This book has been a long time in the making and would not have been possible without the help of many generous people and institutions.

I first visited China in 2002 as an undergraduate student dancer on a tour with the Harvard University Ballroom Dance Team. I am thankful to James Wang, who organized the tour, and to the U.S.-China Media and Publishing Association, its sponsor, as it was this two-week trip that opened my eyes to the world of dance in China. At Harvard I benefited from the mentorship of several professors, notably anthropologists Arthur Kleinman and Michael Herzfeld and performance scholar Deborah Foster, who guided my initial forays into dance ethnography. In 2003–4 a John Eliot Scholarship from the Harvard-Cambridge Foundation supported my year of study at the University of Cambridge, where historians of science Andrew Cunningham and Simon Schaffer advised me in historical methods. In 2005–8 I benefited from intensive language training at Princeton in Beijing and the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Study at Tsinghua University. This was made possible by generous grants from the UC Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies, the UC Berkeley Anthropology Department, the US Department of Education Foreign Language and Area Studies Program, and the Blakemore and Freeman Foundations. While living in Beijing, I also had the chance to begin training in Chinese dance, thanks to community outreach programming at the BeijingDance/ LDTX Dance Center. My teachers there, Wang Zhuorao and Chen Jie, inspired me to embark on this journey.

In 2008–9 I had the amazing opportunity to spend three semesters as a visiting graduate student at the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), China’s premier professional dance conservatory. This experience provided the basis for my doctoral
dissertation and was generously supported by scholarships from the Fulbright Institute of International Education and the University of California Pacific Rim Research Program. I am eternally grateful to the administrators and staff at BDA, who supported my application and granted me this rare chance to study alongside China’s most elite dance students. No words can express the deep gratitude I have to my professors at BDA, whose classes in many ways planted the seeds for this book. They include my water sleeve professor, Shao Weiqiu; my sword dance professor, Zhang Jun; my bare-handed shenyun professor, Su Ya; my Dunhuang dance professor, He Yanyun; my Uyghur and Han folk dance professor and Chinese national folk dance pedagogy professor, Jia Meina; my Chinese classical dance pedagogy professor, Xiong Jiatai; my Han-Tang Chinese classical dance history and theory professor, Du Le; my Chinese dance basic training professor, Yang Ou; my dance pedagogy theory professor, Lü Yisheng; my xiqu theory and history professor, Li Jieming; and my dance criticism professor, Xu Rui. Others who provided me invaluable training in Chinese dance during and after this period include Chen Jie, who taught me Han-Tang Chinese classical dance; Surongna and Wu Dan, who taught me Mongol dance; Liang Yujian, who taught me sword dance; Li Mei, who taught me Korean dance; Wang Jie, who taught me Dai and Tibetan dance; and Jin Ni, who taught me Shandong Jiaozhou yangge and Korean dance.

While I was studying at BDA, I conducted short-term field research in a variety of institutions in Beijing and other places across China, including Chongqing, Fujian, Guangdong, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Shaanxi, Shandong, and Sichuan. The aid of countless individuals made these projects possible. A few who went above and beyond, even hosting me in their own homes, were Mandy Xia, Zheng Qu, and Zhao Yuewei. In the course of this research, over one hundred and fifty professional dancers of various ages and backgrounds graciously shared their life stories with me through formal interviews. The stories they shared inspired my interest in Chinese dance history, igniting many of the questions that fueled the research for this book.

The result of my initial field research was a doctoral dissertation submitted in 2011 to the Anthropology Department at the University of California, Berkeley, for a degree in the UC Berkeley/UCSF Joint PhD Program in Medical Anthropology, supported by the faculty research group in Critical Studies in Medicine, Science, and the Body. Although the dissertation bears little resemblance to this book, it was formative in making the research for this book possible. Thus, I am tremendously grateful to my dissertation chair, anthropologist Liu Xin, as well as to my dissertation committee members: anthropologists Vincanne Adams and Alexei Yurchak, performance scholar Shannon Jackson, and historian Michael Nylan. Their impact on my intellectual development was formative, and they continue to be my greatest role models as a scholar and teacher. Other Berkeley faculty whose courses shaped my project in important ways are Judith Butler, Andrew Jones, Aihwa Ong, and Shannon Steen. I continue to treasure the friendships formed
through several intellectual communities at UC Berkeley, including the Anthropology Department; the Center for Chinese Studies; the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies; and the Dance Studies Working Group.

Several caring mentors helped me sort out my multiple intellectual identities and find homes for my work during the early years of my professional career: Xiaomei Chen in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at UC Davis; William Sun in the Schechner Center for Performance Studies at the Shanghai Theater Academy; Yanfang Tang in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the College of William and Mary; Susan Manning, Janice Ross, and Rebecca Schneider, who led the Mellon Dance Studies project; and Kathy Foley, longtime editor of *Asian Theatre Journal*. In the harrowing environment of the postrecession academic job market, early career mentorship and advocacy have become more critical than ever before. These scholars not only offered personal guidance and championed my work but also created vital professional opportunities, in the form of adjunct and visiting positions, postdoctoral fellowships, and publishing platforms. For this largely invisible but indispensable labor, I am extremely thankful.

Between 2011 and 2017, I was fortunate to receive fellowships and grants that allowed me to totally reconceive my project and conduct the new research that resulted in this book. Between 2011 and 2013, while I was a visiting assistant professor at the College of William and Mary, the Shanghai Theater Academy provided me a nonresidential postdoctoral research fellowship that allowed me to conduct archival and ethnographic research in Beijing, Lanzhou, Shanghai, and Hohhot during summer and winter holidays. After I joined the University of Michigan in 2013, the UM Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies became the most important funder of my annual trips to China, during which I revisited previous research sites and developed new projects in Jilin, Xinjiang, and Yunnan. In addition to annual travel grants, the center also generously funded library collection development, grants to support Chinese dance artists in residence, image permission fees, purchasing of rare books and other research supplies, and a major exhibition and conference. Other centers and units at UM that provided financial and administrative support include the University of Michigan Library, the Asia Library, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, the Rackham Graduate School, the Confucius Institute, the Office of the Senior Vice Provost, the Center for World Performance Studies, the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, the Dance Department, the Institute for the Humanities, the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program, and the International Institute. These units sponsored research travel in China, artist residencies at UM, and library collection development, as well as trips to archives in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. Two external fellowships were absolutely critical to the completion of this book, because they provided two much-needed years away from teaching to write and revise the manuscript: an American Council
of Learned Societies Fellowship in 2014–15 and a Transregional Research Junior Scholar Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council in 2016–17. In addition to salary replacement funds, these fellowships also supported research travel, purchasing of research supplies, and translation assistance for materials in Uyghur. A manuscript workshop funded by the Dean's Office of the UM College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and hosted by the UM Department of Asian Languages and Cultures was hugely beneficial in allowing me to get feedback on a draft of the book before it went out for external review. The subvention for this book was covered jointly by the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies Publication Subvention Award and the University of Michigan Open Access Monograph Publication Initiative.

Many librarians, archivists, and dancers helped provide access to historical materials used in this book. For assistance with institutional libraries and archives, I am grateful to staff at the Asia Library at the University of Michigan, the Beijing Dance Academy, China Foto Bank, the China Opera and Dance Drama Theater, the C. V. Starr East Asian Library at Columbia University, the Inner Mongolia Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, the Royal Academy of Dance in London, the Shanghai Library, and the Xinjiang Daily. For use of personal collections, I am grateful to Chen Ailian, Cui Yuzhu, Fang Bonian, Richard Glasstone, He Yanyun, Jin Ou, Lan Hang, Liang Lun, Lü Yisheng, Gulmira Mamat, Oumijiacan, Sheng Jie, Shu Qiao, Siqintariha, Wan-go H. C. Weng, Hsing Ching Weng Trust, Yang Liping, Ye Jin, Zhang Ke, Zhang Yunfeng, Zhao Qing, Zhao Xiaogang, and the families of Zhang Jun, Zha Lie, and Zhao Dexian. I am especially thankful for the boundless support of the UM Chinese studies librarian, Liangyu Fu. The UM Chinese Dance Collection that she initiated and brought to fruition over the past five years has greatly expanded the possibilities for research on Chinese dance history. Our collaborations on this collection and our related 2017 exhibition, Chinese Dance: National Movements in a Revolutionary Age, 1945–1965, offered a rich intellectual resource for this book. One component of this UM collection, the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive (https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/dance1ic), offers a supplement to this book in that it contains additional photographs of many people and productions discussed here.

A great number of colleagues offered advice and feedback on drafts of this book. For comprehensive feedback on drafts of the full manuscript, I am especially thankful to Miranda Brown, Clare Croft, Nancy Florida, Rebecca Karl, Janet O'Shea, David Rolston, Xiaobing Tang, Wang Zheng, members of the winter 2018 ASIAN 546 graduate seminar, and an anonymous reviewer. For notes on individual chapter drafts and comments offered at conference panels and workshops, I am thankful to Allison Alexy, Cemil Aydin, Erin Brightwell, Rosemary Candelario, Pär Cassel, Tina Mai Chen, Tarryn Chun, Paul Clark, Laurence Coderre, Charlotte
D’Evelyn, Prasenjit Duara, Alissa Elegant, Xing Fan, Mary Gallagher, Ellen Gerdes, Levi Gibbs, Ronald Gilliam, Anita Gonzalez, Engseng Ho, Nicole Huang, Paola Iovene, Reggie Jackson, Imani Kai Johnson, S. E. Kile, Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, Rebekah Kowal, Lanlan Kuang, Petra Kuppers, Siyuan Liu, Xiaozhen Liu, Donald Lopez, Liang Luo, Christopher Lupke, Nan Ma, Jason McGrath, Katherine Mezur, Fangfei Miao, Markus Nornes, Jose Reynoso, Tara Rodman, Youngju Ryu, Aminda Smith, Sue Tuohy, Krista Van Fleit, Judy Van Zile, Ban Wang, Felix Wemheuer, Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, and Jongsung Yang. Christina Ezrahi and Akram Hélil provided assistance with sources in Russian and Uyghur, and students Ting Su, Raeann Romel, Yaehyun (Emily) Sohn, and Yucong Hao offered research support. Additionally, this book would not have been possible without the tremendous work and guidance of editors Reed Malcolm and Archna Patel and the entire staff of University of California Press.

Lastly, I would like to thank the communities who have provided camaraderie, care, and mentorship through the final stages of this project. These include members of the Association for Asian Performance, the Association for Asian Studies, the Association for Theater in Higher Education, CHINOPERL, the Dance Studies Association, Performance Studies international, and the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association. They also include the entire faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, particularly my extraordinary faculty mentors, David Rolston and Xiaobing Tang. Above all, I would like to thank my wonderful family—especially my mother, Debra Wilcox, and my partner, Chinua Thelwell. Their love and support make everything possible.