

One Past, Many Histories

Loitsu (1933) in the Context of Dance Art
in Finland

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The multi/interdisciplinary analysis and construction of *Loitsu*, a magic spell, argue for history that can be danced as well as written. The potential of new historical processes in performative (re)construction of partly lost works is explored by searching for *Loitsu* and its meanings in the context of dance art in Finland both on the pages and in the studio. A mysterious, dramatic, impressive, dark, touching, suggestive and demonic solo dance *Loitsu*, first composed and performed by Elsa Puolanne (1906-1996) in 1933, is analysed and constructed with the help of intertextual web.

Puolanne's life story and an analysis of Finnish dance articles introduce the interplay of the modern and the national in dance, culture and society. This interplay also gives meanings to such words as 'Finn', 'woman', 'gymnast' and 'dancer' in the 1920s and 1930s. They are relevant to discussion on Puolanne's *Loitsu* and useful motivation for new constructions of it. Often dance analysis moves from an existing dance toward texts around it, but here it moves also in the other direction, from possible texts and contexts around *Loitsu* toward the 'lost' *Loitsu*, as well as toward potential new ones. The various histories about them contribute alternative voices to the insufficient and narrow historical narrative of Finnish dance.

The recent discussion of fact and fiction in history writing is located in the context of dancing. Dance histories are challenged through making dance alongside writing about it and being as transparent as possible in the various theoretical and practical choices adopted during the work. Dancer Leena Gustavson joined the research process to perform a new *Loitsu* that was constructed using traces of Puolanne's *Loitsu* and contemporary modes of dancing and choreographing. One 'finished' version of a lecture demonstration *Loitsu: Danced Histories?* is included as a part of the thesis on the DVD.

The experiment does not so much produce unquestionable proofs as historical possibilities.

Koe ei tuota niinkään kiistattomia todisteita kuin historiallisia mahdollisuuksia.

Natalie Davies cited in Ginzburg 1996, p 100.