

## Is the Swan Actually Dying?: Close-Reading Ballet for Detrimental Influences of Commercialization

### Presenter

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### Mentor

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### Session

- [Session 2C: Ritual, Dance, Propaganda and Self-Expression in Art](#)
- 228 MGH
- 3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

“Ballet is a dying art” has become a repeated refrain by dance scholars over the last several decades. My research suggests that far from dying, ballet is thriving, but has experienced a shift both in the context and nature of performances with important implications for dancers. Preliminary findings from my research indicate a recent increase of ballet’s popularity in ways that encourage dangerous trends for dancers who, in new contexts of self-production, self-promotion, and commercialization, are taking ever greater risks. What was an art form and discipline is becoming reduced to a highly athleticized image. As dance scholarship often focuses primarily on the performance, I borrow from other disciplines to provide a line of inquiry that examines the emerging areas of production and consumption beyond traditional performances. To analyze this recent phenomena, I close-read case studies of the viral video of Sergei Polunin dancing to Hozier’s “Take Me to Church,” the popular 2010 movie Black Swan, the tv shows “Dance Moms” and “Breaking Pointe,” recent advertisements by Under Armour and Free People, and Instagram and Facebook profiles used for promotion of both professional and pre-professional dancers. I will use these findings to discuss implications for the future of ballet as an art form and how the shifts providing greater autonomy for individual dancers also encourage negative repercussions on their bodies and careers.