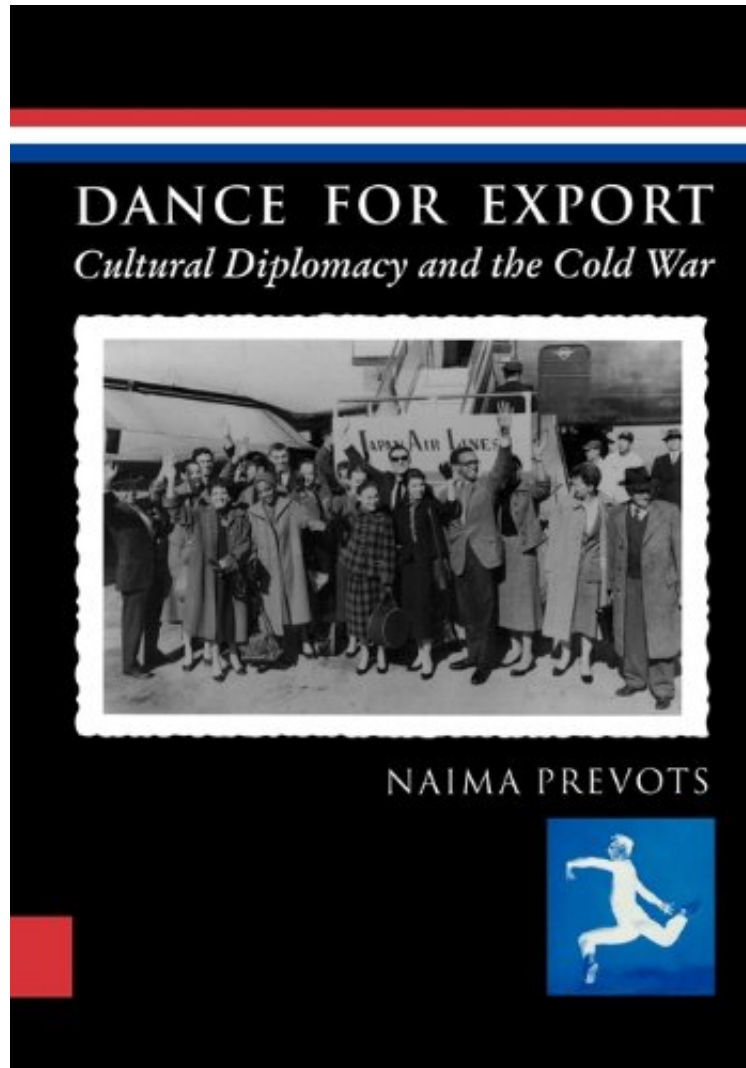


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Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War (Studies in Dance History)

Naima Prevots

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Naima Prevots : Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War (Studies in Dance History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War (Studies in Dance History):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insightful and readableBy mysterydancerI truly enjoyed this book. The topic was of great interest to me, as I find the politics of dance very interesting, and it was readable. Prevot is a wonderful academic. She did serious in depth research for the book, but she did not feel the need to use vocabulary that "proves" her intellectual ability. A great book if you are at all interested in this topic.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. FundamentalBy Sara Martins Pereira da SilvaVery good book4 of 4 people found the

following review helpful. High Hopes By Kevin Killian I had high hopes for this book that it did not fulfill fully. I wrote about it briefly over at HTML Giant but I find myself returning to it and wondering what ultimately left me unsatisfied. For those of you who don't know anything about the book, Dr Naima Prevots studied the transcriptions of the Dance Panel of the President's Emergency Fund for International Affairs, an initiative of Dwight Eisenhower to use the arts as a weapon in the Cold war of the 1950s. These records had been only hastily used before if at all by previous Cold War scholars and a full length analysis of what happened should be able to tell us a lot. Basically dance experts got together and decided which dancers and choreographers would receive money to finance foreign tours and performances. Other divisions of the Fund voted on writers, visual artists, theater companies and so on, but the Dance Panel was seen almost as the apex to the effort to depoliticize the arts in an effort to make America palatable and admirable to skeptical nations in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. Martha Graham got a lot of funding, even though she had been a leftist, exactly the same sort of creature that the House Un-American Affairs Committee was coming down so hard on at pretty much the same time. Prevots is most successful when she can make plain this sort of cultural schizophrenia and can link it to something within dance itself that allows for this free play of image--possibly the turn from language that dance embodies? Thus dance can be understood by non-English speakers and must have seemed especially attractive to the funders. There was also a racial element to their calculations, for America was being vilified by communist critics for its racism and lynching and resistance to social justice, so the Dance Panel could send out partially integrated dance companies, and even all black companies like Alvin Ailey's, to make the silent argument that, look, here in the USA we treat our black citizens with pride and shower them with bouquets. The book also shows us which dancers did not meet with the approval of the panel. In some cases, avant-garde experimentalism was downgraded because, after all, we wanted to send human beings as our ambassadors, not weird Paul Taylor dancers with movements like Lincoln Logs scattered by a child's unruly hand. And some dancers and choreographers were quietly labelled mentally or emotionally unfit to travel, while "Graham's message was universal and reached across many barriers," the author says. Where the book falls down is in the author's thorough endorsement of every one of the Panel's decisions. One chapter concludes with this sentence: "The Dance Panel was right to reject the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo: it chose, instead, to give the world a vision of ballet that was contemporary, exciting, and made in the U.S.A." In other words, anything that helped the US during the Cold war seems perfectly fine with Prevots, which is a shame, since we have the right to expect a little more independent analysis from such a fine researcher.

A little-known episode in the history of dance that illuminates the broader subject of cultural policy during the Cold War era.

From Library Journal Prevots (dance, American Univ.) has mined many previously unexamined resources in her study of the relationship between government and the arts during the 1950s. In order to strengthen strained relations with Cold War enemies, President Eisenhower initiated a program of cultural exchange. Prevots emphasizes the dance programs that were exported and reconstructs a history that takes the reader behind the scenes to congressional hearings and Dance Panel committee meetings. Her study reveals the selection and funding processes in this country and the reception and difficulties facing by touring companies like Martha Graham and the New York City Ballet when abroad. Since the success of Eisenhower's program eventually led to the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts, this volume is interesting reading in this time of severe cutbacks. The subject and academic tone, however, insure that the largest audience will be found among dance scholars and historians. A Joan Stahl, National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Prevots mines the wealth of primary source documents available, from accounts of Congressional hearings and foreign service dispatches to Boston Symphony archives, to unearth a wealth of information on the creation of American cultural diplomacy through dance. Her clear, concise, and accessible book integrates appropriate historical material relating to the artists and key players which gives the text a deep contextual richness." -- Shelley C. Berg, Southern Methodist University "Prevots mines the wealth of primary source documents available, from accounts of Congressional hearings and foreign service dispatches to Boston Symphony archives, to unearth a wealth of information on the creation of American cultural diplomacy through dance. Her clear, concise, and accessible book integrates appropriate historical material relating to the artists and key players which gives the text a deep contextual richness." (Shelley C. Berg, Southern Methodist University)