That Which Remains. The Role of Fonadan Notation in the Establishment of the Mexican Field of Folkloric Dance and its Terminology[1]

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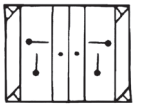
ABSTRACT

In 1972 the Mexican government established the *Fondo Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Danza Popular Mexicana* (Fonadan) as the first institute focused on the research of the nation's traditional dances. The Fonadan implemented a notation system for floor plans and later another system for "steps," both Laban-based. During the two decades, both systems were used in several important publications; however, almost half a century later, very little has been written about Fonadan. After its closure in 1985, the whereabouts of the complete Fonadan archive remain unclear. Nonetheless, the dance research and recording practices established by Fonadan had a substantial impact on the professional dance schools in Mexico City and laid the foundations for traditional dance research throughout the country. This article navigates the fields of Mexican traditional dance and the history and anthropology of dance. The methodological approaches used here are autoethnography and notation analysis. Through this research, I aim to elucidate Fonadan's role in the establishment of the Mexican field of folkloric dance by investigating how dance notation was used to consolidate a terminology that is still in use. The notion of "popular" dance employed in the creation of Fonadan during the so-called Echeverrista populism of the 1970s allows me to question the research and preservation practices that Fonadan established in the field. Finally, through this essay, I intend to provide a better understanding of the history of Mexican dance and the importance of dance notation in the field.

KEYWORDS

Keywords: Fonadan; dance notation; Josefina Lavalle; popular dance; archive.



Introduction. My first encounters with the *Fondo Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Danza Popular Mexicana*

At a young age, I realized how much I enjoyed Mexican folkloric dance, but I did not imagine it would become my profession. Like many Mexicans, I encountered dance as a way of representing *lo mexicano*[2] during end-of-the-year elementary school recitals.[3] During middle school, I continued this practice in one of the after-school clubs. Later, I joined my high school's *grupo de danza folklórica* [folkloric dance group] and then the *Compañía de Danza Folklórica Yumari* [Yumari folkloric dance group][4] that was organized by my hometown. After that, I began to accompany my teacher to dance courses. Finally, I attended national dance conferences on my own.

During my second year of high school, the Section 5 of the *Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Educación* [National Union of Education Workers] (SNTE) organized a diploma course in folkloric dance in my hometown, Ciudad Acuña, Coahuila. This course, aimed at the teachers of the National Education System, was directed by José Guadalupe Villegas, professor at the Escuela de Artes [Arts School] of the SNTE Section 5. Within this course, I encountered for the first time the so-called "dance notation," a system of symbols for recording dance. As part of the theoretical content of the Diploma, Villegas shared with us a collection of photocopies bearing a logo in the shape of a face. That face was composed of two hands which served as eyes, and a snail-shaped mouth with a forked tongue. Beneath the logo was the word "Fonadan," an acronym for the *Fondo Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Danza Popular Mexicana* [National Fund for the Development of Mexican Popular Dance][5] (see Figure 1). Being young, I was only interested in learning a new repertoire and did not foresee the importance of those handouts or the role they would play in my professional future.

Fig. 1. Fonadan Logo in *Los Moros* (1983).

According to the Mexican dance researcher Hilda Rodríguez (1988), the Fonadan was created with the purpose of "systematically studying and recording the traditional dances of our country, to preserve, revise, disseminate and make them available to teachers, students, dancers, choreographers and researchers in the social sciences" (576). Apart from my early encounter with the Fonadan photocopies, I first became conscious of the existence of the Fonadan in 2008, during my professional training in Mexican folkloric dance at the *Escuela Nacional de Danza Folklórica* [National School of Folkloric Dance] (ENDF).[6] I frequently heard my teachers talking about the institution that had deeply influenced their careers during the 1970s. They recalled the golden era when traditional dance was researched and when there was a rich contact between the *Academia de la Danza Mexicana* [Academy of Mexican Danza] (ADM) and the indigenous dancers brought by the Fonadan to the ADM. Throughout the four years of my training (2008–2012), the Fonadan became a sort of mythical institution for me. In this way, the stories of my teachers fueled my curiosity about that institution and hence shaped this research.

In order to allow two sorts of repertoires—the traditional one and the versions reworked by the folkloric dance community—to coexist, Fonadan employed a particular dance notation and implemented mechanisms of collection, research, and publication. A few Mexican researchers have written about the Fonadan. For example, the anthropologist Amparo Sevilla (1990) criticized Fonadan's pretension to "develop" indigenous knowledge by using popular dance for tourism. Others, such as the musician Carlos Emilio Sosa (2015), have mainly listed Fonadan's publications and collaborators, but without differentiating between publications and pedagogical materials, without examining the cultural policies of the time, without investigating the research practices of the period, or without analyzing Fonadan notation systems. To comprehend the role of Fonadan and its notation system in the establishment of the Mexican field of folkloric dance and its terminology, I highlight the institutions under which Fonadan was created. I also review the implications of political populism during Luis Echeverría's presidential administration in the creation of the Fonadan. I investigate how the 1985 earthquake influenced the demise of the Fonadan and what changes in cultural policies during the period meant for the institution. Finally, I analyze how Fonadan notation

contributed to the development of Mexican folkloric dance terminology in a way that continues to this day.

The present research takes a qualitative approach to the realms of dance studies, history of dance, and anthropology of dance. The main methodological approaches used here are archival research, autoethnographic accounts, and notation analysis. In response to the scarcity of material available on Fonadan, I navigate the academic field of Mexican folkloric dance, and I examine its process of institutionalization in the specific context of the Fonadan. Here, I attempt to understand the notions of dance identity expressed in Fonadan notation, and their consequences for the terminology used in Mexican folkloric dance. With this research, I hope to contribute to the historicisation of the Mexican folkloric dance.

Studying folkloric dance in academia: The institutionalization of Mexican traditional dance education at the National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature

During my first years in Mexican folkloric dance, it never crossed my mind that the *maestros* of this discipline had formally studied in any school. It was not until my encounter with Joel Rentería, director of the *Compañía de Danza Folklórica Yumari* [Yumari folkloric dance company], that I became aware of the professionalization of folkloric dance. During that period, Rentería's teachings became my guiding principles in dance. When the time came to begin my professional studies at the ENDF of the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura* [National Institute Fine Arts and Literature] (INBAL), in Mexico City, I became aware of different theoretical and embodied approaches to dance, as well as the historical and social complexities of professional folkloric dance training in Mexico.

Throughout their 80 years of existence, INBAL professional dance schools have undergone various changes. Some of these changes have triggered ruptures within the institutions and, consequently, the creation of new schools. In this section, I outline the trajectory of professional training in dance in Mexico City, from the 1930s to the 1970s, the decade in which Fonadan was created. Since professional dance training in Mexico was centred in Mexico City, I focus here on the INBAL schools.

In 1930, Hipólito Zybin, a Russian classical dancer, presented to the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* [Secretariat of Public Education] (SEP) the project that gave rise to the professional path of dance education in Mexico. According to journalist and dance researcher César Delgado (1985), Zybin arrived in Mexico in the late 1920s. It was not until 1931 that the SEP launched its project, named the *Escuela de Plástica Dinámica* [School of Dynamic Plastique] (EPD).

With the creation of the *Departamento de Bellas Artes* on 15 January 1932, the EPD closed its doors. Nevertheless, the EPD was a watershed in the later development of professional dance schools. Although, in practice, the EPD did not offer a professional career in folkloric dance, it did include the subject of "Mexican Dances" (Delgado 1985). The arts and education researcher Irma Fuentes Mata (1995) states that during this period the teachers at this newly established school drew on their experiences as "cultural missionaries"[7] a role in which they were in contact with indigenous communities.

After the closure of the EPD, the newly created Department of Fine Arts founded the *Escuela de Danza* [School of Dance], with the painter Carlos Mérida as director and the dancer and choreographer Nellie Campobello as his assistant (Ramos 2009a). Mérida's relationship with a select group of influential artists in the country led the school to follow the nationalist

trend promoted by the post-revolutionary government. According to dance researcher Roxana Ramos (2009b), a characteristic of *Escuela de Danza*'s proposal was "recovering the dance and musical work of the indigenous people to work it plastically and technically in order to take it to the stage" (38). While the *Escuela de Danza* offered classical dance as its central training, the transformation of traditional dance for stage performance became a common practice, later repeated in other dance institutions.

In February 1947, a group of dancers, alumnae of the *Escuela de Danza*, brought together by Carlos Chávez, founded the *Academia de la Danza Mexicana* (ADM) as a professional dance company whose objectives were to experiment, create, research, and disseminate Mexican modern dance (Tortajada 2005). These dancers had been expelled from the School of Dance due to a conflict with the director, Nellie Campobello. This conflict became one of the catalysts for the creation of ADM, with Guillermina Bravo as director and Ana Mérida as subdirector. Furthermore, Chávez attempted to reconcile the two factions of Mexican modern dance: the "Waldeenas," guided by the American-born choreographer Waldeen von Felkenstein, Bravo's teacher, and the "Sokolowas" led by the American-born Anna Sokolow, Mérida's teacher, through the creation of the ADM.

Although initially conceived as a modern dance company, from the 1955-1956 academic year, the ADM began to focus on educational work. In response to this shift, two programs were created: 1) "Modern Dance Performer," a five-year programme; and 2) "Regional Dance Performer," a three-year programme (Ferreiro 2009a). It should be noted that in the 1950s, the training in regional dance was the first programme specialized in folkloric dance offered by the INBA schools in Mexico City.

With Josefina Lavalle[8] as principal, the first modification of the ADM's syllabus came in 1959. At the request of the classical dance community, the ADM decided to develop three professional programmes: classical dance, modern dance, and regional dance – each a nine-year programme. Nevertheless, a little more than two decades later, in 1972, also under Lavalle's administration, the members of the Technical-Pedagogical Commission proposed the notion of the "Integral Dancer," with two programmes: *Bailarín de Danza de Concierto* [Concert Dance Performer] (classical and contemporary dance), an eight-year programme, and *Bailarín de Danza Mexicana* [Mexican Dance Performer] (modern and folkloric dance), a six-year programme.

In addition to the curricular modification at the ADM, in 1972, the Fonadan was created to support the Mexican Dance programme. Josefina Lavalle, recalls:

> There was still a program in Mexican Dance, and I always disagreed with the way the folkloric dance area was handled. I felt that it was very bad, that we had to give it a booster shot because we could not go on like that. We didn't really know where the traditional was and where the theatrical began. The important thing was to return to the real sources of popular dance in our country. (Lavalle quoted in Tortajada 1998, 101)

The support that Fonadan provided to the Mexican Dance Performer programme was well received by the students, who met with and learned from the indigenous communities. The dance researcher Elizabeth Cámara, then a student at the ADM, notes:

> the activities of the Fonadan would give me the opportunity to get to know the dances and dancers that week after week arrived from different parts of the country, treasures that were shown on the esplanade of the *Museo Nacional de Antropología* [National Museum of Anthropology]. (Cámara 2017, 112)

In addition, Ferreiro, also an ADM alumnus, recalls, "the creation of Fonadan stands out, thanks to which we folkloric dance students learned new dances directly from the informants" (Ferreiro 2009b: 97). However, the Concert Dance programme was not well received by the classical dance community. This disagreement led to the creation of another educational institution in dance, the ENDF, and the ADM itself was closed for a period of four years.

In 1978, the INBAL created the *Sistema Nacional para la Enseñanza Profesional de la Danza* [National System for Professional Dance Education] (SNEPD). Thus, with the establishment of the SNEPD, three schools were consolidated: *Escuela Nacional de Danza Clásica* (ENDCl), *Escuela Nacional de Danza Contemporánea* (ENDC), and *Escuela Nacional de Danza Folklórica* (ENDF) (Ramos 2009b; Tortajada 2006). With this proposal, the INBAL established its first school specifically dedicated to Mexican folkloric dance.

Regarding folkloric dance within the SNEPD, the ENDF took and adapted the content and programmes of the ADM Mexican Dance program to form the syllabus for *Ejecutante de Danza Folklórica* [Performer in Folkloric Dance], a six-year programme, and for *Maestro de Danza Folklórica* [Folkloric Dance Teacher], with an additional year. Thus, despite the Mexican classical dance community distancing themselves from the ADM's proposal, the field of folkloric dance continued, while, through the work of the Fonadan, the ADM heritage represented a guide for the ENDF (ENDF 1979). This is the institution where I began my professional training in folkloric dance in 2008.

Given the simplification that I must make in this abbreviated historical account of professional dance training in Mexico, I am aware that I do not fully present the historical and political complexities that influenced the discipline of folkloric dance. This remains to be studied elsewhere. However, given the lack of literature in English on the professional education for Mexican folkloric dancers, I find it important to provide some context for Fonadan's place in the institutionalization of Mexican folkloric dance. In the following section, I address the Echeverrist era populism, the political movement that gave rise to the Fonadan.

The politics of the Echeverrist populism movement: The government protects the indigenous people and their dance culture

Populism, described by historian Enrique Krauze (2016, 15) as an "endemic evil of Latin America," is considered by the sociologist Jorge Basurto (1969) as a mechanism designed to control the population, particularly marginalized groups. According to political science professor Soledad Loaeza (2001), the three characteristics of populism are: a vertical relationship between the leader and the masses, the idealization of the people as victims of power, and hostility towards hegemonic institutions and classes. Thus, despite the difficulty of defining the various populist movements (Basurto 1969; Entrena 2001; Hermet 2001; Jingsheng 2018), Loaeza insists that populist movements attempt to vindicate the authentic traditions of the people and protect them from the dangers of external forces, while being "anti-elitist, anti-capitalist, anti-liberal and xenophobic" (2001, 366).

In Mexico, with the presidential triumph of Luis Echeverría Álvarez in 1970, the government official reinstated populism.[9] This political approach, based on indigenism and intense nationalism, sought to favor the idea of a "people" made up of the marginalised classes. Loaeza (2001) indicates that this type of populism corresponds to economic populism, which was characterized by an excessive use of public funds for the sake of political control. In his

inaugural speech, Echeverría (1970) convincingly expressed that, "for the Federal Executive, governing will be to distribute equitably the fruits of redoubled efforts; to make the most fortunate regions and groups contribute to the development of the most backward ones." However, his concern for the "most backward," already present in his presidential campaign, could be considered either a smokescreen for his alleged responsibility in the massacre of the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* during the student protest of 2 October 1968, or a way to restore the image of the federal executive power that was exhausted during the six-year term of the authoritarian President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970).

Echeverría's inaugural speech connected him genealogically and ideologically with the Mexican revolution and with the populism of former president Lázaro Cárdenas and therefore with the indigenism celebrated by Cárdenas. Regarding the latter, ethnomusicologist Sydney Hutchinson asserts that indigenism "first appeared during the presidency of the populist Lázaro Cárdenas, who championed Indian rights" (2009, 210). According to Hutchinson, the anthropologists of this era elaborated a romanticized idea of indigenous people, which contributed to the construction of a national identity—a concept that Hutchinson describes as slippery and insubstantial.

Echeverría focused on domestic tourism to provide "a vehicle for Mexicans to travel more frequently and show their children the roads of their homeland" (1970). He intended Mexicans to become connoisseurs of indigenous culture and to ignore the "foreign," which he cataloged as "manifestations of bad taste." Indeed, some authors highlight the way in which the president and the first lady, María Esther Zuno, wore traditional clothing—such as guayaberas and huipiles—and colorful clothes in official events, seeking to portray an indigenous, colorful, and happy Mexico. Dance researcher Patricia Salas (2019) also highlights the interest in traditional knowledge shown by the presidential couple, although according to Salas this demonstrated their commitment to Mexican culture and positioned them as patrons of traditional and folkloric dance.

According to Salas, the motivation beyond the creation of Fonadan was Zuno's concern that, "all the dances that were performed in different regions of the country should be registered, preserved and disseminated" (2019, 244). Faced with the need to create an institute dedicated to the study of traditional dance, Xóchitl Medina, a collaborator of Zuno, prepared a document to support the creation of Fonadan. Medina (quoted in Salas 2019) argued that:

> There is a gradual and progressive deterioration of the classical Mexican forms and a constant mixture and personal additions to these expressions.
>
> Due to the phenomenon of mass media, we notice [observe] a deformation of national styles, cultural colonial subordination to commercialized expressions outside our reality.
>
> There is an urban concentration of the existing resources; on the other hand, there is an abandonment and marginalization of the rural sectors and smaller populations. [...]
>
> The maintenance and conservation of materials and material expressions have been neglected, and consequently the dissemination and communication of the national cultural wealth are almost non-existent. (246-7)

In view of these premises and the political framework of populism, the Echeverría administration created Fonadan. As I will demonstrate, Fonadan's notion of popular dance that originally was a practice of the subaltern classes in opposition to Western concert dance became an instrument of Echeverrist populism.

The creation of Fonadan in the epicenter of Mexico: Mexican popular dance enters into the conversation

"Relax your body, you are holding it as dancers do in *ballet folklórico* [folkloric ballet]!" More or less, those were the words that Nazul Valle addressed to me while I was learning *Montesón*.[10] Nazul was the teacher in Traditional Dances 1 during my first semester at the ENDF. At that time, rather than thinking about changing the organization and the way of moving my own body, I was used to focusing on learning dance steps. I can still remember that embodied experience: my legs were parallel, slightly bent and separated diagonally; my somewhat tense torso leaning backwards; in my right hand I held a *sonaja*[11] [rattle] and in my left, the *palma*.[12] My torso was twisting to the right and to the left while I was making an effort to maintain my centre of gravity in that unstable position. The moment I heard my teacher's words, I wondered what I was doing with my body. At that precise moment I understood that at the ENDF it was important to value the indigenous knowledge rather than the staged version performed by the *ballet folklóricos*. During that semester with Nazul, I first heard about Fonadan, whose work had a definitive impact on the careers of many of my teachers.

Throughout my time at the ENDF, most of the teachers referred at least once to Fonadan. They spoke about a golden era when traditional dance was researched and when there was a rich contact with indigenous dancers. I heard those stories of how, as students at the ADM, my teachers would sneak in to listen to the dancers recording in the classrooms on the third floor or in the infirmary area of what is now the ENDF. I also remember the time when my teacher, Itzel Valle, who taught us Labanotation, brought a few Fonadan booklets that she and her sister, Nazul, had bought when they were teenagers. Itzel handed them to us as if they were national treasures, while sharing her memories as a young student. We passed the booklets from hand to hand with extreme care, contemplating glimpses of the past among the pages full of notation symbols. In this section, I contextualize the creation of the Fonadan in relation to the ADM, and I describe the methodology used at Fonadan to investigate Mexican traditional dance.

In 1972, the Echeverría administration launched an Educational Reform initiative that led to a significant change in the nation's dance education.[13] The syllabi of the ADM were modified to focus on an educational model of the "Integral Dancer"[14] rather than on dance genres. The Fonadan was established to support the Mexican Dance program. The then director of the ADM, Josefina Lavalle, stated:

> Fonadan was created to support the ADM, particularly its Mexican dance branch that was very weak at that time. Each teacher had his or her own truth about a certain dance, and the truth lay in the original places of dance, in the indigenous communities. That is why we reached out to those villages and their teachers, who were the primary source (Lavalle, quoted in Camacho 2009, 62).

To financially support the creation of Fonadan, the Mexican government instituted a trust fund. According to Lavalle (1973), the justification for Fonadan funding lay in the importance of recording and researching Mexican dance to disseminate it to the public, to preserve original traditions, to create a national identity through dance, to reintegrate the authentic value to Mexican folkloric dance, and to revitalize urban centres by bringing them into contact with the expressions of popular art. Thus, the Credit Department of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit set up an initial trust fund of 3,000,000 Mexican pesos for the

creation of Fonadan (Lavalle 1973). Lavalle served as executive secretary of the Technical and Administrative Committee of Fonadan, while also holding the position of director of the ADM.

The initial directives of Fonadan were the study of "the basic characteristics of the dances and their distribution by regions" (Lavalle 1973, 21) and the elaboration of an atlas of Mexican dance. To accomplish these tasks, Fonadan produced descriptive cards that collected information on: the name of the most characteristic dances of Mexico's regions, including linguistic groups, gender and age of the dancers, type of dance, dates on which they were performed, places where they were performed, number of musicians, and types of musical instruments. Originally, Fonadan staff consisted of fourteen members, among whom were the so-called fathers of Mexican folkloric dance, Luis Felipe Obregón and Marcelo Torreblanca. Subsequently, Fonadan's multidisciplinary team increased to about twenty specialists, including dancers, ethnomusicologists, choreographers, ethnologists, musicians, photographers, and filmmakers.

After the initial data gathering, Fonadan selected a traditional dance to study by analyzing four aspects: the choreography, through the notation of the dance; the music, through musical analysis, audio recording and notation; the visual, through still photographs and motion picture recordings; and finally the paraphernalia, through the drawing and description of the costumes and objects used in the dance. The various publications produced by the Fonadan addressed these four aspects, accompanied by general ethnographic data on the communities that performed the dances. In addition, as Ferreiro (2009b) and Cámara (2023) describe their student experiences, the kinetic transmission of the dance by the indigenous dancers to ADM students was considered a significant part of Fonadan's research and dissemination process.

Fonadan's relationship with the ADM was reflected in the 1972 syllabus. This new programme, the Mexican Dance Performer, was intended to bring students closer to the "authenticity" of traditional dance through four aspects: first, working with informants; second, drawing on Fonadan's documentary and audiovisual research; third, following Fonadan's theoretical and practical advice; and finally, introducing the Choreography and Notation course that was considered "essential for the correct understanding, interpretation, and recording of dance forms" (ADM 1982, 13).

Fonadan implemented two different notation systems in choreographic analysis. The first proposal, used in *La danza del Tecuán* (1975), contained floor plans accompanied by the Labanotation symbols for the paths of the dance (see Figure 2). The second system was presented almost a decade later in smaller booklets, such as *Los Moros* (1983), *Los Sonajeros* (1983), and *Danza de las Varitas* (1985). This system, elaborated by Josefina Lavalle,[15] contained some symbols from Labanotation and Yolanda Fuentes[16] systems to describe the steps of the dance, as well as the paths of the dance (see Figure 3).

At the *Encuentro Nacional de Investigación* [National Research Meeting] held at Cenidi Danza[17] in 1987, Lavalle presented the terminology used in Fonadan's second system. This terminology had been developed at the ADM during the 1970s, when Yolanda Fuentes' notation was tested experimentally with a group of students. These students later used this notation in other institutions, such as the *Colegio de Bachilleres* and the Centro de *Educación Artística* (Cedart). Lavalle wrote:

> I have used and developed, to a certain extent, a terminology based on that initiated by students who graduated from one of the most brilliant groups produced by the *Academia de la Danza Mexicana*. I am referring to Alejandra Ferreiro, the current Principal of that school; Elodia Straffon,

who directed, the after me; Luzella Rodríguez, who currently directs them; María Isabel Jiménez, and Ana María Jiménez (1987, 13).

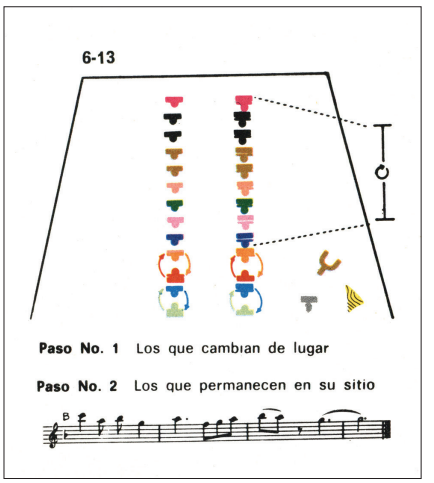


Fig. 2. Fonadan first notation system. *Danza del Tecuán* (1975).

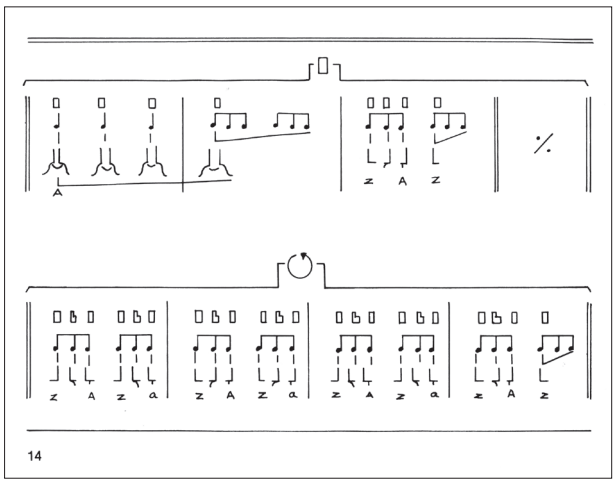


Fig. 3. Fonadan second notation system. *Los Moros* (1983).

The use of Yolanda Fuentes' notation system by the ADM students led them to develop their capacity to analyze repertory, to improve their performance, and in a certain way, to establish a terminology that allowed them to name the movements of traditional dance. That is to say, the use of notation empowered them to improve their *zapateados* and later to systematize their teaching, as Ferreiro (2014) asserts.

Fonadan used its two systems of dance notation in a series of booklets published by Fonadan, the SEP, and the *Dirección General de Culturas Populares* [General Department of Popular Cultures]. These publications were aimed at teachers in the national education system and had didactic and dissemination aims. Fonadan used notation to disseminate traditional dances that it had studied. These publications typically presented the dance terminology used to analyze and notate the dance. Thus, by including this information, the scores contributed to the systematization of a folkloric dance terminology at the national level and to the institutionalization of this genre of dance in different regions of Mexico.

Outreach was another important aspect of Fonadan's activity, although it was related to the tourism promoted by Echeverría. The internal tourism aimed to entertain mainly the residents of Mexico City. Mexican Folkloric Dance teacher Xóchitl Medina was the person in charge of Fonadan's outreach department. The outreach programme aimed to present to the public in Mexico City the dances investigated by Fonadan. These performances took place mainly on the esplanade of the *Museo Nacional de Antropología* [National Museum of Anthropology] and in other public spaces.

On this matter, poet and dance researcher Patricia Camacho (2009) suggests that Fonadan "supported indigenous groups to revitalize, promote, and further develop their traditional dance art" (61). However, anthropologist Amparo Sevilla (1990) argues that the populist character of Fonadan's work created problems among the dance groups performing in Mexico City. Sevilla argues that Fonadan's invitation caused the traditional groups to limit their number of participants in order to comply with the established budget, which led to confrontations among the dancers.

The decontextualization of traditional dance caused by Fonadan—transporting it from the traditional context of the villages to a performance context in Mexico's capital—promoted capitalist values that influenced the creation of performances designed to appeal to the cosmopolitan public in Mexico City. Due to the lack of documentation, it is almost impossible to know what changes the traditional dances underwent. Although it would be simplistic to assume that indigenous groups had no agency in decision-making about their dance heritage, it could be said that their contact with the epicenter of academic dance in Mexico led to the commodification of the relations between the worlds of traditional dance and Mexican folkloric dance. In fact, the dance research and teaching practices established by Fonadan had a substantial impact on the professional dance schools in Mexico City and laid the foundations for traditional dance research and teaching throughout the country. This was the case for the ADM, the ENDF, and the *Escuela Nacional de Danza Nellie y Gloria Campobello*. These institutions continued the practices established by Fonadan, including fieldwork, work with informants, and the analysis and recording of dance.

Fonadan carried out its work from 1972 to 1985. After thirteen years of operation, the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* [Official Journal of the Federation] (DOF) of 18 February 1985, announced the closure of Fonadan. Yet its work remains rooted in the memory of the members of the folkloric dance community. The important role played by the earthquake of 19 September 1985 in Mexico City in shaping the teaching and training in traditional dance has also been overlooked.

The aftershocks of the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City: The downfall of the Fonadan and Mexican popular dance

After Itzel Valle showed some of Fonadan's booklets to my cohort, my curiosity about the Fonadan flourished. The impression that those booklets left on me, with their extensive collection of handmade dance scores, musical scores, ethnographic research, and beautiful drawings led me to become more interested in the whereabouts of the Fonadan archive. I repeatedly searched for publications from and about Fonadan, with very little success. Camacho (2009) claims that the archive was abandoned in one of the warehouses of the *Dirección General de Culturas Populares*, but no serious research has been done on the remains of Fonadan.

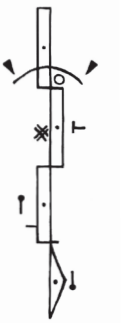
After the economic disaster caused by the two populist six-year administrations of the 1970s—the first under Echeverría and the second under José López Portillo—the president elected in 1982, Miguel de la Madrid, introduced radical neoliberalism in response to the economic crisis. His austerity policy, as documented in the DOF (18 February 1985), contributed to the dissolution of Fonadan. Thus, what was then called popular dance as a commercial product—which had occupied a central place in the cultural life of Mexico City during the populist administrations—came to be regarded as an unnecessary expense under the new political and economic regime.

According to Basurto (1969), the imprecise ideological policy of populism, together with its opportunism and corruption, implied that the institutions created during these regimes failed to achieve stable consolidation. It was in this context that Fonadan ended its activities. However, the work of Fonadan, both innovative and ambitious, had a lasting impact on the professional training in folkloric dance within the INBA schools, as reported by Ferreiro (2009b), Cámara (2017), and the curricula of these schools in the 1990s. In other

words, as Sevilla (1990) suggests, Fonadan consciously or unconsciously contributed to the spectacularization and academization of traditional Mexican dance.

Its archives, however, continue to be elusive. According to musician Carlos Emilio Sosa (2015), the archive contained: 16 long-playing records, documentation of 28 dance courses, 58 dance monographs, and 150 dance study projects. However, according to Lavalle (quoted in Salas 2019), the Fonadan archive comprised the following items 1,144 location cards, 134 dance files, 1,800 audio tapes, 470 radio programs, 20,000 slides, 270 black-and-white videotapes, 2,000 feet of color film, 55 videocassettes, 12 documentaries, 15,000 negatives, 4 books, 16 records, 12 cassettes, and 10 pamphlets. There is a large discrepancy between Lavalle's inventory in the 1980s and Sosa's listing in 2015, but the reason for it remains unclear.

Although the DOF indicates that Fonadan was closed down with the approval of the President of the Republic, Miguel de la Madrid, the musicologist Enrique Jiménez López (2014) suggests that it was the Secretary of Public Education who decided to dissolve Fonadan. In addition to the lack of clarity about the end of Fonadan, the catastrophe caused by the earthquake of 19 September in Mexico City led the government to focus on the people and areas affected by the disaster. Thus, traditional dance was set aside, regarded as unimportant in the view of the government. In a certain way, it seems as if the earthquake not only collapsed buildings, but also, as a *coup de grace*, buried the work of cultural institutions such as Fonadan. It shook the foundations of research in traditional dance. To date, no governmental effort of comparable magnitude dedicated to the research and documentation of Mexican traditional dance has re-emerged.



In 2013, seeking a deeper understanding of Fonadan's work, I interviewed Professor Antonio Miranda, who studied at the ADM with the cohort who had a meaningful notation experience. He also worked at Fonadan dealing with the informants, and in 1978 he became a professor at the ENDF. His experience teaching traditional dance and notation, and previously working at Fonadan led us, his students, to gain a deep respect for and interest in traditional dance. According to his firsthand account, after Fonadan's disappearance in 1985, the teachers at the ENDF rushed to the INBAL authorities to claim Fonadan's archive, but as Miranda said, "They gave us the finger."

Following the account of Miranda, I searched in the library of *Centro de Información y Documentación Alberto Beltrán* [Center of Information and Documentation Alberto Beltran] in the *Museo de Culturas Populares* [Museum of Popular Cultures] in Mexico City. Fonadan's archive was restricted at the time, but I was able to access only ten of its publications, nine of which contained dance notation. As elusive as Fonadan's material became after 1985, the accounts of my professors inspired me to research the work of that institution and motivated me to reflect on how to access the dance knowledge contained in Fonadan's publications.

My embodied experience: Dance notation, terminology, and repertoire

While writing my dissertation for the *Maestría en Investigación de la Danza* (Master in Dance Research) at the *Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de la Danza José Limón* [National Centre for Research, Documentation and Information José Limón], I came across the book *El Jarabe... El jarabe ranchero o jarabe de Jalisco* (1988) by Josefina Lavalle. The book was published only a few years after the disappearance of Fonadan (see Figure 4). To my surprise, it contained the score of the *Jarabe* in the notation used by Fonadan. I was thrilled.

Some years later, Professor Sándor Varga invited me to give a lecture for the Choreomundus International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice, and Heritage. I set myself the task of reading and incorporating the first phrase of the *Jarabe* in order to teach it to the students. To my surprise, I found that the same terminology I had learned at the ENDF had been used by Fonadan. This inspired me to look more closely to what the score contained, to reflect on how Fonadan notation changed in order to adapt to the nature of different dances, and to understand how the notators' approach to the diversity of traditional dance led them to develop a specific folkloric dance terminology.

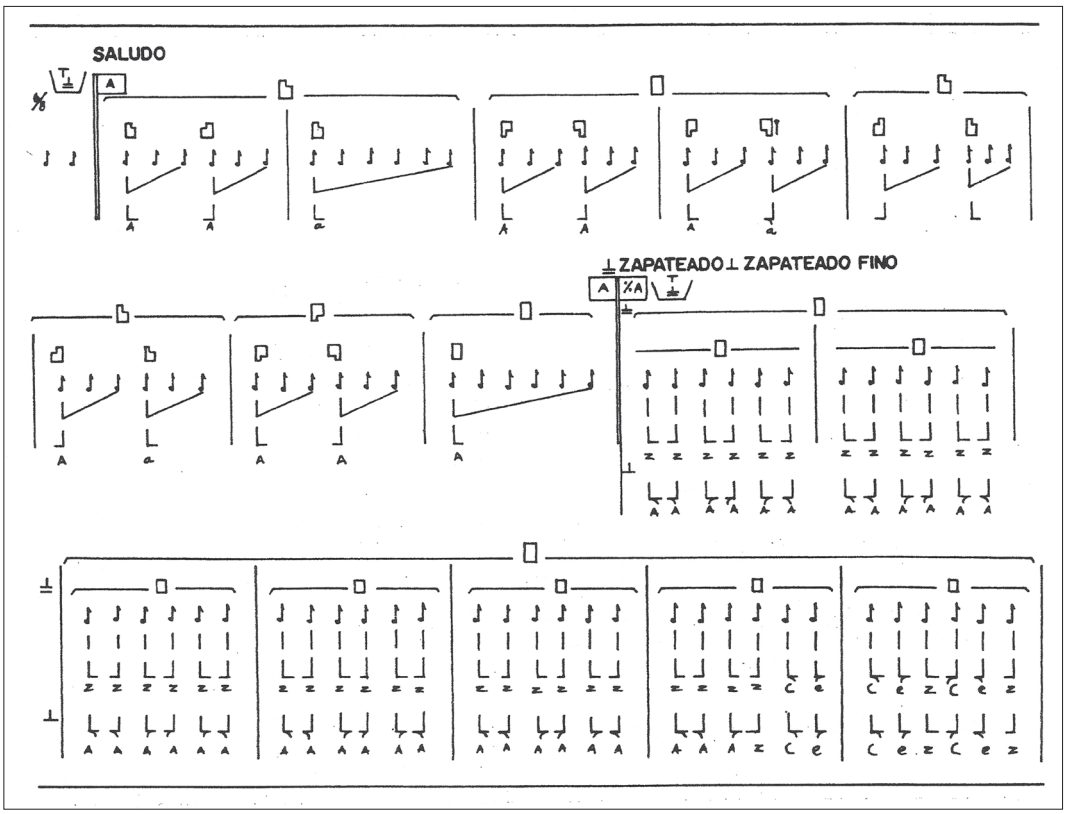


Fig. 4. *El Jarabe... El jarabe ranchero o jarabe de Jalisco* (1988).

Some authors have discussed dance identity and how dance knowledge is accessed (e.g. Bakka and Karoblis 2010; Van Zile 1985-1986, 1999; and Anderson 1987). While these scholars have examined the context of the Global North and Western concert dance, dances from the Global South have rarely been studied. According to ethnochoreologist Egil Bakka (Bakka and Karoblis 2010), the two dimensions through which dance knowledge can be accessed are Concept and Realisation. While the former refers to the body of knowledge that allows one to dance and recognize "a dance," the latter notion concerns each particular performance of a dance. On the other hand, the dance critic Jack Anderson (1987) questions whether the identity of the dance lies in the ideas or in the specific movements or instructions for a given piece. Given these discussions, the question arises as to what is written in a dance score.

In the case of Fonadan, its second proposal for notation focused on the analysis of the feet and legs, as shown by the scores produced in the 1980s. This system distributes the information across five rows: 1) the direction of the paths; 2) the direction of the feet; 3)

the duration of the movement; 4) which foot and which part of the foot moves; and 5) the type of movement (see Figure 5). The first, second and fifth columns use a terminology represented by signs, such as *zapateo*, *apoyo*, *zapateo con cambio de peso*, *apoyo con cambio de peso*, *golpe con cambio de peso*, *giro*, *elevación*, and *desplazamiento* (see Figure 6); but the notation assumes the reader's tacit knowledge of how to execute most of these movements.

Choreographer and dance historian Mark Franko (2011) suggests that the notation has historically influenced what we think of as dance and how we experience it. I thus consider that in this context the use of notation transformed the professional education of Mexican folkloric dance. In the following decades, a structuralist approach resulted in this education focusing on the use of terminology. The scores elaborated by Fonadan could help answer the question of what dance is in kinetic and etymological terms, but the question of what the score itself represents remains.

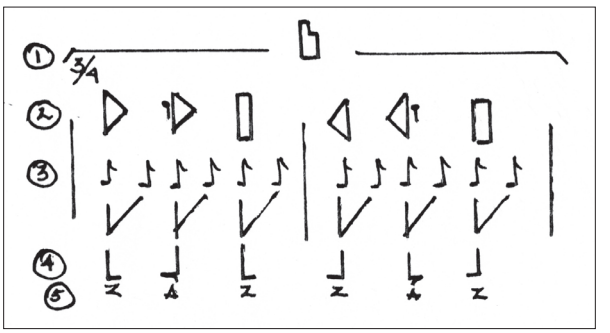


Fig. 5. Fonadan's Step Notation system. Lavalle (1987)

Fig. 6. Fonadan's Terminology. *Los Moros* (1983)

- ⌋ Indica el uso del pie izquierdo.
- ⌊ Indica el uso del pie derecho.
- Z Zapateo con cambio de peso.
- 3 Zapateo sin cambio de peso.
- A Apoyo de toda la planta del pie con cambio simultáneo de peso.
- a Apoyo de toda la planta del pie sin cambio de peso.
- Avanzar hacia adelante o simplemente avanzar el pie indicado hacia adelante.
- Avanzar hacia atrás o simplemente avanzar el pie indicado hacia atrás.
- No moverse de su lugar, es decir no desplazarse. Si se refiere al movimiento del pie, indicará que éste no se desplaza o que vuelve a su lugar.
- % Indica que se repite exactamente igual el trozo señalado entre las líneas dobles del compás.
- El talón derecho toca el suelo.
- El talón izquierdo toca el suelo.
- Indica que el metatarso del pie derecho hace contacto con el piso.
- Indica que el metatarso del pie izquierdo hace contacto con el piso.
- Indica que sosteniéndose sobre los metatarsos, los talones hacen contacto para golpear uno contra otro.

For her part, the ethnologist and teacher of notation Judy Van Zile (1999) argues that notating dance involves addressing questions about what dance is for both the dance community and the researcher. Regarding the process of notation, in an interview with

Van Zile (1985-86), notator Jane Marriett emphasized the importance of recording what is happening in every precise moment of dance. Furthermore, Marriet asserts that the most important information in the score is who transmitted the dance, to what audience, and who recorded it in notation. According to Marriet, the notator accesses knowledge through the Realisation dimension, i.e. through observing and recording what happens in each rehearsal. Marriet clarifies that her score is not Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes*, but rather Balanchine's *Stars and Stripes* as taught by France Russell. Although Marriet accesses the Concept—community's agreement on what constitutes a *Stars and Stripes*—she makes it clear that, through the Realisation dimension, what she records is a specific version: Russell's.

Given these notions, one can reflect on the relationship between Fonadan's notation, the folkloric dance community, and the notators/researchers at the time. It should be noted that the Choreographic Research department at Fonadan was coordinated by Luis Felipe Obregón, advised by Marcelo Torreblanda, and included by Evelia Beristain[18] and Josefina Lavalle.

The notion of repertoire also comes into play in a discussion of the identity of dance. Lavalle argues:

> My interest is that the dance teacher knows that he is not dancing the authentic *jarabe ranchero*, but that he is following the choreography of a master [...] Where does the popular, the anonymous, begin, and where does the recreation of the masters begin? (Lavalle quoted in Tortajada 1998, 104)

Ferreiro states that the creation of Fonadan modified the notion of repertoire as it relates to the ideas of "authenticity" due to the "direct contact with 'informants-indigenous masters of the dance' who, in general, acted as captains or masters of the dances and knew the forms of traditional transmission" (2009, 202). In a way, the contact between Fonadan and ADM students, together with the publication of dances in scores and the identification of some of these dances as authentic versions from indigenous groups and from specific communities, reshaped the paradigm of folkloric dance teaching. Fonadan used a specific terminology to allow the coexistence of two types of repertoires: the traditional repertoire and the repertoire re-worked by the larger, often urban, folkloric dance community. Ferreiro notes: "it became a common practice to focus the teaching on the formal aspects of the dances: steps and movements in space" (2009b, 82).

Upon discovering the score of *Jarabe* written by Lavalle, I could not believe how familiar it felt to embody it. Not only was this because I had learned different versions of this piece, beginning when I was six years old, but because the terminology I found in the score was very similar to what I have learnt during my training at the ENDF: *zapateo, apoyo, cepilleo, escobilleo, deslizado, volado, quebrado, gatillo, rebotado, golpe*, among others. Although there is a short description in the terminology section of the book that enables those unfamiliar with Mexican folkloric dance to understand the movement, my implicit knowledge of this discipline informed my interpretation. The logic of the movement depicted in the notation felt familiar. Hence, I became interested in how the terminology and descriptions of the *Jarabe* were similar to what I had experienced as a student at the ENDF. This allowed me to reflect on how Fonadan had impacted the field of folkloric dance.

When I approached Professor Miranda, author of the *Basic Manual for the Teaching of Traditional Mexican Dance Technique* (2002), he remarked:

> We went to Morena [the building located on Morena street], we spoke with the authorities, with all the people, and we explained: the School of Folklore [ENDF] is this, it does this, and it has

> been nourished by Fonadan. It follows the work that Fonadan has done, it continues bringing in informants, and we are doing work through the School [ENDF] on what Fonadan did. We did not have the published materials, we did not have all the records of the dances. What Fonadan had, we did not have, we were homemade. But they gave us the finger: "Yes, we are going to review it and wait"... "Well sit down, let's see if you don't get tired" ... Nothing happened. (A. Miranda, interview, 29 December 2013)

With Fonadan's disappearance in 1985 and little information about the location of its archive, one might assume that key written records of Mexican traditional dance were lost. I wonder, however, how true this assumption is. As Miranda's account shows, the teachers at the ENDF tried to preserve Fonadan's legacy, recognizing its importance. However, there is only partial knowledge of the whereabouts of the Fonadan's archive. What remains of Fonadan's work is my embodied knowledge of its concepts of movement, the analytical categories and terminology, which we share within the Mexican folkloric dance community. This knowledge enables me to access what is written in the scores and to transmit it as part of my own heritage.

Conclusions

The institutionalization of Mexican folkloric dance instruction at the National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature marked a significant shift in the professional training of this art form, reflecting a complex interplay of historical, social, and political factors. This development underscores the importance of preserving traditional dance and the continuing need for academic inquiry into its educational frameworks and cultural significance. It is undeniable that the populist government of Luis Echeverría engaged in disproportionate expenditure—it pursued an instrumentalist approach to indigenous culture, which affected indigenous groups. It is also evident that economic mismanagement, together with the manipulation of traditional indigenous knowledge to create a forced national identity, led the next government to consider traditional dance as unimportant. Although the 1985 earthquake disrupted research of traditional dances, Fonadan's practices continued to influence the Mexican folkloric dance community.

Fonadan's work laid the foundations of folkloric dance training that have been continued over the following three decades: promoting fieldwork to understand the context of the traditional dances, working with informants to learn the dances directly from local dancers, and analyzing and recording the dances as a part of the professional training in folkloric dance. Throughout this research, I have come to understand that Fonadan's aims of research and preservation were extensions of the tourist agenda of Echeverrist populism, as reflected in the term *popular dance* during the 1970s and 1980s. However, although the Fonadan archive was an important body of knowledge on Mexican dance heritage and the loss of some of its materials has been significant for dance research, some of the Mexican traditional dances studied by Fonadan still survive in the practices and embodied knowledge of indigenous communities in Mexico.

With this first historical and historiographical attempt to examine Fonadan's notation, I can only raise further questions. Given the need to safeguard traditional dances, how timeless are the archives? If traditional dance resists documentation, can it survive? What are the implications of recording for traditional and folkloric dance? How did rural dancers respond

to the policies of the urban elites in the 1980s? Due to the lack of attention from Mexican governmental institutions and dance researchers to the work of Fonadan, and the consequent lack of documentation, it is impossible to answer some of these questions without sustained fieldwork. This essay is an effort to contextualize the work of the only institution dedicated to dance research and an attempt to understand the field of Mexican folkloric dance. It also represents a step towards valuing the production of knowledge through non-Eurocentric notation systems to trace the history of the academization of Mexican folkloric dance.

NOTES

1. I am in debt to János Fügedi (1953-2025) for his support. As my mentor in Laban Kinetography—the Hungarian dialect of the notation system developed by Rudolf Laban—he encouraged me since the beginning of my academic career, which has led me to deepen my research on dance notation.

2. I follow Manuel Cuellar (2022) in his use of the concept of *lo mexicano*, instead of Mexicanness, "in order to signal not only the racial implications of the term but also the gender and sexual inscriptions that it enables" (11) in Mexico's patriarchal society.

3. The post-revolutionary administrations introduced folkloric dance into the national educational system through the *Misiones Culturales* [Cultural Missions] program. For further research into the role of dance in the *Misiones Culturales*, see Marín (2004). In my experience, the end-of-the-year recitals included a repertoire of Mexican folkloric dances selected because they could be taught to children, such as: the *Jarabe Tapatío* [Mexican hat dance], *Los matachines*, and various "polkas."

4. Whereas in Eastern Europe such groups are typically referred to as "folklore groups" or "folk dance groups," in Mexico they are commonly called *grupo/compañía de danza folklórica* or *ballet folklórico*. In Mexico, the use of these categories attends to the aesthetic and political identities of these groups. This distinction corresponds to the typology used in Mexican dance studies, which differentiates between traditional dance, folkloric dance, and *ballet folklórico*, as Elizabeth Cámara (2006) observes. The traditional dance refers to the dance practiced by indigenous or mestizo communities in ritual or social contexts. The folkloric dance refers to dance forms derived from the decontextualization of traditional dances and adapted for stage performance with the aim of promoting a national identity. Finally, *ballet folklórico* refers to the hybridization of traditional and classical dance, exemplified above all by the *Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández.*

5. The term "popular dance" was used in Mexico mainly during the 1970s alongside the concept of popular art. In that context, "popular" became interchangeable with "indigenous" and "traditional," and in some cases was even used for folkloric dance. In this article, I use the word "popular" when referring to the name of Fonadan.

6. The ENDF was created in 1978 after the dissolution of the *Academia de la Danza Mexicana* (ADM). Both institutions belonged to the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura* (INBAL). After closure of the ADM, some of its teachers and students were transferred to the ENDF, while others remained on strike, demanding the re-establishment of the ADM until 1984.

7. The *Misiones Culturales* was a programme developed in 1923 during the administration of José Vasconcelos, then head of the SEP. The *Misiones Culturales* were intended to take education to different parts of México. Among the activities included in these missions was physical education that incorporated rhythm and aesthetics. Luis Felipe Obregón and Marcelo Torreblanca participated as missionaries. For more information see Marín (2004).

8. Josefina Lavalle was an outstanding personality in the field of dance in Mexico: a dancer, choreographer, teacher, pioneer of Mexican modern dance, and founder of Fonadan, ADM, and other institutions related to artistic education. She was Director of the ADM and a researcher at the *Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de la Danza José Limón* [National Centre for Dance Research, Documentation, and Information] (Cenidid).

9. According to Basurto (1969), there were glimpses of populism during the Mexican revolutionary period; however, the defining populist period was the six-year term of General Lázaro Cárdenas, between 1934 and 1940, characterised by nationalism and reformism.

10. Danza Montesón is a traditional dance performed in the Huasteca region of Veracruz, Mexico. The version Nazul taught my cohort during the 2008 academic year was the version performed in Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz.

11. A *sonaja* is a percussion instrument made from a hollow gourd. In Montesón, the *sonaja* is decorated at the top with a small paper fan.

12. A *palma* is a carved wooden object used in many traditional dances in Mexico, usually held in the left hand. In Montesón, the *palma* has a hexagonal shape and is adorned

with tissue paper and a star on each side.

13. In the early 1970s in Mexico, there were two professional dance schools within the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes* (INBA): the *Escuela Nacional de Danza* (END), founded in 1932, and the *Academia de la Danza Mexicana* (ADM), founded in 1947. Both schools taught traditional Mexican dances, but the latter offered specialized training in this discipline.

14. The Integral Dancer model was intended to train professional dancers in two of the three main dance disciplines in Mexico: classical, contemporary, and folkloric dance. Two programs were offered: *Bailarín de Danza de Concierto* [Concert Dance Performer] (Classical and Contemporary) and *Bailarín de Danza Mexicana* [Mexican Dance Performer] (Modern and Folkloric). This proposal led to the rupture of the ADM community and triggered the creation of the *Escuela Nacional de Danza Clásica* [National School of Classical Dance] in 1977 and the *Escuela Nacional de Danza Contemporánea* [National School of Contemporary Dance] and the Escuela Nacional de Danza Folklórica [National School of Folkloric Dance] in 1978.

15. This proposal was registered for copyright by Josefina Lavalle on 6 July 1987, under number 12747-87 and presented as a paper at the National Research Meeting of Cenidi Danza during the same month.

16. Yolanda Fuentes taught at the ADM. She created the *Cursos de Verano* [Summer Intensive Courses] where she developed and taught a notation system to help her students to remember the dances they learnt.

17. Originally named *Centro de Investigación de la Danza* [Centre for Dance Research], the *Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información de la Danza José Limón* [National Centre for Dance Research, Documentation, and Information] (Cenidi Danza) was created by Patricia Aulestia on 14 January 1987.

18. Evelia Beristain (1926-2019) was a dancer, teacher, and choreographer. She belonged to the first generation of Mexican modern dancers. Together with Lavalle, she was part of the Choreographic Research Department at the Fonadan.

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