



Resignifying the Action of Conducting in Ballroom Dance: a bibliographical review of academic productions

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ABSTRACT – Resignifying the Action of Conducting in Ballroom Dance: a bibliographical review of academic productions – The article presents reflections arising from a study within the field of Dance Education based on the perspective of resignifying the traditional Ballroom Dance models that are practiced in our culture. A literature review of contemporary Brazilian scientific research on the subject was conducted to understand the possibilities and intersections between different studies on communication between the duos in Ballroom Dance. The results show the quantitative and qualitative progress of research on Ballroom Dance related to the actions of conducting and being conducted. However, they also point to the lack of studies related to dance education in this genre, which is considered to be an obstacle to reflecting on and updating the forms expressed in spaces where Ballroom Dance is taught and practiced.

Keywords: Ballroom Dance. Dance Education. Literature Review. Conduction. Counter-conduct.

RÉSUMÉ – Redefinir l'Action de Conduire en Danse de Salon: une revue de littérature des productions académiques – L'article présente des réflexions issues d'une enquête située dans le domaine de la Pédagogie de la Danse, développée dans la perspective de redefinir les modèles de danse de salon traditionnellement pratiqués dans notre culture. Une revue de littérature de la production scientifique brésilienne contemporaine sur le sujet est réalisée pour tenter de comprendre les possibilités et les intersections entre les différentes études sur la communication du duo en Danse de Salon. Les résultats montrent l'avancée quantitative et qualitative des études sur la Danse de Salon liées aux actions de conduire et de se laisser conduire, mais soulignent le manque d'études sur les pédagogies de ce genre de danse, ce qui est considéré comme un obstacle à la réflexion et à l'actualisation des formes diffusées dans les environnements d'enseignement et de pratique de la Danse de Salon.

Mots-clés: Salon Dance. Pédagogie de la Danse. Revue de Littérature. Conduit. Contre-conduit.

RESUMO – Resignificando a Ação de Conduzir na Dança de Salão: uma revisão bibliográfica de produções acadêmicas – O artigo apresenta reflexões decorrentes de uma investigação situada no campo da Pedagogia da Dança, desenvolvida na perspectiva de ressignificação dos modelos de Dança de Salão tradicionalmente praticados na nossa cultura. Na busca pela compreensão das possibilidades e interseções entre diferentes pesquisas sobre a comunicação da dupla na

Dança de Salão, realiza-se uma revisão bibliográfica da produção científica brasileira contemporânea sobre o tema. Os resultados evidenciam o avanço quantitativo e qualitativo das pesquisas sobre Dança de Salão relacionadas às ações de conduzir e deixar-se conduzir, mas apontam a carência de trabalhos relacionados às pedagogias desse gênero de dança, o que se considera um entrave à reflexão e atualização das formas difundidas nos ambientes de ensino e prática da Dança de Salão.

Palavras-chave: **Dança de Salão. Pedagogia da Dança. Revisão de Literatura. Condução. Contraconduta.**

Introduction

The reflections presented in this article stem from an ongoing doctoral research, which proposes to create and implement alternative ways of teaching Ballroom Dance in the perspective of highlighting and disseminating educational practices that subvert heteropatriarchy and contribute to the updating of teaching methods and the transformation of the environments in which Ballroom Dance takes place. The central idea of the research is to re-signify traditional didactic-pedagogical actions of Ballroom Dance as a way to enable the creation of non-binary pedagogies for this type of socio-cultural manifestation, encouraging a more equanimous dance, as well as the naturalization of interaction between people of the same gender, in order to respect diversity and promote accessibility and democratization of spaces where Ballroom Dance is learned and practiced.

The option for adopting the term *Ballroom Dance*, among others that are commonly used, such as *social dance* or *dances for two*, is based on the studies of the researcher Maristela Zamoner (2012), author of books and scientific articles on this dance genre. In an academic production focused on the conceptualization of this cultural manifestation, the author suggests that, in the scientific, professional and educational spheres, the expression *Ballroom Dance* should be written with initial capital letters, as it constitutes a proper name, and in the singular, according to its use by Fundação Biblioteca Nacional¹, by the Agência Brasileira do ISBN² and by the most cited publications in the area.

We aim to understand the limits, possibilities and intersections between the different modes of communication between the duos in Ballroom Dance and encourage critical thinking about updating, researching and creating accessible and inclusive pedagogies for the practice of this dance genre. For this, we carried out in this article a bibliographical review of national

publications from scientific research in the field of Dance, specifically focused on Ballroom Dance, which problematize the actions of *conducting* and *being conducted*, typical of this artistic-cultural manifestation.

As a general aspect of the review presented, it is highlighted the considerable leap in the national academic production in the area of Dance in the last decade, not only in volume, but also in quality, understood here as a reflection of the proliferation and consolidation of graduate courses in Dance and Performing Arts in Brazil in face of the restricted quantity of specific books, theses and dissertations on Ballroom Dance, an aspect evidenced in the survey conducted by professors and researchers Bruno Nunes and Flávia Nascimento (2020) together with the Catálogo de Teses e Dissertações and Fundação Biblioteca Nacional.

In this way, even though the dissertations and theses are prioritized, it is mentioned, in advance, some examples of undergraduate conclusion work and academic articles (and their respective authorships) of undeniable relevance to the reflection about the actions of conducting and being conducted. We highlight them here: *Discussões sobre gênero nas danças de salão: vamos dialogar?* (Monteiro, 2021); *Condução e danças de salão: conducopificação* (Lorandi; Mancini, 2019); *Condução e contracondução na dança de salão* (Polezi; Martins, 2019); *Dança de salão e novos conceitos de condução: uma análise através da sexualidade, comunicação proxêmica e relações de poder* (Nunes, 2019); *Um novo olhar sobre a condução na dança de salão: questões de gênero e relações de poder* (Nunes; Froehlich, 2018); *Para além de damas e cavalheiros: uma abordagem queer das normas de gênero na dança de salão* (Pazetto; Samways, 2018); *Salão compartilhado: um estudo sobre a condução compartilhada entre dama e cavalheiro na dança de salão* (Moreira, 2018); *Dança a dois: a proposta para um diálogo ampliando as possibilidades* (Wittmer, 2017); *Condução, diferentes possibilidades a cada dança* (Zamoner, 2013b); *Condução e prazer* (Zamoner, 2013a); *E se as damas conduzissem* (Zamoner, 2011).

In order to measure the production of academic research on Ballroom Dance at the master's and doctoral level in Brazil, a search was carried out in the CAPES' Catalog of Theses and Dissertations³ at the beginning of 2021⁴. Therefore, this mapping includes works published up to the year of 2020, covering those made available on the platform at the time of the que-

ry. However, the article also includes works made available after the initial query in the database, considered particularly relevant to the understanding of scientific production in the field of Ballroom Dance teaching.

Searches in the CAPES' Catalog of Theses and Dissertations began with the descriptor *Dança de Salão*, from which were identified 65 papers that contained the term in the title. A second cutout took into account the productions published in the last 10 years, i.e., between 2011 and 2020, from which 52 papers were identified. In the preliminary analysis of the 52 results found, it was observed that some works were not related to Ballroom Dance or that they appeared more than once in the query, which implied the reduction of the number of researches to 44, being 11 theses and 33 dissertations.

The next procedure involved reading the titles, abstracts and keywords of the 44 papers, as well as categorization of recurring themes in the research. In this process, some findings were surprising, such as the fact that 23 works, that is, the equivalent of more than half of the research found, were related to the physical health or quality of life of Ballroom Dance practitioners. Most of these studies are carried out in graduate programs in the field of Physical Education or Medicine, reflecting investigations on Ballroom Dance as a physical activity and taking into account its contributions in the treatment of patients with different diagnoses, as well as for improving the quality of life of practitioners of this artistic-cultural manifestation.

A smaller part of the selected works, i.e., six of them, approached social aspects of ballroom dancing, focusing on the socialization process of dancers at balls or in classes of this dance genre. Other six researches cover varied themes, related to processes of creation in dance, to the analysis of movements or to discussions concerning specific areas, such as Psychology, Sociology and Physical Education.

Of the identified academic productions, eight address themes related to gender issues or to the actions of conducting and being conducted, mostly concentrated in the fields of Sociology and Arts. Finally, only four works are dedicated to the discussion of didactic-pedagogical aspects of Ballroom Dance, two of them coming from graduate programs in Arts, and the others, from Education and Physical Education programs.

A discrepant aspect of the survey concerns the objectives of the investigations reflected in the theses and dissertations found, that is, the analyzes showed a large amount of researches that seeks to reveal or prove benefits caused by the practice of Ballroom Dance to the physical, psychological or social well-being of its practitioners in contrast to the reduced amount of investigations that address didactic-pedagogical aspects of Ballroom Dance. In general, the researches aim to contribute to the quality of life and physical and mental health of the subjects involved in these practices, especially people from 60 years of age, showing little interest or emphasis on the ways and conditions in which their processes develop. In this sense, the survey points to the need for discussion and critical reflection about the quality of the teaching of Ballroom Dance, directly involved in the maintenance and diffusion of this artistic-cultural manifestation so widely practiced in Brazil.

One of the ideas involved in this discussion to be problematized is the utilitarian view of Ballroom Dance, which understands this type of manifestation as a mere tool or means to provide benefits to its practitioners. The studies by Isabel Marques and Fábio Brazil (2012, p. 41) expand this understanding by stating that artistic languages constitute “[...] worldviews, ways of thinking, producing and discussing ideas, meanings and sensations in/of the world [...]”.

Although the authors refer to the context of formal education, this understanding can be extended to non-formal teaching spaces, where Ballroom Dance classes tend to have an inclusive or accessible approach. From this perspective, Ballroom Dance pedagogies tend to mean sensory experiences of self-knowledge and perception of the other through the movements generated in the interaction between the bodies of its practitioners.

In the following subchapters, a theoretical interlocution is proposed with current intellectual productions that problematize the actions of *conducting* and *being conducted*. This dialogue contributes to reflection on the didactic-pedagogical aspects of Ballroom Dance.

Traditional conceptions about communication in Ballroom Dance

In the debates that surround the field of Ballroom Dance, the actions of *conducting* and *being conducted* usually generate heated debates that put, on one side, traditional theories and practices about this artistic-cultural

manifestation and, on the other side, expanded ideas that problematize the conservative forms of this dance genre.

We start from a non-linear view of the relationship between the duos in Ballroom Dance, contrary, therefore, to the idea of stimulus/response and mandatory correspondence between emitter and receiver, which, in traditional Ballroom Dance, are represented, respectively, by the gentleman/conductor and the lady/conducted. Thus, this work refers to the actions of *conducting* and *being conducted* jointly, understanding them as a *communication* process.

This understanding is based on the encoding/decoding model developed by Stuart Hall (1973). According to the author, the meaning of the message is not determined by the sender, but takes place in the midst of a collective process of construction of meaning between the sender and the receiver as the sender encodes the message to send to the receiver, with the latter having an active role in the decoding based on its context, as well as in the return to the issuer in the form of feedback (Hall, 2003).

In traditional Ballroom Dance, the pair of dancers is composed of a man and a woman, who receive the classic denominations *gentleman* and *lady*, related, respectively, to the attributions of *conducting* and *being conducted*. Such nomenclature does not only refer to the interaction of the dancers' movements and their displacements in space, but also to their behaviors, as it implies that the man behaves with virility, assuming a protective posture, and that the female figure is attentive to the movements of the one who guides her while moving delicately and gracefully.

Zamoner (2013) defines *conduction* as the “[...] proposal of movements or silences⁵ that the Gentleman makes to the Lady who accepts and responds in a personalized way, influencing the following conductions and establishing a communication that is maintained throughout the dance” (Zamoner, 2013c, p. 99).

In the usual understanding of conducting, it is the man's role to think and propose the dance, which implies conducting his partner with firmness and precision, and it is up to the woman to respond appropriately to the movements conducted, that is, to let herself be conducted by the partner with readiness and fluidity. Caroline Silva (2011), in her dissertation on the

importance of Ballroom Dance in interpersonal relationships, justifies this tradition and its maintenance today:

[...] the man is the conductor in Ballroom Dance, as it is a dance that emerged in the 15th century, in France [...] where it would not be proper for the man to be conducted by the woman, a characteristic maintained until today. However, it is necessary to clarify that this is not a relationship of submission, since someone needs to conduct, and it is impossible for both dancers to conduct. By convention, this is a male function, but it has the fundamental role of the lady, considering that if there is a conductor, someone must allow this conduction (Silva, 2011, p. 36-37).

Note that the author's justification in defense of the binary conception of Ballroom Dance under the argument that the action of conducting is a male role by convention, historically determined, seems to despise the profound social changes linked to gender issues over time and their implications in the relationships between practitioners of this dance genre today.

Despite encouraging the debate about the origin of conduction in Ballroom Dance, Zamoner (2007) seems to agree with Silva's ideas, since she understands the *lady* and the *gentleman* as characters with predetermined responsibilities that can be interpreted by practitioners of different genders. In her view, the fact that gentlemen conduct ladies is a mere characteristic of Ballroom Dance, unrelated to ideological issues:

It is a question of the historicity of techné and not of ideology. [...] Today, the gentleman continues to conduct the lady in Ballroom Dance, for historical reasons that in today's society have been overcome. [...] It is our duty to discuss the origin of the phenomenon of conduction, clarifying that, although conduction exists in Ballroom Dance, what gave rise to it no longer exists (Zamoner, 2007, p. 131-133 *apud* Strack, 2017, p. 37).

Although the monopoly of conducting by men is consistent with the space-time in which Ballroom Dance culture emerged, it is inconsistent to state that this conduct is neutral, since there is no free positioning of ideologies. Still, even though we recognize the social ascension of women, we disagree with the author, because the dominance of the male gender over the female gender is far from being overcome.

In a position similar to that of Zamoner, Tiago Tonial (2011), in his dissertation that thematizes Ballroom Dance as a leisure activity in contem-

porary Belo Horizonte's society, considers that men and women feel comfortable with the roles determined by traditional Ballroom Dance:

Men and women accept their predefined roles. They end up getting used to it and, in a way, they like it, because they are in an environment where everyone does it, where the good conductor and the good conducted are exalted. Therefore, they assume these roles without questioning. Those who question usually do so out of difficulty. Thus, people are concerned with following these rules of the game that are pre-established. The fundamental point is that a Ballroom Dance ceases to exist if there is no interaction between the pair, as this is not an individual dance (Tonial, 2011, p. 148).

The author explains his understanding of the process of interaction between the pair:

[...] this process of conduction, as it becomes more sophisticated, can no longer be seen as one-sided, where the conductor is the agent and the conducted is passive. There is actually a two-way process of induction, where both are constantly conductor and conducted. However, the decisions and the starting point of the stimulus are always going to be with one actor, the gentleman. In addition, this was understood as something functional in Ballroom Dance and not something that is linked to male chauvinism (Tonial, 2011, p. 148).

The idea of *induction* is understood as an advance in relation to the understanding of traditional conduction, as it considers the active role of the conducted in the relationship with the partner, unlike the conservative views that subjugate it to a passive role in the dance. However, the author defends that the initiative and decision-making power are attributions of the one who conducts, placing once again the man as the responsible for proposing in Ballroom Dance.

With an argument similar to that of Tonial, Leonardo Siqueira (2017), author of a dissertation on the teaching method of the Argentine teachers Glória and Rodolfo Dinzel, replaces the term *conduction* by *dialogue* and justifies its adoption because it considers the active role of the one who allows herself to be conducted:

Conduction is a concept in disuse, which has given way to the idea of dialogue; after all, the proponent only suggests the first movement, and whatever comes after that is the improvisation and perception of both. The woman no longer becomes submissive to the man's will, and the man, in turn, sharpens his senses to perceive his partner and adapt himself to her

propositions. Let us remember that this dialogue must be respectful, neither of the participants can establish a monologue, because, if this happens, the unity of the couple is lost (Siqueira, 2017, p. 97).

The term *dialogue* (of Greek origin), etymologically composed of the elements *dia*, which means *through*, and *logos*, which means *word*, refers to the sharing of someone's deepest truths (Ronqui, 2021); and the use of the term to define the relationship established between the duo in Ballroom Dance presupposes, therefore, two bodies interacting in a visceral way, sharing intimacies through the word, which, in this case, is the dance itself.

From this point of view, transposing the idea of dialogue to Ballroom Dance allows us to understand the active role of the actions of conducting and being conducted. In a conversation, in which two people alternate between listening and speaking, the listener reacts to the interlocutor's speeches with facial and body expressions, gestures or even the word itself. In Ballroom Dance, the body of the person who lets her/himself be conducted reacts to the movements proposed by the other body, that is, theoretically, one is free to interpret, through one's corporeality, the proposition of movements of the person who conducts. However, the adoption of another nomenclature does not necessarily imply a change in Ballroom Dance practice; on the contrary, in general, in conservative Ballroom Dance practices, the person being conducted is expected to perform movements that correspond exactly to the proposals of the person conducting, and this exactness is the parameter to qualify one's performance in the dance.

The replacement of the term *conduction* by the term *dialogue*, when not limited to discourse, constitutes, in fact, a paradigm shift, reflecting in the dance of the people who conduct ballroom dances, as well as in the pedagogical practice of teachers of this genre of dance. A dialogical dance presupposes that the people who conduct and those who let themselves be conducted are stimulated, respectively, to feel each other and to take initiative. Discourse is effective when it *dances* with the practice.

Studies by Júlia Vieira (2019) about the artistic potential of Ballroom Samba dance expand the idea of dialogue in Ballroom Dance, insofar as they understand the responsibility of communication in dance as something to be shared between its agents – the person who conducts and the person who lets her/himself be conducted:

The conductress needs to know what possibilities she has to propose to the conducted safely, in addition to knowing the response possibilities of the conducted, even knowing that there may be some response different from the ones she already knows. [...] The person being conducted also needs to prepare their body to be attentive throughout the dance and to know their response possibilities in order to respond quickly, bringing or proposing other dynamics for the dance (Vieira, 2019, p. 67).

From another perspective, Jonas Feitoza (2011) defends the existence of a system of intentional actions, in which the pair of dancers acts cooperatively towards a common goal, and proposes overcoming the duality of *conducting* and *being conducted*. The author reflects on the interaction between the duos in Ballroom Dance based on the procedure he called *co-conduction*, understood:

[...] as an equality of purposes, that is, the actions of both bodies, even with their singularities and distinctions, aim at the realization of dance (for two). For a better understanding of the cooperative processes that occur in the body in ballroom dancing, I propose the notion of homologous-body together with that of co-conduction as a complement for the formulation of the hypothesis that when two bodies are dancing together there is a cooperativity in both for action of dance (Feitoza, 2011, p. 9-10).

Understanding the act of conducting as a cooperative action enables a new form of interaction between those who conduct and those who are conducted. The dance develops like a conversation, in which one person speaks and the other responds with a new proposition, in addition to or in opposition to the one that started the dialogue, as shown in the following excerpt:

If dance is body communication, then there is supposed to be an exchange of ideas. If there is this exchange, then the two talk. There is a proponent and another who receives this proposal and opposes it or adds something to it. This generates a new proposal, which calls for a counterproposal, and so on. So it is that man and woman take turns in the roles of conductor/tress and conducted, or leader and follower. It is like a conversation, really an exchange of ideas (Nogueira, 2009 *apud* Feitoza, 2011, p. 25).

According to Feitoza (2011), the hierarchy between the roles in Ballroom Dance does not make sense, as the movement of one of the agents of the duo interferes in the other's movement. From this perspective, there is a doctoral research carried out by Professor Rodrigo Vecchi (2012), which

understands that Ballroom Dance happens in the meeting of two bodies, in the availability, communication and expression of the agents of the duo in a single language. According to the author:

In Ballroom or Social Dance, all this context related to individualized expressions must give way to the dance for two, whose relationship between an 'me' and a 'you' makes it necessary for the body to exchange feelings in order to build a single language, experienced in both positions (conductor and conducted). When this unidual contact is established by the couple, both must be concerned, with each other, in the ways of expressing and communicating. The movement, which in turn is created through the act of dancing, becomes constructed by the relationship with the partner, and this single body becomes the constructor agent of these movements (Vecchi, 2012, p. 7).

The idea of a *unidual body*, described by Vecchi (2012), as a way to make possible the act of dancing in pairs can be understood in an approximate way of what is usually called *connection*: causal relationship between the duo, which occurs through a game of action and reaction, which allows both components to communicate and move through physical contact (Santos, 2016).

In general, the studies carried out allow us to infer that the functions of *conducting* and *being conducted* tend to be problematized and re-signified by Ballroom Dance professionals, who currently understand them as cooperative and complementary. However, even acknowledging this progress, researchers in the field of Dance, from a feminist perspective, problematize the fact that conducting is still a monopoly of men in traditional Ballroom Dance.

In order to subvert the heteropatriarchal logic of traditional Ballroom Dance, alternative forms of communication and expression of this sociocultural manifestation are developed, presented, in general terms, in the following topic.

Alternative forms of communication in Ballroom Dance

As a reflection of the advancement of gender and sexuality studies, as well as the social achievements of women in the world, researchers, mostly women, are dedicated to creating artistic and pedagogical proposals with the aim of deconstructing, or at least minimizing, sexist conceptions and postures, impregnated in traditional Ballroom Dance practices.

Researchers Carolina Polezi and Anderson Martins (2019) use the concept of *counter-conduct*⁶ (Foucault, 1995) to name the set of initiatives by researchers and teachers that aim to subvert the binary logic of traditional Ballroom Dance. Despite the particularities of each proposal, each one of them aims at building a more equanimous Ballroom Dance for women and men. According to the authors:

[...] the concept of counter-conduct can be explored in three ways. The first seeks to 'escape' from the known behaviors of the standard movements of each rhythm, expanding creativity and bringing other experiences to these dances. The second is to counteract the discourses inculcated in Ballroom Dance, stereotyping this practice and not allowing its critical evolution, which has remained structurally unchanged for over a century. Finally, the concept of counter-conduct is the opposition to an unequal structure of gender and sexist perpetuated by the structures of Ballroom Dance by placing women in a secondary role in the creation and proposition of movements, musicality, spatialization and expression. On the other hand, counter-conduct also has a personal sense of inner reflection of not accepting the habit, the repetition, the copy and the established order. By modifying our behavior and with our body designing a new way of dancing, we express through movements our worldview in that ephemeral instant of movement. This means that the counter-conduct in Ballroom Dance can be used as a practice of conducting differently from the known and as an exercise of analysis of the discursive crossings to which bodies are subordinated in dance, enabling the multiplication of discourses and opening for new possibilities of creation (Polezi; Martins, 2019, p. 10-11).

Many are the counter-conduct initiatives related to particular ways of teaching or practicing Ballroom Dance created and developed in Brazil; and the mapping of this ample set, in time and space, escapes the purposes of this work, which chooses for considering only the initiatives registered in academic productions.

The dancer and Ballroom Dance teacher Sheila Santos (2013), who, from the restlessness of having her movements determined by other people, experiences a more active role in dance with her partner, what allows her autonomy to express herself through non-conducted movements, proposes one of these initiatives considered particularly interesting. In order to teach other women to relate in a more purposeful way in Ballroom Dance, Santos systematizes a method,

composed of four stages, which allow the *gentleman* and the *lady* (nomenclature that she retains) to exercise in different ways of conducting.

In stage 1, the gentleman conducts all the movements of the lady, who is responsible for executing the proposals precisely, without performing any embellishments⁷. In stage 2, the gentleman conducts, creating variations in contacts, directions and dynamics, and it is up to the lady, in addition to the precise execution of the movement corresponding to the proposal, to carry out embellishments involving the parts of the body that are available, without interfering in the music tempo and in the conductor's proposal. In stage 3, the gentleman proposes some *conduction silences*, allowing spaces for the lady's propositions, who may choose, for example, to use more time to perform embellishments. Once the lady's proposal is finished, the conductor resumes the conduction, and so on. Finally, in stage 4, the lady interferes in the gentleman's dance, requesting more time to perform a certain embellishment or modifying her partner's initial proposal. The gentleman, in turn, must be prepared to understand and respect these interferences, including modifying his initial idea, in order to correspond to the lady's proposal, that is, both must be attentive to observe the completion of each proposal and resume the conduction.

Recognizing the advances of Santos' proposal in relation to traditional models, researcher Míriam Strack (2017), in a work dedicated to the analysis of alternative modes of communication in Ballroom Dance, problematizes some questions:

This proposal, despite already bringing some divergent aspects from the traditional, such as making the Gentleman pay attention to the Lady's body movements to be able to meet her requests for time and movement, still fits within male domination. The Gentleman, by making 'silences' in conducting the Lady and by 'letting' her use a little more time, or modifying a movement, is still in control of her, as he is the one who decides when and how to give her that space. The Lady receives, or asks for, a small space/time to express herself freely. Space/time that is soon after taken away from her again (Strack, 2017, p. 64).

Despite the limits pointed out by Strack (2017) in relation to Santos' (2013) proposal, the development of the four stages, in which the conducted woman acquires autonomy as she advances in level, is considered to be a significant strategy for teaching Ballroom Dance, that expands the protago-

nism of women. However, it should be noted that this protagonism is related to a more proactive attitude of the conducted person, and not to the fact that she is responsible for bringing beauty to the dance, as proclaimed by the dominant discourse on traditional Ballroom Dance.

In general, these speeches reinforce values of a patriarchal society, as it dictates ways in which people should behave and relate in spaces where Ballroom Dance is practiced. That is, the man monopolizes the action of conducting, while the woman is subjected to a passive role, of following him, performing her own movements only at times when he allows it. In this sense, Polezi and Silveira (2017) consider that conduction “[...] imposes a pattern of movement while inserting those who dance into gender stereotypes and how this power relationship should be established” (Polezi; Silveira, 2017, p. 68). According to the authors:

The power relationship of men over women in Ballroom Dance is expressed mainly through conduction, which is the act of a man conducting a woman to perform dance movements while she responds to the stimuli. When observing the communication between the bodies, we perceive a rigid dance, that is, closed, whose base is constituted through the movements and stimuli learned in the beginning of the 20th century, when Ballroom Dance was structured for the first time in the format that it currently carries (Polezi; Silveira, 2017, p. 68).

In opposition to the traditional model of communication in Ballroom Dance, Polezi proposes the so-called Shared Conduction, an alternative form of relationship between the duo, motivated by practical situations experienced by the author herself in which, due to the belief that Ballroom Dance should be thought exclusively by men, her creativity was inhibited by her partner (Polezi; Silveira, 2017). According to Polezi and Silveira (2017), Shared Conduction:

[...] has as its main objective to expand the artistic participation of women in dance and also to develop greater sensitivity in men, who should mix action (his conduction of movement) with the response to the lady’s stimulus. In this pedagogy, the woman actively participates in the composition and creation of the dance, since she also becomes the conductress and proposer of movements, that is, the conduction would be shared equally between man and woman (Polezi; Silveira, 2017, p. 76).

The sharing of conduction enables the experience of conducting and being conducted for both agents of the duo. In this sense, even if the conduction is not shared equally, the exercise of developing it can improve the listening ability of the conductor person, as well as the search for spaces to interfere in the dance by those who allow themselves to be conducted.

Studies by Brigitte Wittmer (2017) propose expanding the dialogue between pairs of dancers in Ballroom Dance by breaking the links between gender stereotypes and certain steps associated with them. According to the researcher:

Through a constant corporal dialogue carried out between the dancing couple, it is 'negotiated', in communion, who proposes and who follows, with the possibility of changing at any moment and/or constantly. This dialogue gives freedom to both to say yes and no (Wittmer, 2017, p. 17).

From the expansion of the idea of dialogue arises a communication proposal in which conduction is more egalitarian, meaning greater expressive freedom for Ballroom Dance, since it dissolves the roles of conductor and conducted in a fluid dance, in which it is not possible to determine a conductor. This is the so-called *mutual conduction*, defined as:

[...] a communication practice in Ballroom Dance that breaks with hierarchical structures, including those underlying the defined roles of 'conductor/tress' and 'conducted' [...] That is, beyond of the alternation of roles and their detachment in relation to gender, in this model both conduct and are conducted simultaneously. We understand that this model 'avoids operating with dualisms, which end up maintaining the logic of subordination' (LOURO, 2001, p. 552), as it suppresses even the conductor-conducted dualism, since it makes it impossible, in the flow of the dance, the identification of who originates the movements (Pazetto; Samways, 2018, p. 175-176).

Mutual conduction requires specific training from the dancers so that the bodies can communicate simultaneously. The methodology used for the body preparation of these performers involves body awareness techniques, somatic education, martial arts and contact-improvisation, which differentiates their practices from those traditionally proposed in Ballroom Dance classes.

Defended by its proponents as a queer educational strategy, mutual conduction tends to contribute to the re-signification of the ballroom dance culture, as it promotes a communication between unique, singular and pro-

visional bodies that is free, therefore, from the impositions of predefined movements, styles and gender roles (Pazetto; Samways, 2018).

In the search for a more egalitarian Ballroom Dance, Queer Ballroom Dance stands out, which is not exactly a method, but “[...] a new way of producing and thinking about Ballroom Dance, a constant experimentation of these possible ways of dancing in pairs, respecting the instability and fluidity of the identities that are constructed therein” (Polezi; Silveira, 2017, p. 75).

Beyond the boundaries of Ballroom Dance that takes place at balls and dance schools, the scenic proposal of Queer Ballroom Dance by the Casa 4 Collective from Salvador (BA), composed of gay dancers, whose shows are created based on personal experiences, stands out. In order to problematize the male chauvinism and homophobia impregnated in the Ballroom Dance environment, the proposal of the collective breaks with the classic binarism of the traditional Ballroom Dance, once it starts from the gesture of this dance, without limiting itself to it.

It is understood that Ballroom Dance developed from a queer perspective contributes to men and women being able to perform the actions of conducting and being conducted, as well as for people of the same gender to be able to dance together, meaning new forms of expression, especially for women, whose creativity is often hampered in traditional Ballroom Dance. Silveira’s (2018) reflections on her art illustrates this expanded perspective of understanding female bodies:

I have tried to propose a trans-Dance where it is possible to experience these states of sharing beyond the visible bodies, where experiences can be established among the participants. However, I believe that even though there is this desire for connection between bodies that is independent of gender, I realize the importance of accessing other qualities of movement as women during the dance for two. I bring this up mainly after noticing the bodies of female dancers who have spent years in formative processes that convened only lightness and gracefulness. What makes it more difficult for these bodies to access experiences of grounding and rooting (Silveira, 2018, p. 15).

The movement known as Queer Tango, started in Buenos Aires (AR), in the mid-2010s, inspires Queer Ballroom Dance, as well as other practices that aim at subverting the roles of traditional Ballroom Dance. According to Maria Liska (2019, p. 2):

[...] the queer proposal focuses on the socio-communicative aspect which, like queer studies, rejects the discrimination caused by gender construction regulations. It has a verbal discourse that supports a teaching that does not presuppose the sexual orientation of the dancer or the obligation to occupy a certain role in the couple, creating the possibility to dance without fitting into the social norms of traditional tango.

This type of proposal aims at expanding the forms of communication and conduct in Ballroom Dance, contributing to overcoming the dominant discourse of practices supported by the gender binary model. For Louro (2004), queer theories make it possible to reflect on the ambiguity, multiplicity and fluidity of sexual and gender identities, allowing us to think of new ways of working with culture and education.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning some artists from other fields who work from the perspective of questioning gender binarism. Argentine writer, actress and singer Susy Shock recognizes herself as a trans sudaca⁸ artist, and has a work that reflects on corporeities dissident from the norm, which are usually disregarded by traditional Ballroom Dance. Shock contributes to the queer scene through the activism of her art, characterized in the following quote:

I claim my right to be a monster, neither male nor female, neither XXY nor H₂O, monster of my desire, flesh of each of my brushstrokes, blue canvas of my body, painter of my walk, I don't want any more titles for carry around, I don't want more poles or lockers to fit or the right name that any science reserves for me, I'm a butterfly alien to modernity, post-modernity and normality (Shock, 2021, p. 91).

Nationally, we highlight the investigations of teachers and artists Dodi Leal and André Rosa (2020, p. 11), who understand the body as “[...] a way to intervene, act and create critical practices of recognition of subjectivities [...]”. They bring out some artists from the music area, whose proposals affect the Ballroom Dance universe, insofar as they extrapolate the frameworks of the cis-heteronormative society. The pioneering spirit of the multi-artist Alice Marcone, from the city of Valinhos (SP), in the creation of the Travanejo style; the aesthetics of the trans cangaço of the singer Isis Broken, from Aracaju (SE); the work of the gospel singer and pastor from Bahia, Ventura Profana, who understands her artistic performance as a manifesto in favor of dissident lives; the duo Irmãs de Pau, formed by the multiartists Isma Al-

meida, from Uberlândia (MG), and Vita Pereira, from Araraquara (SP); and the award-winning rap singer Jup do Bairro, from São Paulo (SP), are representatives of an intense movement of transsexual and non-binary people that contributes to the demystification of bodies in environments where Ballroom Dance is taught, demanding pedagogies that contemplate the diversity of the ways of being and existing of its practitioners.

An example of non-binary pedagogy based on queer thinking is developed at the Ata-me school, in Belo Horizonte (MG), an initiative idealized by dance teacher Laura James, a transsexual woman and queer activist, organizer of Forró Queer, in which practitioners are encouraged to learn both roles and form gender-independent dance pairs (Pazetto; Samways, 2018).

Strack (2017) develops another proposal towards the expansion of female protagonism in Ballroom Dance through the systematization of stages, called *territories*, which aim at the growing autonomy of women in the process of communication between the pair of dancers. The notion of territory, as conceived by Strack, contributes to think about the different possibilities of communication and expression in Ballroom Dance.

First territory: traditional conduction: the men/Gentlemen decide the steps to be taken and the women/Ladies just follow. [...] Second territory: with embellishments. Women/Ladies gain authorization to carry out embellishments, as long as they do not disturb the conduction of the man/Gentleman. Third territory: silences in the conduction: men/Gentlemen can be silent when conducting so that women/Ladies can spend more time on their embellishments (SANTOS, 2016). Fourth territory: influence of the Lady: the women/Ladies can use their own movements to influence the next conductions of the men/Gentlemen, as well as the due displacements, dynamics of movements and musicality. Those, in turn, may even allow them to propose steps, but always resuming the conduction for themselves at some point. Fifth territory: queer tango. The roles of who conducts and who is conducted are no longer associated with gender. Men and women learn both roles and can choose which one to use when dancing. Sixth territory: body dialogue with both people in the pair knowing how to propose and follow, it is possible to establish a body dialogue when dancing. It is no longer necessary to define who will play what role, because the role will naturally change during the dance according to the will of the pair. Seventh Territory: communion (total dissolution of conduction). Here there is a total dissolution of any kind of conduction or proposition. At this point, the pair reaches experiences of flow and

they no longer know who initiated the step. The feeling is of two people dancing as a single body (Strack, 2017, p. 101-102).

The seven territories delimited by Strack (2017) present, to a certain extent, an overview of the possible forms of communication between the pair of dancers. The territories are progressively organized: as the stage progresses, the dance becomes more equitable. The first territory is a completely conducted dance, while the last proposes the total dissolution of the conduction, in which the roles of conductor and conducted are extinguished.

In the intent of contributing with those who identify themselves with a feminist approach in Ballroom Dance, Strack (2017) shares aspects that she considers relevant in the practice and teaching of this dance genre: valuing pre-existing body repertoires; understanding error as a possibility; teaching men and women the actions of conducting and being conducted; favoring the possibility of role exchange or absence of roles; adopting a new terminology; development of body communication and connection to self, to the peer, to the space (including other peers), and to music (Strack, 2017).

The proposals mentioned so far are a sample of the diversity of forms of communication between the duo in Ballroom Dance, whose intention is not to exhaust the subject, but to propitiate the interlocution with researchers who discuss new possibilities of communication in Ballroom Dance, in order to contribute to an equanimous and accessible dance for people of different genders, biotypes, age groups, sexual orientations, among other identity groups.

Beyond standardizations: gender and its intersections

Ballroom Dance in general, as a social practice or as an artistic activity, is crossed by discourses related to corporeality, sexuality, gender and age issues, among others, whose meanings are not always understood or made aware by its practitioners. In this sense, it is considered that the planning and creation of accessible and inclusive ballroom dance pedagogies cannot do without critical reflection on these discourses.

In general, the problematization of the actions of conducting and being conducted in Ballroom Dance highlights the latent sexism in the traditional conceptions of this dance genre. Therefore, understanding Ballroom

Dance from the gender binarism not only limits the communication between the pairs, but also reduces the expressive capacity of the agents.

In opposition to the deterministic discourse that gender is defined by biological sex, Judith Butler (2003) refers to gender as a culturally constructed performance based on the repetition of stylized actions, opposing the dominant discourses that consider gender a natural disposition or an essence of the human being.

Extending Butler's (2003) conceptualization, Paul Preciado (2014) considers that [...] "[...] gender is not simply performative (that is, an effect of linguistic-discursive cultural practices)", but "[...] first of all, prosthetic, that is, it only takes place in the materiality of the bodies. It is purely constructed and, at the same time, entirely organic" (Preciado, 2014, p. 29).

The concept of gender as performance (Butler, 2003), the result of social constructions that are maintained by the repetition of patterns, largely overcomes the deterministic notion of gender roles, reinforced by conservative views of Ballroom Dance. Likewise, the notion of gender materiality (Preciado, 2014) expands this understanding by also considering that people who do not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth.

This understanding is especially relevant to the problematization of traditional Ballroom Dance environments, in which the transgender identity, especially of people without *passability*⁹, is often disregarded. An example of this usually occurs in dance school classrooms, where transsexual or transvestite women, arbitrarily identified by their biological sex, and not by the gender they identify with, are constrained to perform the function of conductor. For the psychologist, activist and professor Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus, the adequacy of the bodies of transgender people to gender occurs:

[...] autonomously and disassociated from sex. The personal and social identities of transgender women and men, unlike those of biological women and men, are not in line with what would be socially expected of their sexes, or more specifically, their genitals (Jesus, 2010, p. 3).

In general, it is observed that the contemporary conceptions of Ballroom Dance defend the deconstruction of the cis-heteropatriarchal structure, mainly with regard to the expectation in relation to the ways of moving and relating in dance, which tends to contribute to that Ballroom Dance environments become welcoming to people who do not conform to

the norm. However, in the vast majority of Ballroom Dance practices, the ways in which practitioners move still tend towards conservatism linked to gender stereotypes based on biological sex, which proves to be especially limiting for female bodies.

In everyday interaction with female artists, teachers, researchers and ballroom dancers, it is possible to see that not every woman feels comfortable moving in a *sensual and graceful way*, as is usually determined by traditional forms culturally disseminated and solidified by binary Ballroom Dance pedagogies. For example, positioning the hands on the waist or showing off by caressing parts of the body with them are not considered expressive movements by all women, which conducts one to think that, regardless of the performing gender, expressiveness in Ballroom Dance is a particular experience for each person.

In addition to the way she moves, each woman develops her own ways of communicating with her male or female partner: some of them prefer to just be conducted, letting themselves be carried away by the proposals of those who conduct them; others need to participate more actively in the conduction process, sharing or proposing movements; still others manage to express their dance only in the total dissolution of the *conduction*.

In this sense, Silveira (2018), a Queer Ballroom Dance dancer, teacher, and researcher, relates her experience with traditional Ballroom Dance:

A disquieting body that never felt part of this universe, for wanting more possibilities to relate to the other when dancing, beyond the state of having to be conducted. This fact, at first, seemed to be something related only to the format of how the dance was performed. Over the years, this issue gained density and political implications in my body, as it became clear that the discomfort and concerns witnessed stemmed from an experience of dancing coming from a woman's body (Silveira, 2018, p. 1).

Unfortunately, experiences similar to the one reported by Silveira (2018) are recurrent in traditional Ballroom Dance environments. Women and men who do not correspond to gender stereotypes are frequent targets of criticism in classes or dances attended by the conservative public. The heteropatriarchal structure of society not only oppresses women, but also affects men to some extent.

Despite the social privilege of men in relation to women, some of them are also the target of discrimination and prejudice due to the way they communicate or express themselves through Ballroom Dance. Therefore, the male chauvinism that affects women also hurts men who do not conform to the heteronormative standard dictated by society.

The standard *gentleman* is the man who performs masculinity and who conducts the lady (woman) with precision across the room. The conductor's focus should be on making the lady move, while his personal dance should be discreet, unadorned. Men who do not fit this profile, besides having their performance devalued, are the target of jokes and debauchery, just as it happens with women dissenting from the norm.

The questioning of this pattern is not intended to put men in a victim role; on the contrary, it aims to recognize their place of privilege in a patriarchal society and, at the same time, to understand that some social groups of men are also affected by this same oppressive system.

An example of this is the report by researcher and Professor Alisson Moreira (2021), one of the members of the Casa 4 collective, about the oppression suffered by a group of openly gay dancers in the city of Salvador (BA):

The fagged bodies of these members raised debates, became the subject of academic papers and even became the subject of lawsuits, all provoked only and exclusively by the discomfort caused in spaces where the tradition of masculine and feminine, of gentleman and lady, of who conducts and who will be conducted was questioned. Scenarios like this one demonstrate how, even today, ballroom dances are environments with the strong presence of male chauvinism and other movements that tend to exclude portions of the population (Moreira, 2021, p. 6).

In this sense, gender oppression cannot be debated on the basis of gender identity alone, as if oppression were the same for all people performing the same gender. Each subject is composed of different social identities, which, overlapping, subject them to different systems of oppression.

The understanding of this overlapping identity and its modes of oppression is mediated by the concept of *intersectionality*, coined by the Afro-American intellectual Kimberlé Crenshaw (1980), which reflects on different identities of black women and which came to constitute a strategy of distinction and visibility of their causes in relation to the white feminist

movement and anti-racist struggles focused on black men, which tend to disregard the specificity of black women.

According to Carla Adriana da Silva Santos (2019), activist, researcher and professor of black feminism in Brazil, the concept of *intersectionality* objectives:

[...] to give theoretical-methodological instrumentality to the structural inseparability of racism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy, producers of identity avenues in which black women are repeatedly affected by the crossing and overlapping of gender, race and class, modern colonial apparatuses (Santos, 2019, p. 14).

In this work, the adoption of the concept of *intersectionality* contributes to the understanding that gender oppression does not affect individuals belonging to the same gender in the same way. In addition to different gender identities, race, sexual orientation, age group, body type and other characteristics directly influence the ways in which people are seen and treated in society and, consequently, in the environments in which Ballroom Dance is practiced.

Although structural male chauvinism is impregnated in the masculine being, the other identity layers that compose him make heterosexual men and gay men, for example, relate to gender and sexual oppression in different ways in society. Even among homosexual men, there are differences, for example: in a social or artistic Ballroom Dance, probably a homosexual man with manly and masculine behavior will have an experience closer to that of a heterosexual man, than a gay man with behavioral traits or gestures that somehow identify his sexual orientation.

In an approximation between feminist studies and cultural studies, Louro (1997) understands that women and men are constituted by their sense of belonging to different groups – ethnic, sexual, class, gender, among others –, as well as by their plural and multiple identities, which are transformed because they are neither fixed nor permanent.

From this point of view, Ballroom Dance proposals that subvert gender binarism are legitimized insofar as they consider the intertwined identities of their agents. In the same way that the discussion about gender is emptied as the other specificities that constitute the bodies in interaction in Ballroom Dance are neglected. In this sense, it is worth considering the

multiplicity of gender and sexuality identities, including cisgender and transgender, as well as the non-binary form of identity, asexuality and pansexuality, currently covered by the acronym LGBTQIAP+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual and other groups and variations of sexuality and gender).

However, in Ballroom Dance practices traditionally widespread in our culture, these issues are not usually debated or even considered. In general, gender tends to determine *how* and *with whom* one should dance; sexual and affective identities that escape the heteronormative and cisgender pattern are considered inconvenient. Even the formation of alternative pairs to the classic *man-woman* pair is often frowned upon, generating discomforts and insecurities. Such distortions are at the base of heteronormative society, which understands sex as:

[...] a technology of heterosocial domination that reduces the body to erogenous zones due to an asymmetrical distribution of power between genders (female/male), making certain affects coincide with certain organs, certain sensations with certain anatomical reactions (Preciado, 2014, p. 25).

Thus, the mistaken understanding of some adepts of Ballroom Dance, who are guided by the need of affective or sexual correspondence between the pair of dancers, that is, who choose/accept their partner and relate to him/her aiming at interests other than dance, tends to make the balls and Ballroom Dance classes uninviting spaces, inaccessible to a wider, plural and diverse public.

Final considerations

In this study, we carried out a bibliographic review of Ballroom Dance research found in the CAPES' Dissertations and Theses bank. This made it possible to verify a qualitative and quantitative advance in the academic production of Ballroom Dance in Brazil in the last ten years, although it is still reduced in comparison to other areas of knowledge.

One of the most impacting findings in the mapping carried out is the fact that many productions are dedicated to revealing or proving the benefits of the practice of Ballroom Dance to the physical, psychological or social well-being of practitioners, in contrast to the reduced number of researches that are interested in the pedagogies of Ballroom Dance. In this

sense, the work highlights the need for reflection and specialized criticism about the teaching and learning of Ballroom Dance as a way of contributing to the re-signification of this culture.

Despite acknowledging the progress of research on Ballroom Dance, especially in relation to the actions of *conducting* and *being conducted*, it is fundamental for the consolidation of this field of research to deepen the concepts of *expression* and *communication* in future research aimed at creating accessible pedagogies of Ballroom Dance.

The interlocution with the scientific production of Ballroom Dance is considered to contribute to the construction of a panorama about the different modes of communication between the pair of dancers, as well as to evidence the limits, the possibilities and the intersections between the different modes of communication between the pair in Ballroom Dance, allowing the glimpse of new paths for a more inclusive and accessible Ballroom Dance.

The article raises some questionable aspects of traditional Ballroom Dance, which contribute to discrimination or even to the exclusion of people dissenting from the norm of the balls and dance schools. At the same time, this survey reveals possibilities for a more equitable and accessible dance from the reviewed works and in the light of queer theory, represented by disruptive artists, who contribute to structural modifications in society and, consequently, in Ballroom Dance.

Concluding the reflection, it is worth considering that male chauvinism, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion suffered in Ballroom Dance by some identity groups is not the essence of this culture, but a social construction, the result of a heteropatriarchal society. That is, Ballroom Dance only reproduces the characteristics of the environment in which it is developed, hence the urgency of qualifying the debate between professionals, teachers, artists, and practitioners who compose the Ballroom Dance community.

Far from the intention of developing closed methods or of making opposition to the Ballroom Dance culture, the proposals of queer practice and pedagogy emphasized here are aimed at contribute to the deconstruction of the gender binarism impregnated in the dominant discourse of Ballroom Dance, emerging as a pedagogical and political alternative to embrace multiple categories of gender and sexual orientation and, consequently,

make the educational and communitarian environments where Ballroom Dance is learned and practiced more accessible, diverse and democratic.

Notes

- ¹ Agency responsible for capturing, storing, preserving, and disseminating the Brazilian intellectual production.
- ² It is a numerical standard, whose purpose is to enable the identification of monographic publications, books, articles and handouts.
- ³ Platform that aims to enable access to theses and dissertations defended in graduate programs in Brazil, as well as provide statistical information of these academic productions.
- ⁴ Year when the research was started.
- ⁵ Small moments when the leading person stops leading and allows the conducted person to execute an idea. In the traditional conceptions of Ballroom Dancing, the proposition of silences is rare or does not happen.
- ⁶ Understood here as an opening of new possibilities, which, despite the strangeness, can oppose established conduct, counter-conduct can be considered an act of resistance and freedom, not only for social parameters, but also for ourselves (Polezi; Martins, 2019, p. 9-10).
- ⁷ “*Enfeites*” in Portuguese: term used to describe non-conducted movements, performed by the person being conducted for aesthetic purposes, without interfering with the conductor’s movements. Example: sliding the hand through the hair while performing a spin in a forró. The term *adornment* is also used.
- ⁸ Derogatory term used to refer to people born in South America.
- ⁹ It refers to the recognition of a person who has transitioned, or who is in the process of gender transition, to the gender with which they identify.

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