



Exploring Global Education Through Dance: Cross-Cultural Narratives in International Standard Dance

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Abstract. This essay explores the globalization of dance education through the lens of localized expressions of International Standard Dance in China. It discusses the globalization process of dance education, which is not only an area or national action, but also a globalization process that beyond the geographical boundaries. The analysis traces the evolution of the international standard dance education sector in China, from initial learning and adaptation to the innovation of International Standard Dance infused with local expressions. This study uses the Beijing Dance Academy's dance drama "*April Day on Earth*" as a primary example, examining how it constructs a cross-cultural narrative based on Chinese aesthetics. Adopting case study approach and qualitative analysis, the paper discusses the potential of dance as a powerful medium for intercultural dialogue and artistic communication in the global educational landscape. It also provides practical and theoretical insights into education as a bidirectional and globally integrated process, shedding light on the dynamics and complementarities that enhance global education.

Keywords: Global Education, International Standard Dance, Cross-Cultural Narrative.

1 Introduction

Globalization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various dimensions of economic, political, social, and cultural interactions across global boundaries. In today's ever-more interconnected world, the process of globalization across all fields is inevitable. As such, education has become increasingly central to government agendas,¹ reflecting its growing importance in our rapidly changing global landscape.

Dance, as an art form with deep historical and cultural roots, is also in this process. As a profound expression of human culture, transcends linguistic barriers, embodying a unique potential to foster global understanding and communication. International Standard Dance in education—both as a subject and as a medium of cultural expression, By focusing on the development and integration of this dance form within China's

educational systems, the paper seeks to uncover how International Standard Dance serves as a tool for cultural dialogue and narrative construction, and how it function as a dynamic component of global education.

Up to now, a substantial body of scholarly work has emerged on International Standard Dance, reflecting a dynamic field that evolves as research deepens. As investigations progress, themes within this discipline continue to shift, expand, and diversify, increasingly engaging in interdisciplinary collaborations that enrich its study.

Searching for "ballroom dance" and "sport dance" as keywords, I found that the majority of the results are in the direction of dance science, dance therapy, and dance health. Few studies have been conducted on the performance dance and creation of international standard dance. Much Of the research on international dance education has focused on international dance technique and training. Despite its widespread popularity the potential of International Standard Dance to foster global understanding and cultural integration remains under explored in academic research.

The transformation of International Standard Dance from a competitive sport to a staged artistic performance illustrates a fusion of Eastern and Western cultural elements. Unlike in foreign countries, China establish formal educational programs dedicated to training professionals in this field. By analyzing the development of International Standard Dance as a performance art in China, This paper demonstrates how the discipline of International Standard Dance significantly contributes to cultural integration and shows the process of global education.

The significance of this study shows dance education mainly a global process, Practical examples vividly illustrate the dynamic nature of dance education. This process begins with mastering physical expressions rooted in Western dance traditions, followed by their integration through local adaptation, and culminates in the creation of a cross-cultural narrative. Such a progression not only enriches the practice of International Standard Dance but also opens avenues for its development to embrace regional characteristics uniquely.

International Standard Dance originating from European folk dances², has evolved significantly over the centuries. Initially a leisure activity among common folk, it was later embraced by royal courts as a ceremonial social dance.³ This transformation was largely influenced by Europe's social culture and the Enlightenment movement, allowing the dance to penetrate broader societal layers and enrich its cultural significance. The modern incarnation of International Standard Dance traces its roots back to 11th and 12th-century European court dances.⁴ The popularity of ballroom dance in Europe during the last century played a pivotal role in standardizing these dances, which originated from diverse regions and were imbued with distinct cultural elements. International Standard Dance is categorized into two main styles: Standard Dance (also known as Modern Dance) and Latin Dance. Each category encompasses five dance types—Waltz, Tango, Foxtrot, Viennese Waltz, and Quickstep under Standard Dance; and Cha Cha, Samba, Rumba, Paso Doble, and Jive under Latin Dance. These ten dances, each reflecting a unique human emotion, maintain their distinct temperaments amidst a versatile rhythm.

2 The Process of International Standard Dance Education Development in China

Having crossed oceans to reach China nearly a century ago, International Standard Dance first took root during the New Culture Movement around the May Fourth era. It experienced a resurgence during the era of China's cultural revolution. Despite a lengthy period of suppression during the 'dance ban era,' the reforms and opening up of China revived and sustained the public's enthusiasm for these dances. Today, International Standard Dance continues to thrive in China, blending traditional influences with contemporary fervor.

International Standard Dance has gradually stepped into the right track under the impetus of active mass dance. The unprecedented activity of mass dance has greatly promoted the development of international standard dance on a large scale, and at the same time created a foundation for expanding and perfecting the function of art education, broadening the direction of specialization, and filling the vacancies in the discipline of mass dance. With the assistance of China Dancers' Association and the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Culture, Beijing Dance Academy took the lead in importing teachers and teaching materials from Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc., and established the discipline of international standard dance, which formally entered China's higher art education in 1989.

The discipline of international standard dance entered China's higher art education as a dance performance specialty, and experienced a development process from scratch, from small to large. Initially, through the platform of the Social Dance Education Department of Beijing Dance Academy, it entered the art education as a technical course in 1989, and began to teach as a specialist in 1993, upgraded to a bachelor's degree in 1997, and added a master's degree in 2008.⁵ After nearly 30 years, there have been more than 70 universities specializing in international standard dance, and the academy school of international standard dance education has cultivated a batch of international standard dance professionals for our country, and created a precedent of international standard dance specialty in higher education.

In 2020, the Beijing Dance Academy created a performance for the Blackpool Dance Festival that also exemplifies the global fluidity of dance education: Silk Road Journey. This performance is notable for its fusion of Latin dance elements with the Dunhuang style of Chinese classical dance. The introduction of this dance language provided a refreshing experience for audiences. Originating in the West and blending various national, cultural, and ethnic elements, Latin dance was introduced to China. The combination of Dunhuang and Latin styles was unprecedented. The group dance work "Silk Road - Line" not only creates the external appearance of Dunhuang in the desert, but also expresses the connotation of the profoundness of Chinese traditional culture. The choreographer also adds the expression of oriental national connotation and the manifestation of dance imagery on the basis of showing the sports dance technique. Dance imagery refers to the artistic human body dynamics to create an artistic image full of ideas and emotions. Dance imagery is a blend of "real image" and "virtual image". In this work, the real image is the five dances of the dancers, and the imaginary image is the oriental meaning embodied in the dance.

The choreographer and director downplayed the Spanish flamenco style of the Paso Doble itself, replacing the original Paso Doble posture with the stylised movements of the Chinese classical Dunhuang dance school, retaining the basic dance postures of the hips, lifting up the chest and waist, and holding the head high, which are similar to the Dunhuang's "three bends" S-shaped postures.

3 Localized Elements in the Artistic Performance Dance of International Standard Dance

Isadora Duncan, the mother of modern dance, once said that dance is the language of the soul and that limitations are the punctuation marks that give us depth of expression.⁶ Limitations in art are expressed as rules by which artistic activity is governed, such as thematic boundaries, formal vocabulary, specific media, cultural or social expectations, and historical context. In art, freedom is often understood as the ability to express oneself without limitations and to explore ideas, emotions, and aesthetics without constraints. This unlimited creativity is the essence of artistic freedom, allowing artists to transcend traditional norms and explore infinite realms of imagination, regardless of the fact that any art form is a game of regulation and freedom in practice.

The limitations of international standard dance refer to the established standards followed in the process of dance, the standards of dance form, the standards of dress and make-up, the standards of music, the standards of competition, the standards of etiquette and so on. "Standard" is not a synonym for rigidity and immutability, but rather an objectively set reference. The standard dance is not a "standard dance", and the national standard dance is not a "showmanship dance" that is stipulated and rigid. These standards have contributed to the international popularity and exchange of international standard dance. Dancers are based on the same technical standards, giving the dance a variety of flavours and styles that carry cultural genes. From 1924, when the Royal Society of Teachers of Dancing defined and standardised standard dance to the present, standard dance has undergone great changes in technique, form and even dance aesthetics.

The ten dances in the international standard dance have their own characteristics, such as the waltz's "elegant and dignified" and the tango's "powerful and unrestrained", but these are the intuitive impression of the international standard dance. National standard dance allows dancers with strong personality symbols, contestants from all over the world gathered together, dance skills reveal a variety of national cultural temperament and spiritual outlook, the national standard dance in the process of development also according to different national characteristics of the formation of different schools with different characteristics. The dance expression form of national standard dance also presents diversified freedom, the artistic performance dance is born from the black pool queue dance and the champion appreciation performance, by paying attention to the technology and neatness to the present injection of theatricality and regional culture. For example, China's National Standard Dance's exploration of stage practice has resulted in the formation of National Standard Dance experimental

dance dramas such as *The Song of Long Hatred*, *The Yellow River*, and *April Day on Earth*.

Students and teachers of Beijing Dance Academy captivated audiences with their original Chinese dance drama, *April Day On Earth*, performed on April 21 and 22. Directed by Dang Qi and Liang Qun, with choreography by Xie Changhui and Lou Hui, and music composed by Qian Qi, the production narrates the compelling story of Lin Huiyin, an esteemed 20th-century Chinese architect, poet, and writer.⁷ Showcasing a fusion of contemporary dance styles, including captivating ballroom dance, the dance drama shines a spotlight on Lin's architectural prowess, honed during her studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her legacy includes significant contributions to the design of China's national emblem and the Monument to the People's Heroes, alongside her fervent dedication to safeguarding and preserving ancient architectural marvels.⁸

Inspired by classical Chinese literature, myths and historical events, the International Standard Dance has injected cultural depth and narrative complexity into the program. The integration of Chinese dance elements into International Standard Dance performances represents a significant step towards cross-cultural collaboration and artistic innovation. Incorporating traditional Chinese dance movements, gestures, and costumes into their repertoire, creating a seamless fusion of Eastern and Western dance aesthetics. In addition to choreography and dance movements, the management of musical style plays a crucial role in shaping the artistic identity of International Standard Dance performances with localized elements. By incorporating traditional Chinese instruments such as the erhu, pipa, and guzheng into orchestral arrangements, composers infuse International Standard Dance performances with a distinctive sonic palette that resonates with Chinese audiences while maintaining the elegance and sophistication of the dance form. This strategic integration of musical elements not only enhances the emotional impact of International Standard Dance performances but also reinforces the cultural relevance of the art form in the global process.

4 Implications of International Standard Dance to Global Education

John Dewey's philosophy on education, particularly his views on the holistic nature of educational experiences, significantly supports the inclusion and elevation of arts within the educational curriculum.⁹ His vision emphasizes the comprehensive development of individuals—not just intellectually, but emotionally and physically, thereby fostering a complete personality. Education should not be about the mere transmission of information but should facilitate the meaningful engagement of all aspects of the student's personality.¹⁰

Studies have shown that American universities mostly copied European educational models when they were first created, and only gradually developed their own characteristics in later years.¹¹ The development of this educational model is also reflected in the development of a single artistic discipline. Just as educational models have adapted and evolved, so too has International Standard Dance incorporated diverse cultural elements, enhancing its role as a conduit for global education.

Integrating International Standard Dance into global education systems presents several challenges. One major challenge is the lack of resources, including insufficient funding for arts programs, which can hinder the implementation of comprehensive dance education. Additionally, the training of educators who are equipped to teach International Standard Dance is often lacking, which can affect the quality and effectiveness of such programs. Cultural resistance can also pose a significant barrier, as traditional educational paradigms may prioritize more academic subjects over the arts.

Respecting cultural roots, boldly and innovatively integrating multicultural perspectives, and links the complexity of educational development through innovative approaches, while education develops through exchange, dialogue and cooperation play a crucial role in shaping the future of global education.

The combination of indigenous cultural elements in international standard dance performances provides a direction for the globalization of education that needs to take into account cultural plurality and inclusiveness. By demonstrating the diversity of human expression and experience, the process of continuous innovation allows education to be less of a one-way, superficial simulation and more of an interactive, fluid development. Maybe provide some international collaboration projects where students from different countries work together on dance productions, could further highlight the role of dance in promoting global understanding and cooperation. Such initiatives not only enhance cultural exchange but also prepare students to operate in a globalized world. The core of the whole remains in the exploration of further in-depth developments in the globalisation of arts education.

5 Conclusion

This study explores the potential of International Standard Dance in contributing to global education through cross-cultural narratives and artistic expression. The globalization of dance education, particularly in the Chinese context, illustrates a dynamic process that transcends geographic boundaries and fosters intercultural dialogue. By examining the Beijing Dance Academy's production of *April Day on Earth*, we gain insights into how localized expressions and Chinese aesthetics can be integrated into International Standard Dance, facilitating cultural exchange and understanding.

The transition from initial learning and adaptation to the innovative incorporation of local cultural elements highlights the flexibility and resilience of International Standard Dance in various cultural contexts. This evolution not only enriches the practice of dance but also enhances its educational value. The integration of indigenous cultural elements into International Standard Dance performances underscores the importance of respecting and celebrating cultural diversity within global education.

The process of dance creation, particularly within the framework of International Standard Dance, exemplifies a harmonious blend of cultural respect and innovation. As dance educators and practitioners integrate traditional cultural elements into their performances, they not only honor the rich heritage of diverse cultures but also foster an environment of continuous creative evolution.

By embracing both cultural specificity and artistic innovation, dance serves as a powerful medium for educational exchange on a global scale.¹² It becomes a bridge that connects different cultures, facilitating a flow of ideas and fostering mutual understanding among diverse communities.

As dance education evolves, it continuously pushes the boundaries of tradition while respecting cultural roots, thus promoting a globalized flow of knowledge and creativity. This progression underscores the importance of intercultural dialogue and cooperation, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and globally integrated educational landscape.

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