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Spectacular Suffering: Holocaust Representation in Competition Dance

Rebecca Rossen

In November 2016, Tatiana Navka—former Olympic champion and wife of Dmitry Peskov, Vladimir Putin's press secretary—and her skating partner, actor Andrey Burkovskiy, performed a Holocaust-themed ice dance on *Ice Age*, a Russian competition show similar to *Dancing with the Stars*.[1] Sporting concentration camp uniforms emblazoned with Jewish stars, their mouths frozen into grins, the pair skated a routine inspired by Roberto Benigni's 1997 Holocaust film *Life Is Beautiful.* [Figure 1] Although well-received in Russia, the performance caused an international uproar. There were dozens of stories in mainstream Western news sources, Jewish and Israeli newspapers, and ironic commentary from Jewish comedians including Sarah Silverman ("Oh those wacky Holocaust victims"), Michael Ian Black ("This might be offensive if they didn't take such care to recreate all the wonderful ice dancing going on at Aushwitz [sic]," and the Daily Show's Adam Lowitz ("Judges can't give Holocaust victims bad scores, they've been through enough"). There was also swift condemnation from Holocaust and Jewish studies scholars on twitter and a pointed response from Miri Regev, then Israel's Culture Minister, who proclaimed that Holocaust themes are "not for dance and not for reality," adding, "Not one of the six million danced."[2]

Just like European Jewish artists, writers, composers, directors, actors, and musicians, European Jewish dancers were both victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Dance historian Judith Brin Ingber carefully traced the pathways of a number of dancers during and after World War II, arguing that "through the skills and drive of dancers in transit camps, concentration camps, and extermination camps, dance as a tool to continue Jewish identity, Jewish expression and resistance continued, increasing the sense of hope and the urge to survive in manifold ways" (2005, 1). In addition, dance, whether created for the concert stage, as dance on film, or performed at memorial sites, has served as a critical platform for representing Holocaust memory and history since the end of World War II (Bing-Heidecker 2015; Eshel 2023; Kosstrin 2017; Rossen 2022).[3] While Regev is wrong about dance's capacity to engage Holocaust history, this "Life is Beautiful" routine does raise important questions about the aesthetics, ethics, use, and reception of Holocaust dance in competition platforms.

Over the past twelve years, there have been several Holocaust routines performed on major competition television shows that have attracted global audiences, including an acrobatic solo on

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Figure 1. Andrey Burkovskiy and Tatiana Navka in "Life is Beautiful," Ice Age*, 2016. Screenshot from YouTube.*

Dance Moms and a contemporary duet on *So You Think You Can Dance* (SYTYCD), all of which recycle tropes and iconography from popular Holocaust literature and film. This article examines the ways in which competition dance participates in the Holocaust-heritage industry, drawing upon and further commercializing Holocaust representations through passionate routines that produce affective responses in dancers and spectators through the kinesthetic, choreographic, and narrative mechanics of moving people. Writing about SYTYCD, Elena Benthaus argues that competition dance's spectacular virtuosity, heightened by screen technologies, generate intense reactions "from the audience in the form of screams, extensive clapping, gasps," which she dubbed the "WOW-affect" (2018, 395; 2015, 11). Moreover, Kate Elswit demonstrates how, through a process she terms "affective spectatorship," SYTYCD teaches audiences how to respond to dance through the use of narrative frameworks that converge the "story" of the dance with that of the dancers' struggle through the competition, heightening viewer investment (2012, 134, 136). Placing Holocaust routines in dialogue with scholarship on dance competition, screendance, and Holocaust representation in popular media, I argue that these formulaic dance numbers universalize the Holocaust for mass audiences and spectacularize victimhood to increase competitors' chances of winning. Holocaust routines and the affective responses they generate thus become products within neoliberal economies in which, as Sherril Dodds writes, "competition reigns as a global value system" (2018, 4).[4]

The routines discussed here, including hopeful "Anne Frank" dances and melodramatic Holocaust duets, encompass myriad styles—acrobatic, contemporary, dancesport, and ice dancing—each of which have their own technical requirements yet reproduce similar narratives. Throughout I identify the provocative ways in which competition dance vocabularies, choreographic and filmic devices, music, costuming, and scenario partner with Holocaust tropes and plots to embody and reproduce Holocaust victimization for mass consumption. Despite the controversy that some of these dances have provoked, I nevertheless contemplate their efficacy and their role in the public archive of the

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Holocaust. Do Holocaust routines have the capacity to generate cross-cultural empathy in audiences? Or do they only offer a performative nod to Holocaust commemoration? Finally, there is a great deal of ambiguity at play when considering the contexts in which these routines are created and performed. For example, how do Russian versus US contexts impact the meanings of these routines? How is reception complicated through global circulation? Ultimately, I query if Holocaust dance routines should be taken seriously as cultural products that convey new information about Jewish and Holocaust representation in popular spheres.

"There's No Business like Shoah Business"

Writing about the mediatization of the Holocaust at the end of the twentieth century, historian Tim Cole poses the following provocation: "Shoah business is big business," a variation of the oft-quoted quip "There's no business like Shoah business," a play on Irving Berlin's 1946 song "There's No Business like Show Business" (1999,16).[5] "Not only is it possible to buy a 'Holocaust' cookbook in the 1990s," Cole writes, "but it is also possible to 'consume' the 'Holocaust' equivalents of … 'kitsch'" (1999, 16). Such representation, in Anne Rothe's words, offer "simple moral truths that are repeated over and over" and reduce "complexity by relying on well-rehearsed formulas, clichés, and conventions" (2011, 43). Building on Cole, Rothe argues that popular Holocaust depictions rely on "emplotments of the pain of others" and adapt trauma into "entertainment commodities" that "reinforce the oppressive hegemonies of late-modern capitalism" (2011, 11). In particular, she discusses the ways in which the Jew-as-victim trope, which she describes alternatively as "discursive death-rig drag" and "teary-eyed sentimentality," translate representations of the Holocaust into blockbusting spectacles of suffering (2011, 21, 45). Rothe's ideas align with Dara Horn's 2021 *People Love Dead Jews*, which considers the historical fascination with murdered Jews and how they have "served a clear purpose, which was to *teach us something*" (2021, xiv). While Holocaust performance has the capacity to recover erased histories and shine a light on how systematic oppression can lead to genocide and atrocity, Holocaust representations can also whitewash history, reinforce nationalist values, and spectacularize Jewish victimization or martyrdom.

Acro Anne Frank: Narratives of Hope and Girlhood Innocence in Competition Solos

Anne Frank, one of the most popular and enduring symbols of the Holocaust, is a prime example of how Holocaust narratives can be commodified, whitewashed, and adapted to suit the needs of the present. As essayist Cynthia Ozick puts it, Frank's diary "has been bowdlerized, distorted, transmuted, traduced, reduced; it has been infantilized, Americanized, homogenized, sentimentalized; falsified, kitschified." "All these appropriations," she concludes, "have contributed to the conversion of Anne Frank into usable goods" (Ozick 1997). Similarly, in their 2012 anthology *Anne Frank Unbound* Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler offer a litany of engagements with Anne Frank—not just her diary (which has been published in seventy languages and has sold more than thirty million copies), but also collectibles, fan-fiction, films, musicals, plays, pop songs, and visual art. They dub this "the Anne Frank phenomenon," a "kind of folk practice" which has resulted in a "cascade of media … through which one engages her life and work—remediated … from manuscript to printed book to stage adaptation to film to televised dramatization to digital social media" (2012, 7, 21–22). While Ozick is critical of this phenomenon, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler see possibilities for how such expressions can be "unbound," enabling them to circulate beyond the reach of spoken and unspoken aesthetics that can circumscribe more "kosher" representations of the Holocaust.

Dancing Anne Frank is certainly one of the ways in which her story has been adapted and transmitted across media. The Anne Frank phenomenon informs the many Anne Frank ballets that have been

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performed by professional dance companies internationally since the late 1950s, as well as the abundance of Anne Frank routines in dance competition circuits in North America.[6] Drawing upon the work of Janet Adshead-Lansdale and Sara Ahmed, Benthaus discusses the "inherent intertextuality" of competition dance and how it engages "other screen, dance, and entertainment-related texts" producing citational "traces" that "trigger or arouse strong feelings and emotions in spectators" (2018, 388 and 392). Such affects, as Ahmed argues, are shaped by cultural politics and layered histories that she describes as "sticky" (2004, 4–5).[7] The figure of Anne Frank has a high degree of stickiness: as she moves from page to stage to screen she carries socio-political meanings for girlhood, victimhood, and Jewishness along with her.

The most highly-circulated Anne Frank routine appeared in 2012 on *Dance Moms*, a television show broadcast on Lifetime that follows a youth dance team based in Pittsburgh, its combative coach Abby Lee Miller, and the dancers' overinvolved stage moms. *Dance Moms* uses a variety of filmic and narrative techniques common to reality television and televised competitions including backstage and rehearsal footage, over-dramatized conflicts, confessionals, and the spectacle of the competition itself to draw in its audience. In a narrative arc that extends over the show's second season, Brooke Hyland, a fourteen-year-old dancer, struggles with a back injury and her commitment to the team. Miller offers her the opportunity to redeem herself in an "acro" (acrobatic) Anne solo.[8] Shortly after this announcement, the camera cuts to the studio's waiting area, where Kelly (Brooke's mom) asks—"Does anyone know about this *Diary of Anne Frank*? Because I have no clue about the story"—prompting looks of disdain and shock from the other moms, one of whom points out in a cutaway that the diary is required middle-school reading. "I don't know much about Anne Frank," Kelly says as a kind of retort, "but I don't think she was doing cartwheels." Brooke at least knows who Anne was, but she too wonders "what her story has to do with dancing." Rather than encouraging Brooke to read the diary to prepare for the solo, Miller is more concerned about whether or not she has the emotional gravitas to pull it off. "Brooke is doing a solo this week … about the Holocaust. I mean this is serious," Miller shares with the camera. "I don't know if she has what it takes to perform this number or not." Susan Foster asserts that role of teachers in competition dance "is no longer to impart socially and aesthetically validated knowledge, but instead, to optimize the chances of students winning" (2017, 62). Brooke's barriers to winning include landing her cartwheels and handsprings gently, protecting her back, and expressing feelings. "It's all about the diary," Miller says, as she coaches Brooke how to physicalize her engagement with the book: "Look [at it]! Hide it! And, throw it!"[9] Shots of Brooke's lackadaisical dancing in rehearsal illuminate Miller's concerns.

Brooke's solo, as presented at a competition, is, to my eyes, a relatively bland routine set to piano music that begins with the dancer entering the stage in a lacy white dress and clasping a diary. [Figure 2] She rolls to the ground and tucks the diary into her chest, holds it aloft, pretends to read it while stretching her leg into a high side extension, arches backwards reaching it out to the audience, then uses the book to ground a cartwheel, after which a closeup shot hones in on the dancer "writing" in the diary with looping wrists. The clip also includes several tumbling passes with and without the diary. When I watched this scene, I could not help but imagine Kelly and Miller as Edith Frank and Auguste van Pels reminding Anne as she tumbles through the attic to roll through her feet—*toe-ball-heel*—so that the Nazis won't hear her (perhaps an inappropriate response, but one rooted in cultural and familial exposure to Jewish humor that compels me to take the show's campy aesthetic a step further). The camera pans to Kelly and Miller looking on teary-eyed while Brooke sweeps the diary offstage as if she is ready to move past the Holocaust and the episode's drama. The routine tells us absolutely nothing about Frank or her circumstances—the title of the dance and the diary are the only clues that signify "Anne."

Competition dance culture, which emerged in the 1980s as a "leisure activity," has since become a booming, for-profit, pre-professional industry that includes dance studios and local, regional, and national competition platforms (Schupp 2020). Karen Schupp emphasizes the ways in which dance competition culture, which caters primarily to middle- and upper-middle class white girls whose

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Figure 2. Brooke Hyland in "Anne Frank." Still image from Lifetime's Dance Moms *©2012, A&E Television Networks, LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission.*

families can pay-to-play, values "the importance of winning" and teaches skills such as hard work and performing well under stress (2020, 483). Competition dance also involves facial choreography that, in Dodds' words, is "hyperbolic and hypermobile," (2023, 18), while, as Foster points out, offering "a highly standardized range of emotions" (2017, 59). Within the competition economy emotions "become events that are placed in circulation for profit" (Foster 2017, 63). In the end, it is hard to know if it is Anne's fate or Brooke's acute back pain that helps her summon the expressive pathos that judges look for, but the performance wins her the title of "Miss Teen Energy."

When creating dances about historical figures or social issues, Miller does not conduct research about these topics or engage her students in dialogues about history; instead, she draws on aphorisms of triumphing over adversity as motivation for winning. For example, the following year, she choreographed a "Rosa Parks" routine for her almost entirely white team as a means to drum up some passion from her dancers and garner points in competition.[10] "We're doing a routine about Rosa Parks… [who] broke down barriers and united entire races," Miller tells her dancers, excising Jim Crow and packaging Parks' embodied protest as a post-racial, unifying gesture that constitutes a "win" for all people, adding in a cutaway that she "likes dances that move the judges." The speech fails to move her students, however, prompting Miller's ire: "[Rosa Parks] cared! She stood up for it! … She went to jail for something she was passionate about. You don't care if you win or not." Led by twelve-year-old Nia Sioux (the studio's only Black student) as Rosa Parks, the dancers show the required commitment in competition, earning them first place.

Both routines lead to questions about the role that marginalized bodies and histories play in competition dance economies, and who should or should not be telling these stories.[11] First, these routines showcase Blackness and Jewishness differently. Although both girls wear white dresses, as Rosa, Nia's dress is backless (the ensemble wears the same in purple), which sexualizes her, and she

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wears a fascinator that ages her. Although Rosa prevails at the end, there is a demeaning moment in the routine when series-favorite Maddie Ziegler steps on Nia's back. Nia's Blackness, her debasement, her "maturity" (vs. her youth), and her subsequent transformation into a winner who defeats racism (and helps her team beat their main competitor) demonstrates how Miller uses the dancer's identity for her own gain. In contrast, there is nothing "Jewish" about Brooke's Anne; Anne's Jewishness is replaced with a generic, white, adolescent purity, permitting Brooke to swipe away history and tumble into happily-ever-after. These two examples demonstrate how the program whitewashes history, how race functions in the show's depiction of girlhood, and how, within a US context, Jewishness, unlike Blackness, can be assimilated into whiteness.[12]

Fan responses to a clip of Brooke's routine posted on YouTube evidences the efficacy and emotional impact of this solo on audiences, while also illustrating some of the pros and cons of dancing Anne Frank on competition stages. The majority of viewers have positive responses: they call the solo "breathtaking" and "beautiful," describe how the dance left them "speechless" or gave them "chills," and focus on the final image as "so powerful! you could feel the emotion," all manifestations of the "Wow-affect," the corporeal/expressive impact of competition dance on viewers (Benthaus 2018, 389). Other comments highlight how prior knowledge of Frank's story increases emotional responses to the solo ("This was legendary, impactful and tear jerking for anyone that read the diary of Anne frank"), or, on the other hand, how dance helps amplify the diary's power ("I honestly felt emotional watching this dance, because Brooke took a piece of tragic history, and turned it into something beautiful").[13] This last comment, however, also suggests that Anne's story, universalized and unburdened by history, is what makes the dance impactful and beautiful. The routine evokes conflicting responses from viewers with relationships to this history. For instance, one respondent writes, "this is disrespectful to jewish culture. i am jewish myself and find this very offensive… . Turning this into a dance is highly inappropriate to the culture and Anne Frank herself." On the other hand, a viewer whose grandfather was an ally soldier describes the solo as "touching," while another who identifies themselves as the grandchild of survivors says that it "hits close to home." One viewer's comment that—"Brooke did absolutely amazing in this solo! … Anne Frank would be so proud ❤️"—elucidates how Anne Frank routines can bolster fans' personal relationships with Anne by imagining her in the present moment, unbound by history or time.[14] The comment recalls pop star Justin Bieber's inscription in a guestbook after visiting the Anne Frank Museum in 2013: "Truly inspiring to be able to come here. Anne was a great girl. Hopefully she would have been a belieber."[15] Bieber positions Anne as a "great girl" (and a fangirl), an image that Anne Frank routines mobilize and circulate across stages and screens.[16]

Since Brooke's routine was broadcast in 2012, Anne Frank has become a popular theme in the local and national competition circuits in the US and Canada.[17] Whether performed as solos or ensemble works, the majority of Anne Frank routines offer achingly earnest, highly feminine portrayals of girlhood in which dance provides Anne's confined body an entire stage to fill with heartfelt self-expression. These routines feature adolescent girls, most of whom wear gold stars affixed to their torsos that mark their dancing bodies as Jew-*ish*, but more importantly, identify them as Anne.[18] Like Brooke's solo, the majority are set to sentimental piano or pop ballads. However, a number of routines supplement the music with excerpts from *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* or Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's play, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1956); while others offer truncated summaries of Holocaust history and Frank's life. This use of text increases the routine's didactic potential.

I would like to focus on one additional Anne Frank solo that amplifies the use of acrobatics and contortion as metaphors for expression and confinement, reinforced by excerpts from the Goodrich and Hackett play, a recording that features a young girl's voice (likely that of the soloist). Presented at the Bedazzled Dance Champions competition in Ontario in 2015, it features a teenaged dancer dressed in a cream lace dress with a gold star on her hip. In addition to the diary, there is a two-foot-high miniature house center stage, which the dancer sits on at the beginning of the solo while reading the diary.[19] After tumbling downstage, she performs gestural sequences to lines from the play: to "My

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name is Anne Frank," the soloist touches her chest and collapses over her legs, stands up proudly, then reaches entreatingly while stepping backwards; the line "As my family is Jewish" prompts her to place her hands around the gold star; to the words, "We immigrated to Holland when Hitler came to power," she falls to her knees and raises her fist. Although she performs acrobatics in the greater stage space, the solo frequently takes her to the miniature house, where she twists her body into myriad poses, embodying Anne's worry that she will "never be able to run, and shout, and jump" while in hiding. Near the end of the dance, as Anne discusses her ability to shake off despair, she performs a chest-roll on the house's roof, then pushes into a backbend, balancing on the tops of her feet as she reaches her bottom down, resembling an oversized Alice-in-Wonderland trying to squeeze herself into the Secret Annex's cramped space. The solo ends with the dancer seated cross-legged on the house embracing the book to the words "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

This particular line, which concludes a number of Anne Frank routines, is not how the diary ends—incompletely with Frank thinking about being a "bad" person and remarking that she could be herself "if only there were no other people in the world" (Frank, 1996).[20] However, this is the last line Anne speaks in the Goodrich and Hackett play and its film adaptations.[21] Goodrich and Hackett's script has been critiqued for its minimization of the characters' Jewishness and its hopeful ending, a decision that "largely edited out the Holocaust" (Cole 1999, 33). Written during the postwar years when many American Jews were invested in assimilation, the play's use of universality appealed to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. As Alexandra Zapruder shows, the diary's framing within the US in the 1950s "obscures the irrevocable atrocity of genocide by applying to it a hopeful veneer," so that "something positive … could be gleaned from it and celebrated despite it," a discourse that has been "repeated again and again, in endless permutations of Anne Frank's story" (2002, 7, 5). Similarly, Horn describes Frank as everyone's favorite dead Jew "whose grace and absolution" (both Christian values) continue to draw millions to her story (2021, 9). The passages quoted in these routines do not include Frank's anger, frustrations, or budding sexuality, an aspect of the diary that recently led a graphic version to be banned from some school libraries in Florida and Texas.[22]

Not all routines posted online list choreographers, but this particular acro Anne Frank solo was choreographed by a Canadian Jewish dance artist. Thus, the earnestness of these routines suggest that they can serve as genuine expressions of Jewish heritage and sentiment for Frank through a medium that dancers, choreographers, and fans value highly. Furthermore, commentary on the *Dance Moms* routine demonstrates that, although many viewers learned about Anne Frank in school, some did not — as one respondent writes, "i learned about her through the media."[23] Thus, despite the ways in which these routines may spectacularize Anne's situation through virtuosic contortions on miniature annexes or reduce her complexity to platitudes about hope, they nevertheless keep her story in circulation.

The Romance of the Holocaust: Melodrama and Jewish Suffering in Holocaust Duets

A video shared on YouTube from the 2014 World Dance Council's Dutch Open shows a male and female couple creeping across a ballroom, clutching each other in fear.[24] Around them audience members, stationed on all sides, quiet down as they realize the performance has begun. The couple stops in the center of the ballroom and look out with confusion at those around them as if they are in the midst of a nightmare and not a competition. The duo's faces are made up to look pale with hollow cheekbones and they wear faded blue and white striped concentration camp uniforms with small identification numbers sewn onto their chests. As John Williams's "Theme from Schindler's List" begins to play, the dancers connect arms and the male dancer twirls and dips his partner. Next, they seductively rotate their arms, prompting the female dancer to spin and fall chest first into her lover, after which he drags her across the floor as if pulling her out of rubble. Shockingly, when the dancers

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Figure 3. Davide Fumagalli and Debora Macaluso in "Schindler's List," 2014. Screenshot from YouTube.

whip themselves into turns or come into contact, clouds of chalk erupt from their bodies, simultaneously evoking a smoke machine and ash (from bombs? from crematoria?) [Figure 3]. Throughout the four-minute routine, the couple punctuate contemporary dance vocabulary—floor rolls and lifts, dramatic falls and gestures—with fast-based Latin footwork, hip swivels, pin-sharp spins, precise partnering, and extended poses with broadened chests and arched hands. Their faces dance between exhausted blank stares, tenderness, and grimaces of pain and passion. As the duet nears its end, he spins her into a grand lift—she throws her arms around his waist and kicks up her legs, wrapping them around his head, then flips over his back, causing him to fall as she, crouching over his body, cradles his head. They rise to perform a few steps of what appears to be a brief death march, before the sounds of guns pierce the languid violins and she shakes, miming taking multiple bullets to her torso and collapses. Soon thereafter, he is shot in the heart and dies reaching his hand towards her prone body. The crowd erupts in cheers as they take their bows.

This routine, performed by professional Latin showdancers Davide Fumagalli and Debora Macaluso, epitomizes a subgenre in Holocaust competition dances that depicts heterosexual love stories set to well-known soundtracks such as William's "Theme from Schindler's List." These routines utilize passionate choreography and music, combined with concentration camp cosplay, to present melodramatic narratives in which true love prevails despite the horrors of the Holocaust. In these over-the-top dances of love and death, the dancers' corporeal labor and emotional displays garner points and prizes. The narrative and choreographic repetition of these pas de deux—across different pairings and competition platforms—provides a strong example of the formulaic ingredients of Holocaust routines.

Indeed, two years prior to Fumagalli and Macaluso's duet, Russian Dancesport duo Vladimir Karpov and Mariya Tzaptashvilli performed a nearly identical freestyle routine, suggesting that the Italians were likely inspired by the Russians. Entering to the sounds of sirens and barking dogs, the pair run

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Figure 4. Vladimir Karpov and Mariya Tzaptashvilli in "Schindler's List," 2012. Screenshot from YouTube.

into the ballroom holding hands, sporting the same ghostly makeup and stripped uniforms, while a competition number, prominently displayed on Karpov's back, offers an unintentional yet disturbing citation of the numbers tattooed on concentration camp internees' arms [Figure 4]. Sonically and choreographically, the dance is remarkably similar to the Italians' routine with its use of the "Theme from Schindler's List," blank gazes, Latin footwork and partnering, death-defying lifts, and the same tragic end: Tzaptashvilli's body quaking in a cascade of bullets, Karpov taking a shot to the chest, dying by her side. [25] Despite the fact that these duets have attracted international viewership via YouTube, they did not cause much controversy even though both positioned Italian and Russian bodies as (Jewish) victims of fascism.[26]

Holocaust routines performed by adult pairs, whether they are presented in Europe or the US, transform the Holocaust into a melodramatic display of Jewish victimhood in order to elevate their performances and increase viewer buy-in. Benthaus asserts that competition dance draws on melodrama to generate an "affective intensification in its spectators that might inspire them to become attached to and also vote for individual dancers" (2018, 389). Such enactments also exemplify Scott Loren and Jörg Metelmann's definition of melodrama as a distinct form of representation that utilizes "the public spectacle of personal suffering, the emotive coding of consumer practices, or the sentimentalization of national politics" to generate sympathy in mass audiences, while also producing more subtle cultural and political affects (2016, 9). The following sections focus on two Holocaust *pas de deux* televised by major networks—a refugee duet on the American show *So You Think You Can Dance* (SYTYCD) and the "Life is Beautiful" routine on Russia's *Ice Age*. Although these routines are technically, stylistically, and narratively distinct, both paint romantic pictures of wartime suffering due to the agonies of exile or the violence of the concentration camp while occluding Jewishness in service of nationalist discourses.

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Holocaust Innuendo on *So You Think You Can Dance*

Fox's SYTYCD is a competition show that follows a select group of young dancers (ages 18-30) over the course of a season, culminating in the selection of "America's favorite dancer." The show utilizes audition, rehearsal, and performance footage alongside confessionals and the judging panel's feedback to create a narrative about the dancer's journey, including their technical challenges and personal struggles, which increases the investment of the show's studio audience and millions of at-home viewers. This narrative technique aligns with Elswit's discussion of SYTYCD's "very explicit shaping of spectator experience" (2012, 135–36) through which the show trains audiences to make "connections between the over-the-top 'story' of the dance and the effort it takes to physicalize it onstage" (2012, 140–41).

When he joined SYTYCD as a contestant in 2012, Chenon Wespi-Tschopp was a 23-year-old ballet dancer (born in the US but raised in Switzerland by his adopted parents) who regularly received the judges' praise for his outstanding technical skills, even though he lacked the overt display of emotion and chemistry with his partners that the show demands of champions. An intervention was necessary. Enter Emmy-winning choreographer Tyce Diorio with an emotional duet for Wespi-Tschopp and "all-star" Kathryn McCormick.[27] The program introduces the duet by showing clips of the dancers in rehearsal performing some of the duet's more tortured moments, their faces contorting, while Diorio states: "In history, there have been so many tragic events, so many devastating losses. The piece is about what do people do, how do they get through it with courage and hope. Whatever is left in their life is in one suitcase—and they're trying to move forward." Here Diorio offers a generic and timeless narrative about events "in history" that require humans to move through and beyond personal tragedies. Wespi-Tschopp, dipping his toes into method acting, describes how his experience at boarding school and as touring dancer is helping him understand displacement: "It's scary because I've always had a guard up. So, I just want to use the emotion and the meaning of the piece and relate that to my story, because I feel I have always lived out of a suitcase. If I lost everything now, I would have so many regrets… . It's the emotional side that drives the physicality, and if we can nail that, we will definitely bring a tear to everyone's eye." It is unclear if "losing everything" means his home or the competition.

The duet begins with a closeup of McCormick standing behind Wespi-Tschopp and covering his mouth with her hand. The camera angle widens to show him holding a battered suitcase and they wear vaguely European, war-era costuming. He moves forward into a lunge and McCormick places her head against his back, after which he rotates her and cradles her head as she extends her leg. The dancing that ensues is expansive, seamless, and expertly performed. The choreography emphasizes suffering, striving, and, reaching—towards each other, the suitcase, home, the unknown. The dancers' bodies retreat or fall only to lengthen or hurl through space. They frequently return to the suitcase—in one moment, Wespi-Tschopp curls his body around it while McCormick leaps on and over it, before collapsing to the ground. A few moments later, she pushes the suitcase and he propels himself horizontally across a vast distance to retrieve it. The narrative is highly romantic in that their bodies, even if separated spatially, are continually drawn back to each other for support: they are in this together. In one of several moments that draws applause and appreciative whoops from the audience, Wespi-Tschopp lifts McCormick above his head into an arabesque "presage," then they fall, and he opens his mouth into a silent scream as she holds him. Near the end, he lifts her as she holds the suitcase between her flexed feet. Then, Wespi-Tschopp swings McCormick over his shoulder and walks off as she drags the suitcase behind them [Figure 5]. The camera angle widens to show the audience's standing ovation from behind, then zooms in to show sweat streaming down the dancers' faces as they embrace then turn to face the judges.

Given SYTYCD generally offers explicit narrative information to help audiences read and respond to dance, it is striking that when this routine premiered nobody on the SYTYCD team (including the choreographer, performers, and judges) used the word "Jewish" or "Holocaust" in relation to its meaning. Nevertheless, the dance is encoded with overt and covert references to both. Specifically, the

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Figure 5. Chenon Wespi-Tschopp and Kathryn McCormick in Tyce Diorio's "Eli, Eli," So You Think You Can Dance*, 2012. Still image courtesy of Dick Clark Productions, LLC and 19 Entertainment Limited.*

dance offers iconography common to dances on Jewish themes that address exile resulting from pogroms or the Holocaust, including wartime clothing, a suitcase, choreographic depictions of struggle and migration, and a silent scream. In addition, the routine is set to "Eli, Eli" (1945), a Hebrew-language, Zionist song by Israeli composer David Zehavi based on the 1942 poem "Walk to Caesarea" by Hannah Szenes, a Hungarian-Jewish activist who emigrated to Palestine in 1939. The poem and song (this version sung by Sophie Milman, a Russian-Jewish singer) is inspired by the beauty of the Mediterranean coast. Szenes was also a resistance hero who volunteered to parachute into the former Yugoslavia in 1944 on a mission to provide assistance to Hungarian Jews, where she was captured, imprisoned, and killed. Significantly, "Eli, Eli" is played to commemorate Yom HaShoah in Israel, demonstrating how song choice can function within particular nationalist contexts to connect the Holocaust and survival to Zionism both within Israel and in the Diaspora.[28] This uninterrogated, intertextual connection is therefore replicated in the duet.

Of the very few fan comments about the routine that have been posted on YouTube, I found only one reaction to the content: "An incredible piece that is as relevant today as it was back in 2013 when it was first performed (and which harkened back to immigrants coming to the U.S. from Europe before WWII from Eastern Europe). I cry every time I watch this." This response demonstrates the affective impact of the work ("I cry every time I watch this") in relation to its content ("immigrants coming to the U.S.").[29] Jewishness is also coded here ("from Eastern Europe"), but, significantly, the viewer roots the dance's narrative in the early twentieth century when the majority of Eastern European Jews were able to enter before the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act curbed the flow of Jews and immigrants from Africa and Asia into the US. Moreover, the routine's lack of specificity got some attention on a blog post written by SYTYCD fans Kate Boe and her friend Erica. Kate says she did not "get" "Eli,Eli." "You didn't get it," Erica responds, "because for reasons I really don't understand, they refused to say what it was about… . No one said the word "Holocaust." Why? … I want to call anti-Semitism, but I know my anti-Semitism trigger is a little jumpy sometimes. So let's just call it weird?"[30]

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Interestingly, the dance's meaning and its relationship to the Holocaust shifts between its premiere and re-performance in the season finale. After the routine's first performance, judge Nigel Lythgoe describes it as emotional because "in the 1940s in this country… there were so many immigrants coming in and they all had their entire lives in a suitcase." This statement is somewhat simplistic given that the US maintained the Johnson-Reed Act's quotas on immigration until 1965, limiting the number of refugees seeking asylum in the US.[31] The other judges focus solely on the routine's power and Wespi-Tschopp's achievement in conveying emotion. Judge Mary Murphy observes, "Look, Chehon, you are still touched by doing that number. You're so moved through your own movement," while guest judge and actor Christina Applegate fixates on Wespi-Tschopp's facial expressions: "That silent scream you gave… was filled with so much pain and anguish that you can't even make a sound. That's what we've been waiting for and you have achieved it." By avoiding words like "Holocaust" and "Jews," the show erased Jewishness, romanticized displacement, and hinted at a happy ending that aligns with American mythologies about the US being a refuge for Jewish immigrants, a narrative that a 2018 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibit and the 2022 Ken Burns documentary, *The U.S. and the Holocaust*, have significantly complicated.[32]

However, in the show's finale, Murphy re-introduces the routine as "an incredible number … that is in remembrance of the Holocaust and what it meant to get that knock on the door and be told that you're only allowed to have a suitcase. And it was an amazing journey in this choreography." Thus, "Eli, Eli" is and is not about the Holocaust (which she pronounces "*Holly-Cost*"—as in *Holly*wood—an apt slip): it is about providing the dancers and the audience with an "amazing journey." Dance competition shows are ultimately about "winners and losers" (Dodds 2018, 5). "Competition dances serve the purpose of spectacle and drama," Dodds explains, "as it must visually captivate film and television audiences, and hook into spectators' desire to follow the successes and failures that play out as dancers move through each round" (2018, 6). Wespi-Tschopp's virtuoso display of emotional and technical prowess in this number ultimately equates surviving the Holocaust with surviving the competition—which he did: he won the season.

Holocaust on Ice

The award-winning film, *Life Is Beautiful*, set during World War II, features Robert Benigni as Guido, a fun-loving Jewish man who marries Dora, a non-Jewish woman. Life is beautiful until they are sent to Auschwitz. In order to keep his young son alive and minimize his trauma, he convinces the boy that the camp is a fun competition. His antics save his son, but Guido is shot and dies. Some Holocaust scholars criticize the film for its use of comedy and sentimentality to diminish the horror of the camps, while promoting, in the words of one critic, the "indefatigability of romantic and parental love, even under the harshest conditions" (Gonshak 2015, 238). Other critics question the kneejerk impulse to dismiss *Life is Beautiful*, including Walter Metz who points out that the film's detractors demonstrate an intellectual bias which reinforces Cartesian dualism: "These diametrical readings fall into traditional splits between mind and body, between trusting reason and trusting emotion, and between body genres (like comedy and melodrama) and high art genres (like tragedy and social realism)" (2008, 20). *Life is Beautiful*, he suggests, transgresses normative Holocaust aesthetics through physical comedy and melodrama thereby broadening the scope and impact of Holocaust films.

Navka's and Burkovskiy's 2016 "Life is Beautiful" ice dance embodies and magnifies these tensions. The duet begins with Navka, as the non-Jewish Dora, and Burkovskiy, as the Jewish Guido, in concentration camp costumes standing side by side in a spotlight with outreached hands, a sober expression on their faces. [Figure 6] Rows of viewers are visible in the background. Another camera pans away and looks down on the pair from high above the arena through a wired grating used for overhead lighting, evoking the barbed wire fencing at Auschwitz. The routine is performed to Nicola Piovani's "La Vita é Bella (Beautiful that Way)," the film's theme song, which emphasizes smiling through sorrow. When the song begins, the pair grins and starts skating. The routine intersperses

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Figure 6. Andrey Burkovskiy and Tatiana Navka in "Life is Beautiful," Ice Age*, 2016. Screenshot from YouTube.*

pure skating (often supported by wide camera shots) with pantomimic actions (highlighted through closeups)—the couple miming communication with their child; Burkovskiy lifting his partner into playful poses; Burkovskiy mimicking Benigni mimicking a Nazi goosestep, all of which elicits applause. At one point, the pair comedically pretends to escape from barking search dogs, recalling the dog soundtrack in Karpov and Tzaptashvilli's dancesport number and demonstrating how Holocaust iconography moves across media and competition platforms. The routine ends with a closeup of Burkovskiy checking his wrist, indicating that their time has run out, then skating backwards away from Navka and into the blinding glare of a search light. Navka mimes picking up a young child, her body shaking as sounds of gunshots indicate her partner's death. The camera cuts from a closeup of her face to view her again, this time alone, through the wired scaffolding above the arena. The audience gives the pair a standing ovation; as they take their bows, Navka wipes a tear from her cheek. They earn perfect scores from the judges who comment that the routine demonstrated the "fragility of human life and the power of love."[33]

Western responses to the routine via twitter and news sources were almost entirely negative, with a number of commentators expressing shock and dismay over its surreal pairing of the Holocaust and ice dance, concentration camp iconography and grinning performers, all set against a backdrop of enthusiastic Russian onlookers. Jewish respondents in particular expressed disgust and dismay. For instance, historian Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern writes: "For a person who knows very little if anything about the Holocaust, the message is this: Put on a striped robe, adorn yourself with a yellow six-pointed Star of David, get an all-included deal at a concentration camp, and your life will be beautiful… . I would call it a crime against elementary humanity."[34] Sara Ahmed argues that disgust is not simply a gut response—it is socially, culturally, and politically mediated. Disgust "pulls us away from the object, a pulling that feels almost involuntary, as if our bodies were thinking for us, on behalf of us. In contrast, desire pulls us towards objects, and opens us up to the bodies of others" (Ahmed 2004, 84). Thus, instead of eliciting Benthaus's "WOW-affect," the concentration camp routine induced a kind of "UGH" or "CRINGE-affect" in a number of Jewish viewers that, I would argue, stems from transgenerational trauma and deeper knowledge of or connection to Holocaust history.

That said, the routine and its reception are complicated, particularly when considering local versus global, or in this case, US versus Russian, contexts.[35] This episode of *Ice Age* required contestants to perform routines inspired by films, and *Life Is Beautiful* was extremely popular in Russia. As one

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judge comments after the routine, "The film [had] lyricism, humor, and… [it showed the] unbreakable strength of the human spirit that [can] overcome all those horrors," demonstrating how favorable responses to the routine are tied to those about the film. Navka also defended the performance on Instagram as an homage to the film and necessary education for "our kids" so that they can "remember those terrible times that they, God willing, will never know!"[36] Moreover, representations of the Holocaust in competitive ice-skating are not new, especially in Russia. Just like the Latin ballroom duets I discussed above, there have been multiple, Olympic-level skating routines performed to music from the 1993 film *Schindler's List*, starting with solo free skates by Katerina Witt (Germany) and Paul Wylie (US) in 1994.[37] Several of those performed since have featured Russian skaters, including a 2009 routine for ice-dancers Elena Ilinykh and Nikita Katsalapov, in which Ilinkyh portrays the Jew/ess (dressed identically to Navka) and is shot at the end.[38]

Moreover, Ilya Averbukh, the former Olympic ice-dancer who choreographed the "Life is Beautiful" routine, and was the coach and producer of *Ice Age* at that time, is a Russian Jew who has regularly addressed his heritage through his art. He choreographed Yulia Lipnitskaya's 2014 gold-medal-winning "Schindler's List" routine, and he also created and performed a 2012 "Schindler's List" duet for himself and a female partner that depicts the moment when a Jewish man and his non-Jewish wife must separate when a knock on the door heralds his impending departure for the ghetto, a narrative analogous to Diorio's SYTYCD routine—including his use of a suitcase as a prop.[39] It is worth noting that Holocaust routines that utilize John Williams' score for *Schindler's List* have nothing to do with the film's plot; however, they tap into the film's visual and musical iconography to set its affective power into motion across multiple screens.[40]

Russian routines for pairs consistently emphasize the tragedy of the Holocaust through depictions of interfaith relationships that almost always end with the death of one or both partners.[41] This melodramatic formula simultaneously suggest a shared Russian/Jewish history, while necessitating Jewish death and highlighting Russian martyrdom. Russian memorialization of the Great Patriotic War and the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow, which commemorates the deaths of the approximately 27 million Soviets, are distinct from US narratives about and commemorations of World War II and the Holocaust (Ellman and Maksudov 1994). Indeed, as one Russian commentator wrote in response to international criticism of the *Ice Age* routine: "One reads foreign comments and is amazed by the crooked brains. Our loss … allows us talk about the war … in any language, including… dance."[42] Crucially, the majority of these Russian Holocaust routines end with protagonists being shot to death, which is, to some degree, historically accurate. The initial phase of the Nazi regime's Final Solution began with what is known as the Holocaust by bullets, the brutal massacre of approximately two million Jews in German-occupied Soviet territories; most of the victims were shot and killed in mass graves that they had dug themselves. Historically, these mass graves, if they are marked by plaques or memorials, have listed victims as Soviet citizens, thereby suppressing Jewish genocide.[43] As Andreas Huyssen notes, "in the Soviet account, the genocide of the Jews lost its ethnic specificity and was simply collapsed into the Nazi oppression of international communism" (1995, 257). Moreover, it is important to think about the narratives that these routines present in relation to a long history of Russian antisemitism, which prompted millions of Russian Jews to emigrate to the US and Israel at different moments in the twentieth century, and the continued suppression of this history. The 1970s, when Averbukh was born, saw a mass exodus of Jews from Russia. His family either decided to stay or were unable to leave. In the early 1990s, when he began to skate internationally as a junior champion, his nationality would have been listed on his passport as "Jewish" (or "Hebrew") versus "Russian" (the clause was dropped from official documents in 1997, five years before he won silver at the Olympics).

The "Life is Beautiful" ice dance was broadcast on Channel One, a state-controlled television station, and it starred a woman with close ties to the Putin administration, situating the routine within sanctioned national performances and discourses. It also reproduced a Russian imaginary that suppresses its antisemitic history and reinforces the narrativization of the Holocaust by bullets as a tragic history that impacted all Soviet citizens equally. That said, the show features the work of a

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Russian Jewish ice dancer and choreographer. By consistently presenting Jewish and Holocaust choreographies on high-profile, national platforms, Averbukh succeeded in representing his own identity, while bolstering Russian identification with and positive sentiments about Jews.

Conclusion

Some scholars who write about representations of the Holocaust in popular media consider Holocaust kitsch and spectacle to be unacceptable (Lang 2000; Wiesel 1989). Others, like Huyssen suggest that to "prevent forgetting, we have to be open to the powerful effects that a melodramatic soap opera can exert on the minds of viewers today" (1995, 256). Similarly, Alison Landsberg argues that mass media is uniquely situated to generate interest, affect, and empathy in broad audiences who lack a personal connection to another group's history, which she terms "prosthetic memory" (2004, 8). Holocaust routines engage recognizable tropes from film and other media to make dance readily legible to mass audiences while generating embodied responses from both performers and spectators.

At the same time, Holocaust routines also translate historical trauma into votes and points that serve competition narratives of personal triumph. While competition dance studios may rehearse routines over an extended period of time, shows like SYTYCD and *Ice Age* generally produce new routines weekly, a process that lacks the time-intensive labor, careful research, and historical accuracy that goes into the development of the many Holocaust dances for stage, screen, and memorial sites that I have evaluated (Rossen, 2022). Although we can see the dancers' sweat and tears, it is hard to imagine that the impact of these two-to-four-minute dances on performers and audiences is anything other than superficial and temporary.[44] Moreover, the similarities of these routines, their (re)use of a limited lexicon of choreography and iconography towards the maximum emotional effect, demonstrate a formulaic approach to Holocaust representation with its winning combination of suffering and spectacle that offers a whole new meaning to the concept of survival. Such Holocaust routines do not encourage performers and spectators to reflect upon antisemitism, genocide, or racist immigration policies, but instead, transform the Holocaust into an opportunity for competitors to prove they have the emotional investment, technical virtuosity, and gumption to "survive" to the next round. The Holocaust becomes, to repeat Mary Murphy's characterization of her favorite routine—a physical feat and "an amazing journey."

Ultimately, competition dance utilizes the Holocaust for its tearjerker effect, while at the same time providing highly visible platforms for promoting dance to broad publics and, at times, expressing marginalized identities and addressing or educating publics about social issues. When circulated globally, Holocaust routines offer a lens through which we can understand the impact and usages of the Holocaust in distinct national contexts, as well as the complexities of transnational reception and the politics of the current moment.

Notes

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1. "Татьяна Навка и Андрей Бурковский — «Beautiful That Way». Ледниковый период. (26.11.2016)," https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=F3FsrjBASNY, accessed August 1 2017. The video of this routine and the commentary, which I evaluated in 2017, has since been removed from YouTube.

2. Commentary in mainstream news sources came from BBC, CNN, CBS, *Daily Mail*, NBC, *New York Daily News*, *New York Times*, *People Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *USA Today*, and many others; and Jewish and Israeli sources such as *Haaretz*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, and *Times of Israel*. Responses from Holocaust scholars included Labendz, who tweeted, "You are not

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supposed to perform Holocaust-themed ice-dances" (https://twitter.com/jacob_labendz/status/802758059751866368, November 27, 2016); and Deborah Lipstadt, who tweeted "Have you lost all sense of decency? Have you no shame? The Holocaust on ice, complete with a sound track of barking dogs" (https://twitter.com/deborahlipstadt/status/802859114720268288, November 27, 2016). For Silverman's and Black's tweets, see Sarah Lynch Baldwin, "Wife of Putin Aide Sparks Outrage with Holocaust Skating Routine," November 11, 2016, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tatiana-navka-putin-spokesman-wife-outrage-holocaust-skating-routine/. On Miri Regev's commentary see Ivan Nechepurenko and Sewell Chan, "Holocaust-Themed Ice Dance in Russia Draws Condemnation," *New York Times*, November 28, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/28/world/europe/holocaust-ice-dance-russia.html. All articles accessed August 1, 2017.

3. This is the subject of my forthcoming book, *Moving Memories: Representations of the Holocaust in Dance*.

4. In this article, I do not aim to reproduce binaries between concert dance and popular dance, with the former representing "art" and the latter representing "commerce." Concert dance is also always imbricated in the material conditions (funding, presentation opportunities, reviews, promotion) that inform its production. See, for example, my discussion of Sophie Maslow's choreography for the Chanukah Festivals at Madison Square Garden produced by and for Israel Bonds, in *Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Postmodern Dance* (2014).

5. Shoah, which means "catastrophe" in Hebrew, is another term used to describe the systematic killing of six million Jews by the Nazis. The quote "There's no business like Shoah business" has been attributed to Israel's former Minister for Cultural Affairs Abba Eban.

6. Some of the Anne Frank dances produced for the concert stage over the last sixty years include Adam Darius's *Anne Frank Ballet* (1959), Mauricio Wainrot's *Anne Frank* (1984), Linda Diamond's *The Secret Annex* (1985), James Buckley's *Anne Frank* (2003); Paul Vasterling's *Anne Frank* (2010); Maria Barrios and Offer Zaks's *Anne Frank* (2012), Helios Dance Theater's *About Anne* (2013), Imperfect Dancers's *Words from the Shadows* (2014), Budapest Dance Theatre's *My Daughter, Anne Frank* (2014), and Reginaldo Oliveira's *Anne Frank* for Staatsballet Karlsruhe (2016).

7. Also see Sherril Dodds' useful discussion of Ahmed's concept of stickiness in relation to emotion and affect in *Facial Choreographies* (2023, 17).

8. Acro is one of a number of styles or categories found in competition dance. The category merges dance and acrobatics and requires moves from a catalogue of acrobatic skills appropriate to the competitor's level. Brooke's "Anne Frank" solo was featured on two episodes in Season 2 (2012) of *Dance Moms*: Episode 21, "Break A Leg," and Episode 26 ("Nationals 90210"), Lifetime. The solo is set to "Sour Grapes" by Brian Crain. Also see clips from rehearsal at AldcClips, "Dance Moms Brooke's Solo Rehearsal Diary Of Anne Frank, 2016, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=WIUkE48zoRM, accessed May 20, 2024; and, for clips of the performance, see Lifetime, "Dance Moms: Brooke's Acro Solo - "The Diary of Anne Frank" (Season 2)," 2018, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=38z-ETGfSBY, accessed July 15, 2019.

9. All quotes from *Dance Moms*, Season 2, Episode 21.

10. *Dance Moms*, "The Apple of Her Eye," Season 3, Episode 12, Lifetime, March 19, 2013, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=AG_gPBkYeXA, accessed October 10, 2023.

11. Alexis Weisbrod (2014) discusses this racist problematic on the Fox competition show SYTYCD, which has historically situated white "contemporary" competitors as "trained" and Black "street" competitors as "untrained."

12. For a more detailed discussion of marked (Black) vs. unmarked (White) bodies in American dance see Susan Manning (1998). For a discussion of the ways in which Jewishness complicates Black/white binaries in American dance, see Rossen (2014).

13. These comments are pulled from fan responses to Lifetime, "Dance Moms: Brooke's Acro Solo - "The Diary of Anne Frank" (Season 2)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38z-ETGfSBY, accessed April 5, 2024. The video has 469,000 views with 265 comments. Fans quoted here are @darnellmartin9558 and @izuchisoonforever8151.

14. Ibid. Respondents quoted, in order, are @leeana.6614 (2022), @kaitlinsauvae9247 (2021), @ianhimmelstein5915 (2023), and @kingdomgirl8309 (2021).

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15. There are a number of articles about the controversy Bieber's comments caused. See, for instance, Alan Duke, "Justin Bieber hopes Anne Frank 'would have been a belieber'," CNN, April 16, 2013, https://www.cnn.com/2013/04/14/showbiz/bieber-anne-frank/index.html. On the other hand, Reuters reported that the Museum defended Bieber's comments, showing the value of the pop star's endorsement in promoting the Museum to young people. See "Anne Frank museum defends pop star Bieber over guestbook comment", Reuters, April 15, 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE93D09I/. Both accessed on May 29, 2024.

16. For more on the relationship between Anne Frank's representation, girlhood, and music, see Judah Cohen (2012).

17. I have reviewed eighteen Anne Frank routines (for soloists and ensembles) presented in youth dance competitions and posted on YouTube or Facebook between 2009 and 2022. There are likely many more that have not been circulated on social media.

18. Of course, Anne Frank would not have worn the badge while in hiding.

19. Jordana Rosenberg, "Diary of Anne Frank," posted 2015, has 5900 views. See https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=JrXpKbzbNic, accessed October 10, 2023.

20. Miller's first Anne Frank solo, choreographed for Stephanie Pittman in 2009 (pre-Dance Moms), was also set to text from the 1956 play. It is interesting to think about Miller's or Lifetime's reasons for excising text in Brooke's version. See LoomerE, "Stephanie Pittman - The Diary of Anne Frank (Full Solo), July 15, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z92lfwyB23o, accessed May 29, 2024.

21. There have been a number of English-language Anne Frank films. Both the original 1959 film (starring Millie Perkins) and a 1980 remake (starring Melissa Gilbert) were based on the Goodrich and Hackett play and ended with Anne's hopeful message. The line is generally delivered via voiceover as Otto Frank finds the diary in the annex after the war's end and mourns his daughter.

22. See, for example, "Texas Teacher Removed After Using Anne Frank Graphic Novel with Sexual Content," September 20 2023, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/education/texas-teacher-removed-using-anne-frank-graphic-novel-sexual-content-rcna108039, accessed May 29, 2024.

23. @cherries56325, commenting on the *Dance Moms* rehearsal footage, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIUkE48zoRM, accessed May 20, 2024.

24. Mario Egthuijsen, "WDC Dutch Open Assen 2014 Showdance Latin - Schindler's List," featuring Davide Fumagalli and Debora Macaluso in "Schindler's List," posted November 19, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3q7x2B4hgY, accessed October 10, 2023.

25. Vladimir Karpov and Mariya Tzaptashvilli, "Schindler's List," 2012, World DanceSport Federation, Bejing, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=4bLZbb2OyCs, accessed October 10, 2023.

26. The video of the Italians' routine has 6800 views and four brief comments (all in Italian). In contrast, the video of the Russian pair has 111,277 views and thirty-four comments, primarily written in English and Russian, with a few in French, German, and Italian.

27. Diorio's routine for Wespi-Tschopp and McCormick was televised on *So You Think You Can Dance*, Season 9, Episode 13, September 5, 2012, https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vUhhM4atpmA, accessed October 10, 2023. "All-stars" are former contestants who return on subsequent seasons to dance with current contestants.

28. This song was used to accompany the credits for the Israeli version of the *Schindler's List*; it was not used in the US version. On the other hand, Fort Sam's army band played the song to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2020. See https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2807134449309055, accessed October 10, 2023.

29. See "SYTYCD Season 9 - Chehon & Kathryn - Eli Eli," posted by Icy Phoenix in 2013, accessed October 10, 2023. The commentator I quote here is @lauramartha3 (2018).

30. Katie Boe, "SYTYCD Season 9 Top 6," September 6, 2012, Blog. https://katieboe.wordpress.com/2012/09/06/sytycd-season-9-top-6/, accessed May 20, 2024.

31. See "Immigration to the United States, 1933–41," on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/immigration-to-the-united-states-1933-41, accessed May 20, 2024; or David Nasaw, "America Denied Refugees After the End of World War II—Just As We Are Today," *Time Magazine*, September 17, 2020, https://time.com/5889460/american-history-war-on-immigrants/, accessed May 20, 2024. For more in-depth

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discussion of this topic see Daniel Greene and Edward Phillips (2022); David S. Wyman (1998); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut (1987); and Michael Berenbaum (2022).

32. You can learn more about the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's touring exhibition, *Americans and the Holocaust*, at https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust. Also see PBS's documentary series *The U.S. and the Holocaust*, 2022, directed by Ken Burns and produced by Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein, https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/us-and-the-holocaust/.

33. Translation of the video and online commentary, as well as research on media responses, courtesy of Marina Alexandrova.

34. Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern quoted in Paddy Dinham and Will Stewart, "Putin's spokesman causes outrage with an astonishing HOLOCAUST-themed routine - including Star of David badges - on a Russian TV dancing show," *Daily Mail*, November 27, 2016, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3975682/Wife-Vladimir-Putin-s-spokesman-performs-holocaust-skating-routine.html, accessed October 10, 2023.

35. Russian-Slavic studies scholar Eliot Borenstein makes a similar argument in a Huffpost opinion piece: "In defense of Russia's 'Holocaust on Ice," December 15, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/in-defense-of-russias_b_13357308, accessed October 10, 2023. A completely different take is offered by Mel Brooks in his 1981 film *The History of the World Part I*, which ended with faux previews for Part II, including a sketch he titled "Hitler on Ice," which depicts a figure-skating Nazi performing in a show that riffs on the popular Ice Capades franchise. Brooks distinguished his use of parody to disempower Nazis and fascism from Beningni's *Life is Beautiful*, which attempted "to find comedy in a concentration camp… . The philosophy of the film is: people can get over anything. No, they can't. They can't get over a concentration camp." See "With Comedy, We Can Rob Hitler of his Posthumous Power," *Spiegel International*, March 16, 2006, https://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/spiegel-interview-with-mel-brooks-with-comedy-we-can-rob-hitler-of-his-posthumous-power-a-406268.html, accessed October 10, 2023.

36. Russian social media and press commentary on this routine were translated by Marina Alexandrova. Tatiana Navka, Instagram, November 26, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BNSPG26jQ4c/.

37. For more on this, see Michael Rothberg (2000). In his discussion of these routines, Rothberg notes that reusing John Williams's score for ice dancing fetishizes the music's virtuosity and emotionality to "evoke the film's dark subject without too literally representing it" (244).

38. See Mintaka Alnilam, "Elena Ilinykh and Nikita Katsalapov 2009 JGPF FD "Schindler's List," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YubzJSk6peU.

39. A video of this duet, which I believe was also performed on Ice Age, was posted on YouTube: Cmona1il, "Ilya Averbukh (Russian Jew Ice Dancer)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKf-sTUyQCc, posted in 2012, accessed October 10, 2023.

40. Cole argues that the 1993 film is so widely viewed that it has garnered the "status of a primary source," despite its synthesis of history and fiction. Like the Anne Frank phenomenon, Cole utilizes the "Schindler's List effect" (1999, 75) to discuss the film's impact, although he does not trace how images and iconography from the film are decontextualized and circulated across media platforms. For example, there are dozens of competition routines—for children and adults, in amateur and professional circuits—titled and set to music from *Schindler's List*, which I expand on in my forthcoming book.

41. Another routine that emphasizes Russian martyrdom and Jewish death features professional ballroom dancers Olga Kulikova and Dmitri Zharkov, performing on an unknown Russian television event (likely for the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow). This particular example is incredibly elaborate, involving an Auschwitz set (with a smoking chimney), background dancers portraying concentration camp prisoners and Nazis, video projection, and aerial feats. See https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ASyTDwnyfrw, posted in 2022, accessed October 10, 2023.

42. YouTube commentator, translated by Marina Alexandrova.

43. These atrocities are documented in *The Black Book of Russian Jewry* (Il'ia Erenburg and Vasilii Semenovich Grossman, 2002), a collection of testimonies and primary-source materials

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compiled and published by Soviet Jewish writers in the mid-1940s—the book was not available in the Soviet Union until 1980. Also see the organization Yahad–in Unum's database on the Holocaust by Bullets: https://yiu.ngo/en.

44. For more on the problems of creating dances with large social messages on competition shows see Veronica Jiao's excellent critique in *Dance Magazine* (2017) of white choreographer Travis Wall's "Strange Fruit" routine, a response to Black Lives Matter, on SYTYCD, specifically the routine's problematic iconography, its message of racial harmony, and its superficiality.

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