buenos Aires over the last twelve years has become more flexible thanks to the influence of

queer tango. According to her, those who start dancing *tango* nowadays know that there are alternative places. In addition, we need to mention that the Queer International Tango Festival, organized annually, invites LGBTQIA+ people from all over the world to go dancing in the Buenos Aires capital.

Carolina Polezi, in turn, addresses that in her experience, despite working in a ballroom dance school that maintains some traditional teaching structures, and the challenges imposed by this fact, she also calls this space to rethink her proposals. Her presence made the school assume gender equality as a guideline, putting more women to teach, reviewing the statements of male teachers, and giving guidance to teachers in this regard. Thus, there is a reciprocity of influences in this process, with changes occurring gradually.

It is these small changes that change realities. Anna Turriani mentions how much she understands this space as clinical, in the sense that the experiences in the classes subjectively change the participants through dance. This would happen due to subjective rectification when we change the way we perceive reality. "So, I think dance is a super clinical device in that sense; it categorically and drastically alters the way people perceive reality. To me that's its potency, that's why I do it." (TURRIANI, 2019, n.p.). Believing in this social effect that ballroom dancing drives her to continue teaching dance classes.

We see, then, some paths being transformed thanks to the actions of these women. It is evident that there is much to be developed in this scenario so that, in fact, ballroom dancing can be a more plural space. However, I highlight the engaged work developed by these agents in the search for more plural, egalitarian and democratic ballroom dance practices. Respecting the uniqueness of the life processes of each of these women and the importance of all of them having different approaches from each other. Some stressing aspects related to sexuality, others the issue of gender or racial aspects, but all articulating a sensitive look at all these layers.

All of them understand the importance of this intersectional look to change this practice as a whole and the location of their social role within these discussions. Bell Hooks points out that:

Multiculturalism forces educators to recognize the narrow boundaries that have shaped the way knowledge is shared in the classroom. It obliges all of us to recognize our complicity in accepting and perpetuating all kinds of partiality and prejudice. (HOOKS, 2017, p. 63).

These teachers, from their singular and distinct actions, have made possible processes of teaching in ballroom dancing crossed by intersectional issues. Being propositions that not only tension normative teaching formats but are also interested in elaborating other notions of corporeity in ballroom dances beyond the cisgender demarcation of men and women. Seeking to extend this practice to other minority groups. Tracing non-hierarchical alternatives of ways of relating during the dance and creating sensitive and critical experiences for its participants.

They are rebels because they put their bodies and their experiences at stake. They used this rigid experience in the roles of ballroom dancing and launched themselves to follow their desires, which pointed to unknown paths in dance. They managed to resist in this space and continued teaching and, at each meeting, their alternative propositions for dance matured. They grew and changed as people, but they also continued to pollinate transforming experiences for other people. Thus, we have the opportunity to initiate this practice through these other perspectives. I believe that meeting these rebels along the way undoubtedly gave me the strength to continue walking with my ideas and desires for ballroom dancing. It was through these experiences alongside them that I had the opportunity to rekindle my desire to take ballroom dancing classes.

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