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## Spanish ballet school: nationalism, the weakness of bourgeois culture and heteronomy in the artistic field in Spain in the nineteenth century

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### ABSTRACT

Academic ballet is one of the iconic manifestations of High Culture. In Nineteenth-century Spain, it failed to take root in the form of stable companies, schools, and venues. There were various social, political, and cultural reasons for this, even though conditions at the time seemed propitious. Those reasons and conditions form the subject of this paper. The methodological approach employs Bourdieu's sociological *Field Theory*, and neo-institutionalist theories to explain why Spain failed to consolidate a national academic ballet school. Drawing on the current situation of ballet in Spain in terms of the cultural and educational policy of dance, the present analysis seeks to both broaden and enrich the historiographic interpretation of the Spanish dance scene and education. Considering the effects of path dependence, this analysis tries to explain the antecedents of the configuration of the didactic programs of public dance conservatories, the development of private academies and the late articulation of an official ballet company in Spain, devoid of signs of identity due to the eclecticism of the training of Spanish dancers.

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What counts as national art in Spain? The question is a thorny one given the political strife raging between regions and Central Government on identity and the difficulties in formulating a common narrative. This generates a 'Spanish' national identity, both hard and controversial. Although the concepts of nation, nationality, and nationalism raise concerns, because, among other reasons, they seek refuge in the idea that local identity may offer a facile escape from today's globalizing pressures, they do also offer a collective feeling of belonging, that is key to investing in shared institutions (Calhoun 2016).

It is academically interesting to explore the ways in which peoples build cohesion strategies. The Social Sciences, Politics, and Anthropology each sheds its own lights on the symbolization and identification processes for constituting groups, thus providing different ways of understanding the phenomenon (Anderson (1983 2006); Bourdieu 1983 2006); Gellner (1983 2001); Hobsbawm (1990 2018)). This paper does not aim to chart

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the state of the art on these issues. That said, it is worth considering several perspectives that see dance as part of national symbolization processes. Even so, one should bear in mind that this opens a spectrum running from folk wisdom and essentialism at one end to their opposite at the other end, namely, a society with an imagined architecture in which fiction acts as the most powerful binding force so that subjects tend to co-operate among themselves (Anderson (1983 2006); Harari (2011 2018)).

Our interest focuses on the performative implications of accepted national symbols (Bourdieu (1983 2006)), upon which community and State power are based through socially shared elements. These, among many other things, include flags, anthems, dances, tales, and languages (Moncusí Ferré 2016). The more intangible these elements are, the more they seem to serve the communities imagining them (Anderson (1983 2006)). Although imagined, these elements may still exist (Sanjaumei Calvet 2016).

Without underestimating the power of the written and spoken word, staging national symbols gives them legitimacy and makes them part of folk wisdom. Dances lie within this symbolism, representing at least part of what citizens belonging to a Nation-State see as one of its hallmarks – namely a particular form of corporal expression. Folk dances thus become a distinguishing feature that shows, even to the most fervent supporters of globalization trends, why climate, culture and its influences, anatomical features, and landscapes combine to make each people special.

### National representativeness through academic ballet

The foregoing premises are our point of departure, but in this case, the focus is on High Culture, not folk culture. High Culture can be defined in terms of cultural consumption determined by a certain social class and by its dynamics, which bear on ‘Art for Art’s sake’. In this respect, High Culture was linked to artistic products that were consumed in an omnivorous fashion by the upper classes (the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy) in the Nineteenth century. At the beginning of the Twentieth century, minority cultures, such as stage dancing, opera, classical music, among others, continue to exist, but are consumed by minorities, basically the upper classes. The global trend is, however, towards omnivorous consumption of culture (Ariño Villarroya and Llopis Goig 2017).

In the dance sphere, the genre that held sway among the elite was undoubtedly academic ballet. It was the heir of Mediaeval and Renaissance courtly dances, and – after leaping the social barrier – became a performance art (García Barranco 2002). France and Italy played key roles in creating this art form and here one should stress that dancers, teachers, and choreographers from these two countries were the main drivers for the initial expansion of ballet. Nevertheless, like in other sectors of the arts and sciences, the universalism of its technique did not prevent local adaptations, which were often linked with *schools* or *styles* of one kind or another.

*School* here means a given collective approach to a broader discipline. This meaning may have lost explanatory power in general, but it is not so in the academic ballet sphere. In the world of ballet, it is still easy to detect both those national idiosyncrasies, which mark the aesthetic trajectory of the art form, as well as ballet dancers’ personal styles and their influence (Bonnin Arias 2016).

Despite this, there is no general agreement on what constitutes a *school* in ballet. That is because *method*, *methodology*, *style* and *school* are often used interchangeably in

describing certain masters, companies, and choreographers. It would not be until the second third of the twentieth century that some order would be put to the concept of ballet. This labour was undertaken by Arnold Haskell and Ninette de Valois (founders of the British School), and a little later by Alicia Alonso and other Central American exponents in establishing the Cuban School.

Not all *schools* in the dance field necessarily imply local identities – some simply refer to the creative or teaching legacy of key agents. Others are the product of a universal manifestation but that have distinctive local tints. Haskell (1973) established the point of departure, listing eight choreographic centres, each with its own distinguishing features: Paris, Milan, Leningrad [Saint Petersburg], Moscow, Copenhagen, London, New York, Havana, thus embracing the French, Italian, Russian, Danish, British, American, and Cuban schools. They have been listed in the order in which they were roughly formed.

The Italian Peninsula was the centre of courtly dances during the Renaissance and it was these that preceded modern academic ballet. Nevertheless, the French School of ballet was institutionalized before the Italian School. In France, this institutionalization took place through the *Académie Royale de Danse* (1661) and the *Académie Royale de Musique* (1669), founded during Louis XIV's reign. This gave rise to an officially approved national style of dancing, teaching, and choreographing ballet (Guest 2006). In 1713, Louis XIV also passed a Royal Degree establishing the features of the infant French School, in a text exalting the need for harmony, co-ordination, accuracy, and sobriety: '*Que l'école française soit fondée sur la primauté de l'harmonie, la coordination des mouvements, la justesse des placements et le dédain de la prouesse.*' (Valentin 2013, 22)

This wish-list set the teaching and artistic tone for the training of French academic ballet dancers, and of stage performance. Here, the *power field* was keen to ensure that ballet avoided the fiery movements of *balletto* and the *bravura* associated with the Italian style. Sollertinsky (1945) argued that the differences between French and Italian ballet had sociological roots: while the former had sprung from courtly protocol, the latter incorporated both rural elements and others stemming from professionalization through the *Commedia dell'arte*.

Following the French initiative, the institutionalization of ballet in various parts of the world gave rise to the six remaining *schools* – a process that occurred in two stages. The first stage occurred during the Enlightenment, with the emergence of ballet companies and training centres in Italy, Russia, and Denmark. These schools strengthened in the Nineteenth century and Romantic Ballet was born, with a late flowering of this genre in the case of Russia. The second stage occurred in the Twentieth century – mostly as a response to the impact of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. The result was the establishment of national ballet schools, first in Great Britain, then in the United States, and later on in Cuba in mid-century.

In order to procure a broad, inclusive concept of *national ballet school* that embraces various positions and perspectives, we need to acknowledge the closely intertwined institutional and social dimensions, which in turn determine the meaning of the art form. We first examine such dimensions, where we see institutions as constituting the cultural frameworks through which individuals build their preferences and interpret the world (Zurbriggen 2006). Institutions are articulating, legitimizing elements in most social processes and are three-dimensional, being of a social, cultural, and subjective nature.

The commonest institutional model among *national ballet schools* can be summarized as a company with an associated training centre, with both often forming part of an opera house. Here, one should stress that the articulation of this institutional eco-system is shaped by the policy strategies of the ruling classes, whose ideological, financial, and symbolic support leads to the creation of an official art form. This is thus both representative of and before citizens given that – as Bourdieu (1983 2006) notes – it is the authorities who decide what the representative symbols of a nation are, and who thus trace the bounds between the internal and the external, between what is national and what is foreign.

The social dimension of a *national ballet school* not only refers to art as the product of the culture of a community, but also as the configuring of artistic output in the sense meant by Bourdieu, comprising performers, choreographers, and teachers. These actors make up a dynamic relational system in which the economy of symbolic goods determines the nature and make-up of said school. The official teaching method is one of the most visible defining elements in these fields. That is because the chosen method is reflected in the training imparted, and it serves as a factor in reproducing a social model, preparing performers to tackle the company's repertory. This is shaped by the institutional context as a whole, and thus meets 'representativeness' requirements. In addition, the creators align themselves with the artistic goals and identity of companies, and strive to create works with national themes, music, dramatic conception, and aesthetics (De Valois and Gayle 2011; Haskell 1973).

Although local artistic expression was of key importance, one should recall that the *national ballet school*, emerged from external agents and converged on a given country. Thus, the schools were not purely national creations, but rather exotic alloys forged over time by a succession of maestros from many lands, all of whom had brought something new to make academic ballet thrive in each national setting. Nevertheless, the resulting mix gave the performing art unique local features (Alonso 2010). This gave rise to the local nuance of *danse d'école*, which covered the artistic expression through corporal lines and angles, and through movement dynamics that was to turn each local variant into a physical and symbolic manifestation of national identity. Thus, one can see that without altering its universality, academic dance was tinged with local colour, which often came from traditional national dances (Alonso 2010).

*Intra-field* dynamics were added to *inter-field* dynamics. This led to the formation of the *intellectual field*, which scrutinized artistic and ideological meanings and, more importantly, the heteronymous relationship with the *power field*. The decisions of those wielding power on matters concerning funding and symbolic importance were to affect both the *school* and even its status in the *artistic field* of dance. Depending on the model of the nation taking up ballet as one of its symbols of national identity, the *power field* could be represented by royalty, Ministers, and even wealthy patrons of the arts (Alonso 2010).

In addition, the articulation of a *school* did not follow pre-established patterns and thus it could not be forced into an existing mould. Various historic, cultural, and even environmental factors combined to shape national ballet (Alonso 2010).

While one needs to bear in mind the heterogeneous way in which the above-mentioned indicators developed in the seven national settings, the very same premises considered earlier also provide a matrix for studying geographical settings, where no *national ballet school* was established. Any setting that hosts one or more ballet training

centres and ballet companies provides a pool of skills and experience among dancers, teachers, and creators and thus the potential to create a *school*. Where such conditions existed but no *school* was created, we speak of ‘unfinished configurations’.

Why was it that there was too little freedom of action in the choreographic field to produce a *school* of ballet in Spain? Strong institutional support is needed for there to be such freedom, and it could well have come from the aristocracy, from the Church, or from the Nineteenth century rising bourgeoisie. In Bourdieu’s theory, saying that an institutional impetus was needed means that material, financial, and symbolic resources were all required, so that the machinery of artistic could grind into action in the *artistic field*, powered by strategies for accumulating symbolic capital through the shared enthusiasm and the aims of those working in that field.

Following on from the foregoing discussion, this paper takes a sociological and political perspective in analysing opportunities favouring the configuration of a Spanish school of ballet in the Nineteenth century, and the hurdles to such an enterprise. Here, one should recall that this was a period in which those *ballet schools* that had sprung up elsewhere during the Enlightenment went on to consolidate their position.

The methodology employed rests on documentary observation of mainly secondary sources. The records obtained were triangulated with the concept of *national ballet school*, with the analysis being enriched by sources drawn from the Sociology of Art and Institutions, especially from Bourdieu’s *Field Theory*, as well as concepts such as *path dependence* and *institutional isomorphism* found in the discipline of *Historic Neo-Institutionalism*.

### Favourable predictors and antecedents in the Spanish case

From the perspective of essentialism, there is a common belief that Spaniards have a natural gift for dance. Among many other authors, Lifar (1968) considers that Spaniards have a natural approach to dance that is only equalled by Russians. While various experts nuance such judgments nowadays for fear of repeating stereotypes and ‘old chestnuts’, one should bear in mind: (1) the richness and variety of Spanish folk dances, which take innumerable forms throughout the country; (2) an academic tradition that dates back to the times of *ballet de cour* (Ruiz Mayordomo 1999); (3) the extraordinary number of local dancers in the late Twentieth and early Twenty-first centuries. In various countries, such factors are strong predictors of an official style of performing, teaching, and choreographing ballet, with a marked component of identity, giving rise to a *national ballet school*.

To clearly analyse Nineteenth century ballet in Spain, one needs to first consider the antecedents at the end of the Seventeenth and the beginning of the Eighteenth centuries, when Russia, Denmark, and Italy followed the footsteps of France to institutionalize the dance form.

The trend in creating academic bodies during The Enlightenment also reached Spain as the country fell under the Bourbon dynasty, which – not surprisingly – forged strong links with France. Felipe V set up the first royal academies and, under his patronage, Arts and Sciences consolidated the efforts of the *novatores* [pioneers] to introduce new European intellectual currents in their discourses, in which they also fostered the idea of ‘an awareness of the backwardness of the country’, based on their



perception of cultural differences between Spain and other European States (Velasco Moreno 2000).

As in France or Great Britain, the key to these discourses making the leap from the private sphere to the public one lay in seeing these academic circles as serving the State and thus meriting official patronage. In Spain, this was manifested by the foundation of *la Real Academia Española* (1715), *la Real Academia de Historia* (1738), and *la Junta Preparatoria* (1744) – the forerunner of *la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* (1752), which was established during the reign of Fernando VI (Velasco Moreno 2000). Nevertheless, despite the strong French influence on courtly dances (Martínez de Fresno 2011), neither the Spanish king (Louis XIV's grandson) nor his successors set up a Royal Dance Academy for the country. This was in stark contrast to the situation in Paris, Milan, Naples, Saint Petersburg, and Copenhagen, which had all set up or consolidated institutions of various kinds for fostering academic ballet.

Nevertheless, several attempts at institutionalization were made during the various stages of the *Teatro de los Caños del Peral*, both through the *Trufaldines* companies, which made great use of dance in their performances (Domenech Rico 2006), and later through the *ballet d'action* fostered by Domenico Rossi, the most important project being the one drawn up by Pascual Vallejo and the Marqués de Astorga towards the end of the Eighteenth century, in which the participation of Dauberval or Noverre was discussed (Carreira 1991).

Another worth highlighting factor was the battle between two diametrically opposed views on society in the Eighteenth century. One was based on the principles of the Enlightenment, the other on fierce defence of national characteristics that led to the creation and strengthening of stereotypes through various measures (Lucena Giraldo 2009). Dance and the social practices surrounding it were one of the battlegrounds, on which foreign dances were seen as rivals to national ones (Mera 2011).

Finally, just three days before the dawn of the Nineteenth century, a Royal Decree forbade on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1799 any performance that was not in Spanish (Castilian) or by native artists. Although the ban was short-lived, its effects on the Spanish dance scene were devastating and long-lasting, according to Carreira (1991).

The tortuous development of Spanish academic ballet during The Enlightenment reveals the internal contradictions stemming from co-existing antagonistic ideological frameworks. The result was a context that was much more complex than a mere opposition between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, bearing in mind that the factor tilting the economic balance towards local art forms seems to have been the Royal Decree of 1799 (Martínez del Fresno 2011).

Thus, the dynamics stemming from the social and institutional context of Eighteenth-century Spain were sufficient to sunder the country from the trends elsewhere in Europe that fostered artistic production in the fields of nationally representative cultured dance.

### Opportunities for establishing a Spanish ballet school

We should now review the opportunities in the Nineteenth century for establishing a Spanish ballet school. The omens for such a development seemed favourable: incipient institutionalization of the art form; an influx of performers, teachers and choreographers from key centres abroad, bringing great artistic and symbolic capital to the country; the growing influence of Spanish dance on the international stage, with the spread of the

*bolero* school and the consolidation of the concept of the *bailarín completo* [complete dancer].

### Institutionalization of academic ballet in Spain

The incipient construction of an institutional framework for dance provided a favourable setting for academic ballet. Around 1807, ignoring the ill intent behind the aforementioned Royal Decree of 1799, the Marqués de Perales embarked on a new project for creating a training centre, presumably with the aim of turning it into the first National Dance School. His initiative provided free training of eight boys and eight girls – previously chosen for their dancing aptitudes – paid for by the Madrid City Council and given a rehearsal room at *el Teatro de los Caños del Peral*, music, teachers, dance and mime teaching methodologies stemming from the Franco-Italian tradition, regulations, timetables, and measures to preserve female virtue (Mera 2015). Mera's study reveals that the project involved the French company run by Lefebre and Lebrunier, with Francisco Lefebre as the Director, and Fernanda Lebrunier in charge of teaching matters. Despite opposition by the comedians of the *Príncipe* and *de la Cruz* theatres (who took umbrage at funding of a national school to impart foreign dance) the project went ahead, in contrast with the previous frustrated initiative of Marqués de Astorga. However, the project of the Marqués de Perales lived shortly, for it lasted from 1807 to 1808 and was cut short by the invasion of the Peninsula by Napoleon (Mera 2015).

Another initiative in 1807 was the new *Reglamento general para la dirección y reforma de teatros* [General Regulations for Theatre Management and Reform]. This again took up the idea of turning *el Colegio de Niños doctinos de San Ildefonso* into an institution for the professional teaching of dance, stage elocution, and theatre music. The idea was that those it trained would be a jewel in the Spanish crown, thus emulating the stellar reputation enjoyed by performers in France and Italy. In this case, it was proposed that students should be taught both national and foreign methods (Mera 2011).

Here, one should note that both projects drew on foreign models – the French and Italian ones –, but unlike these, the prestige value was eclipsed by financial arguments because the scheme was little more than a way of cutting spending on foreign artists, who earned a great deal more than their Spanish counterparts (Mera 2015).

After performing in Madrid, the Lefebre-Lebrunier company set up at the *Teatro Cómico de Sevilla*, becoming the main driver of dance in Seville. Its repertoire, as Álvarez Cañibano states (1992), had never provided such a wide range of dance activities, which alternated between *ballet d'action* and national dances, with many dances and almost daily performances between 1810 and 1813. The protection afforded by the Napoleonic forces of occupation not only benefited Ana Sciomeri, the owner of *Teatro Cómico de Sevilla*, but also Seville society as a whole. As a matter of fact, the purpose of French patronage was to legitimize the Occupation (Álvarez Cañibano 1992).

A little later, the arrival of Romantic Ballet coincided with the boom in theatres – especially in Madrid where, in addition to the old *la Cruz* and *del Príncipe* venues, another ten theatres sprang up in the 1840s (Hormigón 2010). Ones that were especially important for academic ballet were *Teatro del Circo*, *el Gran Teatro del Liceu* and *el Teatro Real*, all three of which had their own dance companies and associated training centres (Alberdi Alonso 2018; Hormigón 2010; Mera 2015; Puig Claramunt 1951).



## The contribution made by foreign dancers, teachers, and choreographers

The arrival in Spain of leading foreign artistes made a big contribution, especially to the *Circo*, *Liceu* and *Real* theatres, raising the chances of establishing a Spanish ballet school. Here we can mention Marius Petipa, his father Jean Antoine, Marie Guy Stéphan, and Sofia Fuoco, linked to *Teatro del Circo* (Hormigón 2010), and Arthur Saint-Léon, Fanny Cerrito, and (again) Sofia Fuoco. These were principal dancers in a major company under the orders of its Director-Choreographer Antonio Appiani, whose first dance season opened at the *Teatro Real* in 1850 (Diana 1850). However, one should bear in mind that there were other artists whose names are seldom cited in the specialized literature, but who were equally important in enriching the Spanish academic ballet scene. They included Jean Baptiste Barrez, Federico Massini, Achille Henry, Giuseppe Villa, Clotilde Laborderie, to mention just a few (Diana 1850; Hormigón 2010; Puig Claramunt 1951).

Their work aligned the Spanish dance scene with the work of other leading European theatres, both with regard to the choreography and the interpretation of the academic repertoire, which included works such as *Giselle*, *Le Corsaire*, *Ondine*, *La Péri* shortly after their world premieres, among many new productions (Hormigón 2017).

One should also bear in mind the work of Spanish artists and teachers, such as Victorino Vera, Ricardo Moragas, and Rosita Mauri who became famous abroad after becoming a star at *la Ópera de Paris* and Milan's *Teatro alla Scala* (Del Val 1992; Hormigón 2010; Puig Claramunt 1951).

## The consumption habits of the emerging bourgeoisie

Botafogo and Braga (1993) argue that the bourgeoisie demanded technological advances to be incorporated in Nineteenth-century stagecraft. These developments opened a window on thrilling magical worlds full of weird and wonderful denizens and strange lands, marking the triumph of French romantic ballet. This cultural phenomenon highlighted the rise of the bourgeoisie – a social class that was to play a decisive role in the development of academic ballet in the Nineteenth century.

The well-heeled social stratum in Spain was also admired by the aristocratic lifestyle and its values, which were incorporated in the bourgeois customs of the day and was evidenced in the affinity of this class for theatre, including ballet, as artistic manifestations of high culture (Cruz Valenciano 2014). The gentleman of the day spent his time between social settings for displaying one's distinction and power and indulging in luxury. Such settings included social balls, theatre, with performances of *bel canto*, *zarzuela*, cultured music, drama, and ballet (Cruz Valenciano 2014). Here, ballet enjoyed even greater popularity than opera, according to Peña y Goñi (1885 2004). Dancing and watching dancing (practice and consumption) shaped academic ballet activities in the Nineteenth century, leading to huge business investment in theatres to meet the growing demand (Hormigón 2017).

## The spread of the *Bolero* school

The trend towards romantic escapism with a dash of local colour gave the *bolero school* a golden opportunity to make its mark abroad and it soon spread to key choreographic

centres such as Paris, Copenhagen, London, and Saint Petersburg, among others (Garafola 1995). There were many *bolero* groups that spread Spanish academic dance far and wide during the Nineteenth century. Here, one can broadly distinguish three generations in this cultural Diaspora:

- The first generation, with the appearance of María Mercandotti, María Ramos, and Sandalio Luengo in London during the opening decades of the Nineteenth century (Guest 1992; Plaza Orellana 2013).
- The second generation, with Dolores Serral, Mariano Camprubí, Manuela Dubiñón, and Francisco Font, performing from the second third of the century onwards, either together or separately in France, Denmark, and the Netherlands, among other European countries (Guest 1992; Plaza Orellana 2013; Puig Claramunt 1951; Salas 1992).
- The third generation, including stars such as Manuela Perea ‘*La Nena*’, Petra Cámara, Josefa Vargas, Concepción Ruiz, Josefa Soto, a generation that was much better academically trained and with a much broader range of virtuoso skills (Guest 1986; Plaza Orellana 2013).

In addition, one should note the great work done by Marius Petipa and Arthur Saint-Léon in spreading the *bolero school* in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and Paris. Both were familiar with Spanish folk dances because of their respective stays in the Peninsula (Hormigón 2010; Salas 1992). There was also the contribution made by Francisco Miralles, especially after 1900 (Rodríguez Lloréns 2015).

### The concept of the *complete dancer*

Finally, we appraise the singular *bailarín completo* [*complete dancer*] concept as a way of avoiding hybridization between Spanish dance and academic ballet (Ruiz Mayordomo 1999). The phenomenon describes what one might call ‘bilingual’ dancers in terms of the ‘language’ of choreography. These artists were able to tackle Spanish and foreign dance repertoires with equal skill. Precursors of this new kind of dancer can be found in María Medina Viganò, the Lefebvre-Lebrunier Company, Marie Guy Stéphan, and Marius Petipa, among others. Exponents of the approach such as Ricardo Moragas, Vicente Moreno, Rosita Mauri, and Francisco Miralles were just a foretaste of a broader movement in the Twentieth century, whose main centers were Barcelona and Madrid, with dancers such as Joan Magriñá, María de Ávila, *Mariemma*, among many others (Puig Claramunt 1951; Rodríguez Lloréns 2015).

This approach not only revealed the curricular meshes laid by public dance conservatories in the Twentieth century (Mariemma 1997), but it was also reflected in institutional developments. For example, after its inauguration in 1847, *el Gran Teatre del Liceu* required two dance companies, one to perform what was then called *el rango español* [the Spanish dance range], and one to perform *el rango francés* [the French dance range]. From 1852 onwards, the hybrid repertoire based on ballet and Spanish dance, was covered by the same company until the decline of Romanticism pushed ballet into the background (Puig Claramunt 1951) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Academic Ballet and National Dance Companies at el Gran Teatre del Liceu from 1847 to 1900

**Table 1.** *Academic Ballet and National Dance Companies at el Gran Teatre del Liceu from 1847 to 1900.*

Period	Company type	Management
1847–1848	Classical Ballet	Albert Bellón
1847–1851	National Dances	Joan Camprubí
1849–1851	Classical Ballet	Jean Baptiste Barrez
1852	Classical Ballet & National Dances	Federico Bartotelo
1853–1858	Classical Ballet & National Dances	C. Duchateau, José Nieto and José Puig
1859–1864	Classical Ballet & National Dances	Ricardo Moragas
1865	Classical Ballet & National Dances	Gustavo Carey
1866–1872	Classical Ballet & National Dances	Ricardo Moragas
1873–1881	Classical Ballet	Juan Garbagmati
1882–1900	Contracting of foreign companies by shows	Various

Source: Author, based on Puig Claramunt (1951).

## Conflict, social capital, and institutional failure as hurdles to ballet's development in Spain

We shall now review the factors that stunted the development of academic ballet in Nineteenth-century Spain. The key factors were: (1) the persistence of a xenophile/xenophobic conflict of identity; (2) a weaker bourgeois culture than in other major European nations; (3) theatres inability to hang on to local and foreign talent; (4) the marginal status of Bolero in traditional dance circles; (5) *inter-field* conflicts and lack of interest by 'the powers that be' (Bourdieu's *power field*); (6) institutional failure under adverse historical conditions.

### The persistence of a conflict of identity and the social perception of academic ballet

The conflict of identity that raged in the eighteenth century was one of the reasons for the aforementioned Royal Decree of the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1799, which dealt academic ballet a body blow. While the ban came to an end in 1806 (Mera 2011; Roldán Fidalgo 2015), the nationalist feeling sparked by the Napoleonic invasion meant that ballet (with its foreign origins) was widely despised, especially by common folk, who greatly preferred local art forms (Ivanova 1972). Ballet was seen as both elitist and alien.

Although ballet had made its mark by mid-century through the boom in theatres and its following by the upper classes, the turn of events tilted the balance against the art form (Hormigón 2017). One of these events was the so-called 'choreography war', which was politically and commercially motivated. Like the 'war' unleashed in Paris fifteen years earlier between the supporters of Taglioni and Elssler, the Spanish battle was between bourgeois supporters of Guy Stephan (*guyistas*), headed by the businessman José de Salamanca, and those of the nobility who admired Sofía Fuoco (*fuquistas*), led by Narváez (Hormigón 2010, 2017; Lavaur 1999). The farcical battle was joined by the *varguistas* and *nenistas* (Plaza Orellana 2013) and was reflected in the foreign press. This argument turned the intellectuals against ballet, which had simply been exploited as pretext for settling political and other scores (Hormigón 2017).

## A weaker bourgeois culture than in other major European nations

Some recent studies support the hypotheses of leading historians (Fusi Aizpurua and Palafox Gámir 1997; Vincent 2007), arguing that the Spanish bourgeoisie of the time was sufficiently well-rooted to drive the kinds of cultural changes, consumption patterns, and lifestyles as those in other European countries (Cruz Valenciano 2014), but that this factor was not as important in the Spanish case as in other nations when it came to forging an academic ballet school. Other initiatives in the music field, such as the *Unión Artístico-Musical* in Madrid were precarious ventures beset by adverse market conditions at the end of the Nineteenth century (Flores Rodriguez 2018). The lack of a State willing to fund such initiatives was a common denominator in the world of theatre and music. The resulting instability meant it was hard for performers to make a living – something that made for short-lived projects. This situation means one cannot corroborate the above-mentioned thesis, at least on the supply side in the dance and musical fields.

## Inability to hang on to local and foreign talent

Theatres showed themselves incapable of hanging on to artists, whether local or foreign. Although the subject has been yet little explored, there are various bits of evidence that financial straits may have been partly responsible for ballet's failure to take root in Spain. The already scanty salaries of artists were affected by political instability, wars, epidemics, not to mention the bankruptcies of theatre-owners. Such vicissitudes led to the cancellation of many a theatre program, failure to pay wages, cancellation of dancers' contracts, maestros forced to emigrate to pursue their careers abroad, and so on (Guest 1992; Mera 2015; Plaza Orellana 2013), quite apart from those who left for personal reasons (Hormigón 2017).

## Meagre social capital and the marginal status of *Bolero* in traditional dance circle

While the internationalization of the *bolero* school was marked, Lynn Garafola (1995) questions the status of *bolero* dancers and their art in Paris. That is because in French Romantic Ballet, *bolero* was treated less as an art form from a **neighbouring** European country and more as something that smacked of the Arab world, with strong connotations of exoticism, eroticism, primitivism, vulgarity, and orientalism – in other words, all the stereotypes so often found in Romanticism.

Apart from the ideas evoked by *bolero*, there was also the fact that it was linked with commercial theatre – yet another hurdle to it forging a link with academic ballet, which was then battling to be taken as a serious art form. Spanish dance was segregated from the practices of *la Opéra de Paris* and, although it made its mark on the romantic repertoire, its impact on the language of *danse d'école* was slight (Aschengreen 1992). *Bolero* left behind it a trail of socially marginalized performers desperately seeking patrons so that they could make ends meet and gain a measure of social recognition (Plaza Orellana 2013).

### Inter-field conflicts

Another factor weakening ballet in Nineteenth-century Spain can be explained by Bourdieu's *Field Theory*, which points to the role social dynamics play in articulating fields of artistic production. Throughout the Nineteenth century, *inter-field* challenges, especially those covering identity issues, that had been worsened by the Royal Decree of 1799, became less pronounced by the 1850s as solutions such as *the complete dancer* were found.

There were also conflicts with other *fields* of artistic production (for example, drama and singing) that were eager not to lose ground to ballet, making it even harder for the dance genre to carve out a niche in Spanish theatres (Mera 2015). The problem worsened for ballet towards the end of the Nineteenth century as *Wagnerism* swept the board in opera houses (Puig Claramunt 1951).

Furthermore, dance as an artistic field was *heteronymic* and, therefore, subject to various external conditioning factors. It strongly depended on the decisions made by the ruling class. This explains the tensions with the *power field*. Those wielding power did little to institutionalize ballet in Spain. This was in marked contrast to the situation that Marius Petipa found in Russia, where the Tsars gave ballet their unconditional support – something that proved decisive in making the dance form flourish there (Tomina 1945).

### Institutional failure

This last point in our analysis is strongly linked to the foregoing one. It concerns the institutional failure caused by *path dependence*. In this respect, and unlike the centuries-old institutions found in other European settings, no sound projects were drawn up for a national ballet company or a training centre capable of surviving events such as the Peninsula War or the Carlist Wars (Guest 1992; Mera 2015). To these hurdles, one should add unfavourable regulations such as the Royal Decree of 1799, a vacillating cultural policy with fuzzy goals, and the limited impact of certain artistic trends. Of great importance is, for instance, the decadence of Romanticism, with ballet succumbing to cheap sensuality on the one hand and *Wagnerism* on the other (Puig Claramunt 1951).

In addition, the persistent lack of an academic institution as a body regulating practices was a further hurdle to the legitimization of the art form.

In the end, the sum of all these factors working against the establishment of a Spanish school of ballet cancelled out the positive developments in this field. Here, one should note that academic ballet stagnated (except in Russia) between the decadence of Romanticism and the arrival of Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes* in the West in 1909. This problem was therefore not confined to Spain. Nevertheless, the obstacles strewn in the way of the establishment of a Spanish school of academic ballet meant the arrival of Diaghilev's company had little lasting impact in Spain. This was in stark contrast to its impact elsewhere, where the *Ballets Russes* both directly and indirectly breathed new life into the art form in France and consolidated ballet in Great Britain and the United States. Spain would continue to suffer from the impact of *path dependence* and the lack of a strong social and institutional underpinning for academic ballet, notwithstanding the nation's remarkable dancing traditions.

## Conclusions

The Nineteenth century in Spain is of key importance to understand how bourgeois art and culture developed and the impact of this class on the nation as a whole. In this paper, we examined the artistic, historical, and social factors that hindered the consolidation of a Spanish academic ballet school and why these outweighed the factors favouring the art form taking root.

Each positive indicator was more than cancelled out by a negative one preventing the establishment of a ballet *school*. The boom in academic ballet's *artistic field* drew on considerable foreign artistic capital, and was more than offset by the lack of interest of the political class in developing and protecting a national ballet. This cold indifference tilted the balance towards other artistic fields, which pressed home their advantage in the long-running conflict of identity. The upshot was that ballet was given a bad name and the notion of the genre was spurned as common heritage of some citizens.

The weaving of an institutional fabric of hybrid companies based on the concept of *the complete dancer* was offset by the disdain for the ballet of the ruling class, or, as Bourdieu would put it, *the power field*. This blocked institutionalization and weakened the structures of ballet. As a result, ballet was rendered helpless before a hostile regulatory framework, the decadence of favourable artistic currents, and adverse historical circumstances. The result was institutional inertia rooted in *path dependence*, whose effects have lasted until this day.

The rapid emergence of an artistic elite was cancelled out by the haemorrhage of local and foreign artists, who sought better career opportunities abroad.

Although Spain experienced a late, hazy Enlightenment compared with Northern Europe, there were marked changes in the lifestyles and in the cultural consumption of a tiny but influential part of Spanish society. However, in the dance sphere, Spain is a case of failed modernization.

Meanwhile, the trend that put Spanish dance in the international limelight through the spread of the *bolero* school was cut short by the weak social capital built up by performers in the main centres of academic ballet, thus confirming marginal status of Spain in the sphere of High Culture, and hence its inability to play a role in defining the artistic field.

All these factors prevented the creation of an academic ballet school in Nineteenth-century Spain, killing off its chances of achieving symbolic importance and being seen as part of the common heritage. They explain the current state of development of Spanish dance and academic ballet as the product of deeply-ingrained social and institutional vices characterized by instability, the loss of talent abroad, precarious employment, and the low social status accorded dancers in Spanish society.

Due to path dependence, this will have consequences in Spanish dance and ballet in the 20th and 21st centuries, especially with regard to the training of dancers in the public context, which is best resolved in Spanish dance and flamenco with the capitalization of the concept of the complete dancer. Conversely the training of dancers dedicated to academic ballet will be conditioned by the lack of a defined model that functions as social reproduction factor. This will be taught out in the formal and non-formal study plans implemented in public conservatories and private academies, institutions that are not capable of articulating an homogeneous system of feeding local talent to the official company created in 1979, today Compañía Nacional de Danza.



Despite this, the development of a more eclectic and diverse training model in Spain, not based on dogma, will make several generations of leading figures flourish among which we can mention Ana Laguna (Cullberg Ballet), Arantxa Argüelles (Berlin Staatsballett), Trinidad Sevillano (London Festival Ballet), José Carlos Martínez (Opéra National de Paris), Tamara Rojo (Royal Ballet/English National Ballet), Ángel Corella (American Ballet Theater), Lucía Lacarra (Ballet National de Marseille, Bayerisches Staatsballett), Joaquín de Luz (New York City Ballet), just to name a few of them. The common denominator of all of them is their technical mastery and versatility to be incorporated into strongly institutionalized contexts such as the British, French or American, among others, accounting for the magnitude of the artistic product generated despite the lack of an implemented state model.

Thus, it seems to be verified that the configuration and evolution of the national ballet schools do not constitute an irreplaceable quality indicator of the development of ballet in a geographical context. Nevertheless, gives reasons to think in stable settings in which this art flourishes and develops with less difficulty than in other contexts.

Finally, it is suggestible to complete this analysis by focusing on the development of ballet in Spain in the 20th century, which will be offered in future approaches to this topic.

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