

# Linking the tradition to modernity with the choreographic aesthetics of Shen Wei's and Xiaoxiong Zhang's *The Rite of Spring*

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## Abstract

Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* has inspired a plethora of artists in its hundred years of history. As it transcends geographic barriers, it has also been choreographed by many great dance masters such as Maurice Béjart and Pina Bausch from the West, and Hwai-Min Lin and Helen Lai from the East. This paper focuses on the choreographic aesthetics of versions of *The Rite of Spring* by choreographers Zhang Xiaoxiong and Shen Wei. Zhang's version depicts images with references both to the original work of Vaslav Nijinsky, and to aspects of Asian culture in a way that is sensitive to the original music and to his memories as a child living in Cambodia. Shen has been known for his organic movement vocabulary and unique way of using Chinese cultural elements. By tracing their separate creative processes, I discuss how choreographers negotiate tradition and innovation through their different choreographic methods and aesthetic visions through contemporary dance.

Keywords: choreographic aesthetic, cultural identity, dance, nostalgia, *Rite of Spring*.

## Introduction

Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* has inspired a plethora of artists in its hundred year history. As music, it is the emblem of an era of great scientific, artistic and intellectual achievement. As it transcends geographic and temporal barriers, it has also been choreographed by many great dance masters such as French choreographer Maurice Béjart (1959) and German choreographer Pina Bausch (1975) from the West, and Taiwanese choreographer Hwai-Min Lin<sup>1</sup> (1984) and Hong Kong choreographer Helen Lai<sup>2</sup> (1992) from the East.

In this paper, I focus on the choreographic aesthetics of versions of *The Rite of Spring* by Chinese choreographers Zhang Xiaoxiong and Shen Wei. Zhang Xiaoxiong, in his version of *Rite of Spring* (2008), depicts images with references both to the original work of Vaslav Nijinsky in 1913, and to aspects of Asian culture. Zhang is both sensitive to the original music and influenced by his personal memories of childhood in Cambodia and teenage years in China during the Cultural Revolution. Shen Wei, from *Folding* (2000) to *Rite of Spring* (2004), has been known as an innovator of dance, and is internationally renowned for his organic movement vocabulary and unique way of using Chinese cultural elements. By examining both versions of *Rite of Spring*, I discuss how these choreographers explore the creative blending of their native cultural elements with contemporary ideas. I also describe how both choreographers negotiate their cultural background and life experience through contemporary dance. I focus on the specific issues of Chinese diaspora and look at how the Chinese dancing body negotiates 'Chineseness' in a globalized world.

## Chinese dancing body in diaspora

The concepts of individual identity and cultural memory can be traced to a personal proclivity for nostalgia. According to Wantanee Suntikul (2013), the term nostalgia was first used by Johannes Hofer in 1688 and the term refers to its original meaning of longing for a place left behind. Nostalgia has now come to refer more frequently for a longing for a particular time in the past (cited in Gammon, 2002, p. 1).

In addition, Boym (2001) distinguishes the two stands of nostalgic emotion: restorative and reflective, as follows:

'Restorative nostalgia' is grounded in grand narratives of national identity and shared values and truths, and is concerned with the return to a previous, ostensibly better, state. 'Reflective nostalgia' has its roots in individual memory of one's personal past and is associated with fragments and details in the present that evoke connections to a personal past (p. 1).

I propose that the feeling of nostalgia can be temporarily created through the medium of traditional performance but it can also be carried through a Chinese dancing body. Nostalgia, as an apolitical sentiment, can arouse an extreme feeling of nationalism and patriotism without necessarily addressing the political issues surrounding the idea of nation. The savouring of lost nationalism and patriotism is experienced by the individual who feels nostalgia for the lost homeland. One of the side effects of globalization in this research is the continuous production and consumption of Chinese nostalgia.

Throughout my personal experience of living in Los Angeles, California from 1997 to 2015, I noticed a large demand for the teaching and performance of traditional Chinese dance in Southern Californian communities. Chinese immigrants celebrated Chinese holidays throughout the year. Representations of Chinese traditional dance have also been showcased in major dance competitions such as Showstopper or Starpower throughout the United States. From my own experience and observation, dance students or audiences exhibit strong feelings of cultural connection to China, particularly the ones who have had families in the United States for a long time.

According to the cultural studies scholar James Clifford, in his book *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, 'because moving is a living status of human beings and of culture, its rootedness is interwoven with its routes, and the perspective of dwelling-in-travel should be acknowledged' (1997, p. 25). Bodies therefore are important receptacles of cultural knowledge and diffusion because the movements of whole people are reflected in the microcosm of the culturally dancing body. By applying this idea in this paper, I examine the Chinese dancing body in relation to the construction of the subjective idea of 'Chineseness' on the global stage, as a measure of the movement of Chinese culture, and reflection of nostalgia in diaspora.

In her book *Kinesthetic City—Dance & Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*, SanSan Kwan (2013) locates her study in five urban Chinese spaces (the Chinatowns) in Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, New York and Los Angeles, and explores the contentious nature of Chineseness in diaspora through the lens of moving bodies as they relate to place, time, and identity. Kwan lays out the similarities and

differences in the construction of Chineseness and proposes how the moving bodies that she considers are not only those in performances by such well-known Chinese dance companies as Cloud Gate Dance Theater of Taiwan or City Contemporary Dance Company in Hong Kong, but also her own as she navigates urban Chinese spaces. Kwan's observations make key connections between the performance of Chineseness for both Chinese and foreign audiences hungry for an imagined Chinese heritage, while also acknowledging the influence of surrounding foreign cultures and spaces on the idea of 'Chineseness'.

Applying Kwan's idea of urban Chinese spaces and her personal experiences to this paper, I also look at how Chinese people negotiate a feeling of nostalgia for the lost homeland through the practice of contemporary dance in the Chinese metropolises—Taipei and New York. I trace how the Chinese dancing body travels, and examine how the Chinese dancing body labours to project 'Chineseness' and Chinese modernity in the globalized world. In a diasporic community, the imagined cultural heritage becomes infused and influenced by the surrounding cultural practice and aesthetic. Expanding from the argument that identity is shaped by social experience, I use both Zhang's and Shen's *Rite of Spring* as examples, to discuss how the dancing body is an archive of a group's collective memory when social and cultural values change. By tracing their separate creative processes, I discuss how both choreographers negotiate tradition and innovation through their choreographic methods and aesthetic visions and argue how an image of Chinese modernity has been built through this dance practice.

### **Dancing Chineseness in Chinese metropolises**

Zhang Xiaoxiong was born in Cambodia in 1958. However, when the Khmer Rouge<sup>3</sup> emerged in 1968, Zhang's parents sent him back to China at only twelve years old. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), at the age of fifteen, he started to learn Russian style ballet technique as well as Chinese classical dance, folk dance, and ethnic minority dances through his school's dance team. He also performed the Chinese model plays for school services. In 1983, Zhang immigrated to Australia to join his mother, who had been accepted by the South Australian government as a Cambodian refugee. He started formal dance training of ballet, modern and contemporary dance at the *Adelaide* College of the Arts in 1984. He subsequently joined the Sydney-based One Extra Dance Company (1985–87), Australian Dance Theatre (1987–92), and Vis-à-Vis Dance Company (1994–95). According to my interview with Zhang (2013), he saw Maurice Bejart's *Rite of Spring* in a dance history class during his college study in Australia. Upon hearing the music, his mind was filled with vivid visual images. He decided one day he would make his own version of the dance, as Zhang mentioned in the interview:

The music itself is very structured, and it is very visual.... My experience with western classical music only began in my college years. I listened to all kinds of classical music during those four years, and the accumulation of all that experience was a big help when I first heard *The Rite of Spring*, a so-called modern classic. My training in classical music allows me to understand the structure and composition of *The Rite of Spring*, and every little detail is profound both musically and visually. It brings out images

of my memory from childhood to college, and those images intertwine vividly with the story that the music is trying to tell (X. Zhang, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

After spending almost thirty years soul searching, Zhang finally choreographed the *Rite of Spring* at Taipei National University of Arts in 2008. Since then, the piece has been re-staged for the Taipei International Festival of Dance Academies in 2012, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2013, the Hong Kong Dance Company in 2014 and Beijing Normal University in 2015.



*Rite of Spring* (2013) performed by Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Photo: Xiaoxiong Zhang.



*Rite of Spring* (2014) performed by Hong Kong Dance Company. Photo: Xiaoxiong Zhang.



*Rite of Spring* (2015) performed by Beijing Normal University. Photo: Xiaoxiong Zhang.

Zhang has been travelling through Chinese speaking communities in Cambodia, China, Australia, Hong Kong and Taiwan for the past forty years. These travelling and living experiences have formed his unique cultural background that is both western and eastern. In his version of *Rite of Spring*, Zhang expresses his personal feelings and life experiences of his childhood in Cambodia and during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He also includes personal stories about his family members in his work. Zhang saw people killed and their dead bodies strewn all over the rivers. He mentioned his sister, who had worried constantly during the war, because all the girls in the villages had to line up next to the well for the injured or disabled soldiers to choose as sex slaves. As Zhang mentioned in his personal interview with me:

The dirt field next to the well was the only open area in the village. Many young girls were forced to bring themselves next to the well, and some of them were almost ready to just jump in. My sister was one of them, and these kinds of images keep popping up in my head. I have to digest these brutal images from the past, and then decide if I should perhaps turn them into a powerful protest, or present them rationally, collectively, but with enough warmth and passion. It has been a great challenge. I have spent twenty, maybe thirty years to collect all these emotions. For these survivors of war and their families, my families, and all my friends who have been put through the savagery of the Cultural Revolution, this music certainly stirs up these feelings that rest inside of us, and it will take time to really examine the causes of these feelings (X. Zhang, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

Zhang's observations and experiences influenced the structure and narrative of his *Rite*, which is based on two parallel stories, involving two main female and two male characters. Through these stories he lays out the power relationships and dynamics between a higher being and humanity. Zhang mentioned in his interview:

It is as if, driven by the power of the group, a young girl is pushed out to be sacrificed, and this young girl, or maybe this young boy, in many ways shoulders the burden of survival for the entire group. Therefore, in the highlight of the ceremony, the sacrifice of the individual, it reminds me of my personal experience in the past. Whether it was in Cambodia, or during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, this sacrifice, or shall we say, the forced sacrifice of an individual by an entire group, is much too common to me (X. Zhang, personal communication, October 10, 2013).

These real stories and experiences were transferred and presented as powerful images through his choreography. In Zhang's *Rite of Spring*, with contemporary dance as a medium, he uses Western dance techniques as his language, and also focuses on the relationship between the movement and music to express his personal feelings and story. Zhang mentioned in his interview that, for him, the body's language could transcend cultural borders. Technique training is an important part during the rehearsal process in order to prepare dancers for the performance. His technique training focuses on strengthening the core, centre and control of the limbs. As an artist, choreographer and educator, Zhang is successful in finding a balance in between technique and narrative. During the early 1990s, after he left Australian Dance Theatre, he taught full-time at the Hong Kong Academy for



*Rite of Spring* (2012) performed by Taipei National University of Arts. Photo: Xiaoxiong Zhang

Performing Arts. At the same time, he was also invited to teach at Guangdong Modern Dance Company before he settled down in Taipei, Taiwan in 1996. The company dancers he worked with were China's second-generation modern dance artists such as Xiang Liang,<sup>4</sup> Sang Jijia,<sup>5</sup> Yang Yuntao,<sup>6</sup> Hou Ying,<sup>7</sup> Shen Wei and many others. These dance artists, who later became major figures in the development of modern dance in China, Hong Kong, and even in the United States, had Zhang's training and influences with them through their professional careers.

Unlike many other famous versions of *Rite of Spring*, for example Bejart's in 1959, Bausch's in 1975, even Zhang Xiaoxiong's in 2008, which make clear reference to Nijinsky's original sacrificial ballet idea, Shen Wei's *Rite of Spring* has provided a very modern look and entered altogether new territory. Shen Wei is renowned for using dancing bodies to express a fusion of aesthetic ideas and visual images on stage.

Shen Wei was born in Hunan, China in 1968, started Chinese Opera training at the age of nine and performed professionally with Hunan State Xian Opera Company from 1984–89. He joined the Guangdong Modern Dance Company in 1991. Upon by receiving a scholarship from the Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab, he moved to New York City in 1995. In 2000, he formed his own company Shen Wei Dance Arts at the American Dance Festival.

Shen Wei's version of *Rite of Spring* embarks on new choreographic territory because it provides a modern visual illustration of a contemporary version of the music. He choreographed *Rite* without the classical story-line of *Le Sacre du Printemps* and focused instead on the abstracted movement-vocabulary and its relationship to the music. Dance critic Renate Stendhal explained, ' [Shen Wei] does not use the orchestral version of Stravinsky's score that premiered with the Ballet Russes in

1913 in Paris [..., instead, he] uses a four-hand piano version' (which Paul Taylor also used for his story-telling version of *Sacre*), a recorded arrangement by only one pianist, Fazil Say<sup>8</sup> (2004, n. p.).

Here, it is obvious that Shen Wei's music choice is a significant factor that distinguishes his version of *Rite of Spring* from others'. The dance 'begins even before the audience knows it as the dancers calmly walk to their places on stage before the house lights have dimmed' (Kuo, 2004, n. p.). Twelve dancers start out in silence. They begin within the line at both sides of the stage upon a floor designed and painted with abstract patterns and lines by Shen Wei himself. Dancers slowly enter stage one by one by taking a place, being still, or facing a specific direction. 'The moment the piano starts, the movement strikes with one explosive surprise after another [...]. The choreography moves and is informed by the music' (Stendhal, 2004, n. p.) but is not reactive to the music. Sometimes the entire group moves altogether; sometimes individual movement dominates. It seems that Shen Wei lays out the entire music score as a stage visual for viewers to read.

In her book *Colonial fantasies: Towards a feminist reading of Orientalism*, Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) offers a complex analysis on the contrasting relationships between west and east, between orient and occident, between subject and object, between self and other, and between 'man' (European white male) and 'woman' (the Third World). She explains that the west has identified itself by recognizing its 'difference' from others. Applying this idea to Shen Wei, through his choreographies, also highlight cultural differences in order to distinguish himself from other contemporary choreographers. He explores the possibilities of body movements, and is constantly creating new movement vocabulary, which simultaneously creates an image of Chinese modernity for the audience.

The specific physicality of Shen Wei's choreography is an important factor distinguishing his version from others'. The original and organic movements in Shen Wei's *Rite of Spring* explore four major movement qualities: momentum, rotation, centre shifting, and continuity. By refining a specific movement vocabulary, Shen Wei clearly demonstrates an idea of core-distal connectivity for which dancers must have a strong centre. While they move their torso in a spiral motion, their limbs can reach out fully in lines at the same time, and it seems that dancers can control their limbs and torsos easily. In some movements, the dancers move their joints and limbs individually and freely in a short amount of time. He plays upon the rotation and movement of single joints, such as shoulders, elbows, and ankles, and also uses movements from Chinese opera such as the cloud hand, as well as running and walking steps that are unique to Chinese opera. Although these movements are used as transitions to connect sections or major movement phrases, these traditional movements are blended with the contemporary movements seamlessly.

Since western modern dance was imported to China in the late 1980s, it has been an important factor in the development of contemporary Chinese dance in general. Knowing that he or she is an object of study in the west, many of these Chinese choreographers, who left mainland China, have not only 'self-orientalised' by forming their individual cultural identities, but have also shown a renovation of a hybrid dancing body through contemporary dance in the twenty-first century. Although Shen Wei has established his career outside of China, he is still part of this history. By

examining his aesthetic visions and creative processes for *Rite of Spring*, I suggest that the Chinese dancing body has become a cultural hybrid in today's contemporary dance world and Shen Wei has created and transferred this cultural hybrid dancing body to the non-Chinese dancers successfully. This is significant because he not only demonstrates cultural exchange but he also shows the hybridity of dancing bodies. As a founding company member, American dancer Sara Procopio described her experience in a personal interview with Byron Woods (2010) at the American Dance Festival:

[Shen Wei's] work has a different voice and vision than anyone else that's out there. I don't think what he's doing is similar in many ways to what else is being done, in terms of its visual aspects, and the different movement qualities he's continued to develop. There's a different way of moving he encourages. And as one who's taught his work at various universities and festivals, and who's passing this information on to younger dancers, I hear so many times, "This is so different from anything I've learned before. At my school, no one's ever talked about movement in that way." There's valuable information that has come out of his vision. I've watched my own dancing change and grow, and I've seen my students' dancing grow as well. In some way, they've become a bit more versatile; they have more tools to choose from. I think that's an important contribution (n. p.).

Since Shen Wei has spent twenty-six years in China and twenty years in New York, his choreography is considered to be a transnational production on the globalized stage. Some people may argue that his success is due to the attractiveness of his "exotic" cultural elements. However, I contend that Shen Wei's choreographic work is different from that of other Chinese dance artists such as Yang Liping's *Spirit of Peacock* (1986) and Zhang Jigang's *Thousand Hand Bodhisattva* (2007), as the two latter choreographers simply re-orientalised themselves and repackaged their own cultural traditions in their arts. As dance critic Rachel Straus states concerning Shen Wei's work, '[h]is works resemble each other for looking neither Western nor Eastern, following neither ballet, modern dance or the Chinese opera tradition. They resemble each other for their exactitude' (2007, n. p.). As Procopio mentioned:

Shen Wei's vision deals with the whole big picture, not just the movement, but the lights, the costumes, the sounds, in a highly detailed or specific way. All elements are cared about, paid attention to. I think it's his unique way of moving bodies through space; having multiple things happening at the same time. I know what that feels like from inside the work, but I often hear from people who have had the chance to see a work performed a couple of nights in a row say "Oh, I totally saw this tonight, but last night I didn't even notice that because my eye was looking at something else." On a second viewing, they have a totally different experience (Wood, 2010, n. p.).

In both versions of the *Rite of Spring*, Chinese choreographers Zhang and Shen promote and support the idea of boundary crossing among cultural elements through contemporary dance practices. Shen Wei blends cultures specifically in terms of his combination of movement vocabulary, but Xiaoxiong Zhang combines this canon piece of western music with Chinese cultural narrative and memory. The Chinese

dancing body acknowledges the differences between various cultural elements and western dance techniques, while simultaneously creating a fantasy of Chineseness by producing innovative fresh looks of contemporary Chinese dance. Through these representations of *Rite of Spring*, both Chinese choreographers show multi-cultural images to the world, creating unique perspectives on cultural identity and hybrid dancing bodies. Hong Kong arts critic Andy Ng discussed how Shen Wei blends Chinese opera elements in developing his movements:

What he [Shen Wei] pursues in *The Rite of Spring* is not the drama inside and outside the music,<sup>9</sup> but rather the variety in movements, in particular the curved linear movements. Such movements often appear in Chinese folk dance, particularly in the movements of female dancers. The dancer lifts one arm high above her head with the palm facing up; by twisting her wrist, she brings the arm to a turning movement that leads the whole body to turn in one direction [and] such movement of turning one's body by twisting the wrist is also adopted in Chinese opera. Interestingly, in *The Rite of Spring*, the stage is divided into square patterns. While making the twisting movements, the dancers' bodies clearly draw lines that move like serpents. English painter William Hogarth once said, "Serpentine lines are nimble and lively, which whirl in different directions simultaneously and satisfy the eyes by leading them to chase after their infinite variety [...]. They embody a variety of content"<sup>10</sup> (2006, n. p.).

Although the twisting movements seem to have been adopted from the Chinese opera, the way the female dancer moves does look completely fresh and contemporary. The particularly curved line is in contrast with the drawn lines on the floor. It is very exciting for viewers to see how Chinese modernity is created and projected through this hybrid dancing body. As Stendhal states in her review of Shen Wei's *Rite of Spring*:

I was struck by the technical and stylistic cohesion of the twelve dancers, bringing to mind the severely trained artists of Chinese Opera or, in the West, the unity of the New York City Ballet at the time of Balanchine's brilliant dictatorship [...]. There were comical touches: movements that made burlesque allusions to Mats Ek; running and childlike crawling seemingly right out of Pina Bausch; there was the spice of Balanchine's disjointed hip swings and flexed feet; there was the bent-back stomping that for seconds brought back the original folkloristic Russian inspiration of Nijinski's choreography. Shen Wei's choreography held the tension between occupied space and negative space and between concentric and exploding movements of ensembles, quartets, trios or solos, without ever falling into chaoticness or haste [...]. Dance critic Anna Kisselgoff called it "an instant classic." "It is hard to recall anyone else," she wrote, "who has responded to the music with such striking, stripped-to-the-bone abstraction as Mr. Shen has" (2004, n. p.).

In this paper, I contend that both Zhang's and Shen's versions of the *Rite of Spring*, as latest 'representations' of the Orient, are continuing to satisfy both the producer and the consumer through innovating the Chinese dancing body. As Woods mentioned,

When I'm seeing a full-company world premiere by him [Shen Wei], I know I'm going to have to get the second ticket for the second night. I know I'm only going to be able to see a fraction of everything that's there the first time; more is going on than I'm going to be able to attend to in one viewing (2010, n. p.).

In another review of Xiaoxiong Zhang's *Rite of Spring*, Australian dance critic Philip Channells states,

Zhang's interpretation is as much striking as it is provocative for any admirer of the human form as it paints a powerful and compelling tale of tragedy some prefer to forget [...]. Zhang's choreography is an electrifying depiction of traditional belief which marries beautifully and poetically to Stravinsky's composition as if it were written for this dance alone (2012, n. p.).

Because of the artistic achievement and the popularity of their works, respectively, Shen Wei has been invited to the Lincoln Center International Arts Festival five times since 2000, and Zhang Xiaoxiong's *Rite of Spring* has been re-staged in Taipei, Australia, Beijing and Hong Kong since 2008.

The subject matter of the *Rite of Spring*, the contexts of the creations, and the choreographies themselves embody the essence of a globalized world, where identity straddles cultural boundaries between East and West. Tracing both Zhang Xiaoxiong's and Shen Wei's creative pathways to the *Rite of Spring*, I demonstrate how these two Chinese choreographers have created a new and hybrid Chinese dancing body through contemporary dance. Both versions of the *Rite of Spring* not only show that Chinese dance can be an archive of a group's collective memory of social and cultural value, but both versions also embody a fresh perspective on Chinese modernity through the dancing body on a globalized stage.

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1. Hwai-Min Lin (1947– ) is the founder and artistic director of Cloud Gate Dance Theater of Taiwan. Cloud Gate is the first modern dance company in the Chinese speaking community since 1973.

2. Helen Lai has earned her place as Hong Kong's most prominent *choreographer*. She joined Hong Kong City Contemporary Dance Company as a founding member in 1979 and as the Artistic Director from 1985–89. She has been its resident *choreographer* since 1991.

3. The Khmer Rouge or Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) was the ruling party in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. For more details of this genocidal regime see <http://www.cambodiatribunal.org/history/cambodian-history/khmer-rouge-history/> (retrieved 31 October 2015).

4. Xing Liang (1972– ), a former principal dancer and choreographer at Hong Kong City Contemporary Dance Company during 1999–2011.

5. Sang Jijia (1973– ), an independent choreographer and currently guest artist at Beijing LDTX Modern Dance Company, worked with William Forsythe 2000–2006.

6. Yang Yuntao (1975– ) has been artistic director of Hong Kong Dance Company since 2013.

7. Hou Ying (1973– ), a formal principal dancer and rehearsal director at Shen Wei Dance Arts 2001–2010, is the artistic director of Hou Ying Dance Theater since 2013.
8. Fazil Say, a Turkish pianist and composer, was born in Ankara in 1970.
9. In 1913, Vaslav Nijinsky first choreographed a ballet of the same name to the Igor Stravinsky score. However, the radical choreography led to arguments between supporters and opponents in the theatre. Choreographers of later generations have also created works that have occasioned a similar reaction , including local choreographer Helen Lai (Ng, 2006).
10. From a translation of *The Analysis of Beauty* written by William Hogarth, translated by Yang Chengyin (Ng, 2006).

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***Personal Interviews (conducted by the author)***

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**Biography**

Professor Ting-Ting Chang, PhD, is a dancer, choreographer, and educator. Currently, she is an assistant professor and the director of the International Educational Program at National Taiwan University of Arts. Her research focuses on contemporary dance in Asia and cross-cultural performance. Her interests include post colonialism, diaspora study and globalization. She has presented her interdisciplinary research at Association for Asian Studies, The Congress on Research in Dance, Society of Dance History Scholars, World Dance Alliance, etc. Professor Chang is also an artistic director of T.T.C Dance, and has presented works internationally including at the American Dance Festival and Festival d'Avignon, Off. She holds a PhD from University of California, Riverside, and an MFA from University of California, Irvine. She was an Andrew W. Mellon postdoctoral fellow in dance at Washington University in St. Louis.