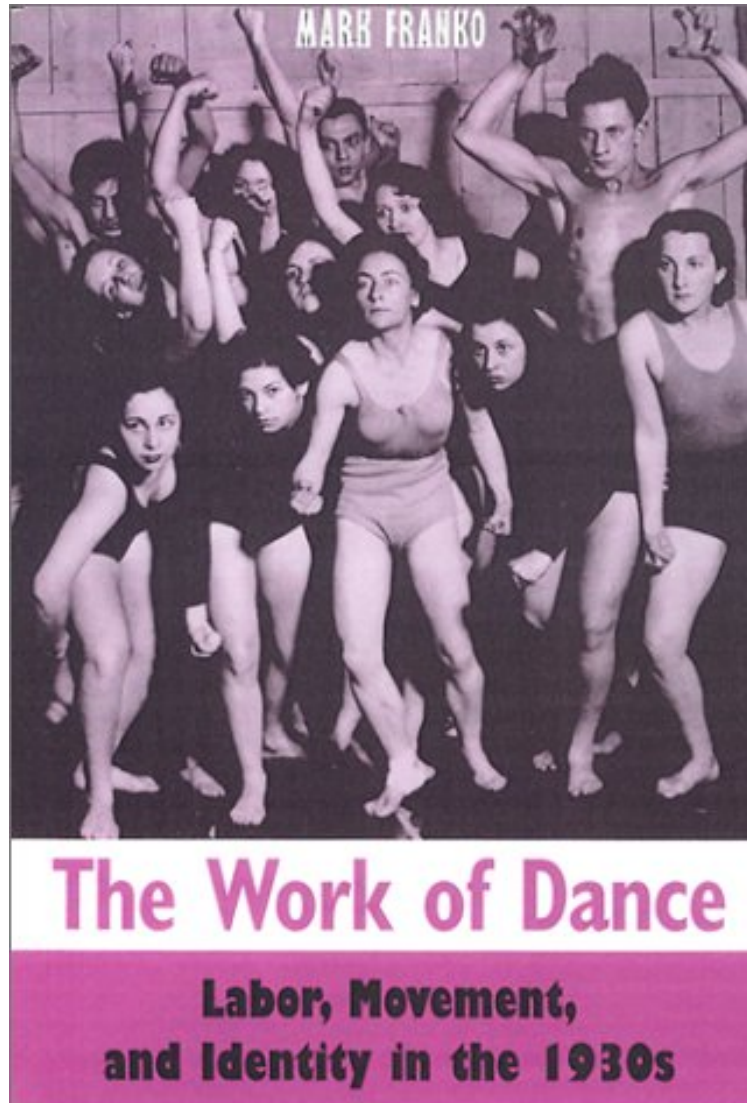


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The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s

Mark Franko

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Mark Franko : The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930s:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Important BookBy Michael LomekaMark Franko offers an interesting investigation between dance and the labor realities of the 1930's. He sites movements such as the Communist Party, Federal Dance, and unions as strong influences. The methodology of choreography of the period was steered by social as well as political issues. The idea of art reflecting life, as we as life, political and social, being

inseparable from the choreographic process of the time. Ideological jockeying became prominent on and off the dance stages. The 1930's, a period so deeply infused with the radical agenda of individuals and groups was a battleground displayed in dance from many aspects including gender, socioeconomic, and class system. "Ideology is a realm of contestation and negotiation, in which there is a constant busy traffic: meanings and values are stolen, transformed, appropriated across the frontiers of different classes and groups, surrendered, pepossessed, reinflected." -Ted Eagleton

There was a fair amount of attention paid to the Communist Party and how the ideals of modern dance of the time aligned itself with the ideals of the Communist Party. Improvisation and the amateur infrastructure of modern dance of the period was formatted in a casual manner that encouraged participation by professionals and amateurs alike. This gathering mentality was mirrored in the increased influence of labor unions. Dance was as prevalent in union halls as it was in traditional theaters. I especially found interesting the look at modern dance soloist Si-Lan Chen, a radical dancer who worked consistently throughout the 1930's. Chen had extensive classical dance training which aided in her success in working around the globe including the Soviet Union. She came from Chinese lineage and investigated her ancestry in the Beijing Opera form. Also, she utilized traditional Chinese dance in her creative process for several solos. Part of her success probably could be attributed to her work being short in duration. Chen explained, "my dances were of necessity always short, terse, to the point. In contrast to the radical nature of the modern dance, there was plenty of spectacle that was consumed in the 1930's dance. Some of the spectacles include the opening number of *Gold Diggers* of 1933, "We're in the Money" and other lavish numbers by Busby Berkeley: -Whoopee! (1930)-Kiki (1931)-Palmy Days (1931)-42nd Street (1933)-Wonder Bar (1934)-Stage Struck (1936)-Gold Diggers in Paris (1938) This only a partial list of Busby Berkeley's incredible and prolific career. The schizophrenic nature of the dance scene (Martha Graham, Busby Berkeley) is a direct result of the radical tone seen in a myriad of systems in the 1930's (Immigration, Great Depression). Mark Franko and "The Work of Dance: Labor, Movement, and Identity in the 1930's" take a highly analytical look at the connection between social, economic, and dance during a tumultuous period, not only in the United States, but worldwide. While the examination was highly analytical and cerebral, there was an underlying personal tone to the realities faced by dancers of the period. I thoroughly enjoyed the book.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By marina di Everything perfect!! Thank you

In this insightful new book, Mark Franko explores the many genres of theatrical dancing during the radical decade of the 1930s and their relationship to labor movements, including Fordist and unionist organizational structures, the administrative structures of the Federal Dance and Theatre Project, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and the Communist Party. Franko shows how the structures of labor organization were reproduced and acted out -- but also profoundly reasoned through in corporeal terms -- by choreography and performance of the proletarian mass dance, the chorus line of the Ziegfeld Follies and the reflexive backstage musical film, Martha Graham's modern dance, the revolutionary dance movement of the proletarian avant-garde, African-American "ethnic" opera-ballet, and Lincoln Kirstein's "American" ballet. The contributions of many important personalities of American theatrical, visual and literary culture are included in this study. Franko's focus extends from the direct impact of performances on audiences to the reviewing, reporting and photography of print journalism.

From Library Journal

Dance and labor may seem an unlikely pairing, but the author of this scholarly work proves otherwise with a look at the relationship between theatrical dancing and the progressive politics of the 1930s. Drawing on a cast ranging from modern dance pioneers Anna Sokolow and Jane Dudley, to the less-celebrated chorines of backstage film musicals, to organizations such as the Federal Dance and Theatre Project (part of the WPA), the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGW), and the Communist Party, Franko (*Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics*) "explores how work in the 1930s was configured by dance, and how dancers performed cultural work." A central thesis is that the organizational structure of labor and political groups was replicated and even put into action by the choreography and performances of the day, as seen in the modern dance creations of Martha Graham, the avant-garde revolutionary dance movement, and even the chorus lines of the Ziegfeld Follies. Enhanced by a generous bibliography and detailed notes, this title should find a place in specialized collections in dance, labor, or social history. Carolyn M. Mulac, Chicago P.L. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Written with clarity and urgency, this book will be of interest not only to dance scholars, but also to social historians, labor historians, and art historians, as well as all who seek a better understanding of the relationship between the arts and political change." (Jane Desmond, author of *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*)

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