Expanded
Screendance

The International Journal of Screendance

EDITORS

Kyra Norman & Marisa Zanotti

The International Journal of Screendance Editorial Board

Table of Contents: Expanded Screendance

IJSD Volume 11

Editorial: Expanded Screendance

Kyra Norman & Marisa Zanotti

This issue marks the 10th anniversary of the International Journal of Screendance. Our first journal appeared in the Spring of 2010 and was entitled "Screendance has not yet been invented." It both looked at historical precedents and contested limited definitions of 'screens' or 'dance', opening a space for the discussion of past, present and future thoughts that might shape this field of practice. The title of our second issue, "Scaffolding the Medium" gave a clear sense of purpose as a publication, to create, or make visible, structures that support screendance practice. Each issue since has defined its own parameters and established its own identity: alongside the desire to scaffold, lives the desire to shake things up.

For the past decade an annual issue has been a labour of love, largely curated by the original members of the Screendance Network who created the journal and committed themselves to peopling the volunteer Editorial Board. When we began to imagine the call for this issue of the journal in summer 2019, it was motivated by a desire to open this project up in various practical and theoretical ways: decentralising discussions, making room for other voices, and listening out for the different kinds of questions currently being asked through this form: to look beyond borders, whether those are borders between art forms, genres or geographical locations. What questions are artists / curators / activists asking through their screendance work?

The seismic events of 2020 so far have been key factors in shaping the content of this issue. Writers and editors have worked in a shifting landscape to negotiate emotional, financial and practical challenges, to balance the needs of family, friends and work at this time. Ariadne Mikou and Elisa Frasson, writing from Italy at the beginning of the Covid19 crisis, consider the social, economic and political systems and mechanisms through which screendance is made, in the northern Mediterranean area. They highlight different ways in which curatorial, production and commissioning practices interface with local, as well as global, communities and concerns. Doug Rosenberg reflects on the possibilities for allyship in screendance, reporting from *Regards Hybrides,* a festival that he describes as defining a 'new wave' in screendance, through an intersectional curation by Priscilla Guy and Emilie Morin. A desire to extend conversations begun at this event, and to discuss ways of evolving the field toward a more egalitarian space, drives a subsequent conversation between Rosenberg, Cara Hagan and Naomi Macalalad Bragin. Both women are artists and scholars who are finding ways to creatively make change happen across the field. Hagan's ongoing curatorial project at American Dance Festival is opening up screendance to many new practices and makers, whilst Bragin's writing and activism shine light on the work of artists and communities who have been historically marginalised. Anna Macdonald's reflective writing, Witness, responds to the work

of Marlene Millar, which Macdonald saw in the context of a full retrospective of Millar's work curated by Iliyana Nedkova and produced by Horsecross Arts for Threshold artspace, Perth.

Reading these articles side by side in late 2020, it is poignant to reflect on the role of festivals in bringing together artists, practitioners, writers and curators, and the thinking and actions such events can prompt. Gathering at such events can offer a sense of unity and solidarity, as well as challenging one's own thinking and inspiring new individual approaches. As a field, we must keep finding meaningful ways to connect. Sharing these texts alongside one another here is intended to open up a space for further exchange and connection, keeping the conversations circulating. Each of these articles also foregrounds the time it takes for the patient activity of paying attention: to a work, to a conversation, to one another, to a significant point in time.   Continuing this trajectory, in her article, filmmaker Katrina McPherson attends to her shifting sense of her surroundings and reflects on the validity of artistic practice at this time from lockdown in Edinburgh, Scotland.

In a pair of in-depth analyses, two dancers and scholars, Jo Read and Sandhiya Kalyanasundaram, propose perspectives on, respectively, the relationships between film histories, live dance, musicality and animation, and the work of Tamil film director Shankar Shanmugam, seen through a screendance lens. Read constructs a detailed analysis of a recording of a live performance by Isaac 'Turbo' Baptiste, drawing on Disney's '12 Principles of Animation' as a framework, and argues for further discussion and scholarship around the ways in which screen media histories, apparatus and techniques shape current live dance practices. In her article, Kalyanasundaram draws on contemporary screendance practice and theory to introduce, challenge, and enrich our viewing of a series of song videos from Shankar's celebrated Kollywood hits.

Finally, and bringing us up to the present, Jaleea Price reviews Harmony Bench's newly released book, *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common* (2020). Returning to the theme of the activity of attention: in her book, Bench "attends to shifts in dance performance, reception, dissemination, and circulation brought about by popular digital media technologies"[i], focusing on the period 1996 – 2016, while in her review Price reflects on the 'virtual time capsule' that this offers the present reader, and how these works, and Bench's vivid analysis, influence our experiences of screen space as collective commons today.

* * *

Statement from the Editorial Board

An annual journal is in a sense inevitably a retrospective project: a reflection on activities over the past year. But it also offers an opportunity to propose ways forward. What is missing from this issue of the journal also has much to tell us about these times, and the realities for us all, and our field of enquiry, right now. Little did we know, when planning this issue, the devastating impact a global pandemic would have on nations, cultural life and individuals around the world. And, in this moment of suspension of so many aspects of our lives, the

impact of George Floyd's death and the urgency around Black Lives Matter protests in the US and beyond have brought us to a moment of critical introspection. Over the past four months, the Editorial Board has taken the opportunity to reflect on the potential of this publication, and how we might move forward in the face of so much change and uncertainty. As part of this process, we have begun to examine the ways in which systemic racism has, in fact, operated within our own Board. Our being a small group, and our internalized biases and friendship groups, have limited who is in the (currently, Zoom) room with us, and we want to acknowledge this. As an Editorial Board we continue to have fruitful, sometimes difficult, debates on this and other topics that pertain to the ways in which we move forward as a publication: we are united in our desire to expand not only definitions of screendance, our pool of contributors and our readership, but also more specifically the membership of our Editorial Board – to look beyond the borders of our own racial myopia. If you would be interested in being involved in the work of the Journal and have time and energy to commit to bi-monthly (online) meetings and shaping our direction as we move forward, then contact us. We want to hear from you.

Our next issue (Issue 12) will respond to a provocation from guest editors Harmony Bench and Alexandra Harlig: *This Is Where We Dance Now: COVID-19 and the New and Next in Dance Onscreen*. The scope of this enquiry extends across multiple dance practices, platforms, and screens. We understand that some dance artists have long viewed the Internet as a primary platform for sharing their work within vibrant online communities, while others are grappling with sudden and radical changes to their practices. Although IJSD is an English-language publication, COVID-19 is global, and this volume seeks to represent a wide range of perspectives from around the world and across disciplines.

Issue 13 will be open-themed, and we invite submissions for this on a rolling basis. We are currently considering a series of sub-sections within this and future issues, around pedagogies, and concerning the interrelation of sound and image in screendance. Discussions around translations and potential collaborations with publications in other languages are ongoing, and we welcome suggestions, proposals and advice in this area.

We leave this editorial thanking Ohio State University for their strong support and ongoing commitment to IJSD's digital platform and distribution, and thanking the contributors to this issue for working with us in difficult and rapidly shifting conditions and for inviting us to join them in processes of questioning, reflecting and reimagining, in what in his article Doug Rosenberg proposes as 'a series of awakenings'. These processes are ongoing.

Notes
[i] Bench, 187

Screendance Narratives from around the Mediterranean Sea

Ariadne Mikou
in collaboration with Elisa Frasson
and with the contribution of Anna Alexandre, Marisa Hayes & Franck Boulègue, Chrysanthi Badeka, Lucia De Rienzo, Simona Lisi, Marco Longo and Loránd János

Abstract

The European Mediterranean appears to be an active key player for the production and circulation of screendance. Focusing this research on the pre-pandemic state of screendance in Italy, France, Greece and Spain and employing a methodology of one-to-one interviews, this text examines the art policies that have been in place for potentially supporting the production of screendance, the ways that spectatorship and social engagement kept on growing and the predictions for the yet-to-come evolution of the form in a context disassociated from, yet applicable to the on-going pandemic. Although screendance is understood differently among the interviewees – curators of major festivals such as DAN. CIN. LAB., Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne, COORPI/La Danza in 1 minuto, Cinematica Festival, Stories We Dance International Videodance Contest, Choreoscope - The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona and the formerly known Athens Video Dance Project – International Dance Film Festival – the aim of this research is to create knowledge regarding the heterogeneous landscape of screendance in the European Mediterranean as well as a broader understanding of the shifting Mediterranean culture.

Keywords: screendance, economies, spectatorship, social engagement, interviews, European Mediterranean

Introduction

This text is the outcome of a series of interviews that were addressed to key figures in screendance curation active in the European part of the Mediterranean area – excluding the former European colonies in this geographical zone. These interviews, conducted right before the outbreak of COVID-19, examine different modes and restrictions on screendance production in the Mediterranean area, strategies of dissemination and social engagement emerging from the artform, narratives of local legacies and future perspectives on the form.

The intention of this project shares the editorial agenda to decentralise – and *expand* (authors' emphasis) – the academic discourse on screendance beyond the English-speaking scholar context of IJSD which is mainly circulated in the USA, Canada and the UK. Our goal is to offer perspectives and insights from the European Mediterranean, a geographical and socio-economical area currently active in screendance production and dissemination.

As artists, curators and writers originating from and recently being relocated in the European part of the Mediterranean, our curatorial and teaching projects mainly take place in Italy, a Mediterranean country by definition. Our focus is, on one hand, to contribute to the expanded understanding of the notion of screendance in academic and artistic contexts,[1] and on the other hand to make this interdisciplinary art form available and appreciated by a larger and non-expert audience. At the same time, we are interested in exploring how screendance may turn into a tool for building social awareness.[2]

At this particular stage of the research, the Mediterranean countries of focus are Italy, France, Greece and Spain and it is important to remind the reader of the pre-COVID 19 sociopolitical landscapes in relation to cultural policy in each one of these countries. France has a long tradition of providing support to the Arts while Italy, Spain and Greece have been influenced in different ways by the 2008 financial crisis. Greece has been especially affected by the austerity measures that followed and almost diminished any kind of state support towards the Arts approximately until 2018. In addition, Spain, Italy and in particular Greece have been hit by the large and uncontrolled migrant crisis that is the outcome of the massive displacement of people fleeing war in areas such as Africa and the Middle East. Keeping in mind this frame, by looking at the pre-COVID 19 state of screendance – a form that primarily engages the human body, and by extension motion, as well as the screen, a surface that is an integral part of everyday communication – how can we help others understand the particularities of the place where we live? How can we enhance our own understanding of the socio-cultural area where we currently reside?

Regarding the structure and technical aspects of the interviews, we conducted and registered them via Skype in December 2019 – around three months before the official lockdown in Europe (a fact that perhaps gives a historic dimension to the project given that it is unclear how long the measures of social distancing will last, and how they will affect the evolution of the Arts). The interviews were strategically structured as discussions [3] and they were with:

- Anna Alexandre from *DAN. CIN. LAB.* (Saint-Etienne, France)

- Marisa Hayes & Franck Boulègue from the *Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne* (Le Creusot, France)

- Chrysanthi Badeka from the *Athens Video Dance Project - International Dance Film Festival* (Athens, Greece) [4]

- Lucia De Rienzo from *COORDINAMENTO DANZA PIEMONTE (COORPI)/La Danza in 1 minuto* (Torino, Italy)

- Simona Lisi from *Cinematica Festival - Immagine in Movimento: Performance, Arti Visive, Cinema, Nuove Tecnologie* (Ancona, Italy)

- Marco Longo from *collettivo Augenblick / Stories We Dance International Videodance Contest* of *Fuori Formato - Festival Internazionale di Danza e Video Danza* (Genova, Italy)

- *Loránd János from Choreoscope - The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona* (Spain)

We invited responses from these curators, as residents in the European part of the Mediterranean area, who are engaged in different ways in the development of the field of screendance. Most have been working since around 2010. As they direct major screendance festivals and most of them are connected through specific network schemes and alliances – for instance, The Mediterranean Screendance Network (MSN)[5] and the Creative Europe funded project mAPs[6] – they are an integral part of screendance in the Mediterranean region.

The project is driven by the authors as artists-researchers and curators working independently from institutions and this factor does shape the research process and necessarily the outcome.[7]   In future iterations of the project, we aim to develop further collaborations both within and beyond the European zone of the Mediterranean area and we also plan to invite academic voices to comment and broaden the scope of the work. At this stage, it has been useful in the research to employ a mapping process that aims to locate the centres of screendance dissemination in the area of focus such as independent festivals that are currently operating although their activities might have been suspended due to the measures against the spread of COVID-19. For the purposes of this paper, only a small selection of dance, film and video art festivals with special programs on the body on the screen are included.
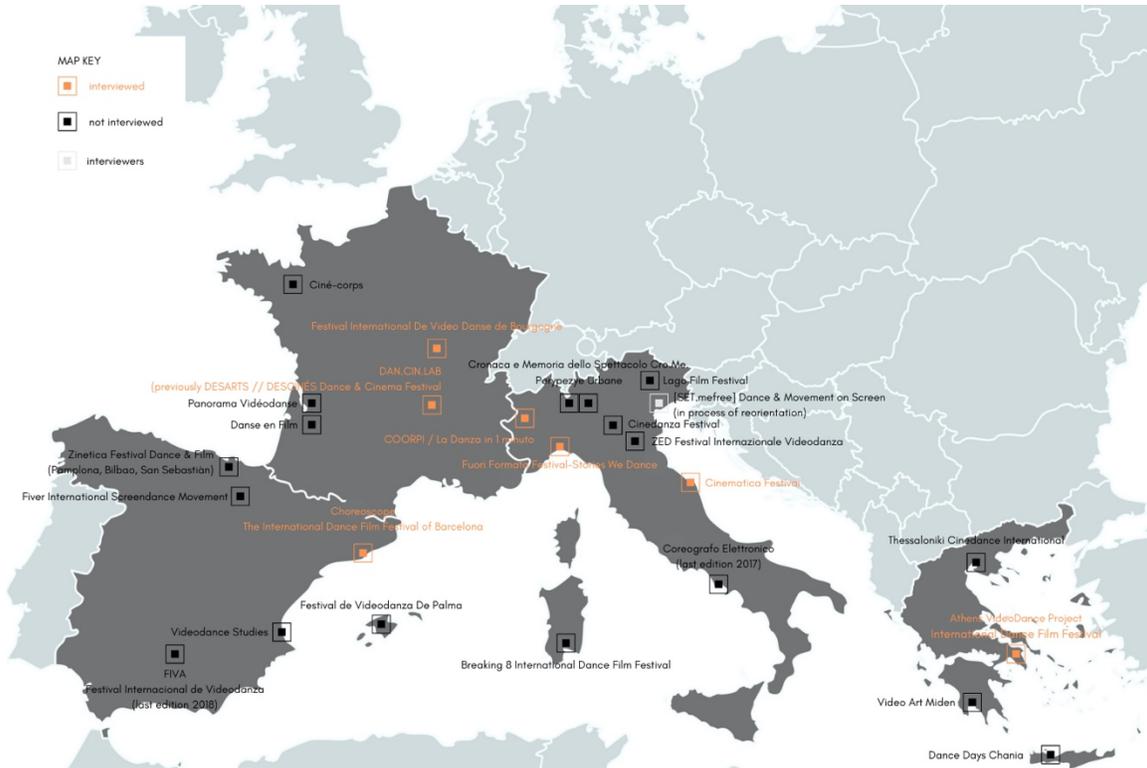
Location of independent festivals and organisations that are currently operating in Italy, France, Greece and Spain. Map: Ariadne Mikou

Our interviewing method allowed us to refine questions and respond to the research as it emerged. Questions below appear in the order that they were addressed in each interview and the responses are presented as edited summaries underneath each question. The first question asked each interviewee for a general overview of screendance production in each country. A geographical clockwise movement that begins with Italy and ends with Spain determines the sequence of answers. The rest of the questions – except from the last one that appears as a summary – are answered personally and the participants are identified by their names and affiliation. This order follows the sequence assigned above.

The interviews took place in the language native to the interviewees – Italian and Greek – and then they were translated into English. In some cases, they were also conducted in English, which for the authors of this paper and most of the participants is a second language. The translation process necessarily drew attention to questions of language; one of our key findings is that the term 'screendance' is rarely used in the geographical zone of this research. As writers, whenever possible, we use the term 'screendance' while "keeping in mind the slippery definitions of dance, choreography, screen and their expanding and transgressed borders." [8] However, in the cases of Augenblick Colletivo, COORPI, DAN.CIN.LAB. and Choreoscope all use the term 'dancefilm'.[9] The Festival

International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne aims for a more holistic approach towards definitions of what might constitute screendance and Cinematica Festival is oriented towards a broader understanding of screendance as Movement Image (Deleuze, 1983). The contradictory title of Athens Video Dance Project - International Dance Film Festival (AVDP) makes available the medium of video as part of a filmic environment and AVDP seems to be a promoter of works that embraces video and film alike.

Question One

1. How is the production of screendance enabled in your country? Which are the available financial resources that circulate? [10]

Referring specifically to Italy and France, the interviewees agree that screendance flourished under the form of 'videodance' [11] during the 80s and 90s. Then there was a gap of approximately 10 years and around 2010 the form reappeared under the name 'dancefilm.' The French and Italian interviewees concur that the audio-visual form that unites dance and choreography with the screen is going through a second *big wave* or *golden age* (orig. emphasis) in terms of production and circulation.

ITALY
The three interviewees from Italy (Lucia De Rienzo, Simona Lisi & Marco Longo) agree that there is a lack of financial opportunities specifically for hybrid forms such as screendance or videodance. However, they acknowledge the availability of financial resources for cinema and dance as discrete art forms. In the case of dance, these funding schemes are predicated towards the distribution of dance rather than the production of new work. All of the interviewees make explicit that artists might sometimes re-invent their projects for a specific community or as part of an educational program in order to make it fit to the given financial frames that are separately available for cinema and dance. Additionally, artists and producers might need to adjust their language when applying for grants. More specifically, when requesting financial support for audio-visual projects from the dance sector, it can be helpful to rephrase the artistic outcome not as a videodance *per se* but as a mediated dance performance for the screen. These *small* (authors' emphasis) language adjustments can help to transcend the borders of the two artforms in the eyes of funders.

Artists and producers find their way in Italy through the available options below:
1. FONDO UNICO PER LO SPETTACOLO (FUS) which is a ministerial funding resource for the Performing Arts in Italy. More specifically, article 41 of FUS states that funding is available for the promotion of the performing arts. For example, the use of the word 'video' in a funding application from a screen artist can open the door for the creation of trailers for dance performances and/or adaptations for these on screen that might be developed into original videodance works.

2. PER CHI CREA [12] which is a project co-funded by SIAE [13] and the Italian Ministry of Culture. It is dedicated only to youth creativity (up to 35 years old).
3. Funds from the local municipalities and regions that aim to support live performances or cinema.
4. Bank Foundations and other private institutions. [14]
5. Opportunities for artists residencies that may produce as outcomes works created for the screen. [15]
6. The creation of networks that facilitate co-productions. In this sense, as Longo suggests, the artistic process develops a dimension often based on contacts and cross-institutional support.
7. Resources from abroad, as for instance the production of *Carte Blanche* [16] by the Italian collective Augenblick. It received support from Stavros Niarchos Foundation in Greece as part of the cultural activities of the LIRCES Conference on Greek-born Italian poet Ugo Foscolo.

Still from *Carte Blanche*. Direction and choreography Collettivo Augenblick, 2017. Film.

FRANCE

According to Anne Alexandre from DAN.CIN.LAB. as well as Marisa Hayes & Franck Boulègue, the directors of Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne, financial resources available in France include:

1. The National Film Funding that is accessed through a single production company as well as a recognised production company with a track record but not by individual artists. An additional difficulty for the dance filmmakers, according to Alexandre, is that the majority of the film resources do not

recognise dancefilm as a film genre. Also, screendance (*danse pour l' écran* in French) is a term that is not appreciated by the film industry and to indicate quality and high standard artists and producers need not to differentiate dancefilm, dance cinema or ciné-dance from film.

2. A scheme developed two years ago by the Dance Division of the Ministry of Culture which opened an experimental Call on Dance Film in dialogue with the National Film Funding. Hayes reports that currently "a certain amount of grants for choreographic creation are available to fund audio-visual projects in relationship to dance (screendance, documentaries, and others)." [17]

3. Canal Plus, a prepaid TV channel as well as a production company, offers a residency program with the support of the Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée. The 2020 edition was inaugurated with the production of *La collection: Comédie Musicale*, a collection of seven short musical films in which dance was an integral part.

4. A screendance residency initiated by Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne in collaboration with La Briqueterie CDCN du Val-de-Marne and a large group of partners mainly coming from France. It includes a two-week residency and financial support up to 8,000 euros for production and artistic creation. [18]

5. There are funding opportunities for collaborative projects with Arabic countries (Lebanon, Syria) and former French colonies (Morocco, Tunisia).

6. The Anna Lindh Foundation promotes projects in the Mediterranean area for peace and equality across countries. [19]

7. French Institutes abroad may provide funding for dancefilm productions. [20]

Still from *Aporia,* the project that was co-funded by Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne. Direction and choreography Salvatore Insana and Elisa Turco Liveri, 2019. Screendance.

GREECE
"*AVDP (Athens Video Dance Project-International Dance Film Festival) was born during the years of the financial crisis.*" [21]

Despite the impoverishment of the country during the last decade caused by the financial crisis and the austerity measures, artists by engaging minimal tools managed to have a strong presence abroad. According to Chrysanthi Badeka, the former co-director of AVDP, artists were able to produce works that communicated an engaging story and conveyed directly a message. Collaboratively, Greek artists have recently been proposing works that leave a strong imprint in the screendance market [22] or works with a rich socio-political context [23]. However, a contrast between available resources and the creation of artworks might be described as both miraculous and audacious: artists create almost with no financial support and the lack of resources pushes them to be even more creative. Although financial opportunities still remain few, an increase in accessibility to technologies continues to affect artistic production and dissemination positively.

SPAIN
Loránd János, the director of Choreoscope – The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona, in answer to the question about the availability of financial resources that circulate in Spain says explicitly: "NONE." There is no funding for screendance and this is the reason, he explains, why the Mediterranean Screendance Network (MSN) was created. He continues: "to create a sort of lobby in order to gain joint visibility, to develop work together and access financial resources as a strong team." The MSN has been operating for three years and it is still mainly European as it includes festivals from France, Greece, Italy and Spain. As János adds "we continue to seek exchanges with other European Mediterranean countries (e.g. Malta, Cyprus)."

Question Two
2. Through which ways does spectatorship grow within and beyond the context of your 'videodance' or 'dancefilm' festival?

De Rienzo from *LA DANZA IN 1 MINUTO CONTEST*: We developed a digital audience and followers through social media (Facebook and Instagram), the video platform Vimeo and our own website. In 2019, in order to reach the new generation, we launched a new category dedicated to 1-minute works shot with a smartphone. This digital audience still prefers the ease of home viewing through cell phones, computers, iPads and resists visiting physical spaces, such as cinemas or museums in order to engage further with other forms of screendance.

Lisi from *CINEMATICA Festival*: With curatorial formats such as special screenings [24], exhibitions, installations, multimedia and site-specific performances, we aim to address

our work to a large audience originating from the visual and performing arts as well as the field of cinema. Curating workshops with experienced artists for professionals and amateurs of every age, holding academic conferences, hosting meetings with film directors (e.g. Peter Greenaway) and choreographers, as well as the creation of Jiří Kylián's *Scalamare*,[25] that was co-produced by our festival, helped to further augment spectatorship.

Specifically speaking about *Scalamare,* it was shot in one of the landmarks of Ancona, *the Monumento ai Caduti*, which is a tourist attraction and a haunt that gathers many people daily. Shoots on location built the curiosity of the residents, who visited the site day after day to observe the process of the filming or to attempt to meet the cast. When the film was ready for distribution, we invited the residents to attend the premiere and they responded eagerly to our invitation. We have to consider that videodance was unknown at that point to the local citizens and creating a work that presents their city on the screen, was very important for them. By extension, this action helped to build a sense of pride in their hometown. As *Scalamare* toured in several major festivals around the world, our festival's reputation increased.

Scalamare, 2014. Dir. and chor. Jiří Kylián. Prod. Kylián Foundation, Cinematica Festival, Comune di Ancona, Marche Teatro. Film.

Longo from *COLLETTIVO AUGENBLICK (Stories We Dance International Videodance Contest)*: For growing the audience for our curatorial activities, we engage an interdisciplinary dialogue with other arts. We attempt to go out from our own cinematic and performative sphere in order to develop meeting points with other contexts and to 'contaminate' [26] screendance as well as the choreographic discourse through diverse

approaches. We organise practical workshops and lectures with screenings, as for instance, our event which is called *Videodance and the Other Art Forms* that aims to connect videodance with cinema, theatre and architecture. This is a way to attract an audience from other disciplines beyond the fields of dance and cinema.

Alexandre from *DAN.CIN.LAB.*: In our first steps as curators and in order to introduce dancefilm in the area of Saint-Etienne, our strategy was to approach screendance through screenings on the popular heritage of dance on film (*West Side Story*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Blues Brothers* etc). Then, as our project began to orient towards social issues, long form films from the cinema industry were accompanied by a program of short dancefilms connected to the featured cinema director or the topic of the main film. Currently, our events are followed by after-screening talks with experts on the field, such as filmmakers, choreographers or dancers. We also organise a lot of screenings of short dancefilms outdoors because the audience does not go to the cinema to attend shorts. They prefer feature films. So, DAN.CIN.LAB. started to place the screen outdoors in the urban space such as the streets, the parks, the museums [27], at the shops and on the squares. This idea was successful because people remained to watch the films.

Hayes and Boulègue from *Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne*: In France, most of the financial resources are gathered and centralised in large cities and especially in Paris. But, in Le Creusot [28], a small city in the region of Burgundy and the home of our festival, there was far less competition for initiating a project such as a screendance festival.

In our festival, we aim at being 'glocal' (global and local at the same time) and we question how to create a dialogue between the local residents and the international public. In the early editions of the festival -- around 11 years ago -- we used to curate programs that provided an overview of different screendance practices. These programs gradually moved towards thematic festivals. Speakers from France and abroad were invited to give lectures as part of international screendance conferences organized in relationship to festival themes, including *The Politics of Space* (2015) and the economy and ecology of *Low-Tech/Old Tech* (2017). Encouraging artists to visit Le Creusot, make films and attend workshops on location, helped the residents to discover the festival and gradually built their curiosity. We have also been proposing collective works of screendance since 2013 through an "exquisite corpse technique." [29] Free entry for the public and no-fee submission for the artists were other strategies adopted. For the last three years, we have received enough funding to pay the artists for their films.

Still from *Open Borders*, 2015.

Badeka from *AVDP (Athens Video Dance Project-International Dance Film Festival):*
AVDP was created in order to show our works. As artists-curators we were interested in treating the featured artists with care and respect. We wanted them to be happy and we treated them as we wanted ourselves to be treated. This ethos of care was recognised by our followers through time and increased the audience which initially consisted of local artists. This kind of care is not measured in terms of financial profit but rather as an attitude that promotes visibility for the artists in international festivals and platforms. Ethos of care and respect for the participating artists also builds their trust towards the curators.

Furthermore, we aimed to support Greek artists, although, in the beginning, their works were at an early stage of technical and artistic development. We think that their selection at our festival was a reward and motivation for them as we hope that AVDP became an opportunity to deepen understanding of the form as it evolved in Greece and internationally.

Our additional dissemination tactics for audience development include several educational projects as well as the project *AVDP on TouR* in which we promote a national circulation of screendance programs as part of several Greek Dance Festivals with whom we collaborate permanently or occasionally [30].

János from *CHOREOSCOPE-The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona:*
Besides the use of social media for communication, the *Filmin* platform [31] helps the visibility of the form. The Choreoscope short film catalogue is made available on *Filmin* after the festival ends around the middle of October and it is available to be streamed until December 31st. This is an agreement that we as Choreoscope reached with this platform in order to promote further the artists, their dancefilms and assure a broader audience for their work. At the same time the viewings generate income for the artists.

Furthermore, having a clear identity as a festival is important for expanding our audience. We need to know what we are talking about in order to be able to sell it and to explain it to our audience. We have a clear branding strategy to communicate to the audience what they can expect to see at our festival. Choreoscope is a FILM FESTIVAL (orig. emphasis), focused on dance, choreographed movement and non-verbal communication. We screen films (shorts, animation, feature, documentary and series) where the stories are told by the body, or the dance/movement element has a clear narrative and dramaturgic weight.

Question Three
3. What is the potential of the form for social engagement and how is it practised especially by your organisation?

De Rienzo from *LA DANZA IN 1 MINUTO CONTEST*: There is an urgency in the Mediterranean area, especially after the financial and migration crisis that changed our society, to begin to speak about social issues. So, the crisis changed the content of the works and rendered them more urgent and perhaps less aesthetic. These works have the possibility to speak to a broader audience and help it to connect with them.

Lisi from *CINEMATICA Festival*: I believe that we should be involved in collaboration projects around the Mediterranean area not only for circulating works among festivals but as well as for producing collective films internationally. A lot of questions can be raised through the common language of the body, so I think that in the future it will be possible to use videodance (the body on the screen) for sharing and conveying ideas around social themes.

Longo from *COLLETTIVO AUGENBLICK (Stories We Dance International Videodance Contest)*: There is a central question for us as a collective regarding creating and curating art in the Mediterranean area: "What makes you move? (authors' trans.)" [32] where *you* (authors' emphasis) refers to the spectator, the dance-artist, the choreographer and the cinematographer as well as the curator. This question aims to stimulate motion at a physical as well as at a socio-political level and to expand the choreographic discourse.

Alexandre from *DAN.CIN.LAB.*: Dancefilm is a tool to understand how we can make society together. Our first concern is to produce and disseminate (dance)films addressing social issues. To connect reality with technology. DAN.CIN.LAB. has been producing short dance films and documentaries since 2015 involving in various inclusive ways local populations (as for instance youth, adults, people with disabilities, migrants) in front or behind the camera.

We all share a body that is political and this is a strong vehicle to support and translate emotions, sensations and to convey thoughts and questions. Moving body mixed with cinema, image speaking broadly, becomes even a stronger tool to talk to people and make people talk together. In DAN.CIN.LAB., we have screened programs on dance & equality, migration, mutation in the city space, civil rights, differences and prejudice (LGBT+). To summarise, we work towards expanding the art form of dancefilm to go beyond the dance audience.

Still from *Moving Bodies*, 2019.

Hayes and Boulègue from *Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne*: Workshops targeted at not only dancers and filmmakers but also at school children, adults with intellectual disabilities (autism and Down syndrome) and minorities of populations helped to build a local audience in the small city of Le Creusot with an interest in screendance. Inviting the residents to join social practices such as cooking and eating together while also proposing screenings helped to establish further the festival and create an impact on the local community.

Badeka from *AVDP (Athens Video Dance Project-International Dance Film Festival)*: Screendance is a powerful tool of expression because it can narrate moving stories, bringing the body in the centre of attention and proposing dancefilm as a strong means of communicating current issues. With this in mind, we have organized thematic screenings under the titles: US-and-THE OTHERS (2017), MOVING FORWARD (2018), WOMEN IN ACTION (2019).

In Greece, the sense of owning a work is stronger because actually the work belongs to many who are the ones that then visit the festival. The audience who attends AVDP is made up of the local artists, their collaborators, their sponsors, their fans, their friends, their family. Therefore, the audience is constituted by the people who are involved in the collaborative process in its broadest sense. This process from the production until its dissemination engages a part of society.

János from *CHOREOSCOPE-The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona*: The films that we program are speaking socially and they go beyond the aesthetically 'nice' screendance that features a display of strong dance technique. Subjects that are discussed in our festival include Gender/LGBT+/Inclusion/War/Climate Change/Death/Women & Feminism.

Question Four
4. What can you observe about the evolution of the art form in your country?

De Rienzo from *LA DANZA IN 1 MINUTO CONTEST*: As I mentioned in my previous answer, I think that the works that are currently being produced tend to become more socially engaged, to explore social issues and to go beyond the experimentation of the form.

Lisi from *CINEMATICA Festival:* The technical audio-visual skills, such as editing, shooting and photography, have been improved. However, I see a lack of content in the works of today in comparison to the past when the technical skills were less but the creativity more intense.

Longo from *COLLETTIVO AUGENBLICK (Stories We Dance International Videodance Contest)*: Videodance in Italy receives increasing attention, especially by young people thanks to the accessibility of technologies. It is necessary to encourage a deeper understanding of what a dance film can be and to strengthen research around this art form.

Alexandre from *DAN.CIN.LAB.*: Artists in the 80s and 90s were audacious and free to experiment with the form. Works used to be funny or aesthetic but with content. When the French TV ceased to support the production of videodance, there was a gap. The arrival of new technologies and the democratisation of technology increased the quantity of screendance productions but not necessarily the content which often is quite poor. Dance films achieving both a fulfilled form and targeting social issues are rare. However, few filmmakers and choreographers gradually begin to build fruitful collaborations.

Hayes and Boulègue from *Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne*: Screendance in France is currently becoming more international and open to

collaborations from abroad, as French citizens become increasingly open. Also, the colonial past of France is very much present in screendance in the sense that many French filmmakers go to work with African choreographers in former French colonies (Congo, Senegal, Morocco). On one hand, this choice gives visibility to African artists and on the other hand, it follows a colonial model. Furthermore, now that the economy of TV (in terms of financial and technological constraints) is no longer available, artists do not create work in a TV studio and site-specificity has largely become the norm.

Badeka from *AVDP (Athens Video Dance Project-International Dance Film Festival)*: During the 10 years of our festival and regarding the Greek works, storytelling and the medium -- screendance as artform as well as camera work and editing software -- have been mastered and the purely aesthetic -- and almost superficial -- works of the recent past have given way to mature artworks. There are three keywords that describe the Greek screendance landscape: "trust between people, vision and collectivity" which pushes the artists to create thoughtful stories for the screen.

János from *CHOREOSCOPE-The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona*: Films, such as *Timecode* by Juanjo Giménez [33] or Goya-nominee *Bailaora* by Rubin Stein have definitely raised interest in dancefilm (rather than screendance). These works highlighted the potential of the form of dancefilm as part of the film industry motivating new productions and collaborations among choreographers and filmmakers. It is like cinema is discovering dance film, a film strand with not so much competition yet that helps young filmmakers to gain visibility easily.

Since Choreoscope started in 2013 we can see a clear increase in screendance productions in Spain. From only a handful a few years ago, in 2019 we received more than 40 projects made in Spain, most of them in Catalonia and the Barcelona area, proving that Choreoscope's efforts to encourage and promote the production of dancefilms is working.

Question Five
5. What is the potential of the form to expand the limits of choreography as well as the limits of the screen in relation to new technologies?

Most of the participants suggest that Virtual and Augmented reality and in general technology-based interactive and immersive performances, when addressed creatively, may represent a positive engagement for the audience that nowadays seeks new experiences. As Alexander concludes "the evolution of new tech as well as maturity coming after experimentation will help to address relevant topics in innovative ways, pushing further their understanding through our body's sensations, emotions and movements".

Still from *Weightless* (work-in-progress) 2019.

Conclusion

In every country examined in this research different rules apply in relation to screendance production, a result perhaps of different economic landscapes. Education appears to be a common denominator for disseminating the form beyond the context of festivals. Workshops, non-academic lectures, conferences with artists and scholars, thematic programs and the use of social media are common across countries that aim to grow spectatorship locally and at the same time to reach out to a transnational and international audience. Another observation is that screendance becomes more accessible when it leaves its own zone and enters into unexpected contexts or invades the public or digital space, for instance in open-air screenings, community settings, public shootings or private online channels. Additional comments could be

summarized through the following two points: the stronger the content of the work and perhaps more story-driven, the greater is the potential for social engagement in the discourse developing in the European Mediterranean. Although the use of technology varies from festival to festival – from the low-tech exploration to VR – the mission of technology for all the interviewees is to bring people together.

Most of the participants in this research used the following three words repeatedly, however giving them a different meaning and often referring to a different context:

1. *Curation* as a responsibility to bring the work of the artist in contact with a wide audience and generate income for them -- as aimed by Choreoscope-The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona -- and *curation* as an opportunity for artistic exchange -- as aimed by AVDP *(Athens Video Dance Project-International Dance Film Festival)*.

   This kind of responsibility is understood by János as a process of becoming 'commercial' in the same way, as he states, that film directors Alfred Hitchock or David Lynch are commercial and as a result their films have reached a wide audience. He continues by saying that "directing a festival is like having a child" which emphasizes both care and responsibility in his concept of curation. For Badeka, a festival is an opportunity for a social gathering, "a place for meeting, exchange, dialogue and fermentation of ideas" between Greeks and artists from abroad. For both of them, curation is an action of giving back to the artist: in terms of money, visibility or both.

2. *Collaboration*: Badeka speaks about dancefilm as a collaborative process of collective ownership since a community of friends and family members in Greece is often involved in and supports the production phase of the work. Hayes and Boulègue also speak about collective-authorship between artists in the making of screendance. Through either a collaborative or collective process, screendance is a social practice.

3. *Audacious:* This refers to the making of the work without knowing how to do it – as for instance the first videodance experiments in France during the 80s – and to producing work without having financial means -- such as artists working in Greece during the recent financial crisis.

Regarding the Mediterranean Screendance Network (MSN) which has been formed by the majority of the participants in this research, it holds a geographically and linguistically inclusive name as screendance is "an intentionally broad term that may address any and all work that includes dance *and* film or video as well as other screen-based software/hardware configurations." [34] Although the network is working towards embracing organisations from the same geographical area with an expanded curatorial

and aesthetic agenda, at the moment the majority of MSN' s members are organisations that focus on cinema and dancefilm.

The debate around the use of the terms 'videodance' and 'dancefilm' is ongoing in the European part of the Mediterranean. As János argues "the lack of a clear definition is still a huge problem in the professional sector" because the terms are not being used with consistency. The supporters of dancefilm look for a linear narrative format in the way that it appears in cinema, which principally emerges from a story -- at least in the way that it is understood among the majority of the interviewees. Alexandre adds to this point by questioning "how do you unite these two ways of writing (choreo-graphy and cinemato-graphy/dance and cinema) to sustain a content?". This question can be answered by approaching screendance as a dancefilm and by looking in the audio-visual form for a specific narrative of the moving body and thus for a specific story that this body can tell beyond the language barriers. Screendance is considered as a medium for non-verbal story-making through a moving body on the screen. Thus, the concepts of *recorporealisation* [35] and *videodance body* [36] that have been two of the strongest propositions of the videodance origin of screendance are almost out of context here. Furthermore, the way that the motion and the movement beyond the body are read are less relevant as well.

From another point of view, the discussion about the definition of screendance, Boulègue states, removes attention from the work and its *right* to be *undecidable* (orig. emphasis), hold an in-between status and still have a strong value. Hayes is inspired by Susan Sontag's quote 'this but also that,' [37] she adapts it for screendance proposing that "screendance can be this and also that." She supports the potential contribution of screendance to cinema practices and film medium in terms of "how do we read and experience movement, filming techniques, economies, interpretation, analysis […]. Screendance can impact other fields just as other fields can impact screendance." As Longo suggests through different words, the border becomes a connection and a link [38]; the border between disciplines is a place for 'contamination' as well as for socio-political intersections.

As curators, artists and researchers we cannot but agree further: the point of meaningful intersection, connection and even 'contamination' of the different origins of screendance is deeply crucial for exploring its full potential. The socio-political area of the European Mediterranean seems to be able to provide rich stimuli towards rendering screendance less a medium of aesthetic exploration but rather a tool that could inspire social change and unite people. Furthermore, as technology tends to replace but also complement human skills and physical contact at all levels of life, the Mediterranean area before the COVID-19 adjustments of social distancing, has proven to be and we hope to remain a strong pole for holding and promoting human values such as collective vision, mutual support, trust and contact between people. Given this particularity, screendance as a tool for communication has a lot of room for growth if practiced towards this direction.

Author, Collaborator and Contributor Biographies

Ariadne Mikou (PhD) is a Greek-born artist-researcher currently residing in Italy. With a background as an architect, dance performer and choreographer, her research deals with oral history, alternative modes of archiving, as well as site interventions, processes of transformation and community-making. She is co-founder of futuremellon/NOT YET ART, a collective that enables her to expand her choreographic practice as well as to experiment with the curation of screendance. Her writings have been published in peer-reviewed international journals and book anthologies and she is presently collaborating as an Editor with the global theatre portal *The Theatre Times*. She is currently a Fellow Artist for Creative Europe's *Migrating Artists Project_Challenging Dance and Cinema across Europe* and a Research Assistant at *Memory in Motion. Re-membering Dance History* at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.
For more info: www.amikou.com

Elisa Frasson is a PhD Candidate in Dance Studies at Roehampton University (London). She has been working in different educational and organisational contexts, and for independent and institutional projects, between Italy and the UK. She has extensive experience within organisational contexts of dance and screendance events and with mentoring dance and performance students in creating their own work. Her interests involve dance history, the impact of somatics into choreography, screendance, and electronic music. She has founded and co-curates *[SET. me free] Dance & Movement on Screen*, a platform for the promotion of screendance based in Italy. She is currently based in Berlin.

Anna Alexandre is a French artistic director, producer and programmer. She has been working internationally for the last twenty-five years to create new bridges between Dance & Cinema developing an inclusive creative practice that brings together and at the core of each of her projects artists, amateurs and people with special needs. In 2019, she created with her non-profit organization Stéla a new artistic platform called DAN.CIN.LAB. She signs then her first 52' creative documentary, *Moving Bodies,* in collaboration with filmmaker Anthony Faye shown both at Berlinale EFM and Art FIFA Montreal, while she launches, with four European partners and the support of Creative Europe, a three-year project titled *mAPs* (*Migrating Artists Project_Challenging Dance and Cinema across Europe)* aiming for a collection of four short dance films and one documentary about POWER. In 2020/2021, she will have co-produced no less than 15 dance films -- shorts and documentaries -- and the International Societal Cinema Dance Festival that she runs will celebrate its 10th edition.

Chrysanthi Badeka after her B.A in Dance (Athens), she pursued her M.F.A at Tisch School of the Arts in NYU (New York), focusing on choreography for the camera. Since

then she has worked as a freelance choreographer, cinematographer, editor and videodance trainer and curator. For 10 consecutive years, she dedicated herself to the promotion of the art of dance film making, co-directing AVDP - International Dance Film Festival (2010-2020) and co-funding The Mediterranean Screendance Network, while now she is the Artistic Director of MØZ Cultural Organisation and Project Manager of mAPs (Migrating Artists Project_Challenging Dance and Cinema across Europe) in Greece (Creative Europe Program). As maker, propelling dance & composition, her practice merges movement with technology, nature and science working through different mediums, on or off stage to synthetic environments. As an artist she has been supported by the Greek Ministry of Culture, NEON, Onassis Stegi, Compagnia di San Paolo and SIAE (in collaboration with COORPI), State Scholarship Foundation of Greece and NYU. For more info: www.chrysanthibadeka.com

Franck Boulègue is a screendance filmmaker, scholar and educator. He holds a Masters Degree in Screendance Education from La Sorbonne in Paris. He is a regular contributor to film magazines such as LES CAHIERS DU CINÉMA, POSITIF and is the co-editor of the book ART IN MOTION: CURRENT RESEARCH IN SCREENDANCE (2015). As a screendance Lecturer and workshop facilitator, he has taught internationally for The European Video Dance Heritage Project (Maison de la Danse, France & Universidad Rey Juan Carlos/Museo Reina Sofia, Spain), Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Hanoi Cinematheque (Vietnam), Université de Bourgogne, and other institutions. The screendance project GAFFE co-created with Marisa C. Hayes won the Susan Braun Award at the New York Dance Films Association. In 2009, he co-founded the Festival International de Vidéo Danse de Bourgogne in France and its conference for the promotion of screendance research. He is currently an associated scholar at the University of Liège in Belgium.

Marisa C. Hayes is an interdisciplinary artist, scholar and curator working at the crossroads of moving images and choreography. In addition to co-directing the Festival International de Vidéo Danse de Bourgogne, she creates screendance films, which have been honoured as "Best Video Dance" by Pentacle Movement Media in New York and the New York Dance on Camera Festival. Her screendance publications include contributions to books and research journals, including THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF SCREENDANCE STUDIES (Oxford University Press, 2016), CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE FIELD OF DANCE STUDIES (Society for Dance History Scholars), and THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCREENDANCE. In 2015, she co-edited the book ART IN MOTION: CURRENT RESEARCH IN SCREENDANCE with Franck Boulègue. Following her Master's Degree in Screendance Pedagogy and Transmission at La Sorbonne in Paris, she regularly teaches screendance workshops in France and abroad for universities, choreographic centers, and film/visual art programs. She is editor-in-chief of the French dance research journal REPÈRES, CAHIER DE DANSE and screendance curator at La Briqueterie - National Choreographic Center of Val-de-Marne. She is also the filmmaker for the European project DANCING MUSEUMS.

Lucia Carolina De Rienzo (Executive Producer COORPI, Torino-IT). After graduating as theatre actress she has worked as dramaturg and assistant director in several stage performances (2007 – 2010). With an MA in Literature at the University of Turin, in 2010 she achieved a Master Degree in Cultural Project Management at Fitzcarraldo Foundation. She has been Project manager of the European project «PerCorpi Visionari» and Performing Arts Consultant at Turin's Metropolitan Urban Center (2014-15). Since 2010 she has worked as project manager and executive producer at COORPI, where she is also Vice President. Artistic director of the screendance contest "La Danza in 1 minuto" and of "Campo Largo", the first Italian artistic residency focused on screendance. She is Executive Producer of transmedia dance projects: "re – FLOW" and "Zona Martiska". In the last 5 years she produced with COORPI 25 original short dance films, which have been selected in international festivals in over 40 different countries and won 13 different awards.

Loránd János is the Artistic Director of Choreoscope – International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona and co-artistic Director of Moovy Tanzfilmfestival Köln. His films have been selected by festivals such as Dance on Camera, Jumping Frames, Videodance Buenos Aires, Dança em Foco, MashRome, Boomtown Film & Music Festival, Tanzbiennale Heidelberg. In 2015, a retrospective of his work was screened at the III Video and Experimental Art exhibition Vartex Medellín, Colombia. In 2014 he was a member of the jury of the Production Grant Review Panel for the Dance Films Association New York in the selection of post-production grants for screendance projects. He participated in the International Meeting of Performative Research of the University of the Basque Country, the VI International Dance Congress of the University of Malaga, the Future Screens of Dance Conference of the Loikka International Dance Film Festival in Helsinki and the History and Theory of the Dance Seminar of the Complutense University of Madrid.

Simona Lisi. Dancer, actress, choreographer, independent dance aesthetics researcher. BA in Philosophy , PG Degree in Contemporary Dance at London LCDS, BMC® Somatic Movement Educator. Dance/theatre artist as well as performance and videodance maker, she is the artistic director of Cinematica festival that hosts the Corporeality and New Media National Conference in partnership with the Italian Philosophical Society and the Polytechnic University of Marche. Cinematica Festival has run the International Cinematica Videodance Competition since 2015 and co-produced the dance film *Scalamare* by Jiří Kylián. Lisi's philosophical research deals with dance as a language and body as generator and meaning translator and her written contributions are present in *Looking for dance* by Various Authors (Costa & Nolan 2000), *Light, body space* (Artdigiland 2013), *Creators of Meaning* (Aracne), *Agalma* nr 35 (Mimesis Edizioni). For more info: www.simonalisi.it & www.cinematicafestival.com

Graduated in Film Directing (Civica Scuola di Cinema Luchino Visconti, Milan) with a background in Literature (Università degli Studi, Pavia), **Marco Longo** is a filmmaker, independent producer and teacher. Co-founder — with Alessandra Elettra Badoino, theatrical set designer, performer and Danzeducatore®; Marina Giardina, dancer and

performer and Fabio Poggi, PhD in Urbanism and performer — of Augenblick Associazione Culturale, a video dance collective based in Genoa. Augenblick curates *Stories We Dance*, the video dance section of *FuoriFormato Festival*, in Genoa.

References

Aporia, Direction and choreography Salvatore Insana and Elisa Turco Liveri, co-funded by Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne. 2019. Screendance.

Art for Social Change Video. Organized by Agora for Arts and Culture, The Arab Origami Center, El Madina for Performing and Digital arts and the Spanish Embassy of Egypt. Prod. Figleaf. 2011. Video documentary.

Augenblick Collettivo. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://augenblick.it/about

Athens Video Dance Project - International Dance Film Festival. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://www.avdp.gr

Bailaora. Dir. Rubin Stein. Prod. Nirvein. 2018/2019. Film.

Cambridge Dictionary online. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/contaminate

Campo Largo, 10 original short films. Prod. COORPI; Casa*Marziano-Experimental Film Virginia. Accessed 25 May 2020. https://vimeo.com/showcase/4278681

Choreoscope - The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://www.choreoscope.com

Cinematica Festival - Immagine in Movimento: Performance, Arti Visive, Cinema, Nuove Tecnologie. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://www.cinematicafestival.com/

COORPI/La Danza in 1 minuto. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://coorpi.org/portfolio/progetto-la-danza-in-1-minuto/

DAN. CIN. LAB.. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://www.dancinlab.co

Deleuze, Gilles (1983). *The Movement-Image*. Trans. Barbara Habberjam. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Dodds, Sherril. *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230509580

Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://videodansebourgogne.com/

Filmin. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020. https://www.filmin.es/

Filmin Choreoscope short film catalogue. Accessed only between 31 Oct. and 31 Dec. https://www.filmin.es/canal/choreoscope

Fondo Unico Per Lo Spettacolo (FUS). Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://www.spettacolodalvivo.beniculturali.it/index.php/contributi-online

Fuori Formato - Festival Internazionale di Danza e Video Danza. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://www.fuoriformatofestival.it/

Kylián, Jiří. *Scalamare*, 2014. Dir. and chor. Jiří Kylián. Prod. Kylian Foundation, Cinematica Festival, Comune di Ancona, Marche Teatro. Film.

La Collection: Comédie musicale: *Plot,* Dir. Sébastien Auger; *Quatorze ans,* Dir. Barbara Carlotti; *Monsieur,* Dir.Thomas Ducastel; *Belle étoile,* Dir. Valérie Leroy; *Rap-night,* Dir. Salvatore Lista; *BBQ,* Dir. Jeanne Mayer; *Fin de saison,* Dir. Matthieu Vignau. Prod. CNC, Canal+. 2020.

mAPs (migrating Artists Projects). Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. http://migratingartists.com/

Mediterranean Screendance Network, The. Accessed 10 Apr. 2020. http://screendancenetwork.com/

Moving Bodies, 2019 supported by CNC – French National Film Fund and French Ministry of Culture. Dir. Anna Alexandre and Anthony Faye. Prod. DAN.CIN.LAB, Nomade Productions Films, TL7 - Télévision Loire 7, YN Productions. Documentary.

Open Borders. Dir. Marisa C. Hayes, Franck Boulègue. Prod. Festival International De Vidéo Danse De Bourgogne. 2015. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020. https://www.numeridanse.tv/en/dance-videotheque/open-borders

Per Chi Crea. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://www.perchicrea.it/

Rosenberg, Douglas. *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199772612.001.0001

Sampson, Cherie. "Body Cinema's Sacre/ilège(s) – Re-interpretations of a modernist classic in contemporary screendance." *Screendance Studies. Art in Motion*. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020. https://screendancestudies.wordpress.com/2014/04/25/body-cinemas-sacreileges-re-interpretations-of-a-modernist-classic-in-contemporary-screendance-2/

Scalamare, 2014. Dir. and chor. Jiří Kylián. Prod. Kylian Foundation, Cinematica Festival, Comune di Ancona, Marche Teatro. Film.

[SET.mefree] Dance & Movement on Screen. Accessed 12 Apr. 2020. https://setmefreecall.wixsite.com/events

SIAE. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020. https://www.siae.it/en/about-us/siae/siae-s-mission

Susan Sontag, Interviewed by Edward Hirsch. Accessed 26 May 2020. Available at: http://franciscovazbrasil.blogspot.com/2012/05/susan-sontag-interviewed-by-edward.html

TATE online. Accessed 9 Apr. 2020. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/cadavre-exquis-exquisite-corpse

Timecode. Dir. Juanjo Giménez and chor. Lali Ayguadé. Prod. Nadir Films SL. 2016. Film.

Weightless (work-in-progress) 2019. Digital Artist Andrej Boleslavský and chor. Chrysanthi Badeka. Virtual Reality project.

Notes

[1] In April 2018, we curated *Screendance Landscapes*, a two-day symposium designed to explore different strands of screendance both as theory and practice. Building on this event, in January 2020 we designed and delivered the screendance workshop SOMA.CI(ty)NEMA that aimed to put into an interdisciplinary dialogue the moving body and the moving image with the urban context of the city of Venice. Both the symposium and the workshop were hosted by the Theatre and Performing Arts Master Program at IUAV University of Venice. An archive of our curatorial work can be found on the website of *[SET.mefree] Dance & Movement on Screen.*

[2] At the *Screendance Landscapes* event we launched a call on the theme of POSITIONING. For this call, we were interested in gathering screendance works that take advantage of the "transportability of the camera and the body in sites of conflict or areas that need attention" (from the Selected Submissions document found on the site of *[SET.mefree] Dance & Movement on Screen*).

[3] The interviews were in total seven. They lasted from 60 to 120 minutes and they took place one to one.

[4] Badeka was the co-Artistic Director of AVDP until January 2020 when she left the project in order to continue her career as an independent artist, videodance educator and curator and to focus on her role as Project Manager in Greece for mAPs-migrating Artists Project.

[5] The members of the Mediterranean Screendance Network at the time of writing are DAN.CIN.LAB. , Athens Video Dance Project - International Dance Film Festival, Choreoscope - The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona, Festival de Videodanza de Palma, COORDINAMENTO DANZA PIEMONTE (COORPI) and collettivo Augenblick.

[6] mAPs (migrating Artists Projects) is one of the first European funding from Creative Europe dedicated to the production of four short dance films that focus on social issues and one documentary of the creative process of the overall project. This funding opportunity is available only for artists with citizenship from Finland, France, Greece & Italy. The mAPs project was created by STÉLA – DAN.CIN.LAB/France; COORPI/Italy; MALAKTA FILMS/Finland; TANZRAUSCHEN e.V./Germany; Chrysanthi BADEKA/Greece. According to Anne Alexandre from DAN.CIN.LAB., mAPs is committed to engaging communities through the artists' creative processes.

[7] Shortly before the publication of this article, Ariadne Mikou, the main author of this article, has been selected as a choreographer to participate together with filmmaker and audiovisual anthropologist Konstantina Bousmpoura to Creative Europe funded project mAPs.

[8] [SET.mefree] Dance & Movement on Screen / about

[9] Lucia De Rienzo, the vice president of COORPI emphasises the cinematic approach on behalf of COORPI by declaring that "the duration of works we select, program and produce are aimed to be strongly *cinema* driven (orig. emphasis). They are films." The director of Chorescople - *The International Dance Film Festival of Barcelona* also makes explicit: "Choreoscope is NOT (orig. emphasis) a screendance festival, it is a dance film festival. We rarely program videodance or other audiovisual translations of dance on screen."

[10] The MEDIA sub-program of Creative Europe funding is open to all members of the European Union. It is possible to apply as a production company for film and audio-visual support.

[11] Videodance is known as 'videodanza' in Italian and 'videodanse' in French.

[12] The call PER CHI CREA was known as SILLUMINA until 2019.

[13] SIAE is the Italian Society of Authors and Publishers.

[14] For instance, Fondazione Cariplo :: progetto La città Intorno; Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo-Ora! and Fondazione CRT in Torino.

[15] *Campo Largo* (2016) is the first residency opportunity in Italy dedicated to videodance and it has been promoted by COORDINAMENTO DANZA PIEMONTE (COORPI).

[16] *Carte Blanche* (2017) was produced in cooperation with Université Nice Sophia Antipolis and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3 in France and Università degli Studi di Genova in Italy.

[17] As Hayes specifies, in 2019 "12 projects received from 5.000 to 20.000 euros."

[18] The winners of the 1st International Call were the Italian artists Salvatore Insana and Elisa Turco Liveri who produced the short film *Aporia* (2019).

[19] The Anna Lindh Foundation has funded Montenegro Film Festival, International Music + Media Centre (IMZ), the documentary *Art for Social Change*.

[20] The project *Dancing Cities*, directed by Thibaut Ras and co-produced by ALL WE CAN DO IS DANCE, has been supported by the French Institute of Budapest.

[21] During the years of the financial crisis in Greece, the festival received the annual amount of 3.000 euros from the J.F. Kostopoulos Foundation (3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th and 9th edition), a state grant equal to 5.000 euros by the Greek Ministry of Culture (separately for the 9th and 10th edition) and since its 4th edition the Greek Radio & TV (EPT) recognized AVDP as the International Dance Film Festival of Greece and it became one of the main sponsors of communication.

[22] *Prêt a porter*, directed by Panos Boudouroglou and choreographed by Xanthippi Papadopoulou in 2014, won the International Prize-La Danza in 1 minuto in the 2017 edition. *SinkUp* by Christos Xyrafakis and Antonis D. Tzoumas won the Audience Award in 60secondsdance (Finland) in 2017. *Coated* directed by Antigone Davaki and choreographed and performed by Vassia Zorbali and Evi Psaltou was the winner in 60secondsdance (Finland) in 2017.

[23] Vassilis Arvanitakis is a Greek artist who shows a particular sensibility to social issues. *Remains* (2018), his artistic response to the Greek financial crisis, has a symbolic character and it won several awards such as the 1st Prize - 60seconds Denmark 2018 and the 1st Prize - Ork Kota Plattform 2019 in Hungary.

[24] In 2013, during the first edition of our festival, we introduced the work of Maya Deren through a program under the title *Lo sguardo che circonda* and the following year we included *Random Acts - A British Council Touring Programme*. The work of Billy Cowie and especially his 3D videos were very well received by our audience which initially originated from the local dance scene.

[25] Kylián, *Scalamare*

[26] A note on translation from Italian to English: in this context and since our interviewee is Italian, we borrow the definition of the verb 'contaminate' and its derivative noun 'contamination' as it appears in Italian. Therefore, 'contamination', which according to Cambridge Dictionary online in English means "to make something less pure or make it poisonous," is intentionally misappropriated in order to define the fusion of artistic elements. Therefore, by 'contaminating' screendance, the intention is to speak about the entrance of screendance into an interdisciplinary discourse.

27 As for instance, the Museum of Mine in Saint-Etienne.

28 Le Creusot is currently in extreme economic decline. In the past and prior to the 50s, it used to be an important industrial capital of France. Currently, it is home to a large elderly population.

29 Exquisite Corpse is "similar to the old parlour game consequences – in which players write in turn on a sheet of paper, fold to conceal what they have written, and pass it on to the next player – but adapted so that parts of the body are drawn instead" (TATE online). As Hayes and Boulègue explain, an "exquisite corps technique" is enabled by the communication between artists through internet technology and the possibility to transfer digital files. In this technique, every participating artist is working remotely in his/her country of residency. For the final collated outcome, the screen becomes a shared co-authored space and different visions of the same theme can emerge. Examples include: *Sacre/ilège(s)* -- in tribute to the *Rite of Spring* centenary in 2013 -- and *Open Borders* in 2015 – a collective film in support of migrants, a message from European-based artists to their governments regarding immigration and asylum policies.

30 At a national level, AVDP collaborates with Akropoditi Dance Festival in Syros, Dance Days Chania Festival in Crete and Dimitria Festival in Thessaloniki.

31 The Filmin platform is equivalent to Netflix but is available only for Spanish and Spanish-speaking countries.

32 In Italian, it appears as "Cosa ti muove?"

33 Interestingly, Juanjo Giménez is a film director who does not consider his work a dancefilm although dance has a central place in his film *Timecode*. He won the Palme d'Or 2016 for the Best Short Film in the Festival de Cannes.

34 Rosenberg, 3

35 Ibid., 55. Recorporealization is "the literal re-construction of the dancing body via screen techniques; at times a construction of an impossible body."

36 "[t]he televisual mediation of dance creates a 'video dance body' that transcends the limitation of the material body which offers the possibility of alternative modes of dance […] the spatiotemporal boundaries of the body can be made to appear increasingly fluid, dynamics can be manipulated independently of the physical body" (Dodd 2004:170).

37 Full quote: "It isn't that I like it and I don't like it—that's too simple. Or, if you will, it isn't 'both yes and no.' It's 'this but also that.' I'd love to settle in on a strong feeling or reaction. But, having seen whatever I see, my mind keeps on going and I see something else. It's that I quickly see the limitations of whatever I say or whatever judgment I make about anything. There's a wonderful remark of Henry James: 'Nothing is my last word on anything.' There's always more to be said, more to be felt." (Susan Sontag, Interviewed by Edward Hirsch).

38 In Italian, it appears as "il confine diventa un legame."

Witness: a response to Marlene Millar's *Witness*

Anna Macdonald

I have been watching Canadian artist and filmmaker Marlene Millar's new work *Witness*, [1] which formed part of a full retrospective of Millar's work in 2019 curated by Iliyana Nedkova and produced by Horsecross Arts for Threshold artspace, Perth. It is described in the curatorial overview as a "quiet, yet poignant work inspired by Marlene's own experience as a caregiver and witness to the unfolding of her mother's dementia." [2] The film is four minutes long and involves a series of long slow-motion tracking shots that follows a woman doing simple actions such as walking, hanging up washing, and putting on lipstick. At times, she appears to dance, lifting her hands rapturously into the sky. In the middle of the film there is a single shot of an older woman, sitting looking away from the camera, tucking her hair behind her ear.

Iliyana Nedkova, the curator of the exhibition, invited me to respond to Millar's film because she felt it poses similar questions, about loss, identity and screendance, to my recent body of work, *Acts of Holding*. [3] Millar and I are both mature female artists thinking about mortality (I was told once by a curator that he was so tired of women making work about things like death and motherhood – right before I showed him my portfolio...). *Witness* is part of a longer documentary and so the version I have seen acts both as a trailer for this longer film, and a screendance in its own right. Watching something that you know is an edited version of something longer sets up an interesting tension, particularly, perhaps, when it concerns a state of fragmented presence, of dementia. It also makes me aware of the importance of resisting the urge to speak for a film that is only one film from an entire exhibition, and is itself part of something larger. So, these thoughts must be taken as speculations from a restricted view, and it is the act of viewing, or more specifically the different ways Millar and I position the viewer as witness, that interests me here. [4]

Witness has a cinematic feel. The colour and lighting are exquisite, and the figures elegantly framed. The sound is emotive and sparse and feels made for the work. At first, I wonder if *Witness* is too beautiful for me? Perhaps as a throw-back to my origins in performance/video art, whilst appreciating the skill involved, I am not normally drawn to work rooted in filmic aesthetics. Although this is not the case with *Witness*, as I discuss further on, I associate the use of high, pin-prick resolution, often found within screendance, with a sort of mastery of the filmed body. [5] To me, this seamless aesthetic can sometime feel like it subdues the contingent possibilities of the event, such as, changes in light, stumbling, changes of heart, and glitches, adding, perhaps, to what Claudia Kappenberg describes as, the "ongoing idealization of mobility in the art form." [6]

In the first online thesaurus I search for, I find the antonyms of mastery are listed as:

failure
weakness
want
lack
powerlessness
challenges
hardships
defeat
frustration
amateurishness
clumsiness
incompetence
impotence

…words that might perhaps be used to describe the experience of dementia, certainly words my mother used at times to express her frustration with terminal illness. So how does the elegant, controlled beauty of *Witness* relate to the difficulties of its subject?

Over repeated viewings, I see something different going on, not mastery so much as careful choices that invite me into the content of the film. The softly focused, and slowly moving, camera brings us towards, and next to, the women. Here the camera acts as a benign witness that encourages a protective way of looking and the subject is wrapped in the viewer's/artist's/daughter's warm gaze. *Witness* seduces us, and it is nurturing. It invites a soft way of thinking. *Witness* reaches forwards, reaching, allowing, testing, touching, and sensing. It feels non-verbal and I am reminded of the tactile cinema of Laura Marks where she invites us to think "of the skin of the film not as a screen, but as a membrane that brings its audience into contact with the material forms of memory." [7]

Another way Millar manages to employ filmic aesthetics that subvert, rather than assert, a sense of viewing as mastery, is in her merging of subject and environment. *Witness* offers us fingers interlacing with flower stems, feet surrounding by beans, and sun/moonlight through leaves on skin. For me there are echoes here of a feminine cinematic aesthetic, born out of Bracha Ettinger's concept of the matrixial gaze, which allows us to escape the "notion of the discrete and singular subject formed by the establishment of the boundaries that distinguish it from an oceanic or undifferentiated otherness of the world." [8] The people in the film are in the world rather than using it as a backdrop for their journey as the subject/hero of the work. Even the separation between tangible and imagined/remembered worlds become blurred when the list of surfaces upon surfaces that we are offered (hands on walls, shoes on bark, fingers on hair) is broken by sequences where the woman reaches out and touches things that are not there. Touching space. Touching memories.

My screendances often involve task-based scores designed to produce movement with a sense of precarity and immediacy, and I record these events using single, static shots. If Millar

offers a desirous body, moving and reaching through the lens then, in some ways, my work offers the opposite: the amateurish dead eye of the camera sitting un-manned upon a tripod. In responding to the curator's request to consider my practice in relation to Millar's, my work looks hard edged and unflinching, more like a search light pinning its subjects to the wall. The camera does not move or follow. It witnesses from a distance. The shots I use lack the benevolent warmth found in Millar's *Witness* but there is, perhaps, another form of protection in their lack of involvement. For, as I have thought about for some time now, witnessing without desire can also be a form of holding. [9]

Two of my works from *Acts of Holding* concern (perhaps as Millar's work does) the experience of witnessing my mother's terminal illness. *Witness* makes me question the space I often maintain between camera/viewer and subject. Perhaps I am slightly scared by the immersive quality of *Witness* because when the camera moves in, I feel part of me try to stay back. I realise how much easier boundaries and clarity and a bird's eye view of a situation can be for me to manage. Filming myself (and others) creates a space between my grief and myself. In the act of recording I become my own witness, holding myself, as an act of self-care, within a frame. Perhaps Millar's subjects are being pulled in against their will and there is a darker edge to the invite. It is notable that the only image we are kept away from in this version of *Witness* is the shot of the older lady, who we only see from behind in a static shot. This makes me want to see her more. Her earrings, the blue against the grey/white hair, are so familiar. I want to know what she is witnessing.

Author Biography

Anna Macdonald

https://vimeo.com/annamacdonald
Anna Macdonald is a screendance artist who uses film to expose the resonance of simple movements, such as, moving from 'here to there', 'holding' or 'getting slower'. She specialises in working directly with the public, using film and movement to articulate people's experiences in ways that can be understood by others. Alongside her free-lance work Anna is a Senior Lecturer in Performance at the Manchester School of Art and publishes regularly about dance, time and affect. Last year she was awarded an arts fellowship at Keele University, using screendance to re-imagine the pathways connected to the experience of chronic pain.

References

Kappenberg, Claudia. "Does Screendance Need to Look Like Dance?" *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 5.2-3 (2009): 89-105. https://doi.org/10.1386/padm.5.2-3.89/1

Macdonald, Anna. "Holding and Curation." *REPERTÓRIO: Teatro & Dança* 27 (2017): 49-58

_____ . "*Acts of Holding: Dance, Time and Loss.*" PhD by publication. Man Met University. 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332180525_Acts_of_Holding_Dance_Time_and_Loss

https://espace.mmu.ac.uk/622591/10/Acts%20of%20Holding%20abstract%20%2B%20title%20page%205th%20march.pdf

Marks, Laura. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2000. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1198x4c

Melo, Sebastian and Nicolas Salazar Sutil. "Exposed to Time: Cross-Histories of Human Motion Visualization from Chrono- to Dynamophotography." In Rosenberg, D. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 143-165. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199981601.013.7

Pollack, Griselda. "Thinking the Feminine: Aesthetic Practice as Introduction to Bracha Ettinger and the Concepts of Matrix and Metramorphosis." *Theory, Culture & Society* 21.1 (2004): 5-65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404040479

Singh, Julietta (2018) *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*. Durham and London: Duke University Press 2018.

Notes

[1] *"*Witness"(2019) by Marlene Millar

[2] Nedkova, 2019

[3] "Acts of Holding" (2010-2019) by Anna Macdonald https://vimeo.com/showcase/6183450

[4] This writing has been developed from a blog entry, which was originally published under the name 'to witness, is not one directional' on the Threshold Arts Contemporary Arts Blog on 29th July 2019. https://www.horsecross.co.uk/contemporary-art/resources/contemporary-art-blog/anna-macdonald-responds-to-marlene-millars-witness. I am grateful for the on-line comments the blog received that have helped me re-work this response

[5] There is of course a large body of discourse that examines the relationship of 'mastery' and film from both feminist and colonial perspectives. I begin to address this more directly, within an upcoming publication emerging from the 2019 Regards Hybrides: international forum, in an article entitled "Keeping in time". This article draws on Julietta Singh's analysis of mastery, "Unthinking Mastery" (2018), in relation to the act of filming a dancing body, focusing on the removal of the possibility of change, within the act of removing the body from time, in both mastery and film.

[6] Kappenberg, 103. Kappenberg's observation is echoed later by Melo and Sutil, "Exposed to Time", 2016

[7] Marks, 243

[8] Pollock, 6

[9] See Macdonald "Holding and Curation" (2017), and "Acts of Holding" (2019)

Reflections on *Regards Hybrides, an International Forum* (2019, Second Edition) [1]

Douglas Rosenberg

While in Montreal recently, I had the opportunity to see and experience a profoundly moving video installation at the Musee Contemporain, by the artist Francis Alÿs. [2] Alÿs' work is poetic, political and often addresses his own quotidian observations of everyday life through performance, sculpture and installation. He describes his practice as "a sort of discursive argument composed of episodes, metaphors, or parables." In *Children's Games,* the multi-screen installation at Musee Contemporain, Alÿs arrays almost twenty individual films shot and collected since 1999 into a porous tapestry of childhood activities; an inventory or index of children at play shot around the globe. These simple films collectively illuminated the ways in which mostly impoverished children turn everyday objects such as stones, plastic bottles, flying insects, chairs, coins, and stones into games and a sort of interactive universe. What was evident in all the films, was the idea of improvisation and of giving space to one's collaborators in order to create a collective sense of freedom and joy. While wandering through the cinematic landscape created by the work of Alÿs, I began thinking about how we are taught (or instinctively learn) to *take turns*, and to give space to others so that others may experience something joyful or new in their lives. As artists, we compete throughout our careers; for shows, for space in shows, for reviews and teaching positions, for performance opportunities and grants and for gigs of all kinds. It becomes rote, this competition for space, for a platform from which to speak.

However, space like land, is limited and needs to be tended. While it seems there should be enough for everyone, the idea of taking turns or sharing such space has gotten lost both in the metaphoric sense and in reality as well. I've been thinking a lot lately, about what it means to share one's resources, to really share space and things and platforms and opportunities; to be generous in a way that is neither done for one's own edification or attention or for personal gain, but simply as a gesture of recognition. I've been thinking about what it means to be an ally in the arts and beyond and how to do so generously and with an open heart. Advocating for those other than oneself inherently means that an opportunity for visibility may confer to the one we advocate for, rather than to ourselves. This seems to be a foundational and very real fact of generosity.

Participants at *Regards Hybrides* Photo: Omer Yukseker

I have been noticing more and more, that spaces in which I regularly participate, conferences, publishing, symposia, public exhibitions and other spaces where knowledge or creative capital is shared, have a new and different dynamic. Simply put, many of these spaces have become sensitive to the changes in social and cultural norms (many have not) that lean toward inclusivity, polyvocality and diversity. They have become aspirational spaces in which one can feel the pendulum swing of a process of repair and righteousness, where discussions of privilege and otherness are brought from the margins to the center. I recently had the opportunity to attend *Regards Hybrides, an International Forum* focused on screendance, and curated by Priscilla Guy and Emilie Morin at Montreal's TangenteDanse. *Regards Hybrides* felt charged with a particularly contemporary and thoughtful energy. Contemporary dance artist Kim-Sanh Châu describes the organizing principles of Guy as "definitely engaged in a feminist curation, which by extension involves BIPOC and Queer artists", which, she notes, "is not usual in the screendance world."[3] However, such a gesture is perhaps signaling a significant change in the landscape of the field. Since attending *Regards Hybrides,* I have been thinking about a generational shift in the field and the possibility for a kind of "allyhood" in support of an inclusive screendance community.

Over the few days of screenings and panels, I was hyper-conscious of my own body in that space, how I took up space, how I processed the very curatorial imperative of the event and what that might mean on a deeper level generally. As colleagues presented papers, screened films and performed in real and virtual space, and as a non-French speaker, I listened to all the proceedings in simultaneous translation from English to French. The lag in the translation and the difficulty that the translators often had with the very specific use of language to describe complicated theory seemed like an apt metaphor for my own feelings of being outside of the discourse I was there to participate in. I felt self-consciously like an interloper in the room and in many of the discussions. Rightly so, as the curatorial imprimatur was decidedly feminist, of color and queer. Though an empathetic ally, I am none of the above. I wondered, can I speak? May I speak here? If I do, whose space do I impose on? And of what value is my voice in this discussion? For the most part, I tried to listen and to feel what that was like to be not in the center, but at the margins, a visitor in a space that was empowering others by intention and to be conscious of the amount of space I take up, generally.

Clearly, we are well into a moment in which many of us need to lean out so others can lean in. This means not only being an ally, but advocating strongly for spaces that are inclusive and empowering, consciously recognizing issues of gender and sexuality, marginalized identities and LGBTQ+ challenges. Here, I am a person in progress and realize that it is my time to listen more, to share the space and to generously be available if called on. I am conscious of the abundance of good fortune that has made it possible for me, through my work and the facts of my gender and personhood, to have a voice, and I am acutely aware that such privilege necessitates, in fact demands, working on behalf of others even if, and especially if, that work involves ceding space.

At the start of each session of the forum I attended in Montreal, a number of speakers read the following statement:

> *"I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations."*

This particular statement was pertinent to the venue that we were in of course, but one can imagine such a statement acknowledging the histories and personhood of other groups, who have been silenced, omitted or otherwise made absent from our own communities. As artists and problem-solvers, I imagine we can make such an activist gesture through the arts, and I wish to be a part of that gesture.

As I listened to the speakers and presenters at *Regards Hybrides*, I was aware of how the work of the scholars and artists who were presenting flowed from a distinctly personal, embodied set of life experiences. [4] I took notes to memorialize my responses in the moment during the panels and presentations and in the months after the event,

I reached out to some of the participants through email to help me flesh out my understanding of their ideas and to create some space here to share their insights. The email responses to my questions extended the event across distance and time in an uncanny way and the generous responses I received took me back to the same embodied experience I had while in the room in November. Further Skype conversations with Alanna Thain and Marisa Zanotti amplified the asynchronous nature of how we are able to continue to remain in conversation in and out of "real time", especially as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold and we were all to some extent, frozen in place, immobilized and unable to attend the sort of conferences and events in which such exchanges thrive. Many of my subsequent conversations with presenters seemed eerily prescient of the current moment though the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing global protests had yet to occur. In fact, many of the presenters at the *Regards Hybrides* event spoke to issues relevant to racial justice and equity in their original presentations.

Apropos of the current historical moment, in her talk at *Regards Hybrides*, Hilary Bergen talked about "post-human" dance (dance as mediated by technological transformation) and in a later correspondence pushed back a bit at the idea of "the personal" that I had attached to thusly, stating,

"I don't interpret the impact of the presenters' work as attributable to its personal nature so much as its investment in an embodied and relational politics. In the panel I participated on, where many of us addressed the relationship between race / gender and histories of technology, dance and film, the takeaway for me was the importance of being attuned to the political resonance of these bodies on screen, a resonance that extends beyond just the image of the body, to the discourses circulated about those images, and the histories that get buried along the way. I suppose the risk, for me, of viewing scholarship by a diverse group of presenters as "personal" first (even though it may well be!) is that it positions the white (or white/male) scholar as somehow a-personal or, like a blank canvas, exempt from the "distraction" of the personal." [5]

Dance artist Anna Macdonald talked about loss and identity, brought on to some extent by the process of aging. In retrospect and in response to my subsequent prompts, she expanded on her own experience at the event and noted that, while aware of the difference she felt (generationally older, not a person of color, etc.), though she "felt at home in a way that is unusual for me at screendance events… the exciting bit for me is the permission 'otherness' gives for a range of work to be seen." She wrote, "I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the critical mass of other voices tipping so that they became 'the' voices".[6] I also recall Macdonald's evocation of what she called, a "feminine cinematic esthetic" that seemed to bond her to the larger discussion raised by others in the language of feminism and feminist practices.

'The personal' is also part of a nascent discourse in black feminist practices as noted by Naomi Macalalad Bragin who talked about the intricacies of animating muscle groups and contraction in black dance forms such as popping and locking. She also

spoke about a "Black feminist poethics", in the context of Black feminist speculative practices. Bragin explained that the scholar Denise Ferreira da Silva had used the term "Black Feminist Poethics" as the title of a 2014 journal article, and that her own current book project, *Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: On Kinethic Politics*, builds a theory of "kinethics", drawing on Ferreira da Silva's work.

Naomi Macalalad Bragin, photo: Omer Yukseker

I was fascinated and enlightened by the films of First Nations artist Terrance Houle and moreso by his explanations of the symbolism and personal backstory leading up to his challenging and provocative work, which implicates the viewer in the very colonialization and subjugation that Houle unravels in his riveting and at times, troubling films. If I look away, am I even more complicit? The gaze is imminently political here.

In her talk, artist and scholar Ayanna Dozier, spoke about the complex and existential questions that flowed from the groundbreaking work of Janet Jackson. Of particular impact to me was the Dozier's deconstruction of what she called "the stare": Janet Jackson's uncanny move that quite literally stops the performance at a moment in which the performer wishes to amplify a sense of power or control over her audience. It was palpable when Dozier played back a concert video in real time, counting the minutes of silence and confrontation that turns to discomfort at times and upends the expectations of "liveness" in many ways. As there were multiple references to "poetics" by presenters, I asked Dozier (in a recent email conversation), to further explain some of the ideas she spoke about in Montreal and she wrote,

My use of the term poetics is informed and transformed by Black feminist thought. I deploy Black feminist poetics in my scholarship as work that imbues a feeling of possibility and emancipation in its form. Its 'narrative' arc (understood here in its formal definition rather than its representative one), structure, and presentation move us outside the dominant epistemological position of Black womanhood as a point of negation in the world. [7]

Such conversations and densely theoretical disruptions create fissures that allow for new ideas to take root; in communities of caring, creative people and in the dominant narratives that we inherit in screendance and elsewhere.

In the seminar, film theorist Alanna Thain wondered aloud "why don't we reconceive the histories of cinema as the history of screendance?", a proposal with which I agree completely; indeed, why not? In our subsequent conversation, Thain suggested a number of ideas for me to consider in the context of this essay that both validated some of my observations and challenged me to move beyond my own limitations or boundaries in thinking about difference and community. She talked about the idea of "redistributing vulnerability" around such fraught issues as race and gender (in screendance and elsewhere) which I understood as a kind of communal embodiment of the anxiety around such conversations. She suggested that within "intergenerational conversations" we might find generational allyhood, and new kinds of professional practices leading to a model of "active engagement".[8]

While watching live, hybrid performances by Kim-Sanh Châu, Emilie Morin + Ryan Clayton, and Andrew Turner (Canada), all of which were predicated to some degree on corporeal / technological interfaces, it occurred to me that the issues raised by the artists who presented their "live" work in the context of *Regards Hybrides*, made those presenting graciously vulnerable: to viewers, to the technology and to scrutiny from an audience who wanted to know more about how to embody the questions such performative work raises in the context of screendance. They made themselves vulnerable to the failure of technology, of mediation generally, and their audience accommodated that risk, a gesture that I made a note to remember.

On screen, in real time, in slow motion, in digital media and in the space of the internet, I noted that, as an audience member, I was regarding the experience of others, often through digital mediation. I wondered if the artists and performers considered themselves as a part of history or apart from their historical predecessors? In response to that question, Kim-Sanh Châu said (via email) "I think artists tend to not detach themselves from predecessors, as it's part of inspiration, on a creative and reflective perspective. However, in dance, this can't be as true as other practices (literature, visual arts mostly) as dance is [at] its essence ephemeral." [9] In regard to the question of historical predecessors, Châu also notes affiliations with visual artists, (Olafur Eliasson and James Turrell) filmmakers and philosophers (David Lynch and Timothy Morton). Her observations about the interdisciplinary work she presented at

Regards Hybrides, speak to existential questions about the form itself. She states, "Space and time have always been an underlying obsession for dancers, at least it is for me… the question about space also relates to the question of what is real, or what kind of realness to do we allow to exist."[10]

In their work, *Skype Duet*, Emilie Morin + Ryan Clayton, performed across digital space in a way that seems now, eerily prescient; they appeared (she live, in the space of the audience, he as a screenic apparition) *socially distanced*, the technology of their interface transparently obvious, yet their engagement was suffused with warmth, humor and affection, If there was a technological lack in the form of the work, it did not seem to otherwise hamper a humanist sense of connection between the performers. I asked Morin + Clayton a number of questions via email to get a sense of how they saw their work within the context of both *Regards Hybrides and the generational moment of screendance.*

DR: Do you see art as agent for change?

Morin + Clayton: We see ourselves and our artistic inquiry as part of the dominant culture - a narrative with a capital "N". Aware we live within this dominant culture, our work contributes in its humble way to its critique. We are an agent of change in that we are interested in critiquing and transforming this narrative. There is more and more space in the public discourse for more diverse artists to raise their concerns. These alternative voices are becoming more visible within academia and the art industry. Despite that we are not directly addressing these narratives within our performance, but we are thinking of these other voices as we make our contribution[11]

DR: What is hi tech/lo tech?

Morin + Clayton: This question is one which cannot have a consistent answer but rather is framed by both the audience and performers context of technology…We think low tech means it's part of the audience and performers everyday, not a special magic trick reserved for the rich and technically proficient.[12]

DR: What is the right work and for which audience?

Morin + Clayton: We think a responsible part of the choreography of a performance is thinking through to whom the performance is addressed. Skype Duet was choreographed with a contemporary art / dance audience in mind, this is not to gate-keep the performance. We think any person from any audience would gain meaning from the performance but the attention of our intended audience is attuned to the ways in which our performance makes meaning.[13]

I saw in notes that I had written to myself a personal reminder that speaks to screendance as a space of empowerment, that is writing its own history through deep engagement with significant questions about the field and its politics. The division of

labor in the screendance community is largely female but the distribution of equity is neither adequately acknowledged nor rewarded equally. While there are numerous digressions in any timeline or index of screendance as an artform and as a space of intellectual consideration, the history of screendance is a *feminist* history as Guy's event demonstrates and even more, I would claim, flows through the legacies of feminist theory, its practices and political ideology. Throughout the programming by Guy and her guest curators, including Alanna Thain, Claudia Kappenberg, Ximena Monroy and Paulina Ruiz Carballido, we were reminded of that fact through the presence of work by Amy Greenfield, Maya Deren, Lucy Cash, Marisa Zanotti, Katrina McPherson and others; work that, while generational and straddling numerous eras, encourages us to be empathetic and present as viewers. It is a reminder of what generational allyhood looks like in practice.

Taken as a whole, the presenters, curators, scholars and artists asked us to be not so much a *woke* community (if woke is still a thing) but a community that is actively and constantly in the *process of* awakening to the changes in the cultures we inhabit, to the re-understandings of our histories and to the possibilities of an egalitarian and significant contribution that screendance can make to such a dialog.

In organizing *Regards Hybrides, an International Forum*, Artistic Director and Curator Priscilla Guy has created a context for understanding not only the current climate of a generational shift in screendance, but her hybrid event pushes us toward a new model. Activist curated programs by artists / curators /educators such as Cara Hagen, inclusive programming of work by indigenous artist and filmmaker Terrence Houle, boundary crossing theory by scholars including Naomi Macalalad Bragin and Ayanna Dozier and others, resonate with a new cultural understanding of the pendulum swing away from a dominant narrative in screendance. Such visionary and intellectual work creates a new audience of allies whose collaborative task is to bear witness, as work that previously lived at the margins of screendance now *occupies* the center in ways that make us all students. It awakens us to what an inclusive and aspirational community looks like, such as the one suggested by the artist Francis Alÿs in the aforementioned multi-screen installation at Montreal's Musee Contemporain. His *Children's Games* models hope, community and generational optimism through a seemingly simple world of children's games.

Participants at Regards Hybrides, an International Forum. Photo: Omer Yukseker

In the months that have passed since *Regards Hybrides*, its importance resonates even more deeply. As our screens become overly populated with creative applications of streaming media, much of it making use of familiar arts-based techniques (Alanna Thain calls it "platform determinism"), it is tempting to frame some of it as screendance. I see movement, esthetic choices, rhythmic editing and some sort of implied meaning leading to a distinctly social message. However, even media production in the service of public awareness quite quickly becomes a trope, subject to overused and at times, hackneyed couplings of form and content. What those involved with *Regards Hybrides, an International Forum* reminds us is that we have a very full toolkit with which to critically engage mediated images of all kinds, from creation to distribution to analysis. How we deploy these tools is what grants the screendance community a kind of global and artistic citizenship and likewise the responsibilities that come with it in the shifting landscape of the cultures in which we live.

Author Biography

Douglas Rosenberg is an artist and a theorist and the author of *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* as well as the editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, both published by Oxford University Press,. He is a founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance* and his work for the screen has been exhibited internationally for over 25 years. He has been a long-time advocate of screendance as the founding curator of the International Screendance Festival at the American Dance Festival and as a speaker and organizer of symposia and international workshops. His most recent screendance is *CIRCLING*, a collaboration for the screen with Sally Gross, an original member of The Judson Dance Theater Group. Rosenberg is a professor in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Notes

[1] *Regards Hybrides,* November 21-24, 2019. 'Bodies and Motion Pictures from Scratch: Popular Culture and Low-Tech Screendance' Artistic director and curator Priscilla Guy (Canada) http://regardshybrides.com/en/

[2] http://francisalys.com/category/childrens-games/

[3] Châu, personal correspondence

[4] Scholars and artists included: Conference/event organizer/director, Priscilla Guy (Canada), Anna MacDonald (United Kingdom), Hilary Bergen (Canada), Naomi Macalalad Bragin (United States), Alanna Thain (Canada), Terrance Houle (Nation Kainai / Canada), Jessica Jacobson-Konefall (Canada), Marie-Josée Parent (Canada), Ann Murphy (United States), Claudia Gutierrez (France), Ayanna Dozier (United States), Karla Étienne (Canada), Kim-Sanh Châu (Canada), Emilie Morin + Ryan Clayton (Canada), Andrew Turner (Canada) and many others. For complete programing, see: https://tangentedanse.ca/en/event/rirh-2019/

[5] Bergen, personal correspondence

[6] Macdonald, personal correspondence

[7] Dozier, personal correspondence

[8] Thain, personal correspondence

[9] Châu, personal correspondence

[10] Ibid.

[11] Morin + Clayton, personal correspondence

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

Evolving the field: Interviews with Naomi Macalalad Bragin and Cara Hagan

Douglas Rosenberg

Keywords:
Screendance allyhood, Regards Hybrides, diversity, feminist, inclusive, aspirational spaces

Initial statement

Screendance seems to have had a few historical waves now. We know that dance or movement on screen had a simultaneous genesis with the very beginnings of optical media such as film and video. I would argue that the nexus between the performative body and its representation is linked as far back as representational media of all kinds including drawing and mark-making generally. It is clear that the dominant narrative of bodies in motion, on screens or mediated in any way, has been explicated through a western, Eurocentric lens. It is not a leap to say that even with the best of intentions, screendance suffers from the same systemic racism that we call out in other institutions generally. What is also clear is that the space of screendance is being populated by a new generation of makers, curators, scholars and theorists. This was evident to me in the event organized by Priscilla Guy and Emilie Morin in Montreal in the fall of 2019. *Regards Hybrides: an International Forum*[1] was clearly representative of the new wave in screendance. I noted that it was a very generous space, thoughtfully articulated and critical without judgement. It was also largely feminist and queer and the curation created a platform for people of color, marginalized and/or indigenous groups to offer new narratives about screendance. The ensuing conversations and presentations juxtaposed much of what is missing in the screendance world against what we should be thinking about at this point in history. Given all the changes in the world since then, I have been thinking about how screendance can address questions of race, colonialism and oppression of all kinds with an eye toward evolving the field into a more egalitarian space. I am grateful to be able to share conversations here with Naomi Bragin and Cara Hagan, both of whose work I greatly admire.

Questions to Naomi Macalalad Bragin

DR: *Naomi, I think I first encountered your work at a conference some years ago. Your voice made a huge impression on me. What you write about and how you write has introduced me to ideas and practices I would not otherwise have knowledge of. I was really thrilled to include your work in* The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies[2]. *I recall that the chapter you had written (which was fantastic) won an award and was published in a prestigious journal, so you wrote an entirely new and also deeply important chapter for the handbook. I was happy to meet you again at the forum and to hear your presentation as well. Your writing*

on street dance in Oakland California was prescient given the current state of the culture. You wrote about RIP videos and the "mourning culture" of East Oakland, which you described as including, "a hastily constructed street side altar [with] flowers and teddy bears propped at signposts"[3], and images of recently passed loved ones circulating on t-shirts, etc. This seems all too familiar at present. You wrote about "turfing" as a dance practice that pays tribute to dead friends and family and described how many of the subsequent films circulate via YouTube and social media. Can you talk about how your writing from that moment helps us understand how screendance can illuminate the present, and also how we might expand the field to better incorporate such work into screendance generally?

NMB: *Shot and Captured*[4] for me was really simply a love letter to Oakland and specifically to young people with whom I lived and worked intimately—the people and places who touched me and helped me to grow over twenty years, as an activist, educator and dancer. So the writing emerged and continues to emerge from a feeling of familiarity with a community, more than a desire to be incorporated into an academic field—though I am now institutionally bound up in the academic project and must contend with what all that means. It's a difficult, ambivalent, torn and imperfect story. There's things looking back I'd do differently. Yet the writing reflects what I felt moved to say in a particular moment. Oakland has a prolonged history of protesting policing and incarceration—to name a few the Black Panthers, Critical Resistance, Ella Baker Center, Let's Get Free, Books Not Bars, Underground Railroad, Youth Uprising. The article tries to site the ongoingness of this movement in black dance as an ethical bond between the living and the dead, and to to hopefully reframe attention to the spectacles of violence we, as social media users, consume when we interact with screens. I hoped in some small way to show dance as an everyday resource Black youth use to prepare—within a context of racialized violence which overlooks black life. Particularly in Oakland at that time, Turfing under the movement of gentrification gestured to a complex sense of embeddedness which Turfers practice in ways that reformulate a history of displacement.

DR: *You participated in* Regards Hybrides: an International Forum *and talked about the intricacies of animating muscle groups and contraction in black dance forms such as popping and locking You mentioned "Black feminist poethics", (a term I found fascinating) in the context of Black feminist speculative practices. Your own book project* Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: On Kinethic Politics[5], *builds a theory of "kinethics", drawing on Ferreira da Silva's work, I believe. Can you tell me more about this work?*

NMB: Black Feminist Poethics[6] is Denise Ferreira da Silva's call for a speculative praxis of uprooting racial capital's system of value and its ethical global order. So she's really calling for radical imagining, radical dreaming. What scholars may not know is she's also a dancer, so I'm super interested in how her work speaks to movement—which is how the idea of kinethics came about in my writing. Kinethics combines kinetic, kinship, ethics-aesthetics and kinesthetic, to describe emergent relations which dancers activate in practices of moving

together, and to ask about the ethical consequences of these relations. In this book I study dances that originated in Black Power era California which have contributed to contemporary hip hop/streetdance culture—specifically black social dancing on Soul Train, popping, robot, and waacking/punking. I don't have the expertise for a comprehensive history—streetdance historians are the public scholars of that project and I learn from them—but I do feel this group of dances has some interesting stories to tell.

DR: Can you speculate a bit on how screendance might evolve in the future given the new generation of activist maker/curator/scholars that are working to change the field? How should it evolve?

NMB: The most important thing academics in any field can do to essentially prepare is deepen awareness of their institutional motivations and let go of investments in the institutionalization of knowledge projects. Diversity and inclusion is an institutional rhetoric engaged extensively by activist scholars like June Jordan, Jacqui Alexander, Sara Ahmed, Roderick Ferguson to Takiyah Amin and Nyama McCarthy-Brown's current work on diversifying dance pedagogies. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's collaborative scholarship also offers a model for change. Especially in this moment, when the stakes of freedom are so violently amplified, I would like to see us less committed to titles and roles, and instead building our power to radically dream-into-being practices of caring for life which measure our proximity to collective liberation.

Questions to Cara Hagan

DR: *Cara, I first met you at a workshop for screendance educators I was teaching with Katrina McPherson at The American Dance Festival in 2015. The workshop coincided with the 20th anniversary of the ADF International Screendance Festival. It struck me at the time, that there was some sort of change coming to the field, though it was unclear what that would be. In a short essay at the time, I noted,*

> *Over the last 20 years, Screendance has grown into an area of practice that is global, vibrant, and brimming with the possibilities of an art form that has gained a foothold in the cultures of both dance and media... Screendance, as an art form, is a part of a rich history and at the same time a part of an ever-evolving present, a part of the same technological evolution as social media, digital culture, and the global push toward the democratization of technological access.*

That workshop felt important at the time and your activism on behalf of the screendance community (which was already in motion) has had an incredible impact. I know you have written a manifesto recently that will be included in your forthcoming book, tentatively titled, Action! Celebrating Screendance on the Film Festival Circuit. *Can you share some of that and*

expand on your vision of what we need to do to make screendance a more diverse and politically aware space of representation?

CH: Curators must be dreamers:

> We have to be able to imagine a world where ideas and expression can actually change the trajectory of history; that art can change the world. As we dream of what art can do, we must dream of creating the environment for it to do its best work; then we must create it.

As I have traveled around the world talking about issues of representation in screendance and on the screendance festival circuit, I cite three distinct barriers that I observe as hindrances to a more diverse and therefore multi-dimensional experience in screendance:

1. Financial Barriers
2. Cultural Barriers
3. Awareness Barriers

Though I imagine there isn't room [in this writing] to speak at length about each one, it is clear that since screendance is a labor of love for many – meaning largely self-funded – that a lot of people haven't been able to participate until more recently. The wider availability of good and user-friendly equipment is definitely changing the face of screendance, though in some respects, it's still slow-going. As we think about venues, organizations, and institutions where screendance appears often, we cannot dismiss the histories of those spaces that may dissuade people from marginalized identities from participating. As a community, we have to interrogate things like where we hold our events, who stands to profit off of them, and the ways they may be inaccessible to people in both real and perceived ways. Finally, it takes constant re-evaluation to be aware of trends we see across our discipline. Most especially those that may be problematic. As curators especially, it's our job to know what's happening across the field and to be able to observe and articulate the presence of patterns that give us insight into the zeitgeist of both the landscape of screendance, and our society at large.

DR: *You curated a program of short films at* Regards Hybrides. *Can you talk about your curatorial practice specifically in relation to your choreographic practice, writing and activism? How does all this work support what I think is your larger commitment to social justice?*

CH: As you may have gathered from my answer to the last question, I belive imagination is everything. For me, it isn't about the type of art that gets made. It's about cultivating the tools to do the work you dream of doing. It is about willfully reorganizing reality in a way that both recognizes and honors the inherent human capacity to make. My feeling is, that if we are creative enough to think of and to make real all the things that keep us from being just,

empathetic, and a unified people, we need only think of the alternatives and believe in them enough to make them real. Race was created. The gender binary was created. Poverty was created. Lack of access to things like equal education, healthcare, and other public services was created. The concept of war, was created. Indeed, I believe that our inability to do something different socio-politically, is because of a lack of imagination. Thus, I write, I dance, I make film, I curate, because each of these modalities, each of these ways of being in the world offers me unique tools, while also offering me opportunities to utilize each tool in a way that supports or compliments the other tools. I don't mean to be simplistic. I understand that there are complex problems in the world that require us all to act, to be addressed. But then I think of all the amazing things that have happened throughout history, and how we have demonstrated that we are capable of solving socio-political issues including racism, White supremacy, misogyny, ableism, class stratification, and more.

DR: *When I met you, I had an instantaneous idea that I wanted to offer you my position as Director of the ADF International Festival of Screendance. I realized that I would never be able to create the kind of contemporary energy around screendance that you could, given your previous work in the field and what I took to be your very progressive vision of screendance with the larger culture. Now some five years after you took over the role of director, you have indeed pushed the festival into spaces that I could only imagine. You have expanded the vision of the festival and you have become a significant voice internationally. Can you tell me a bit about your vision please? What is screendance at this moment and where will you push the field through your own work as a curator/activist/maker/scholar?*

CH: In all honesty, my vision is simple: to support and champion screendance. When that's the goal, the rest flows from there. While I haven't yet been able to implement everything I'd like to do yet, I feel grateful to have been able to push to visibilize work that may not otherwise have been visibilized and to keep interrogating our definitions of screendance.
For the time being, screendance is multiplicitous. It's the festivals, it's commercial, it's video essays, it's TikTok, it's Instagram, it's zoom, it's the expendable experiments we make with our devices while we're stuck at home, it's the precious works made once in a lifetime. I don't wish to disrupt any of this. I only wish to encourage the community to keep digging into its own philosophies, accepted histories, and hopes, with the view of moving that information beyond itself. To keep its arms open for whoever else wants to play here.
Screendance is bigger than me. I do what I can do.

DR: *Final question: Being in the world at this moment, I am constantly reminded that we live in a society that is in need of repair. What has been so compelling to me in the overlapping phenomena of Black Lives Matter and the Covid-19 crisis is the preponderance of dance onscreen across virtually all media. More than just dance, it seems to be that the camera is the closest companion for many people. The ensuing performances for the camera from Zoom meetings to YouTube, TikTok and other means of transmission bring us face to face (so to speak) with the politics of our time, with protest and struggle and with a kind of framing*

and presentation quality that is not without artifice. It is not art per se but some kind of synthesis of the personal, the political, and the mediated moment. Ultimately, it seems we are witnessing a complete deconstruction of the visual culture of history and a new set of images about race and culture are rising in real time.
So, my question [to both of you] *is how do we honor this moment in our own field (screendance) and what can our institutions and those of us who are committed to change do to ensure a progressive and egalitarian space for all?*

NMB: This moment is both extraordinary and ordinary. For me that juxtaposition just shows up as a daily practice of feeling myself decentering—it's a practice in which I am just constantly falling and failing. It means becoming attuned to my in-the-moment motivations but not getting caught up in this omnipotent fear that I can't change or that I'm somehow innocent. It means recognizing and adapting my complicity with things academic. If I'm inevitably complicit with the institution, how can I shift its power, even infinitesimally, in the ways I structure the classroom, interact with students, imagine the boundaries of a field of study? And also cultivating the vulnerability to study myself and let go of myself all at once. Maybe that's where scholarship can be useful, because academia has not historically been about studying ourselves – especially our implication within these functioning power structures. Anyway, I'm leaning toward collectivities of gifted artists, activists and teachers who inspire and guide me. Academia is really just this centuries-old conversation (conversation in the sense of turning together). So I'd like to use that idea to attune more deeply to conversations and what they invite/activate creatively – wherever they take formation among whoever's gathering with me in the moment.

CH: We honor it by stepping back (to listen to those voices who have been silenced for too long) and diving in (to actively discover and test out new ways of being in the world) at the same time! We are all participants in this current moment. So while this means a suspension of doing things the way we have been, this moment is literally handing us an opportunity to do something different, with more awareness, and more hope. For me, it's helped to put things into perspective. What's really important? What can we let go of? What's worth keeping? And how do we expend our energy? With whom? Why?
As of late, I've been scheduling zoom meetings with groups of screendance curators, practitioners, and educators to gather information about all of our experiences and identify how we want to organize and encounter screendance post-COVID. And while there are many possibilities that come to the fore, one thing that remains constant is the desire for us all to share space and resources. Screendance is defined by our collective endeavors. It serves us well not to forget that, and to use our powers of creativity and community for good.

Author Biographies

Naomi Macalalad Bragin is an assistant professor at University of Washington Bothell. She's currently developing her manuscript, Black Power of Hip-Hop Dance, and performance

collaboration, Little Brown Language. She's received awards from Congress on Research in Dance, American Society for Theatre Research, and National Endowment for the Humanities. She is a former NYC Hip-Hop Theater Future Aesthetics Artist and Bay Area Isadora Duncan Best Choreography Nominee.

Cara Hagan is an artist whose practice exists at the intersections of movement, digital space, words, contemplative practice, and community. She is the director and curator for ADF's Movies by Movers, an annual, international screendance festival. She serves on faculty in the department of theatre and dance at Appalachian State University.

Douglas Rosenberg is an artist and a theorist and the author of *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* as well as the editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, both published by Oxford University Press,. He is a founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance* and his work for the screen has been exhibited internationally for over 25 years. He has been a long-time advocate of screendance as the founding curator of the International Screendance Festival at the American Dance Festival and as a speaker and organizer of symposia and international workshops. His most recent screendance is *CIRCLING*, a collaboration for the screen with Sally Gross, an original member of The Judson Dance Theater Group. Rosenberg is a professor in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

References

Bragin, Naomi Macalalad. *Black Power of Hip Hop Dance: on Kinesthetic Politics.* Berkeley: University of California. 2015

Bragin, Naomi Macalalad. 'From Oakland Turfs to Harlem's Shake: Hood Dance on YouTube and Viral Antiblackness' in Rosenberg, Douglas ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies.* Oxford University Press. 2016. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199981601.013.33

Ferreira Da Silva, Denise. 'Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World' in *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research* Volume 44, 2014 – Issue 2: States of Black Studies, published online 2015. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2014.11413690

Regards Hybrides, November 21-24, 2019. 'Bodies and Motion Pictures from Scratch: Popular Culture and Low-Tech Screendance' Artistic director and curator Priscilla Guy (Canada) http://regardshybrides.com/en/

Rosenberg, Douglas ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2016. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199981601.001.0001

Notes

[1] *Regards Hybrides*, 2019

[2] Rosenberg, ed., 2016

[3] Ibid., 541

[4] Ibid., 537-556

[5] The manuscript has been selected for the Studies in Dance History series, which is published through the Dance Studies Association and the University of Michigan Press.

[6] Ferreira Da Silva, 81-97

Walking in the light: reflections on screendance in a time of pandemic

Katrina McPherson

This essay was written within the first few weeks of 'lockdown', which came into effect in Scotland on 23 March 2020, in response to the spread of COVID19. The rules were that no one was allowed to leave their home, unless for essential journeys, or for 1 hour of recreation outside per day, or to travel more than 5 miles from home.

Restricting where we can go seems to focus us on where we are. Living now, back in the city where I grew up, on my evening walks I experience the built-environment as I would have as a child and teenager – on foot. I tramp the streets, sometimes alone, often with a daughter, usually with the wee dog, but always detouring approaching strangers, familiar faces, neighbours with a smile, a shrug, an acknowledgement that this is our new reality, one which we are trying to normalise, yet at the same time are determined to believe won't always be so. At walking pace (I'm no jogger, and cycling the route seems to be over too quickly to make the most of our time allowed outside), the details of this grand city's architecture process by in sharp relief, exquisitely lit by the golden beams of a setting Northern summer sun, and crystal clear in the newly fresh, pollutant-lite air. Grand town villas, with carefully tended rambling gardens; Victorian tenements (now much sought-after family homes); 1970s blocks; half-built re-imagined public buildings, their transformation into condos halted in mid-air by social distancing restrictions, all pique my interest, yet not enough to halt the flow of my journey. The lack of drama and the pace of travel allows my mind to come back into my body, to become conscious of my walking, my head balanced on my spine, my feet peeling off the tarmac, my arms swinging gently, my hands curled and relaxed.

It strikes me that what I am experiencing through living in 'lockdown' and the limits imposed on where we can travel, shares aspects in common with the time when many of the buildings that I am walking past were built. Back at home, I google 'images of Edwardian Edinburgh' and, sure enough, I see scenes, captured over a 100 years ago, that resemble the streets outside my window today: people walking along pavements and spilling onto roadways, going about their every-day business, many others seeming less purposeful, a few blurred bicycles, and the occasional car, open-topped and revealing important-looking, well-dressed passengers. In late 19th century Scotland, there were horse-drawn trams instead of our empty busses and it strikes me that I have not seen, or heard, an aeroplane for weeks. These photographed people are not going

to fly off to a far-away country and only the wealthiest amongst them could dream of boarding a train and steaming up to holiday destinations in the Highlands. The majority were going to walk and see and experience the world through their bodies, at pedestrian speed, in the time and the space that they live, as I am doing now.

▪ ▪

In *Rivers of Shadows – Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*, American philosopher and social commentator Rebecca Solnit writes about the era of the invention of the telephone and phonograph and describes how these "were added to photography, telegraphy and the railroad as instruments for 'annihilating time and space'…", attributing them as having launched 'the modern world, the world we live in…".[1]

These inventions, some of which carried our bodies and belongings, others our words and images, acted to shrink the space between things, and in doing so, sped up, fragmented and transposed the time it takes to travel between them. Following hard on their heels, and combining newly invented mechanics and optics with the desire to capture and (re) create movement, the first film camera/ projectors, and their closest relatives, would further and completely alter our experience of the environment we inhabit and, as Solnit describes, our relationship to time spent in it:

> And motion pictures changed the relationship to time further; they made it possible to step in the same river twice, to see not just the images but events that happened in other times and other places, *almost to stop living where you were and start living in other places or other times.* (my emphasis)[2]

Re-visiting this idea in the context of the lock-down life, it assumes a new resonance. My enforced walking has shown me how little of my life is usually spent at this pace, and how deeply enmeshed this time and space /speed altering has become in our experience of the world.

At the end of my excursions, I come back into the flat and flip open the laptop. A portal into an on-line world that is a direct descendant to those early flickering experiments in space and time altering. And yet, whilst perhaps sharing DNA with early film, that small portable screen feels more complex, multi-layered, fraught, bound up in economics and financial, physical and mental well-being. But perhaps not? Later in the first chapter of *Rivers of Shadows,* Solnit describes the rapid evolution of moving image culture into cinema and, in her words, I recognise much that is applicable to what is offered by the on-line world:

Movies became a huge industry, became how people envisioned themselves and the world, defined what they desired and what was desirable. The Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky thought that time itself, 'time lost or spent or not yet had', was what people desired and fed upon in the films that became a collective dream world inhabited by multitudes.[3]

'time lost or spent or not yet had'
Time not experienced in the moment.
Time not experienced at walking pace.
Time on the Internet.
Time in the Internet.
Time spent planning for things that don't happen.
Time spent thinking about things that never happened.
Time spent walking.

▪▪▪

There is no doubt for me that my privileges have continued into lockdown. Like many self-employed artists, my income stream was initially devastated, as paid gigs due to happen fell away and it was not at all clear when or how they could return. But having unlimited access to the Internet has meant that my work can be re-channelled and, a few weeks in, my diary is filled with on-line workshops to teach, films to edit, presentations to deliver and artists to mentor, all from my laptop perched on a table in a corner of the flat. It is not so easy for others. Pandemics seem to highlight the inequalities, the flaws in the flaws of our structures. It's extremely humbling. It also feels a bit weird to be thinking and writing about art-making when so many people are experiencing hardship, or working so bravely and intensely to care for those people whose lives are directly endangered by the pandemic. But that has always been the way with art. It can seem too unimportant. However, I for one have never lost hold of the belief that it is also too important to let slip. If I am not trained to work on the front-line, at least I can try to use my expertise and experience to make a different sort of contribution.

▪▪▪

I've always enjoyed Douglas Rosenberg's description of screendance as "perhaps the most invasive of all arts species" and his suggestion that, whilst seemingly a newish art

form, it has in fact been there all the time, simply ''hiding in plain site'.[4] Through this play on words that links ideas of visibility and place, in an unpublished talk that he gave at Stanford University, Rosenberg conjures an image of screendance as a surreptitious art-form, one that existed "before there was a critical mass of interest in the form, even before it was named as such."[5]

An unexpected legacy of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic may be that screendance becomes more visible, shifting if not into the limelight, then perhaps at least out of the shadows? Certainly, I have seen evidence of this in terms of the numbers of people interested in learning about the form. Early in the global pandemic, there were over 60 applicants in a matter of days for my screendance workshop offered on-line. Artists reaching out to participate from Argentina, Chile, Germany, Russian, the USA, Scotland, England, telling on their application forms how they had found themselves at home, away from their usual creative spaces and collaborators, with time on their hands, due to other work and activities being cancelled, and thinking pragmatically now about how they might make, share, sell and imagine dance, movement, performance, on screen and in contexts other than live events.

An appearance of screendance bang in the middle of the UK mainstream came recently when veteran English choreographer Richard Alston wrote a piece for the Guardian newspaper, in which he describes his re-watching the screen-versions of his choreography whilst in lock-down. Over the years, these films had been directed by people who evidently understood the power of well-made screendance, whether it was being recognised at the time or not. As Alston observes:

> I'm beginning to understand how exhilarating can be the marriage of a moving camera and dancers flying by. It's made me seriously think about whether the speed and detail which I so love in dance does indeed come across more clearly with good camerawork and sensitive use of totally engaging close-ups – and more engagingly perhaps than on stage. [6]

You got it!

A frequent hiding place for screendance are music videos, and one which I have been drawn to time and again, particularly during this time of physical distancing, is *Territory*, by the French electronic duo the Blaze. [7] Cousins and creative collaborators, the Blaze have rightly been lauded not just for their dreamy beats, but also for the richly human intensity of the short films that they make to accompany their music. Through the lens of an embodied, empathetic camera, in *Territory* we witness the return of a young male boxer to his family home in an Algerian city. The gently handheld camera moves with and around the young man as brothers, parents, grandparents, siblings and cousins envelop their cherished-one back into their arms and the family home. Seen at

unflinching close proximity, we feel the intensity of joy and familiar love as he breaks down in tears, his face scrunching, body crumpling as he is engulfed in their relieved joyful embraces.

Talking about *Territory* in an interview published in the New York Times in 2018, film-director Barry Jenkins describes the experience of being blown away on first seeing the work, likening the images of male vulnerability, as framed by the Blaze's moving camera, to dance:

> It's almost like a ballet in a certain way, the camera is so active. It's participating in this dance. [8]

There is no dialogue, no backstory, no explaining in *Territory*, and the camera never breaks its gaze, as we at first struggle to read the man's emotion, before being engulfed in shared relief and comfort. Watching now, in the context of the current physical distancing restrictions, this has become almost unbearable, an intense reminder of how something as essential to life as proximity and touch feels so much more dangerous now.

∎ ∙∙ ∎

In my family circle, like so many others who have the possibility, weekly gatherings and quiz nights on Zoom have become a thing during lockdown. As children, parents, cousins, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles gather opposite each other, watching each other watching each other through the portal of the computer screen, I am reminded of *Facing a Family* by the pioneer Austrian video artist Valie EXPORT.[9]

This seminal work was made for television in 1971. It consists of images of a man, a woman and two children sitting at a dinner table, apparently filmed from the point of view of the television set that they are watching as they eat. The family's gaze is drawn again and again towards the TV (and thus the viewer), as EXPORT highlights the pervasiveness of the screen-object in our lives. By watching the family watch us, their banal interactions - and the vacancies around them - are exposed and, viewing this on the television for which is was conceived, our own behaviour is mirrored. EXPORT further draws our attention to the incessant flow of TV images by disrupting them through freeze frames, further strengthening the comparison to our current experience of the screen in our living space.

I have always been drawn to art that illuminates, and critiques, the medium by which it comes into being. I wonder what will be the work that we make now, and in the future,

that shines a light on the virtual architectures of our current lives, like EXPORT does in her work, and the sunlight does to the old buildings on my street walks?

● ●

Sunlight is an image that used by the writer and critic Olivia Laing in her latest book *Funny Weather – Art in an Emergency,* the pages of which have become a refuge, and place of mentorship and inspiration for me in these past few weeks. In it, Laing writes about coming across an Instagram post announcing the death of Jonas Mekas, which quoted from his 2007 gallery project *To New York with Love*. She retells how one of the stills had a caption that read: "YOU LOOK AT THE SUN. THEN YOU RETURN HOME AND YOU CAN'T WORK. YOU'RE IMPREGNATED WITH ALL THAT LIGHT."[10]

Laing connects this image with an observation of the importance – the function, if you like - of art, by likening Mekas' experience of being filled with sunlight to the essential nature of what art offers us, when she writes:

> 'We are so often told that art can't really change anything. But I think it can. It shapes our ethical landscapes; it opens us to the interior lives of others. It is a training ground for possibility. It makes plain equalities, and it offers other ways of living. Don't you want it, to be impregnate with all that light? And what will happen if you are?"[11]

At a time when it would be too easy to down tools, to feel overwhelmed by the complexities of navigating the changes, to feel that making/sharing/talking about art, and encouraging others to do the same, with and alongside you, is pointless and irrelevant, I am finding it infinitely helpful to meditate and work with the processes that Laing describes so simply. At time when less must become the norm, these few sentences are more than enough of a manifesto for moving forward. And that is also important. Art as described by Laing is a process, not a product. It's how it moves towards, around, between and in us that is essential. Like the sun.

Author biography

Katrina McPherson is a director and award-winning screendance artist whose creative, scholarly and educational practice is at the forefront of the international field. www.katrinamcpherson.com; www.makingvideodance.com

References

Alston, Richard. "Move on up! The most joyful dance clips to raise the spirits." *The Guardian*. May 14, 2020. Accessed online. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/may/14/move-on-up-the-most-joyful-dance-clips-to-raise-the-spirits

Barry Jenkins quoted in "*How the Blaze's Emotional Dance Music Brings Listeners to Tears"* Caramanica, Jon. New York Times, Aug. 16, 2018.
Accessed online. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/16/arts/music/the-blaze-dancehall.html

Facing a Family. Valie EXPORT. Austria: ORF TV. 1971.
http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/facing-a-family/video/1/

Laing, Olivia. *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency.* London: Picador, 2020.

Rosenberg, Douglas. *Hiding in Plain Site*. Notes for a public lecture given at Stanford University, November 2018. (unpublished)

Solnit, Rebecca. *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West. New York:* Penguin Books, 2003.

Territory, (2017). The Blaze. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54fea7wuV6s

To New York With Love. Jonas Mekas. USA. 2007 https://www.artspace.com/jonas_mekas/to-new-york-with-love

Notes

[1] Solnit, 4
[2] Ibid., 4
[3] Ibid., 4
[4] Rosenberg
[5] Ibid.
[6] Alston
[7] The Blaze
[8] Jenkins
[9] EXPORT, 1971
[10] Laing, 8
[11] Ibid., 8

Animating the Real: Illusions, Musicality and the Live Dancing Body
Dr. Jo Read

Abstract

Animation film frequently uses dance and choreography as part of explicit scenes to help assist with and compliment the narrative. Although animators frequently acknowledge relationships between dance and animation, scarcely any scholarly work considers how animated film principles are used and applied within live dance performances. Additionally, although many scholars discuss the relationship between live dance and music and similarly animation and music, rarely has the collision of all three been scrutinized. In this article, I draw upon principles from animation film and choreomusical scholarship to show a complex relationship between the real and the pretend in a solo street dance performance. Based on detailed movement analysis of a short solo dance performance by Isaac "Turbo" Baptiste, I discuss the ways that moving image can influence live dancing bodies and create endless possibilities for choreomusical play.

Keywords: Isaac "Turbo" Baptiste, musicality, choreomusical, animation, street dance, popular dance

> *"Oh" spontaneously taps his six feet-like tentacles, one by one in time with the beat of the music. He attempts to physically suppress this with his hands by covering each moving limb in turn, but the infectious movement continues and spreads uncontrollably up through his body and head as he exclaims "Involuntary physical response!" A series of exaggerated dance movements then follow: a quick sequence of angular robotic arm isolations to embody a matching pattern of snare drum beats show his unstoppable connection with the music. He twists his head to create a 'fixed point' and his body then follows repeatedly, creating a bizarre game of chase between body parts. His long flexible ears ripple in smooth waves, which he attempts to stifle by tying them in a tight knot. Each limb and body part develops a life of its own, as Oh's first encounter with popular music literally moves him.*

In this scene from animated feature film *Home* (2015), a comic and unusual relationship between musicality, the animated and the actual is created, as popular dance movements are parodied by this alien character as he navigates his first human

experiences on Earth. More remarkable still, is the presence and influence of *animation* in this scene (referred to in italics throughout to distinguish from animated film), a popular dance style where live dancers aim to imitate and appear as animated characters with their movements. Ironically, Oh performs animated *animated* dance movements to express an inexorable reaction to popular music, which creates an amusing blend of the real and the pretend. Illustrated in the example above, is the inclination to identify with the anthropomorphic qualities of well known and loved animated film characters. It is less common, however, to reflect on the ways in which this process may also work in reverse. More specifically, it is rare to consider the ways that animated film characteristics and techniques may also be traced through the moving body of the live dancer. In this article, I investigate animated film principles and musicality in a live dance performance involving *animation* and closely related illusory movement styles*.*

From Gene Kelly in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) to the opening sequence in *La La Land* (2016), popular dance has enjoyed a long history in Hollywood films. Many animated films also present choreographed dance scenes in a similar format, such the use of tap dance in *Happy Feet* (2006) and large ensemble popular dance scenes in *Madagascar* (2005). These examples are among many animation films that feature dance scenes explicitly and deliberately. Animation has a robust foundational association with dance and choreography, as even in its basic form it is described as "movements-that-are-drawn" or "drawings-that-move."[1] Animators frequently discuss the importance of dance and choreography in their practice,[2] yet few scholars discuss the impact of animated film techniques on the live dancing body[3]. Studies that explore *animation* as a dance form in any capacity are also scarce [4], and *animation* is a dance style that takes inspiration directly from animated film.

Animated film "references (and simulates) 'reality' and yet surpasses it, presenting scenarios that we [the viewers] recognize as simultaneously other and the same" [5]. It is a broad term to describe a wide range of filmic techniques, approaches and formats, including cel animation (where each frame is drawn by hand), computer generated imagery (CGI) and stop-motion animation. *Animation* in dance involves the imitation of stop-motion animated characters and their movements [6], and has close links to film and cartoon animation, popping and street dance styles. According to Kenneth A. Priebe, stop-motion technique "requires a person to literally place a puppet in their hands and bring it to life, frame by frame" [7], creating a flick-book animation style. In its simplest definition, popping involves the contraction and release of the arms, chest and neck muscles along with extension of the legs in time to the music [8], and generates an illusion where the whole body pulses like a drum-skin once struck. The style of *animation* also involves creating illusions with the body that make a dancer appear "to look unreal" or animated [9], with a particular emphasis on character development. Dancers who specialize in popping often draw from *animation* and other closely related movement styles such as waving, as a part of their dance technique and training. Although often mixed interchangeably, they have different foundational

principles. These dance styles form part of a large cluster of African and Latin diasporic dance practices, which are often referred to collectively as street dance [10]. There are convoluted and extended debates about what differentiates popping, *animation* and other closely related movement styles, which are beyond the scope of this article to discuss [11]. It is generally agreed and widely acknowledged that *animation* took some of its original inspiration from 1950s/60s 'dynamation' or 'claymation' style of animating, developed by Ray Harryhausen [12]. *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) are frequently mentioned examples, where character inspirations included the cyclops, the seven-headed hydra and an army of skeletons [13]. Some dancers deem *animation* to be a very specific technique akin to the claymation style of stop-motion, whereas other dancers argue that it should be used as a more flexible term to describe a whole collection of illusory movement styles [14].

The dance style of *animation* attracted a surge of media attention when commercially successful dancers featured in various international televised competitions, including Cyrus "Glitch" Spencer as a finalist in the American 2012 season of *So You Think You Can Dance* [15]. The form is sometimes referred to in the media as 'dubstep dance,' since many dancers selected dubstep style music for these performances, mixing different styles of dance associated with popping and *animation* and pairing them with complex rhythmical features. Despite a more recent boom in popularity, the history of *animation* long precedes these recent examples in popular culture, and many dancers including Flattop, Mr. Animation, Bopping Andre and Boogaloo Shrimp are credited as pioneers [16].

Both animation studies and popular dance studies confront significant challenges in the academy in relation to their scholarly value. The field of animation studies has faced a long-term struggle for legitimacy within film scholarship [17], which is a challenge all too familiar for popular dance practices within the field of dance studies [18]. For example, close relationships between sound and movement in animation and popular dance practices have frequently been disregarded and deemed unworthy of intellectual study [19]. This is perhaps as a result of attention to experimental contemporary dance and film work, which often diverts from an intimate relationship with music. Curiously, many scholarly references only focus on the rejection of musicality as a principle of post-modern dance, rather than any detailed discussion of the term itself, its application or uses [20]. The connection between movement and sound is a fundamental aesthetic in both animated film and popular dance, and paramount to any detailed analyses of both practices.

In the UK, there are several dancers who are acclaimed for their skills and talent in *animation,* and many of them are part of a collective called Pro-Motion, headed up by dancer and choreographer Brooke Milliner and founded by Rob Pountney of ProDance [21]. This collective has produced several short films with witty and innovative choreography that feature the style of *animation,* along with varied and bold uses of theme, costume, location, filming and editing techniques. Although these examples

have excellent potential for analysis, I have deliberately chosen to focus on a recording of a live dance performance with minimal technology, editing or other production elements for my analysis. This is in order to focus on how the filmic techniques are cultivated through the live dancer's movement alone. As technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, the development of advanced motion capture software has the potential to create fascinating interactions with the live dancing body in various performance contexts. Scholars have investigated blurred lines between the animated and the live dancer in performances that combine the two mediums [22], with a range of discoveries emerging as a result of interdisciplinary blended approaches. In this article, however, I focus specifically on techniques and principles associated with the popular dance form of *animation,* investigating the ways that animated film characteristics and principles are embodied in live dance performance, without technological intervention.

This article presents the illusory potential of the dancing body, through the analysis of specific principles informed by the fields of choreomusicology and animated film studies. I will conduct an analysis of a solo performance by Isaac "Turbo" Baptiste (Turbo), to consider the ways in which the presence of the animated in the actual creates potential to produce illusions of a pretend character, through which sophisticated uses of musicality can be achieved. First, I address a few of the complexities associated with musicality. Second, I discuss animated principles that are specifically relevant in *animated* performances. Third, I identify three important attributes of the performance that contribute to the bending and distortion of reality: i) the uses of character and a cartoonish body; ii) the use of humor and comic devices; and iii) choreomusical play.

The Trouble With Mickey-Mouse

Mickey-Mousing is a concept that is used to describe dance and music that closely "mirrors" one another, with a particular focus on rhythm [23]. The term was developed specifically in film studies, and was given its name due to sound and music being directly synchronized with movement and image in original Mickey-Mouse cartoons. Despite its frequent use in many forms of dance and other art forms involving moving image, Mickey-Mousing is riddled with negative associations. Scholars such as Barbara White have challenged the tensions surrounding close sound and movement relationships, arguing that this device is usually discussed with resistance to "the loudness and intensity we experience when sound and movement join together in glorious excess" [24] . White argues that "understandable dread" emerges when attempting to analyze the impact of one art form upon the other, and a fairly sinister agenda involving the devaluation of popular art forms underpins this [25].

Animation has a complicated and troubled history with race, with overt racial stereotyping prevalent in early Twentieth-Century cartoons [26]. The question of race is

implicit in the presentation of Mickey Mouse himself, where his white gloves signify blackface minstrelsy, despite an insistence that this design was for technical practicalities to help animators [27]. Non-white characters were often offensive and stereotypically presented, such as the "jive-talking crows" in *Dumbo* (1942), with one even named 'Jim Crow' in the film. Furthermore, some characters were so problematic that they were removed, such as "Sunflower the Centaur" in *Fantasia* (1940). This character was offensively portrayed as "a textbook example of the "pickaninny" caricature", and was subsequently erased altogether from the 1960 re-release due to "shifting, civil-rights era sensibilities" [28].

Issues of race and class are also interwoven through the negative connotations of Mickey-Mousing as a choreomusical device. Eurocentric value systems often underpin close music-dance relationships and choreomusical scholarship, despite notable exceptions from the field of ethnomusicology [29]. Mickey-Mousing has a common association with popular entertainment for children and the cartoon world, and when the device is used by choreographers, it has led to accusations of laziness and simplicity [30]. Juliet McMains and Ben Thomas partially contest this, arguing that when used selectively, Mickey-Mousing or "isolated conformance" can be more effective than when used continuously [31]. They support their claims by selecting from a wide range of examples that encompass popular dance forms, including brief references to Gene Kelly and Lil Buck's *The Swan* (2011) [32].

In street dance cultures, the nuances and complexities of close dance-music relationships are widely accepted, and binary thinking about dance and music as separate entities is discouraged. The close relationship is valued as a fundamental part of street dance styles whereby dance and music are inseparable, evolving from African and Latin diasporic forms. Uses of rhythm and polyrhythm are also fundamentals of African aesthetics [33], and the active and detailed practice of listening is a part of learning the dance styles for both freestyle and choreographed performances [34]. This training however, does not often take place as part of a syllabus or institutional setting, leading to misconceptions about the dances being "non-technical", when there is in fact a large degree of technique involved [35]. Different musical styles have specific signifiers for street dancers. For example, a track with funk influences and a strong emphasis on the backbeat (two and four of each musical bar) might indicate popping, whereas a faster electronic track with a constant hi-hat in between beats could signify house dance [36]. In this paper, I argue that Mickey-Mousing is employed strategically by street dance performers both as a choreographic and improvisational device, with the potential to alter the spectator's experience of listening.

Animated *Animated* Principles

The 12 Principles of Animation were developed at Disney Studios in the 1930s, and were created as a "benchmark for 'good' animation" [37]. They are as follows, with brief

explanations added for context [38]: I will italicize the principles throughout the article to make them easier to identify.

1: *Squash and Stretch*: Gives a moving object or character "gravity, weight, mass and flexibility".

2: *Anticipation*: Preparing for action, making movements look "more realistic".

3: *Staging*: Drawing attention to what is important within a scene.

4: *Straight Ahead Action and Pose to Pose*: Two approaches to drawing animated movements.

5: *Follow Through and Overlapping Action*: The process by which some parts of an action continue to move, even after the action has ended.

6: *Slow In and Slow Out*: Adding more frames at the start and end of an action.

7: *Arcs*: The natural path that objects follow, when moving.

8: *Secondary Action*: Smaller actions used to "emphasize the main action".

9: *Timing*: Using correct timing to make movements look realistic.

10: *Exaggeration*: Altering movements "just beyond what's possible" to make them more dynamic.

11: *Solid Drawing*: An understanding of how to draw in three-dimensional space.

12: *Appeal*: Designing and developing characters to "appeal" to audiences.

A selection of these animated movement principles can be translated to the live dancing body [39], which I refer to as 'real' throughout, with "more flesh and substance" than animated characters on screen [40]. *Anticipation*, for example, refers to the preparation that is required before the next action takes place. This allows for the consideration of tiny movements that happen in the spaces between bigger movements, and how they are performed musically. Another example is *secondary action*, which is when smaller movement details are added to enhance believability of the overall illusion that is being created. Other principles can be applied more obviously in the character development and performance of a dancer, such as *appeal* and *exaggeration*. The suggested principles of animation, along with other concepts from the cartoon world such as "the take," described as "a moment of extreme surprise" [41], create fascinating potential for dance analysis.

Turbo's Solo

This section is best read while watching Turbo's solo from Breakout - The Solo's *(2011)* [42]. *Due to the choreomusical intricacies discussed, I've included some video time codes to aid the reader.*

An established dancer and entertainer often well-known for teaching and battling in house dance, Isaac "Turbo" Baptiste (Turbo) is a skilled practitioner who has impressed audiences for several years with his musicality. He reached the finals of *Got to Dance* on Sky 1 in 2011, and has appeared in many hip hop dance theatre productions such as 'The Mad Hatter' in *The Mad Hatters Tea Party* (2016-17) at the Royal Opera House, as part of Zoonation Dance Company. Despite several commercially successful projects and ventures, a much smaller-scale solo theatre performance by Turbo forms the basis of my analysis. *Breakout - The Solo's* is an event that was established by Deja Vu Entertainment in 2010, aiming to give artists the opportunity to perform short solo pieces of work in a small theatre setting.

Turbo's performance at the 2011 edition of *Breakout - The Solo's* is set to a recording of *4 Mains* composed by Wim Mertens. This piece of music features piano played by four hands, and has minimalist stylistic influences, including a melodic foundation where small motifs develop through repetition and variation throughout. Although there is a consistent melodic pattern to follow in the track, the use of frequent cross-phrased rhythmic patterns add complexity. This is an unconventional choice of music for a street dance performance. It has none of the standard drum kit sounds such as the bass drum, snare drum and hi-hat, and features only piano. The movement style is difficult to categorize firmly in this piece, as there are notable influences from various street dance forms throughout. However, the consistent use of detailed isolations, illusions and animated effects to specific musical features make this a compelling choice of performance to analyze.

Turbo creates a series of illusions and imagery throughout this three-minute solo, and his *animating* body heightens and exaggerates musical complexities. He performs the piece effortlessly, with relaxed facial expressions and a seemingly casual approach. His effortlessness is juxtaposed with complicated polyrhythms, fast rhythmic footwork and expert body articulation and control. Consequently, a remarkable contradiction emerges where there is no trace of the physical exertion or effort required, and manifest in this is the "aesthetic of the cool" [43]. This concept, developed by Robert Farris Thompson, suggests a rich area of studies in relation to visual art, music and dance in the Black Atlantic world. There are many applications of the term in a vast range of artistic contexts, but it can be identified when "composure and vitality" combine in a dancer's performance [44]. The troubled historical relationship between animated film and race that I discussed earlier, demands rethinking when animation is transferred to real bodies. I want to acknowledge the racist legacy of animated film, which is present

in any discussion of animated principles in live dancing. In this analysis I focus on the movement, musicality and animated principles, rather than an in-depth study of this problematic history. This decision reflects my current expertise, but is also an important limitation of this writing. In this work focusing on Turbo, who is Black British [45], the troubled history and erasure of race endures through the embodied history of animated film, yet is made visible in his performance of the dance.

Turbo embodies the dominant melodic line through the use of complex isolations and polyrhythmic patterns. He employs his body as a toolbox, isolating and using a range of different limbs and joints. It is often unclear as to whether what we are witnessing is improvised, or pre-choreographed; a mixture of the two seems probable due to uses of theme and variation focusing on different body parts. Turbo demonstrates a skillful ability to isolate parts of his body where there is an extensive movement range in the joint, such as the hands and fingers. This enables him to illustrate the way that the rhythms are *contained* in every part of his body. He quickly establishes a democratic use of his body [46], where many unusual body parts are isolated in the performance. The dance contains remarkable detail, especially when he shakes the individual joint or body part in question with precision in time with the vibratory 'trill' in the music. This musical motif repeats eight times in total using different melodic notes, and Turbo shifts the location of this 'embodied trill' to coincide with different limbs and joints. He often uses the fingers and hands to create a tracing affect in order to *exaggerate* the part that is being articulated, almost as if an invisible string attaches his hand/fingers to other parts of his body. A pull and push on this invisible string triggers the heel of the foot to be released and pushed back to the floor, for example, appearing as if the hand and fingers are physically manipulating and taking control of the other body parts. He draws attention to each body part, as the audience are invited to follow the pattern of movement around the body. This guide functions similarly *to secondary action* in animated film, enriching and emphasizing the illusion and embodiment of the trill that he generates. Familiarity and predictability reside in the repetition of rhythm in both the movement and the music, but melodic changes and different body parts create variation. It is almost as if his body parts become individual characters, each with their own utterances, battling against one another to be the most articulate.

As a result of Turbo's effortless, relaxed performance quality, the spectator's reading of the moving body – rather than facial signals – helps them anticipate what might happen next. For example, the use of a trigger, or preparatory movement is commonly used throughout the piece to create a sense of choreomusical *anticipation*. He uses movements of the chest and torso through controlling his breathing pattern in order to build suspense at the point that a new musical phrase is about to begin. This is akin to a singer controlling breath to prepare to begin a new line. An example can be found at 00:40, where the shoulder rotates and the chest lifts as he fills his lungs with air, just before the next musical and movement phrase begins. A brief, alternative performance quality emerges here. He appears to feel and experience the movements more fully or deeply, and even briefly glances towards different body parts to acknowledge their

use. There is a sense that the body moves more as a unit rather than the disconnected parts that are dominant in other sections. This is further emphasized later in the piece in a similar section where he closes his eyes and appears to be deeply immersed in the movement and at one with the music. Here, his head moves with the rest of the body, in conjunction with the pathways and curves that the movements take. The change in expressiveness is similar in the music at this point, which increases in volume as Turbo's movements also expand in size. An extended melodic line coincides with a longer succession of movements, which climbs and falls in pitch repeatedly. This combination creates fullness and connectivity in the performance, which is juxtaposed with his nonchalant, relaxed facial expression. It initiates a switch from the illusion of disconnection that is created earlier, to a more integrated performance that presents his body a single expressive unit. As a spectator, I am reminded of Turbo's real body, which moves congruently as if all his body parts are now 'behaving'.

In the piece Turbo skillfully and consistently uses the music and movement to create complexity and simplicity, and repetition and variation. During one section (00:54), the melodic motif is repeated eight times in total. The rhythm in the music remains constant and so does the rhythm of his movements, so it is the melody and body parts that continue to change and build. With each repetition, he becomes more creative and experimental with his movement choices, until it feels as if he has exhausted all possible choices of body parts. By the seventh repetition, he has his left elbow resting on his left raised thigh and his chin in his hand and uses a jittering movement with his elbow along his thigh to his knee, a similar effect to that of a flip-book animation. Just when the spectator's gaze is fully engaged and tuned in to absorb what is happening, his movement is interrupted by a small action. The sudden shift is evident from a combination of the slowing tempo of the melody, the rhythm of the melody falling on basic whole counts, and the simplicity of the gesture being performed. In one moment, he uses only the fingers of his right hand in isolation, which immediately follows the most physically expressive section where the whole body is in use (02:44). This abrupt switch from the use of the whole body performing fully integrated movements, to the sudden use of only the fingers on the right hand with an aloof expression is quirky, and the audience laughs. Musically, the melody follows a similar pattern to create an unanticipated shift to a softer, lower pitched motif with a much smaller range. These moments create what might be described as a choreomusical anti-climax, starting by gradually building complexity and ending in unexpected simplicity. Here, tension is built by Turbo to create the expectation of a 'beat-kill' – a moment where the dancer is in complete synchronization with the music, often at the point of a musical climax [47]. In these moments, the intense cycle of choreomusical tension and resolve is disrupted playfully. A cheeky sense of character emerges, where Turbo spontaneously disturbs the building illusions, acting as a reminder that he is in charge of what the audience sees and hears.

In the performance, Turbo often uses a cartoon-like animated effect, which evokes laughter from the audience. Turbo also showcases the extent to which he can control

and articulate parts of his body, by isolating parts of the body not normally isolated in dance. He even moves individual pectoral muscles (01:47), and also moves his mouth and tongue (02:50) in time with the music. In this brief moment, his pink tongue suddenly appears and rolls rhythmically like a small hidden creature popping out of his mouth, as if he is trying to prove that any part of his body can become animated and dance on its own. There is frequent use of *the take* to surprise the audience, to produce unexpected moments of Mickey-Mousing, for example during the subtle movement of the pectorals. In the moments preceding this, Turbo performs a series of fast gestures with the hands, arms and legs, then suddenly relaxes in a standing position with his gaze directed over his left shoulder; seemingly disinterested in his body. It is at this moment that he performs the series of alternating pectoral isolations in a rhythmic pattern to the music. As this becomes fully noticeable, the moment has ended, and the spectator is given the impression that he doesn't notice this happening. Slapstick humor emerges through a bizarre moving body part with a life of its own, connotative of a pantomime and the classic "he's behind you!" joke. He uses pauses and syncopation intelligently in several places in the piece in connection with cartoonish humor. At one point, Turbo uses three small runs to travel towards stage right and after this he simply lets his weight shift backwards, almost as if he is catching his body up with his feet to create *overlapping action*. There are other similar moments where it seems as if he is tripping himself up through catching the syncopated rhythms, synonymous with "creeping gravity" that is often used in cartoons [48]. He creates suspense as he transfers his body weight over his toes to give the impression he might fall forwards, and then catches himself in time with the music using what could be considered a pedestrian run. The pedestrian movements that he uses are often *exaggerated* and happen in rhythmic synchronicity with the music, which he builds into a cycle of tension and resolve.

The deployment of *animation* and an animated, cartoon quality consistently highlights and stresses moments of choreomusical acuity during the piece. Turbo frequently uses *exaggeration* through moving joints and limbs in unexpected and surprisingly flexible ways. He also gradually transforms into a cartoonish posture to appear as an animated character. This posture involves a wide stance where the feet are slightly turned in, the shoulders are rolled in and forwards, the head extends out so that the neck is elongated, and the hips jut out to the back. Turbo holds this posture whilst performing movements with the arms and hands, employing waving technique to extend out towards the audience and back four times. The strange contorted shape of his body seems to draw more attention to the movements, and this is heightened by the way that the movement synchronizes with the music along with the satisfying repetition in both the movement and music. He also uses a strobe light effect, where the pace of the main melodic line is suddenly slower and follows a series of even quavers (half-beats). During this short sequence, Turbo breaks down his movements into equidistant smaller actions. It takes eight movements to bring his hands up the front of his body and t-shirt towards his hat, for example. This creates an illusion of slowing down time, due to the stop/start effect of the strobing technique that looks like a film that is being

paused and played continuously. The slower rhythmic high-pitched pattern that is played over the faster bass riff also contributes to a sense of decreasing speed. The overarching tempo doesn't actually change, as the supporting layers of the music continue at the same speed and rhythmic pattern. It is a combination of the even quavers in the melody blended with the strobing effect that momentarily appears to stretch and extend time.

For the majority of the piece, Turbo experiments with the dominant melodies, but there are also parts where he references other layers of the music that have a supporting role to the melodic line. One example, is when he references the three bass notes by pressing his right foot three times into the floor whilst keeping his arms and upper body in a fixed angular, grounded position (02:56). His foot presses into the floor almost as if he is pressing the note himself, like a foot pedal. These three bass notes occur consistently throughout the whole track, but it is only at this moment that our attention may be drawn to them. The musical idea is therefore "amplified" through this movement [49]. Furthermore, this particular moment happens fairly close to the end of the performance, serving as a reminder of the endless potential of musical and movement choices to the point where I imagine that every body part and rhythmic possibility has been exhausted. The solo ends fairly abruptly after a complicated series of hand and finger gestures, with an image of Turbo with his arm outstretched and index finger pointing towards the cheering audience.

Conclusion

The practices of animated film, *animation* and musicality expose an interesting relationship between the imagined and the actual in this short solo dance performed by Turbo. His body parts come to life, ranging from shoulders and hands to pectorals, fingertips and the tongue; each part acting as a character in itself and outshining the previous in a competitive battle style, which is apt for a dance performance of this genre. Turbo's skillful musicality shifts and disrupts cycles of tension and resolve, distorting my perception of timing and rhythm. He physicalizes less prominent sounds in the music, providing a visual representation of its detailed subtleties, almost like a dancing conductor. The precise timing and use of humor pays further homage to animated film principles, and suggests that Turbo cannot always control his unruly body parts, because they have a life of their own. When watching this work, the audience might 'suspend their belief' [50], as the restrictions of human movement are provisionally forgotten. As a spectator, I am temporarily convinced by the presence of an animated dancing body, through my investment in the physical illusions that Turbo performs.

The original motivation for this research was sparked by my fascination with animated films, and the connection to my practice as a dancer, enjoying movement styles related

to street dance, popping and *animation*. Additionally, I work with many students on the undergraduate dance programme at The University of East London, and have observed their interest in an expanding range of popular dance forms, about which there are few scholarly resources. Furthermore, I identified the need to find suitable approaches to analyze popular dance forms, valuing close and intricate music-dance relationships. In this case, the *12 principles of animation* provided a lens through which to appropriately scrutinize a popular dance practice. The approach also derives from popular culture, privileges sound-movement connections, and has a similar struggle for legitimacy. The value of many popular dance practices in screen contexts such as television, social media and in film have been explored by scholars extensively [51]. However, the impact that film histories, apparatus and techniques have on live dancers without their mediated presence needs more scholarly attention. As a result, we might consider a wider range of popular and street dance practices, and the ways that they are influenced by different popular screen and film principles. I hope that this work might lead to a wider range of approaches, and ways of investigating the value of the nuanced, detailed movement histories and practices of popular and street dance styles.

Author Biography

Dr. Jo Read is Senior Lecturer on the undergraduate dance programme at the University of East London and is also a practitioner in the dance field. She recently completed an AHRC funded PhD at De Montfort University, exploring choreomusicality in street dance practices in the UK. As a dancer, Jo has a keen interest in street dance forms and particularly focuses on litefeet in her current training. She has performed in various projects as part of hip-hop dance company Boy Blue such as *Emancipation of Expressionism* (2017), and also reached the finals for the 2v2 litefeet battles at *Litefest* 2019. Jo is currently beginning research for a new choreographic project called *Dancing With Endo*, which focuses on working with professional dancers who also have endometriosis.

Notes

[1] Cholodenko in Coyle, *Drawn to Sound,* 3.

[2] Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*; Purves, *Stop Motion*.

[3] A few notable exceptions include Takiguchi, *Michael Jackson's Performance of Difference,* which includes analysis of Michael Jackson's illusory dancing abilities, and Goldmark and Keil, *Funny Pictures,* which includes movement analysis of Charlie Chaplin.

[4] JRock Nelson, *Animation Lesson (Part 1);* Mackrell, *Animation dance: hip-hop's living cartoon marvels.*

[5] Coyle, *Drawn to Sound*, 5.

[6] "Lesson in Animation Dance Style (JRock)."

[7] Priebe, *The Advanced Art of Stop-Motion,* xvii.

[8] Therealnessdance.com.

[9] "Lesson in Animation Dance Style (JRock)."

[10] I have observed that street dance is a term that is used amongst dancers in the UK, to describe a range of different dance practices. A few examples commonly practiced by UK dancers include popping, locking, hip hop, litefeet, breaking, house dance, waacking and krump.

[11] "Otis!" Otis Funkmeyer discusses many aspects of these debates on his public youtube channel, such as showing video footage from the 1970s and beyond, the historical origins of some of the movements, and their definitions. Evidence of various debates can also be found amongst poppers on many social media platforms, including the public Facebook group, "Whats Poppin."

[12] "Lesson in Animation Dance Style (JRock)."

[13] "Boppin Andre. Basics of Animation." Boppin Andre demonstrates different animation concepts, including the famous Cyclops character from *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958).

[14] u/sanlands. "What is Animation?"

[15] Others who have found fame through similar platforms include Brian "Chibi" Gaynor, Jade "Soul" Zuberi and "Dytto."

[16] "Lesson in Animation Dance Style (JRock)."

[17] Coyle, *Drawn to Sound,* 5.

[18] Malnig, *Boogie, Ballroom;* Dodds, *Dancing on the Canon.*

[19] White, *As If They Didn't Hear*; Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*; Coyle, *Drawn to Sound.*

[20] Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers,* xxii. I included a discussion of the term 'musicality' in my PhD thesis, focusing on its use and meanings for street dancers in the UK. Read, *Cadences of Choreomusicality,* 45-54.

[21] "Pro-Motion." Other well-known dancers in this collective include Shawn Aimey, Nicholas Marvel, Harry Popper and Rikoshay. Although there are many practicing female poppers and *animators,* this is notably disproportionate to the number of male dancers who become prominent or leading figures in the style. Recently formed all female A.I.M collective (formed by Shawn Aimey) are a notable exception, along with other UK-based female dancers such as Paris Crossley, Vicky "Skytilz" Mantey and Natalie McParland.

[22] Birringer, *Dance and Media Technology*; Blanco-Borelli, Oxford *Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* Brennan and Parker, *Animating Dance and Dancing with Animation.*

[23] White, *As If They Didn't Hear The Music*, 67.

[24] Ibid, 66.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Sammond, *Birth of an Industry.*

[27] Sammond, *Who Dat Say Who Dat,* 145.

[28] Watson, *A Short History of Race in Animation.*

[29] Nor and Stepputat, *Sounding the Dance, Moving the Music.*

[30] Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu,* 76.

[31] McMains and Thomas, *Translating from Pitch to Plié,* 210.

[32] Ibid, 213-214.

[33] Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence,* 13.

[34] Although these concepts are imperative to any understanding of the popular dance forms in question, it is also important to question the unique British and Black British aesthetics, which emerge in the practice and performance of street dance forms in the UK. As the majority of available and aforementioned literature focuses on popular dance in an American context, this is often overlooked. Thomas Defrantz asserts that Black British dance has different "concerns" to Black American dance, and Akinleye notes a "distinct lack of acknowledgement" of "being British" when performing dances related to the African Diaspora. Defrantz in Akinleye, *Narratives in Black British Dance,* ix. Akinleye, *Ibid,* 2.

[35] Bragin, *On the Front Porch.* There is a vast range of activity fostering street dance cultures in London, which ranges from organized classes in studios such as Base Dance Studios in Vauxhall, training meet ups in public and private spaces (previously at venues such as Trocadero, Charing Cross Station and the Southbank Centre), organized battles and competitions (e.g. Juste Debout London) and theatre and outdoor events (e.g. Breakin' Convention at Sadler's Wells Theatre).

[36] Bosse, *Bodies of Sound*, 43. Bosse describes this similarly here in relation to ballroom dance styles.

[37] Bishko, *The Uses and Abuses of Cartoon Style in Animation*, 24.

[38] Coron, *Understand Disney's 12 Principles of Animation.*

[39] "The 12 Principles of Animation with Commentary." In this video, Otis Funkmeyer discusses the importance for dancers to understand these principles and apply them to their practice.

[40] Bouldin, *The Body, Animation and the Real,* 48.

[41] Bishko, *The Uses and Abuses of Cartoon Style in Animation*, 27.

[42] "Turbo [Breakout - The Solo's]"

[43] Farris Thompson, *Aesthetic of the Cool.*

[44] De Frantz, *The Black Beat Made Visible*, 69.

[45] Turbo prefers to describe himself as "a person of culture", and noted the many cultural influences that contribute to his identity as a performer. Turbo, message to author, 26 February 2020.

[46] Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop*, 51.

[47] There are other variations of this term that have the same meaning. I have come across this described as 'beat-matching', 'beat-freaking' and a 'blow up' amongst dancers, often when describing moments of musicality in a battle.

[48] Anon, *Gravity is a Harsh Mistress.*

[49] McMains and Thomas, *Translating from Pitch to Plie*, 210.

[50] Bishko, *The Uses and Abuses of Cartoon Style in Animation,* 24.

[51] Blanco Borelli, *Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen.*

References

Akinleye, Adesola, ed. *Narratives in Black British Dance: Embodied Practices*. Springer, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70314-5

Aloff, Mindy. *Hippo in a Tutu. Dancing in Disney Animation.* New York: Disney Editions, 2008

Anon. "Gravity is a Harsh Mistress." *tvtropes.* https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/GravityIsAHarshMistress

Banes, Sally. *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance.* Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2011

Birringer, Johannes. "Dance and Media Technologies." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24.1 (2002): 84-93. https://doi.org/10.1162/152028101753401811

Bishko, Leslie. "The Uses and Abuses of Cartoon Style in Animation." *Journal of Animation Studies* 2 (2007): 24-35

Blanco Borelli, Melissa, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199897827.001.0001

"Boppin Andre. Basics of Animation." Pub. Maria Nekrasova. Posted 14 July 2012. *youtube*

Bosse, Joanna. "Sound Understandings: Embodied Musical Knowledge and 'Connection in a Ballroom Dance Community." *Bodies of Sound*. Routledge, 2016. 57-69

Bouldin, Joanna, A. Koivunen, and S. Paasonen. "The body, animation and the real: Race, reality and the rotoscope in Betty Boop." *Proceedings of affective encounters: rethinking embodiment in feminist media studies* (2001): 48-54

Bragin, Naomi. "On the Front Porch: Deborah McCoy and Fresno Streetdance." *Tropics of Meta. Historiography for the Masses.* Posted 3 April 2018. https://tropicsofmeta.com/2018/04/03/on-the-front-porch-deborah-mccoy-and-fresno-streetdance/

Brennan, Claire, and Parker, Lynn. "Animating Dance and Dancing with Animation: A Retrospective of Forever Falling Nowhere." *Electronic Visualisation and the Arts,* (2014): 63-70. https://doi.org/10.14236/ewic/EVA2014.11

Coron, Tammy. "Understand Disney's 12 Principles of Animation." *Creative Bloq.* Posted 17 June 2019. https://www.creativebloq.com/advice/understand-the-12-principles-of-animation

Coyle, Rebecca, ed. *Drawn to Sound: Animation Film Music and Sonicity.* London: Equinox, 2009

DeFrantz, Thomas. "The Black Beat Made Visible." *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on dance and performance theory.* Ed. A. Lepecki. Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, (2004): 64-81

Dodds, Sherril. *Dancing on the Canon. Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230305656

Folkes, Frederick. "The Realness." https://therealnessdance.com/history/

Goldmark, D and Keil, C, eds. *Funny Pictures.* California: University of California Press, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520950122

Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. *Digging the Africanist presence in American performance: Dance and other contexts.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996

Happy Feet. Dir. George Miller and Warren Coleman. Warner Brothers, 2006. Film

Hayward, Philip. "Polar Grooves: Dance, Music and Musicality in *Happy Feet.*" *Drawn to Sound. Animation Film Music And Sonicity.* Ed. R. Coyle. London and Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010. 90-103

Home. Dir. Tim Johnson. DreamWorks Animation, 2015. Film

Jason and the Argonauts. Dir. Don Chaffey. Morningside Productions, 1963. Film

Jordan, Stephanie. *Mark Morris: Musician, Choreographer.* Hants: Dance Books Ltd, 2015

"Lesson in Animation Dance Style (JRock) "Final Animation" "Beat Killing."" Prod. JRock Nelson. Posted 16 Oct 2018. *youtube*

Mackrell, Judith. "Animation Dance: Hip Hop's Living Cartoon Marvels." *The Guardian Dance Blog.* Posted 13 Jan 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/stage/dance-blog/2015/jan/13/animation-dance-hip-hop-cyrus-glitch-spencer-javonte-crooks-introspect

Madagascar. Dir. Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath. DreamWorks Animation, 2005. Film

Malnig, Julie, ed. *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake. A Social and Popular Dance Reader.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009

McMains, Juliet and Thomas, Ben. "Translating from Pitch to Plié: Music Theory for Dance Scholars and Close Movement Analysis for Music Scholars." *Dance Chronicle* 36.2 (2013): 196-217. https://doi.org/10.1080/01472526.2013.792714

Nor, Mohd Anis Md, and Stepputat, Kendra. eds. *Sounding the Dance, Moving the Music: Choreomusicological Perspectives on Maritime Southeast Asian Performing Arts.* Routledge, 2016. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315609959

Osumare, Halifu. *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-05964-2

"Otis!" Accessed 3 July 2019. https://www.youtube.com/user/poppingtv

Priebe, Kenneth A. *The advanced art of stop-motion animation*. Cengage Learning, 2011

"Pro-Motion." *prodance.* Accessed 2 July 2019. http://www.prodance.co.uk/artists/info/promotionldn

Purves, Barry. *Stop Motion. Passion, Process and Performance.* Oxford and Burlington: Elsevier Ltd, (2008). https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-240-52060-5.50008-9

Read, Jo. "Cadences of Choreomusicality". PhD diss, De Montfort University, 2017

Sammond, Nicholas. "Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation." *Online Companion to the Print Book.* No Date. http://scalar.usc.edu/works/birthofanindustry/race-and-ethnicity-in-animation?path=animation . https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375784

Sammond, Nicholas. "Who Dat Say Who Dat?: Racial Masquerade, Humor, and the Rise of American Animation." *Funny Pictures. Animation and Comedy in Studio-Era Hollywood.* Eds. D. Goldmark and C. Keil. California: University of California Press, 2011. 129-152

Shrek. Dir. Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson. DreamWorks Animation, 2001. Film

Takiguchi, Amanda. "Michael Jackson's Performance of Difference: Dance as Ostracism and Wonderment." *Undergraduate Dissertation.* Columbia University (2013)

"The 12 Principles of Animation." Prod. OTIS!. Posted 30 Jul 2016. *youtube*

Thompson, Robert Farris. *Aesthetic of the cool: Afro-Atlantic art and music*. Periscope Publishing, 2011

"Turbo [Breakout the Solo's]" Chor. Isaac "Turbo" Baptiste. Prod. Deja Vu Entertainment (2011). *Youtube*

u/sanlands. "What is Animation? Is the Term Losing its Meaning?" *reddit.* Posted 2015. https://www.reddit.com/r/FunkStyle/comments/2g802x/what_is_animation_is_the_term_losing_its_meaning/

The 7th Voyage of Sinbad. Dir. Nathan Duran. Columbia Pictures, 1958. Film

Watson, Richard. "A Brief History of Race in Animation". *The Guardian.* Posted 21st Jan 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/jan/21/race-disney-animation-brief

"What's Poppin." *Public Group.* Accessed 5 July 2019. *Facebook*

White, Barbara. "'As if they didn't hear the music,' Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Mickey Mouse." *The Opera Quarterly* 22.1 (2006): 65-89. https://doi.org/10.1093/oq/kbi108

Navigating Hyperrealities : Tamil Film (Kollywood) Choreography as Screen Dance

Sandhiya Kalyanasundaram

Abstract

This essay discusses the choreographic ethos that integrates technology and dance as an evolving mode of storytelling in South Indian (Tamil-Kollwood) movies by tracing the work of director Shankar Shanmugam. Through analyses of song-dance sequences, I identify three key principles for using screendance techniques, and reflect on how these innovations contribute to cultivating and shaping the audience imagination. The audience is challenged to further engage at multiple levels and grapple with the relationships between human and more than human worlds. In the Kollywood scene, there is a constant quest for new techniques that can embrace inner realities.

Keywords: Hyperreal time-space, Kollywood screendance, embodied technology, Indian narratology, perception

> *Before him, a film mounted on a huge scale would be described as being "like a Hollywood movie." Now, we just say it looks… like a Shankar movie* – Baradwaj Rangan[1]

Through this essay I am interested in outlining the specific Tamil film ethos that is rapidly evolving its storytelling modes in response to 1) a fast-changing social identity developed as a result of the changing Indian political, ecological and social landscape; 2) critical discourses about the individual and their role in society and the portrayal of the female characters; 3) what it means to be human in a world of technology and consumerism; 4) questioning the role of cinema and cinema artists in contributing to a dialogue about living our anthropocentric lives whilst beginning to inquire empathetically into more-than-human worlds; 5) bridging the quest of the artists and the audiences alike.

In India, particularly in South India, one of the leading performing arts companies, Attakkalari[2] based in Bangalore have experimented with videodance and/or screendance in several formats including mixed media. In films however, the particular aesthetic of mixed choreography that borrows from world dance as well as specific Indian classical and folk forms, has generally led to applying the idea of videodance to dance made for the screen and including video, digital media, vfx/cgi effects and complex character costuming with prosthetics or large-scale festival celebrations. The camera does not take center-stage in most South Indian film choreography, serving merely the role of documentation or recording purposes, however in the case of the films of South Indian Director Shankar Shanmugam, there is an attempt to reprise, recreate or

enrich some of the current debates in film-making across the world through camera techniques, as well as improved sound design, editing and costume design.

 As an extension of these developments, innovations in film choreography techniques are a standout feature in Shankar's films. Since the early nineties, choreography in many of the songs from his movies includes graphics, and dancers responding to a graphic character, use of motion capture technology and filming 'timeslice' by linking multiple cameras.

> I'm tempted to call Shankar Tamil cinema's first real 'social' spectacle director, someone who makes stories set in our age, in our neighbourhoods, in our physical world (*Enthiran* being an exception, of course), addressing our problems, but with the pomp and pageantry of Indra's realm or Shiva's abode or the *Arabian Nights* [3]

writes Baradwaj Rangan, 2018, noted film critic and historian as he reviews Shankar's Tamil films from the nineties. This paper reflects on four songs that attempt to adapt the hybrid elements of screendance into Tamil film choreography through the films directed by Shankar from 2005 to 2018.

Songs in Tamil films are typically released a few months ahead of the film and serve to create anticipation through repeat screening on television or releasing lyric videos on YouTube: audiences have personal favourites before they watch the movie on screen. Music lovers repeat their viewing of movies just for the song sequences in the movie as well. Songs typically have their own narrative complementing the narrative of the movie but not necessarily following the sequence of the movie. Song and dance sequences serve to highlight a character's journey, a unique life experience that fundamentally changed their perspective or important nuances that cannot be captured through the mainstream narrative of the film.

> Songs and their accompanying dance choreographies are effective on many levels within a specific film; they can provide significant moments of interruption in the narrative, or simply advance the narrative; they may interpret a hidden story-line or can allow a permissible expression of romance that may in other ways be inexpressible. Often they create an imagined fantasy space, intensifying the emotional content of the story and offering suggestions of eroticism.[4]

To outline the power and impact of the early release of songs, I describe the fan response to the song "*Arima Arima*" from the movie *Enthiran* (The Robot):

The early evening light softly merges into a rapturous October twilight as 50 men and women, most of them novice dancers, line up neatly with printed masks of the Robotic 'Chitti' over their faces and dance to the song, "*Arima arima*." This was 2010, San Jose California, the first day of the release of the movie *Enthiran*, starring celluloid god, Rajnikanth and directed by Shankar Shanmugam known for his futuristic imagination and big budget movies using a variety of visual effects and technology. All the dancers were fans of Rajnikanth and they had learnt the choreography for the song in the time period between song release and movie release. Dancing this prior to the screening of the movie in front of the theatre was their tribute to a

much awaited film of their beloved superstar before they walked in to watch the movie. Local media and newspapers covered this fan dance which continues to be a hallmark feature of celebrating the release of a Rajinikanth movie by his fans.

In the movie *Enthiran*, actor Rajnikanth plays both a scientist and creator of the humanoid Chitti and Chitti itself. The song *Arima Arima* features Chitti, the robot. Chitti widely captured the hearts and minds of viewers of all ages beginning as a robot learning to understand human emotions, falling in love with a beautiful human woman, then gradually programmed as a destructive element only to be dismantled and displayed as a museum exhibit. The movie ends with the response by Chitti, "*Naan sinthikka arambichen*" (I started thinking) to a curious student's question of why the robot was dismantled.

Still from *Arima Arima. Screenshot by author*[5]

Arima Arima, choreographed by Prabhu Deva, was filmed at Ramoji Rao Film City, Hyderabad, India. The song features the transformed humanoid Chitti smitten with a human woman, Sana, and his robotic army that is ready to destroy at his command. It clearly showcases the rise and power of Chitti from a service robot to one that is set to conquer and destroy. The song includes elaborate sets and costumes, vfx, choreographed camera movements and editing work, deciding where a movement may begin or end and includes several elements of screendance. The song plays with the idea of multiples without cloning a single individual. Instead, different dancers are placed alongside interacting as multiples bound by rhythmic patterns to express and highlight the complex interiority of Chitti. The bodies in the frame are choreographed as is the space around and the camera capturing all of this is choreographed as well, creating an

expansive framework for the audience to delve into the robotic and power-hungry Chitti's mindscape. It seems like his robotic army is completely an extension of him and towards the end of the song the multitudes of Aishwarya Rai dancing before his eyes, while the audience gets a glimpse of the words "battery low", all reflect Chitti's multiple failed attempts to gather a full understanding of the human psyche and its emotions. While the fan dance was just that – a tribute of the fans for their superstar – it was clear that their imaginations were sparked by the robotic character and the choreography using hybrid elements of screendance was powerful enough to elicit a major audience response even before the fans watched the movie.

Another song in the movie Enthiran using screendance elements is *Irumbile oru Idhayam*, choreographed by Remo D'Souza. [6] The changing color tints in the song generally follow the color scheme steel gray, chrome, gold and black keeping in line with a robotic metallic lead and animatronics.

Stills from *Irumbile oru Idhayam* and *Kaadhal Anukkal*. Screenshots by author.

This song contrasts immensely with the movements and the color schemes used in the song for the scientist Rajinikanth, *Kaadhal Anukkal*, [7] choreographed by Prabhu Deva. Here the bodies are positioned in a vast space with several wide-angle shots providing fresh perspectives to the audience about being human by connecting to the environment and placing the protagonists in a realistic location. The light happiness of the female dancer's heart is shown by showing her suspended in space while the next instant transforms her corporeal reality into butterflies that then flit away. Moments in the song show the path of her movement in space from position 'a' to position 'b' by transposing her at once in both positions. She remains in her colourful entirety in position 'b' while fading slowly into transparency position 'a'. Her movements are choreographed from land into water as a shimmering mirage who has cast her lovely spell on the protagonist. The spatial play creates an intrigue for her character emphasizing a complex, playful and intelligent woman.

Douglas Rosenberg, 2012[8] writes about screendance as,

> In fact, the term might encompass any form of mediated dance delivered to any kind of screen. This could include animated dance on a computer screen, cine-dance on a projection screen or videodance projected on a wall or glass of milk. The term "screen"

here is thus loosely applied to and open to interpretation: it implies something that is a receptor of an otherwise ephemeral image, and which reifies that image in the process of receiving it… Screendance alludes to the end point of a process in which dance is grafted to or merged with techniques of representation particular to viewing on a screen.

From the vantage point of this broad encompassing definition of screendance, Shankar's films are a harbinger of using the hybrid elements of (what we might read as) screendance in Kollywood choreography, as well a good case for adaptive use of the idea of screendance in Tamil films. Let us consider the song *Irumbile oru idhayam* as a standalone song and the impact of choreographing, through screendance, on the audience. The song starts out with Chitti surrounded by many robots each of whom seem to mirror each other and Chitti itself. Opening out into an endless mirroring, the choreography introduces the human Sana as Chitti's partner and it seems like there lies a palpable communication of the intangible between robot and human. Yet as the song progresses, the endless mirroring is collapsed into disappearing robotic selves that merge into edges, walls and the periphery, and the audience is invited into questions of imagination, metaphor and the interrogations of the mind-body at the interface of technology.

On one level a piece of pure entertainment, this song-dance can also provoke deeper questions: how should consciousness be defined? As a human being, what does the compass of morality mean? Could it be extended to a robot? If a robot can have the imagination of a song sequence with its love interest just as a typical Tamil movie song-dance sequence, should a robot be considered human? What does it mean to establish bridges between the non-human and the human world, through dance? As the audience grapples with these questions and a wealth of meanings emerge, Shankar's film plays powerfully with adapting the idea of screendance in South Indian Film choreography particularly through his Tamil films. The idea that the sum of the parts is not equal to the whole is recurrent in his song dance sequences.

Katrina McPherson notes in her 2006[9] book, Making video dance- a step-by-step guide,

> Through the use of different shots and angles, the camera can take the viewer to places they could not usually reach. The lens can enter the dancer's kinesphere – the personal space around them that moves with them as they dance – focusing on a detail of movement and allowing an intimacy that would be unattainable in a live performance context.

Choreography in Shankar's movies is a clear extension of his filmmaking, his script and direction where each sequence is elaborately matched to his imagination and conception of the characters, their lives within the story and their individual endpoints and outcomes. The choreographic feel of *Enthiran* continues to achieve Shankar's cinematic process – working with five different choreographers in a combination of styles, locations and perspectives.

Winding back in time to look at Shankar's 2005 movie, *Anniyan* (The Stranger), we find the use of screendance elements in the song *Kannum Kannum Nokia.*[10] *Anniyan* is a psychological thriller centered around a protagonist having multiple personality disorder.

Actor Vikram plays Ramanujam, an idealistic, law-abiding lawyer and his two other identities: a high-energy metrosexual fashion model Remo, and a 'savage', Anniyan. The song *Kannum Kannum Nokia* choreographed by Raju Sundaram is a love duet between the metrosexual Remo and his love interest Nandini (actress Sadha). Pictured amidst steel, glass and concrete (the location is a building by Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa), the choreography uses, and extends, the reflection of light to play with materiality, giving to the audience an extra sense of curiosity and exploration by using obtuse camera angles, alternating between the 'real' and the 'unreal' and the multifaceted eight directions. Materiality, identity and choreography are completely fused in this song. The camera pans, tilts and tracks serving to defamiliarize the viewer creating a clear tension between the ambiguity of Remo's identity and individual existence allowing the viewer to traverse on an independent experience layered into the visual experience of the choreography. Within the context of the movie it positions Nandini's obsessive love for Remo only to realize that Remo is merely an identity.

In 2015, Shankar released the science fiction movie *I* which tells the story of a body builder turned supermodel, played by actor Vikram, who suffers by malicious injection of a virus, loses his career, recovers and eventually exacts revenge on the perpetrators. *Aila Aila*[11] is a song in the movie which showcases the meteoric rise of the protagonist Lingesan (Vikram) alongside his co-star Diya (actress Amy Jackson) it is a compositional play on seven product advertisements popular between 2012 and 2014. While the song appears as a patchwork of commercials, the song captures a section of the journey of the protagonist from being a small time bodybuilder turned model to a successful model and actor. The protagonist Lingesan starts his career with boring commercials and is eventually noticed for his physique. He is paired with a beautiful model for several high-profile commercials. This launches his career as a very successful model and actor and the purpose of the song is to show his personal success as well as the success of the pair which leads to the actual plot of the movie. The song was choreographed by the duo Bosco Martis and Caesar Gonsalves and I mention it in this paper because it contrasts the other works discussed, through use of camera, choreography, costumes, set design and vfx elements.

This song successfully draws the viewer's eye from one set of shots to the next and also creates active-viewing opportunities for the viewer to recreate the rest of a sequence through suspense and humor. The montage approach to editing allows a completely different experience of time and space for the audience. The choreography is not a mere re-creation of the product commercials, it is instead an intelligent and humorous recreation of Tamil popular culture and the identity of the youth.
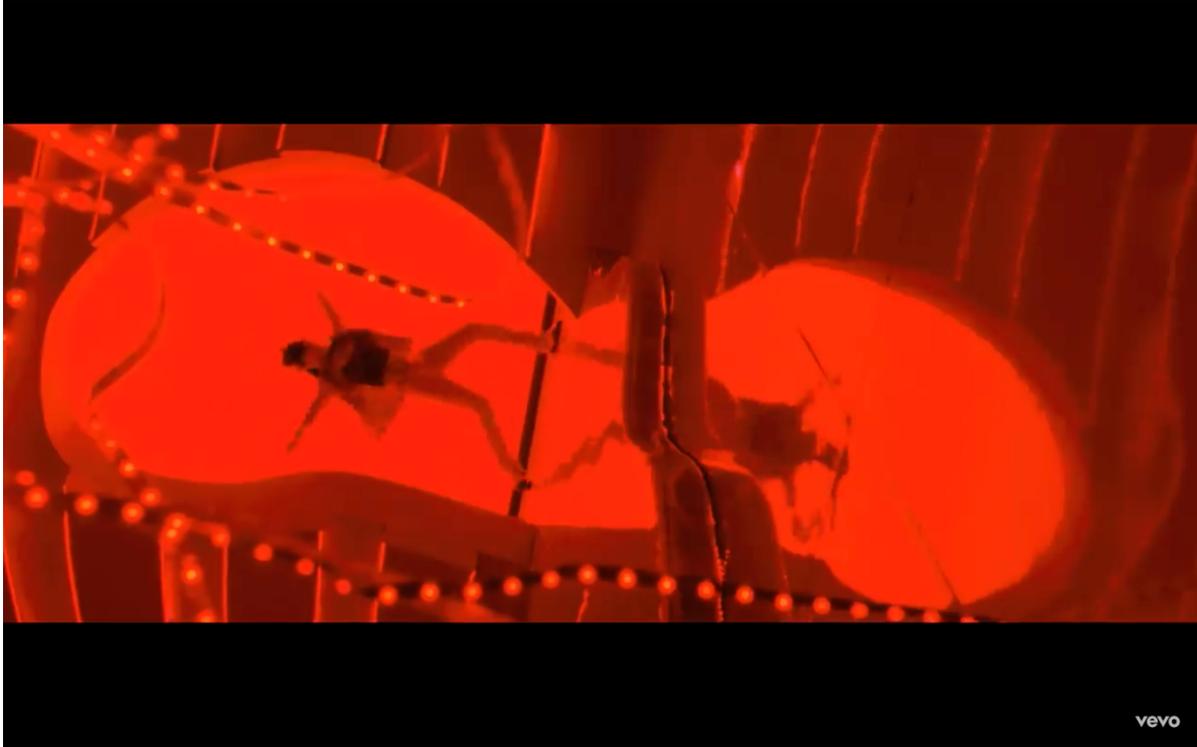
Still from *Aila, Aila*. Screenshot by author

Choreographer Bosco Martis, 2018[12] says,

> Knowing Shankar's large-than-life vision, I didn't mind giving him the time. He's a choreographer's delight because he gives a choreographer the vision and capacity to explore and that's the reason why I felt I should try and understand his style of filmmaking.

2018 featured the release of *Enthiran*'s sequel *2.0* with Rajnikanth reprising his roles and actor Akshay Kumar playing Pakshirajan, the villain. In this movie, the song *Raajali*[13] has primarily Vfx elements with elaborate costume design for Pakshirajan and Chitti, the humanoid. Pakshirajan is a metamorphosed, altered existence, bordering on radical non-identity. The song showcases the interaction between Chitti and Pakshirajan where Chitti has been reassembled to eliminate Pakshirajan. The song creates a fantasy world of electromagnetic radiation, millions of cell phones, aural bodies and robotics and multiple choreographed camera angles. In this context Susan Kozel's words usher in the right focus,
" Implicit is an inability to tell where the digital body ends and the physical body begins, and, most important, the conviction that distinguishing the two no longer matters". [14] Choreography for Pakshirajan's movements evoke a large bird of prey possibly from another geological time, violent in nature yet threatened and frightened of an unknown impending apocalypse. The audience enters Deleuze's notion of affect, which is "not the passage from one lived state to another but man's nonhuman becoming"[1516]. While good triumphs over evil in a technological fantasy, environmental damage and the cost of human excesses on the more-than-human world is the epiphany.

Stills from *Raajali* (left); *Pullinangal* (right). Screenshots by author

Raajali offers yet another layer of contemplation when contrasted with the song, *Pullinangal*[17] in a revealing flashback about Pakshirajan's past where he is originally an ornithologist. We see this idea of contrast between two songs within a film used to elaborate and expand unspoken sociological and ethical questions for the audience. The audience is drawn into the life of birds in through bird movements, feeding, flocking and flight patterns from different locations and timepoints merged with choreographic editing. What the audience perceives through the *Pullinangal* song therefore is a fluidity of movement, a dancescape of evolutionary order, where it is possible to be imaginatively transported into more-than-human[18] perspectives. Placed in contrast, the songs *Raajali"* and *Pullinangal* from the film 2.0 provide opportunities for cross-species empathy. David Abram[19] writes evocatively in 'Becoming Animal',

> When we disparage the intelligence of birds, or the size of their brains, we miss that flight itself is a kind of thinking, a gliding within the mind, a grace we humans rarely attain in our contemplation (although if we're following a falcon with our focus, we sometimes find our thoughts soaring as well).

Pakshirajan seems to play on this thought. We are never far from the bird's intelligence or its appreciation by the human in the new fused identity of Pakshirajan. Pakshirajan does not show the elation and joy of flying in his own body for his role here is as guardian and savior, avenger of the birds. However, in the tension and kinetic conversation emanating from his presence, he raises our perception of this hybrid man-bird world, pushing us to move seamlessly between bird-thought and human-thought. The question for a mature audience however is not just empathy, we, like Timothy Clark (2015) must question the limits of fiction and wonder if literary narrative is actually "allied with forms of anthropocentric thinking."

Following Rosenberg in his book, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*,

> In screendance terminology and semantics have evolved in a way that is perhaps quite accidental, often a case of one community picking up the vernacular usage of a term or

phrase and institutionalizing it over the course of a number of iterations, to be adopted by another community of like-minded practitioners.[20]

we find that within the Tamil film community, purposes for using screendance elements in film dance choreography seem to converge on one or more of the three key principles:

1) Time and Space

There is usually a direct correlation between the physical passage of time and space. The ability to travel mentally through time as past present and future is a defining characteristic of consciousness of being human. Cassanto and Boroditsky 2008[21] have suggested "that our mental representations of things we can never see or touch may be built, in part, out of representations of physical experiences in perception and action". Recent research has also shown that mental time travel has a spatial counterpart and there is an association of physical movements through space (Miles et al., 2010a[22]; Miles et al., 2010b[23]).

Choreography for song-dance sequences in director Shankar's Tamil films plays on the idea of this mental time travel and altering perception and reality by distorting time and space. The temporality resident within the choreographic process when converted on screen allows for a hybridization of the real and the fictional in the audience's perception. There is a certain quality of vulnerability to the space that is created onscreen- it is real yet unreal because it is revelatory of the interior space. Time-space in Tamil film song dance generally works on multiple layers of audience perception. Since the protagonists in Shankar's films tend to be complex characters which traverse multiple identities and ethical beliefs, there is an expectation from the audience to simultaneously comprehend very different interior time-spaces within the same protagonist. In all the song-dance sequences described, there is a clear juxtaposition of images/shots that are intended to evoke associations through memory in the audience's minds, that is not merely a causal chain of linear unfolding story elements.

2) Narrative

Tejaswini Ganti[24] writes, "Bollywood movies are aesthetically and culturally distinct from Hollywood but as prolific and ubiquitous in its production and circulation of narratives and images." While writing about Bollywood film music in 2001, Nasreen Munni Kabir[25] notes, " It is mainly the music that shows fantastic new energy and originality." Jonathan Durr[26] in his thesis describing the performance sequence says, " it is here that innovations in technology, allusions to socio-political realities, and aesthetic experimentation are most in evidence."
Shankar's narrative is mythical and futuristic all at once. Shankar's films continue to build within the Indian narratology devices. Ayyappa Paniker[27] lists these as "Interiorisation, Serialisation, Fantasisation, Cyclicalisation, Allegorisation, Anonymisation, Elasticisation of time, Spatialisation, Stylisation, Improvisation." Therefore Shankar manages to emerge a successful hybrid space for creative expression. Song-dance sequences in many of Shankar's movies take symbolic elements of myth and project, juxtapose and transmute onto the futuristic. Narrative in Shankar's song- dance sequences have a tendency to comfortably move between the real

and the surreal and technology enables creating the narrative superstructure. Ayyappa Paniker[28] notes that

> …some of these are a regular feature of postmodern fiction in the West. Traditional Indian techniques have surfaced in experimental Western theatre during the past century, and more or less in the same way, narrative devices common in traditional Indian texts have materialised in modern and post-modern European fiction.

Shankar's films provide a crucial interface between the traditional narrative structures and modern technological tools to allow the audience to seamlessly move between imagination and reality. Anniyan's Remo is one identity of multiple personality disorder. Using fragmented elements of screendance, Shankar manages to create an alternative space where the audience can reside comfortably and enjoy the love duet yet at the back of their minds feel queasy about the almost unreal existence of Remo within the context of the larger narrative of the film. In both films, *Enthiran* and *2.0*, there exist two parallel worlds: one of the humanoid robot and the other human. In the song-dance sequences of both films, emotions, events and materiality coalesce between the human and humanoid worlds into hyperreality.

3) Technology as Embodiment

Technology becomes a key tool that aids as well as constructs Shankar's film narrative. Baradwaj Rangan[29] says, "That's Shankar for you. Someone who's always out to wow you. Someone whose imagination has always exceeded what the practical realities of Indian budgets and effects houses can give him – but also someone who doesn't let this stop him." In Shankar's storytelling, nothing is left to chance and the worldview of the characters is made visible to the audience using techniques of sensorial heightening through technology. We, as audience enjoy the need to slip between realities and the opportunities to embody technological space while watching his movies. Susan Kozel in her book *Closer* observes,

> Wearables are worn close to the body because we want them to be there; we invite them to be there and to share our personal space with fluid and transforming expectations. It is here that they rub shoulders with domains of body modification and prosthetics: techniques and technologies of the body, from martial arts to robotic arms, outline and amplify the metaphysical structure of our flesh. [30]

In Shankar's movies, body modification using prosthetics is a common and recurring feature. Very much in line with Susan Kozel's description above, Pakshirajan and Chitti's prosthetic makeup from the movies E*nthiran* and *2.0* allows for creating their metaphysical identities. A perfect illustration from the movie *2.0* shows Pakshirajan constructing a new 'negative' body composed of millions of cell phones that are powered by a concentrated mass of negative charge with electromagnetic properties and destroying telecommunications towers as a retribution for avian deaths. The public is terrified and normal functioning is disrupted. This negative body was created with extensive prosthetic make up of the actor.[31]

Within Shankar's song-dance sequences, the moving images and other sensory material that we are presented with make our encounters into the ephemeral kinaesthetic plausible enabling empathy and a connected hyperreality that we can come back again to revisit, learn from and embody within ourselves.

Shankar's fims feature male protagonists with dominant paradigms of patriarchal masculinity containing shades of mythical heroism. While young males rejoice in this celluloid version of hypermasculinity, the reality of their lives is challenged by a postmodern view which questions these male identities and their power. There is in Tamilnadu, as in other parts of the world, a cultural shift away from the hegemonic masculinity. Shankar's films bring into focus the metrosexual man as a transitional option for young men to relate with. This transitional comfort is particularly emphasized in the songs from Shankar's movies that allow the young male to morph into a 'desirable male' in touch with a feminine aspect, care about appearance and spend money for luxury as opposed to saving for a distant future. Through the song and dance sequences young men reimagine their identities as well as social mobility and allow themselves to express emotion.   The song and dance sequences in Shankar's movies highlight this exclusive fantasy and relief for the modern young man faced with cultural and individual performative anxieties.

From an audience perspective, Shankar's refusal to be limited by traditional shooting locations, budgets and his desire to play with technology allows reconceptions of reality because of our connectedness through technology. Geographer Nigel Thrift's perspective seems to echo this reconception as he says,

> It could be argued that the human body is what it is because of its unparalleled ability to co-evolve with things, taking them in and adding them to different parts of the biological body to produce something which, if we could see it, would resemble a constantly evolving distribution of hybrids with different reaches. . . . The human body is a tool-being.[32]

Films hold a wild imagination for Indian audiences. Dance and choreography from films move into reality TV shows, street dances, stage shows, mushrooming dance schools, performances at family events and in several other contexts. More and more young dancers are training their bodies to find that ductile, malleable extension of themselves found in the imaginative technology extended by the films they love. Gopal and Moorti note that,

> Choreographed sequences often migrate from the screen to the stage, to dance halls, and to community centers. These migrations not only draw on but also radically recode the meanings that the dance had in its filmic context.[33]

Individuals take on, for the sheer pleasure of re-finding, and re-modelling in their own bodies, the complex characters of film protagonists, re-shaping them into new identities. A perpetuating cycle of myth, screen and body finds its way into public imagination. Shankar's films nudge the audience towards staying alert about social issues of poverty, inequality and corruption. While staying within the boundaries of popular Tamil culture, his films offer a

window to look at the pressures on, in particular, young men in urban Tamilnadu and their attempts to negotiate globalisation and modernity, within the framework of traditional values.

Author Biography

Sandhiya Kalyanasundaram is a dance educator, choreographer and poet. Trained in Bharatanatyam, Butoh and Flamenco, Sandhiya has led and performed in several collaborative performances between dance styles, served on the Jury Panel for the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and used dance therapy to work with survivors of domestic violence. She enjoys working at the intersection of science and art and is currently expanding her research into the role of dance in science education. Sandhiya partners with local communities to develop sustainable foodscaping and urban restoration. Before her work with the environment, she was a researcher in the field of Neuroscience.

References

Abram, David. *Becoming animal: an earthly cosmology.* New York: Pantheon Books, 2010.

Abram, David. *The spell of the sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York: Random House,1997.

Baradwaj, Rangan. "Every Shankar film, ranked." Posted November 22, 2018 https://www.filmcompanion.in/every-shankar-film-ranked-baradwaj-rangan-2.0-enthiran-arrahman-rajinikanth-mudhalvan-indian/

Casasanto, Daniel, Boroditsky, Lera. "Time in the mind: Using space to think about time." *Cognition* 106 (2008): 579–593 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2007.03.004

Clark, Timothy. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept.* London: Bloomsbury 2015: 187.

David, A. 2015. "King of Bollywood? The construction of a global image in Shah Rukh Khan's dance choreography." *Shah Rukh Khan and Global Bollywood*, Eds. R. Dudrah, E. Mader & B. Fuchs Oxford University press, 2015. Retrieved 3/22/2019. https://www.academia.edu/17555981/King_of_Bollywood_The_construction_of_a_global_image_in_Shah_Rukh_Khan_s_dance_choreography

Deleuze, Gilles, Guattari, Félix, Tomlinson, Hugh and Burchell, Graham. *What Is Philosophy?* London: Verso, 1994: 173

Durr, Jonathan. "*Seeing Song in Bollywood: Landscape, the Postnational and the Song-and-Dance Sequence in Hindi Popular Cinema*" (Master's thesis), University of Wisconsin, Madison. 2001: 36

Ganti, Tejaswini. *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema.* New York, NY: Routledge, 2010:2

Gopal, Sangita and Sujata Moorti. "Introduction." *Bollywood- Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, Eds. S. Gopal and S. Moorti Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 1–60.

Kabir, Nasreen M. *Bollywood: The Indian Cinema Story*. London: Channel 4 Books, 2001: 130

Kozel, Susan. *Closer: Performance, Technology, Phenomenology*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007: 80. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262113106.001.0001

McPherson, Katrina. *Making Video dance. A step-by step guide*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Miles, Lynden K., Karpinska, Katarzyna, Lumsden, Joanne, and Macrae, Neil C. The   Meandering Mind: Vection and Mental Time Travel. *Plos One.* 5 (5): e10825. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0010825

Miles, Lynden K., Nind, Louise K. and Macrae, Neil C. 2010. "Moving through time". *Psychological Science.* 21 (2): 222-3. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797609359333

Paniker, Ayyappa. 2003. *Indian narratology*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts: 4

Pudipeddi, Haricharan. "Bosco Martis on Rajinikanth's 2.0, choreographing Endhira Logathu Sundariye and why he likes working with Shankar." Posted November 19, 2018 https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/bosco-martis-on-rajinikanths-2-0-choreographing-endhira-logathu-sundariye-and-why-he-likes-working-with-shankar-5578621.html

Rosenberg, Douglas. *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2012: 16. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199772612.001.0001

Smith, Daniel and Protevi, John. "Gilles Deleuze" Updated Feb 14, 2018 https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/ retrieved 4/1/2019

Thrift, Nigel. *Non-representational theory: Space, politics, affect.* London, UK: Routledge. 2008:10. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203946565

Notes
1 Rangan
2 http://www.attakkalari.org
3 Rangan
4 David
5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5F3H9_pYpYg
6 https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=U7x8iEiax64
7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpVA5mx73UE
8 Rosenberg, 16
9 McPherson, 24
10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSnSo0DAJAE
11 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1rYKmNS8uQ
12 Martis
13 https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=2268wHKStWI
14 Kozel, 80
15 Deleuze, 173
16 Smith and Protevi
17 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNm55ptmDcs
18 Abram,
19 Abram,
20 Rosenberg, 16
21 Casasanto and Boroditsky
22 Miles *et al.*, (a)

23 Miles *et al.*, (b)

24 Ganti, 2

25 Kabir, 130

26 Durr, 36

27 Paniker, 4

28 Ibid., 4

29 Rangan

30 Kozel, 286

31 https://www.legacyefx.com/avengers-infinity-war

32 Thrift, 10

33 Gopal and Moorti, 32

Review: *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common* by Harmony Bench (2020)

Jaleea Price

Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common takes the reader on a journey through a collection of digital dance works that cumulatively reveal a rich, and ongoing, interplay between dance and digital media. Available for purchase as a book and as an open-access download, *Perpetual Motion* details an historical evolution of dance's engagement within shared digital media experiences, focusing on the period from 1996 to 2016. As a reader, I quickly found within these pages a personal connectivity and, in these isolating times, a renewed membership into the global, online corporeal community. With myriad works (re)discovered in each chapter, *Perpetual Motion* shows us the global impact dance and digital media have had upon each other through shared social relationships and interactions, both on- and off-screen.

Amidst a richly-woven tapestry of philosophical thinking, author Harmony Bench embeds vivid analysis of shared social relationships within digital spaces as "common", in layered definitions. Readers come to understand movement not only as a common resource, but also digital dance itself as a set of "commoning practices". Using the term from theatre scholar Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Bench constructs examples of these practices as "performative commons" [1] - where artists and viewers collaboratively co-exist in and co-produce shared movement artifacts, across digital media and across bodies. Highly relevant to current social media landscapes, this idea of performative commons is developed and substantiated through analyses shining light on archival markers in dance media history. Traveling through the pages of Perpetual Motion is like unearthing a virtual time capsule and finding layers of digital dance formations - from 1990s interactive screen works to current politically-engaged circulations of viral videos.

Chapter One establishes repetition as a thematic anchor, both in choreographic analysis and conceptual links to early interactive dance-media loops. First exploring CD-ROM examples of limited replay options, Bench later compares iPad apps and iterative screen dance works as more nuanced participatory artifacts in the 1990s (as Bench describes, over this period the invitation to viewer-participants develops, from repeated clicking a 'repeat' button to creating one's own movement material as a factor within the work.) Connecting these works with French philosopher, Jean-Luc Nancy's definition of 'unworking' [2] artifacts, Bench argues that they planted the seeds of future digital-dance commonalities in trends of participation, with YouTube as a favored platform. Those trends are explored throughout subsequent chapters, including: self-recorded dancing in public common spaces in Chapter Two, dance-makers crowdsourcing common material within a diverse global identity in Chapter Three,

and the globalized, gifted re-performing of common digital-dance artifacts in Chapter Four. Each chapter successively builds on the previous writing in weaving through relational developments of the Internet and global dance-cultures.

Continuing with the opening chapter's premise of digital dance as a participatory act, Chapter Two shifts focus to public venues where unexpected airport solos or flash mobs exemplify how "[dance] transforms the affective dimension [of a space]" and "can thus recuperate a sense of the common within public spaces".[3] Here, Bench intertwines theories on the politics of aesthetics and corporeal appearance in questioning what rights do which bodies have to dance in which public spaces (and non-spaces)? During the post-9/11 restrictions on movement in public spaces of the early 2000s in the USA, much dancing onsite became dancing online, disseminated through early forms of social media and allowing for a redistribution of space, via digital platforms, back into the hands of the collective common. The works examined range from heart-warming videos of solo dancers playfully engaging city-goers, to more politically-charged embodied protests and displays of solidarity, dancing in banks or malls. Bench's analysis reveals that amidst the fun of the flash mob era, there are also "important examples of how… "just" dancing in public can be a deeply political act".[4]

Expanding the scope further from public dance in the USA into global perspectives, Chapter Three connects dancing together on social media as a way to create meaning in a common world or a worldly world in Nancy's *mondialisation*.[5] In Bench's selected examples of crowdsourced choreographies from diverse movement backgrounds, participants intermingle roles of dance-making, film-making and/or viewing, all to coexist as Nancy's "singular plurality"[6] of individuals within the masses of common digital-dance collectives. In the final chapter, using the 24-Hour "Happiness" music video project as a primary example, Bench analyzes more commercialized online spaces to assert that "at the intersection of gift and market economies, [dance] in digital cultures, … migrate[s] as a gift of the common." Grounded in anthropological theories, Bench argues that digital platforms support the perpetual motion of shared movement information throughout globalized platforms as gifts of "shared gestures and choreographies … [that] travel between the culture industry and fans."

As a dance-arts educator, I found many of the curated artifacts in *Perpetual Motion* to be engaging tools or learning resources. I was delighted by the archaic CD-ROM tidbits unearthed (and sad I couldn't play them – as Bench discusses, the disappearance of these works through obsolescence is itself an important aspect in the study of digitized dance). I was also intrigued by the iPad Apps (which I *could* download and play!). Bench's unique collection is a valuable resource showcasing pivotal works in a lesser-known history of digital movement-based art. Some of the 90's websites of screendance projects or old gifs and memes were occasionally frustrating in limited viewing access (darn you FlashPlayer!). However, the majority of YouTube videos and short films were still quietly awaiting rediscovery. Many of the works also resonate with sociopolitical contexts that are highly relevant in current global perspectives. Chapter One's purgatory of performing repetitive loops in limited space recalls images of COVID lockdown. Meanwhile the political power of unified bodies in public, from the 2012 Black Lives Matter movement in Chapter Two, can be

seen re-performing all over the world today. In Chapters Three and Four, almost as a counter-perspective to political contexts, the artifacts examined reveal a semblance of shared 'global digital-dance citizenship' amongst practitioner-performers and viewers.

Far from painting social media as a great equalizer in global dance expressions, Bench does raise stinging questions of appropriating culture, and gives voice to legitimate concerns of authorship and attribution regarding crowdsourcing. She also notes the privileged positions of a majority of social media producers, and readily admits that her own specific lens has narrowed the scope of the book's investigations. 'However, my salient feeling after reading this book is that, through "attend[ing] to shifts in dance performance, reception, dissemination, and circulation brought about by popular digital media technologies"[7] Bench is offering up a set of questions and approaches that will lend themselves to future analyses of historical, current and future dances in digital spaces.*Perpetual Motion* accumulates a sense of kinesthetic connections across borders; an empathy and vitality in sharing laughter, and struggles, through digital dance as a common, embodied global language. Bench's research is an important commentary on the evolutionary synergy between digital dance and social media, a process through which common human experiences are shared across global digital cultures.

Author Biography
Jaleea Price is an international dance-art and film educator with a penchant for movement analysis, biomechanics, and theater tech. She is a neophyte filmmaker and Certified Movement Analysis candidate with an M.A. in Dance from California State University - Long Beach. When not teaching, teching, or practicing Mandarin, Jaleea can be found binging on screendance, investigating global intersections of Black Lives Matter campaigns, or learning new recipes while living in Asia.

References
Bench, Harmony. *Perpetual Motion*: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctvxw3p32

Cramer, Franz Anton. "Thinking Dance - Jean-Luc Nancy: Goethe Institut." Copyright: Goethe-Institut e. V., Internet-Redaktion April 2015. Translation: Heather Moers.
https://www.goethe.de/en/kul/tut/gen/tan/20509686.html

Maddock Dillon, Elizabeth. *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649–1849*
Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822395737

Notes
[1] **Maddock Dillon**, 2014
[2] Bench, 2020: 15
[3] Ibid., 17
[4] Ibid., 61
[5] Ibid.,17
[6] Ibid., 101-102
[7] Bench, 187