

SOS MEXICO: CONTEMPORARY BALLET AS AN ARTISTIC LANGUAGE FOR REFLECTION ON FEMICIDE

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Summary

Femicide is one of the most serious manifestations of gender-based violence and represents a serious social and human rights challenge in Mexico. Faced with this situation, different forms of art have emerged that function as platforms for denunciation, remembrance and social reflection. This article aims to examine contemporary ballet as a thought-provoking art form on femicide, based on the analysis of the choreographic work SOS Mexico. The research was carried out using a qualitative approach, with a descriptive and analytical design together with the case study method. Techniques of documentary analysis, analysis of the artistic content and detailed observation of the scenic representation were applied, which facilitated the interpretation of the symbolic, corporal and expressive elements that make up the scenic language of the work. The findings show that contemporary ballet has the ability to physically represent women's fear, violence, and vulnerability, while also reinterpreting the body as a space of denunciation, resistance, and hope. In addition, the work incorporates cultural and identity elements to challenge the normalization of femicidal violence and promote social awareness processes. In conclusion, contemporary ballet is presented as a valuable artistic tool for a critical reflection on femicide and as a legitimate means of creating social knowledge from the field of the performing arts.

Keywords: Femicide; contemporary ballet; gender violence; art and social denunciation; body and scenic expression.

1. Introduction

Femicide is one of the most extreme and systematic expressions of gender-based violence globally and represents a serious violation of women's human rights. In the Latin American context, and particularly in Mexico, this phenomenon has taken on alarming dimensions due to its persistence, sustained growth and high levels of impunity. Radford and Russell (1992) define femicide as "the murder of women committed by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure or a sense of ownership over them" (p. 3), stressing that these are not isolated events, but rather structural violence inscribed in historical relations of inequality. In Mexico, femicide has been legally recognized; however, their criminalization has not managed to stop the reproduction of this violence, which shows deep flaws in the systems of prevention, justice and reparation.

Various studies agree that femicide is based on patriarchal sociocultural structures that normalize violence against women and perpetuate gender inequality. Segato (2016) argues that this violence cannot be understood only as individual crimes, but as messages inscribed in a "system of power that is expressed in the female body as a territory of domination" (p. 38). From this perspective, femicide operates as a social, political and cultural phenomenon that directly challenges society as a whole, the State and the institutions responsible for guaranteeing life and human dignity. The repetition of these crimes has generated not only collective pain and mourning, but also an urgent need for visibility, memory and denunciation.

In this scenario, art has emerged as a legitimate space for symbolic resistance, critical reflection and construction of social memory in the face of femicidal violence. Various authors agree that

artistic expressions make it possible to communicate what, in many cases, legal, political or media discourse fails to convey. Gasca Macías (2019) states that "art has become a fundamental tool to make femicidal violence visible, confront social indifference and resignify the memory of the victims" (p. 4). Thus, artistic creation not only fulfills an aesthetic function, but also assumes an ethical and political role by questioning the structures that sustain violence and by generating spaces of collective sensitivity and consciousness.

Within the performing arts, dance and, specifically, contemporary ballet, are configured as body languages capable of articulating complex discourses about pain, fear, resistance and hope. From a theoretical perspective, the body on stage is transformed into a device of social significance, where movement expresses experiences that transcend the word. Lepecki (2010) points out that "the dancing body not only represents an aesthetic action, but also embodies memories, conflicts and social tensions inscribed in its gesture" (p. 21). In this sense, contemporary ballet allows us to address current problems from a body narrative that challenges the spectator emotionally and intellectually, favoring processes of critical reflection.

The work *SOS Mexico* emerges in this framework as a choreographic proposal that articulates the language of contemporary ballet with an urgent social problem: femicide. Through a staging that combines movement, symbolism and theatrical elements, the play builds a scenic discourse that seeks to make visible the daily fear of women, denounce systematic violence and project, through art, a desire for social transformation. As Bodelón (2016) points out, the fight against femicide requires not only legal responses, but also "cultural and educational processes that transform social perceptions of gender-based violence" (p. 52), an area in which art plays a fundamental role.

In this sense, the purpose of this article is to analyze the work *SOS Mexico*: contemporary ballet as an artistic language for reflection on femicide, approaching it as an artistic experience that dialogues with the Mexican social reality and contributes to raising awareness of gender violence. From an interdisciplinary approach that integrates gender studies, art theory and scenic analysis, it is proposed that choreographic creation can be an effective means to generate awareness, promote critical reflection and contribute to the academic debate on contemporary forms of representation and denunciation of femicide in Mexico.

2. Objectives

2.1 General objective

To analyze contemporary ballet as an artistic language capable of generating critical reflection and social awareness on femicide in Mexico, based on the study of the work *SOS Mexico* as a scenic proposal of denunciation and sensitization.

2.2 Specific objectives

- To examine femicide in Mexico as a social and gender problem that underpins the artistic discourse of the work *SOS Mexico*.
- To analyze the choreographic, expressive and symbolic elements of contemporary ballet used in *SOS Mexico* for the construction of a scenic discourse of social denunciation.
- Interpret the use of the body, movement and staging as narrative resources that represent fear, violence and female resistance in the face of femicide.
- To value the role of contemporary ballet as an artistic tool for raising awareness, social reflection and making gender violence visible in contemporary contexts.

3. Theoretical framework

Femicide as a social and gender phenomenon

The term femicide is presented as a category of analysis that helps to highlight gender-motivated murders of women and to differentiate it from conventional homicides. Radford and Russell

(1992) introduce the word femicide to describe "the most extreme form of sexist terrorism directed against women for the simple fact of being women" (p. 15), noting that such crimes are deeply related to unequal power dynamics. In the Latin American region, femicide has been interpreted not only as a crime, but as a structural phenomenon that shows the normalization of violence against women and the constant impunity at the institutional level.

From a critical stance, Segato (2016) argues that femicide should be perceived as expressive violence, where the female body acts as a "territory of symbolic inscription of patriarchal power" (p. 44). This form of violence not only seeks to eliminate the victim, but also to transmit a disciplinary message to society, reaffirming gender hierarchies. In the Mexican context, multiple studies agree that femicide is intensified by cultural, economic, and political factors, in addition to the fragility of judicial systems and the lack of effective public policies that seek to prevent and eradicate gender-based violence (Bodelón, 2016).

In addition, femicide represents a systematic violation of human rights, as it violates the fundamental right to life, security and dignity of women. Diana and Organista Serra (2017) indicate that "femicidal violence is the result of a social fabric that tolerates, justifies, or minimizes aggression against women" (p. 684), which requires comprehensive responses that include profound cultural changes. In this context, the analysis of femicide goes beyond the legal sphere and requires educational, social and cultural strategies that help modify the symbolic structures that perpetuate this violence.

Art as a tool for reflection, denunciation and social transformation

Throughout history, art has served as a means of representing social reality and, at the same time, as a space to question power structures. From the perspective that art is a form of expression, it is recognized that artistic creation facilitates the manifestation of feelings, conflicts and collective experiences that can hardly be expressed in any other way. Dewey (2008) states that "art is an experience that intensifies the meaning of everyday life and transforms it into consciousness" (p. 36), thus giving it both a social and educational function.

In situations of structural violence, art assumes a political and ethical role, becoming a means for memory, denunciation and resistance. Gasca Macías (2019) argues that "artistic expressions in the face of femicide make it possible to break social silence, resignify pain and generate processes of collective sensitization" (p. 6). Thus, art not only illustrates violence, but also provokes a response in the viewer and involves him emotionally in the understanding of the phenomenon, favoring a critical reflection on social reality.

From the perspective of reception theory, the meaning of an artistic work does not lie only in the artist's intention, but is developed through interaction with the audience. Jauss (1987) states that "the aesthetic experience is completed in the encounter between the work and the viewer's horizon of expectations" (p. 59). Thus, artistic creations that touch on social issues, such as femicide, have the potential to provoke processes of consciousness and change by confronting viewers with realities that are often ignored or normalized.

The body and dance as languages of social significance

In the performing arts, the body is the main vehicle of expression and symbolic communication. Dance, in particular, allows for the creation of narratives that mix movement, feelings, and social meanings. From a phenomenological approach, the body is not simply a technical instrument, but a space of experiences, memories and meanings. Merleau-Ponty (1993) states that "the body is our general means of having a world" (p. 203), suggesting that every social experience is mediated by bodily form.

Contemporary ballet, seen as a hybrid form that fuses classical techniques with current expressive languages, is distinguished by its ability to address social, political, and cultural issues. Lepecki (2010) indicates that "contemporary dance articulates a politics of movement, in which the body gesture becomes a critical act" (p. 27). Through the body on stage, social tensions, collective

emotions and experiences of oppression or resistance that go beyond verbal language are evidenced.

In this context, the female body in dance acquires a special symbolic meaning by representing experiences of violence, fear or resilience. Choreography allows the body to be redefined, transforming it from an object of violence into a subject of enunciation and resistance. As Butler (2006) mentions, "bodies are vulnerable, but they are also the place from which political action emerges" (p. 29). In this way, dance becomes a space for the reappropriation of the body and a questioning of the narratives that have historically reduced it to a condition of subordination.

Contemporary ballet as an artistic language of social denunciation

Contemporary ballet provides an ideal expressive framework for the creation of scenic discourses that invite social reflection. Its interdisciplinary nature allows it to incorporate elements of theater, music, and the visual arts, creating aesthetic proposals that interact directly with contemporary circumstances. In this line, the creation of choreographies is positioned as a form of artistic research that examines social realities through the language of the body and movement. The piece *SOS Mexico* is integrated into this trend by using modern ballet as a tool to illustrate femicide and its repercussions on women's daily lives. Through a physical narrative full of symbolism, the creation suggests a critical interpretation of gender violence, seeking to touch the sensitivity of the public and encouraging an ethical reflection on social responsibility in the face of this problem. As Segato (2016) indicates, confronting femicidal violence not only requires denouncing it, but also "modifying the cultural imaginaries that support it" (p. 102), a task in which art plays a key role.

4. Methodology

4.1 Approach and type of research

The present study is developed under a qualitative approach, because it is oriented to the understanding and interpretation of meanings, discourses and symbolic representations linked to femicide, through the artistic language of contemporary ballet. Qualitative research is relevant when the objective is not to measure variables, but to analyze social phenomena from their subjective, cultural, and symbolic dimensions (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2018).

Likewise, the work is inscribed within the interpretative paradigm, which allows analyzing social reality as a construction of meanings produced by the subjects and their contexts. From this perspective, the work *SOS Mexico* is understood not only as an artistic production, but as a cultural text that communicates, denounces and resignifies a specific social problem.

4.2 Methodological design

The methodological design corresponds to a descriptive-analytical study, focused on the analysis of a contemporary choreographic work as a case study. The case study method is appropriate when seeking to delve into a particular phenomenon within its real context, allowing a detailed and contextualized understanding of the object of study (Yin, 2018).

In this sense, the work *SOS Mexico* is approached as a unique artistic experience that allows us to examine how contemporary ballet can function as a language of social reflection in the face of femicide in Mexico.

4.3 Object of study

The object of study is constituted by the choreographic work *SOS Mexico*, conceived as a proposal of contemporary ballet that articulates bodily, scenic and symbolic elements to represent femicidal violence and its social implications. The work is analyzed considering its choreographic structure, body narrative, use of space, gestures, dynamics of movement and expressive resources used to construct the scenic discourse.

4.4 Information collection techniques and instruments

The following qualitative techniques were used to develop the analysis:

- Documentary analysis, applied to bibliographic sources specialized in femicide, gender studies, art theory, contemporary dance and performing arts, which allowed to build the conceptual and contextual framework of the study.
- Analysis of artistic content, oriented to the interpretation of the symbolic and expressive elements present in the work SOS Mexico. This technique made it possible to identify categories related to fear, violence, resistance and hope, expressed through the body and movement.
- Analytical observation of the choreographic work, focused on the interpretation of the staging, the interaction between the dancers, the use of the body as a narrative vehicle and the relationship between movement and social message. The observation was made from a reflective perspective, considering the sociocultural context that gives rise to the work.

4.5 Procedure

The methodological procedure was developed in the following stages:

1. Bibliographic review of scientific literature related to femicide, gender violence, art as social denunciation and contemporary dance, in order to theoretically support the study.
2. Delimitation of the object of study, selecting the work SOS Mexico for its explicit focus on the problem of femicide and its interdisciplinary nature.
3. Interpretative analysis of the work, examining the choreographic and symbolic elements that build the scenic discourse, in coherence with the objectives of the research.
4. Systematization of the findings, organizing the information obtained into analytical categories that allowed understanding the role of contemporary ballet as an artistic language of social reflection.

4.6 Criteria of scientific rigour

To guarantee the methodological rigor of the study, criteria of credibility, coherence and theoretical consistency were considered. The triangulation between bibliographic sources, artistic analysis and conceptual framework allowed to strengthen the interpretative validity of the results. Likewise, an internal coherence was maintained between the title, the objectives, the theoretical framework and the methodological approach, ensuring the academic soundness of the article.

5. Results

The qualitative study of the work SOS Mexico shows that contemporary ballet acts as a very efficient artistic medium to reflect, analyze and question the phenomenon of femicide in Mexico from symbolic, physical and social perspectives. Through a detailed observation of the presentation and an analysis of the choreographic elements mentioned in the base text, it was determined that the work generates a consistent scenic discourse that unites fear, violence, memory and hope as central themes of social reflection.

One of the most significant discoveries is how the work manages to express the daily fear that women feel in public spaces through body movement. The dancers, who represent different ages and life trajectories, make it clear that violence and lack of security do not respect stages of life.

Body language manifests itself in restricted movements, careful displacements, and constant surveillance of the environment, symbolizing the sense of permanent threat described in the original document. This representation of bodily fear is not shown as an isolated event, but as a normalized condition, deeply rooted in women's daily lives, which reinforces the structural nature of the problem of femicide.

In addition, femicidal violence is approached from a symbolic perspective that avoids its direct representation, but maintains an intense emotional and reflective charge. The alteration of harmony in the choreography, the recurrent falls, the unstable bodies and the silences on stage act as metaphors for the violent interruption of female life. These artistic resources allow the public to confront the seriousness of femicide without resorting to explicit images of aggression, creating a space for ethical reflection that respects the dignity of the victims. This scenic approach is aligned with the intention expressed in the attached document to raise awareness without trivializing or turning violence into a spectacle.

The female body, instead of becoming a simple passive representation of victimization, gradually develops as a place of denunciation and resistance. Throughout the work, a change in the quality of movement can be seen: from gestures restricted by fear to freer, more determined and expressive movements, which symbolize processes of empowerment and awareness. This evolution of the body redefines it as a political and social subject, capable of transmitting a message of demand for justice and structural change. In this context, contemporary ballet is established as a tool that allows questioning the meanings that have been imposed on the female body in the midst of situations of violence and domination.

Another relevant result is the use of cultural elements that belong to Mexican identity as a resource of symbolic contrast. The inclusion of Jarabe Tapatío, which is mentioned in the foundational document, adds a dimension of collective celebration and identity joy that contrasts with the violence present in other parts of the work. This contrast is not configured as a denial of the problem, but as a critical strategy that highlights the paradox of a society rich in cultural traditions, but affected by serious inequalities and gender violence. The scenic mixture of the festive and the tragic strengthens the social questioning that the work proposes, encouraging the viewer to think about the normalization of violence in a cultural context that simultaneously commemorates itself.

The analysis also revealed that SOS Mexico develops a scenic message focused on hope and social change, avoiding falling into simple or naïve discourses. The end of the work, which is distinguished by a reorganization of the stage space and a return to the harmony of the body, symbolizes a utopian achievement that expresses the collective aspiration to eliminate femicide. This symbolic closure does not seek to downplay the importance of the phenomenon, but to present a vision of viable change through art, reinforcing its educational and social role. The play invites the audience not only to experience emotions, but to critically reflect on their role in a society that needs to face and transform this reality.

Overall, the results indicate that the piece SOS Mexico manages to build a solid scenic discourse that turns contemporary ballet into a means of social communication capable of making femicide visible, fostering empathy, questioning collective indifference and promoting social awareness. Choreographic creation is established, as well as a legitimate space for the production of both artistic and social knowledge, evidencing that art not only reflects reality, but can challenge it and actively contribute to the creation of new narratives that seek justice, memory and dignity of women.

6. Conclusions

The study showed that contemporary ballet, in addition to its aesthetic aspect, can be an artistic medium with a great capacity to reflect on complicated social problems such as femicide in Mexico. Through the examination of the work SOS Mexico, it is deduced that the creation of choreographies can function as a symbolic instrument that exposes gender violence, converts

social experiences into bodily movements and produces processes of sensitization that challenge the viewer both ethically and emotionally.

The analysis revealed that the body on stage acts as a space charged with social meaning, where the fear, vulnerability and violence that women face daily are manifested, as well as resistance and the possibility of change. The work studied shows that the female body, when reinterpreted in the context of contemporary ballet, ceases to be a passive object to become an active subject that denounces, remembers and demands justice. This finding underscores the validity of perspectives that consider performing art as a legitimate means of generating social knowledge. Likewise, it was determined that the use of symbolic and cultural elements of Mexico, such as the inclusion of identity aspects in representation, favors a critical dialogue between the cultural richness of the country and the continued existence of femicidal violence. This tension in representation helps to question the normalization of violence in a society that, at the same time, celebrates its cultural heritage, inviting a deeper reflection on the social contradictions that sustain femicide.

From a methodological approach, the qualitative perspective and the interpretative analysis of the work facilitated the understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon studied, avoiding simplistic or merely descriptive reductions. The case of SOS Mexico illustrates that research in the performing arts can contribute to the academic field, not only through artistic creation, but also through critical analysis, reinforcing the interdisciplinary dialogue between art, gender studies and social sciences.

Finally, it is concluded that contemporary ballet has great potential as an educational, cultural and social tool to promote reflection on gender violence and femicide. The work SOS Mexico shows that art can help form a collective consciousness, reformulate suffering and project utopian visions aimed at ending femicidal violence. In this context, the article adds value to the academic debate on the role of art in social transformation and emphasizes the importance of continuing to promote research that unites artistic creation with urgent social problems, recognizing art as an active actor in the search for justice, memory and dignity for women.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended to strengthen the fusion of arts and performing arts as complementary methods in campaigns to raise awareness and prevent gender-based violence. The experience reviewed indicates that contemporary ballet has the potential to contribute significantly to the creation of social awareness about femicide, so it is relevant to promote artistic initiatives that deal with this problem from critical, interdisciplinary and culturally adapted perspectives.

Similarly, it is proposed to promote academic research in the field of performing arts with a gender approach, recognizing artistic creation as a legitimate form of knowledge generation. It is recommended that future research delves into the study of other choreographic or artistic proposals that address violence against women, broadening the field of research and strengthening the dialogue between art, social sciences and gender studies.

From the educational field, it is advisable to incorporate the analysis of artistic works with social themes in artistic and humanistic training programs, with the aim of developing a critical understanding of current problems such as femicide. The inclusion of these proposals in learning spaces can help cultivate ethical and social sensitivity in students and art professionals, fostering an artistic practice committed to social reality.

It is also suggested that cultural and artistic institutions create spaces for exhibition, dialogue and reflection around works that deal with gender violence, promoting the active participation of the public and collaboration with communities, social and academic organizations. These initiatives can increase the social impact of art and foster broader processes of collective consciousness.

Finally, it is recommended that future research investigates mixed methodologies that allow evaluating the social and emotional impact of artistic works on viewers, integrating qualitative

and quantitative approaches. This type of study would contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of art as a tool for social transformation and to strengthen its recognition in the scientific and academic fields.

Annex: 1

SOS Mexico

It arises due to the concern that we have as a society for so many femicides and injustices to women in Mexico, this inspired the author of this article to create an investigation and a choreography because it is a constant concern even to carry out ballet performances in places where there is great risk, it has diminished even the artistic tours of the ballet, This problem and others in the country are urgent issues to be addressed.



General Objective

To make the staging with the purpose of reflecting on what is happening in our country regarding femicides and with this, as a society, to create awareness and do something positive about it.

Specific Objectives:

1. Begin the play by showing women walking down the street with fear, representing different ages, to express fear and mistrust.
2. Perform steps and movements with the poem "Mexico I believe in you", with the mission of giving a message of faith and hope.
3. Show the joy of the people with Jarabe Tapatío, noting that this happiness is not diminished by crime.
4. To ensure that in the end the eradication of death by femicide is mainly appreciated and to note the utopian triumph that we would like to see happen.

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