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Women to the Placards! The Socio-economic Situation of Female Choreographers in the Male World of Ballet Art

Introduction

Ballet and dance are investigated in Poland from different perspectives – historical, choreological or phenomenological. Dance as “cultural knowledge” reflects socio-cultural relations and influences their shape (Thomas 1995: 169–170). However, this field of art is rarely seen as part of the economy – generating profits, having a real impact on GDP (cultural and creative industries generate 3.5% of GDP in Poland, which is higher than industries such as mining or agriculture) and creating jobs (there are about 320,000 people employed)¹. Culture should therefore also be considered in economic terms. As one of the leading cultural economists, David Throsby, says: “Within the interpretation of culture in functional terms, we also find the concept of culture as an economy and the belief that culture is embedded in the economic environment” (Throsby 2010: 25).

Both women and culture are still struggling with remaining outside the mainstream of many spheres – economics, politics or even history.

However, there is a growing trend to take into account the impact of culture on the economic performance of small and large groups, especially on the processes that determine economic growth and economic transition in developing countries. Central to this trend is a shift away from the standard commodity-centred development model to a pluralistic people-centred model (ibidem: 73).

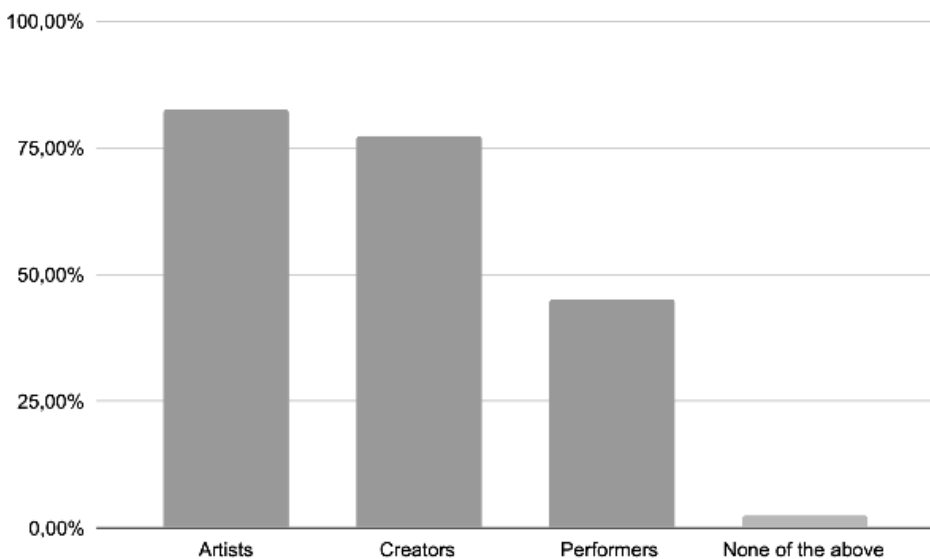
Cultural economics is a young but rapidly developing field of study that explores the relationships between economics, culture and art, as well as the artists working in those fields. Dance, belonging to the field of performing arts, as a subject of research in a way gave rise to this young scientific discipline. In 1966 a groundbreaking work for the study of culture and art in a market context was published – *Performing Arts. The Economic Dilemma* by economists William Baumol and William Bowen. This book was the result of extensive research on the performing arts –

¹ See the *Alert Culture* report: K. Czyżewski, J. Fogler, J. Hausner, M. Niezabitowski, M. Komar, P. Łysak, A. Opatowicz, R. Piaskowski, J. Purchla, Ł. Ronduda, J. Sanetra-Szeliga, T. Szlendak, A. Szymańska, B. Świątkowska, *Alert Culture*, Open Eyes Economy Summit, 2020, <https://oees.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Alert-Kultura-1-1.pdf> (access: 15.07.2020).

theatre, opera, music and dance precisely, which became the flywheel for research on the relationship between economy, culture and the arts – *the economics of the arts*, as cultural economists were calling it until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Trimarchi 2016: 171–184). This was the beginning of a prominent stream of work on the fields of culture and the arts, and later, consistently on cultural industries, media, the artists' labour market, sustainable development and many other issues at the intersection of economics and culture.

The most important component of performative artworks, including ballet performances in particular, are the artists, and, according to Baumol's law known as 'cost disease', the highest but necessary cost of performative (ballet) production (Ilczuk 2012: 28–30). "If a ballet lacks a dancer-artist on stage, choreography means absolutely nothing there" according to the eminent Polish choreographer Teresa Kujawa (Berski 1979: 204). Ruth Towse applies the dual definition of artists used by cultural economists dealing with the issue of the labour market of artists, dividing them into *creative artists* and *performers*. The first category includes visual artists, writers, authors of screenplays, films and TV programmes, directors, composers, lyricists and choreographers. The term 'performers' includes musicians, singers, dancers, actors (including puppeteers), circus performers (...). (Towse 2011: 294–295).

Chart 1. Who do you feel you are in a professional sense?



Source: own compilation based on Estimating the Number of Artists, Creators and Performers in Poland (Ilczuk et al. 2018).

Where are These Women?

Looking at the ballet environment – both in Poland and internationally – it is easy to see the numerical dominance of women², which does not account for their dominance in the creative (choreographic) and managerial spheres³. “As a traditionally female (but not necessarily female-dominated) field that perpetuates the strongest symbols of femininity in our culture, Western dance stage provides feminist reflection with its potentially richest material” (Daly 1991: 2).

Looking at the international situation, it is not difficult to notice a generally prevailing trend – ballet companies are mainly managed by men (van Dyke 2017: 20–38). As Jan van Dyke writes, the biggest difference between male and female artistic directors and the companies managed by them appears when considering: the size of the budget, the size of the audience, the number of touring performances, the salaries of artists, and the technical and administrative division. The larger the ensemble, the greater the likelihood of a male director.

“At least in the United States, the more well-known a ballet company is and the larger is its budget, the less likely it is to be led by a woman (...) While women have been the founders of many important ballet companies, once they have been institutionalised (and recognised as important cultural centres in a city), men have often taken over the leadership role,” confirm Joellen A. Meglin and Lynn Matluck Brooks (Meglin, Brooks 2012: 1).

In the context of choreography, the question of the person in charge of the company is important as he/she decides on the employment of a given choreographer for the season and on the shape of the repertoire, i.e. the performances to be shown on stage.

Gender Proportions in Choreography

Dance Data Project research conducted in the US has shown that in the 50 leading ballet companies in America, in the 2019/2020 season, 79% of choreographies were created by men. This is a slight shift towards equality (2%) – in the 2018/2019 artistic year it was 81% of all choreographic works⁴. A similar situation prevailed in the late 20th century when American male choreographers outnumbered women three to one (Meglin, Brooks 2012: 3).

Teresa Kujawa and Jan Berski also discuss these disparities:

J.B.: – I am often told that composing music, as well as choreographing, is rather a male occupation, a male profession.

T.K.: – How is it a men’s profession?

² See Dance Data Project reports, <https://www.dancedataproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Leadership-Report-2020.pdf> (access: 15.07.2020).

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Dance Data Project, *208–2019 Season Overview* (July 2019), <http://www.dancedataproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/July-2019-2018-2019-Season-Overview.pdf> (access: 15.07.2020).

J.B.: There are simply not many female choreographers, much less than women sculptors, painters or writers. How many female choreographers can we name in the 20th century: Bronisława Nijinska, Agnes de Mille, Ninette de Valois, Marta Graham, Brigit Cullberg, and here, Jarzynówna-Sobczak – that’s all.

Ballet Environment in Poland

The ballet community is very specific – hermetic and small. The study *Estimating the Number of Artists, Creators and Performers in Poland* (2018), led by Dorota Ilczuk (in which I also participated) estimated the number and recognised representatives of artistic professional groups in Poland. The study shows that Dance is the second least numerous industry (it comprises 2380 people, where there are 59970 all male and female artists). The ballet community consists of around 630 people, including 430 ballet dancers⁵. Apart from the dancers, the representatives of ballet also include choreographers, directors/managers (who are usually also leading choreographers) and the pedagogical department of ballet companies. The study of the labour market of ballet artists in terms of gender inequality, as well as the identification of the causes of gender inequality, is an issue often raised in public discourse, but so far unexplored. As early as the 1980s, Janina Pudełek noted that: “It is extremely difficult today to form a complete and objective view of the salaries of dancers“ for instance (Pudełek 1981: 108).

Research Methodology

Access to stage is an imperative of women’s development in choreography – that is, the number of performances shown on theatre stages. An indicator of this phenomenon are ballet repertoires set by institutions, or rather by their artistic directors (Teague 2016). To understand the actual gender proportions on the Polish ground, I conducted a quantitative data analysis [*documentary evidence analysis* (Macdonald, C. Tipton 1993)] taken from the public websites of selected ballet companies. Their list has been compiled using an analysis of the official website *taniecpolska.pl* run by the Institute of Music and Dance⁶, where ballet companies are listed as follows:

1. Polish National Ballet
2. The Ballet of the Grand Theatre in Łódź
3. The Ballet of the Grand Theatre in Poznań
4. The Ballet at the Kraków Opera House
5. The Ballet at the Opera House “Na Zamku“ in Szczecin
6. The Ballet at the Silesian Opera House
7. The Ballet of Opera Nova in Bydgoszcz
8. The Ballet of the Wrocław Opera House
9. The Ballet of the Baltic Opera House

⁵ The remaining 200 are choreographers; it is not possible to single out a leading technique.

⁶ Institutions → ballet companies [<https://www.taniecpolska.pl/institucje/filtr/16>] (access: 6.04.2020).

An additional selection criterion adopted by me was the size of the company (more than 20 artists), the form of their employment (employed on the basis of a full-time contract), their repertoire (the overwhelming majority of productions is based on classical dance technique or related – author’s works, as well as at least one large-format classical ballet in the repertoire, e.g. *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, etc.), their (historically) established position on the Polish ballet stage (they have been functioning for at least 20 years, including breaks, as in the case of the Baltic Opera Ballet; and they were founded as ballet companies). I have taken information on the number and general situation of male and female choreographers in the Polish labour market from the analysis of data originating from the study *Estimating the number of artists (...)*⁷.

Values and Scale of Measurement of Ballet Performances

To determine the proportion of performances authored by women and men, I use a statistical survey method where I assume that the variables form a measurement scale (Teague 2016: 13 after Agresti, Finlay 2013). In my opinion and to the best of my knowledge (different to Teague), multi-part performances, so-called ballet evenings, are often of lesser stature than those that are a whole in themselves – from a historical and economic perspective. Therefore, according to the variables I adopted: the gender of the creator and the *material* on which the choreography is created – ballet companies, an original measurement scale was created, where:

- a full ballet performance takes the value of 1
- a stage work forming part of a three-part ballet evening (*triple bill*) takes the value 0,3; and respectively:
 - x-part ballet evening – 0,x⁸;

Women in Choreography – a Historical Context

“History is written by the victors” said Winston Churchill, and the same is true of dance. Choreography – from Greek: *choreia* – dance, *grapho* – I write (Doroszewski 1961), is specific movement literature, whose “movement notation”⁹ is made by a choreographer with the help of the dancing bodies of male and female dancers. However, female researchers and historians dominate among those who *strictly write* about dance, dance has been “written” by men for centuries. When analysing ballet history and literature, as well as looking at the contemporary repertoires of leading companies, it is male dominance that comes to the front (Cholewicka 2018). In his iconic article, Luke Jennings notes that in professional ballet companies,

⁷ It should be noted that the survey included people working in choreography in general – without distinction to the leading style, therefore further research is needed to show the situation of strictly choreographers working in leading ballet companies, who (of course) also collaborate in other institutions, companies, using different techniques.

⁸ The most common form of ballet evenings – combined forms by different choreographers and choreographers – are three-part forms, the so-called *triple bill*, although there are also two- or four-part ballets.

⁹ I am not referring here directly to the notation of dance; it is rather a metaphor.

with increased workloads and the increased stress of competition (not to mention the hardships of dancing *on point* – point shoes), few women have the time, energy and desire/drive to undertake choreographic trials and struggles (Jennings 2013). In my opinion, the problem is more complex and the reasons are many.

“Above all, you are a wife and a mother,” Helmer addresses Nora, the heroine of Henrik Ibsen’s drama *A Doll’s House*. The woman replies: “I think above all I am a human being, just like you, or at any rate, I should try to be one” (Ibsen 2014). The Norwegian playwright’s play caused a huge moral scandal in the late 19th century. Nevertheless, more and more women wanted to be like Nora – to fight for their independence, emancipation and, above all, subjectivity. I claim it is happening now among ballet artists. This drama is taken up and told through movement – the language of dance – in the performance “Nora”, choreographed by Stina Quagebeur. It is part of a ballet evening – a triptych, included in the spectacle *She Persisted*, which is one of the crowning positions of the English National Ballet repertoire under the direction of a woman – Tamara Rojo. This performance was artistically groundbreaking in the discussion on the deficit of women in the field of ballet choreography. In the introduction to the book “Ten Dancing Women” one can read the following words of Krzysztof Pastor, the director of the Polish National Ballet, which refer to the English National Ballet’s triple-bill:

“Tamara Rojo, director of the English National Ballet, decided to arrange her ballet evenings according to parity and it turned out that there were not that many female choreographers available to her. (...) I would venture to state that men as creators mature more slowly and later, to cite Emanuel Gat or Jérôme Bel, for example, as well as a few other avant-garde artists. In fact, this would be an interesting subject for reflection on why women are less likely to direct or choreograph ensembles after all” (Marczyński 2016: 7–8).

My research is therefore a response not only to a perceived research gap in Polish and World science but also to a need articulated by representatives of the researched ballet community.

Profession: Choreographer/Choreographress

The work of a choreographer is similar to that of a film director. Today, the recognition of both professions seems obvious, although half a century ago choreography was not considered a subject to copyright. Among *not-professionals*, there was a belief that ballet choreography was an improvised *bouncing* of dancers to the rhythm of the music. It should be noted, however, that “a choreographer is a person who, guided by the music of his choice, sets the movements of the dancers, thus creating that part of the ballet which is the dance” (Haskell 1969: 55–57). According to the 20th-century British scholar Arnold Haskell, a choreographer should be characterised by:

1. a fruitful and intensive stage past – an engagement with a good ballet company where “the desire for self-expression will arise almost as a reaction against routine”

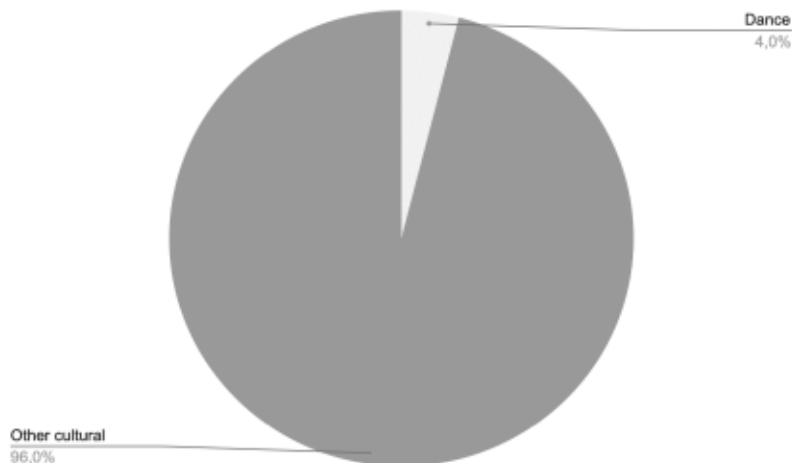
2. knowledge of the history and aesthetics of painting and sculpture
3. understanding the “spirit and mechanisms of theatre”
4. leadership skills – “knowledge of human nature and the ability to gain trust and obedience”.

Teresa Kujawa, on the other hand, says in an interview with Jan Berski:

“Can choreography, ballet exist without music? Of course, it is possible to do ballet without music, although not many choreographers have made such attempts. (...) And even further: if you look at a spatial figure in geometry – its form, its proportions, they can beautifully compose a choreographic movement in space. Someone who works with choreography and is allergic to the notion and dimension of space enclosed in geometric-plastic forms is, in my opinion, extremely impoverished as an art creator” (Berski 1979: 202).

A choreographer must therefore be characterised by versatility – excellent technical skills, broad knowledge, creativity, individuality, uniqueness – originality; “a choreographer, due to the type of his/her work, is someone intermediate between an artist – creator and an artist – re-creator” (Haskell 1969: 56). The report *Estimating Numbers...* shows that among the choreographers who took part in the survey¹⁰, 82.5% professionally regard themselves as artists, 77.5% as creators, 45.0% feel that they are performers and 2.5% that they are none of the above. This research confirms Arnold Haskell’s thesis from 1955 – in the opinion of the Polish community, a choreographer is both an artist and creator, as well as, to a lesser extent, a performer.

Chart 2. The size of the Dance sector in relation to other cultural sectors



Source: own compilation based on *Estimating the Number of Artists, Creators and Performers in Poland* (Ilczuk et al. 2018).

¹⁰ There were 40 of them, which is 20% of the whole community. Again, the fact of the lack of knowledge of the leading technique of the choreographers and the institutions with which they worked or collaborate should also be highlighted.

- Earnings

The average monthly earnings of choreographers are PLN 2 642,86 net; for women: PLN 2 714,29 and men: PLN 2 357,14¹¹. As research and analysis show, women dominate and have dominated the contemporary dance community, which (probably) translates into the level of their earnings (Ilczuk 2018: 32). Earnings from artistic work account for 82% of the total earnings of the male and female choreographers participating in the study.

- Education

Among the men and women choreographers, 60% have an artistic university degree, 20% have a secondary education, 5% have primary education and 15% have no artistic education at all. In the case of general education, 90% of the respondents are university graduates and the remaining 10% have secondary education.

- Forms of employment

In the case of male and female choreographers, the majority are representatives of the precariat – the predominant form of employment is a part-time contract of employment (64%); 15% receive commissioned contracts, 9% have the privilege of permanent employment under a full-time contract, and as many as 14% are self-employed. The grey economy is fed by 9% of choreographers, working without any contract and therefore without basic social benefits such as health insurance.

- Weekly working time

Male and female choreographers work an average of 42.8 hours per week, where creative work accounts for a significant part of it – 30.6 hours.

- Seniority

The creative activity of male and female choreographers is almost 17 years among the survey respondents – the earning years are just over 14 years.

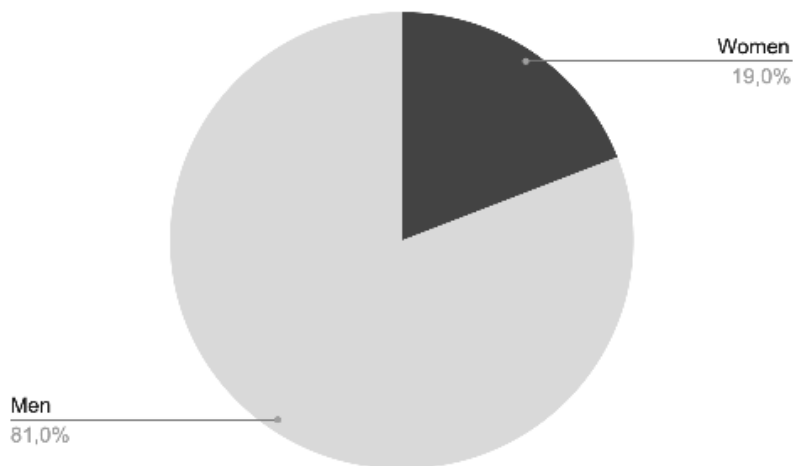
Access to the Stage – Analysis of Repertoires of the 2019/2020 Season Based on the Analysis of Publicly Available Online Documents

At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century in Poland – in the 2019/2020 season, 81% of all choreographers showing their work on stage are men, whose number is 42. There are much fewer female choreographers (*choreographresses*) – 8, which is less than 20% of the total study population¹². It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of choreographers are artists who are alive, both male and female. Among historical (not-living-any-more) creators there were only 3 men (Conrad Drzewiecki, Jean Coralli, Jules Perrot) and 1 woman – an extremely important figure for the history of dance – since ever favouring men: Bronisława Nijinska.

¹¹ Net earnings in the dance industry average 2524.09 PLN; for women – 2411.38 PLN and for men – 2978.27 PLN.

¹² The survey covers 9 leading ballet companies in Poland, for the 2019/2020 season; as of 26 March 2020.

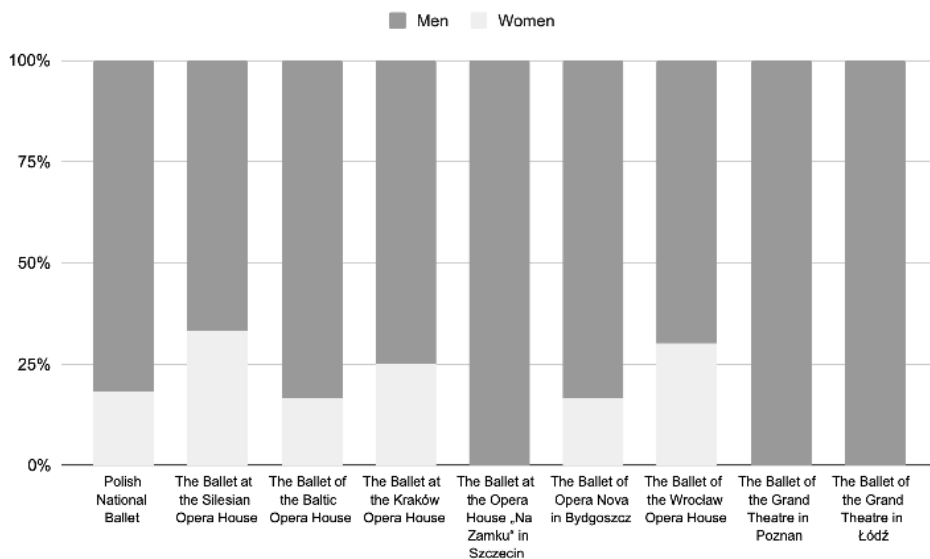
Chart 3. Female and male choreographers of the 2019/20 season in Poland



Source: own compilation based on the websites of selected ballet companies for the 2019/2020 season.

Among the 9 companies, some decided not to show any work (even as part of the evening) by a woman. These were: Opera "Na Zamku" in Szczecin, the Grand Theatre in Łódź and the Grand Theatre in Poznań. In this last company, whose new director is also a choreographer with roots in the Polish National Ballet, there were works by as many as 9 different choreographers in the 2019/20 season. There were no women among them.

Chart 4. Proportions of women and men creating choreography in the 2019/20 season in Poland

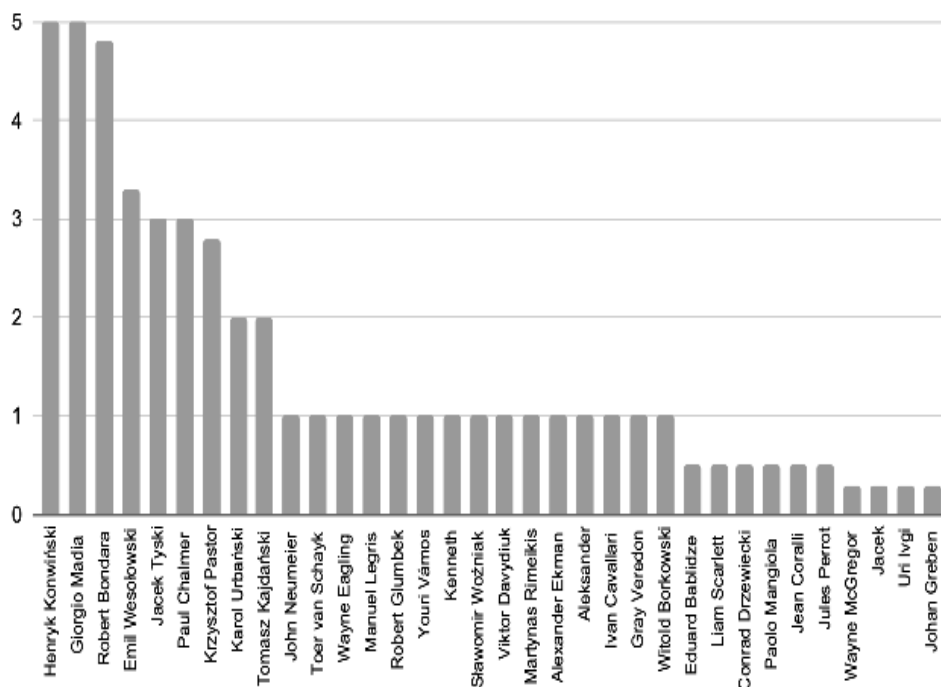


Source: own compilation based on selected ballet repertoires in the 2019/2020 season.

- Choreographers

In Poland, Henrik Konwinski had the highest number of works in 2019/2020 season: 5. The other leading choreographer in Poland, whose 5 full-length works could be seen in the 2019/2020 season, was Giorgio Madia. Robert Bondara also made a significant contribution to the ballet season by showing both full productions and choreographies included in the ballet evenings. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, he was able to successfully perform the virtual premiere of the three-part production “BER”.

Chart 5. Male choreographers and the number of their works in the 2019/20 season in Poland



Source: own compilation based on selected ballet repertoires in the 2019/2020 season.

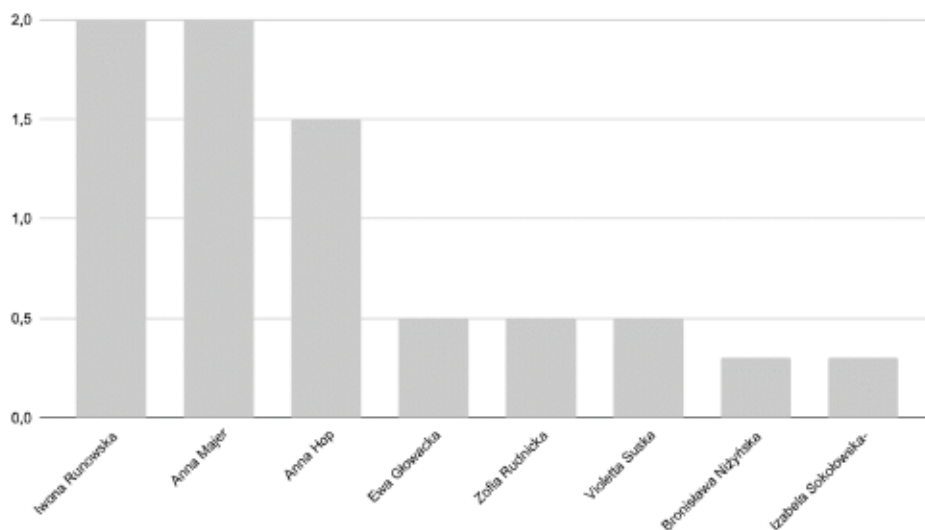
- Choreographresses

The remaining 19% of choreography creators include 8 females: Anna Hop, Iwona Runowska, Anna Majer, Izabela Sokołowska – Boulton, Violetta Suska, Bronisława Niżyńska and Zofia Rudnicka cooperating with an outstanding dancer, Ewa Głowacka. The duo produced a staging of the romantic ballet *Giselle*, based on the original choreography by Jean Coralli and Jules Perot. This production, which is in the repertoire of Wrocław Opera, is therefore not the author’s own piece. Some of the female choreographers – *choreographresses*, such as Izabela Sokołowska-Boulton, have only created a fragment – one act – of the non-authorial performance. Together with Wojciech Warszawski¹³, based on the original choreography, they created the second act of the same romantic ballet as Rudnicka and Głowacka – *Giselle*.

¹³ They are the ballet management body of the Baltic Opera.

Moreover, there are those artists among choreographers who create only their original spectacles. Among them, a special mention should be made of Anna Hop's original choreographies; as many as two companies have her works in their repertoires – Polish National Ballet – a one-act ballet *Husband and Wife*, which is one of the two parts of *Fredriana* ballet evening (on a small stage of the theatre), and Wrocław Opera – *Carnival of the Animals* (a one-act ballet for children).

Chart 6. Female choreographers and the number of their works in the 2019/20 season in Poland



Source: own compilation based on selected ballet repertoires in the 2019/2020 season.

The Shortage of Women in the World of Ballet Choreography – an Attempt to Identify the Causes

As research shows, there are many reasons behind the gender inequalities both in the labour market and in ballet choreography. Among the reasons, which are somehow well-established in society and have a stigmatising effect on the position, perception and self-awareness of women, both choreographers and others active in the labour market, we should mention:

- lower salary expectations¹⁴
- less willingness to take risks and compete
- the greater importance of failure (laboratory studies show that women are much more likely to become discouraged after a failure, whereas losing does not affect men's further performance or efficiency)

¹⁴ I wrote about the pay system for ballet dancers in full-time companies in my article *Ballet is a Woman. The role...* ibidem: 14.

- “unwillingness” to negotiate (this is not so much due to a lack of negotiating skills or an unwillingness to negotiate *per se*, but rather to an entrenched belief in failure)
- the conviction that there is an undeniable correlation between success and the amount of work involved

Reasons specific to the choreography profession include:

- Reluctance to attempt choreography

Some companies, apart from repertory performances, also run ballet workshops for employed dancers. This is a common practice all over the world (Het Nationale Ballet, Royal Ballet, etc.) and is present in Poland in the Polish National Ballet and, since recently, in the Wrocław Opera Ballet. During such workshops female and male ballet artists have a chance to test themselves in other creative roles – in choreography, stage design, costume design, etc. The gender ratio during such voluntary performances is a kind of indicator of the willingness and aspirations of both women and men to take up other roles in the ballet world – especially the creative role I am interested in – choreography. As repertory research has shown, women are reluctant to make such attempts. In the Polish National Ballet during the choreographic workshops entitled *Creations*, the proportions of women and men in the last four editions have been as follows:

- *Creations 12* (2020): 3–8¹⁵
- *Creations 11* (2019) : 3–11
- *Creations 10* (2018): 5–10
- *Creations 9* (2017): 3–6.

- “Glass ceiling” or “glass escalator”

Sociologist Christine L. Williams in 1992 published a study that looked at men in female-dominated professions. She found out that women in male-dominated professions experience a *glass ceiling* preventing their advancement due to the discriminatory attitude of male superiors. Whilst men, on the other hand, in typically female professions, experience a kind of “elevation” thanks to the *glass escalator* manifested in the visible support of their promotion and advancement in a given professional area. Williams finds that female minorities employed in predominantly male occupations face several difficulties – legal or institutional provisions that make it difficult to recruit and promote women in particular areas, informal decision-making that results in discrimination in hiring and training, and lack of support from colleagues. The researcher argues that men, however, do not face analogous challenges when they enter jobs where women are outnumbering them; instead, they may experience privileges in hiring and promotion (Williams 1992: 254–256). Dance researcher Colette LaMonica Kelly finds an application of Williams’ research and theory in the study of institutional causes of inequality in ballet choreography. In her research, she looks at male choreographers, three young American choreographers, zooming in and analysing their career paths and rapid advancement,

¹⁵ A specific online premiere at the time of the pandemic, the realisation of which involved additional cameraman/audiovisual requirements. It involved 4 women – Anna Hop and Joanna Drabik created their choreographies, and Olga Yaroshenko and Rosa Pierro co-created the choreography with their male creative partners.

applying the *glass escalator* theory, and at the same time pointing to the ever-present *glass ceiling* among female choreographers (Kelly 2015).

- The historical and cultural division into male and female roles – a gender issue

There are few female directors in the film world, a lack of female music composers, female conductors in orchestras and especially female choreographers in the field of classical dance. The underrepresentation of women is present on many levels in the art world. There is probably more egalitarianism among female choreographers, creators in contemporary dance or music. The “classical” arts still face many deep inequalities.

Yuri Temirkanov, who since the 1980s has headed the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, considered one of the most prestigious art institutions in the world, explains: “I don’t know whether it is God’s will or nature that women bear children and men do not. He goes on to explain by analogy that just as children are in tune with women’s nature – so is conducting contrary to it. (...) he then smoothly moves on to quoting Karl Marx and his statements about weakness as an inherent quality of women, and finally concludes: “the essence of conducting is strength, and the essence of women is weakness”. It should therefore come as no surprise that there is not a single female conductor in the institution he leads (Gromada, Budacz, Kawalerowicz, Walewska 2015).

Ballet constantly corresponds with music – both creatively and institutionally, co-functioning in theatres and opera houses. Gender relations in both branches and artistic fields are also identical and the patterns are replicated.

- Education system

The ballet education system in Poland needs a reform. As I wrote in 2016, it is characterised by obsolescence, inefficiency, and abuses that are almost an immanent part of it. Boys, as a minority, function in schools on privileged conditions proving that the Williams’ theory (1992) about men in female-dominated professions (areas) are true for the ballet world – both on the professional and educational level:

The female dancer, on the other hand, has to deal with discrimination in its broadest sense from the very first years of her education. She grows up fast – at the age of eleven or twelve, under the influence of demands, challenges and through a merciless system of evaluation, for which the child is not ready. The way of evaluation is comparing with her others, constantly accompanied by reflection in the mirror, lack of acceptance for changes in the body and its shape, hierarchisation from the very first ballet lessons – the best children by the middle bar, worse by the side-bar, and the not-worth-attention by the “donkey” bar, opposite the piano. All this negatively affects self-esteem (Cholewicka 2018: 8).

Anna Laerkesen, a former dancer with the Royal Danish Ballet who recently choreographed for the company, attributes the lack of women in the realm of choreography to the general upbringing of girls, which emphasises “the reproductive side more than the creative side”; “The emphasis on what you look like and what your body can do has a limiting effect. It was felt that you had to be a good girl, and being a good girl meant executing rather than creating. Girls have the same creative side as boys, but it is not developed” – says the artist (Meglin, L. M. Brooks 2012: 4).

- Sticky floor

The phenomenon called *sticky floor* is associated with assigning women to groups of less prestigious professions, which is directly correlated with lower salaries. "It also occurs in significant professions, hence female scientists are more likely than their male colleagues to be involved in teaching, which is perceived as an activity less important than conducting research" (Młodożeniec, Knapińska 2013: 55). In the case of dance, it is women who most often fill the ranks of the lowest levels in the company – the *corps de ballet*. There are few among choreographers and management staff. The educational, as well as tutoring verticals in both ballet schools and theatres, are dominated by women, which is confirmed by my research. There are as many as 14 women among the 21 ballet masters and mistresses in the 2019/2020 season in Poland.

In ballet companies, the creation of an original performance, which is part of the permanent repertoire, is usually connected with a proposal (commission) made by the artistic director – often a mentor of young choreographers. Both in academia and the artistic world, superiors usually select their protégés based on similarity of interests or style. In a situation where the management level is dominated by men, the established choreographers are also mostly men (often also acting as artistic directors), there is a high probability that the next generation of ballet choreographers will remain male-dominated.

Summary

Ballet heritage – choreographing ballet performances has remained a male domain for years. "Most female dancers dance in ballets created by men, and in companies directed by men, throughout their careers" (Macaulay 2017). The results of my research, which shed light on the gender distribution of the 9 largest ballet companies in Poland, for the 2019/2020 season showed that 6 of the 9 leading companies in Poland are currently headed by men. There are only 8 women among all 42 choreographers of the 2019/2020 season. Qualitatively, this is confirmed by my personal experience: during my 16-year dance career and professional ballet education, only once I had the opportunity to dance choreography in classical dance technique created by a woman Zofia Rudnicka.

There would indeed be more male names, but not many yet come out of it. Could you explain to me what a 'male profession' is because I don't understand it? (...) So well, I've regretted all my life that I wasn't born a man, and that's probably the only reason why I'm a choreographer. (...) If a woman knows what she wants, if she does something that counts in society, people immediately say: she's not a woman, she's a man-lady in a skirt. Let's put an end to this mythology that only men can afford great things," says Teresa Kujawa (Berski 1979: 209).

The correlation between success, recognition and dominance is not directly proportional to gender. The 21st century is a time of equality changes in the labour market and also (fortunately) in the world of dance and ballet. Greater awareness of female ballet artists, changes in the system of artistic education, the fight for

equal pay and its transparency – systemic changes on the labour market, as well as pro-women initiatives supporting young female choreographers, such as ballet evenings dedicated to women creators¹⁶, are necessary and crucial on the way towards equality and gender equivalence in ballet, as well as greater participation of women in the Polish and world stage heritage and the labour market at all.

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¹⁶ Current initiatives include: *She Persisted* (English National Ballet), *ABT Women's Movement* (American Ballet Theater) or *Venus Rising* (New Zealand Royal Ballet).

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Abstract

The ballet environment is very specific – hermetic and small. Analysing the history and literature of ballet as well as looking at the contemporary repertoire of leading ballet companies, it is easy to notice the numerous domination of women, which does not determine their dominance in the creative (choreography) and management sphere. In Poland, in the season 2019/2020, 6 out of 9 largest, primer ballet companies are headed by men. As research has shown, it is the male gender that has been dominating in choreography for years, constituting

the spectacles shown on the stages and, as a result, the ballet heritage. The article *Women to the placards! The socio-economic situation of female choreographers in the male world of ballet art* shed light on the labour market of Polish choreographers working in leading ballet companies, pointing out the prevailing inequalities between men and women who are involved in ballet choreography. In this study, I apply the methods of social sciences (documentary evidence analysis – repertoire and labour force of 9 premier Polish ballet companies in the season 2019/2020), I analyse the data collected during the study *Estimation of the number of artists, creators and performers in Poland* (Ilczuk et al. 2018), whilst cultural economics is the theoretical framework of my study. This theoretical-methodical base allowed me to expose the inequalities, potential causes and dependencies that exist on the labour market of artists creating ballet choreographies. An immanent feature of this market is the deficit of women.

Kobiety na afisze! Społeczno-ekonomiczna sytuacja choreografek w męskim świecie sztuki baletowej

Streszczenie

Środowisko baletowe jest bardzo specyficzną społecznością – hermetyczną i niewielką. Analizując historię i literaturę baletową, jak również przyglądając się współczesnym repertuarom wiodących zespołów, łatwo można zauważyć liczebną dominację kobiet, która nie stanowi o ich dominacji w sferze kreatywnej (choreografia) i zarządczej. W Polsce w sezonie 2019/2020 na czele 6 z 9 największych kompanii baletowych stoją mężczyźni. Jak pokazały badania, to płęć męska od lat dominuje w choreografii, stanowiąc o pokazywanych na scenach spektaklach, a w efekcie o dziedzictwie baletowym. W artykule analizuję rynek pracy polskich choreografek pracujących w wiodących zespołach baletowych, wskazując na panujące nierówności między kobietami i mężczyznami, którzy trudnią się choreografią baletową. W badaniu stosuję metody nauk społecznych (analizę dokumentów – repertuarów i składów osobowych 9 wiodących polskich kompanii baletowych w sezonie 2019/2020), analizuję dane zebrane podczas badania *Szacowanie liczebności artystów, twórców i wykonawców w Polsce* (Ilczuk i in. 2018), a ekonomika kultury stanowi o ramach teoretycznych mojego badania. Baza teoretyczno-metodyczna pozwoliła mi naświetlić nierówności, potencjalne przyczyny i zależności panujące na rynku pracy artystów i artystek tworzących choreografie baletowe. Immanentną cechą tego rynku pozostaje deficyt kobiet.

Keywords: artists' labour market, ballet, choreographers, women, inequality, cultural economics

Słowa kluczowe: rynek pracy artystów, balet, choreografia, kobiety, nierówności, ekonomika kultury

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