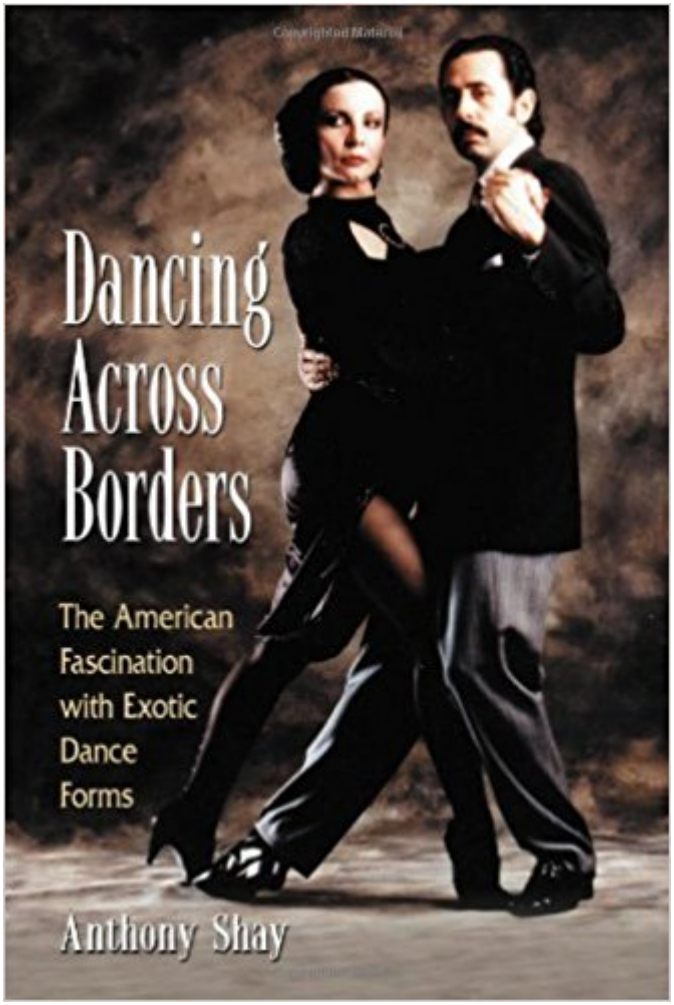
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Dancing Across Borders: The American Fascination With Exotic Dance Forms



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Synopsis

This study describes and analyzes the phenomenal popularity of exotic dance forms among mainstream Americans. Throughout the twentieth century and especially since 1950, millions of Americans have begun learning and performing various Balkan dances, the tango, and other Latin American dances, along with the classical dances of India, Japan, and Indonesia. While most previous studies in dance ethnography and anthropology have focused specifically on "dancing in the field," or the dancing that native dancers do in their own environments, this study turns the tables to examine the ways in which ethnic dancing has allowed many Americans to create more exciting and romantic identities through dancing the dances of the "exotic other," if only within the framed moment of a one-time dance lesson or performance. Throughout the work, the author describes the uniquely American enthusiasm for learning exotic dances, describing specific deficiencies in the U.S. cultural identity that have led many people to seek new or alternative identities through the various exotic dance genres.

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Award winning choreographer Anthony Shay lives in Los Angeles, California. His articles have appeared in Dance Research Journal, Iranian Studies Journal, International Encyclopedia of Dance, and other publications. He is the editor of Balkan Dance (2008) and the author of Choreographing Identities: Folk Dance, Ethnicity and Festival in the United States and Canada (2006).

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