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The History of Dance Representation on TV in the United States

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I. Introduction

Recently the exposure of dance on TV in Korea has increased, much due to the regular programming of reality TV shows of which dance becomes the main or indispensible component, such as *Dancing with the Stars* and *Korea's Got Talent*. In addition to these two programs that have already been in a few seasons on air, another dance competition show called *Dancing 9* is scheduled to be produced this year.[1] Along with other reality TV shows including *Top Band, Korea's Next Top Model*, and *Superstar K*, these dance-related programs form the boom of audition- or competition-based talent shows in Korean TV industry. In that these programs have shaped and been shaped by the discourse of dance in Korean society, it seems necessary to investigate the increased exposure of dance on Korea's terrestrial and cable TVs in terms of its meaning

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1) 정철운(2013), '슈스케' 악마PD, 전세계 춤꾼들 불러모은다, 미디어오늘 (2013-02-02) 〈http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=107477, 2013. 3. 23.〉

and consequences.

What is particular with this recent boom of dance programs on Korean TV is its global scale. The shows mentioned above are either direct imports or heavily inspired by foreign popular dance talent shows: *Dancing with the Stars* is the direct import of American TV shows with the same title (whose origin goes back to British TV show *Come Dancing*); *Korea's Got Talent* is the import of *America's Got Talent*; and, the upcoming *Dancing 9*—in which dancers would compete each other across genre boundaries—seems to benchmark the formula of the popular American talent show *So You Think You Can Dance*. Considering that the recent dance talent shows on Korean TV directly import the formats and formulas of a few successful dance talent shows abroad, it is important to contextualize dance representation on Korean TV with the international landscape.

Given that, the purpose of this research is to provide the history of dance representation on TV in the United States. The reason to focus on the North American case, not the Korean one, is two-fold. First, the international impact of Hollywood cinema and North American mass media cannot be avoided when discussing global pop culture and medias phenomena today. Often pejoratively derogated for homogenizing and even degrading global pop culture, American mass media has exerted enormous influence worldwide, and dance programs on TV are not an exception. Second, and more importantly, as much as the history of the TV industry is longer and more stable than that of Korea, dance programs on American TV is relatively more affluent and diverse than that of Korea. I perceive that the volume, history, and diversity of North American dance programs on TV forms a kind of discourse, while it is not yet in Korea—which seems crucial for envisioning the field of dance on mass media. Indeed, reality TV is not a recent invention, whose origin goes back to variety shows that were popular in Britain and North America in the early days of TV industry in 1940s and 50s. Thus, the rationale to introduce the history of dance representation on North American TV is also a strategy to situate dance representation on Korean TV in a global and historical context.

Regarding dance representation on TV, Korean dance scholarship has been largely focused on analyzing the dance image in TV advertisements. Jiwon Lee analyzed dance-related advertisements from the feminist standpoint and argued

that dancing females in those advertisements function largely as sexual objects and further carry out roles for symbolic, functional and entertaining values.[2] Chu-Yun Oh similarly analyzed four dance-themed advertisements aired in 2000s using Laban's Theory of Effort focusing on gender and sexuality. Oh observed that, while dancers' movements comply with stereotypical gender roles, the use of gaze subverts the traditional gaze model in that female dancers become the audience gaze's subjects while male dancers become its objects.[3] Also, Ah-Young Park (2012) analyzed dance-themed advertisements in terms of sexuality.[4] While it is acknowledgeable that advertisements are strategic areas to test a society's norm, that all of these researches analyzed advertisements also seems to imply that regular programs featuring dance have been meager and marginalized in TV industry.

In addition to TV advertisement analysis, another notable research trend on dance on TV in Korean dance scholarship is to analyze the relationship between the viewership of TV dance programs and the attendance rate of dance performances. Hyun-Sook Kim and Jeong-Ok Park conducted a survey and concluded that viewing TV dance programs influences the time and frequency of attending dance performances.[5] Other researchers furthered this proposition as the rationale for promoting dance's presence in the society; in other words, they argue for utilizing TV dance programs as a means to enhance dance concert attendance. Gui-Ho Ahn, Jin-Sook Yang, and Seung-Hee Lee similarly analyzed the current status of TV dance programs as the means to popularize dance in Korean society.[6]

While these two research trends regarding dance representation on TV have meaningful findings and suggestions for further inquiry, it also seems to lack

2) 이지원(2002), TV 광고에 나타난 여성과 춤, 무용예술학연구 9(봄): 197-221.
3) 오주연(2010), TV 광고 춤에 나타난 젠더 이미지(gender image)연구, 한국무용기록학회, 19: 29-45.
4) 박아영(2012). TV광고에 나타난 무용 이미지의 기호학적 의미에 관한 연구, 성균관대학교 석사학위논문.
5) 김현숙, 박정옥(2003), TV 무용 프로그램 시청을 통한 무용인식 및 무용공연 관람의 관계, 대한무용학회논문집, 35: 103-119.
6) 안귀호(1998), 무용의 대중화 방안을 위한 mass media 활용연구, 경희대학교 석사학위논문; 양진숙(2001), 춤의 대중성 확보를 위한 mass-media의 역할에 대한 현황분석, 숙명여자대학교 석사학위논문; 이승희(1996), TV방송매체를 통한 무용활동 현황분석을 통한 발전방안연구, 경희대학교 석사학위논문.

historical and critical reconsideration in the larger purview. Considering that dance programs on TV tend to be few in numbers and short-lived, it is understandable that scholarship on dance representation on Korean TV tends to be synchronic rather than diachronic; that is, it is easier to apply media theory to current advertisements than to historicize them. Yet, not to mention of the current boom of dance talent shows that are directly licensed from foreign programs, even *Ye Sul Ui Gwang Jang* (EBS, 1992-2004, 2007), one of the rare regular TV programs that are straightforwardly showcasing dance and other performing arts, is not free from the conventions of how dance has been translated and viewed on TV. Arguing that representation depends on convention, film scholar Gilberto Perez articulates the problematic but necessary nature of convention as follows:

> [A] convention in art is not just an established rule… but an agreement on the part of the audience, a consent to what the work is doing, to a way of doing things the work proposes…. [E]ven the most innovative work cannot just disregard convention but must negotiate its audience's acceptance of its innovations.[7)]

Perez's argument reveals why it is necessary to understand the history of dance representation on TV both in local and global perspectives even when discussing a Korean case.

However, the literature on dance on TV and mass media is quite meager in other countries, too, due to the fact that traditional dance scholarship tends to be focused on dance as art works in the format of live performances. One exceptional book is *Television and the Performing Arts* by Brian G. Rose, a reference book on the TV programs on performing arts in North America.[8)] In addition to providing early history of American TV industry, its first and longest chapter is devoted to dance programs on TV. However, published in 1986, its coverage of the history of dance representation on TV is quite outdated, inevitably omitting the recent boom of reality TV phenomenon. Besides this,

7) Gilberto Perez(1998), *Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp.21-22.

8) Brian G. Rose(1986), *Television and the Performing Arts: A handbook and reference guide to American cultural programming* (New York; Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press).

only a few anthology books provide an introductory discussion of the field, among which stand out two books on North American and Britain. *Envisioning Dance: On Film and Video*, edited by Judy Mitoma, is the result of a six-year project based on UCLA Dancer for Intercultural Performance.[9] Focusing on the effectively recording dance, it collects 55 essays by directors, choreographers, cinematographers, editors, producers, and documentary filmmakers. While touching on diverse topics and works, the lack of an overarching theme makes it difficult to draw a clear view not only of the field of dance on TV but also that of dance on media in general. Meanwhile, another edited book published in Britain shows a more focused approach to dance on film and TV. *Parallel Lines: Media Representations of Dance*, edited by Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen, provides a rare introduction of the dance on British TV.[10] This book particularly pays attention to dance as light entertainment on TV, i.e., competition shows and music video. In that Britain and the North American broadcasting companies have sustained and active exchanges with each other in terms of cultural programs and even recent reality shows, the book offers a contextual framework to globally envision dance representation on TV.

While dance programs on American TV occupies only a small part of the enormous American TV industry, it is still vast enough to cover in the confinement of this article. Thus, I will divide the history into three periods and illustrate each one's characteristics and explicate the transitions between them. I argue that, as the American TV had been commercially oriented from the beginning, dance programs on TV in the early years were geared toward the entertainment value, which further went back to Hollywood cinema and vaudeville tradition. However, the establishment of NET (National Educational Television and Radio Center, later renamed as PBS, Public Broadcast System) in 1952 provided a legitimate space for performing arts and cultural programs, in which regular dance programs proliferated. However, the boom of reality TV programs since the 1990s lead to the revival of dance representation on

9) Judy Mitoma, ed.(2002), *Envisioning Dance: On Film and Video* (New York and London: Routledge).

10) Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen, eds.(1993), *Parallel Lines: Media Representations of Dance* (London: John Libbey & Company Ltd.).

commercial channels while its representation on public TV became dwindled. Thus, the current boom of dance competition shows should be understood as a revived attention to dance as an commercial and popular element in TV industry, with a whole set of issues and consequences different from that of the early variety shows.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it provides the historical and contextual framework to envision dance representation on TV, for the first time in Korean dance scholarship. Although delimited to the North American case, it provokes questions and issues that are still valid to the contemporary Korean cases, such as TV's dilemma as mass media and the conflicts of genre conventions between artistic vs. anthropological and educational vs. entertainment goals. Thus, this historical tracing will anchor the imported dance reality TV shows buoying on Korean TV with concrete cultural and historical backgrounds, and will tell where it comes from and where it headed for.

II. Dance Representation on the Early Commercial TV

Commercially available since the late 1930s, television quickly spread in American households, and the postwar TV boom in the early 1950s naturally led to the dance boom on TV. From its early days, TV companies produced dance programs. Dancers were among the first to be on television when live shows were introduced before World War II, while Sunday night dance programs appeared, with genres such as ballet, folk dance, and vaudeville dance quickly becoming regular offerings. General Electric alone produced more than 50 dance programs by 1947, while many dancers hoped that dance programs would replace soap operas. The significant presence of dance on TV continued for several decades. Responding to this boom of TV dance programs, *Dance Magazine* ran a monthly column called "Looking at TV" from 1953 to 1970,[11] in which staff writer Ann Barzel commented on the programs she watched last month or recommended programs to be aired this month. TV dance programs

11) The column was discontinued on January 1970, without particular notification or postscript announcement.

abounded, to the extent that a reader complained that important dance programs were omitted from the column, to which Barzel stated that she could only selectively cover those that were aired nationwide.[12] This episode provides a glimpse into the variety and enormity of dance exposure on TV.

Early TV represented dance mostly in the form of variety shows that introduced dance, music, comedy, and skits. Unlike Hollywood narrative film and musical comedy film, which were dictated by the plot, variety shows had an open format into which various dance materials could be easily incorporated and adapted. Initially aired as live programming, variety shows much resembled vaudeville shows in which dancers were briefly featured along with crooners and comedians.[13] Many variety shows at the time, such as *Show of Shows*, *Toast of the Town, The Wayne King Show, The Fred Waring Show*, and *This is Show Business*, assigned great importance to dance. *Your Show of Shows*, a successful dance variety program in the 1950s, featured dance numbers, the majority of which were specially made for the program. Yet, the kinds of dance that are most frequently featured in those shows are classical pas de deux or excerpts of the 19th century Russian ballets, reflecting tried-and-true approach of the stations and the conservative audience tastes.

While variety shows were an easy way to feature dancers, TV companies also adapted existing concert dance repertoires for broadcasting. For example, *Omnibus* (CBS) gave the public an opportunity to see "serious and important dance works in their entirety," such as José Limon's *The Moor's Pavane*, and Eugene Loring's *Billy the Kid*. TV companies even commissioned new works from choreographers. The weekly half-hour show *Sketchbook* (Farnsworth Television and Radio Corporation, 1944), was one of the first dance programs featuring new ballets specifically choreographed for TV broadcasting. Through these various outlets, diverse styles of dance were represented on TV.

Interestingly, the discourse of early dance representation on TV paralleled that of the early days of film in the 1920s. This new media was expected to advance the dance field, and it was expected to make good dance available to the general public. When dance representation on television was compared to

12) Ann Barzel(1955), Looking at Television, *Dance Magazine*, March, p.10.
13) Ann Barzel(1955), Television in Recent Years, *Dance Magazine*, March p. 63.

the "gold rush" of dance in the early days of the talkies, dancers expected this new media to become a new world for dancers. Dancers had unlimited expectations for television, feeling "as if the dancer [were] in on the ground floor for the first time" while criticizing radio and film for failing to promote dance.[14] Many television producers emphasized the compatibility between television and dance, saying that, "Television being a visual medium and dance being a visual art, they simply go hand in glove."[15] The fact that the same rhetoric had been used for talkie film was seldom recognized. Presented as early as in the 1940s, dance programs on TV were expected to enhance the American public's understanding of dance. Similar to the early talkies, TV, whose distribution was stronger and more widespread than that of film, was praised for delivering high quality dance to the small towns in rural America. As Hollywood dance directors prided in presenting high quality dances via musical comedies, television producers featured renowned dancers such as Alicia Markova, Frederic Franklin, and Mata Hari, believing that they were democratizing high art.

However, these ambitious goals for TV inevitably faced a challenge with its innate discrepancy as mass media. On one hand, TV attempted to deliver good taste to the American public; on the other hand, TV was mass media, and therefore the interests of the masses and the corporations paying for the advertising slots mattered most in its programming. The problem is, "good taste" did not necessarily respond to public taste, since the latter tended to be more conservative than the former. TV viewers included not only dance aficionados in metropolitan areas, but also farmhands in North Dakota and cowboys in Colorado, whose cultural and aesthetic perspectives remained more conservative. Given that television companies had a policy to provide dance programs proportionately to the public's interest in it at that time, television's representation of dance, despite its quantitative presence, had an indelible rupture with the art dance field.

Inevitably, different dance genres were disproportionately represented on TV. Conservative public taste further conflicted with television's self-imposed task

14) Maurice Stoller(1946), Terpsichore among the Megacycles, *Dance Magazine*, May, pp.10-11.

15) Ibid.,10.

to present good taste to the public. Max Liebman, producer of *Your Show of Shows*, explained that the viewers wanted to see the best on TV, yet resisted unfamiliarity. This explains much about the popularity of ballet, as it was both a relatively familiar dance form and generally regarded as high art. Yet, even for ballet, conservative public taste dictated its representation on TV. The failure of Lew Christensen's *Filling Station* on *Your Show of Shows* is a case in point. Since television audiences for this revue-type program regarded ballet as a symbol of high art, they were uncomfortable seeing people performing ballet in overalls and knickers.[16]

Meanwhile, compared to ballet and popular dance forms, modern dance was almost nonexistent on TV. This is another parallel with Hollywood musical comedy created by dance on TV. Although Martha Graham was one of the first to appear on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1939, revue and vaudeville took precedence over modern dance or ballet in the early 1940s.[17] Judy Dupuy, editor of the magazine *Televiser* who worked for the General Electric Company, commented that, "The ballet, folk dancing, rhumbas [sic], tap dancing and oriental dances [were] excellent for television," while totally omitting modern dance from her list.[18] It is not surprising, then, that the modern-dance-oriented magazine *Dance Observer* lamented that "modern dancers [were] conspicuous by their absence" while folk dance was regarded as a "particularly successful choice for the basis of the weekly program."[19] The magazine urged modern dancers to break the taboos against new technology and to think about the potential of television for their artistic development. Considering that, even in the early 1950s, modern dancers were instructed to wear sandals so as not to offend viewers by dancing barefoot while a ballerino wore trousers instead of white tights in *Les Sylphides* on TV,[20] the rare appearance of modern dance on TV was not just a matter of modern dancers' reluctance to appear on TV but the result of the conservative taste of television viewers. In doing so, it was inevitable that the integrity of a dance work as art

16) Doris Hering(1955), Conversation with Max Liebman, *Dance Magazine*, March, p.28.
17) Maurice Stoller(1946), Terpsichore among the Megacycles, May, pp.10-11.
18) Judy Dupuy(1947), Choreography for Television, *Dance Magazine*, June, pp.26-31.
19) Lois Balcom(1942), Television—What to Do about It? *Dance Observer*, January, p.11.
20) Ann Barzel(1953), Looking at TV, *Dance Magazine*, March, p.8.

should be compromised and altered to meet commercial interests of TV.

In sum, the dance programs on early commercial TV expected to satisfy both good taste and public taste, and yet its conservatism inevitably refracted and strained the representation of the art dance phenomena. Considering that the dance film field in the same period began to be reformulated and structured at the service of the dance field, TV remained an exclusive field in which individual dancers could not have agency. As a result, the most popular form of dance shown on TV was classical ballet pas de deux in the variety shows.

Due to this limited representation, the quantitative revelation of dance exposure on early commercial TV via variety shows at the time did not satisfy those in the dance field; rather, it only highlighted the ontological instability of the way dance was represented on TV. Many notable concert dancers appeared along with comedians and other entertainers, while well-produced dance numbers were frequently unrecognizable as backup to the singers. Within the flood of variety shows, many viewers objected to the absence of all-dance programs in which dancers danced, not behind singers, but on their own, presenting the entire work.[21] Also, the pervasive commercialism of these programs was criticized. Pejoratively referred to as "commercial dancing,"[22] dance on commercial television shows was separate from art dance practices. This sentiment was well captured in an interview with a TV professor, who spoke about TV's potential as a medium for dance and as a means of teaching: "It is very hard to turn on television any night without seeing some kind of dance. [Yet] What we are talking about is something worthwhile in dance."[23] The comparison between "some kind of dance" and "something worthwhile in dance" indicated the distinction between popular dance and dance as a serious art.

Lamenting on the mannerism of dance numbers on variety shows, Barzel argued that "[t]here should be a dance show in which dance would be the only and featured art."[24] Here Barzel projected the new kind of show as "an

21) Jack Anderson(1965), Danny Daniel says 'Grumble,' *Dance Magazine*, Dec., p.123.
22) Olga Maynard(1965), The View from 'The Big Eye,' *Dance Magazine*, Jan., p.41.
23) Rudy Bretz(1960), Television—a Tool for Teaching Dance, interviewed by Alma Hawkins, *Impulse*, p.53.
24) Ann Barzel(1995), Looking at Television, *Dance Magazine*, September, p.9.

educationally geared presentation that could broaden the audience base, not only of television dance, but of all dance. Illustrated introductory remarks, well-considered explanations, in some cases even comments during the dancing… could enhance a program."[25] Barzel's suggestion became the prelude to the advent of more serious programs on dance, which were quickly recognized and welcomed by those in the dance field, as seen in that *DANCE Magazine* established awards for the television industry in May 1955.[26] *DANCE Magazine's* first awards were given to four programs shown on national networks: *Spectaculars* (NBC, its producer Max Liebman), *Omnibus* (CBS), *Your Hit Parade* (NBC, its choreographer Toni Chamoli), and *Adventure* (CBS). These four programs differed from each other in terms of genre and focus; *Your Hit Parade* was a popular variety show, *Omnibus* and *Spectaculars* provided art dance works that were either reformatted according to TV studio or specifically choreographed for the show, and *Adventure* was an experimental anthropological program. Given that the majority of programs in which dance was featured at that time were light-hearted variety shows, the awards to these four different programs that were exceptionally serious reveals the dance field's yearning for a new kind of television programs fully devoted to dance.

III. The Establishment of NET and the Educational Turn

In the postwar years of 1950s, there emerged the sentiment that performing arts are national cultural assets to be protected and supported in the international context. Thus, the increased governmental support for the arts and the recognition of the cultural significance of dance influenced the dance media field, which was most visibly realized in the form of educational turn in the way dance was represented on TV.

One of the important movements for these dance programs was the popularity as an educational tool TV had gained, especially with the emergence of educational television stations. If TV's popular and lowbrow connotations

25) Ibid.
26) A special issue of TV award is included in *Dance Magazine's* May 1955 issue.

had been predominant in commercial channels, the emergence of educational channels served as an effort to depart easily from those cultural connotations. Bringing the educational benefit for the general public to the foreground, educational TV stations were ardently funded as an effective way to support and publicize the arts. This is the context in which TV dance programs were produced and funded with public grants. For instance, the New York State Council on the Arts granted $75,000 on a series *A for Art* (1973), while the NEA, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting[27] granted $200,000 to *American Ballet Theater: A Close-Up in Time* (1973). Sometimes the funding agency was actively involved in producing the programs, as seen in the Ford Foundation Television Workshop's production of *Omnibus*.

The growth of educational dance programs was more indebted to the emergence of regional educational television stations and its controlling organization, the National Educational Television and Radio Center (NET), which existed between 1952 and 1970 and later was replaced by Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). As an organization of non-commercial educational television stations, the NET circulated educational television programs among its member stations. With the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, educational television became more full-fledged, in which performing arts programs flourished.

With prominent educational purposes, the NET made its materials available to schools and the community for classroom instruction and group meetings. As its programs covered a wide range of materials, dance was included along with science, international politics, and other arts. In fact, NET's role in promoting dance in American TV was remarkable, especially as it exposed people to "serious" dance. Two of the NET's early dance programs were made on Martha Graham: *A Dancer's World* and *Appalachian Spring*, which were highly appreciated by the dance field to the extent that one commentator said that, "If you have an organization that begins with Martha Graham, you can imagine what its future plans must be!"[28] This public interest and support for

27) The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is a private, not-for-profit corporation created by Congress in 1967. It is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting.

the educational benefit of dance enabled big-budgeted, large-scale productions on dance that had not been possible previously via dance film festivals or private recordings.

At the same time, however, this public broadcasting stations' coverage of dance also deepened the public connotations of dance. While the mainstay of those programs, such as Martha Graham, naturally strengthened the canon or classic American dance, they also created polarization with less-featured dancers. In so doing, individual dancers or dance companies featured in those TV programs were not just themselves, but were also endowed the responsibility to represent the whole dance field and to promote its social status in the American society.

This is a surprising shift, considering the previous sentiment that, the more dance had been the mainstay of commercial television shows, the more serious dancers had distinguished themselves from commercial dance programs. However, the emergence of public-funded educational programs on dance and a few successful pioneering programs on TV compelled individual dancers to reconsider TV as a medium beneficial for disseminating serious dance. Interestingly, if the choreographers of commercial dance programs strived to integrate their dance with the whole show, these serious dance program makers tended to stand out and speak about dance. In other words, these educational dance programs developed a strong sense of identity. This is because the educational dance programs' fundamental goals were not only to educate the American public about what dance was and how to appreciate it, but also to distinguish serious dance from commercial dance and affirm it as an important cultural asset. Not surprisingly, most education TV dance programs used a lecture-demonstration format to explain concert dance forms, as seen in Agnes de Mille's two dance programs for the *Omnibus* series in 1955 and 1956, 'The Art of Ballet' and 'The Art of Choreography.' Each program presented a series of dance excerpts with commentary that was written and delivered by de Mille.

An interesting comparison was forged between the two early dance programs of the NET: *A Time to Dance* and *People Are Taught to Be Different*. A *Time to Dance*, aired on WGBH in 1959, was a nine-part introductory interview-

28) Jac Venza(1965), Educational TV loves dance, *Dance Magazine*, September p.43.

demonstration dance program. Martha Myers, dance professor at Smith College, conceived the project, convinced the NET Council of the educational benefit of dance on TV, and then managed the project. The program focused on three types of concert dance: ballet, modern, and ethnic dance. The entire program was devoted to ballet and modern dance with the exception of one episode, and even that episode focused on theatricalized forms of Trinidad dance featuring Geoffrey Holder and Company. Martha Myers described the program's significance as featuring "the country's most outstanding dance artists, with performance of excerpts from many famous works."[29] Although the title and structure of the program inferred a comprehensive presentation of dance phenomena, it focused exclusively on dance as a theatrical art.

Meanwhile, *People Are Taught to Be Different*, produced by KUHT-TV in 1958, was referred to as a "danced anthropology."[30] Narrated by a sociology professor, cultural differences between societies were illustrated through different forms of dance. Western and non-Western dance cultures were compared in this production, featuring the performance of an African-American modern dance group from Texas Southern University. Their dances were appreciated for their lack of self-consciousness—one of the defining factors of Western concert dance forms. The choice of an African-American dance group to represent various non-Western cultures, from the Kwoma of New Guinea to the Hopi of Northern Arizona, could be seen as a racial stereotype disguised in an educational agenda.

The difference between *A Time to Dance and People Are Taught to Be Different* seems significant, since the contrast indicates the different representational approaches to dance as art and dance as culture. It became the conceptual structure on which successive educational dance programs would rely. Dance as art specifically referred to ballet and modern dance, while dance as culture referred to non-Western communal dance forms. Neglecting the social and ethnic dance forms within Western culture, these two different pathways of dance programming constructed the binary conception of dance between Western dance as art and non-Western dance as culture.

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29) Martha Myers(1960), 'A Time to Dance': Dance Series for National Educational Television, *Impulse*, p.33.

30) Danced Anthropology, *Impulse*, 1960, p.31.

Similar large-scale educational dance programs followed these early programs including *A Time to Dance, People Are Taught to Be Different* (both by WGBH, Martha Myers, 1960), *Arts USA* (1965), *Great Performances: Dance in America* (1976-), *Eye on Dance* (1981-), *Rhythms of Earth* (1987), and *Alive from Off Center* (1985-1996).[31] Also, entire performances of theater dance, particularly ballet, were introduced via occasional series of *Live from the Met, Live from Lincoln Center*, and *Alive from Off Center*, while there were also single-unit programs on dance such as *U.S.A.: Dance* (1965) and *Five Ballets of the Five Senses* (1973). Despite their different subjects and approaches, they shared with each other the goal of dance advocacy as well as the consequence of transforming dance programs from a pure instructional product to something for evening family audiences.

The apotheosis of this educational turn of dance representation on TV seems to be the production of *Dancing* (Thirteen/WNET, 1993). As an eight-hour documentary series on the role of dance in world culture, *Dancing* was distributed for broadcast to more than 300 public television stations nationwide and even abroad. The scale, preparation, and cost of the program were unprecedented in the dance field. The research had already begun in 1985, and production began four years later when film crews visited 18 countries on 5 continents. Costing 10 million dollars of funding from America's major foundations,[32] *Dancing* is referred as a "public-television blockbuster."[33]

Moreover, as its ambition was geared toward impacting dance education in schools as well as raising dance awareness in American society, it is generally considered as "the first major television series to approach dance with the depth and substance given to other fields such as the visual arts, sciences, nature, and public affairs."[34] In addition, the airing of the program was celebrated with "America Dancing," a nationwide campaign taking place during the spring and

31) Program lists of *Dance in America, A Time to Dance, Arts USA,* and *Alive from Off Center*, are listed in *Envisioning Dance*, pp. 39-52. Many of them were made under the supervision of Jac Venza.

32) It received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, National Endowment for the Humanities, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Public Broadcasting Service, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

33) Ellen Cohn(1993), …5 and 6 and 7 and 8! *the Village Voice*, April, p.27.

34) K.C. Patrick(1992). Television Takes the Stage, *Dance Teacher Now*, September, p.46.

summer to heighten awareness of dance. The majority of its funding from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund was given to 22 local public television stations across the country to support individual "America Dancing" projects, including live performances, master classes, and workshops for kindergarten through college students, public forums, teleconferences, teacher's seminars, and an essay contest. With these multi-format presentations, *Dancing* achieved the self-imposed significance as "the largest outreach program ever created in conjunction with a television series… with 90 performances and events taking place across the country."[35] With not only its budget and production duration but also its multi-faceted strategies, *Dancing* resided as a monumental project in the genealogy of education TV programs on dance.

However, when *Dancing* actually aired, viewer reception was lukewarm. Many of the reviews showed mixed attitudes, while others were quite negative toward it, expressing descriptors of "conceptually skewed"[36] and "pathetic."[37] Although this study cannot fully elaborate why *Dancing* failed to draw more positive reactions from the field, what can be observed is that self-imposed responsibility to "educate" the viewers inevitably confused its approach to dance. *Dancing* was made in the convention of anthropological TV documentary, while the reviewers viewed it in the convention of aesthetic dance representation on TV. Also, since *Dancing* was an anthropological documentary with its intention of cultural critique., it is significant to provide enough explanation in order not to mislead the viewers about the featured culture, which inevitably renders its approach explanatory and "wordy"—often derided as the "Voice of God." In the end, *Dancing's* overt attempt to "educate" what dance is and how it should be seen did not appeal to the viewer as much as it had been with earlier programs on educational television.

For more than a decade since its premiere, there has been no anthropological dance program of the scale of *Dancing* in North American TV. First, no one could fundraise, persuade TV stations, and execute the project as effectively as *Dancing* did. Indeed, most reviewers shared the sentiment that "[w]e should not carp, but be thankful that it was done at all."[38] Second, the channel to be

35) Release copy on "America Dancing," Clippings, the New York Public Library.
36) John Elson(1993), Rituals and Rhythms, *Time*, May 3.
37) Tobi Tobias(1993), Peripheral Vision, *New York*, May 10.

exposed to world dance became more diversified with digital and web-based media. In a world in which one can retrieve dance footage from the most remote community in the world with a few clicks, the dance footage of anthropological TV documentary loses its value of rarity. Third, and most important, in the contemporary world where overarching statements lose their validity, *Dancing's* ambitious goal to represent dance in the world becomes obsolete. While many sweeping assertions regarding dance—e.g., that dance is universal—was accepted for the sake of dance advocacy in *Dancing*, they became more and more scrutinized in the recent productions. In sum, the failure of this exceptionally ambitious project involving both the United States (Thirteen/ WNET) and Britain (BBC2) prognosticates the decline of educational and public value of dance representation on cultural programs and the reactive turn of entertaining value—with the boom of reality TV—of dance representation on commercial TV.

IV. The Boom of Reality TV and Dance Competition Shows

In 1991, two years before *Dancing* was premiered, a new TV show called *The Real World* was premiered on MTV. Later acknowledged as the first of influential reality TV shows, *The Real World* had seven young people with different background in a house filled with cameras without overarching narratives. Due to its wide success, there soon emerged the genre called "reality television" in American mass media, and now it is matured as a genre of distinct cultural form. Its formats and characteristics trace back to the early variety shows and quiz shows in 1950s, particularly to Alan Funt's show called *Candid Camera* (1948) in which Funt shot other people unexpectedly doing bizarre things.[39] Since then, reality TV has expanded and evolved into various subgenres, including game show, dating program, makeover program, the documentary soap opera, the talent show, reality sitcom, charity programs, court

38) Alexandra Carter(1993), Contemplating the universe, *Dance Now*, Spring, p.63.
39) SJ Miller (2011), Demythologizing Reality TV: Critical Implications as a new literacy, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3): 137.

programs, lifestyle games, and even faux reality shows.

What penetrates these various subgenres of reality TV is the fact that it features "real" people in dramatic situation with unpredictable outcome. The editors of the book *Reality TV: Remaking Television*, one of the first books that academically recognized and discussed the genre, define reality TV "as an abashedly commercial genre united less by aesthetic rules or certainties than by the fusion of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real."[40] In other words, the keywords penetrating diverse reality TV shows are commercialism, entertainment values, and the documentary tradition.

Among these ever-evolving subgenres, dance programs are mostly limited to the competition show, in which ordinary people or non-dancer celebrities show off their talent in the format of dance competition. A few popular dance- and dance-related programs are *Dancing with the Stars, So You Think You Can Dance, Got Talent*, and *America's Best Dance Crew*. *Dancing with the Stars* traces back to the British program called *Come Dancing*, one of television's longest-running shows. As a BBC TV ballroom dancing competition show that ran on and off from 1949 to 1998, it was re-launched as a celebrity version entitled *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2004 in which celebrities pair up with professional ballroom dancers. It has been successfully exported to other countries under the name *Dancing with the Stars*.[41] *Got Talent* is also a talent show first conceived in Britain (*Britain's Got Talent*), debuted in America (*America's Got Talent*, NBC, 2006-), and spawned to more than fifty countries. Featuring dancers, singers, comedians, and other kinds of performers of all ages, it became one of the most successful talent show programs.[42] *So You Think You Can Dance* (Fox, 2005-) is a competition show in which dancers show a variety of popular dance genres including ballroom, hip-hop, street, jazz, and musical numbers danced in solo, duet, and group forms. *America's Best Dance Crew* (MTV, 2008-) is another dance competition show, yet it differs from other programs in that it is more focused on hip-hop and group competition. In sum,

40) Laurie Ouellette and Susan Murray, eds.(2009). *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* (New York: New York University Press), p. 3.

41) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dancing_with_the_stars 2013-3-30>

42) <http://www.fremantlemedia.com/Production/Our_brands/Got_Talent.aspx, 2013. 3. 30>

these prominent dance competition shows were all premiered or re-launched in the mid-2000s, mostly focusing on popular dance forms. Also, like other popular reality TV shows, they become a global phenomenon as their licensed formats are widely exported and even further inspire derivative programs.

Meanwhile, dance representation on public TV dwindled. Compared to the 1970-80s in which the boom of dance programs on PBS lead to the increase of the attendance to live dance performances, dance representation on public TV in the 2000s lost much of its cultural influences. Now a few major inventions of the previous periods, such as *Great Performances* and *Dance in America*, are barely maintained, while no other innovative and influential program has appeared yet. No program as ambitious as *Dancing* has been attempted. Moreover, even when a new dance program was launched on public TV, it follows the formats and styles of commercial TV programs. An example in case is *America's Ballroom Challenge* (PBS, 2006-). As a ballroom competition program, which is a part of Ohio Star Ball, a festival of dancesport held in Columbia, Ohio, it faithfully follows the formats and formulas of those on commercial TV.

In that dance representation on reality TV is primarily limited to the format of competition show, it does not necessarily share with other programs the typical issues that penetrate the discourse of reality TV. Reality TV has a set of issues derived from the fact that it provides "nonscripted access to 'real' people in ordinary and extraordinary situation."[43] Yet, as most dance competition programs are structured in the form of competition, not so many "nonscripted" accidents could happen between the performance and result announcement. Also, while reality TV has complicated issues of veracity and ethical concerns by exposing the "real" people, dance programs that maximize individuals' performativity and stage persona do not excessively expose people's private lives and personalities, either.

Rather, exclusively limited to the highly stylized competition format, dance representation on reality TV has its own set of issues. First, dance representation on reality TV is exclusively limited to popular dance genres while neglecting less popular concert dance forms. As much as variety shows in the 1940-50s

43) Laurie Ouellette and Susan Murray, eds.(2009), p. 3.

primarily featured classical ballet pas de deux while neglecting modern dance, dance competition shows in the 2000s are highly focused on popular dance forms in which physical technique conquers other elements of dance. Moreover, since it relies on the competition format, the approach to dance is inevitably narrowed to the aspect of technique and visual impression.

Second, the limited representation of dance also has ideological issues concerning sex, gender, race, and class. Since the participants to the competition are assessed by the judges, and ultimately by the viewers, what is "good" or "proper" dance always involves ideological implications. For example, in the first episode of the premiere season of *So You Think You Can Dance*, the executive producer and head judge Nigel Lythgoe critiqued the contestant Anthony Bryant for not dancing masculine enough.[44] As the language used by the judges and the outcome of the viewers' vote directly reflect the norm of the proper dancing body without enough educational and political intervention, dance on reality TV becomes an ideological barometer of the given society.

In the end, although dance competition shows on reality TV enhanced the dance exposure that has traditionally been marginalized in the American society, it also carries specific drawbacks as it follows commercial, not educational, rules. Indeed, what is particular with the advent of reality TV is that, it challenges the traditional dance representation on TV that has always been associated with nonprofitability and nonpopularity, because it can feature dance and it can still be entertaining and profitable. However, this popularity and spotlight on dance on reality TV is not achieved without sacrifice. Despite its connection with the discourse of real, reality TV eschew the "educational" connotation of nonfictional TV programs and it utilizes dance primarily as a vehicle for entertainment and not necessarily as a platform for educating audiences. In so doing, the educational function against prejudice against dance that dance programs on public TV had strived to carry on can be easily lost.

44) Further discussion on this can be found in Mark A. Broomfield(2011), Policing Masculinity and Dance Reality Television: What Gender Nonconformity Can Teach Us in the Classroom, *Journal of Dance Education*, 11: 124-128.

V. Conclusion

This research traced the history of dance representation on North American TV, covering the period between 1940s and 2010s. Quickly accepted as an indispensible part of commercial TV programs, dance representation on North American TV underwent a dialectical development between commercial and public values. In the early years, dance was featured in the variety shows mostly in the popular forms and formats. As a result, referred to as "commercial dancing," dance on commercial television shows was separate from art dance practices, while classical ballet pas de deux was frequently featured as it could satisfy conservative taste of the viewers. Unlike the European TV, North American TV had been primarily linked with commercialism from the beginning, yet the establishment of NET in 1952 made a watershed in American cultural programming that peaked in the 1970s. Combining performance, documentary materials and lecture-demonstration, dance programs produced in this period emphasized education and accessibility, even resulting increased attendance to dance concerts. However, at the turn of the 1990s, this public connotation of educational television has dwindled, while the boom of reality TV on commercial and cable TV revived the entertaining value of dance. Although the increased exposure of dance on TV via a few popular dance competition shows may allude to the cultural spotlight on dance in the society, it also entails drawbacks as it tends to strengthen the very stereotypes that dance programs on educational television in the previous era had tried to abolish.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it, for the first time in Korean dance scholarship, historicizes dance representation on TV and contextualizes it with the global condition. While delimiting its subject to the North American case, it provides a historiography in a large scale, drawing a dialectical relationship between dance on commercial TV and dance on public TV. Given the recent boom of dance reality shows on Korean TV, this finding should function as a strategic point to approach dance representation on Korean TV more critically and globally. Especially when dance representation on Korean TV other than transient advertisements has not been academically scrutinized in Korean dance scholarship, the historiography that this study offers would function as an initiative to generate more diverse and critical approach

to dance on mass media.

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Abstract

텔레비전 무용 프로그램의 역사: 미국을 중심으로

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성균관대 강사

본 연구는 미국 텔레비전 무용 프로그램의 역사를 거시사적 관점에서 서술한다. 1930년대 상업화된 텔레비전이 널리 보급된 이후 무용은 다양한 형식과 방법을 통해 텔레비전 프로그램의 주요 콘텐츠가 되어왔다. 텔레비전에서 무용이 재현되는 방식의 역사를 주요 전환점을 중심으로 재구성해보면 크게 상업성과 공영성의 가치가 교차적으로 부각되었음을 알 수 있다. 즉, 텔레비전의 초기 단계부터 상업방송채널을 중심으로 춤의 오락적 가치가 소비되었다면, 1952년 미국교육방송(National Educational Television and Radio Center; NET)이 출범하고 1967년 공영방송법이 발효되어 공영방송이 활성화되면서 춤에 대한 교육적, 공영적 접근이 활성화되었다. 그러나 이후 90년대 이후 케이블 TV를 중심으로 이른바 "리얼리티 TV" 프로그램들이 크게 유행하고 공영방송에서의 무용 프로그램들이 침체되면서 다시금 춤은 상업방송의 오락적 요소로 소비되는 패턴을 보인다. 이러한 텔레비전 무용 프로그램의 변화의 역사는 간헐적으로 등장하는 무용 프로그램을 바라볼 수 있는 기초적 배경을 제공해줄 뿐 아니라 무용 프로그램의 성격과 특징이 사회문화적 요인 및 제도적 변화에 따라 크게 영향받아 왔음을 일깨워준다.

국내 텔레비전 무용 프로그램의 역사, 편수, 다양성은 하나의 담론을 형성할 만큼 풍부하지 않다. 무용 및 다른 공연예술을 소개해온 〈예술의 광장(EBS, 1992-2004, 2007)〉를 제외하고는 이렇다할 정규 프로그램이 존재하지 않았으며, 최근 유행하는 무용 리얼리티 TV 프로그램 역시 해외 프로그램의 포맷을 직수입하거나 변용시킨 것이라는 점에서 자생적 담론을 형성하기 어려웠다. 이러한 상황은 본 연구가 국내 매스미디어 상의 무용 연구를 위한 선결과제로 우선 미국의 사례를 종합하여 소개하는 주요원인으로 작용했다. 미국 텔레비전 무용 프로그램이 한국의 경우에 비해 상대적으로 긴 역사와 다양한 포맷을 지닐 뿐 아니라 최근 한국에서도 유행하는 〈댄싱 위드 더 스타〉나 〈갓 탈렌트〉 등 무용을

주요 소재로 한 리얼리티 쇼 프로그램들이 영국과 미국을 중심으로 활성화되어 세계적으로 전파되었다는 점에서 미국의 사례를 들여다볼 필요가 있다.

텔레비전의 역사 속에서 무용을 비롯한 예술 장르는 텔레비전의 담론이 공영성과 상업성 중에서 어디로 치우치느냐에 영향받아 매우 다른 방식으로 재현되어 왔으며, 특히 미국 텔레비전 무용 프로그램의 경우 상업성-공영성-상업성의 가치가 교차적으로 부각되는 변화를 거치면서 오늘날에 이르렀다. 이러한 거시사적 틀거리는 현재 한국의 케이블 채널을 중심으로 유행하는 리얼리티 무용 프로그램 현상에 대해 세계적, 역사적 맥락에서 위치지울 수 있게 해준다. 또한 텔레비전에서의 무용 노출빈도의 증가가 무용관객 증가로 이어질 것이라는 단순한 기대를 넘어 매스 미디어로서 텔레비전이 지니고 있는 특성으로 인해 무용 프로그램이 태생적으로 지닐 수 밖에 없는 딜레마에 대해 보다 복합적으로 바라볼 수 있게 한다. 나아가 최근 리얼리티 무용 프로그램들이 텔레비전 초기 역사의 상업방송에서 무용을 재현해온 방식과 공유점이 많으면서도 차별화되는 지점을 정확히 짚어낼 때 텔레비전 무용 프로그램에 대한 논의가 소모적으로 반복되지 않고 풍부해질 수 있다는 점에 기초조사로서의 본 연구의 의의가 있다.

주제어: dance representation(무용 재현), TV dance program(텔레비전 무용 프로그램), variety show(버라이어티 쇼), educational television (교육방송채널), reality TV(리얼리티 TV)