As esteemed artists, Cuban dancers have often used their art to posit more radical notions of social justice than political leaders were able or willing to implement. After 1959, while generally promoting revolutionary projects like mass education and internationalist solidarity, they also took risks by challenging racial prejudice, gender norms, and censorship, all of which could affect dancers personally. This exciting new book sheds powerful new light on how dance, too often overlooked in histories of Latin America and the Caribbean, provides fresh perspectives on what it means for people, and nations, to move through the world.

Dr. Elizabeth Schwall has taught at Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley; she also held a fellowship at New York University’s Center for Ballet and the Arts, and was a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University. Her work has appeared in the Hispanic American Historical Review, Cuban Studies, Gender & History, and Dance Chronicle.

For many Cubans, Fidel Castro’s Revolution represented deliverance from a legacy of inequality and national disappointment. For others—especially those exiled in the United States—Cuba’s turn to socialism made the prerevolutionary period look like paradise lost. Unsettling this familiar schism, this powerful new book excavates Cubans’ contested memories of the Revolution’s roots and results over its first twenty years, revealing how these battles over the past not only defied simple political divisions—but also helped shape the course of modern Cuban history.
