

Ageing, Gender, Embodiment and Dance

Elisabeth Schwaiger



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Dancers in Western cultures have traditionally been subject to age-grading and have retired earlier from performance than those in less body-based professions. The underlying rationale for this has been that the dancer no longer possesses the physical capital to successfully execute the physically demanding steps, assumptions that this book challenges. Using an interdisciplinary approach, it critically examines how dancers' bodies are constructed, experienced, and understood within their culture as they age, arguing that both gender and the dance genre practiced and performed inform dancers' perceptions and constitution as a mature dancing subject. Focusing predominantly on dancers in Western cultures which value gendered youthful physicality, it presents an alternative, nondualistic understanding of the mature dancer as culturally situated and embodied, where the 'interior' and 'exterior', practice and performance, the studio and the stage, are not separate but imbricated in this constitution.

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