MEDIA DANCE: AN ART FORM - THE INTERSECTION OF ART, TECHNOLOGIES, AND BODIES IN MOTION

GEORGE TURNBULL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

June 2025

© George Turnbull, 2025

Abstract

Media dance, as an umbrella term, building on its screendance roots, is a hybrid art form, one that operates at the intersection of dance (body in motion) and technology, with the frame of the screen in mind. In effect, media dance involves a conversation between the creator engaging with media dance, who must embrace all the possibilities of movement, dance, and technology, and the choreographer, who must grasp the possibilities of media as an art, while understanding the potential to create new kinds of works through the capture of movement and the power of editing. Building on and supported by a substantial review of the screendance literature, case study analysis, and interviews with leading Canadian and international screendance scholars, practitioners, and film festival curators, this research investigates the critical debates animating the screendance field today. The dissertation addresses one central research question in particular: is media dance, building on its screendance foundation, an art form with a viable future in a post-pandemic, technologically mediated world?

This dissertation proposes a taxonomy for screendance redefined under the umbrella category of "Media Dance" and argues that from an institutional perspective, screendance, and perhaps more broadly in the future, *media dance*, should build on its interdisciplinarity by seeking its own institutional home in an interdisciplinary arts program or department with a future focus, not only on scholarship, but also on research-creation. The dissertation's case studies reveal that many films have technologically mediated dance elements within them, but only a few feature-length films have enough of these elements to be truly classified as media dance films. However, contrary to feature-length films, media dance works flourish in the experimental (avant-garde) and music video genres where entire works are created with only dance, music, technology, and the frame in mind. Despite ongoing funding issues, the production

of technologically mediated dance works is entering a new phase of creativity, innovation, and technological advancement that may have broad audience appeal. In a post-pandemic world, media dance may take its place on multiple forms of social media and streaming platforms, as well as in traditional modes of cinematic distribution.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Foreword

I have always loved screendance, as it combines three of my passions – filmmaking, film technology, and dance. When I began thinking about a dissertation topic for my Ph.D., screendance was a natural choice. Initially, I was drawn to include both research-creation and academic components, in meeting the requirements of the degree. In the last ten years, I have made eight screendance films, including five in the avant-garde/experimental style: *The Umbrella Dance* (2010); *Black and Gold* (2013); *Identity Crisis* (*ID*) (2015); *Hanging On* (2015); and *The Rainbow Ribbon* (2019). Three other works I created in the Hollywood style: *Where Can I Run?* (2012, updated 2023), a 30-minute horror musical; *HVUC Fitness Club* (2016); and *Happily Ever After* (2017), a short satirical musical. Of these, I would classify three as research-creation screendance productions: *Identity Crisis (ID)*; *Happily Ever After* (2017); and *The Rainbow Ribbon* (2019). My initial focus was to use my Ph.D. research to bolster my screendance production experience. Because of the 2020 pandemic, however, this proved impossible. Studios and production spaces closed, and dancers went into isolation. I decided, therefore, to take a more academic approach to my research and to delve into the major issues animating the screendance field and genre at this time. However, not wanting to ignore my research-creation experience, I have included relevant information about the screendance films I have already produced in appropriate sections in this dissertation.

Understanding that I would be bringing a new and more academic direction to my research, two of the comprehensives for my Ph.D. focused on screendance. In addition, as part of the course work for my degree, I took a directed reading course where I focused on screendance in Canada. This resulted in the publication of an article on that topic in *The Dance Current* in 2019. I also incorporated information on screendance in Canada into a chapter I wrote – *Film in*

Canada's Creative Industries: Old Barriers and New Opportunities – which was included in the text, *Creative Industries in Canada,*[1] published in 2022.

My work on this dissertation has taken me through the highs and lows of the screendance field and has yielded new insights. I look forward to taking what I have learned and incorporating it into my future research, teaching, administrative, and filmmaking endeavours.

[1] Cheryl Thompson and Miranda Campbell, eds. *Creative Industries in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2022).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the many people who have helped me on my academic journey. My love of making films began when I was 11 years old and received my first camera. This led to making films with family and friends at a family cottage. I was hooked. My love of dance began at an early age and led to years of being a competitive dancer and now into a love of choreographing and teaching dance to people of all ages, particularly seniors.

Thank you to the teachers and friends who supported me in my academic career before I began my Ph.D. at York: my teachers at the Etobicoke School of the Arts where I was a film major in high school; my professors at Queen's University, the California Institute of the Arts, and the University of California at Los Angeles during the completion of my B.A. (Film and Media Studies); and my professors at Ryerson University (now Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)), where I completed my M.A. (Media Production).

I have loved my time at York University. I want to thank all the professors from whom I have taken courses and Kuowei Lee for his support during my years at York. I want to thank the members of my supervisory committee: Dr. Michael Zryd (supervisor), Dr. Brenda Longfellow, and Dr. Taien Ng-Chan. I also want to thank the other members of my examination committee: Dr. Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof (TMU), Dr. Bridget Cauthery (York), and Don Sinclair (York).

My studies and research have been supported by granting agencies and York University: The Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS-Award from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), an Ontario Graduate Scholarship, York University's Doctoral Entrance Award, and York University's Susan Mann/Provost Dissertation Scholarship.

Thank you to all those who have supported me in my screendance endeavours thus far, including all the Canadian and international screendance scholars, practitioners, and film festival

curators whom I interviewed as part of my research. Also, thank you to Janet Uren for her support from my very first filmmaking experiences.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family, particularly my mother and twin sister – Deborah and Audrey Turnbull, for always being there for me, in times of joy and in times of struggle. I could not have done this without you.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

Setting the Stage in the Use of Terminology:

Screendance is an art form and a growing field of academic inquiry launched on an upward trajectory in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world. In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I propose that the term "media dance" replace the term "screendance" as the umbrella category in the complicated taxonomic and labelling debates in the field of "screendance" that have animated but ultimately divided the field to the point where they need resolution. In doing so, I am creating challenges for readers of this dissertation because of the use of different terms, often synonymous ones, used by various scholars in the screendance field. To set the stage, I review the screendance literature and introduce concepts using the term "screendance." After my taxonomic analysis, introduced in Chapter 1, I use the terminology as I define it in Figure 2. I hope you will bear with me as you read this dissertation and come to embrace the new terminology and taxonomy being proposed.

Introduction to Screendance:

Screendance is a hybrid discipline, one that operates at the intersection of dance (body in motion) and film (image in motion); is made with the frame of the screen or screen-like display surface in mind; and is interdisciplinary and intermedial by its very nature. The intimate relationship between the camera and the choreography is fundamental to screendance. The camera can capture movement that a live audience of dance performance on a proscenium stage cannot see, a capacity that results, as Douglas Rosenberg explains, in the recorporealization "of the dancing body via screen techniques; at times a construction of an impossible body, one not encumbered by gravity, temporal restraints, or death."[2] The filmmaker engaging with

[2] Douglas Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 55.

screendance must embrace the possibilities of movement and dance, while the choreographer must grasp the possibilities of cinema as an art while understanding the potential to create new kinds of work through the capture of movement, framing, and the power of editing. With the evolution of new technologies, the collaboration among the filmmaker, the cinematographer, the choreographer, the dancer, and the editor give endless options for creative expression in this evolving field.[3]

Many terms have come to be synonymous with screendance: choreocinema; cine-dance; dance for camera; choreography for the camera; motion-picture dance; dance on screen; video dance; dance film; film dance; dance 4 camera; and moving-image dance. This confusing multiplicity of terms has resulted, as Greg Faller writes, in a "convoluted semantic and theoretical arena" which, as Douglas Rosenberg states, "currently suffers from a crisis of identity"[4] and even confusion about what is fundamental to this art form. Does the human form need to be present or can non-humans, or even inanimate objects such as animals or grasses swaying in the wind, be part of screendance? Does screendance depend, as Anne Heighway suggests, upon "the intentions of the creators themselves?"[5] How does screendance intersect with the history of montage editing in film? What light does it shed on the nature of dance itself? With debates over whether the roots of screendance date back to the earliest films of Eadweard Muybridge or other examples like the 1920s dance spectacles of Loïe Fuller, the 1930s musicals of Busby Berkeley, the first animated films by Disney in the late 1930s, and/or in the 1940s and

[3] In this dissertation, I will use the term "filmmaker" as an umbrella term but acknowledge that the filmmaker also may be the cinematographer, choreographer, editor, and even the dancer or one of the dancers, or the filmmaker may be the director working with a choreographer, dancers, cinematographer, editor, and an entire post-production team to produce a screendance work.
[4] Greg Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance – A Personal Archaeology," in *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films*, eds. Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty (South Yorkshire and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016), 20; Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 1.
[5] Anna Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance" in Radical Screendance," *The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014): 44.

1950s in the pioneering surrealism of Ukrainian-born Maya Deren,[6] the battle to define this art form continues to rage. Described by Erin Brannigan as an "undiscipline," screendance continues today to be the focus of a definitional debate among many scholars and practitioners as to whether it should be classified as a discipline, an "undiscipline," an interdisciplinary field, or an art form,[7] or a component of all of the above. And where is the home of screendance from an academic, institutional perspective? Even with these definitional, taxonomic, and institutional conundrums, the number of screendance works (however ill-defined the term) appearing in the first two decades of the 21st century has exploded under the influence of easy access, and relatively inexpensive digital media technology, and the availability of numerous social platforms and film festivals (virtual, hybrid, or in-person) for dissemination.

This dissertation addresses one central research question: is screendance, and what I would more broadly define as media dance, an art form and a field of academic inquiry with a viable future in a post-pandemic, technologically mediated world? To answer this question, it is necessary to explore the critical debates in this hybrid field and to address many related sub-questions that are key to the future of screendance and media dance. Is the obsession with the taxonomy and labelling actually diminishing our understanding of the form? With institutions of higher learning and research funding agencies now broadly accepting research-creation as a methodology for artistic expression and academic exploration, what role can this shift play in screendance, and more broadly in media dance, scholarship and practice? Consideration of what Wyn Pottratz calls for the necessity of the "choreographic compositional intent"[8] in screendance

---

[6] Maria De Rosa and Marilyn Burgess, *Canadian Dance Mapping Study: Literature Review* (Ottawa: Canadian Council for the Arts, 2012), 61.
[7] Erin Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 518.
[8] Wyn Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything: Defining the Form Ten Years after the *(Hu)Manifesto*," *The International Journal of Screendance* 6 (2016): 182.

works to further fuel the discussion. What does "choreographic compositional intention" mean, and what are its creative possibilities? What is the relationship of embodiment to screendance works? Do screendance works have to feature a human body in motion to be classified as screendance or can images of moving insects put to music be classified as such? What are all the possibilities for creation with new – and yet to be conceived – technologically mediated dance forms? Do these definitional questions bear on how we can improve funding, distribution, and exhibition opportunities to support diverse and intersectional art forms, like media dance? Should the overall master category for technologically mediated dance be "screendance" or has that term outlived its usefulness because of its relationship to analogue, 2D technologies? Rather, should the overall master category be called something else, such as "media dance," to more broadly encompass everything that this creative form has been, is, and can be? How does media dance portray popular culture particularly addressing issues of gender, race, disability, agism, body politics, identity, appropriation, diversity, human rights, environmental concerns, and equality?

In this dissertation, these research questions are explored with many examples and case studies coming from international sources as well as from the Canadian perspective. Even though much has been and is being done in this field in Canada, many of these contributions have not been integrated into international, contemporary, screendance (media dance) scholarship.

The scope of this dissertation is broad, but it needs to be, as the questions posed must be addressed in an effort to understand the field as a means to move it forward as an interdisciplinary field of study and a creative, hybrid art form. With the evolution of new technologies, new audiences, new screens, and new platforms for dissemination, supported by new, creative funding models and sources, screendance (media dance) is in its infancy in terms

of what it offers scholars and practitioners as a futuristic art form in Canada and around the world.

Relationship to Existing Screendance Literature/Research Context:

This research builds on a body of screendance literature that reaches back to the mid-twentieth century, beginning with the writings of Maya Deren[9] in the mid-1940s, followed by a special issue on 'cine-dance' in the academic journal *Dance Perspectives* published in 1967.[10] Early articles focused on methods of production of this art form, with scholarly writings that established an academic foundation for the field only beginning to emerge in the 1990s. In many articles and texts, the academic focus is based on the work of the practitioners in the field with much overlap between scholarly pursuits and the production of art form. Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen's *Parallel Lines: Media Representations in Dance*, published in 1993, was one of the first anthologies of commissioned academic papers examining dance in media and how dance is represented on public television in Britain.[11] Sherril Dodds' *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*[12] was the first, definitive scholarly text that began to define the field, introducing the rich diversity of screendance genres. She linked the history of screendance to the history of television, which has evolved into reality TV dance programs, among other genres. She, like many others, credits Maya Deren for her *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945) as the first major film of screendance, featuring the intersection of dance and the camera. Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber compiled practitioner-

[9] Maya Deren, "Choreography for the Camera," in *Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film,* ed. B.R. McPherson (New York: Documentext, [1945] 2005), 220-224.
[10] Harmony Bench, "Screendance," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies,* ed. Sherril Dodds (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 219.
[11] Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen, eds., *Parallel Lines: Media Representations in Dance* (London: John Libby, 1993).
[12] Sherril Dodds, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

drafted essays on dance film. Their book, *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video,* includes 55 papers written by different professionals in the field: choreographers, directors, cinematographers, editors, historians, and experimental animators, among others. This compilation combines the academic with the practical and, in the words of Stephanie Jordan and Dave Allen, sheds light on the "challenges facing artists as they transform dance works for the screen."[13] These same issues are explored in *Dance's Duet with the Camera: Motion Pictures.* Edited by Telroy Arendell and Ruth Barnes, and published in 2016, this collection of papers focuses on the elements of videodance related to space, time, body, editing, and the detailed processes involved in videodance production. Papers presented in the text explore new technologies, the role of the spectator, and the concept of cinematic time.[14] These compilations are complemented by the step-by-step guide to creating dance for screen, *Making Video Dance*, written by Katrina McPherson and published in 2006 (second edition, 2019). This book constitutes a how-to manual for choreographers and filmmakers, including interviews with leading practitioners on both sides of the camera.[15] Erin Brannigan, in *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image,* took a whole new approach to the analysis of screendance. She does not date screendance to the early 20th century, rather tracing its origins to the first dance on film created by Thomas Edison in the United States and to the recordings of vaudeville artists by the Lumière brothers in France. She discusses screendance as an "undiscipline" and argues that Loïe Fuller should join Maya Deren in taking a "more central position within the historical and technological matrix" in screendance, rather than just being a footnote.[16] *The Oxford Handbook*

[13] Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber, eds., *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), xvi.
[14] Telroy D. Arendell and Ruth Barnes, eds., *Dance's Duet with the Camera: Motion Pictures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[15] Katrina McPherson, *Making Video Dance: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Dance for the Screen* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
[16] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*, 38.

of Dance and the Popular Screen is another important anthology, consisting of 28 papers that examine contemporary perspectives of dance in popular culture and on multiple screens and platforms. Edited by Melissa Borelli Blanco, papers in this volume analyse dance films from many perspectives: identity politics, technology, commercialism, self-discovery, individual expression, choreography, embodiment, and dance pedagogy.[17]

Douglas Rosenberg's writings have laid the academic groundwork for this flourishing art form in the second decade of the 21st century. In his 2012 book *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* he tackles the history of controversial definitional debates, calling the field "screendance," which he says is "the most accurate way to describe the passage of 'dance' via its mediated image, to any and all screens without articulating materiality."[18] He challenges scholars in the field to look at the critical issues being addressed by screendance works and advocates for interdisciplinary approaches to allow for a broader discussion of hybridity and mediatized representation as they apply to dance on film. He addresses the need to teach courses on screendance that will integrate scholarship with production. Rosenberg went on in 2016 to edit *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, comprising 36 papers written by scholars from various fields of dance, performance, visual art, and cinema and media studies. He makes the case for screendance as an interdisciplinary, hybrid art form to be recognized as an academic field in its own right, worthy of critical recognition. With growing interest in this academic field, Douglas Rosenberg and Claudia Kappenberg joined forces to launch *The International Journal of Screendance* in 2010. Attracting scholarly articles from around the world, this journal continues to publish one edition annually. More recently, Harmony Bench, in her 2020 text,

[17] Melissa Blanco Borelli, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[18] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 55.

Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common focuses "on the twenty-year period from 1996 to 2016…proceeds from the position that digital technologies, and especially internet technologies, have thoroughly saturated the practices, creations, distribution, and viewers' experiences of dance."[19] Screendance and digital dance are easily accessible given the way they are disseminated, viewed, and circulated having changed greatly in 21st century digital culture. The works of all of the scholars cited above have provided a foundation on which to base the current study, and many of their contributions to this field will be explored more fully in the relevant chapters in this dissertation.

The field is suffering an identity crisis as well as an ongoing taxonomic debate. Rosenberg has defined what he calls the three branches of screendance, indicating that each involves dance "with the screen as its end point."[20] The first branch encompasses Hollywood and Bollywood musicals, as well as other mainstream musicals, "in which dance is embedded in the narrative arc of the film – such as the choreographic work of Busby Berkeley, Gene Kelly's *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), and the numerous contributions of Shirley Temple."[21] Many recent films clearly belong to this branch, such as the works of the choreographer, Bob Fosse, and *Chicago*, adapted for film in 2002 by director, Rob Marshall.[22] Within this branch, "films are distinguished by high entertainment values and the use of dance in service to a narrative arc."[23] The second branch is populated by experimental or avant-garde artists whose work "articulates individual manifestos for screendance."[24] The works in this

---

[19] Bench, *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 3.
[20] Rosenberg, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.
[21] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[22] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[23] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[24] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.

branch are characterized by a yielding of narrative "in favour of a poetics of the body…[with] repetition, sequencing, reimagining, and the recorporealizing of bodies in the context of choreographic sensibility."[25] Maya Deren's *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945) is one of the most often cited works included in the second branch. The third branch is the rhizomatic and includes the scholars and practitioners in the field, says Rosenberg, who "write conference papers, essays and books, curate festivals, distribute work via the Web, and teach courses and workshops in screendance at institutions of higher education and elsewhere."[26] All the texts cited above are examples of works from the third branch. This three-branch taxonomy has put screendance in what Priscilla Guy calls an "uncomfortable box."[27] In this dissertation, this complicated structure is analysed with a new taxonomic and hierarchical approach presented in Chapter 1.

Brannigan inaugurated the debate around "discipline," describing screendance as an "undiscipline," appearing as it does so variously "in performance, galleries, cinemas, and on our television screens."[28] An examination of screendance studies in higher education feeds the discussion for, as Bench writes, "many scholars and practitioners involved in Screendance self-identify as coming from other fields and do not see themselves uniting around a shared discourse of Screendance."[29] Consideration of these disciplinary and institutional conundrums leads to the conclusion that, as screendance evolves as an art form, it will utilize, examine, and adapt

[25] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 5.
[26] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,*13.
[27] Pricilla Guy, "Screendance as a Question: *All This Can Happen* and the first Edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screendance." *The International Journal of Screendance* 7 (2016): 201.
[28] Brannigan, "Yvonne Rainer's *Lives of Performers*: An 'Undisciplined' Encounter with the Avant-Garde," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 518-519. As quoted by Bench, "Screendance," 224.
[29] Bench, "Screendance," 224.

concepts from other disciplines and art forms. This interdisciplinarity makes it a vibrant, creative, and innovative medium for artistic expression and appreciation.

Research-creation is increasingly widely accepted as a methodology for advancing new knowledge at institutions of higher learning. Even funding agencies like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of the Government of Canada have been funding research using this methodology since about 2001.[30] The continued interest in Canada in research-creation has been and is being studied by a number of researchers such as Natalie Loveless at the University of Alberta and Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk at Concordia University.[31] Their research complements that of other scholars in this area as they develop suggestions, guidance, and recommendations on the endorsement of research-creation studies in institutions of higher learning. Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis have examined art as inquiry in relation to narrative research.[32] Maria Piantanida and her colleagues, as well as Patrick Slattery, Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow, and Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, have made recommendations on how to create arts-based educational research in institutions of higher learning.[33] John Hockey has developed practice-based research degree opportunities for art and design students in the United Kingdom and Anne Goldson recently examined the emergence of

---

[30] SSHRC. Research-Creation Grants in Fine Arts, September 6, 2013. Accessed February 6, 2024, https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/fine_arts-arts_lettres-eng.aspx

[31] Natalie Loveless, "Practice in the Flesh of Theory: Art, Research and Fine Arts PhD," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (2012): 93-108.; Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Durhan and London: Duke University Press, 2019); Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and "Family Resemblances," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no.1 (2012): 5-26.

[32] Arthur Bochner, and Carolyn Ellis, "An Introduction to the Arts and Narrative Research: Art as Inquiry," *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, no. 4 (2003): 506-514.

[33] Maria Piantanida, Patricia L. McMahon, and Noreen B. Garman, "Sculpting the contours of arts-based educational research within a discourse community," *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (2003): 182-191; Patrick Slattery, "Troubling the contours of arts-based educational education," *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (2003): 192-197; Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow, "Articulating Choreographic Practices, Locating the Field: An Introduction," *Choreographic Practices* 1 (2010): 3-19; Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, "Ways of Framing: Introducing Creative Arts Research, in *Creative Arts Research: Narrative of Methodologies and Practices,* eds. Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publications, 2009).

creative practice as research in New Zealand.[34] My practice-based research, introduced in the Foreword and discussed more thoroughly in other chapters in this dissertation, endorses the use of this creative approach to research, combining the scholarly with creative practice. The analysis presented on research-creation reviews the scholarly literature introduced above and adds to our understanding by analyzing how an art form like screendance can benefit from this research practice to build new participation by scholars, practitioners, and students. In this dissertation, I focus on academic discussions of screendance but acknowledge that debates among artists in the media dance community deserve further attention.

This dissertation addresses the elements of embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, and, in many works, social and/or cultural commentary on themes related to race, religion, disability, and other issues, often within narratives or through metaphorical concepts, as fundamental to screendance works. The most common definition of dance is simply "humans in motion." However, after the acceptance of films at screendance film festivals that do not include the human form, the debate around the nature of screendance has broadened and intensified. After seeing some films not involving the human form, Pottratz was reluctant to classify them as screendance. She concludes that "Screendance is a moving image work, the content of which has choreographic compositional intention, combined with the technical and creative language of cinema."[35] The key for Pottratz is "choreographic compositional intention," which, according to my analysis, privileges human intention in choreographic intent. Heighway dismisses the need for "choreographic compositional intention," concluding that "dance" in screendance need not be

[34] Annie Goldson, "The emergence of creative practice as research," *Pacific Journalism Review* 26, no. 1 (2020): 1-13.; John Hockey, "Practice-Based Research Degree Students in Art and Design: Identity and Adaptation," in *Research in Art and Design Education: Issues and Examples,* ed. Richard Hickman (Bristol, U.K.: Intellect Books, 2008).
[35] Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.

"dance movement, nor human motion, but anything kinetically driven, full stop."[36] My research challenges the notion of "choreographic compositional intention" with a focus on how movement is captured, on the type of movement captured, the intent of the creator, and the contributions of individual works to the analysis of social, cultural, racial, and religious themes and issues (among others). My contribution in this area addresses the need for boundaries, especially related to funding and critical recognition. In this respect, my research builds on the work of many other screendance scholars.[37]

There is growing interest in the use of expanded cinematic techniques in screendance products, particularly with emerging technologies likes virtual and augmented reality (VR and AR), and artificial intelligence (AI) to say nothing of 3D, CGI, motion-capture, 4K UHD cellphones, video projections, computer choreographic software, and wearable screens. Development software, such as Unity, Isadora, and DanceForms and their successors, support some of these new technologies. As the technologies for film and cinema evolve, the future of screendance may lie in holography and AI. As Kent de Spain writes, "if our dance is to reflect our lives, we must learn to create new movements in new spaces, and dance with the technology within and around us."[38] With the growing use of screendance in video games and the

[36] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance" in Radical Screendance:" 44.
[37] Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182-185; Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance" in Radical Screendance:" 44-62. Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 14-42; Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*; Roger Copeland, "The Best Dance is the Way People Die in Movies (or Gestures Toward a New Definition of "Screendance")," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 225-242; Ann Cooper Albright, "Resurrecting the Future – Body, Image, and Technology in the Work of Loïe Fuller," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 715-730; Amy Greenfield, "The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren and Harris, in *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video,* eds. Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber (New York: Routledge, 2002), 21-26; Jenelle Porter, "Dance with Camera – A Curator's POV," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 23-44; Marcus White, "Narrative Shifts: Race, Culture, and the Production of Screendance," *The International Journal of Screendance* 9 (2018): 155-170.
[38] Kent de Spain, "Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans," *Dance Research Journal* 32, no. 1 (2000): 16.

development of interactive sites where viewers become the creators of their own screendance works, there is great room for creativity, innovation, and technological advancement in this emerging art form. New technologies and the writings of many scholars are reviewed in Chapter 3 in relation to the history and evolution of interactive media technologies and the future of media dance.[39] The results of this research lead to proposals for new funding models for technologically mediated dance works.

This study examines the evolution of screendance as an immersive art form where the user is also manipulating images or technologies to create their own screendances. As an immersive art form, the aptness of the term "screendance" may be challenged as these immersive works go beyond the traditional cinema or video screen, while, at the same time attracting new audiences and creators to the field. The growing interest in VR and AR, among other technologies, illustrate this point.

Many scholars have explored audience reception and spectatorship.[40] The fundamental tenet of the reception theory is that an audience member interprets the meaning of a "text,"

---

[39] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving*; Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: Dutton, 1970); Johannes Birringer, "Dance and Interactivity," *Dance Research Journal* 36, no. 1 (2004): 88-111; Johannes Birringer, "Intelligent Stages: Digital Art and Performance," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 24, no. 1 (2002): 84-93; de Spain, "Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans"; Bench, "Anti-Gravitational choreographies: Strategies for Mobility in Screendance," *International Journal of Screendance* 1 (2010): 53-61; Andrea Davidson, "Extending the Discourse of Screendance – Dance and New Media," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 389-419; Simon Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," (2008), hyperchoreogrpahy.org; Naomi Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution – Popular Dancing, YouTubing, and Exchange in Screendance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 695-714; Kim Vincs, "Virtualizing Dance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 263-282; Mark Boucher, "Virtual Dance and Motion-Capture," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 9 (2011): 1-15; Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art and Installation* (MIT Press, 2007); Thecla Schiphorst, A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of the Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of *Trackers,* Master of Arts Thesis (Vancouver, B.C.: Simon Fraser University, 1993); Schiphorst and Tom Calvert, "Creative Collaboration: The Evolution of Software for Dance," *Computational Culture, A Journal of Software Studies, Special Issue on Software Practices in digital Performance* (2013).

[40] John Sullivan, *Media Audiences: Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013); Tom Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," *Yale Journal of*

whether this be a book, movie, theatrical performance, or other creative work, according to their own cultural, religious, political, or economic backgrounds, and life experiences. John Sullivan, in his extensive work on audiences and spectatorship, has concluded that the study of audiences should "start with *everyday life* [his emphasis] experiences" in relation to "how technology, social relationships, and physical contexts can shape our identities as individuals, consumers, and citizens."[41] In terms of screendance, this invites different cultural conceptions of dance and choreography in this field, which support my argument (discussed in more detail in Chapter 1) to reclassify screendance to embrace the broader concept of *media dance*. Dodds supports my argument stating that screendance "would benefit from further qualitative research into how audiences read and understand popular dance film."[42] She argues that popular screendance has a wider potential audience than "theatre dance or presentational vernacular dance."[43] New platforms for presentation, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, web channels, company websites, and interactive museum and gallery installations, may attract new audiences. YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are the oldest and best established of these platforms, with TikTok becoming more popular.[44] The emergence of more and more web channels and a variety

---

Criticism 7, no. 2 (1994): 189-201; Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," in *Culture, Media Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis (London: Hutchison, 1980), 128-138; Sonia Livingstone, "Relationships between media and audiences: Prospects for future audience reception studies," in *Media, Ritual and Identity: Essays in Honor of Elihu Katz Liebes,* eds. James Curran and Tamar Liebes (London: Routledge, 1998), Chapter 14; Judith Mayne, "Paradoxes of Spectatorship," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film,* ed. Laura Williams (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 155-183; Martin Barker, "I have seen the future and it is not here yet…; or, on being ambitious for audience research, *Communication Review* 9, no.2 (2006): 123-141; David Morley, "Unanswered questions in audience research," *Communication Review* 9, no. 2 (2006): 101-121.

[41] Sullivan, *Media Audiences*, 247.

[42] Dodds, "Values in Motion: Reflections on Popular Screen Dance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, ed. Melissa Blanco Borelli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 452.

[43] Dodds, "Values in Motion," 452.

[44] Tiktok currently has over 1.7 billion users, "was the most downloaded app in 2021 beating various popular social media apps such as Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat…with more than 1 billion videos being viewed on Tiktok every day." (GilPress, "Tiktok Statistics For 2024: Users, Demographics, Trends," 29 November 2023, https://whatsthebigdata.com/tiktok-statistics/). As of January 2024, Facebook had "3.049 billion monthly active users" (Backlinko, "Facebook User and Growth Statistics to Know in 2024," 12 December 2023, https://backlinko.com/facebook-users), Instagram "is expected to hit 1.4 billion [monthly users] worldwide in 2024"

of company websites offer a novel means for screendance dissemination, while interactive sites and installations at museums and galleries are an obvious forum. The same applies to the use of relatively new devices, such as Apple Vision Pro or Meta Quest, for viewing screendance works created with new technologies.

Media dance has a place in popular culture and deserves more public attention, not just through Hollywood, but through legacy media and new streaming and social media platforms. In Canada, broadcasters such as CBC, TVOntario, Radio Canada, Bell TV, and Rogers might play a role by increasing their commitment to dance and embracing the relationship between dance and emerging digital technologies, without abandoning original concepts of what dance on camera can be. To date, research has largely neglected the audiences who watch screendance on new devices and platforms. Similarly, little attention has been paid to what audiences expect to see after reading the marketing and advertising materials promoting such screendance products and festivals. Does the platform or festival deliver the art form they expected to see? In my research, I analyse this question to provide new and different answers and to present options related to the definitional debate and the technologically mediated future of screendance (media dance).

This dissertation examines major research questions through the work of international scholars and practitioners and of Canadian scholars who have studied screendance with or

(Oberlo, "How Many People Use Instagram? (2020-2025)," January 2024, https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/how-many-people-use-instagram#), and the number of monthly users of YouTube worldwide "is forecast to hit 933.39 millon" in 2024 (Oberlo, "How Many People Use YouTube? (2019-2028)," January 2024, https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/how-many-people-use-youtube#

without a Canadian focus.[45] As well, it introduces the work of a long list of Canadian practitioners who have driven screendance scholarship and the evolution of the art form historically and continue to lead today. These include: Norman McLaren, Phillipe Baylaucq, Marie Chouinard, Veronica Tennant, Philip Szporer and Marlene Millar, Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, Freya Björg Olafson, Priscilla Guy, Elias Djemil-Matassov, Alan Lake, Terrance Houle, Sarah Lefebvre, Allen and Karen Kaeja, and Kathleen Rea. This analysis will help integrate the contributions of Canadian scholars and practitioners into international, contemporary, screendance scholarship.

This dissertation addresses the issues that concern screendance scholars and practitioners today. It presents options for encouraging growth in the art form in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world where there is potential to attract new scholars, practitioners, audiences, and students who are looking for new ways to study, produce, and present technologically mediated dance works.

[45] Philip Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," in *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video,* ed. Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber (NewYork: Routledge, 2002), 168-175; Szporer, "Motion in Motion," in *The Dance Current* (2003); Szporer and Marlene Millar, "Moving In(To) 3D," in *Dance's Duet with the Camera,* eds. Telroy Arendell and Ruth Barnes (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016), 225-237; Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, "Loïe Fuller's Serpentines and Poetics of Self-Abnegation in the Era of Electrotechnics, in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 45-62; Jessica Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 349-367; Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 200-212; Guy, *Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators,* Master of Arts Thesis (Toronto: York University, 2011); Guy, "Where is the Choreography? Who is the Choreographer? – Alternate Approaches to Choreography through Editing, in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 591-610; Allen Kaeja, *Transforming Media: Adapting the Dance Production: 'Asylum of Spoons' from Stage to Film* (Toronto: Lambert Academic Publishing (2009); Mary Fogarty, "Gene Kelly: The Original, Updated," in *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image,* ed. Erin Brannigan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 83-97; Fogarty, "From 'Best Street' to 'Step Up 3D': The Sound of Street Films, in *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films,* eds. Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty (South Yorkshire and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Limited, 2016), 43-60; Schiphorst, *A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's use of the Lifeforms Computer choreographic System in the Making of "Trackers"*; Schiphorst and Calvert, "Creative Collaboration: The Evolution of Software for Dance."

Methodology:

A comprehensive review and analysis of primary and secondary published texts, journal articles, and publicly-available media forms the basis for a contextual and historical synthesis of screendance. Arguing on the basis of this synthesis, the dissertation proposes a new taxonomic approach for this emerging field and proposes answers to questions emerging from definitional and institutional debates. The dissertation also undertakes case study analysis of many screendance works, examining embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, and social and cultural themes and issues related to race, religion, and people living with disabilities, among others. At the same time, it provides a new lens through which to analyze past, current, and future screendance (media dance) works. Aspects of this research are supported by data collection through one-on-one interviews (by Zoom or telephone)[46] with 18 leading international and Canadian screendance scholars, professors, practitioners, and film festival curators.[47] Their input has been invaluable. Using analysis of the collected data, the dissertation examines the

[46] As this research involved interviews with human participants, the methodology had to be pre-approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee of the Office of Research Ethics at York University before the interviews could proceed. This approval was given in the Fall of 2021.

[47] Screendance scholars, practitioners, professors, and film festival curators interviewed: Douglas Rosenberg (Scholar, Practitioner, Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, U.S.A.); Dr. Claudia Kappenberg (Scholar, Professor at the University of Brighton, U.K.); Dr. Erin Brannigan (Scholar, Professor at the University of South Wales, Australia); Dr. Harmony Bench (Scholar, Practitioner, Professor at Ohio State University, U.S.A.); Dr. Sherril Dodds (Scholar, Professor at Temple University, Philadelphia, U.S.A.); Ellen Bromberg (Scholar, Practitioner, Professor at the University of Utah and the University of California at Berkeley, U.S.A.); Dr. Greg S. Faller (Scholar, Professor at Towson University, Maryland, U.S.A.); Philip Szporer (Canadian Scholar, Practitioner through Mouvement Perpetuel, Professor at Concordia University); Dr. Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof (Scholar, Practitioner, Professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, Member of the Toronto-based experimental film collective, the Loop Collective); Priscilla Guy (Canadian Scholar, Practitioner, Film Festival Curator, Director and Founder of Mandoline Hybride, Co-founder of the on-line screendance platform, Regards Hybrides); Freya Bjorg Olafson (Canadian Scholar, Practitioner, was the screendance professor at York University and is now an Assistant Professor, School of Art, at the University of Manitoba); Allen Kaeja (Canadian Practitioner, Professor at Toronto Metropolitan University); Dr. Tom Calvert (Co-founder of Life Forms, now called DanceForms, Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University); Elias Djemil-Matassov (Canadian Practitioner); Kathleen Smith (Canadian Scholar, Canadian Film Festival Curator of the Moving Pictures Festival of Dance and Video (Mopix)); Sarah Choi (Canadian Film Festival Curator and Founder of the Light Dance Festival); Kathleen Rea (Canadian Practitioner, Founder and Director of REAson d'etre dance productions and the Contact Dance International Film Festival).

technological past and future of this hybrid art form, remaps the field, and sets a new course for screendance (media dance) in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world.

Chapter Breakdown:

Chapter 1: Screendance: New Perspectives on the Controversial History and the Definitional and Taxonomic Debates

This chapter analyses the controversial history of screendance, particularly of the roles played by Loïe Fuller and Maya Deren in its evolution. Conclusions are drawn related to the relevance of this controversy to the future of the field. In light of changing definitions of art and, in particular, the definitional conundrum of "what is dance," this chapter also explores the definitional and taxonomic debates. It examines screendance audiences and their role in defining the art form, especially in terms of the definitional debate. It proposes a new taxonomic structure designed to simplify what Faller calls the current "convoluted semantic and theoretical arena."[48]

Chapter 2: Screendance as a Discipline: New Perspectives on the Institutional Debates

Not only have definitional and taxonomic debates been part of the scholarly discourse in this field, institutional debates also have dominated the discussion. Many contemporary scholars refer to screendance as an "undiscipline." This dissertation examines that definition with reference to similar institutional debates ongoing in other disciplines and proposes that scholars and academics recognize the field as interdisciplinary in its own right, rather than seeing it as a sub-set of film or dance. In this chapter, the future of research-creation in screendance scholarship also is examined and new institutional and methodological approaches to screendance research proposed.

[48] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 20.

Chapter 3: The Past and Future of Media Dance in Relation to Technological Innovations, Distribution, Exhibition, Audiences, and Funding Options

Screendance is often seen as a visual and aural poem, where movement and sound are integrated for display on a screen of any size. Given that its two major elements – cinema and dance – are both in themselves intermedial, the art form exemplifies intermediality. In this chapter, this intermediality is highlighted by multiple factors, such as sound, projection surfaces, and performance spaces.

Technologically mediated dance, which, based on the analysis in Chapter 1, I am calling "media dance," can add a level of enchantment, mystery, and spectacle. Ever-evolving filmic, cinematic, and digital technologies can transcend what is possible in live performance and add creative and innovative dimensions, where art, technology, and bodies in motion intersect. The future of digital dance is evolving on at least two tracks, if not more: these are the interactive and the immersive, and they often intertwine. The interactive future lies in technologies such as DanceForms and hyperchoreography. The immersive, as Kim Vincs writes, lies in the virtualized world of "motion capture, 3D stereoscopic film, and animation and game engines in placing dance within an increasingly virtualized cultural and artistic imagination…when dancing bodies make the shift into computer-generated environments."[49] This chapter reflects upon possibilities for creation with new and yet to be conceived technologically mediated dance forms integrated with new digital and cinematic technologies. Case study analysis begins with the works of Canadians, Norman McLaren and Philippe Baylaucq of the National Film Board (NFB), who used chronophotography to technologically mediate their dance forms in works such as *Pas de deux* (Norman McLaren, 1968)*, Ballet Adagio* (Norman McLaren, 1971), and *Lodela* (Philippe Baylaucq, 1996). The discussion then turns to computer-assisted dance forms, including

[49] Vincs, "Virtualizing Dance," 263.

hyperchoreography (also called cyberdance and hyperdance), with reference to the writings of numerous scholars.[50] The chapter explores Canadian digital dance works by Olafson, and Spzorer, and Millar in relation to 3D and augmented and virtual realities. It examines options for the future when, for instance, the body in motion can be created using artificial intelligence or displayed through the use of technologies such as holography. Funding for digital dance projects is discussed.

The new umbrella definition of screendance as media dance, both from technological (analogue and digital) and non-technological perspectives, presents a novel contribution to scholarship in the field, especially in terms of its focus on theoretical approaches, territorial ordering, choreography, and the richness of screendance, re-imagined in relation to media dance as a technologically mediated, intermedial art form.

Chapter 4: Screendance Theory and Media Dance Practice: Embodiment, Choreographic Compositional Intention, Social Themes, and Commercial Issues in Hollywood Feature-length Films, Highlighted by Examples

Short, avant-garde screendance films lie at the very heart of the screendance genre focusing on the poetic movement of a body or bodies in motion combined with cinematic enhancement. A larger debate arises when analysing Hollywood, Bollywood, and other feature film musicals and their relationship to screendance and media dance. After analysing hundreds of feature films, I can classify only a handful as true screendance films, where dance numbers dominate the language of communication in the film and, when combined with the score and an accompanying song, enhance the narrative. Even with this analysis, there is a messiness to the modern-day musical involving screendance elements or those that could be classified as screendance feature

[50] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting"; Bench, "Anti-Gravitational choreographies: Strategies for Mobility in Screendance.;" Schiphorst, *A Case Study of Merce* Schiphorst, *Cunningham's Use of the Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of "Trackers,*;" Schiphorst and Calvert, "Creative Collaboration: The Evolution of Software for Dance."

films. In this chapter, many legacy and more recent feature-length screendance films are explored from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand, 1937), through the Golden Age of Hollywood musicals, up to the recently-released *Wicked: Part I* (Jon M. Chu, 2024) from the perspective of embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, and social themes as well as addressing issues related to the contribution of these films to the industry, funding, advocacy for representation, and popular culture.

My contribution is to illustrate the importance of feature film musicals in the evolution of screendance in popular culture, and the role Hollywood and other feature film musicals play in the global perception and reception of technologically mediated dance on the movie screen. It is also to provide new insight into an analysis of the boundaries of screendance and demonstrate creative and innovative ways to analyse dance films through a screendance (media dance) lens.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Media Dance in a Post-COVID-19 Pandemic World

This chapter presents the research findings and conclusions with emphasis on the originality of the work and its contribution to scholarship and practice, with a focus on my own research-creation projects. A summary of the findings highlights the future of screendance in relation to a new definitional and taxonomical structure with a broader focus on screendance as a component of media dance. A roadmap for engaging academics, practitioners, new audiences, and new funders is provided emphasizing new opportunities for expression, methods of creation and presentation, and scholarly research. Conclusions relate to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on art forms, in general, and media dance, in particular.

Chapter 1: Screendance: New Perspectives on the Controversial History and the Definitional and Taxonomic Debates

1.1 Introduction

Screendance has a long and interesting history and, very probably, an equally promising and diverse future. As an art form, it has been part of film and cinema since the medium emerged, more than 100 years ago, when Eadweard Muybridge, Thomas Edison, and the Lumière brothers, Louis and Auguste, created the first films. I argue in this chapter that, as we enter the third decade of the present century, the history of screendance should embrace the multiplicity of its roots, including both the spectacle of Loïe Fuller and the avant-garde of Maya Deren.

In a paper I wrote on screendance in 2019, I concluded that "the broadness of screendance includes anything from feature film musicals to experimental or avant-garde films – any intersection of dance and movement made with the frame of the screen in mind."[51] Now, after further work, analysis and thought, I have changed my mind. I now see the "broadness of screendance" as a problem. The definitional debate is confusing because some scholars are trying to define screendance as an art form, while others, such as Rosenberg, are trying to define it as an all-encompassing umbrella label – in other words, as a "master category"[52] with subcategories beneath it. Some, like Guy, have opposed strangling of the discipline by such rigid division into branches. Others, like Pottratz and Kappenberg, have defined the art form but have not provided any kind of hierarchical structure. Some agree with Faller, who does not identify mainstream

[51] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance," *Dance Current* 22, no. 3 (2019): 32.
[52] Rosenberg, "Essay on Screendance." In *Dance for the Camera Symposium* (paper presentation, Madison, WI, Dance for Camera Symposium, February 9-13, 2000).

musicals and "archival records, dance documentaries and journalistic profiles"[53] as screendance, while others, like Rosenberg, disagree. I feel it is my time, as a screendance scholar new to the field, to step into the debate and to make it relevant to issues and opportunities in the third decade of the 21st century.

The term "screendance," along with all its various synonyms and sub-sets such as "choreocinema" and "cine-dance," has evolved since Rosenberg first suggested it in 2000 to describe the "master category" of this art form.[54] Still, debate continues around accepted definitional, hierarchical, and taxonomic structures within the field. With changing modes of filming, new technologically mediated dance forms, and new ways of viewing this art form on a multiplicity of screens and, indeed, in entertainment areas where there are no traditional, cinematic screens at all, I am proposing a new term, "media dance," as an all-encompassing, umbrella term to future-proof all this art form can be.

1.2 Background

Dance in film or on film, currently called "screendance" – a term that I will continue to use here for historical purposes and that I will define and debate in this dissertation – dates back to the birth of film in 1895 and even beyond. It was thus an intermedial, hybrid art form from its inception.[55] Given that film and dance were art forms that both engaged with movement, they were compatible from birth. Dance, conceived as "bodies in motion," was even incorporated into the precursors of film, going back to Eadweard Muybridge and his zoopraxiscope in 1879 and to Thomas Edison and his kinetoscope in 1894.[56] Jerome Delamater notes that moving objects or

[53] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
[54] Rosenberg, "Essay on Screendance."
[55] Dodds, *Dance on Screen*, 4.
[56] For a detailed description of the contributions of Muybridge, refer to Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

people were the subject matter of many very early films, including the first commercial screening of a film in the United States on April 23, 1896, which featured two women performing the "parasol dance."[57] This hand-tinted film was made by Thomas Edison and captured a popular dance of the time performed by "Annabelle the Dancer." Louis Lumière also recorded Indigenous dances in his early films.[58] The vaudeville music hall was where, as Tom Gunning postulates, the "cinema of attractions" featuring "acts of display" drew the crowds, attracted dancers, and helped to inspire this new art form, which combined dance and film.[59] Loïe Fuller, a famous vaudeville entertainer, made a 35-mm colour film, *Le Lys de la vie* (1920) featuring "the manipulation of light and movement."[60] She also made other films of spectacle with the Lumière brothers. George Méliès was another key figure in the early development of cinema who included dancers in his fantasy films. With a background in theatre, Méliès realized that "the possibilities extended far beyond the stage, and he was soon experimenting with multiple exposure and stop-action filming, editing his works in the camera as he made them"[61] (e.g., *Magic Lantern* (1903)). Not surprisingly, many stars in the silent era – Rudolph Valentino, for instance, and actors known for their physicality, such as Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin – included dance scenes in their films (e.g., *The Cook*, Buster Keaton, 1918, and *The Gold Rush*, Charlie Chaplin, 1925).

After the silent era ended in the late 1920s, a new genre emerged that explicitly integrated dance into film. This was the Hollywood musical. In these films, elaborate song and dance numbers often dominated, with narrative playing a secondary role. As Rachel Joseph writes, the

[57] Jerome Delamater, *Dance in the Hollywood Musical* (Michigan, WI: University of Michigan, 1981), 4.
[58] Jane Pritchard, "Movement on the Silent Screen," *Dance Theatre Journal* 13, no. 3 (1995-96): 30.
[59] Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking:" 8.
[60] Dodds, *Dance on* Screen, 5.
[61] Pritchard, "Movement on the Silent Screen:" 30.

early "showstopper dance numbers were often spectacular, fragmented, and not necessarily cohesive in terms of narrative and character [but later musicals moved] away from such models and toward narrative cohesion."[62] Dance numbers, which had earlier been transposed from stage to film, were now specifically choreographed for film. Busby Berkeley was notable in that he choreographed numbers with complicated geometric patterns that particularly suited the film medium, with the result that the camera itself became a major participant in the production of dance on screen. Berkeley used tracking shots, wide angle shots, point-of-view shots, close-ups and, of course, his signature "top shot," from above [63] (e.g., *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, 1933) and *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, 1933)). He used more than one camera with "developments in editing [to give] production sequences a uniquely cinematic dimension that could not be duplicated on a theatre stage."[64] While Berkeley's dances tended to halt or suspend the narrative, the song and dance routines of Fred Astaire were integrated into the narrative with full body shots and a limited number of cuts (e.g., *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935), *Swing Time* (George Stevens, 1936), and *Shall We Dance* (Mark Sandrich, 1937)). In the 1980s, musicals had moved on in a meaningful and more direct way to use dance as a metaphor for social values and fantasies: *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, 1977), *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino, 1987), *Fame* (Alan Parker, 1980), *Flashdance* (Adrian Lyne, 1983), and, *Footloose* (Herbert Ross, 1984).[65] This history marks what Douglas Rosenberg calls the first branch of screendance, which encompasses mainstream "Hollywood (Bollywood) entertainments."[66]

---

[62] Rachael Joseph, "Longing for Depth: The Frame of Screened Stages in the Screendance Spectacles of Busby Berkeley," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 482.
[63] Delamater, *Dance in the Hollywood* Musical, 21.
[64] Joseph, "Longing for Depth," 492.
[65] Dodds, *Dance on Screen*, 7.
[66] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 5.

In the 1950s, screendance moved forward into the era of television. Initially, dances shown on television were merely recordings of live stage performances, and some scholars, like Faller, would call these dance film and not screendance. However, with the evolution of the medium, more and more dances were choreographed specifically for the small screen and incorporated into dramas to create plot, provide narrative continuity, or to "suggest multiple layers of emotional or psychological depth."[67] By the 1970s, Bob Lockyer at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was "directing contemporary dance pieces for television."[68] These pieces evolved into dance programming, which later proliferated into the dance shows of the 21st century: e.g., *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Dance Academy*, *Dance Moms, America's Best Dance Crew, Dancing with the Stars*, *Shake It Up,* and *The Next Step*.

Today, as Rosenberg states, "the practice of screendance and its scholarship is coalescing into one of the most decidedly posthistorical and post-disciplinary movements of the twenty-first century."[69] Interest in screendance as an art form has blossomed, as can be seen in the strong presence of screendance works on social media and on the websites of dance schools and academies, and in the more frequent use of dance on camera in commercials destined for many different screens. Screendance film festivals, many of which moved to Zoom or to an online format during the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to be a popular distribution medium for this art form, and they are leading inexorably to increasingly engaged and critical contextual dialogue about specific works, which contributes, in turn, to the theoretical potential of the field. A growing number of live performance installations in a post-COVID-19 world bodes well to increased interest in screendance from both viewership and experiential perspectives.

---

[67] Classic Film, Dance Film/Film Dance: Choreography and the Camera. Accessed November 20, 2022, https://normantaylordotorg.wordpress.com/dance-film/.
[68] Dodds, *Dance on Screen*, 11.
[69] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 17.

1.3 The Controversy in the History of Screendance

Controversy in the history of screendance as an art form – specifically, the nature of its origins – may interest only academics and scholars. It swirls in the literature around debates about the roles played by Deren and Fuller in the evolution of what Rosenberg calls "screendance's *second* branch"[70] – the experimental or avant-garde. Many screendance scholars hold that the historical roots of experimental screendance go back to Deren and agree with Dodds, who writes that Deren created "an art form in which the dance and the camera are inextricably linked."[71] Other scholars, like Erin Brannigan, argue that Fuller – who is often treated as a mere footnote – should take a "more central position within the historical and technological matrix" of screendance.[72] Ann Cooper Albright and Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof also may support that claim.[73] However, Dodds, Greenfield, Faller, Rosenberg, Herfeld, and Carrot, among many others, mention Fuller only briefly, if at all, while touting the works of Deren as constituting the true historical foundation for avant-garde screendance.[74]

The controversy focuses on two subjects who could hardly differ more widely. The Ukrainian-born Deren came from a background in dance and was a "choreographer, poet, author,

---

[70] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5. His emphasis.
[71] Dodds, *Dance on* Screen, 7.
[72] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*, 18.
[73] Albright, "Resurrecting the Future – Body, Image and Technology in the Work of Loïe Fuller," 715; Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof, "Loïe Fuller's Serpentines and Poetics of Self-Abnegation in the Era of Electrotechnics," 45.
[74] Dodds, *Dance on Screen*; Greenfield, "The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren; Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance"; Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*; Stephanie Herfeld, "Seeing and Moving: The Performance of Marie Menken's Images," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse*, eds. Franck Boulègue and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Marion Carrot, "Perpetual Becoming: Figures of Metamorphosis in the Cinematic Choreography of Movement before 1960," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en movement: Recherches actuelles en cine-danse*, eds. Franck Boulègue and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

photographer, and filmmaker."[75] She began experimenting with the body in motion and the camera in her first two films, *Meshes in the Afternoon* (1943) and *At Land* (1944). However, it was her third film, *A Study in Choreography for the Camera* (1945), which became her seminal work for screendance. Filmed with a Bolex camera using 16mm filmstock[76] and subtitled "Pax de Deux" to indicate the relationship and, indeed, the on-screen equality of camera and dancer in terms of movement, time, and space, "Deren fully realized her vision of freeing the human body from the confines of the theatrical."[77] That work is credited by Rosenberg as being the "genesis point for contemporary screendance."[78] Deren's own writing about this film highlights her process:

> In this film, I have attempted to place a dancer in a limitless, cinemato-graphic space. Moreover, he shares, with the camera, a collaborative responsibility for the movements themselves. This is, in other words, a dance which can exist only on film. The movement of the dancer creates a geography that never was. With a turn of the foot, he makes neighbors of distant places. Being a film ritual, it is achieved not in spatial terms alone, but in terms of a time created by the camera.[79]

Never again, in the wake of Deren's revolutionary film, would the human body be confined to the proscenium arch. *A Study* explores "time and space through the formal apparatus

---

[75] Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen, "Screendance as Enactment, in Maya Deren's *At Land* – Enactive, Embodies, and Neurocinematic Considerations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 303.
[76] Paula Marvelly, "Maya Deren: A Study in Choreography for Camera. *The Curriculum* 19 July 2020. Accessed May 2, 2023. https://www.theculturium.com/maya-deren-a-study-in-choreography-for-camera/
[77] Steven Higgins, *Still Moving: The Film and Media Collections of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006), 199.
[78] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* 42.
[79] Maya Deren on *A Study in Choreography for the Camera* (1945) taken from Marvelly, "Maya Deren: A Study in Choreography for Camera. *The Curriculum* 19 July 2020. Accessed May 2, 2023. https://www.theculturium.com/maya-deren-a-study-in-choreography-for-camera

of film and dance"[80] where, as Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty write, "dancers leap into new settings through the power of editing."[81] The film unleashes geography: it begins with the principal dancer, Talley Beatty, bounding through a forest, continues in the Egyptian Hall in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and ends on cliffs overlooking a river. Deren's camera became Beatty's partner with Beatty's choreographed movements matching the editing pattern of the film, and the dancing cinematographer, a classic characteristic of screendance, was born. Deren used film techniques that have become common practice in screendance today. As listed by Brannigan, these include "multiple exposures, jump cuts, slow motion, negative film sequences, superimposition, match-on-action, freeze frame, and acute camera angles."[82]

Fuller, as a vaudeville entertainer, came from a very different background. As mentioned earlier, and further analyzed by Gunning, her dances and choreography – with a focus on costume, colour, lighting, and special effects – were meant to shock, to entertain, to immerse the audience in the spectacle,[83] rather than provide narrative context. Such works became the forerunners of the cinematic spectacles of Berkeley in Hollywood musicals and Hollywood verisimilitude of the future. The contrast between the works of Deren and Fuller is particularly significant in that it reflects larger aesthetic distinctions between approaches to screendance and highlights their use of different cinematic languages for Fuller mainly filmed using a tableaux style and Deren used editing and differently framed camera compositions in her work.

1.3.1 Response to Controversy Concerning the History of Screendance

In my view, the struggle to choose between Deren and Fuller, between screendance as pure art and screendance as spectacle, is pointless: the art form has arisen equally, I believe, from

[80] Dodds, *Dance on Screen*, 7.
[81] Evans and Fogarty, *The Sonic World of Dance Films*, 5.
[82] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image*, 100.
[83] Gunning, "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema," 75-89.

both sources, and it stands squarely on two pillars. If academics accept the current taxonomic hierarchy of screendance as defined by Rosenberg and the modified one I propose (further discussed later in this chapter), where the avant-garde and the feature film musical are assigned to different taxonomic branches, then Fuller and Deren have equal status, as their works were critical to different taxonomic branches. One is focused on the "cinematic" or "figurative" body, and the other on the "abstract" or "metaphorical" body.

I agree with Dodds, Rosenberg, Greenfield, Faller, Herfeld, and Carrot that the historical roots of modern, avant-garde screendance lie with Deren. I also postulate that the historical roots of the spectacle of screendance, as illustrated in feature film musicals, lie with Fuller. The arguments in the literature may be moot, therefore, in that each has a place in the origin story, one occupying a space where dance is treated as a form of experimental narrative, the other where dance is primarily spectacle. Indeed, the works of Deren remind me of the work of the film director, Carl Dreyer, in the 1920s when he directed *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). In this work, he helped establish film as a medium with cinematic connections, through the use of the camera, to abstract art, even as he tackled a historical subject in a narrative form. Deren did the same in her screendance works in the 1940s and 1950s, linking abstract movement to a narrative with implicit focus on the human form. In my opinion, Deren, as a classically trained dancer, would have rejected today's very broad definition of screendance, as expressed in the *International Journal of Screendance*, that goes beyond "human bodies in motion" to include the non-human, both organisms and objects. Considering her dance and choreographic background, I am convinced that Deren envisaged this new artistic form as necessarily including human bodies in motion.

There is another important distinction, between dancing as a collective or individual expression. I agree with Rosenberg and others that Berkeley's cinematic spectacles homed in on the choreography of a group, where no one individual stands out. Deren, on the other hand, in the rise of the avant-garde, focused her choreography, cinematography, and editing on one or a few individuals, including Talley Beatty, a black male dancer. As Rosenberg writes, "Where Berkeley's lens dehumanizes, Deren's humanizes and articulates difference in a kind of anti-spectacle." Deren's "attention to the dancing body coupled with her surrealist flights of fancy make this film (*A Study)* a pivotal work of screendance."[84] This film broke almost every performance taboo. It included an extended female gaze on a black male dancer. It introduced black dancers to what had been almost exclusively a white domain. It set the stage for the normalized integration of black dancers into screendance right from the historical beginnings of modern screendance. It used a male dancer in a field that had been dominated by women and broke down the male-female stereotype in dance. We can see in retrospect how it changed the way audiences perceive the relationship of dance and cinema as being welcoming of all in front of and behind the camera. In addition, the synchronous movement from one location to another is "fictive," creating "foreshortened temporalities,"[85] where cinematic time and space are altered through choreography and editing. In effect, as Rosenberg contends, Deren's film laid "the foundation for the deconstruction of the dancing body and its mediatized other as a central principle of screendance."[86]

---

[84] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* 49.
[85] The term, "fictive," is discussed in Rosenberg (*Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*), who draws on the work of Frederic Jameson where Jameson used this term when discussing "foreshortened temporalities." Jameson's work on this can be found in Jameson's, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 74.
[86] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 49.

At the same time, I agree with Brannigan and Albright that "spectacle" is alive and well in screendance. Since the early days of film and dance on film, audiences have craved, as Gunning discusses, "acts of display,"[87] resulting in the "cinema of attractions"[88] where audiences crave the different, the dangerous, the spectacle where the acts of display depict the anti-narrative, just for the thrill and viewing pleasure. Dodds explains the spectacle in screendance as "images that are visually breathtaking" or "super bodies that exceed the physical capacities of the live human body."[89] She maintains, spectacle has been appreciated from the time of Fuller, which later was incorporated into the classical feature film musicals illustrated with the choreographies of Berkeley and continuing to the present time. Even now, 3D technology is changing how the audience looks at spatial perception, with editing[90] and special effects capable of creating images that "leap beyond human capacity."[91] The rise of reality television – notably, dance competitions – and music videos have supported the emphasis on spectacle. It is possible, indeed, that the rise of these popular screendance forms is causing modern audiences to move away from coherent narratives and back to the spectacle, because audiences have deep and profound fascinations with the human body and the ability of the human body to transcend physical limits. Certainly, this is the recent direction in my own work, where the focus on spectacle is intended not primarily to tell a story, but rather to surprise, delight, and amaze,

[87] Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," 190.
[88] Gunning, "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity," 190
[89] Dodds, "Values in Motion: Reflections on Popular Screen Dance," 448.
[90] See the description on the challenges of spatial perception and editing in Philip Szporer and Marlene Millar, "Moving in(To) 3D:" 225-237.
[91] Dodds, *Dance on* Screen, 448.

providing the viewer with spectatorial pleasure. For example, I recently created a work featuring myself as a solo dancer but replicated many times to create a group choreography. I achieved this by filming a dance multiple times in slightly different locations, then editing all the takes together to create the illusion of three versions of myself all dancing together. This is a technique that many amateur artists began to experiment with during the COVID-19 pandemic, as performances were being developed in isolation and presented on Zoom.

Figure 1: The Power of Editing

Source: Dance by George Turnbull

As we enter the third decade of the 21th century, I believe it is time to accept the diverse and complex origins of screendance, to abandon the argument about which artist created the form and to recognize that there are two main roots: the experimental, visual, and avant-garde approaches of Deren and the spectacles of Fuller. The works of each of these artists have led to the evolution of a different branch of today's screendance, gave rise to artistic and technological opportunities, and laid the groundwork for possibilities that were not dreamed of in their own days. I commend the separate visions of Deren and Fuller and recommend that both be recognized, accepted, and celebrated as the creators of screendance in its multiple and diverse, hybrid forms.

1.4 Definitional Debate: What's in a Name?

1.4.1 Introduction

As a hybrid discipline that operates at the intersection of film (image in motion) and dance (body in motion), screendance has been variously defined by the scholars in the field,[92] as scholars consider whether screendance is the mere documentation of dance, a filmic depiction of dance, or an entirely unique art form. These debates lead to broader institutional discussions of how to classify interdisciplinary artistic practices (addressed in Chapter 2).

The definitional debate arises partly from all the different terms that have come to be synonymous with screendance, the earliest labels being "choreocinema" and "cine-dance."[93] The term, "choreocinema," is attributed to John Martin, a journalist and dance critic who wrote for the *New York Times.* In 1946, he wrote that "choreocinema" was a new art form "in which the dance and the camera collaborate on the creation of a single new work of art."[94] He was referring in particular to Deren's pioneering work, which was taking dance film beyond the recorded stage performances that were usual at the time. Stan Brakhage was the first to employ the term, "cine-dance." [95] With the development of video production, the number of labels exploded, as detailed in the writings of Noël Carroll, to include not only choreocinema and cine-dance, but also dance for camera, choreography for the camera, dance on screen, video dance, dance film, film dance,

---

[92] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*; Rosenberg, "Introduction" *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*; Dodds, *Dance on Screen*; Carroll, "Towards a Definition"; Mitoma et. al., *Envisioning Dance*; Brannigan, *Dancefilm*; Bench, "Screendance"; Kappenberg, "Does Screendance"; Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse"; Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything"; Heighway, "Understanding the 'Dance'"; Blanco Borelli, *The Oxford Handbook of Dance*; Franck Boulègue and Maria Hayes, eds., *Art in Motion: Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse* (Newcastle on Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015); Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance"; Turnbull, " The Shoestring Renaissance," 32-39.

[93] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 14.

[94] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 14.

[95] Stan Brakhage, *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking by Sam Brakhage.* (New York: McPherson & Company, 1967), 129-132.

dance 4 film, and moving-picture dance.[96] The result was a "convoluted semantic and theoretical arena" for screendance.[97] After analysing the appropriateness of all these synonymous terms, Carroll concluded, in a paper published in 2001, that this field should be called "moving-picture dance rather than any of the other labels that had been assigned to it."[98] His rejection of the term, "screendance," arose from the changing nature of the "screen." He argued that the term was simply too limited in terms of what dance and film might become in the future, particularly when "imagin[ing] holographic dances and dances in virtual reality."[99] He pushed instead for the adoption of a new term, "moving-picture dance," where "movement" is broadly understood and where there can be an "impression of movement conveyed by devices like editing and special effects."[100] He further defined dance as "a moving visual array of recognizably human movement or stillness…drawn from an identifiable existing dance vocabulary or a descendent therefrom."[101] With regard to screens, he articulated issues in terms of their size and shape and how film has to be adapted to "make sure that viewers get to see what the composer intends them to see."[102] With such very precise definitions, however, he recognized that many dance films would be excluded, so he introduced the concept of the "extended…moving-picture dance" to include "nonhuman movements."[103] With these amendments, Carroll concluded that the proposed label, moving-picture dance, would be a more all-encompassing one than the others in current use. Although the use of "moving-picture dance" was never widely accepted as the umbrella category, Carroll made good arguments on its utility.

---

[96] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:"47.
[97] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 20.
[98] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:"47-48.
[99] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 51.
[100] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 52.
[101] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 53.
[102] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 51.
[103] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 59.

Other scholars in the field, like Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty, have noted a scholarly neglect of music and sound as significant elements. In their anthology, *The Sonic World of Dance Film*, they use the term, "dance film." The term arises from Lesley Vise's call for the art form to be recognized "as dance film, rather than as film which happens to feature music and dance."[104] The definition prioritizes the equality of and connection among music, film, and dance, all of which "interact with each other to create a new, different, "novelised" form in which music and dance propel the plot."[105] The weakness of Vise's definition, as a stand-alone, lies in its failure to allude to music and sound in its name, what she insists are equal elements. However, the term, "film," does allude to sound for before the advent of "talking pictures," terms used implicitly mention sound or the lack of sound in terms like "silent film," and "silent screen." However, clearly, the search for the perfect name continues, a name that does not relegate music and sound to subsidiary positions.

To date, no universally acceptable terms have been identified. Priscilla Guy concluded, after studying the form for many years, that all synonyms for screendance put scholars and practitioners on the defensive in one way or the other. As she rightly states:

> Instead of diving into the poetics of this eclectic form and its many entry points including choreography, movement, performance, virtual presence, and the moving image, such debate – related both to the materials used and to the methods of creation – has intensified the importance of the two primary artistic components of this practice: dance and cinema.[106]

---

[104] Lesley Vise, "Music and the Body in Dance Film," in *Popular Music and Film*, ed. Ian Inglis (London and New York: Wallflower, 2003), 25.
[105] Vise, "Music and the Body in Dance Film," 25.
[106] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.

Rosenberg, writing in 2012, tried to simplify the discourse relating to nomenclature. Admitting that "screendance" was not a perfect name, he nevertheless defended it "as the most accurate way to describe the passage of dance, via its mediated image, to any and all screens without articulating materiality."[107] For him, screendance essentially involves the creation of a cinematic body that cannot be recreated live or on a stage.[108] He went on boldly to call "screendance" the "master category."[109] As he explains, "screendance speaks of the end point or the point of reception by the viewer and not of the material form of the production in the way that "videodance" refers to the actual production media or method of inscription."[110] He writes that the terms "film dance" and "cine-dance" relate to the history and material culture of film, whereas, "dance for camera" privileges dance over its method of visualization.[111] However, "screendance" "codifies a particular space of representation and, by extension, meaning."[112] He concluded that all other terms linked to or sometimes thought to be synonymous with screendance are actually subcategories or subgenres of it. Faller, like Rosenberg, calls the subcategories "genres," though he continues to debate the use of "screendance."[113] Some scholars agree with Rosenberg. Dodds, for instance, after years as a scholar and practitioner in the field, has concluded that "all dance on any screen is screendance," with "screendance" to be regarded as an all-encompassing term."[114]

Other scholars disagree, refusing to recognize alternative terms as subcategories, and they continue to use a variety of descriptors as synonyms for screendance. Carballido, for instance,

---

[107] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 3.
[108] Douglas Rosenberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, November 2021.
[109] Rosenberg, "Excavating Genres," *The International Journal of Screendance* 1 (2010): 67.
[110] Rosenberg, *Screendance*: *Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 3.
[111] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 3.
[112] Rosenberg, *Screendance*: *Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*, 3.
[113] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
[114] Dodds, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

uses "video dance" and "cinedance" as alternatives.[115] Faller has concluded that the term "screendance" should "exclude archival records, dance documentaries and journalistic profiles…because they are only minimally mediated via technology…only minimally hybrid forms…and rarely collaborative."[116] Thus, these forms should continue to be called "dances on screen" rather than "screendances."[117] Faller plunges into even more complexity as he writes:

> Screendances can be cinematic adaptations or interpretations of stage/live performances or – and most importantly here – works that are specifically "of the screen" (Rosenberg 2010, 69). They require a collaborative intersection between film/video/digital media and choreography; the exploitation of the fluid temporal and spatial potential of the screenic medium; the recorporealization of the human body; no insistence of verisimilitude; and no drive to simply re-present, document and preserve live stage performance.[118]

Although the definition is elaborate and multifaceted, Faller has eliminated dance documentaries as legitimate "screendance," but he may also have eliminated feature film musicals given his comment on "no insistence of verisimilitude." In fact, he appears to be a proponent of the experimental and avant-garde at the expense of the simple document of dance as he highlights the creative marriage of dance with the technical capabilities of the camera or photographic technology being used to capture movement. In contrast to Rosenberg, Faller classifies mainstream musical and documentaries of dance performance as film dance and not screendance for they followed the Hollywood model of "verisimilitude and the preservation of

[115] Pauline Ruiz Carballido, "The Screen a Choreographic Space: A Pas de Deux between the Dancer and the Camera," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 130.
[116] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
[117] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
[118] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.

performance,"[119] which did not explore "the new potential most overtly championed by Deren."[120] Faller also concludes that the filmed dances of Annabelle Moore from the late 1800s where "neither time nor space undergoes any manipulation"[121] have "evolved into mainstream musical and dance documentaries,"[122] but are not examples of screendance.

Wyn Pottratz's definition is simpler than Faller's and apparently more directly in line with Rosenberg's: "Screendance is a moving image work, the content of which has choreographic compositional intention, combined with the technical and creative language of cinema."[123] She developed this definition after a discussion with Simon Fildes, "a screendance veteran,"[124] while they were attending the 2016 Light Moves Festival of Screendance in Limerick, Ireland. After watching an hour-long program of "onscreen insects ready[ing] themselves for what looked to be a bug audition for *National Geographic*,"[125] she began to question her own definition of screendance. If screendance is so all-encompassing, she concluded, "the field risks its status among other more definitive art forms, especially when it comes to funding and critical recognition."[126] Her definition also highlights that filming a dance does not make it a screendance as she calls attention to the need to link choreographic compositional intention with the use of various cinematic and technological enhancements in defining screendance.

Given a lack of consensus as to where the boundaries of screendance lie, Claudia Kappenberg, another leading scholar in the field, postulates that "contemporary screendance

119 Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
120 Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
121 Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
122 Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 25.
123 Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
124 Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
125 Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
126 Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.

artists and theorists have taken on two distinct positions to address this situation."[127] One group has called for a strict definition of screendance with the desire "to identify and name the constituent parts…and delineate the practice."[128] The other group argues that screendance "is a field of diverse practices that cannot be defined…[while] embracing all kinds of concerns, practices, and media."[129] Kappenberg herself supports a very broad definition of screendance, saying "that with regards to screendance…we should perhaps be less concerned with individual projects and whether they are screendance or not, but rather consider a wider body of works and even include that which occurs in the everyday through interactions with cameras and screens, digital media, and the internet."[130] Harmony Bench supports the adoption of a broad definition "to better represent the work of contemporary artists, rather than subscribe to a prescriptive definition that might exclude some of the work I find most compelling."[131] Within those wide limits, however, she still defines screendance works as those where there is a choreographic relationship between the camera and the moving body and where the camera is deeply involved, as well as the editing process.[132] Ellen Bromberg, a scholar, practitioner, and Professor Emeritus at the universities of Utah and California at Berkeley, agrees. Screendance, she says, necessarily combines choreography with cinematography to create a new form.[133]

Not every scholar supports the drive towards precise definition. Guy, for instance, argues that scholars such as Rosenberg, in trying to delimit the boundaries of screendance, have put the

---

[127] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 21.
[128] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms," 21.
[129] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms," 22.
[130] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms," 25.
[131] Bench, "Screendance," 223.
[132] Harmony Bench, in a telephone discussion with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[133] Ellen Bromberg, in a telephone discussion with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

art form in "an uncomfortable box."[134] Guy proposes instead that screendance be looked at, not as an end point (Rosenberg[135]) nor as a binary form (Kappenberg[136]), but rather "as a starting point, an experiment, a method, or a question?"[137] What a refreshing way to look at screendance! Rather than drawing strict lines around the form, Guy challenges scholars and practitioners to envision "screendance as a posture towards art making: a way of accessing new creative ideas, a way of looking at new and old artworks, a way of creating works, and a way of thinking."[138] She takes screendance into the realm of the abstract where a psychological approach can be taken – where screendance is "a starting point and a perspective."[139] Realizing this definition is both generous and vague and that it could apply to almost anything, Guy went on to explore her ideas in the form of a critical review of *All This Can Happen*, a screendance film directed by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, and shown at the Light Moves Festival of Screendance in Limerick, Ireland in 2016. The title refers specifically to screendance, and the film weighs in on the definitional debate. It explores "several alternative visions of choreography for/by/with the cinema without actually making explicit references to dance."[140] Most of the choreographic choices were made by the two editors in the editing suite, and the film consists of archival images and footage from the earliest days of cinema with temporality and spatiality at the centre. Unique to this film is the use of voice-over where the dialogue is not tied to any particular narrative or any particular linear storyline but where voice and choreography "collaborate in the creation of coherence throughout the film."[141] Pottratz wrote that this film "clearly explores the

[134] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.
[135] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image.*
[136] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms," 25.
[137] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.
[138] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.
[139] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 202.
[140] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 205.
[141] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 206.

boundary of screendance,"[142] and Guy concluded that "from a screendance perspective, it stands out as a strong model for the development of new strategies for building interaction between dance and other languages."[143] I urge students of screendance to see this film for what it says about where the definitional debate around screendance currently resides. It also shows how screendance continues to challenge the conventions of both dance and film and its relationship to other art forms.

Confusingly, all of the various terms for this art form are in common use today. Academics who are teaching in the field often choose the name that they find most meaningful in terms of their own backgrounds and preferences, which I support. For example, a course taught by Faller at Towson University is called "Dance for the Camera." This is the term that his co-instructor, Susan Mann, prefers, as it foregrounds the term "dance," rather than "screen."[144] Faller's own preference is to use screendance, as the final works are seen on screens, and he considers that the label, "Dance for the Camera," "fails to truly recognize the vital role editing and post-production play in creating a screendance."[145]

The definitional debate is further complicated by the porous boundaries between "screen" and "dance" as combined in the term "screendance." Can all "bodies in motion" on the screen be described as "screendance?" Or, because "screen" comes first in the name, does it take precedence over "dance"? In the next section, I will discuss the ephemeral place of "dance" in "screendance."

[142] Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 183.
[143] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 206.
[144] Greg Faller, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, January 2022.
[145] Greg Faller, email message to George Turnbull, January 2022.

1.4.2 Definitional Debate: "Dance" in "Screendance"

We have a more or less common understanding of what is intended by the word, "dance," but how is our understanding of the word mediated by its subordination within the term "screendance?" The most general interpretation of dance is simply "humans in motion."[146] The film theorist and philosopher, André Bazin, would have agreed with this human-centred definition of dance, for he stated in his text, *What is Cinema* (1967-71), that "all arts are based on the presence of man."[147] Philosophers such as Sue Jones and Francis Sparshott insist on a more nuanced understanding, with Jones stating that the term has "many layers of meaning."[148] Sparshott agrees that there "are innumerable understandings" of dance but concludes that it is "peoples' normal usage that determines meaning."[149] As Sparshott points out, "there are many perspectives of dance that we are capable of adopting, by nuancing the multifaceted relationship between the words that we use and the contexts to which they relate."[150] Sparshott's analysis holds true for the many words used to describe screendance. All such terms relate in subtle ways to different contexts and relationships between dance and the screen: dance for camera, cine-dance, choreocinema, choreography for camera, video dance, dance on screen, film dance, dance 4 film, moving-picture dance, among others. Thus, trying too tightly to define the "dance" in "screendance" may end by restricting the artistic development of screendance, rather than encouraging and celebrating its varied offerings.

---

[146] Heighway, "Understanding the 'Dance':" 44.
[147] André Bazin, "Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, ed. Hugh Grey (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), 12-13.
[148] Sue Jones, "Do Rabbits Dance? A Problem Concerning the Identification of Dance, in *Dance, Education and Philosophy*, ed. Graham Mcfee (Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport, 1999), 97.
[149] Francis Sparshott, "On Knowing What Dance Is," in *A Measured Pace: Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance (*Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 72.
[150] Sparshott, "On Knowing What Dance Is," 81.

Faller takes his definition of "dance" in experimental screendance from the writings of Dodds, notably that "screendance constructs dances and dancing bodies that could not be replicated on the stage: fragmented bodies, magnified bodies…bodies seen from unconventional perspectives…and bodies moving in ways that are physically impossible outside of a film and television context."[151] Dodds' definition was widely accepted until filmmakers began to question the definition of 'body.'

The definitions of screendance proposed by Rosenberg, Kappenberg, Dodds, and Faller (see the discussion above) are predicated on the presence of bodies in the work, but they need not be human bodies. There are many examples of films classified as screendance – for example, *Birds*, directed by David Hinton, 2000; *This Place,* directed by Becky Edmunds, 2008; *Bridges Go Round*, directed by Shirley Clarke, 1958; and *Spin*, directed by Constantini Georgescu, 2009 – that feature animals or objects in motion instead of human forms or bodies. Heighway goes even further in suggesting that "dance" in screendance need not be "dance movement, nor human motion, but anything kinetically driven, full stop."[152] Pottratz would agree with Heighway, but with some reservations, as she has concluded, as noted in the earlier discussion, that "Screendance is a moving image work, the content of which has choreographic compositional intention, combined with the technical and creative language of film."[153]

The practice of screendance has greatly evolved in the last decade, with the word "dance" acquiring a much broader meaning. Filmmakers, choreographers, and viewers alike have embraced a less rigid understanding that treats "the concept as metaphor, process, attitude, and construct."[154] Thus, screendance, as defined by those in the field today, is challenging scholars

[151] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 79.
[152] Heighway, "Understanding the 'Dance':" 44.
[153] Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
[154] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance":" 56.

and practitioners to adopt a more fluid definition, as Heighway notes, of "what dance and film-making can be."[155]

That broad definition has not gone without challenge, however, and many scholars are questioning the trend. Films such as David Hinton's *Birds* (2000) or Shirley Clarke's *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958) (filmed bridges in New York City edited in an artistic way) have sparked debate after being classified as screendance films that conform to Jonas Mekas' (1967) definition of "cine-dance," specifically holding that "everything that moves has something to do with dance, has dance in it, without really being 'a dance.'"[156] Many scholars and practitioners argue that only "choreographic and cinematic intentions" are needed in order to classify certain films as screendance, even if they do not include "humans in motion." Dodds agrees but adds that "'embodiment' must be present, whether the bodies are human, insect, avian, or whatever."[157] Roger Copeland argues otherwise, stating that the filmmaker's authorial or choreographic intention or self-identification does not necessarily qualify a work as screendance or dance-for-screen.[158] In other words, does the movement of the birds in Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) make this a screendance film? Most would argue "no," as this was not the directorial intention. Hinton, on the other hand, had the conscious intention of making a screendance film when he created his *Birds* (2000). Ellen Bromberg was on the jury at the 2001 Monaco Dance Screen Awards, where Hinton's film was the overall winner. Bromberg testified that, even with a lack of human bodies, the jury saw more "humanity" in this film than in any other entry.[159] David Hinton proved his understanding of choreography moving through space and time and communicated that

[155] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance":" 56.
[156] Jonas Mekas, "Cine-Dance," in *Dance Perspective #30* (New York: Dance Perspectives Foundation, Summer 1967), 33.
[157] Sherril Dodds, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[158] Copeland, "The Best Dance is the Way People Die in Movies," 225.
[159] Ellen Bromberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

perception through brilliant editing. Many in the dance community disagreed and complained that the winning film had failed to include dancers.[160] Dodds would argue, however, that the creator's intention was the critical factor, along with a spectator willing to entertain that the motion in the work was dance. In Hinton's *Birds,* she concluded, he had edited images of motion in a way that created dance sensitivity.[161]

The debate is further muddied in today's technologically complicated era, where we are challenged to redefine "dance" in a virtual context with motion-capture techniques. Here, "movement originally produced by a live body can be mapped onto any virtual body."[162] Dance also can be created by computer animation or used in an expanded cinematic sense. VR and AR technologies are now being used to create dances. Hyperchoreography allows the user of software to create their own screendances and holographics is evolving where dances can be seen where there is no traditional screen at all, just a screen-like display surface. Can these technologically mediated forms of dance really be identified as screendance? The editors of *The International Journal of Screendance* would say "yes," and the publication's expressed mandate supports that expansiveness. "The journal supports scholarship," says the introduction, "intended to expand the parameters of what may currently be considered screendance."[163] The editors thus accept papers and contributions that transcend old definitional boundaries and address the use of new technologies to create screendance works that may not include dance, in its traditional sense, or even screens. Even so, the definitional debate continues within what Heighway calls "The

[160] Ellen Bromberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[161] Sherril Dodds, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[162] Boucher, "Virtual Dance and Motion-Capture:" 10.
[163] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance":" 45.

Republic of Screendance," populated by a community of "filmmakers, pedagogues, curators, and academics," all of them leaders in the field.[164]

Cinematographers and videographers also have contributed to broadening the definition of "dance" in screendance works, given that the act of dancing is not necessarily limited to the subject being filmed but can also engage movement by the so-called "dancing cinematographer." For example, Marie Menken "was not a professional dancer, but she danced within the practice of her art."[165] Dancing with the camera was critical to her artmaking, and she made films where dance was literally created by movements of the camera frame. In her *Visual Variations on Noguchi* (1945), she danced with and amongst solid objects, including a sculpture by American artist, Isamu Noguchi. In doing so, she made what Brannigan calls "anarchic moves, unexpected and unconventional movements."[166] When these movements were created through complex editing strategies involving cuts, pauses, and stops, her film coalesced to provide a moving choreography of images. Tim Glen urges recognition of the role played in screendance by the dancing cinematographer, with the movement of the camera effectively mimicking the movement of a dancer. Panning or tilting the camera suggests a dancer moving peripherally. Using a crane or hinging joints to elongate the shot or distance a camera from the subject replicates the flex-extension positions of a dancer. Moving a camera through space on a dolly emulates dancers who can "move in any direction [they] may choose."[167] Temporal awareness is as important to a dancer as it is to a cinematographer, and the lens of a camera records its

---

[164] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance":" 44.
[165] Stéphanie Herfeld, "Seeing and Moving: The Performance of Marie Menken's Images." Accessed February 20, 2023. https://screendancestudies.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/seeing-and-moving.pdf.
[166] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moviing Image*, 173.
[167] Tim Glen, "Performance Techniques Behind the Lens: Applying the Nikolais/Louis Philosophy of Motion in Cinematography," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* eds. Franck Boulègue and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 60.

movement through space in the same way that a dancer experiences dimensionality. In order to control motion for artistic purposes, dancers must be aware of their body position and shape; by the same token, cinematographers must be aware of their body position in order to capture the desired footage or set of images. The marriage of motion and camera can be a powerful one. As the renowned choreographer, Merce Cunningham, said, "when camera movement acts in consort with choreography a synergy occurs that produces a movement experience not possible on the stage."[168] Katrina McPherson agrees with Cunningham, stating that "the choreographed camera, moving through space in relationship to the dancers, alters our perception of the dance….creating a fluid and lively viewing experience."[169] The cinematographer, to create an art experience, must, literally, move with the dancer, or at least move the camera, to capture the movements, and expressions of the dancer or dancers. Glen thus concludes that the best cinematographers or videographers of screendance are those who understand dance technique, theory, and composition, and have probably trained as dancers themselves.[170] Deren would have agreed for, even in the early 1940s, she saw that the "camera was like a dancer's partner."[171]

By accepting the partnership of camera (or cinematographer) and the subject/object that is filmed, we have clearly returned the nature of the body to the debate. Whatever the understanding or definition of "dance" in screendance, it must involve an artist (and a body) or artists (and bodies) in motion, whether in front of or behind the camera.

[168] Merce Cunningham, quoted by Tim Glen, "Performance Techniques Behind the Lens," 59.
[169] Katrina McPherson, *Making Video Dance*, 145-146.
[170] Glen, "Performance Techniques Behind the Lens," 70.
[171] Quoted by Pauline Ruiz Carballido, "The Screen as Choreographic Space," 133.

1.4.3. Embodiment, Choreographic Compositional Intention, and Kinaesthetic Affects in Screendance

Key components to our understanding of screendance lie in the understanding of embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, and kinasethetic affects. Embodiment has been defined by Dodds as "representation of thought in bodily form."[172] This term is often used by dance artists when discussing "the need to embody movement or refer to the embodied self of the dancer" [where] "some scholars within dance studies seek to validate the embodied knowledge or embodied cognition held by dancers, in a challenge to dualistic separations of body and mind."[173] In discussions of gender and identity, "embodied acts are at the basis of performative and socially constructed notions of identity."[174] In dance, embodiment is integral to movement and, thus, to the choreography and performance. In screendance, embodiment forms the creative basis for design of the work all the way from conception through choreography, cinematography, and editing, with due attention to aesthetics, expression, and messaging. Taking a wider approach to analysing dance in relation to embodiment, Jane Desmond, in her introduction to *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage,* has challenged scholars to take a broader look at embodiment to embrace "embodied social practice." She writes that scholars:

> must analyze dancing as an embodied social practice, with equal emphasis on the last three words: *embodied*, meaning lived physically, not just musing on the "idea" of dance; *social*, meaning embedded in specific material and ideological conditions of possibility;

[172] Lise Uytterhoeven. "A to Z of Key Concepts in Dance Studies" in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies,* ed. Sherril Dodds (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 426.
[173] Uytterhoeven, "A to Z of Key Concepts in Dance Studies," 426.
[174] Uytterhoeven, "A to Z of Key Concepts in Dance Studies," 426.

and *practice*, meaning a process in time and space, one of enactment, an articulation and materialization of meaning and relationships.[175]

Thus, dance can be analyzed as something beyond mere physical movement or abstract ideas to include aspects of the social, cultural, historical, and technological, keeping in mind, as Bench writes, "dance's corporeal, emotional, and conceptual elements…without emphasizing one of these dimensions at the expense of the others."[176] Dance practices can then be read and interpreted "within their social circumstance, cultural milieus and historical moments."[177]

Bench, moreover, challenges scholars to explore what she calls the kinaesthetic affects and how "they manifest in screendance"[178] and in the dancer. Kinaesthetic affects "encompass the muscular, epidermal, respiratory, and other somatic and emotional sensations of the dancer."[179] The kinaesthetic affects also influence the "expression or expressivity and the somatic and psycho-emotional sensations of the viewer or listener, who participates more or less actively…in a historically situated and culturally elaborated affective relationship."[180] Kinesthetic experiences "are thus always connected with a sense of self and a sense of otherness,"[181] while kinesthetic empathy[182] refers "to the embodied empathic process that takes place within the spectator"[183] or, as Karen Wood postulates, the "empathetic interaction between performer and viewer that embodies aspects of the performer's movement…[which] is a sensory

[175] As quoted in Bench, "Screendance," 230. This quote comes from Jane Desmond, *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage,* 13. Her emphasis.
[176] Bench, "Screendance," 230.
[177] Bench, "Screendance," 230.
[178] Bench, "Screendance," 230.
[179] Bench, "Screendance," 232.
[180] Bench, "Screendance," 232.
[181] Carolien Hermans, "Differences in Itself: Redefining Disability through Dance," *Social Inclusion* 4 (4) (2016): 162.
[182] Kinesthetic empathy has been discussed in detail in the works of Foster (2011), and Reason and Reynolds (2010).
[183] Hermans, "Differences in Itself: Redefining Disability through Dance:" 162.

experience, perhaps facilitated by emotion, memory, and imagination."[184] In screendance, Carolien Hermans reminds us that "the experience of both our own body and the on-screen body is thus not only visual-perceptual, but also empathetic and kinesthetic."[185] With screendance being composed of many different elements, these may evoke a multiplicity of reactions from the spectator whether through the narrative, the cinematic techniques, or the dance movements.

The term, "choreographic compositional intention," is often used in the literature and in case study analysis of screendance and screendance works. Choreography is defined as "the art of creating and arranging dances."[186] The word originates from the Greek words for "dance" and "write." In the 17th and 18th centuries, choreography was considered the "written record of dances."[187] However, the working meaning of choreography changed in the 19th century to encompass the art of dance-making, with the term for the written record of dance changing to "dance notation."[188] Often someone other than the choreographer now creates dance notation, using symbols or notations of limb positions (e.g., Labanotation or Benesh notation) to provide information about the duration, fluency, or intensity of movement. By way of contrast, the composition of a dance is the creative component designed by the choreographer drawing on their vision, imagination, and experience. The intention of the dance is embodied in the dancers and the dance movements. Where there is choreography, there is embodiment, with synergy in both definition of the terms and actualization of the dance movement. As highlighted in

[184] Karen Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing," *The International Journal of Screendance* 5 (2015): 29.
[185] Hermans, "Differences in Itself: Redefining Disability through Dance:" 162.
[186] www.britannica.com/art/choreography
[187] www.britannica.com/art/choreography
[188] www.britannica.com/art/choreography

Desmond's definition, the choreography of the dance also can be analysed through the lens as an embodied social practice.

Embodiment and choreographic compositional intention are fundamental components of screendance as defined and experienced on screens or screen-like surfaces. If a dance on a screen lacks choreographic compositional intention, can it be defined as screendance? I would argue, "no." To produce screendance, the creator of the work must have planned to film the dance or produce it digitally to be viewed on a screen or another viewing surface. At the same time, the creator must allow for creative and spontaneous expression and improvisation, whether that occurs during the shooting or in the telling of a story or presenting an abstract concept through dance. As in any art, the choreographic processes of screendance, as Synne Behrndt writes, "do not always begin with a pre-determined structure but rather, structures emerge in concert with the shaping of ideas."[189] If the director and choreographer are two different people, their mental processes must overlap, in effect: "while the director…has to think choreographically, the choreographer has to create movement with filmic notions in mind, and cinematic qualities for movement must be envisioned."[190] The crux lies in the dance itself, which, as Guy notes, "can be broadly described as a series of motions with an organized intention that has an aesthetic and inherent value."[191]

The cinematographer plays a key role here as, in effect, "a dancing cinematographer" whose purpose is to capture movement in a way that is not possible in still photography or in the mere recording of a live performance from a static camera from one static angle. The

[189] Synne Behrndt, "Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20 no. 2 (2010): 185.
[190] Guy, "Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators," M.A. Thesis, York University, 2011, 88.
[191] Karen Wood, Rosemary Cisneros, and Sarah Whatley, "Motion Capturing Emotions," *Open Cultural Studies* 1 (2017): 506.

choreographer and the cinematographer, and, ultimately, the editor, must coordinate their understanding of the artistic concept; they must decide together how the movement will be filmed to capture the meaning, emotion, and physicality of the choreography; and they must agree on how the editing will recorporalize the bodies to bring new meaning to the work in a way that is not possible in live dance performances. As Faller indicates, recorporalization means that "the choreography embodied in the dancer needs to be relocated into a purely cinematic space. This is the creative potential of choreographic intent – how to make this translation into a screendance."[192] The type of movement captured, how it is captured, and the intent of the creator are critical components in what I am calling "screendance." I fully agree with Pottratz, as discussed above, that the definition of screendance should be that of "a moving image work, the content of which has choreographic compositional intention, expressed through the technical and creative language of cinema."[193] Dodds' definition, based on her analysis of Hollywood dance films, music videos, video dance, and television advertising, is in line with Pottratz's, in that she finds dance, in these art forms, is located in the "triadic relationship between the moving body, the camera and the edit."[194] The moving body in screendance, as Brannigan has concluded, "need not belong to dancers but could be found in the movements of crowds, objects or body parts, and their movement may be propelled by internal or external forces or technological manipulation."[195] Examples of movement designed with choreographic compositional intention expressed through the technical and creative language of cinema are presented throughout this dissertation.

---

[192] Email exchange with Greg Faller, October 2021
[193] Pottratz,"Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
[194] As quoted in Bench, 'Screendance," 222 from Dodds, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art,* 89.
[195] As stated in Bench,"Screendance," 222 quoting from Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image,* ix.

Rosenberg emphasized that analysis of the "end point" – that is, assessing the character of the final product – is important in identifying what is, and what is not, screendance, where the end point comprises the linked interventions of the performance + cinematographer or camera operator + the editor. The way in which ideas and stories are depicted through dance depends on decisions taken by the filmmakers and what they have chosen to record through the shooting and, subsequently, how the editor has treated that raw footage. Rosenberg made a film recently that highlighted embodiment as part of the screendance practice. In *Song of Songs* (2021), a 20-minute, black and white film, he is the dancer, an older man engaging in an embodied experience, with the camera as witness, or translator, of the performance.[196] As Rosenberg writes of this screendance work, "*Song of Songs* is a deeply personal evocation of the erotic prose poem of the same name that appears in the Old Testament…with an original cello score…that turns ritual to art to performance; to be enchanted, enveloped and wrapped in the sublime, the imagined, and the familiar."[197] He choreographed his movements to reflect how aging influences and changes relationships within one's self and with others.

Performance, in screendance, is based on conceptualization of the dance by a choreographer who from the beginning may have conceived and choreographed the dance for the screen or another type of surface. Thus, for formal productions, even as the dance is strictly planned in pre-production, the movement of the camera and the camera operator may themselves have been choreographed. In the opposite way, for improvisations, both the camera work and the dance are unplanned: thus, the spontaneity is shared both on the dance floor and behind the camera. For formal productions and improvisations alike, the camera movements are in

[196] Douglas Rosenberg, personal Interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, November 2021.
[197] Rosenberg, accessed November 21, 2021, www.douglas-rosenberg.com

themselves "performance," as the interaction between camera operators and dancers is central to the character of the end product.

Editing is also a form of choreographic art, as the editor of screendance must consider pacing, timing, and spatial organization in a choreographic way.[198] As Karen Pearlman writes, "Editing involves the phrasing of movement, or the aesthetic shaping of movement into that aspect of empathetic engagement with film that awe call rhythm."[199] Editors of screendance works, according to Guy:

> must be attentive to choreographic actions as opposed to narrative event in the evolution of a film. The coherence of juxtaposed images comes from a logic that differs from a linear and narrative construction; rather, it is the logic of movement, choreographic acts, and poetic construction that governs the editing for dance.[200]

Thus, editors of screendance works must understand dance composition and choreography as well as the power of editing "to take initiative and propose interesting 'choreographic options.'"[201]

When it comes to dance, music and sound are vital components of "choreographic compositional intention." As Jürgen Simpson writes, "diegetic sound has the ability to "co-inhabit the visual space" and emerge as an object of choreographic attention in screendance."[202] Music and sound are the foundations of choreography. In screendance, the music and score can

[198] Guy, "Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators," M.A. Thesis, York University, 2011.
[199] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms: Shaping the Film Edit* (New York: Focal Press, 2016), 41.
[200] Guy, "Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators:" 108.
[201] Guy, "Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators," 110.
[202] Jürgen Simpson, "Sound as Choreographic Object: A Perceptual Approach to the Integration of Sound in Screendance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 298.

be included in the original filming or added or manipulated during the editing process. In the pre-digital era, "developing film scores involved grappling with the mathematics of tempo maps to enable a matching between music and filmed events."[203] This all changed with digital editing, which "dramatically improved the ease with which music could be composed and edited to conform with the visual stream."[204] In screendance, the move to digital has given the editor and sound designer tools for the synchronization of movement and sound that did not exist in the pre-digital era.

The spectator also plays a part in this discussion of "embodiment" and "choreographic compositional intention." The filmmaker must consider the spectator during the creative process and contemplate what they are asking the spectator to derive from the work, what they are asking them to see, understand, and feel, and what their kinaesthetic experience might be "when engaging with dance."[205] From the spectator's perspective, they may interpret the work based on their view of their own intersectionality (gender, race, class, sexuality), or their own dance experience, or their understanding or lack of understanding of the technicalities of producing a screendance product. They may enjoy the affective and kinaesthetic experience of watching screendance, or contemplate what the filmmaker had in mind inviting mutual affective experiences of embodiment, or they may passively watch as an art form with no analysis at all.

1.5 Taxonomical Debate: Defining the Branches of Screendance

As introduced in the Introduction to this dissertation, Rosenberg has defined what he calls the three branches of screendance, indicating that each involves dance "with the screen as its end

[203] Simpson, "Sound as Choreographic Object," 295.
[204] Simpson, "Sound as Choreographic Object," 295.
[205] Uytterhoeven, "A to Z of Key Concepts in Dance Studies," 430.

point."[206] To provide more detail to what was introduced earlier in this dissertation, the first identified branch of screendance focuses on films "that have taken dance as their source material."[207] The works classified in this branch resonate "with the theory and practice of film as both an art form…and its subsequent manifestations as re-envisioned by Hollywood."[208] Examples include Hollywood and Bollywood films, "in which dance is embedded in the narrative or anti-narrative arc of the films."[209] This category encompasses film history's musicals where dance is an integral part of each film. Some of these include well-known Hollywood musicals such as: *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donan and Gene Kelly, 1952); films starring Shirley Temple (e.g., *The Little Colonel*, David Butler, 1935); *Saturday Night Fever,* John Badham, 1977; and *Chicago*, Rob Marshall, 2002). Many of the films in this branch were choreographed by the leaders in the genre. Busby Berkeley, working on productions as both the film director and choreographer, was known for his kaleidoscopic, showstopper dance numbers to give "production sequences a uniquely cinematic dimension that could not be duplicated on a theatre stage"[210] and showstopper numbers filmed with one camera to retain control over his vision (e.g., *42nd Street* (Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, 1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933), and *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, 1933)). Robert (Bob) Fosse, as director and choreographer, was known for his dancers with turned-in knees, sideways shuffling, rolled shoulders, and "jazz hands" with the use of many props (e.g., *Sweet Charity* (1969), *Cabaret* (1972), and *All That Jazz* (1979)). Recent works of Kenny Ortega, the director and choreographer for a number of films with major screendance elements, fall into the branch,

[206] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[207] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[208] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[209] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[210] Joseph, "Longing for Depth: The Frame of Screened Stages in the Screendance Spectacles of Busby Berkeley," 492.

including the *High School Musical* (series 1, 2, and 3) (2006-2008). He also was the choreographer for the well-known work with many screendance elements, *Dirty Dancing* (Emile Ardolino,1987).

This branch also includes Bollywood films, formerly named Bombay cinema, which highlight narratives and stories of India through song and dance. From the first sound film in India, *Alam Ara* (Ardeshir Irani, 1931) up to recent films, like *Dola Re Dola* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002) and *Baar Baar Dekho* (Nitya Mehra, 2016), Bollywood films have "successfully blended music, song, and dance as central aspects"[211] of these films. This branch of screendance is recognized by scholars in the field as highlighting screendance's contribution to entertainment where dance services the film's narrative or anti-narrative.

As introduced earlier in this dissertation, the second branch of screendance reflects the influence of visual arts and is populated by experimental or avant-garde artists, as Rosenberg writes, "many of whom are or were auteurs whose work articulates individual manifestos for screendance."[212] The films grouped within this category do not typically use dance to narrate a story; rather, they create meaning through the poetry of the body, of movement, and juxtapositions. This approach is significant, in that such filmmakers are deliberately striving to create an art form mediated by the camera to articulate their own visions of screendance, which may include creating aesthetic pleasure through musicality, rhythm and motion, and the abstraction of the dance form. As Rosenberg states, "These artists have collectively helped to create a digressive map of the field over the span of more than a century…[where they] jettison

[211] Pallabi Chakravorty, "Sensory Screens, Digitized Desires: Dancing Rasa from Bombay Cinema to Reality TV," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 130.
[212] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.

narrative in favor of a poetics of the body."[213] For this branch of screendance, "the body in motion is valorized for its humanist signifiers and the movement is the *lingua franca* of the screen image."[214] Besides the works of Deren, Rosenberg singles out three films, in particular, as being central to the evolution of screendance as "dance made for the screen." These are *Hand Movie* (Yvonne Rainer, 1966), *Hand Catching Lead* (Richard Serra, 1968), and *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (Bruce Nauman, 1967-68).[215] Each of these films offers "a distinct aesthetic statement about the possibilities of movement; a relationship to cinema that foreshadows a wave of dance made for the screen which continues to the present."[216] Faller further defines the attributes of the work in this branch listing them as:

> Non-narrative, short, visually abstract or non-objective/non-representational, challenge taboos, play with depth-of field, do not recreate the proscenium space, close-ups for proximity and intimacy, use of the zoom and lens movement, camera movement (pan, tilt, dolly, hand-held), camera angles, focal lengths, camera-subject distance, lighting, exposure, color, locations, and multiple windows or screens.[217]

Many scholars have further elaborated this second branch. Sophie Walon focuses on the multi-sensory experiences and kinaesthetic sensations "found in and induced by screendance"[218] in such films as *Rosas danst Rosas* (De Keersmaeker and Thierry De Mey, 1997). Marion Carrot has focused her research on the "metamorphosis of the body."[219] The emphasis may vary. What

---

[213] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[214] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[215] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 11.
[216] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 11.
[217] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 26.
[218] Sophie Walon, "Screendance Sensations: Multi-sensory Experiences in Thierry De Mey's Screendance," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes, 21-30. *(*Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 21.
[219] Marion Carrot, "Perpetual Becoming: Figures of Metamorphosis in the Cinematic Choreography of Movement before 1960," in *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en*

unites these thinkers, however, is that all works classified within this branch involve, as Rosenberg writes, the choreographer and filmmaker working in balance using "repetition, sequencing, reimagining, and the recorporealizing of bodies"[220] to create visual poems or metaphors.

Given the long history of screendance, Rosenberg has now concluded that there is a third branch of screendance that is "something rhizomatic,"[221] – that is, capable of having many non-hierarchical roots or points of origin. Indeed, this is the quality that has given rise to much of today's "complex terrain,"[222] where the "makers of screendance also choreograph; direct films; write conference papers, essays and books; curate festivals; distribute work via the Web; and teach courses and workshops in screendance at institutions of higher education and elsewhere."[223] This complexity has resulted in a new model "in which the historical past of screendance, which to some extent has been more or less binary, morphs into something rhizomatic – a space rather than a practice, both relational and locative, with global and regional signatures…[where] the Internet and the Web play an increasing role that holds forth alongside more transitional methods of production and circulation."[224]

According to Rosenberg, screendance is a "rhizomatic practice in the truest sense…[as] it is a space of difference, without concrete schools of practice or movements, without a particular creation myth of singular narrative, but with numerous identifiable versions of each."[225] Naomi Jackson discusses screendance in terms of this third branch and its evolution given the

---

ciné-danse, edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 120.

[220] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 5.
[221] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 16.
[222] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 12.
[223] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 14.
[224] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, 14
[225] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* 15.

proliferation of the Internet, YouTube, and other web platforms.[226] As she sees it, this branch is all encompassing, given the multiplicity of ways that screendance works are distributed and exhibited, as well as the institutional and scholarly focus of screendance, and the ways in which theories and research are being disseminated. Nothing is left to chance, nothing left out of the definition, to be swallowed up by other disciplines or fields.

Guy would probably not agree with Rosenberg's binary (or tertiary) classification of screendance, in that it perpetuates the notion of screendance being locked into an "uncomfortable box."[227] Instead, she challenges her fellow scholars and practitioners to take chances, to take "independent and experimental approaches within this rich playground where dance, performance, digital media, visual arts, and cinema meet."[228] As she and other scholars reject outright the effort to force the discipline into three distinct branches, the taxonomic debate continues.

1.6 Response to the Definitional and Taxonomic Debates

I agree that the definitional debate has led to much confusion in the field of screendance, but it has also contributed to the evolution of critical discourse. This discourse may seem futile to many, particularly those not familiar with the literature and this art form. These definitional and taxonomic debates may be part of a hierarchical construct to name and set boundaries by trying to come up with precise definitions and perhaps even patronizing when trying to articulate "master categories." However, these debates are common in the screendance literature and may have created different camps depending on theoretical perspectives in contrast to territorial ordering, which often differentiate the scholars in this field from the practitioners and the film

[226] Naomi Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution? Popular Dancing, YouTubing, and Exchange in Screendance," 695.
[227] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.
[228] Guy, Screendance as a Question:" 201.

festival curators. The need to use one word to define this field may also be outdated, especially when thinking in the context of today's pluralistic values.

However, I have continued to explore these debates in screendance, as such debates are not foreign to other art forms, as well. The philosopher, Jerrold Levinson, is well known for his attempts to define such terms as "art" and "music," saying that art must have an intentional-historical definition and a relation to earlier artworks.[229] Much earlier, Ludwig Wittgenstein theorized on the impossibility of confining art within a single definition that would satisfy all, also warning that an attempt to do so would stifle artistic creativity.[230] To address this definitional conundrum, others have provided list-like definitions (as has been done for dance and screendance) or conventional definitions based on institutional or historical relationships. Problematically, the attempt to define terms is complicated by application of the same aesthetic terms and relationships not only to art, but also to music, film, dance, natural objects, and humans. The other dilemma in all definitional debates is that the goal can become, as Carroll puts it, "a covert exercise of power, privileging some work and disenfranchising other work."[231] Indeed, this may be happening in the case of screendance.

From my perspective, let us first look at screendance as an art form. I agree with Pottratz's definition, where "Screendance is a moving image work, the content of which has choreographic compositional intention, combined with the technical and creative language of cinema."[232] The key here is the creator's "choreographic compositional intention." Bugs on a screen, birds flying, or tops spinning may look and sound like dance when edited and combined

[229] Jerrold Levinson, "Defining Art Historically." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 19, no. 3 (1979): 232-250.
[230] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and R. Rhees, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).
[231] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 47.
[232] Pottratz, "Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.

with music, but the original movement or concept may not have had choreographic intent. As Pottratz writes, "If screendance is limitless, then the field risks its status among other more definitive art forms, especially when it comes to funding or critical recognition."[233] Those works of Norman McLaren that include human bodies (notably *Pas de deux* (1968) and *Narcissus* (1983)) and those of Merce Cunningham may be recognized as screendance works, whereas bugs on a screen, with no choreographic compositional intention, may not.

I propose that screendance products should necessarily include a human or non-human body in motion, where the choreography is intentional and where dance and the cinematic process are equal partners in the process. I prefer this conception to works where the dance itself, or what has been termed "dance" in the broadest of forms, has dominance. It seems that the deep, historical roots of dance have often been forgotten in this discussion, and by that, I mean dance over many centuries has been understood as a form of intentional, choreographically organized motion. With deep respect for that long tradition, I have come to disagree with Heighway that "dance" in screendance need not be "dance movement, nor human motion, but anything kinetically driven, full stop."[234] Rather, I believe that screendance must involve a "body in motion" (human or non-human), where embodiment and choreographic compositional intention are key factors.[235] Any other definition dilutes the field to an impossible degree, so that any movement can be called screendance.[236] On the contrary, I hold that screendance must reflect the creator's artistic intention, expression, and creativity. Many of the screendance film festivals have adopted Heighway's broad definition with almost no limits, which may make the term

[233] Pottratz, Screendance Cannot be Everything:" 182.
[234] Heighway, "Understanding the "Dance":" 45.
[235] These concepts, with case studies, are more thoroughly examined in Chapter 3.
[236] As Bench said in my interview with her, embodiment is critical to the screendance art form, but the subject of the work does not have to be human. It can be a fence or a fence post or something from nature.

meaningless, causing much confusion among curators, practitioners, and audiences as to what should and should not be included in a festival program. In proposing a new taxonomic umbrella structure, therefore, I mean to turn away from this openness and to argue for an art form with two screendance categories under a much broader umbrella category.

I agree with Guy that all the many synonyms for screendance have achieved little except putting scholars and practitioners on the defensive. There was a time in my studies when I might have recommended that "screendance" as an umbrella label and as "master category" be replaced with an older name of "choreocinema," requiring both intentional choreography and the camera, or its digital facsimile, to be present. I soon realized, however, that "screendance" and "choreocinema" are equally deficient in that both – by relying on the idea of "screen" and "cinema" – ignore important future technological developments in the art form, developments that are already a reality. "Screendance" and "choreocinema" are stuck in the past to the degree that they imply two-dimensional cinematic apparatuses[237] and exclude advances in technology related to VR, AR, hyperchoreography, motion-capture technologies, projection mapping, geolocated dance, and holography, and other technologies yet to be dreamed. These terms also do not reflect the new literature by those like Bench who are exploring "dance in digital cultures" and "reimagining dance for digital screens."[238] How can the technologies driving the future of dance be incorporated into the existing taxonomical structure as defined by Rosenberg and others? My answer is, they cannot. Thus, after review of the literature, case study analysis, and after interviews with some of the most well-known scholars in this field, I am proposing, for

[237] See a discussion about "apparatus theory" in Tom Gunning, "Early American Cinema," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 255.
[238] Bench, *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common,* 3.

consideration, an entirely new taxonomical structure, as illustrated in Figure 2, with five sub-categories under the very broad, all-encompassing umbrella category of "media dance."

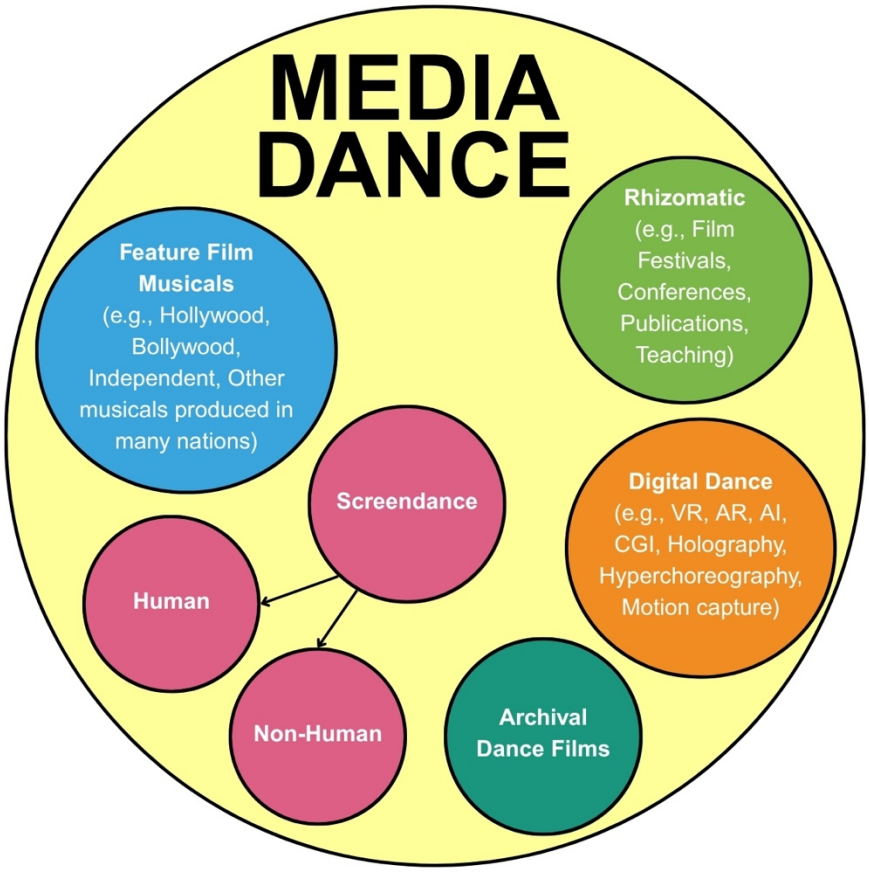

Figure 2: Proposed New Taxonomic Structure: Media Dance

When thinking about this new taxonomic structure, I first thought the term "virtual dance" would work well if "virtual dance" was defined as any technologically mediated dance. Marc Boucher might think so, as well. As Boucher writes, "virtual dance [is] a term greatly informed by the technologies that make it possible."[239] This term is thus much more expansive than "screendance," in that it encompasses "motion-capture…computer animation, digital imaging, motion signature, virtual reality, and interactivity."[240] (The technological innovations

[239] Boucher, "Virtual Dance and Motion-Capture:" 1.
[240] Boucher, "Virtual Dance and Motion-Capture:" 1.

related to media dance – the digital dance sub-category, in particular - are discussed in Chapter 3.) However, with further reflection, the term "virtual" is now used commonly in not only academic literature, but also in the vernacular to mean virtual reality or cyberspace, so does not seem appropriate to use in this discussion. Thus, to encompass all that screendance and other forms of technologically mediated dance can be, I have called the overall category, "media dance," to attempt to future-proof this art form. Media is a term used to describe all types of media, both long available and new media being developed today, and media that will be developed in the future. Always keeping the future in mind, media seems like the appropriate term to combine with dance to become the "umbrella category" encompassing not only Rosenberg's three branches, but all that screendance can be in the future.

The five subcategories within my proposed new structure are as follows: (1) Screendance (including all its synonyms or what Rosenberg calls its "subcategories'), with its binary subcategories as discussed below; (2) Feature Film Musicals including Hollywood, Bollywood, Indie, as well as feature film musicals being produced worldwide (branch one of Rosenberg's screendance definition); (3) Archival Dance, Dance Documentaries and Journalistic Dance Profiles, all technologically mediated; (4) Digital Dance, to include current and future dance driven by such technologies as VR, AR, motion capture, hyperchoreography, projection mapping, geolocated dance, holography, etc.; and (5) the Rhizomatic. The components of Rosenberg's third branch – the rhizomatic – continues to be its own subcategory, challenging scholars and practitioners to participate actively in all aspects of "media dance" from conferences and workshops to film festivals, academic research, and teaching. Each of these subcategories has equal merit in terms of the art form, with no one subcategory having

dominance over another. The circle around media dance illustrates that each of these subcategories can be interrelated to each other.

This classification addresses the concerns of many scholars, including Kappenberg, as this master category – "media dance" – embraces "a wider body of works and even includes that which occurs in the everyday through interactions with cameras and screens, digital media, and the internet."[241] Bench also may support the structure, given her desire for an open-endedness that would not exclude "some of the work I find most compelling."[242] Using the broader term of "media dance" responds to Guy's challenge that the name should not result in a set of barriers but rather be " a starting point, an experiment, a method, or a question."[243] It responds to Carroll's insistence on a name "that will make the exploration of previously undreamt-of possibilities easier, rather than closing down options."[244] "Media dance" will give scholars and practitioners new ways to imagine the art form and a new framework for creative ideas, including new ways to think of and examine new and old works. "Media dance," as an umbrella category, modernizes the field and looks to the future.

As part of this structure, I furthermore propose that the subcategory of "screendance" be subject, in turn, to binary rather than tertiary sub-division. The two subcategories of screendance productions, with no preference in terms of rank, should be: (1) those involving "choreographic compositional intention" with "humans in motion"; and (2) productions involving "choreographic compositional intention" involving non-human living organisms or inanimate objects, etc., where the latter may address the concepts of metaphor and anthropomorphism.

[241] Kappenberg, "The Politics of Discourse," 25.
[242] Bench, "Screendance," 223.
[243] Guy, "Screendance as a Question:" 201.
[244] Carroll, "Toward a Definition:" 47.

This new structure would include all the components that today's scholars wish to see included, without the constraints caused by calling the umbrella category "screendance." Screendance remains a subcategory, as a separate art form and field of artistic expression but without the complications of trying to act as an umbrella label for a broad field of practices and scholarly research. Most importantly, "media dance" is a broad and all-encompassing label that embraces opportunities for technological advancements as we move through the 21st century.

From a research perspective, the umbrella field of "media dance" would tend to generate research clusters within each component, with cross-fertilization in areas of overlap. For example, the dance numbers in musicals or expanded cinematic art forms (e.g., feature film musicals) could well be analyzed through a screendance lens. As Faller proposes, the analysis of works through a screendance lens could include the examination of such issues as: "form, gender, semiotics, politics, populism, content, ageism, meaning, hybridity, race, technique, virtuosity, culture, identity and history."[245] Music genre analysis is integral to the analysis and understanding of choreography and sound in any screendance work. I agree with Vise, Evans and Fogarty, and Jürgen Simpson that such analysis also is key to understanding any works examined through a screendance lens.[246]

The Hollywood (Bollywood) term, formulated by Rosenberg, is now seen as being too narrow as feature film musicals are produced worldwide. The new term suggested for this subcategory is "feature film musicals." In addition, in rethinking how feature films relate to screendance, I have concluded that most feature film musicals are just that—musicals— and not

[245] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 16.
[246] Vise, "Music and the Body in Dance Film," 22-38; Evans and Fogarty, "The Sonic World," 1-13. Jürgen Simpson, "Sound as Choreographic Object – A Perceptual Approach to the Integration of Sound in Screendance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 283-302.

screendance films as many only have a few dance numbers, which, as mentioned above, could be examined through a screendance lens. However, two recent musicals that I would classify as screendance productions are *Cats* (Tom Hooper, 2019) and a Netflix production, *The Prom* (Ryan Murphy, 2020) where almost every scene involves a dance number linked with the score and often an accompanying song.[247] For productions where every or almost every scene involves dance on screen, I would include these under my new binary classification of screendance. For others, I would classify them under the feature film musical subcategory of media dance as they do not have enough "screendance numbers" to be included in the screendance subcategory. In Chapter 4, I examine this observation in more depth through the examination of specific film examples.

The fifth subcategory within this new structure is the rhizomatic. When analysing media dance film festivals, under this subcategory, it is recognized that these have faced many curatorial challenges, as noted by Bench, Marcus White, and Cara Hagan.[248] The first major challenge has arisen from the definitional debate. With all the different meanings attributed to screendance, including whether such works should include a human body in motion or not, many festivals have become so broad in their offerings that the audience loses sight of the themes and delimitations surrounding the curation of the works being shown. The second challenge, as Bench notes, is to "assemble films and experiences that appeal to the widest possible audience, including both the academically inclined and dance fans."[249] Problematically, addressing the first challenge (as outlined above, the need for focus) may actually make it difficult to address the

[247] These films, and others, are more thoroughly analysed and discussed in Chapter 4.
[248] Bench, "Dance for Camera at 45," *International Journal of Screendance* 8 (2020), 162; Marcus White, "Narrative Shifts: Race, Culture, and the Production of Screendance," *The International Journal of Screendance* 9 (2018): 155-170; Cara Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming," *The International Journal of Screendance* 9 (2018): 133-151.
[249] Bench, "Dance for Camera at 45:"162.

second (the desire for wide audience appeal). The reality is that some film festival organizers strive to attract the widest possible audience, while others try to focus their offerings to appeal to a specific group. The third challenge, as noted by Hagan, is to ensure that scholars, practitioners, and audience members do not feel underrepresented, given that there are always barriers to "fully realizing the dream of truly inclusive, equitable, and intersectional experiences for artists and audiences, alike."[250] This new proposed structure may help to address some of those issues, as "media dance" festivals (or specific festivals in one or more of the subcategories) could have a broad appeal across demographic boundaries and areas of interest, as long as there is an intent to promote diversity and accessibility in front of and behind the camera, as well as in audiences. From the perspective of film festival research, design, and curation, this new structure would promote new ways of programming as long as the organizers make clear the definitions they are using in the selection and curation of submitted works, in advertising their festival to scholars, practitioners, and the public, and in the adjudication process.

Even with my new categorization, there are limitations to the structure illustrated in Figure 2. The circle around the diagram is to emphasize that the categories can overlap. The overlap is shown in yellow. The categories can be fluid and not discrete. Analysis of feature film musicals comes by applying a screendance lens as well as relating the works to their technological origins. Works produced under the feature film musicals, screendance, digital dance, and archival subcategories can be embraced by the rhizomatic through film festivals, conferences, in publications, and by being introduced in media dance courses.

"Screendance," as a term, is well embedded in scholarship and is used both to describe an art form and as an umbrella term. It may not be easy to replace it with "media dance." However,

[250] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 133.

I hope that screendance scholars will eventually embrace the new structure proposed here, and that they will begin to use "media dance" as a label that encompasses the past, present, and future of technologically mediated dance. In the short-term, I challenge those working in the field to ensure that the meanings assigned to whatever terms they use are clearly conveyed in the literature, in teaching, particularly at institutions of higher learning, in the criteria for film selection and curation for film festivals, and as part of the discussion related to new media technologies and the future of technologically mediated dance. As for the future, I sincerely hope that the term "media dance" will eventually be adopted and used everywhere as the umbrella label that accurately and comprehensively describes and celebrates what this art form has been and can be. In the pages that follow in this dissertation, scholars are cited who treat "screendance' as the umbrella category, and I will follow their lead, to avoid confusion. Where I use the new terms and structure that I am proposing, I will make this clear in the text.

Whatever happens in terms of nomenclature, I urge scholars, practitioners, and film festival curators to embrace Guy's position and to take "independent and experimental approaches within this rich playground where dance, performance, digital media, visual arts, and cinema meet."[251]

[251] Guy, 'Screendance as a Question:" 201.

Chapter 2: Screendance as a Discipline: New Perspectives on the Institutional Debates

2.1 Introduction

Not only have definitional and taxonomic debates been part of the scholarly discourse in this field, institutional debates also have dominated discussion as institutions, particularly those of higher learning, tackling questions related to what is a discipline, what is a sub-discipline, what is a department, and what are the criteria critical to funding support and resource allocation. In this chapter, given the potential for screendance and digital dance (together part of media dance) creations to contribute to social critique and address political, cultural, and social issues, I propose that scholars and academics recognize the field as a distinct interdisciplinary field of study, in its own right, rather than seeing it as a mere sub-set of film, dance, media or performance studies. I suggest that screendance (media dance) offers academia, filmmakers, and choreographers a unique way to study the interrelationships among dance, film, performance, music, sound, and technologies. I argue that, with the growing acceptance of research-creation as a form of art-as-inquiry, screendance (and more broadly, media dance) provides scholars with innovative and creative ways to articulate research hypotheses and questions within an academic and institutional environment.

2.2 Can Screendance be Classified as a Discipline?

2.2.1 Introduction to Academic Disciplines

Given the definitional and taxonomic debates discussed in Chapter 1, it is not surprising that the identity of screendance as an academic discipline is uncertain and the subject of much

discussion as Departments of Film, Cinema and Media, Dance, and Performance grapple with how to define this intermedial, hybrid field, and how to allocate financial, personnel, and technological resources to it. There is nothing unusual about that. Debate about what is and what is not a discipline dates back to the medieval establishment of universities. Michel Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) that the same line of thought gave rise to both academic disciplines and the modern penal system in 18th-century France.[252] He writes that "disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate."[253] Establishing disciplines (also called "fields of study") within universities was similarly a way of codifying and organizing academic thought, based on a substantial body of knowledge and theory, into cohesive areas.

Although the history of screendance can be linked to the earliest film productions, as a discipline in an institution of higher learning, its journey is relatively new as screendance is at an early stage in its development as an academic discipline. In the broader academic context, debates have raged around both how to identify and how to describe a legitimate disciplinary field, with four separate analytic frameworks emerging as ways to shape the discussion: codification; level of paradigm development; level of consensus; and the Biglan Model.[254] Codification focuses on the accumulated body of knowledge. Paradigm development defines a discipline as a field characterized by "academic law," with "mature" disciplines "having clear

---

[252] Discipline is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a branch of learning or scholarly instruction." It is a focused study in one academic field or profession that may or may not have many branches (often referred to as sub-disciplines). The origin of the word comes from the Latin "discipulus," meaning pupil, and "disciplina," meaning teaching.

[253] Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the* prison, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 223.

[254] Maretta Del Favero, "Academic Disciplines: Disciplines and the Structure of Higher Education, Discipline Classification Systems, Discipline Differences, 2023. Accessed February 23, 2023. https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1723/Academic-Disciplines.html.

and unambiguous ways of defining, ordering, and investigating knowledge."[255] Consensus lies at the core of the paradigm development and relates to the degree of agreement about theory, methods, techniques, and problems in a particular area. Researchers often differentiate among disciplines by the degree of consensus, which is lacking to date around screendance. Anthony Biglan clustered academic fields into a three-dimensional taxonomy, within which each field has a paradigm defining the extent to which the subject matter can be applied practically, and the involvement with living or organic matter.[256] Disciplines with clearly delineated paradigms have been called "hard" disciplines, such as the physical and natural sciences. The "soft" disciplines are those such as the social sciences and humanities – and, arguably, art forms such as screendance – which have less-developed paradigms and low consensus on the basis of knowledge and methods of inquiry. Applied fields tend to focus on the application of knowledge, and these include law, education, and engineering. "Pure" fields, such as mathematics, history, and philosophy, tend to detach from practical application. Biglan concluded that faculties involved in "hard" or "high paradigm" fields were more committed to research and less to teaching than faculties relating to "soft" or "low-paradigm" fields. Although Biglan's model may be dated, his conclusions may be true for screendance where the focus is not only on the scholarship, but also very much on research-creation inquiry by students. Within each of these four separate areas, screendance is only now beginning to advance in terms of study, definition, organization, and academic approaches.

Preparadigmatic disciplines – and these do relate directly to screendance – are those characterized by a high level of disagreement as to what constitutes new knowledge, what

[255] Del Favero, "Academic Disciplines," 2.
[256] Anthony Biglan, "The Characteristics of Subject Matter in Different Academic Areas," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 58 (1973): 195-203.

methods of inquiry are implemented, and what research problems relate to study in a particular field. Other scholars, including Thomas Hagood, have equated disciplinary evolution and the resulting "academic and intellectual diversity as a response to the interest and needs of a developing democratic society."[257] Diversification represents, in effect, a movement away from the classic curriculum, originally taught in North America and "modeled after the English-Scottish tradition…within a Protestant theological framework."[258] It is this very trend to diversification that opens a doorway for new disciplines, such as screendance (or, more broadly, media dance). As disciplines evolved, professional standards were developed by discipline, with the work of educators and academics being subject to peer review. Not only teaching, but also research and, as Hagood writes, "appointment, promotion, and tenure processes became more related to discipline-based criteria."[259]

As the study of screendance intensifies, as more research and analysis are conducted, as more scholars contribute to the debate, a critical mass of scholarship is emerging, and with that the identification of screendance as a discipline is becoming more and more likely. Today, many scholars agree with Dana Polan, who writes that "each critical work [in a field] influences the next and all of them form an ideal and coherent whole – a discipline."[260] A basic encyclopedia definition of a discipline dictates that it must have certain common elements, in that it must be supported by "a community of scholars; have a tradition or history of inquiry; have a mode of inquiry that defines how data is collected and interpreted, as well as defining the requirements for what constitutes new knowledge; and where there is an existence of a communications

---

[257] Thomas Hagood, *A History of Dance in American Higher Education: Dance and the American University* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 20.
[258] Hagood, *A History of Dance*, 19.
[259] Hagood, *A History of Dance,* 155.
[260] Dana Polan, "North America," North America," in *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008), 9.

network."[261] The communication networks often include discipline-specific academic journals, conferences, and presentations. Disciplines may define autonomous institutional units (faculties or departments) at universities and colleges or, alternatively, a cluster of closely-related disciplines may be grouped together in an institutional unit (faculty or department). Often disciplines have different organizational and communication structures, as well as different hierarchical structures, and different reward and stratification systems. Disciplines vary in antiquity, from those with long histories that are found in almost all universities and are supported by many journals and conferences to those identified as "nascent" disciplines – screendance, for example – that are supported by only a few universities, conferences, and publications. As for the academic implications, scholars from different disciplines – from different academic cultures, with their own knowledge, methodologies, and histories – can look at the same problem or phenomenon and understand it and describe it in very different ways. This interest has led to a rise in interdisciplinary program areas supported by scholars and courses from different disciplines or departments providing a horizonal rather than siloed approach to learning and research.

The question of where screendance (and, more broadly, media dance), as a discipline, would fit within the university structure is also problematic. In many universities, disciplines are grouped by broad subject area (e.g., humanities) into faculties with the next highest hierarchical level designated as a discipline (e.g., music); sub-disciplines fall below this level and are related to individual courses with no specific place in the structure of the university (e.g., music appreciation). There are many disciplines, however, where there is little consensus as to where

[261] Encyclopedia.com, "Academic Disciplines*."* Accessed November 20, 2020. *https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/academic-disciplines*

they should be placed or classified in a hierarchical structure. For example, should anthropology be classified as a discipline under social sciences or humanities? Individual institutions of higher education tend to make this kind of decision, as Gay Morris notes, depending on the weight of "institutional politics and the power of disciplines."[262]

The development of screendance (media dance) into an actual discipline may ultimately depend on certain resource practicalities, such as funding. In most universities, the governance structure and administrative power are shaped by funding mechanisms that support institutions at the macro and micro levels. In many countries, universities are run like corporations, with disciplines being dropped from the curriculum for financial reasons (e.g., lack of enrolment), or else they are realigned through the incorporation of one discipline into another. Public and private funding agencies now dictate what will or will not be funded, and this influences the level of resources (human and financial) provided to any one faculty, department, or discipline. With academic institutions in constant flux as a result, the academic focus of any one faculty member also may change, depending on the research funding available. And, indeed, as the interdisciplinarity of universities develops, many faculty members are now associated with more than one department (in some cases, at different universities). It is not unlikely, therefore, that screendance (media dance) may emerge as a discipline that largely overlaps and interfaces with other disciplines, such as dance, film and media studies, performance studies, and digital media through interdisciplinary programming and institutional structures.

In fact, the story of how film studies emerged as a discipline, and the character of that discipline, may shed some light on the future of screendance (media dance). The same

[262] Gay Morris, "Dance Studies/Cultural Studies," *Dance Research Journal* 41, no. 1 (2009): 96.

definitional debate that challenges screendance erupted around the definition of film studies; whether the field can be defined as a "real" discipline on its own, or whether it is an illusory discipline, as stated by Rey Chow in her paper, "A Phantom Discipline."[263] For a field that began as a means to study a technological invention "capable of reproducing the world,"[264] film studies, for Chow, has become "an ambiguous object of study with unstable, open boundaries …but therein may lie its most interesting intellectual future."[265] Many have explored the dilemma, whether it be from the perspective of American Film Studies,[266] European Film Studies,[267] experimental film,[268] or Japanese Film Studies,[269] and most have come to the same conclusion: that this is a legitimate discipline that probably will continue to grow, as Bhaskar Sarkar says, as an ever-expanding field with "new technologies of production, new production conglomerates, media convergence and the transnationalization of film culture with new channels of distribution and new audiences."[270] Such a growing field clearly presents new opportunities for research, scholarship, and practice.

The relative openness of disciplines in the modern university and the trend to interdisciplinarity favours the recognition of screendance as an identifiable field of scholarship. If universities wanted to take a broader approach to their view of screendance, this could possibly be labelled, media dance. The array of disciplines has hardly remained static over time.

---

[263] Rey Chow, "A Phantom Discipline." PMLA 116, no. 5 (2002): 1385-1395.
[264] Chow, "A Phantom Discipline," 1386.
[265] Chow, "A Phantom Discipline:" 1392.
[266] Polan, "North America," 2-24.
[267] Ian Aitken, "European Film Scholarship," in *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008), 22-53.
[268] Michael Zryd, "Experimental Film and Development of Film Study in America," in *Inventing Film Studies,* edited by L. Wasson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 182-216.
[269] M. Yoshimoto, "Japanese Cinema in Search of a Discipline," in *Kurosawa* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 8-49; David Bordwell, "Our Dream Cinema: Western Historiography and the Japanese Film," *Film Reader* 4 (1979-1980): 45-56.
[270] Bhaskar Sarkar, "Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives," in *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008), 136.

Indeed, within an ever-changing academic landscape, new ways of perceiving and relating concepts and fields have emerged, and disciplines have continued to evolve. Marshall McLuhan, writing at a time when the world was moving from the era of mechanization into one dominated by electricity, was among the first to perceive a paradigm shift in the direction of interdisciplinarity and, indeed, simultaneity.[271] Since then, universities have introduced more and more interdisciplinary studies, where students at all levels pursue research that bridges one or more disciplinary categories. At some universities today, interdisciplinary studies are even becoming the norm, with new departments and faculties supporting these as separate institutional units (e.g., Cinema and Media Studies, Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, etc.). In fact, many thinkers have concluded that if the future of university education is to prepare students for well-rounded careers and lives, universities must turn decisively away from siloed knowledge and towards cross-disciplinary collaboration.

2.2.2 Screendance Studies or Media Dance Studies as Disciplines

Brannigan describes screendance as "undisciplined," in that it manifests itself "in performance, galleries, cinemas, and on our television screens."[272] Bench writes that "the same can be said of Screendance Studies,"[273] where many scholars and practitioners self-identify as coming from other fields and do not see themselves uniting around a shared discourse. Indeed, she sees screendance as an "anti-discipline" – that is, a hybrid capable of presenting big, discipline-transcending ideas, and where dance scholarship dominates that of film and screen.[274] Alternatively, Dodds calls screendance a "sub-discipline," usually of dance studies, but also

[271] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 13.
[272] Brannigan, "Yvonne Rainer's *Lives of Performers:* An 'Undisciplined' Encounter with the Avant-Garde," 518-519 as quoted by Bench, in "Screendance," 224.
[273] Bench, "Screendance," 224.
[274] Bench, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

recognizes the interdisciplinary field of inquiry with language shared that is across disciplinary boundaries.[275] Rosenberg identifies screendance as standing at the intersection of many disciplines and occupying an interdisciplinary space.[276] Kappenberg says, in a practical spirit, that defining screendance as a discipline helps to locate it institutionally, and that this has resource allocation benefits.[277] Faller sees screendance as a genre or discipline where the practice is more evolved than the theory or scholarship.[278] This view may be out of date, as critical scholarship has surged over the past ten years, with collections of highly-regarded scholarly papers appearing under the banner of screendance (e.g., in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Rosenberg). This emerging literature is critical to the evolution and recognition of screendance as a discipline and, indeed, to its interdisciplinarity. As Bench has concluded, there are methodologies shared by scholars who examine works through a screendance lens, regardless of whether they bring a dance-specific or a screen-specific perspective to the analysis, and this is helping to frame screendance as a discipline. This analysis may include the study of "framing, editing (sequencing, speed and rhythm), visuality and visual focus, music and sound, representation, storytelling, physically 'impossible' bodies and choreographies crafted through editing and effects, modes of distribution and reception, non-human performers and camera movement, among others."[279]

Screendance features an unusually strong connection between practice and thought. Many scholars in the field began as practitioners in dance, music, film, media or, like me, in all four, and institutions of higher education are showing an increasing openness to research-

[275] Dodds, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[276] Rosenberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, November 2021.
[277] Kappenberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, November 2021.
[278] Faller, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[279] Bench, "Screendance," 225.

creation (see section 2.3, where this will be discussed in detail). The fact that many current scholars began as practicing artists has contributed to both the diversity and creativity of the field. Some, such as Katrina McPherson and Karen Pearlman, began as producers of screendance works.[280] Others have treated the subject from a variety of perspectives – for example, audience reception,[281] neurocognitive approaches,[282] transnational and postcolonial aesthetic criticism,[283] or race and ethnicity in contemporary screendance films.[284] Studies in facial choreography draw on the writings of Deleuze in relation to "affection-image" as analyzed by Dodds and Hooper[285] and Brannigan.[286] Similarly, phenomenological and embodied approaches to film analysis build on the works of Vivian Sobchack, Laura Marks and Elena del Rio.[287] With such a wealth of analysis and critical discourse, research is lacking in one major area – and that is the analysis of individual screendance works and what each contributes to the field and popular culture.[288] (This lack will be tackled, in an introductory way, in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.)

---

[280] McPherson, *Making Video Dance*; Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms: Intuitive Film Editing* (New York: Focal Press, 2016).
[281] Karen Wood, "Audience as Community" Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing," *The International Journal of Screendance* 5 (2015): 29-42.
[282] Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds, "Screen Dance Audiences – Why Now?," *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010): iii – vii; Pia Tikka and Mauri Kaipainen, "Screendance as Enactment in Maya Deren's *At Land:* Enactive, Embodies, and Neurocinematic Considerations,"303-320.
[283] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," 349-367.
[284] Raquel Monroe, "The White Girl in the Middle": The Performativity of Race, Class and Gender in *Step Up 2: The Streets*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 182-198; Cindy Garcia, "Displace and Be Queen: Gender and Interculturalism in *Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights* (2004)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen,* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli *(*New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 155-165.
[285] Dodds and Colleen Hooper, "Faces, Close-ups and Choreography: a Deleuzian Critique of *So You Think You Can Dance*," *The International Journal of Screendance* 4, (2014): 93-113.
[286] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image.*
[287] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Marks, *The Skin of the Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and The Senses (*Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*: *Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
[288] Douglas Rosenberg, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, November 2021.

Clearly, screendance studies conforms to many of the traditional characteristics of a discipline and, I suggest it should be classified a discipline in its own right, rather than as a preparadigmatic discipline. When I interviewed Bench, she admitted that – though she has misgivings – she supports identification of screendance as a discipline, albeit one that is strongly interdisciplinary, primarily in order to access institutional resources from universities, colleges, and funders.[289] I go further. I believe that screendance, as a separate discipline, is following a similar trajectory to that of film studies, and now cinema and media studies, at many universities and colleges. Scholars in other fields are beginning to self-identify as screendance scholars. There are academic journals supporting the field, notably *The International Journal of Screendance*. There are conferences, often combined with film festivals, where academic explorations related to screendance are presented (e.g., Priscilla Guy's Regards Hybrides, held in Montréal on a regular basis). I see screendance as an art form, which is interdisciplinary in its practice. The degree to which it uses, examines, and adapts concepts and techniques from other art forms makes it a unique medium for artistic expression and appreciation. In academic institutions, however, screendance is not recognized as a discipline marked by its own separate faculty or department. No university in the world offers a Ph.D. in screendance. There are, however, exceptions at the master's level that prove the rule: the London School of Contemporary Dance offers an M.A. in Screendance and the University of Utah offers a Graduate Certificate in Screendance. At both universities, screendance is treated as an interdisciplinary program with courses offered in the Dance Department with interdisciplinary links to Film, Cinema or Media Studies, or Performance Arts departments.

[289] Harmony Bench, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

In Canada, only York University had a dedicated faculty position in screendance, with Freya Björg Olafson occupying the post beginning in 2017. She has now moved to become an Assistant Professor in the School of Art at the University of Manitoba. There are at least three other post-secondary institutions in Canada that currently offer courses or have faculty members with an interest in screendance: Simon Fraser University (Dr. Thecla Schiphorst and Dr. Tom Calvert); Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) (Dr. Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof and Allen Kaeja); and Concordia University (Philip Szporer). Not surprisingly, these are the only universities in Canada that offer Dance Studies (including York University) in addition to courses or programs in Cinema and Media Studies, or Interdisciplinary Arts. The definition that these academic institutions apply to screendance has been very broad, including everything from Hollywood and Bollywood musicals to radical, experimental screendance. All types of dancing bodies in motion are studied at these institutions, whether they be human, non-human, or post-human. As for film technology, they embrace everything from traditional film production and projection techniques to modern, advanced digital technologies.[290]

I see these programs as only the starting point. In order to build the discipline, screendance scholars and interested students should take advantage of opportunities for experimentation and inquiry offered at co-creation sites on university campuses (e.g., the Sensorium at York). Universities with programs that operate at the intersection of dance, performance, and media arts might well develop a specialized degree in screendance, or media dance, at the undergraduate level, perhaps modelling them on the Stage and Screen Bachelors Degree (now called the Media and Performance Production Specialization) at Queen's University. There, the degree is jointly co-coordinated by the departments of Film, Media,

[290] Philip Szporer, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

Drama, and Music, with students gaining technical and theoretical knowledge and skills in all those areas of performance study. According to this model, screendance would be an interdisciplinary specialization rather than a separate department in itself. The University of Towson in Maryland, USA, is moving in this direction, with strategic goals for 2020-2030 including the promotion of an interdisciplinary core curriculum to provide opportunities for students to embrace diversity, inclusion, and equity issues in disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields.[291] As Faller writes, the fulfilment of this goal "should provide an institutional space to support all intersectional art forms like screendance."[292] To increase the opportunity for co-creation, Dodds argues that universities should make film editing suites, screening platforms, and cameras as readily available to dance students wanting to produce screendance works as to students from a film or media studies background.[293] To promote the development of interdisciplinary curricula and collaborations at institutions of higher education – especially where there is already an emerging focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion – Faller encourages institutions to reward faculty for undertaking interdisciplinary work and focusing on intersectional art forms.[294]

Interdisciplinary approaches, a scholarly focus on practice-based work, and the continuing evolution of both pedagogy and curricula -- these are the four pillars of an evolving specialization over the next five to ten years. On that basis, I anticipate the imminent emergence of Ph.D. degree programs in the discipline of screendance (or media dance), and I look forward to active involvement in their development.

[291] Greg Faller, email message to George Turnbull, October 2021.
[292] Greg Faller, email message to George Turnbull, October, 2021.
[293] Sherril Dodds, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.
[294] Greg Faller, in a telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, October 2021.

2.3 Screendance as Research-Creation

No matter how screendance is defined or delimited as a discipline, it is clearly an important field of study in terms of the growing interest in research-creation projects and dissertations as part of academic study. Research-creation is defined as "research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation."[295] According to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada, "fields that may involve research-creation may include, but are not limited to: architecture, design, creative writing, visual arts…performing arts…film, video, interdisciplinary arts, media and electronic arts, and new artistic practices."[296] Other terms that describe this area of inquiry include: research-for-creation; research-from-creation; creative presentations of research; creative practice as research; practice-based research; practice-led research; research-based practice; practice-as-research; creative-praxis; arts-driven inquiry; arts-based research; studio-based inquiry; and artistic research.[297] What is significant here is that the "act of creation" is linked to the "scholarly process" in a way that leads to "critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms),"[298] In other words, creative work operates as a component of critical and theoretical study, with research-creation "theses" or projects typically integrating a creative process or an experimental aesthetic as an integral part of the study.[299] As Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis conclude, "to use art as a mode of narrative inquiry [is] to move toward a new

---

[295] Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Accessed 2020. https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx
[296] SSHRC, 2020.
[297] The various names given to research-creation come from a number of sources, including Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and "Family Resemblance," 5; and Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 4.
[298] SSHRC, 2020.
[299] Owen Chapman, and Kim Sawchuk, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances':" 6.

research paradigm in which ideas [become] as important as forms."[300] Natalie Loveless, in her *Manifesto for Research-Creation*,[301] has drawn important distinctions in the terminology used to describe research-creation. She states that "*practice-based* research generates new knowledge through or by means of artistic practice itself, and *practice-led* research draws on artistic methods to generate new knowledge for or about artistic practice in written form."[302] This definitional debate is only relevant in the university context with regard to what Loveless calls "the mode of output"[303] and whether the final product is a dissertation in written form only or whether it includes creative output. Screendance is a natural field of study to embrace a research-creation focus where the final output could consist of both a screendance work and a research dissertation, or just one or the other.

Funding agencies and universities continue to debate the issue of output, and many institutions of higher learning are struggling to determine if research-creation "constitutes valid scholarship" in line with the established practices of degree-granting institutions.[304] Beginning early in this century, the challenge for many academics and institutions was to legitimize "arts-based inquiry" and to assist Ph.D. students in justifying proposals to conduct arts-based dissertation research.[305] And they have been successful. In recent years, as described in the writings of Loveless, Chapman and Sawchuk, Bochner and Ellis, and others, Ph.D. degrees have been awarded where the basis of the thesis was a research-creation focus or where a research-

[300] Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, "An Introduction to the Arts and Narrative Research: Art as Inquiry:" 507. Some of the modes of inquiry they give as examples include: an article, a graph, a poem, a story, a play, a dance, or a painting. Loveless (*How to Make Art*, 5) also includes "creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions."
[301] Loveless, *How to Make Art.*
[302] Loveless, *How to Make Art*, 5. Her emphasis.
[303] Loveless, *How to Make Art*, 5.
[304] Chapman and Sawchuk, "Research-Creation:" 6.
[305] Piantanida, McMahon, and Garman. "Sculpting the contours of arts-based educational research within a discourse community," 182-191; Slattery, "Troubling the contours of arts-based educational research:" 192-197.

creation product has been part of the scholarly review of the dissertation process. Most of these degrees have been in fine arts, media studies, or visual arts. From a cynical point of view, greater acceptance of research-creation among funding agencies may have contributed to this shift.

Currently, research-creation is usually framed as research methodology – that is, a method of inquiry designed to test a research hypothesis and to contribute "new knowledge in a field." Practice-led research by artist-scholars is becoming more common, however, and also more accepted as research practice at the university level. Nevertheless, tensions exist at the institutional level, as pointed out by John Hockey, as to what "practices" qualify as research-creation and around whether they are actually generating new knowledge.[306] Other tensions exist around who should supervise research-creation-based thesis work and how this should be done. In this regard, there is growing support for a joint supervisory model with at least one supervisor or mentor being an accomplished practitioner in the field in question.[307] Finally, there are challenges around how to assess research-creation "theses" or projects, with Chapman and Sawchuk concluding that there must be "rigorous flexibility without resorting solely to putatively objective evaluation criteria…with reviewers…selected who can recognize the terrains upon which a project intervenes, and speak to these considerations in their deliberations."[308]

The struggles continue. It is significant, however, that a number of polytechnical schools and art colleges in Canada have recently become universities (e.g., Ryerson Polytechnic to Ryerson University – now called Toronto Metropolitan University) and college and university programs have merged (e.g., with degrees and certificates being offered jointly by the University

[306] Hockey, "Practice-based Research Degrees in Art and Design," 109.
[307] Hockey and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson, "The Supervision of Practice-based Research Degrees in Art and Design." *Jade* 19, no 3 (2000): 345-355. They analyzed how to supervise students undertaking practice-based research degrees in art and design in the United Kingdom.
[308] Chapman and Sawchuk, "Research-Creation:" 21.

of Guelph and Humber College requiring the successful completion of both practical and academic courses). With a growing interest in technical and skills-based learning, many colleges and universities do now include creative practice-as-research in course offerings. The synergy between skills-based learning and academic research has resulted in the arrival at universities of skills-based programming that was formerly almost the exclusive province of polytechnics. This does not represent a degradation of academic excellence. As Anne Goldson writes of her experience in Australia and New Zealand, "traditional universities can provide skills-based learning without losing a commitment to research, while the former polytechnics have extended their skills-training into more research-based pedagogies."[309] Loveless has undertaken extensive analysis of research-creation opportunities at the university level and has found that they offer very promising pedagogical and institutional possibilities.[310]

In Dance Studies, there is growing acceptance of practice-as-research as a methodology for academic exploration. Jane Bacon and Vida Midgelow concluded that "practice-as-research [is] an enquiry-based approach to creative work that gives rise to epistemologies that can only be known through practice on the premise that dance knowledge is embodied."[311] This is also true for screendance (media dance) as it is only by making art that a scholar can truly investigate the art-making process, since the work becomes not just a creation but also a vehicle to answer research questions. This is also true in cinema and media studies or in other disciplines, including the creative industries, where the final research-creation product is a new media or artistic product. Of course, the work will have an artistic as well as a scholarly existence,

[309] Goldson, "The emergence of creative practice as research:" 13.
[310] Loveless, *How to Make Art*, 2.
[311] Dodds, "Introduction" to *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance* Studies, 13. Dodds introduces the concept of practice-based research as discussed in the writings of Bacon and Midgelow, "Articulating Choreographic Practices:" 3-19.

especially if it is disseminated to the public. In this respect, the weighting of benefits in practice-as-creation may fall on the creative, rather than the academic, side of the balance. Hockey undertook an extensive study of Ph.D. students in art and design who had undertaken practice-based research degrees at one of the 40 institutions offering such degrees in the United Kingdom. He found that more students self-identified as taking research risks "either in terms of failure to pass…or in terms of the negative impact of critical analysis upon their creative capacity"[312] with the ultimate benefit to the student as a "maker/researcher rather than a researcher/maker."[313]

Does research-creation have any standing as a discipline in its own right or is it just a method of inquiry that has become more popular and widely accepted? Certainly, there is an argument to be made that it does. Research-creation does support studies related to screendance as it does for other creative disciplines. A number of scholars[314] now specializing in research-creation have developed theories and methodologies in this area, and are writing about these in the literature. Many conferences include presentations involving research-creation products (e.g., documentaries, podcasts, performances, sound work, blogs, multimedia texts, films, new media products, dance creations, theatrical presentations, scripts, etc.). In addition, the online versions of peer-reviewed research journals have begun to embrace the inclusion of sound files and films, as well as other forms of artistic expression, to support research findings, in such publications as *Qualitative Inquiry* and the *Canadian Journal of Communications*.

---

[312] Hockey, "Practice-based Research Degree:" 118-119.
[313] Hockey, "Practice-based Research Degree:" 110.
[314] e.g., Loveless, "Practice in the Flesh of Theory"; Loveless, *How to Make Art;* Bochner and Ellis, "An Introduction to the Arts and Narrative Research"; Bradley Haseman, "A Manifesto for Performative Research," *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy* 25, no. 4.1 (2006): 98-106; Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practice (*New York: The Guilford Press*,* 2009); Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: L.B. Tauris, 2010); and Chapman and Sawchuk, "Research Creation;" among many others.

In the academic context, there is debate as to whether research creation is, on one hand, a separate discipline or, on the other hand, better understood as a methodology; certainly it is early days in the evolution of the theories and methodologies that are the foundation on which a new discipline necessarily builds. Either way, research-creation is continuing to grow. Gone are the days when the final submission in any course at school is an essay or a written examination. It is possible that future university students, in order to graduate from an arts or science program, will be required to take research-creation courses and to complete research-creation projects to complement their theoretical, essay-based, or journal-based work. Research-creation may even become a support unit, as it is at York University (https://www.library.yorku.ca/ds/), much like the writing-support office, designed to help students to address technical and theoretical questions related to research-creation. This approach to education is not just refreshingly creative, it is also pedagogically useful, as putting theory into practice inspires intellectual inventiveness and enhances cognitive retention.

I believe that research-creation will continue to have a bright future in the context of higher education. As universities continually adapt to new realities and new funding modalities, research-creation is clearly part of the academic continuum. Although research-creation may never be its own discipline, it is expected that universities will continue to embrace research-creation as students and scholars recognize the benefits of integrating practice-based methodologies into their academic work as a powerful means to explore and answer questions and hypotheses.

2.4 Conclusion: Screendance and Academic Institutional Debates

Various financial, social, cultural, and political factors have influenced the way that our institutions of higher learning have evolved. While compartmentalization into schools, faculties,

departments, and disciplines has always been necessary to provide order to university governance, labels have often created artificial boundaries and barriers for creativity and innovation. There has been pushback. Over time, certain areas of study, such as dance and film – including screendance – have become more interdisciplinary, and, as such, they are coordinated by two or more departments. Such programs have proven their success. Now, as we move into the third decade of the 21st century, it may be time for universities to re-examine their structures to allow for even more interdisciplinary areas of specialization, such as screendance (or, more broadly, media dance), to thrive as the new norm. Moreover, given the potential for media dance creations to contribute to social critique and address political, cultural, and social issues, I propose that scholars and academics recognize the field as a distinct interdisciplinary field in its own right, rather than seeing it as a mere sub-set of film and media or dance or performance studies. I argue that, with research-creation as a form of art-as-inquiry, media dance gives us innovative and creative ways to articulate research hypotheses and questions within an academic and institutional environment.

Chapter 3: The Past and Future of Media Dance in Relation to Technological Innovations, Distribution, Exhibition, Audiences, and Funding Options

3.1 Introduction

Technologically mediated dance is often seen as a visual and aural poem. This art form – under my umbrella category, "media dance" – is extremely inclusive, beginning with such formal productions as silent and experimental cinema, Hollywood and Bollywood musicals, and even image projections for stage performances or interactive installations. However, the category also encompasses less formal products, such as amateur videos on YouTube and reality television shows. On the technological front, it includes everything from iPad applications and dance videogames to dance documentaries and dance documentation.[315] The end point, in most instances today, is a screen, as discussed by Rosenberg, displaying "a creative intermedia hybrid of dance and the moving image"[316] where the screen is broadly defined to include any projection surface of any kind. The future has moved from an analogue, two-dimensional space into a virtual space, which I am now classifying under my taxonomic sub-category, "digital dance."

Screendance, as another sub-category of "media dance" in my new proposed taxonomy, remains an emerging art form and field of academic inquiry and one that, like all film, is essentially interdisciplinary in its practice of utilizing, examining, and adapting concepts from other art forms. Such a practice makes it a uniquely rich medium for artistic expression and appreciation and academic scholarship. Indeed, traditional screendance exemplifies the

[315] Bench, "Screendance," 224.
[316] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, 11.

intermediality of the screen in that its two major components, cinema and dance, are also intermedial; these components intertwine, in screendance, to give rise to artistic creations. In the very intermediality of screendance lies its future, even as it continues to embrace a range of traditional but evolving forms, such as musicals, and as films continue to be exhibited at dance film festivals (online, in-person, or hybrid). Screendance is an art form with its own practice and scholarship, as Rosenberg writes, which "is coalescing into one of the most decidedly post historical and post-disciplinary moments of the twenty-first century."[317] With this in mind, the use of expanded cinematic technologies is driving the art form towards an exciting future. As Mirella Misi and Ludmila Pimentel highlight in their writings, "artistic experimentation [which lies] in the zone between dance and technology should generate new forms of aesthetic experiences for the public and new compositional methods for art directors, choreographers, and dancers."[318] Similarly, the Canadian practitioners, Philip Szporer and Marlene Millar, write that "technology augments, rather than replaces, the live-art experience."[319] These technologies are leading to the creation of a new canon of work that will have lasting intellectual and aesthetic effects among scholars, practitioners, and audiences alike.

In this chapter, the future of traditional screendance is explored specifically in relation to intermediality, and screendance and digital dance are analyzed through both the historic and the future-oriented lens of technologically mediated dance forms on the screen. These forms include a multiplicity of new creative technologies that result in immersive and interactive experiences for choreographers, performers, filmmakers, and audiences. Distribution and exhibition options are explored, as well as funding opportunities for large commercial productions. Some examples

[317] Rosenberg, "Introduction," *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, 17.
[318] Misi and Pimentel, "New Virtual Body is Real!," 569.
[319] Szporer and Millar, "Moving In(To) 3D," 234.

are provided of work created using new technologies, including recent short experimental films, Hollywood films, other feature film musicals, and work on digital media platforms. The chapter also looks at examples of technologically mediated works created by the ever-growing artistic community in Canada.

3.2 Screendance as an Intermedial Art Form

Screendance, as a hybrid artistic form and as a sub-category of "media dance," will continue to exist in the form of artistic works that can be, in Faller's words, "seen on a screen by a passive viewer."[320] This will hold true even with the emergence of new production technologies. As Faller indicates, screendances will continue to be produced "because they are the easiest to create and then distribute to a larger audience to see, via Vimeo for example, where the viewer is the consumer."[321] Thus, screendance will continue to be interdisciplinary and intermedial by its very nature, where this intermediality is highlighted by multiple factors, such as sound, projection surfaces, and performance spaces.

Let us examine "sound" to begin with, where the choreography and the score co-mingle in an intermedial way to present a concept. The overlay of non-diegetic or diegetic sound can underscore the theme of a work, whether it be abstract or narrative, in a way that is integral to the viewer's understanding of the choreography and the compositional and emotional intent. Sound can stimulate the imagination, intensify emotions, and enhance feelings. It also operates as a reflection of the cultural issues and environment in which the work was conceived. Clearly, the introduction of sound to film changed the viewer's experience of screendance. When Jakie Rabinowitz (played by Al Jolson) begins to sing and dance in Alan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer*

[320] Faller, email exchange with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.
[321] Faller, email exchange with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

(1927), it brought the silent era in film to an abrupt end. As Rachel Joseph writes, it was a revolution that highlighted "the relationship between live performance and cinema at moments of technological change within the cinematic medium."[322]

Scholarship tended to neglect the central role of sound in screendance until Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty edited a compilation of essays on the topic in *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films* (2016). This seminal anthology examines sound and music in all kinds of films – feature film musicals, avant-garde, and popular street dance films. Faller, in his essay in this anthology, challenges scholars and practitioners to explore more fully the role that sound plays not only in defining screendance, but also in "position[ing] it for future evolution."[323] This anthology builds on the work of scholarly articles related to screen music and sound found in the UK-based journals, *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* and *The Soundtrack*, the New-York-based *Music and the Moving Image,* and *The Australasian Journal of Soundtrack Studies.*[324] It also builds on the work of Mark Evans, one of the authors of the anthology and the editor of *Genre, Music and Sound*, which is a website focusing on "popular international film genres as they have developed in the post-War era (1945-present); analyzing the variety and shared patterns of music and sound use that characterize each genre."[325] There is much room for further study in this area.

Moving on to the "spaces" where screendance works are projected, these too add to the art form's intermediality, as any surface can become a screen in the modern context. Similarly,

---

[322] Joseph, "Longing for Depth," 487.
[323] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 37.
[324] Rebecca Coyle, "Editorial – Sound Tracks the Place: Australasian Soundtrack Studies," *Screen Sound* 1 (2010): 5-6.
[325] Genre, Music and Sound website. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/genre-music-and-sound/.

screens can be moved in a way that immerses the audience in the experience by creating a "montage in space…[that] challenges fixed and passive spectatorship."[326]

The intermediality of technologically mediated dance on screen adds a level of mystery and spectacle to the viewer's experience and an area of academic inquiry for the scholar, particularly related to both the technologies incorporated and the social critique. Indeed, ever-evolving filmic, cinematic, and digital technologies add a complexity to the spectacle of screendance where, at the intersection of art, bodies in motion, and technology, a fantastical impression is created that cannot be replicated in live performance. This intermediality is prevalent in short avant-garde or narrative films, told through dance, as these films lie at the very heart of the screendance genre. Short films, where contemporary dance is the prominent form of expression, often the individual expression of the creator, meet all the criteria and are easily recognizable as screendance. In many of these films, there is no coherent narrative but the art lies in the poetic movement of the body or bodies in motion. These short films are not burdened with the definitional issues that arise with categorizing feature-length films as screendance films or musicals with screendance elements (see Chapter 4). Screendance film festivals, to avoid the definitional debates, tend to focus on short films (45 minutes or less), where movement, whether by humans, animals, animations, or inanimate forms, is identified as being dance or dance-like. As part of this analysis, a number of short screendance films, not previously analyzed in any major way in the literature, are examined.

[326] Ariadne Mikau, "*Anarchitextures:* Intermedial Encounters on the Screen:" 81.

Salt Water (Abe Abraham, 2017) is a superb example of a short (5:57 minutes), experimental screendance film employing visual experimentation, through dance, to provide social critique. This film has won many awards internationally and in Canada, including Best Film at the Lights Dance and the Contact Dance International Film Festival in Toronto. It is an excellent example of what screendance can be. Here, over 20 dancers from the Abanar Dance Company of New York City move to the sounds of JT Bullit's seismographic recordings of the earth's vibrations. The compositional intention of choreographer, Abe Abraham – the artistic director of Abanar – was to take viewers into the sea to witness dancers who embody the movement of such great cosmic forces as currents. This kinesthetic experience challenges viewers to appreciate the aesthetic form of bodies moving and dancing together as one geological or aquatic force of nature. The film begins with a black screen and the sound of a great stirring. Gradually, the viewers realize that they are looking at more than 20 sculpted bodies, a deep shadowy blue in colour, like rocks submerged in the sea. The bodies are pressed together to resemble rock or mounded sand, with "bare arched backs piled on top of and next to one another, rising and falling in wave-like motions."[327] The camera drifts along an arm; a hand is revealed, a face. The dancers move slowly, backs rise and fall, an arm moves like the tide, and the motion

Figure 3: *Saltwater* (2017)

(Source: **https://www.queensworldfilmfestival.com/films/detail.asp?fid=1195)**

[327] Mary Callahan, "Abanar Dance Company Presents Abe Abraham's Dance Film 'Salt Water,'" *Dance Informa*, November 14, 2017: para. 2.

ebbs and flows in an hypnotic way. The pace quickens and then subsides. A pattern of pale light scintillates in the darkness, an effect that Abraham created by projecting a video of an ocean off a mirror and onto the dancers' bodies. Mary Callahan describes the scene:

> One dancer reaches his arms over another's head just as one wave would engulf the water below it. A second dancer expands her body, freeing herself from connection with the group like a wave crashing against a cliff. Dancers break free and reconnect, expand and collapse without any rhyme or reason, but with just as much majesty and mystery as the sea. Eventually, all the dancers return to the starting position: a seemingly never-ending view of beautiful backs ebbing and flowing like a calm tide on the shore.[328]

To capture this underwater dance, Abraham arranged some of the dancers hunched forward with their hands resting on stools so that they could push off and roll against them. He had other dancers crouch with arms resting on the backs of other dancers. Throughout, Abraham favoured an improvisational style, one that suggested the organic movement of the sea. Instead of precise choreography, he gave each dancer a structure of three or four movements: for example, long body rolls, slow wiggles, or rocking forward and back. As noted by Callahan, when Abraham filmed, he would call out when and how he wanted each dancer to move in order to create a pattern of integrated movement, with the bodies moving together or in reaction to each other. He filmed in silence, with the soundscape added in editing.[329]

The camera imitates the motion of the waves, moving slowly back and forth, working in sync with the dancers and using wide shots, close shots, slow pans, and quick flashes to contribute to the kinesthetic affect of moving waves. The viewers are not in control, cannot

[328] Callahan, "Abanar Dance Company Presents:" para. 2.
[329] Callahan, "Abanar Dance Company Presents:" para. 4.

choose where to focus their eyes. The camera takes them on a tightly focused journey as they experience the intensity, "the immensity, the mystery and the wonder of the ocean"[330] or of shifting geological formations.

The film, in the way it juxtaposes human bodies and the sea, depicts a recognizable social practice – which is the collectivity of human experience and its powerlessness in the face of a huge, impersonal nature. The film takes us beyond ourselves as human beings to confront the forces of nature in light of our own need and desire for human connection. The film challenges the viewer to consider the complexity of human society and how the individual operates within, symbolically, a crowd of interlocked bodies, where individual identification is almost impossible, but there is harmony.

Screendance is not, and never has been, limited to the able-bodied, though Western theatrical dance has traditionally been dominated by able-bodied dancers and, as Carolien Hermans writes, "structured by a very narrow vision of a dancer's body (white, long-limbed, flexible, thin, able-bodied) and by strict aesthetic structures and representational codes that suppress and devalue bodies that don't fit into normal categories."[331] Much screendance, however, has moved away from a restricted idea of what a dancer should look like and has embraced, as Ann Albright writes, "the intersection of dance and disability [as] an extraordinary rich site at which to explore the overlapping constructions of the body's physical ability, subjectivity and cultural visibility."[332]

---

[330] Callahan, "Abanar Dance Company Presents:" para. 4.
[331] Hermans, "Differences in Itself: Redefining Disability through Dance," *Social Inclusion* (2016) 4 (4): 162.
[332] Ann Albright, "Strategic abilities: Negotiating the disabled body in dance," In *Moving history/dancing cultures: A dance history reader,* eds. A. Dills and Ann Albright Cooper (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 56-66.

Shay Erlich and Jenna Roy, Toronto co-founders of a trans and disability-led arts collective called the Cyborg Circus Project, have embraced their disabilities in some of their screendance works, including *A Provocation on Wheels* (2019) and *Safe Words* (2019). These works feature Erlich and Roy dancing in their wheelchairs, using innovative screendance to show how barriers can be broken down and removed. For them, the wheelchairs "represent possibility and plurality: the space between motion and stillness, the balance point between safety and risk, and how imagination creates opportunities for new motions to emerge."[333] The dancer, sitting in the inanimate device, becomes animated, where "wheeled motion is a sensory delight, inciting and overwhelming the senses."[334] *A Provocation on Wheels* premiered at the 2019 Contact Dance International Film Festival in Toronto and was also shown at the ReelAbilities Film Festival in Toronto and at the Chinook Festival. It features Erlich and Roy dancing in their wheelchairs in a studio setting, both together and apart, in dances that evoke stability, friendship, and support, as well as suggesting a way of navigating the world on wheels. The dancers are performing their own identities.

Much of what Shay Erlich and Jenna Roy learned in creating *A Provocation of Wheels* has been applied to their new production, *Safe Words.* In *Safe Words* – a 25-minute contemporary wheelchair screendance duet with an original soundscape – they have taken greater risks, as the dance focuses on "wheelchair users' real experiences in public spaces…, [explores] the issue of street harassment faced by disabled folks and questions the need to demonstrate hyper-competence in public to avoid harassment."[335] The development of this screendance was supported by the Blue Kaeja d'Dance Creative Risk Residency (2019), with

[333] The Cyborg Circus Project. *Creative Hub*, para. 2.
[334] The Cyborg Circus Project, para. 2.
[335] Toronto Arts Council, "Safe Words: Offering Social Supports through Community Arts," para. 8.

Allan Kaeja helping to develop the lifts and Karen Kaeja consulting on the choreography. The choreography highlights moments when people living with disabilities have control and others – including fights – when they do not. It shows what it is like for a person living with disabilities to move in a world that can be frightening.[336] This work was designed to make the audience feel uncomfortable, particularly when one of the dancers falls out of the wheelchair and is lying on the floor for an uncomfortable length of time. The dance includes many different moves and lifts, with the dancers balancing their chairs on top of themselves or each other, with the chairs moving from side to side and in spins, with all eight wheels lifting off the ground at the same time. The soundscape includes the spoken word of Erlich and Roy telling their own stories, combined with custom, curated sound. An ASL interpreter signs the spoken words to enhance accessibility.

The messages contained in *Safe Words* are several. To begin with, persons living with disabilities are able to figure things out on their own. Persons living with disabilities are able to feel pure joy – wheel-joy – and, as drivers of wheeled bodies moving through space, can feel speed, momentum, excitement, and exhilaration. Most of all, the film tells us that the human spirit is resilient. These dances embody the panoply of experience of persons living with disabilities. In terms of the social practice, the film challenges

Figure 4: *Safe Words* (2019)

(Source: https://www.aeriskorper.com/curiosities-1/the-cyborg-circus-project-safewords-interview)

[336] Aeris Korper, "The Cyborg Circus Project – Safe Words Interview," February 20, 2020.

the viewer to take a thought-provoking look at what it means to be a person living with disabilities and to celebrate those who can express that meaning through dance. The Cyborg Circus Project, as well as producing films, also offers arts education, performance, and social support to young people living with disabilities and lends mobility devices and equipment to youth. Erlich has choreographed and produced another screendance film, *Love Letters to Willow*, which debuted on the film festival circuit in 2023.

Inclinations (Danielle Peers and Alice Sheppard, 2019) celebrates disability perspectives while at the same time reminding the viewer of the stark reality of people living with disabilities being institutionalized in the past, rather than being welcomed members of society. Four dancers, three black, and one white, through dance in wheelchairs, address racial issues of separation and exclusion and struggles in scenes of seductive gazes between a black woman and a white woman. Often the three white dancers are seen moving in harmony with the one black dancer isolated or at a distance. The athleticism and acrobatics of the dancers depict how people living with disabilities can overcome the struggles they face in institutional and life settings. Filmed from multiple angles, including from above, this dance, as described by the directors of the film, contrasts "the playful connections when disability aesthetics, disability community and a gorgeous ramp meet the institutional histories and

Figure 5: *Inclinations* (2019)

(Source: http://www.daniellepeers.com/inclinations.html)

discordant inclinations that can lurk just below the surface."[337] This film was funded with support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Disability Dance Works, LLC, and The Human Performance Fund from the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport and Recreation, University of Alberta and has been screened at many dance festivals in Canada and the United States.

Screendance is an art form with ever-expanding options for intermedial performance spaces, such as water, abandoned buildings, churches, and empty lofts, to name only a few examples that I shall consider in this section. Consider the filming of screendance productions underwater, for instance, in a short film, *AMA* (2018),[338] performed and directed by Julie Gautier, with the underwater dancer and choreographer capturing dance movements that are uniquely graceful and undulating in an aqueous environment. *AMA* was performed in a pool located in Venice, Italy, which is 12 metres deep. The title of the film is the Japanese word for "women in the sea."[339] The work arose from the filmmaker's deep depression after the death of her daughter, and it was released to honour International Women's Day on March 8, 2018. The film begins with Gautier standing in a rainstorm with the camera focusing on her face. The camera then cuts to Gautier lying motionless and pans across her body.

Figure 6: *AMA* (2018)
Source: https://www.collater.al/en/ama-underwater-dance-julie-gautier/

[337] http://www.daniellepeers.com/inclinations.html. Accessed June 21, 2024.
[338] To watch *AMA*, go to: https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=AwrFErBXDFJm2gc60D.JzbkF?p=Julie+Gautier+-+AMA.
[339] Emma Taggart, "Artist Performs Stunning Underwater Choreography in the World's Deepest Pool," May 4, 2018. Accessed May 23, 2024. https://mymodernmet.com/underwater-dance-julie-gautier/ , para. 1.

As she slowly gets up, it is suddenly apparent to the audience that she is not on the ground but is actually rising from the bottom of a swimming pool.[340] The film, which was made by free diving without oxygen, powerfully depicts the overwhelming pain of mourning.[341] As with many other screendance works, the camera takes the audience beyond the normal limits of the human body to create something extraordinary. This is an example of how a film can combine dance and the rhythmic, musical movement of the body to express grief and incorporate emotions that are pre-linguistic or non-linguistic and corporeal creating kinaesthetic empathy in the viewer. Through her film company, Les Films Engloutis, Gautier has made a series of other screendance films, called *Ashes and Snow,* combining sport and dance, especially dancing underwater in the natural environment with huge aquatic animals.

Similar to Gautier, the Italian choreographer, Marisa Cecchetti uses freediving to create screendances with no supplemental oxygen. She works with both on-land and underwater photographers and, in the editing room, adds the soundscape, typically with music and ocean sounds. A passionate advocate of her art, she has also created the 1st Deep Underwater Dance Festival as a means to encourage other screendance practitioners to join her in this extraordinary creative niche.

Figure 7: A Dance by Marisa Cecchetti

Source: https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/watch-this-pair-of-dancers-tango-underwater

Cecchetti presented her screendance work, *(No) Detachment* (2018), at the 2019

[340] Taggart, "Artist Performs Stunning Underwater Choreography in the World's Deepest Pool," para. 2.
[341] Rajitha Dissanayake, "The Underwater Dance that Holds Your Breath for Six Minutes is Stunning." Accessed May 23, 2023. https://oceanfacts.net/the-underwater-dance-is-incredible/, para. 1.

Contact Dance International Film Festival in Toronto. The film is an experimental, short, screendance work where Cecchetti dances, while free diving in the Y-40 Deep Joy – the world's deepest swimming pool – located in Montegrotto Terme, Italy. [342] The dance, performed with a male partner, presents the relationship joys and challenges of being together and then detached, with the couple reconciling and coming together at the conclusion of the piece.

Cecchetti is a physicist, an accomplished dancer, scuba diver, and free diver. Wide, lateral windows surround the pool, which features various caverns, platforms, and a central cylindrical tunnel from which spectators can watch the divers. Below 12 metres, the walls of the pool narrow into a well-like funnel, which plunges straight down to 40 metres. The pool is fed with thermal water from local hot springs, and the water is cooled to 33.3 degrees Celsius, which is the perfect temperature for diving and dancing underwater.

This is not the only work by this innovative choreographer. Cecchetti has created more than 60 screendance works, mostly filmed underwater in the Y-40, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or in both. For instance, she filmed *Freediving Dancer* (2017) in the Mediterranean Sea. In this work, the choreographer merges dance with free diving to celebrate the natural environment, where a human being can live naturally for a while without breathing. The compositional intention is to illustrate life in the womb before birth and thus to capture a fundamental moment in human existence. The physical response in the viewer, the kinesthetic affect, is instantaneous and unexpected as the spectator watches, with astonishment and awe, the dancers holding their breath and dancing for an extended period underwater.

[342] Y-40 was the deepest swimming pool in the world when it was constructed in 2014. It is now the third deepest pool after Deepspot in Poland and Deep Dive Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

In *All of this and nothing* (2015), Cecchetti dances to the brooding rock song of "Soulsaver" (2015) by Dave Gahan and a group by the same name. The work begins with Cecchetti – wearing a long dress and scarf – dancing on the pool deck of Y-40. She then jumps into the pool, fully clothed, performs a jazz sequence on one of the platforms, looks through the underwater windows and dances along the tunnel and down to the mouth of the funnel. Finally, she drops her scarf, and it floats gently down into the abyss. The dance mirrors the words of the song, "Soulsaver," with reference to storms outside the windows, of moving in from the dark, and the sun rising while you sleep.

The works of Gautier and Ceccetti provide the spectator with new ways of understanding extraordinary embodied endurance and the fantastic ways dancers, in screendance works, can transcend expectations of physical possibilities.

Other screendance artists use every day backdrops to convey their messages. Alan Lake, a Québec-based choreographer, dancer, director, and visual artist, uses ruined buildings, billowing smoke, and bodies smeared with filth as a backdrop for his screendance works in such films as *La-bas, le lointain* (2012), *Jardins-catastrophes* (2014), and *Ravages* (2015).[343] Elias Djemil-Matassov, also a freelance, award-winning, screendance artist based in Québec, begins each one of his screendance projects by first finding a location, whether it be a church, a warehouse, or an empty loft. He then works out the choreography and music in relation to the setting and the story he wants to tell.[344] In his works, he uses cinematic language to elicit emotion from the abstract movement of dance, and he relies on the editing process to give creative impact to the work.

---

[343] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance," 39. To watch an example of Alan Lake's work, *Ravages*, go to: https://vimeo.com/155016513.
[344] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance," 39.

Some powerful examples of his work include *Franciszka* (2018),[345] based on a true story about a Polish ballerina suffering as a prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1943,[346] and his films *Sarah* (2017) and *Lucia* (2018), which tell the stories of women in crisis.[347]

Allen Kaeja, an internationally recognized and award-winning choreographer and filmmaker in Toronto, based many of his early screendance films on Holocaust themes, and he filmed them with characteristically stark backgrounds, including the use of found footage. Many of these films – *Witnessed* (1997),[348] *Sarah* (1999), *Zummel* (1999), *Resistance* (2001), *Departure* (2003), *1939* (2001), and *Old Country* (2004) – were co-directed by Mark Adam. In *Witnessed*, images include bowed and naked figures lined up against a wall to depict the horror, powerlessness, and fear of the Holocaust. Many of Kaeja and Adam's screendance works now form part of the permanent collection of the Jewish Museum in New York and of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel.[349] In such recent works as *Xtraordinary TO Dances: Moments in Reel Time* (2017), *Farewell to Honest Ed's* (2017), and *Sweet Exit* (2014), Kaeja has set his screendance films in realistic urban settings.[350]

The Indigenous screendance artist, Terrance Houle, a member of the Blood First Nation, used the cityscape of Calgary as a backdrop for his screendance work, *Landscape* (2008),[351] in which he combines video, film, photographs, and performance. In this film, shot in Super 8, Houle shows himself in everyday urban environments, for example, "in Nose Hill in downtown

---

[345] To watch *Franciszka*, an example of Elias Demil-Matassov's work, go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXa2gm7zK10.
[346] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance," 39.
[347] Elias Demil-Matassov website. Accessed February 2, 2021. https://www.eliasdjemil.com/.
[348] To watch *Witnessed,* an example of Allen Kaeja's work, go to: https://vimeo.com/281284286.
[349] Allan Kaeja website. Accessed February 2, 2021. https://www.kaeja.org.
[350] Kaeja website, 2021.
[351] This film, as many other short screendance films, can be viewed through a subscription to https://collection.regardshybrides.com.

Calgary, which is a natural, inner-city landscape that is a sacred place for Indigenous peoples and a frequent site for ceremonies and teepee circles."[352] Here, in the form of a contemporary powwow, Houle illustrates his theme by means of repeated tripping, falling, and lying on the ground. The film is shot in Super 8, and "whenever [Houle] is on camera viewers cannot see the city around him."[353] At one point in the film, "Houle is shot in the back…and it turns out that his daughter dressed as a cowboy and riding a toy horse has felled him."[354] For his part, Houle is wearing "a breechcloth that his mother made for him when he was nine and a bustle that his father had given him, well worn, along with a roach, some moccasins, and a choker breastplate."[355] His urban, rectangular glasses operate in contrast to his warrior dress. Jacobson-Konefall, who has studied this work, writes that Indigenous aesthetics and civic consciousness, citizenship, and Indigenous identity are its central themes. Responses to the work have varied. During the filming, many accused Houle of being either drunk or dead: unfortunately, this is a stereotypical response of some urban Canadians to Indigenous peoples. Others have reacted adversely to the work itself, which they see as a negative representation of urban Indigenous peoples. Houle has dismissed the criticism, saying that the work "configures multiple Indigenous temporalities of Calgary's spaces."[356] At a time when discussions on reconciliation and forgiveness for residential schools and the unaccounted deaths of Indigenous women and

[352] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 354.
[353] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," 354.
[354] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," 355.
[355] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," 352.
[356] Jacobson-Konefall, "Dancing in the City – Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle," 354.

children are ongoing in Canada, this work represents an excellent example of how screendance can contribute to the contemporary narrative.

Sarah Lefebvre, a Montréal-based, contemporary urban dancer and filmmaker, created *Les Loups* (The Wolves) in collaboration with the production duo, Flamant. She used natural settings as a backdrop for the film, in which dancers represent wolves in a forest that pay tribute to the passing of Lefebvre's father, who equated his own daughters to a wolf pack.[357]

These examples illustrate screendance, as an art form, having infinite possibilities in the exploration of embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, sound, projection surfaces, performance spaces, movement, and the cinematic experience, with or without human bodies in motion.

3.3 The Past and Future of Technologically-Mediated Dance

3.3.1 Introduction

The past and future of media dance is inextricably linked to the evolution of cinematic technologies from celluloid and silent film to video, digital media, and contemporary immersive and interactive technologies. The relationship between dance and media technology has been evolving since the time of Loïe Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* in 1895. In this dance, she used electric light and fabric to amaze viewers by creating a visual spectacle. As Brannigan writes, "Fuller's work was not merely documented performance but an early example of how film could shape and enhance the viewer's experience of movement."[358] As cinematic technologies evolved, creators have used cameras and editing techniques to produce similarly astonishing effects to

[357] Brianna Rae Johnson, "Unbecoming Human: An Online Screendance Festival." Online Screendance Festival, April 29, 2019, para. 1.
[358] Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choregraphy and the Moving Image*, 12.

those of Fuller. These effects have not come cheaply: in the last 15 years, however, there has been a democratization in filmmaking, particularly in technologically mediated dance, as recording and screening technologies "have been getting lighter, smaller and more affordable."[359] Large budgets and funding support are no longer needed for smaller productions, as filmmakers can use relatively inexpensive cameras, with pre-programmed settings allowing them to shoot in almost any lighting conditions, and edit their work using an inexpensive camera or laptop. For major productions and full-length features, creative funding mechanisms are still needed.

In this dissertation, the past and future of technologically mediated dance forms are explored, along with mechanisms to create, exhibit, distribute, and fund such productions. International and Canadian examples, including both new and well-known works, are examined to show how much room there is for creativity, innovation, and technological advancement around this art form.

3.3.2 Cameras and Editing Software

The camera is the technology that has driven the creation of screendance works since the first films of Loïe Fuller and Maya Deren and the days of the Bolex camera with 16 mm film. Busby Berkeley, even in his early 35mm films, took advantage of technological improvements in cameras to enhance the power of screendance effects on the screen. He used more than one camera, point-of-view shots, wide angle shots, and close-ups, as well as, as Joseph states, "developments in editing [to give] production sequences a uniquely cinematic dimension that

[359] Maria Zanotti, "Digital spaces, analogue thinking: Some thoughts on screendance," *The International Journal of Screendance* 10 (2019): 1.

could not be duplicated on a theatre stage."[360] With the development of the video camera in the 1970s, the ability to produce screendance works became much more accessible to all and led to the democratization of the art form.

Rosenberg emphasized the intimate role of the camera in the production of screendance works. In his 2012 text, he states, "there is one privileged point of view in the making of a film [and that is] through the camera's lens…[and thus]…screendance is built, shot by shot, frame by frame."[361] Jo Cork emphasizes the relationship between choreography and the camera:

> Camerawork can entirely transform choreography! It can draw emphasis to tiny details and give the viewer a sense of motion as a dancer remains still. It can fragment the body to focus on isolated movements or limbs, or make the viewer feel that they are approaching the dancer; there are endless options.[362]

Many screendance scholars have given the name of "micro-choreographies" to this kind of camerawork, which are often captured through the use of the close-up shot. Brannigan, in her 2011 text, argues that the "close-up in dancefilm creates a specific cine-choreographic order by extending and redefining the parameters and nature of screen performance and thereby extending the parameters of dance"[363] drawing new meaning out of the dancer's body. Such redefinitional effects are typically achieved through the use of the close-up to film the micro-movements of a performing body, "the smaller detailed movements of the body and its parts."[364] Brannigan refers to the early work of Béla Balázs in her paper indicating that Balázs wrote that early films in the

---

[360] Joseph, "Longing for Depth," 492.
[361] Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image,* 160.
[362] Jo Cork, "Dance on Film: Find Your Creative Voice," *The One Dance UK Magazine* 10 (Spring 2021). Accessed May 15, 2023. https://www.onedanceuk.org/resource/one-magazine/ .
[363] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," a chapter in Brannigan's text, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43.
[364] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," 43.

1920s were characterized by exaggerated movements of the whole body, while in silent films the close-up was used to replace dialogue and to show the inner drama taking place as a form of physiological subtext showing the power of micro-movements of the body over the written or spoken word.[365] Brannigan goes on to state that she feels that Deleuze would have agreed with Balázs' emphasis on the power of the close-up as both described the micro-choreographies of the close-up as a means to "activate the shot's capacity for expression and autonomy."[366] This analysis is as applicable to screendance as it was to silent film. However, I would argue that in screendance, the close-up of a face should not be the cornerstone on which to build a whole cinematic production, given that close-ups of other parts of the body can also serve as innovative, creative ways of expressing the message of a piece. Expression can be captured in micro-choreographies and in the movement of individual muscles, the movement of the lips or hands, the micro-movement of any body part. By taking a broader view of the close-up and moving beyond the face, the body's full range of expressive capabilities can be captured on film. I agree with Brannigan's assessment that the body can be deterritorialized, "so that any part of the corporeal whole can operate as a site for dance."[367] In other words, the face does not occupy a superior hierarchical importance vis a vis the body.

Dodds and Hooper identify the first use of the close-up in film as "the moment of the very emergence of film as a discourse, as an art."[368] This may be true of the way close-ups were used in certain films, such as Carl Dreyer's silent, black-and-white film, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). In this film, Dreyer included more than 1,500 shots, of which more than eighty percent

[365] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," 43. The work of Balázs is referred to by Brannigan in this paper.
[366] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," 43.
[367] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," 44.
[368] Dodds and C. Hooper, "Faces, Close-ups and Choreography. A Deleuzian Critique of *So You Think You Can Dance, The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014): 94.

were single-face close-ups[369] of the leading protagonist, showing a full spectrum of colliding emotions – tension, oppression, fear, torment, and unwavering faith. Shot from various points of view, including off-centre and low-angle shots, Dreyer's use of the close-up can be adapted to screendance to capture expressions, movement, and micro-choreographies in interesting and creative ways. Adam Roberts, for instance, used techniques similar to those of Dreyer, though on a micro scale, in the 1996 film, *Hands,* where the entire movement "consists of a single, black-and-white close-up of the performer's hands situated on his lap."[370] Similarly, Walter Verdin, in his screendance film, *Monologue* (1994), followed Dreyer's lead in focusing mainly on the performer's face, where the spectator can see, in Dodds's words, "the furrowed brow, the elasticity of the mouth, and the pained, facial contortions."[371]

Micro-choreographies give the screendance scholar a new way of looking at this field. In her 2011 text, Brannigan presents many non-narrative and narrative examples of artists putting the close-up to work. Amy Greenfield directed and choreographed one of the non-narrative films that Brannigan describes. In her screendance film, *Transport* (1971), Greenfield uses a mobile camera that moves around a group of bodies that are lifting and moving other bodies, with a focus on "tiny muscle movements that constitute their own micro-dance."[372] *Resonance* (Stephen Cummins and Simon Hunt, 1991), on the other hand, is an example of a narrative screendance film. It focuses on two love relationships, one heterosexual and one homosexual. Close-ups of arms and bodies, not faces, form the central motif.

[369] Berardinelli, "The Passion of Joan of Arc," 3.
[370] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 72.
[371] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 72.
[372] Brannigan, "The Close-up – Micro-choreographies," 52.

Dodds agrees with Brannigan on the importance of the close-up in the production of screendance works. In her 2001 text, she points out that close-ups in film show what can never be seen in a live performance. "[T]hrough the use of close-up," she says, "the spectator has the opportunity to view dancing bodies from new perspectives…and see movement in precise detail,"[373] transcending what is possible in live performance. She concludes that use of the close-up could result in "a shift toward choreographing whole dances on specific body parts rather than the body as a whole."[374]

The camera is the dancer's partner; but the editing suite is where the final choices are made, in many cases, creating bodies and body movements, which would not be possible in live performance. In combination, the camera and the editing suite produce moments and impressions that cannot be seen by the naked eye on a theatrical stage. For this reason, I have been a proponent of labelling live dances filmed at dance competitions, at dance academies, or on reality TV shows as "screendance." Even the simple act of zooming in and zooming out results in images that transcend what can be seen with the naked eye, thus "freeing the human body from the confines of theatrical – and actual – space."[375] If using a prime lens, the cinematographer has to physically initiate the movement. On the other hand, the zoom lens does all the work by changing the focal length, thus allowing the cinematographer to change the composition or the camera framing without moving the camera. The fact that each different lens captures movement in a different way means that the director and choreographer have to plan the shots carefully in light of the choreographic compositional intention of the work.

---

[373] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 72.
[374] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 84.
[375] Steven Higgins, *Still Moving: The Film and Media Collections of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006), 199.

Rosenberg, Dodds, and Carballido all highlight the importance of the editing process. Rosenberg points out that the construction of a film is "further articulated in the editing process."[376] Dodds agrees that "the style of edit can play a major role in the type of dynamic that is constructed."[377] Carballido argues that "the choice of film cuts"[378] can suspend or prolong every movement, she writes, "through an interplay of inserted camera angles."[379]

Just as choosing the correct lens is important in screendance filmmaking, so is the editing software selected for use in post-production. With a plethora of software choices available, from Adobe Premiere Pro and Final Cut Pro X to DaVinci Resolve and Adobe Premiere Rush,[380] with new ones coming on the market every few months, both amateur and professional screendance practitioners have a wide variety of choice to get the desired look and feel.

Costly equipment and editing suites are not needed today to produce high-quality screendance works. It is a democratization that bodes well for the future. As Dodds has noted, smartphone technology and free editing packages have made producing screendance works accessible to all, and the availability and affordability of cameras and software suggest a healthy and robust future for this art form.[381]

---

[376] Wood, "Audience as Community;" 37.
[377] Dodds, *Dance on Screen,* 90.
[378] Carballido, "The Screen a Choreographic Space," 133.
[379] Carballido, "The Screen a Choreographic Space," 133.
[380] The most commonly used editing software among today's professional editors are Adobe Premiere Pro (usable on either MAC or Windows), and Final Cut Pro (only available for MAC). These software suites provide the editor with a high degree of precision and control. Non-professionals, however, tend to use CyberLink Power Director 365, iMovie, and CapCut, as do YouTubers when editing their screendance work. This software is cheaper and simpler to use than the professional options cited above, and it is available for use on both PC or MAC products. Adobe Premiere Elements is a good editing software for beginners, and as a simplified version of Adobe Premiere Pro, is easy to use. DaVinci Resolve is a good free option, with DaVinci Resolve Studio 18 offering more sophisticated, paid options. Pinnacle Studio offers good video editing software for beginners using Windows, and Adobe Premiere Rush is good for mobile devices. Filmora is now touted as the best value video editing software for hobbyists, a category that includes many screendance producers today, particularly those exhibiting their work on popular social media sites.
[381] Sherril Dodds, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

3.3.3 Interactive and Immersive Technologies

Digital dance seems to be evolving on at least two tracks, which sometimes intersect: the interactive and the immersive.[382] The future of the interactive lies with technologies such as DanceForms and hyperchoreography. The potential of immersive dance technologies depends, as Kim Vincs writes, on the virtualized world of "motion capture, 3D stereoscopic film, animation, and game engines in placing dance within an increasingly virtualized cultural and artistic imagination…when dancing bodies make the shift into computer-generated environments."[383] On the one hand, whether the experience of the art form is interactive or immersive depends on the perspective, or point of view, specifically whether you are the creator or the spectator. There is a great deal of overlap in the interpretation of these terms, and interactive and immersive technologies are often combined in the creation of an artistic work. Interactive and immersive technologies, with examples, are further explored in this section.

3.3.3.1 Interactive Technologies

Interaction is the means by which the consumer of a performance becomes the creator as well. The interactive track encompasses works, as Faller writes, that:

> could be a multi-screen installation or a work that uses web-based technology and apps to provide a virtual space for an interactive experience. These technologies are more-or-less postmodern surrendering control or authorship to the viewer; the viewer is no longer a consumer but a user. The narrative and the experiencing of the work is in the hands of the

[382] In Figure 2, digital dance includes all technologically mediated dance forms.
[383] Vincs, "Virtualizing Dance," 263.

viewer/user; each person creating and experiencing something unique – outside the control and perhaps intention of the work's creator.[384]

These postmodern technologies include innovative software, which is and has been used to create interactive experiences, where, in effect, users create their own digital dance works. Some of the work in this area has been pioneered in Canada. Thecla Schiphorst, Thomas Calvert, and their team – based at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia – began to develop their interactive dance software in the late 1970s. Many publications and research papers have described their work.[385] They developed LifeForms (later redeveloped as DanceForms), "a three-dimensional computer composition tool…[that] generates computer simulations of human movement using key-frame animation, and allows for the choreography and animation of multiple human forms."[386] From its first appearance and use in screendance in the 1980s, when computers first came into common use, LifeForms offered an example, as Hilary McLellan calls it, of "Through the Window Virtual Reality,"[387] designed to be used on Apple Macintosh, Windows PC, and the Silicon Graphic computers. LifeForms was created:

> to map movement in time and space by providing three on-screen windows in which to create dance: 1) a window which allows the creation of movement sequences for a single dancer…(the 'sequence editor' window); 2) a 'spatial' window which allows groups of

[384] Faller, email exchange with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.
[385] Various publications: Calvert, 1978, 1986, 1988,1996; Calvert et al., 1979, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1993; Schiphorst, 1989, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997; Schiphorst and Calvert, 2013.
[386] De Rosa and Burgess, *Canadian Dance Mapping Study: Literature Review*, 62.
[387] Hilary McLellan, "Virtual Realities," in *Handbook on Educational Communications and Technology*, edited by D.H. Janassen, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 465.

dancers to be arranged and edited in space; and 3) a 'timeline' window, which allows the dancers' movement sequences to be moved and edited in time.[388]

LifeForms and DanceForms proved to filmmakers and special effects artists that animations of the human figure could be computer-generated using an interactive graphic interface that enables the user to sketch out movement ideas in space and time. It was a significant discovery. The animation that appeared in the late twentieth century were the precursors of what animators, videogame designers, and special effects artists now commonly create as integral, aesthetic components in many of today's commercial films. Thus, this pioneering work of Schiphorst, Calvert, and Ronda Ryman[389] – focusing as it does on embodied cognition and interaction, movement knowledge representation, and new digital technologies – has contributed new understanding of the potential of digital dance.

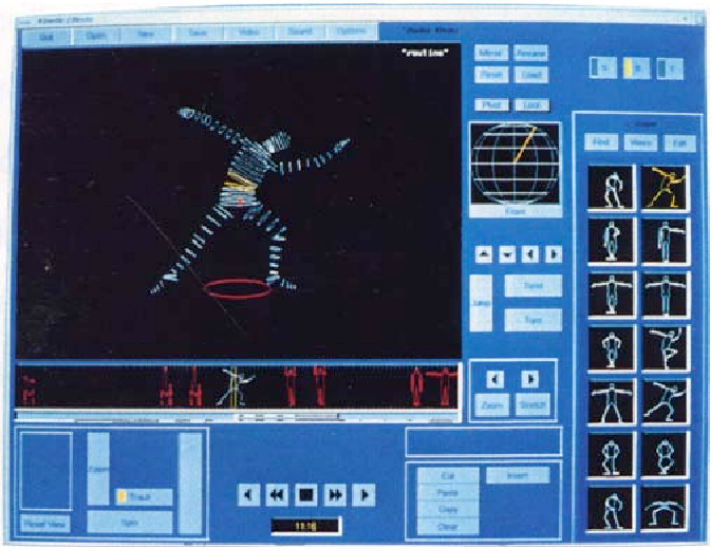

Figure 8: Sequence Editor Version of LifeForms
(Source: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-case-study-of-Merce-Cunningham's-use-of-the-in-of-Schiphorst/a0f9abc63c77db0f84a5a1de8601b6fc9a7e0720/figure/3)

The fact that LifeForms was designed "to be projected and used interactively with live performance"[390] has proven very attractive to digital dance creators. It is a feature that brings

[388] Schiphorst, "*A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of 'Trackers*,'" 36.
[389] Ronda Ryman developed the CD-ROM of Ballet Moves (based on Labanotation), which comes with LifeForms, (now Danceforms) while she was a professor of dance at the University of Waterloo.
[390] Schiphorst, "*A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of 'Trackers*,'" 42.

together the interactive and immersive ways of working with, and experiencing, digital dance works. From 1990 to 2005, Schiphorst collaborated with Merce Cunningham, in a period when Cunningham used LifeForms in the planning of his choreography for more than a dozen dances. His work not only "captured the public's imagination,"[391] but was also "the primary force in the increase of public awareness that [grew] around the field of computers and dance."[392] Such was Cunningham's reputation internationally that his work with LifeForms captured worldwide attention and ignited growing interest in the combination of computer software and dance. Computer-mediated dance began to be incorporated into the curricula of dance companies and educational institutions around the world.[393]

In the wake of Schiphorst's work with Merce Cunningham, LifeForms was modified and reissued as an interactive software called DanceForms, which "uses animation to represent the structure of the dance."[394] The use of this software greatly expanded the definition of screendance,[395] taking it from a combination of dance and film, or dance and video, to a definition that includes dance and film or video with avatars or human-like shapes, artificial intelligence (including the use of robotics), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR).[396] The potential for ongoing future adaptation of DanceForms is only beginning to be explored through, for instance, the evolution of installation and site-specific art. However, VR and holography also offer intriguing possibilities as do "wearable" technologies. This compositional

[391] Schiphorst, "*A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of 'Trackers*,*'"* 83.
[392] Schiphorst, "*A Case Study of Merce Cunningham's Use of Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of 'Trackers*,*'"* 83.
[393] Merce Cunningham, David Vaughan, Thecla Schiphorst, B. Carolyn, and Laura Kuhn, "Four Key Discoveries: Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Fifty, *Theater* 34, no. 2 (2004): 111.
[394] De Rosa and Burgess, *Canadian Dance Mapping Study: Literature Review*, 63.
[395] What I am calling "digital dance" in my new taxonomy.
[396] All these forms I now include in the sub-category of "digital dance."

tool, with adaptions, has the power to attract a whole new demographic to screendance, digital dance, and digital media.

The creation and development of LifeForms and DanceForms spawned a new generation of related work. The Ai_am project, for instance, has examined the use of artificial intelligence in dance using an avatar and a human dancer.[397] The OpenEnded Group has created the Choreographic Language Agent (CLA) with its human-like shape as the "eleventh dancer" in the studio.[398] Wayne McGregor and the Google Arts and Culture Lab have created an AI-driven, algorithmic tool that can generate its own choreography based on hundreds of hours of video footage of dance movements it has been fed from McGregor's choreographic archives and from ten dancers from his dance company. The tool is used to create choreographic sequences, which can then be used by the human choreographer. The Georgia Institute of Technology has an ongoing project, LuminAI, housed in a 15-foot-high geodesic dome that is lined with custom-made projection panels for dome projection mapping of computer-generated improvisational dances. Dancers in the dome interact with an AI virtual dance partner. The Deakin Motion.lab has designed software that allows for real-time interactions between virtual and human dancers.[399] Stanford University has developed EDGE

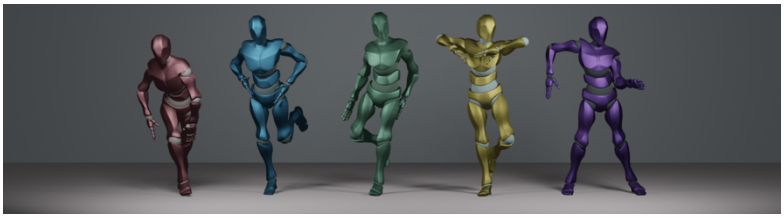

Figure 9: EDGE: Editable Dance Generation – Stanford University
Source: https://tml.stanford.edu/publications/2023/edge-editable-dance-generation-music

[397] A. Berman and V. James, "Towards a Live Dance Improvisation Between an Avatar and a Human Dancer," *Proceedings of the 2014 International Workshop on Movement and Computing* (New York, New York: ACM, 2014), 165.
[398] Berman and James, "Towards a Live Dance Improvisation Between an Avatar and a Human Dancer," 165.
[399] John McCormick, Kim Vincs, S. Nahavandi, and D. Creighton, "Learning to Dance with a Human," in *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium on Electronic Art,* edited by K. Cleland, L. Fisher, R. Harley (Sydney, Australia: ISEA, 2013), 1.

(Editable Dance Generation), which uses AI models to help choreographers design new moves and sequences.[400] All of these groups and projects continue to create new digital products based on technologically mediated dance with many ethical and copyright issues being raised, especially around the use of AI.[401]

Schiphorst and her colleagues changed the way that digital dance products – in particular, the ones that use interactive technologies to create immersive experiences – are produced. The technology developed, the information gathered, and the insight gained from the design and implementation of Lifeforms and DanceForms have supported an emerging field in digital dance called "hyperchoreography" (also known as web dance, cyberdance or hyperdance). Faller, quoting Bench, states that here "users generate their own choreographies…[and] are active participants in creating the work they see onscreen."[402]

Simon Fildes – working with a video dancemaker, Katrina McPherson[403] – was the first to define the term "hyperchoreography" as:

> a non-linear dance performance "space." It only exists in an interactive and/or networked medium. It is based on the model of hypertext…and allows a choreographer/artist to create work that can be sequentially altered by a user at the point of interaction, moving through hyper-linked moving images. The elements are put in place by creators, but the shape of the work is decided by the user at the moment of interaction.[404]

---

[400] Andrew Myers, "AI-powered EDGE Dance Animator Applies Generative AI to Choreography," April 20 2023. Accessed August 20, 2023. https://hai.stanford.edu/news/ai-powered-edg-dance-animator-applies-generative-ai-choreography.
[401] I will explore the issues related to the use of AI in digital dance and screendance in Chapter 5.
[402] Faller, "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance," 36.
[403] Currently, Katrina McPherson is the Coordinator of the MA Screendance Program at the London Contemporary School of Dance, affiliated with the University of Arts London in London, U.K.
[404] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 2.

The dance element within any hyperchoreographic work is, in Fildes's words, "inspired by the post-modern dance tradition,"[405] as in the work of such choreographers as Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, and Lucinda Childs, but with an added dimension that allows the audience or user the ability "to select, interpret, and enjoy the work from their own perspective."[406] Bench uses the term "hyperdance" to describe "a kind of screendance that solicits user interaction and is in turn shaped by that interaction."[407] It "recuperates performance for the screen and positions the computer user not only as a viewer/spectator, but as a performer and even co-choreographer."[408] The world of hyperchoreography offers users the ability to "contribute content and create…linkages…where users can navigate the authored space from their own perspective whilst contexts and choices are offered through association…expanding the possibilities of distributed screen dance collaboration."[409]

Fildes' and McPherson's first hyperchoreographic work, called *Big* (2001), was created in the United Kingdom with the Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite and four dancers from Ricochet Dance Company.[410] In 2003, *Big* was posted to Fildes' and McPherson's website,[411] a site designed

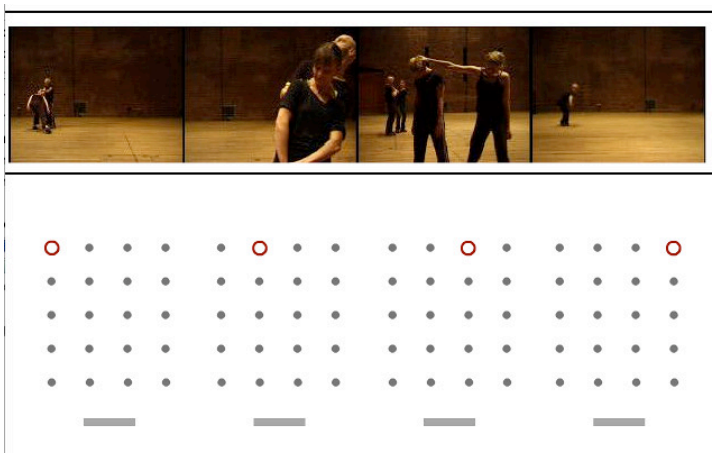

Figure 10: *Big* (2001) – Hyperchoreography
(Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/sfildes/6545439387/)

[405] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 7.
[406] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 14.
[407] Bench, "Hyperdance: Dance Onscreen, Dance Online or, What Difference Does the Medium Make?," in *Screendance: The State of the Art Proceedings, American Dance Festival,* edited by Jessica Vokoun (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 89.
[408] Bench, "Hyperdance: Dance Onscreen, Dance Online or, What Difference Does the Medium Make?," 89.
[409] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 16.
[410] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 4.
[411] Hyperchoreography.org

both to protect the artists' copyright and to overcome technical difficulties for artist and user alike. The site, which hosts a number of non-linear screendance works, includes links to other artists' works and to related articles, and it logs more than 12,000 hits a year. The second of Fildes' and McPherson's hyperchoreographic works, made with the same dance company, was *The Truth* (2004). This work incorporates hypertext, with which the user can record sequences and play them back.[412]

In order to develop hyperchoreographic video clips so that users can experiment in making their own technologically mediated dance products, Fildes created a "kinaesthediting" interface that, as Fildes writes, "allows editing to take place in a fluid and dynamic environment where rapid selection of video material is achievable via a system of user tags and a dynamic video store database."[413] Users are able to visit hyperchoreography.org and select from a list of available keywords to define the starting point of the video dance they are about to navigate.[414]

As in hyperchoreography, immersive theatre invites audiences and users to cross the fourth wall and encourages direct involvement, where, as Josephine Machon says, the traditional boundaries between the performer and the audience member have been "blurred, destroyed or reinvented."[415] Machon points out the risks that audiences of immersive theatrical performances face, saying that audiences must counter those risks with "trust, commitment and a willingness to partake in the encounter."[416] The same is true for hyperchoreography. Passive watching of a screendance production is no longer possible, as the viewer becomes the user, the creator. This

[412] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 4.
[413] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 21.
[414] Fildes, "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," para. 22.
[415] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgarave Macmillan, 2013), 40.
[416] Machon, *Immersive Theatres,* 34.

active involvement in product creation is what Adam Alston, in writing about immersive theatre, called "entrepreneurialism participation."[417] The act of creating your own screendance using hyperchoreographic methods is similar to the experience in immersive theatre, which, in Nicholas McInerny's words, "fulfills the desire of audience members for self-expression and self-actualization…in the arts."[418]

Perhaps more closely tied to immersive theatre and video games than to avant-garde films or feature film musicals, hyperchoreography certainly invites those who engage with it to take risks, to be open to self-expression, and to embrace the use of the internet to create new digital dance forms. As a younger generation is drawn to the art form, the potential of hyperchoreography is opening out towards new and once unimaginable frontiers.

The contributions of early interactive development software, such as DanceForms, are becoming clearer as a means to offer new creation options to students and digital dance practitioners. Other platforms and software also offer new opportunities for interaction, though rapid change in the technology, and changes in corporate deployment of these tools has meant that some software has come and gone. Twine is a HTML coding-based platform used to design hypertext stories. Unity is software that can be used to create VR games. Isadora supports live performance presentations in a virtual setting. BlippAR is used in creating AR products. There is also a growing acceptance of dance in video games, with the current popularity of *Fortnite, Just Dance*, and *Dance Central* driving the shift. As well, there is a new acceptance of interactive sites, where viewers become the creators of their own work. The combination of dance and media is evolving into what Sita Popat calls "dance with screens" rather than "dance on

[417] Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 128.
[418] Nicholas McInerny, "'Don't Speculate, Participate:' Immersive Theatre," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20(2) (2010): 244.

screens."[419] The interactive use of these software programs gives the participant an embodied experience through this interaction as the participant becomes not only the choreographer, but also the director of their works.

These technologies (and ones yet to be developed) are attracting a whole new audience, including millennials and youth, to digital dance. These are demographics that have grown up with video games and social media and that want to participate actively in art and entertainment, rather than being mere passive spectators. Through the use of expanded cinema and motion-capture technologies, this new field of digital dance is attracting a new cohort of consumers – both creators and users – of on-line, interactive experiences.

3.3.3.2 Immersive Technologies

Immersive technologies allow the creator to manipulate software to create an immersive environment for the viewer or participant, where the artificial, digital space surrounds the participant and engages all of their senses. This is achieved through the introduction of visual effects and the creation of 3D, motion capture, computer-generated imagery (CGI), and holographic experiences. Many of these immersive technologies create what Harmony Bench calls "anti-gravitational choreographies," where the dancers seem to "hover, glide, suspend, skim, and float…offer[ing] frequent reformulations of dancing bodies' relationships to gravity and ground."[420] In effect, the dancers become bodies travelling through time and space with the use of software and projection surface manipulation.

[419] Popat, "Transcending Dimensions – Physical and Virtual Dancing Bodies," 657.
[420] Bench, "Anti-gravitational Choreographies: Strategies of Mobility in Screendance," *The International Journal of Screendance* 1 (2010): 53.

Visual effects technologies are taking media dance into new realms, where new cinematic experiences are proliferating. Visual effects for screendance date back in time to the beginning of cinema, from Lumière, Méliès, and Fuller, and progress forward chronologically through the development and use of rear projection, the green screen, rotoscoping, and motion-capture, with the latter two technologies falling under the larger banner of CGI.

Choreographers began to use rear or back projection to create screendance works in the 1930s. This technology was efficient and cost-effective in that it permitted dance creations to be produced in front of pre-recorded film footage projected from behind or under the dancers, giving the illusion that the dancers were either being filmed on location or floating above the scene. Floor projection may have been used early in the musicals, with screendance elements, of Busby Berkeley. In *Flying High* (1931), for instance, Berkeley's top shots of dancers are coupled with floor projections of the scene below to give the illusion that the characters are falling through thin air. Rear and floor projections reduced the cost of building sets, and they continue to be used today to create special effects in screendance works.

Visual effects to create a backdrop in screendance works have been used since the late nineteenth century. The technique involves placing a green screen (or originally black cloth) in the background of a shot; then pre-recorded footage or digital effects are added behind the dancers during image processing or editing. As with rear/back or floor projections, the technique saved on the cost of filming on location and building sets. Walt Disney used this technique in films that include human figures beginning in the 1920s. The green screen is now being replaced by LED walls (a much more expensive technology), where the filming and choreography is created in front of a LED background. These backgrounds are now constructed using CGI, with video mapping and projection dancing that allows performances from different camera takes to

be composited together. This process allows different actors to be filmed separately and then edited together into the same scene.

"Rotoscoping" describes a very old animation technique used to trace over motion picture footage to eliminate the background around figures, frame by frame, in a labour-intensive fashion, to produce a series of realistically moving figures, which were then replaced by equally realistic animation. The original devices used to achieve rotoscoping have now been replaced by computers, but the technique is similar, with the editor going frame by frame to delete the background around figures, creating a silhouette (a matte) that is extracted from one scene and inserted into a different background. Chroma keying, by which a range of colours in the foreground is made transparent, is now often used to create this effect, as it is faster and requires less time and concentration, though rotoscoping still provides a higher level of accuracy. Films with screendance sequences where rotoscoping was used include *Minnie the Moocher* (Dave Fleischer, 1932), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand, 1933), and *The Old Man of the Mountain* (Dave Fleischer, 1933). In each of these films, the jazz routines were performed by Cab Calloway, an African American dancer and musician, with roto tracing of his filmed dance moves being used as guides to draw cartoon characters with different proportions, yet another example of the politics of racialized representations in popular screendance. Other films with dance sequences made by Disney and involving rotoscoping include *Cinderella* (Wilfred Jackson, Clyde Gernonimi, and Hamilton Luske, 1950), and *Alice in Wonderland* (Wilfred Jackson, Clyde Gernonimi, and Hamilton Luske, 1951). In each of these examples, the technique was used to make the motions of the animated characters more realistic. Rotoscoping is still used today to create surreal effects in screendance and music videos.

Today, artists and audiences alike are embracing new immersive technologies, some of which evolved from interactive technologies, with artists presenting them on screens in ways that augment, rather than replace, the live performance experience. All of these works provide new ways of interacting with dance through a screen-based medium. As Szporer and Millar write, "our constant objective [as screendance practitioners] is to guide the viewer's eye and perception and lead them to an increased sense of the body through kinetic images that resonate in the mind."[421] This is exactly what Szporer and Millar achieved when they produced, with support from the NFB and the choreographer, Crystal Pite, a stereoscopic (3D), live action/animated screendance, commemorating fading legacies of WWII, called *Lost Action: Trace* (2011).[422] They found producing a screendance in 3D to be "a startling optimal way of gaining access to the dynamics, emotions, sensation, and the physicality of dance."[423] That was true, they insisted, for the choreographer, the filmmaker, and the audience, all of whom could become fully involved, through the technology, in the movement and action of the film. The challenges of the technology, however, came with the use of those "cumbersome glasses."[424] There were also issues relating to the distribution of 3D films and the high cost of using the technology in small or home settings. These issues did not seem to affect the popularity of the art film hit, *Pina*

Figure 11: *Pina* (2011)

Source: https://mubi.com/en/notebook/posts/wim-wenderss-pina

[421] Szporer and Millar, "Moving In(To) 3D," 225.
[422] To watch *Lost Action:Trace*, go to: https://www.nfb.ca/film/lost_action_trace/ .
[423] Szporer and Millar, "Moving In(To) 3D," 232.
[424] Szporer and Millar, "Moving In(To) 3D," 233.

(2011). In this film, directed by Wim Wenders, 3D was used effectively to portray and present the work of the late Pina Bausch, a world-renowned choreographer, and her Wuppertal *Tanztheater* located in Germany. The film was initially to be a collaboration between Wenders and Bausch, but Bausch died suddenly in pre-production. Filmed in many locations in Germany, 3D technology helps this film become a vision of "utterly transfixing, exhilarating spectacle of bodies in motion."[425]

VR experiences can be immersive and/or interactive, depending on the perspective of the creator versus that of the viewer. The technology is "based on computer simulations that employ three-dimensional (3D) graphics."[426] The experience is an individual one, with the viewer-participant making decisions, taking actions, and being involved in the narrative. In VR, the traditional 180-degree film convention is supplanted by 360-degree space. The incorporation of dance sequences in VR experiences, therefore, can offer the participant an interactive experience, if movement of mimicking of the dancer is required, or if dancing is included in a VR story requiring movement, that cannot be experienced through the passive watching of a digital dance work on a screen. The technology remains expensive for creators, and may cause physical disorientation for some users, but with advancements, it may become more accessible to individual creators.

Motion-capture, "often understood as a modern form of rotoscoping,"[427] is becoming more commonly used in the production of personal and commercial digital dance works, as a component of CGI. As Johannes Birringer writes:

---

[425] Jeremy Forster, "Dancing on the grave of industry: Wenders, Bausch and the affective re-performance of environmental history." *Cultural geographies* 25(2) (2018), 320.
[426] Thomas Elsaesser, "Pushing the contradictions of the digital: 'virtual reality' and 'interactive narrative' as oxymorons between narrative and gaming," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 12(3) (2014): 296.
[427] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet*," 209.

> Today's motion capture-based animations find their historical roots in late nineteenth century motion studies in chronophotography and early cinema (Muybridge, Marey, Méliès)…[and in] the field of dance notation and preservation as well as among choreographers (e.g., Merce Cunningham) who wanted to utilize the computer for the invention and visualization of new movement possibilities.[428]

Canada has been a leader in developing technologies that form the basis for motion-capture animation. Norman McLaren began to integrate motion-capture into such pieces as the minimalist *Pas de deux* (1968)[429] and *Ballet Adagio* (1971). In the former, the movement of the two dancers is "staggered and overlaid by the optical printer to produce a stroboscopic effect."[430] As Guy writes of this piece, "The choreography of this film is created through celluloid manipulations (superimposition, overexposure, juxtaposition), multiplying the choreographic possibilities of the material… Dancers are doubled; their movement is intertwined; bodies are completely transformed."[431] The effects are created through editing where "the use of editing not only creates rhythm, but also creates new types of movements, and opens up new ways of thinking about choreographic processes."[432] In the latter work, McLaren developed the "chronophotography" technique, using time lapses to create what is described as "a work of exquisite beauty, a hymn of flesh, muscle and grace, which is both deeply erotic and sublimely moving."[433] Philippe Baylaucq, whom the NFB also supported, adapted McLaren's filmmaking techniques in his film, *Lodela* (1996), using "miniature cameras and innovative digital

---

[428] Joannes Birringer, "Dance and Interactivity," 88.
[429] To watch *Pas de deux*, go to: https://www.nfb.ca/film/pas_de_deux_en/.
[430] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 170.
[431] Guy, "Where is the Choreography? Who is the Choreographer?" 603.
[432] Guy, "Where is the Choreography? Who is the Choreographer?" 605.
[433] Derek Elly, "Rhythm n' Truths: Norman McLaren," in *Canadian Film Reader,* edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977), 101.

imaging"[434] to give the illusion of bodies moving "in space on horizontal, vertical, and diagonal planes"…[to depict] the transmigration of the soul from death to a new life."[435] Baylaucq saw his work as creating moving "canvases."[436]

Cunningham's *Biped* (Charles Atlas and Merce Cunningham, 2001) exemplifies a motion capture digital dance work that, as Popat explains, is "performed by dancers in both physical and virtual forms…[where] dancers performed movement phrases from the choreography in a motion capture studio…where the virtual dancers [appear] to be much larger than the physical dancers."[437] With new and more inexpensive image projection technologies, motion capture offers tremendous creative potential to use physical theatrical and stage spaces in ways "that enable the audience to perceive virtual and physical spaces as a mixed reality."[438] The experience of the audience is transformed as the audience becomes part of the action of the performed movement with virtual dancers seemingly coming right out into the audience to draw the audience into the work.

Figure 12: Merce Cunningham's *Biped* (2001)
(Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Merce-Cunningham-Biped-1999_fig4_4899072)

[434] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 170.
[435] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 170.
[436] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 170.
[437] Popat, "Transcending Dimensions," 660.
[438] Popat, "Transcending Dimensions," 663.

At the time *Happy Feet* (George Miller, 2006)[439] was made, it used "the most advanced and intricate use of motion-capture photography in a film to date."[440] All the animated dances were created through capture of dance moves via motion capture, complemented by CGI, of actors, including Savion Glover, an African-American, one of the top tap dancers in the world, whose tap steps were animated to create Mumble's unique tap style. Glover, who was also the co-choreographer for the dance sequences in the film, taught the dancers to move like penguins with each wearing a head apparatus to mimic the beak of a penguin. More than 50 dancers worked with Glover moving in synchronous motion, which the FX creators used to develop animated scenes of more than 20,000 penguins dancing on ice in Antarctica.[441]

Figure 13: Savion Glover, front, and a troupe of dancers perform in motion-capture body suits for the film, *Happy Feet*.
Credit: Simon Cardwell, Warner Brother Pictures.
Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/28/movies/28happ.html

The creative opportunities of motion-capture may have motivated Tom Hooper as the creator and director of the digital dance musical, *Cats* (2019).[442] The film exemplifies what motion capture and CGI can do to turn well-known actors into dancing and singing cats. The

[439] This film is also discussed in Chapter 4 as a feature film with screendance elements.
[440] Elias, "Happy Feet," 4.
[441] Elias, "Happy Feet," 4.
[442] This film is also discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to embodiment, choreographic compositional intent, and social themes.

actors wore tracking dots on faces and on tracking suits as the action was filmed on giant sets with giant furniture. The tracking suits were wired and included battery packs, and they were tight and green (in the tradition of the "green screen") to allow for the addition of visual effects during post-production. Digital technology – a combination of motion capture and CGI – was then employed to add fur to the body of individual cat characters, blending in the actors' faces. The fur took on a life of its own in the film, waving and moving (dancing) in time to the music and movements, with moving whiskers, tails, and ears being added in post-production to help suspend disbelief. Actors had to learn to walk, jump, pounce, and dance like a cat. Each actor wore two microphones, just in case one failed, and an earpiece so as to hear the accompaniment, in order for live sound to be captured and recorded. A rushed release meant there were many errors in the CGI, such as human hands appearing by mistake. The film was re-released a few days later with some improved visual effects. Motion capture technology, which allows each movement to be captured in a way that allows for unlimited post-production editing, is an innovation that should motivate more choreographers and directors to tackle digital dance challenges.

3.4 Mixing Technologies to Create Digital Dance Works

Many practitioners are combining different technologies to develop digital dance projects.[443] Marie Chouinard was one of the first Canadian practitioners to mix various types of technologies in the creation of her *Cantique* series of digital dance works. For this project, she used MAX-MSP and NATO software for the real time manipulation of sound and video mixed with the real-time interaction of live musicians. In *Cantique #1:*

[443] De Rosa and Burgess, *Canadian Dance Mapping Study: Literature Review*, 63.

> The stage is set up with two giant screens, one on the right and one on the left. Two musicians, playing music and sound with their computers, are linked to one screen and engaged in what Chouinard terms a "conversation." On the screens is projected a series of images selected live and directly related to the sounds the musicians produce. The images come from a bank of choreographed movements recorded by Chouinard and two dancers before the performance…. Each movement is linked to an audio event.[444]

First shown at the *ImPuis Tanz* festival in Vienna, Austria in 2001, this work demonstrated how multiple technologies can be used for dramatic effect in the live performance of digital dance artistry. In *Cantique* #2 (2003), Chouinard refined what she had produced previously and reshaped it as a multi-screen production. In *Cantique* #3 (2004), she added an interactive device so that spectators could participate in the live production by setting in motion two actors on a screen.

Freya Björg Olafson, an intermedia artist who taught screendance at York University and is now an Assistant Professor at the School of Art, University of Manitoba, is creating digital dance products "at the intersection among video projections, 3D, virtual reality, and interactive technologies."[445] In Olafson's "pioneering practice,"[446] she combines live performance with footage she finds on the internet of people doing ordinary daily chores, such as cleaning the house, and she combines these with music "in a digital collage that she livestreams via webcam to film festivals"[447] or shows in galleries or as part of VR installations. She, like other digital

[444] Fondaton Langlois. Accessed May 4, 2023. https://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.phpp?NumPage=223.
[445] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance:" 38.
[446] Kathleen Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film: An Overview of New Forms Then and Now," *Dance International* Summer 2018, para. 6.
[447] Turnbull, "The Shoestring Renaissance:" 38.

dance artists, uses the software Isadora, which was developed to bring the interactivity of dance to the screen. She also has a growing interest in digital dance at the intersection of video projections, 3D, VR, and interactive technologies, and has used these combinations to make a number of visually seductive works.

Digital dance artists are now taking choreographic compositional intention into new realms through the use of technology. These technologies include the use of video projections and 3D video mapping – "3D graphics projected onto 3D objects, which can be buildings, cars, airplanes…any kind of 3D object or prop"[448] – to enhance backgrounds in multimedia dance works; even more intriguingly, filmmakers are using video projection mapping where "the dancer can be transformed into a screen on which visual patterns and virtual costumes can be displayed."[449] An example of a film that features video mapping is *D.A.V.E.* (1998/2000), directed by Klaus Obermaier, working with dancer and choreographer, Chris Haring. "What's novel about *D.A.V.E.* is the concentration of the projections on the body in motion while avoiding conventional spatial and screen projections."[450] In this type of work, dancers become display surfaces "that are not only moving through space but are constantly changing their shape."[451] In another digital dance work, *Apparition* (2004), Obermaier used a motion tracking system, so that the moving images were "generated in real time to fit within the silhouette of the dance."[452] What is projected on the dancers' bodies goes one step further in AToM-r's work, *Field Anatomy* (2013), where QR codes were displayed that "could be physically read by the

[448] Scarlett Entertainment, "3D Video Mapping Explained." Accessed March 25, 2023. https://scarlettentertainment.com/ca/blog/entertainment-insights-3d-video-mapping-explained
[449] Boucher, "Screen Position and Proprioception," *The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014): 4.
[450] Klaus Obermaier, "D.A.V.E.," artist website, htto://www.exile.at/dave/project.html. Quoted by Boucher, "Screen Position and Proprioception:" 4.
[451] Boucher, "Screen Position and Proprioception:" 4.
[452] Boucher, "Screen Position and Proprioception:" 4.

audience."[453] These works, where the dancer and the screen become one, challenge us again to rethink the definition of screendance. The screen becomes a part of the scenography and the projection becomes a part of choreography in a way that leads to a very different understanding of what constitutes a screen. The notion of 2D framed screens have given way to technologically-mediated projection surfaces where dancers can be projected on any surface, even on their own bodies. The inadequacy this creates for the term "screen" becomes an ongoing dilemma for this digital art form.

In *Variations on Broken Lines* (2020), Nav Waxman, an Israeli-born, Canadian multidisciplinary artist, created:

> a site-specific multimedia installation consisting of screendance works, multi-channel projection, sound, moving-image sculpture and objects…[where] screendance vignettes…are projected simultaneously (through a holographic panel hanging from the ceiling) onto and across multiple surfaces, rendering forms, light, and gestures fleeting and ephemeral.[454]

This work was displayed in an installation at York University as an example of what can be accomplished in galleries and larger room settings.

3.5 International Digital Dance Collaborations

The COVID-19 pandemic opened up new opportunities for digital collaborations across geographic distances. Ever since the internet became available, digital dance artists across the globe have been working together, but the pandemic took collaboration to a new level. As

[453] Zanotti, "Digital Space, Analogue Thinking:" 2.
[454] Nava Waxman, "Variations on Broken Lines." Accessed March 25, 2023. https://www.vaahartspaces.com/nava-waxman-2 .

pointed out during the TanzBremen Digital Think Tank in January 2021, the pandemic has led to "new ways of international collaboration while avoiding extensive travel: finding small teams in different countries who do research on the same topic, exchanging content via digital communication, and realizing the projects locally."[455] New models of international collaboration offer a way for us to create cost-effective, sustainable collaborations. As one example, Japanese choreographer, Hiroaki Umeda, worked with seven dancers located variously in Greece, Taiwan, and Japan. Each dancer created a "five-minute solo individually, sharing progress and videos,"[456] complemented by online meetings, with Umeda editing it all together. These types of collaborations are in their infancy, but, with new creative funding models, they may become much more common in the future. There is much to explore in this aspect of digital dance.

3.6 Distribution and Exhibition of Screendance and Digital Dance Works

Even as the debate continues as to what can and cannot be classified as screendance, interest in the intersection of dance, or a body in motion, and the moving image is growing, particularly in the development of digital dance projects by individual artists and scholars. Artists are beginning to use the cinematic techniques and mediated software products discussed above, as well as new high-resolution cameras (e.g., 8K) and smartphones (e.g., 4K UHD). They are also using a diversity of screening platforms that include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and other social media, web channels, company websites, streaming on dedicated dance channels, pay-per-view, playlists, and interactive museum and gallery site-specific installations. As Andrea Davidson discusses, screendance works are being distributed and exhibited in new

[455] Katrin Ullmann and Elisabeth Nehring, "Hybrid Advances, Making a Festival Fit for the Future," Digital Think Tank, January 2021. Accessed March 25, 2023. https://www.tanz-bremen.com.
[456] Marie Fol, "Virtualised Dance? Digital Shifts in Artistic Practices," "Fit for the Future" Series. European Dance Network (EDN), August 2021. Accessed March 25, 2023. https://www.ednetwork.eu, 14.

and innovative ways through video projection in performance, or through immersive installations, or by spectators wearing stereoscopic head-mounted display units, which highlight bodily experiences.[457] She goes on to highlight that screendance works are also being exhibited through the manipulation of interactive video sequences, or through the juxtaposition of live performance occurring in different locations to audiences via video conferencing systems or social media.[458] New ways of distribution and exhibition continue to expand with the evolution of new technologies and the imaginations of the creators.

Growth in the audience for screendance and digital dance has kept pace with an increase in societal access to video sharing platforms such as Vimeo and YouTube, where music videos and television shows are disseminated (e.g., *Dance Academy*, *Dance Moms*, *America's Best Dance Crew*, *Dancing with the Stars*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Shake It Up*, and *The Next Step*). An interest by Hollywood and independent studios in the feature film musical genre also seems to be having a resurgence perhaps fed by the box office success of films like *La La Land* (Damien Chazell, 2016) leading to the recent release of films that could be classified as musicals with screendance elements (e.g., *West Side Story* (Steven Spielberg, 2021), *Barbie* (Greta Gerwig, 2023), *The Color Purple* (Blitz Bazawule, 2023), *Mean Girls* (Arturo Perez Jr. and Samantha Jayne, 2024), and *Wicked: Part 1* (Jon M. Chu, 2024). In addition, as Naomi Jackson writes, "YouTube and the Internet are important emerging platforms for presenting marginalized individuals and groups of dancers, especially in the arena of popular dance."[459] TikTok, owned by ByteDance at the time this dissertation was written, is also a huge source of screendance content with its focus on dance and music. With YouTube, TikTok, and the Internet as global

[457] Davidson, "Extending the Discourse of Screendance – Dance and New Media," 402.
[458] Davidson, "Extending the Discourse of Screendance – Dance and New Media," 407.
[459] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution? Popular Dancing, YouTubing, and Exchange in Screendance," 710.

phenomena, the reach of any screendance or digital dance product, amateur or professional, is virtually limitless, within the restrictions on copyrighted music and content present in different countries. Similarly unfettered is the ability of spectators to rework a YouTube video "translating it according to [their] own identity and style, and redistributing it to the world."[460] Jackson points to one of the first YouTube videos of screendance to go "viral," *Where the Hell is Matt?* (2005). It was created by an American from Connecticut, Matthew Harding. The video shows him dancing "a quirky jig" in various locations around the world, including "China, Vietnam, India, Russia, Cambodia, and the Czech Republic."[461] He later went on to create three other videos on the same theme but in different locations, "including underwater and in zero gravity."[462] Harding's screendance videos are upbeat and positive, communicating "an infectious joy," and they have received millions of views.[463] These videos, and millions more since 2005, leads Jackson to posit that "YouTube remains a fertile ground for ongoing experimentation."[464]

The platform is also fertile ground for social justice messaging conveyed through dance, which opens up the possibility of global discourses on racism and oppression, inequities and bias, diversity, inclusion, exclusion, and protectionism, while also recognizing that YouTube, TikTok, and also social media sites host regressive content that is harmful to social justice messaging. But from a positive perspective, as Keven Driscoll suggests, "the digital dance culture [is] informing culture today in which young people are revolutionizing the way popular dances are shared, learned, and spread through their engagement with the Web."[465] With every potential screendance or digital dance creator having a smartphone and easy access to editing

[460] Clare Parfitt-Brown, quoted in Naomi Jackson's paper, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 698.
[461] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 698.
[462] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 698.
[463] James Gilden, quoted in Jackson's paper, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 699.
[464] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 707.
[465] Keven Driscoll, quoted by Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 710.

programs, the possibilities for the "creative selection, manipulation, circulation, and critique of mediated dance material"[466] seem endless. The marginalized, the excluded, can now have their voices heard through screendance or digital dance, which have the capacity to change the way messages are spread worldwide. The potential for screendance and digital dance to act as a vehicle for social justice messaging has yet to reach its full potential, but certainly the art form, as Naomi Jackson writes, can encourage "discussion and debate."[467]

An excellent example of the democratization of screendance works that leverage the marginalized and social messaging to a global audience are the daily posts of the Masaka Kids Africana, with millions of views worldwide. Data from April 2023 indicate that Masaka has "3.45 million subscribers on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/c/ masakakidsafrikana), 7.8 million followers on Instagram (#masakakidsafricana), and 5.5 million followers on Tik Tok (https://www.tiktok.com/@masakakidsafricana?lang=en)."[468] The screendance works from Masaka feature young boys and girls dancing to African rhythms provided by drums and other instruments, along with catchy vocals. With as few as four dancers and as many as 20, the children move in harmony and with infectious energy, performing lively dance moves and exuding joy and hope with every movement. Each dance is short, deliberate, and joyful. Most of the filming is done from a static camera positioned in front of the children and then edited to enhance the movement and the messages for distribution.

[466] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 710.
[467] Jackson, "A Rhizomatic Revolution," 710.
[468] David Tusing, "Viral Masaka Kids Africana group to perform at Sharjah Children's Reading Festival." *The National News* April 30, 2023. Accessed July 14, 2023.

The Masaka screendance is a prime example of dance as social practice being used to foster positive social, psychological, and economic change. Masaka Kids Africana is a non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Masaka, Uganda. It supports children from the age of two and up who have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS, war, or famine.

Figure 14: Masaka Kids Africana

Source: https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/pop-culture/2023/04/30/viral-masaka-kids-africana-group-to-perform-at-sharjah-childrens-reading-festival/

Founded in 2013 by Sunna Hassan, who was himself a "street kid," Masaka responded to an urgent need in Uganda, which has more than 2.4 million orphans,[469] more per capita than anywhere else in the world. This NGO has a mission to support "children in education and social well-being through their talents,"[470] with a special focus on dance and song to help these children connect to each other and the world. Orphaned or vulnerable children are placed in private, local homes, or they are domiciled in the Masaka Kids Afrikana Children's Home.[471] The intention is to nurture them in loving and safe environments, "where they can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually."[472]

[469] Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/
[470] Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023.https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/
[471] Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023.https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/. This home was established in 2013 and about 25 children, at any one time, live in this home. Children living in the home are supported in completing their primary, secondary, vocational, or university education.
[472] Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023.https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/.

The choreographer, Kityamuwesi John, works with the children at Masaka on almost a daily basis to present new screendance works on their social media platforms. The films may be less than a minute long or as much as five minutes. The message is a simple one, as John says, "We upload the children's performances on social media to spread the message that Ugandan children, or any child for that matter who has lost a lot, still have so much potential for a bright future when they get the care they deserve."[473] The program has given hope to many children. Through their daily screendance presentations, they have received international donations exceeding US$1.5 million (as of June 2023) to support the children in their education, to pay for school fees and uniforms, to provide homes, food, clothes, and medical care,[474] and to fund travel to literacy festivals and children's day festivals in countries such as the United States (United Nations in New York and the World Bank in Washington, D.C.), Ethiopia (African Union Headquarters), Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. As well as screendance, the children have made albums such as "We are the Stars," "Grateful," and "Let's Praise," which they sell to raise further funds for their support.

In terms of social practice, these children at Masaka demonstrate the potential of orphaned, African children to become leaders and to work towards a better future. These "multi-talented kids have often been praised for being an example of how crisis can be turned into opportunity with determination and creativity."[475] Screendance has given them a vehicle, through

[473] Alisha Roy, "Masaka Kids Africana: On not giving up and returning the childhoods of Uganda's children. *Gulf News* November 24, 2022. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://gulfnews.com/friday/art-people/masaka-kids-africana-on-not-giving-up-and-returning-the-childhoods-of-ugandas-children-1.1669207932281, para. 13.
[474] Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023.https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/. There are no public schools in Uganda, similar to many other parts of Africa.
[475] Tusing, "Viral Masaka Kids Africana group to perform at Sharjah Children's Reading Festival," para. 5.

the monetization of joyous dance numbers, to bring about positive social change in their individual lives and in the lives of people in their community.

Film festivals have been, and continue to be, a major way to attract new audiences to media dance in Canada and around the world. Marisa Hayes estimates that, in 2018, there were "more than 90 festivals and platforms dedicated to screendance…worldwide."[476] In 2018, Cara Hagan analyzed a number of festivals occurring in the United States and conducted interviews with the curators and directors of the San Francisco Dance Film Festival, the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema (Boulder, Colorado), Dance on Camera Festival (New York City), and the Tiny Dance Film Festival (San Francisco). She began by evaluating the demographics of filmmakers and of film festival audiences as she hypothesized that there were race and gender biases both in terms of who is being seen on screen and who is behind the camera. Her analysis revealed that in front of the camera "white, young, thin, cisgender, able, female bodies are the most visible bodies,"[477] with a similar inequity behind the camera in terms of directors and choreographers. Her research also showed that "males of color are least represented."[478] My experience suggests that this demographic applies also to dance schools (certainly in Canada) and among students in post-secondary cinema and media studies. Dance academies, in particular, tend to be less diverse than other arts academies and academic disciplines. These patterns persist despite the fact that the seminal film that defines experimental or avant-garde screendance featured a black male dancer. In Maya Deren's work, *A Study in Choreography for Camera*

[476] Marisa Hayes, "État des lieux : Plateformes et festivals de vidéo-danse á l'ère numerique," *Repères, cahier de danse* 1, no. 40 (2018).
[477] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 135.
[478] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 135. Hagan also highlights the same issue in her recent publication, *Screendance from Film to Festival: Celebration and Curatorial Practice* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2022) where she writes, "the perception for many artists of color is that a lot of the festivals and spaces that host festival activities are not spaces for them" (132).

(1945), Talley Beatty was the premier dancer at a time when "black men were seldom seen on the cinema screen outside of stereotypical roles."[479]

Hagan analysed a number of festivals, consistently arriving at similar findings. These are disappointing results, given that most festivals are trying hard to support diversity. Most have a diverse group of people (racially, ethnically, and professionally) on their curatorial teams. Most are supporting community programs to bring diverse dancers and filmmakers together by providing "them with resources, screen time during festivals, and opportunities to have their work shown on touring reels that go to community partners."[480] To encourage diversity in audiences, festival organizers who offer up such racially-relevant features as Francis McElroy's *Black Ballerina* (2016) have provided tickets for groups of children to come from "public schools, dance studies, and community centers and other places where young people of color are taking dance."[481] One festival, the Dance on Camera Festival – now in its 50th year – coordinates with local boards of education to offer workshops to teach and encourage such students to create dance films that are entered into local competitions. To promote discourse around the issue of diversity, most organizers try to create "space for engaged dialogue throughout the festival."[482] Of course, the location of the festivals (e.g., in diverse places like Toronto or New York City) influences the range both in submissions and audiences. Overall, even a small sample of four film festivals in 2018 – the San Francisco Dance Film Festival, the Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema, Dance on Camera Festival, and the Tiny Dance Film Festival – makes it clear that much is being done to recognize and change perceptions regarding diversity in screendance, and that

[479] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 135.
[480] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 137.
[481] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 138.
[482] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 141.

festivals are doing their best to be representative, to attract young and diverse audiences, and to inspire and welcome young filmmakers.

To complete her collection of data on intersectional curatorial practices, Hagan analyzed her own film festival, American Dance Film (ADF)'s Movies by Movers, held annually at the Nasher Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina.[483] Hagan is a self-declared woman of colour, and she tried to examine screendance through the lens of race. She equates her own curatorial practice with "intersectional feminism,"[484] with a focus on the representation of marginalized communities both in the featured works and in the discussions that take place around them at her film festival. She consciously works to ensure that representation in her festival reflects the issues of racism, sexism, ableism, and ageism. She observes that academic courses, though there are some that address curation at museums and film festivals generally, are lacking for curators of screendance festivals, in particular. As a result, organizers are forced to experiment and to learn from their own experience rather than from the experience of others. As for the artists, she encourages them to make tiny screendance movies to be viewed on iPads or on Instagram. This, she says, will serve "to highlight the ways people are using social media and new technologies to create and disseminate work."[485]

Hagan makes a number of recommendations on ways to overcome the shortcomings that her research identified. She concludes that curators and directors of screendance festivals must adopt creative approaches to ensure diversity both in front of and behind the camera, with targeted action to make sure that festivals include marginalized people, especially those "in

[483] ADF's Movies by Movers, 2018. Accessed November 4, 2018. https://filmfreeway.com/Moviesbymovers.
[484] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 143.
[485] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 146.

positions of leadership and decision-making."[486] All screendance festivals should study and share the demographics of submissions and audiences and be ready to implement appropriate changes to curating, programming, and hiring to reflect findings. Curators of screendance festivals also need more opportunities for formal education dealing with the issues of diversity. More dialogue is needed among directors and curators from different festivals "to help build a stronger, more clear presence in the world."[487] In full agreement with her findings, I submitted one of my screendance works to Movies by Movers. In doing so, I found the website to be informative, with a category encouraging submission from "Underrepresented Directors/Choreographers,"[488] where I had to submit demographic data about my gender, age, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In other words, Hagan is modelling the improvements that she recommends in her research.

As Rosenberg said in some of his early writings on screendance, curating – which involves the selection and organization of works in a particular collection – is important to film festivals because it provides a "sense of identity."[489] The problem, as Hagan points out, is whose identity? If we are to mitigate the underrepresentation of marginalized or alternative groups in order to increase diversity in our film festivals, then Hagan has clearly provided us with a road map.

In Canada, according to Kathleen Smith, dance on film (as she calls it) went through a "mini-Golden Era"[490] in the 1990s. When she and Marc Glassman "founded the Moving Pictures Festival of Dance on Film and Video in 1992, presented annually in Toronto with a national touring program, we were part of a small, but fairly well-funded international circuit devoted to

[486] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 147.
[487] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 148.
[488] ADF's Movies by Movers website, 2018.
[489] Hagan, "Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming:" 139.
[490] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film: An Overview of new forms then and now:" para. 1.

exploring the intersections of dance for the camera."[491] At the beginning, this festival had almost no competitors worldwide. As a result, the event had room also to develop an international touring program that reached out widely to countries such as England, Argentina, Italy, and Spain.[492]

The festival, known as MoPix to its fans, had a goal not merely to introduce audiences to the art form, but also to gather scholars, filmmakers, dancers, donors, and audiences at one large, annual event where participants could contribute to and benefit from the very best "dance-media collisions" from Canada and the world.[493] As it continued, still almost without competitors in Canada, the festival fed the art form throughout its fifteen-year history and challenged the film and arts community to embrace the multi-faceted world of screendance. Public support and growing audiences sustained MoPix during its first years with declining public funding support over time. For Smith and Glassman, dance was defined in its broadest sense, the only criterion for the juried works being that submissions had to feature, says Smith, at least two seconds of "sustained motion"[494] in a projected format, anything from video and 16 mm film to installations and multimedia. Works, which were screened in theatres, small and large, all-around Toronto, represented the full spectrum of Canadian talent and artistry at the time, including the works of Moze Mossanen (*Roxana,* 2006), Pascale Marcotte (*Revolver Tango,* 2004), Veronica Tennant (*a pairing of SwanS,* 2004), Allen Kaeja and Mark Adam (*Departure,* 2003), Marie Chouinard (*Cantique #1,* 2004), among many others. Glenn Sumi, writing for *NOW Magazine* in 2006 (the festival's final year), admired the way that MoPix had stretched "the limits of both movement

[491] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film:" para 2.
[492] Kathleen Smith, personal interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.
[493] Paula Citron, "Dancing onto the big screen." *The Globe and Mail,* October 22, 2002.
[494] Kathleen Smith, personal interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

and film."[495] However, by 2006, Smith and Glassman had to acknowledge that "the bubble had burst."[496] "Funding and broadcast opportunities for dance on film dried up, and distribution systems and platforms transformed completely."[497] They decided to close the festival and move their archive of work to a permanent home at the Dance Collection Danse in Toronto, where it is still housed today.

Screendance and digital dance film festivals are experiencing a resurgence today, as interest in this hybrid art form continues to grow and with digital technology driving new methods of production and distribution.[498] Festivals continue to play a key role in sustaining growth in the art form, building audiences, and encouraging the creation of new works. Most festivals have adopted an expansive definition of screendance and digital dance, with the films being presented as, in the description for the Northwest Screendance Exposition, "a true collaboration between dance and film, where the choreographer and the filmmaker work together combining the techniques of creative movement with the techniques of filmmaking to create a kinetic experience which could never exist on a stage, but can only exist with the context of a video or projection."[499] Traditional and post-modern dance styles are encouraged to take the art form beyond tap, ballet, jazz, and hip-hop, and animated films are included, as well as creations using tai-chi, wheelchairs, and skateboards. Some festivals, such as the ZED Festival held in 2022 in Italy, featured digital dance and new media, "with a particular attention to virtual reality and augmented reality technologies, triggering connections between dance and new media."[500]

---

[495] Glenn Sumi, "Unreeling dance." *Now Magazine,* November 2, 2006.
[496] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film:" para 2.
[497] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film:" para 2.
[498] See Figure 2 in Chapter 1. The new master category includes the sub-category, "Media Dance Film Festivals."
[499] Northwest Screendance Exposition, 2019. https://filmfreeway.com/NorthwestScreendanceExposition .
[500] Screendance and dance 360 VR films at ZED Festival. Accessed March 24, 2023. https://unatc.ro/ccoc/screendance-and-dance-360-vr-films-at-zed-festival/ .

Film festivals featuring screendance and digital dance works, in particular, are beginning to emerge in Canada in the last decade. Notably, in 2013, REAson d'etre dance, under the direction of Kathleen Rea, launched the Contact Dance International Film Festival, which reaches out to a wide range of artists, students, scholars, entrepreneurs, and members of the general public in Toronto. Rea has taken a novel approach to soliciting "momentum-based dance," in which "momentum between two or more people is used to create and inspire dance movements."[501] Two main thematic lines pull the festival offerings together: accessibility and diversity. The festival encourages the submission of films or choreography that feature people living with disabilities or who represent cultural, ethnic, or demographic differences. The works of many Canadian digital dance and screendance filmmakers have been featured at the festival: Allen and Karen Kaeja; Olya Glotka; Kathleen Rea; Sarah Puja Jones; Ariel Llama; Jane Husak; Vivek Pater; Jess Moskal; Tanya Williams; and Kim Simmons, among many others. The festival is held every two years, latterly in June 2023.

In 2017, Sarah Choi – who was at the time a master's candidate at York University – founded the Lights Dance Festival, which celebrates both live dance and dance on film. Works screened at the festival may be unconventional in format, but they have to feature human movement, with dance representing at least half of any production and shown in a narrative context.[502] Applicants, including underrepresented artists, are encouraged to produce short films (no longer than ten minutes), though Choi insists that any good story can be told effectively within three to five minutes.[503] The festival is held in small venues, churches, and clubs, and it is marketed to dance schools and studios, and through dance publications. Choi's goal is to create

[501] Contact Dance International Film Festival. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://contactdancefilmfest.com/.
[502] Lights Dance Festival. Accessed May 3, 2023. www.lightsdancefest.com .
[503] Sarah Choi, in-person interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

new audiences for screendance and digital dance and new opportunities for exhibition by artists. The last Lights Dance Festival took place in 2020, before being halted by COVID-19, when the theme that year was "Shadows and Songs." Choi hopes to resume the festival as an annual event in the near future.

Screendance film festivals are flourishing in Montréal, not the least with Cinédanse. Founded in 2012, Cinédanse aims "to stimulate creation [of] dance films, installation, performances or works from new practices linking dance, cinema and new technologies."[504] It offers workshops and lectures related to the integration of dance with cinema and new media. The festival was last held in Ottawa in 2019 under the theme of "Healing Scars."

Also in Montréal, city-based dance artist and scholar Priscilla Guy organized, curated, and acted as a one-person jury for the first Regards Hybrides International Festival in 2017. The biennial event marked its third appearance in six years when it was mounted in November 2022. Guy applies a very broad definition of screendance to her festival, in that she sees the idea of dance melding with the idea of cinema to include relevant and timely elements of existential and psychological significance.[505] Each session of the festival combines presentations, screenings, live performances, panel discussions, and exploratory workshops. Networking opportunities are built into the program so that artists, researchers, donors, and members of the public can exchange ideas and impressions. The theme of each festival is selected according to what is happening at the time in society, which is why it takes two years to plan each festival. In recent years, specific themes have focused on "self-representation, onscreen racial issues, and socio-

[504] Cinédanse. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.cinedanse.ca/
[505] Priscilla Guy, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

artistic intervention."[506] Tangente Danse[507] is a partner for this festival, providing administrative and marketing support. Over the years, Guy has attracted funding from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts de Montréal. In addition to festivals, Guy launched the Regards Hybrides Collection in March 2023. This dance collection, funded with support from the Government of Québec and the Canada Council for the Arts, is an online, subscription, web platform dedicated "to screendance, featuring more than 60 Canadian works from the 1960s to today, along with interviews, and unpublished texts."[508] Submissions on the site are intended for use and enjoyment by the general public, artists, and scholars.

In Vancouver, two screendance film festivals have been making a mark in recent years. Sophia Wolfe and Kristina Lemieux founded F-O-R-M (Festival of Recorded Movement) in 2015, with the most recent event being held in May 2023. It is a youth-focused, movement-on-screen festival highlighting works that capture "the body in motion, through film, in creative and innovative ways."[509] It promotes and celebrates works featuring artists of all body types and abilities, and it encourages submissions from Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ artists. The other Vancouver festival is the CASCADIA Dance and Cinema Festival, organized by Jen Ray. This festival "grew out of a desire to connect those involved and interested in the arts and industries of dance and cinema." One of my films, *Identity Crisis (ID)*,[510] was shown at CASCADIA Dance and Cinema Festival in 2019. In addition to the festivals described above, there have been a number of one-off media dance film festivals and workshops taking place across Canada, and there is room for more.

---

[506] Regards Hybrides. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.regardshybrides.com/en/
[507] Tangente Danse. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://tangentedanse.ca/en/
[508] Regards Hybrides. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.regardshybrides.com/en/
[509] F-O-R-M. Accessed May 3, 2023. www.F-O-R-M.ca
[510] Analysis of this film can be found in Chapter 5.

All of these film festivals, and others that were to take place in the United Kingdom, Brazil, and India, were postponed during the pandemic but are now beginning to reemerge in hybrid form (that is, with in-person and online options available to participants). The COVID-19 pandemic, though devastating in so many ways, did at least demonstrate that online festivals can be mounted on inexpensive platforms such as YouTube Premiere and Zoom Webinar. The lesson learned includes a recognition of new opportunities to attract and become accessible to new audiences and new demographics. As Bench indicated to me, curated festivals by theme (e.g., aging, identity, ableism), dance type (e.g., ballet, tap, hip hop, wheelchair), or genre (e.g., animation, experimental, digital) have become especially popular for the online viewer, given the online potential to enhance the viewing experience with related materials.[511] In-person, online, or hybrid, all festivals provide an artistic space for media dance practitioners to showcase all kinds of work, whether made with digital cameras, hand-held devices, or very sophisticated cinematic equipment.

3.7 Screendance and Digital Dance Audiences

Screendance works have long been available to audiences at movie theatres and on television. However, they are now even more widely available via the internet, including by means of mobile devices and/or streaming networks, and they are readily accessed on all the popular social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. Despite this burgeoning of media dance, however, audiences have not been well studied, and much scholarly work remains to be done.[512] Karen Wood's work is one notable exception. Within screendance scholarship, Karen Wood has done some research to explore the relationship of audiences, in an

[511] Harony Bench, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.
[512] I would have done this as part of my dissertation research, but the pandemic put a hold on this area of my scholarly research. I look forward to addressing this aspect of media dance in the future.

in-person setting, to experimental screendance works, which she refers to as "dance film." Wood asserts that the way individuals view a dance film relates directly to their own interpretive strategies, which may or may not differ from others in the collective audience. The individual's viewing strategies are "drawn from their beliefs, motivations, competencies, expectations, and values" and bring "their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate pre-occupations to their interpretation of a production."[513] Members of focus groups were asked, after seeing media dance works, to write in diaries, undertake self-reflection, and participate in interviews. The researcher found that audience members exhibited kinesthetic empathy, particularly if they were, or had been, dancers themselves. I would argue that kinesthetic empathy is not needed for an individual to enjoy dance works; however, to understand the choreography and, perhaps, the meaning behind experimental works, a dance background might be helpful. From an audience theory point of view, the encoding/decoding model of Stuart Hall might be relevant to the question of creating meaning. In John Sullivan's account, Hall argued that the "message producer [in the case of screendance or digital dance, this might be the director and/or choreographer] ... must place an idea or event or experience in a format that will be meaningful for audiences."[514] To achieve meaning, the message of the work must have been successfully encoded. The second component of Hall's model is "the reception of the message by the audience, which Hall call[ed] the decoding process."[515] Translated into terms of screendance or digital dance, this means that the audience, if it is to be entertained, influenced, or persuaded, or if it is to feel kinesthetic empathy, must:

[513] Karen Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing:" 32-33.
[514] Sullivan, *Media Audiences – Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power,* 140.
[515] Sullivan, *Media Audiences,*141.

> interpret these messages within their own contexts…where the message receiver brings to bear his or her own cognitive and associative resources to the deconstruction of a message…[as well as being]…informed by the meaning structures such as language, community norms, and cultural conventions.[516]

Thus, the decoding of a film, including screendance and digital dance films, is both a creative and social act. In light of this coding/decoding model, it may be true that audience members who are dancers, or who have some experience with dance studies, may show relatively more appreciation and even kinesthetic empathy in response to experimental screendance or digital dance films.

In many cases, there could be asymmetry between what message the producer was trying to convey and the meaning that the audience attributes to the work. This may be especially true of screendance and digital dance films being shown at film festivals where broad criteria and definitions have been used to curate the offerings. That asymmetry might be most common, in fact, among audiences viewing experimental films, particularly if an artist statement has not been communicated in advance of the cinematic presentation. In addition, as discussed in earlier sections of this dissertation, spectator biases may shape reactions when it comes to "decoding" the film's message, and responses may vary depending on how screendance or digital dance is defined.

Regardless, I am inspired by Wood's conclusions. Though her focus groups tended to involve very small sample sizes, she found solid evidence that the experience of viewers is enhanced if they participate in reflective conversations immediately following the viewing of a

[516] Sullivan, *Media Audiences,*141.

film (or films).[517] This is an interesting observation, which curators of screendance or digital dance film festivals – or even individual filmmakers – should keep in mind when showing their work. Appreciation of the work in a group setting seems to enhance the kinesthetic response of audiences, allowing them to "engage with and provide meaning to the artwork."[518] Wood concluded that audience response could be used to better inform filmmaking practices and audience comments could be used by researchers to "further research the artform."[519] She also concluded that a community of people viewing a film at the same time "are potentially united in the experience…[and, thus,] become much more engaged and invested in the media…which constructs meaning around the role of watching dance on screen."[520]

In the last ten years, I have made eight screendance films,[521] including five in the avant-garde style: *The Umbrella Dance* (2010); *Black and Gold* (2013); *Identity Crisis (ID)* (2015); *Hanging On* (2015); and *The Rainbow Ribbon* (2019). Three other works I have created in the Hollywood style: *HVUC Fitness Club* (2016); *Happily Ever After* (2017), a short, satirical musical; and *Where Can I Run?* (2023), a short horror-musical (these films are described in more depth in Chapter 5). I have never undertaken any research related to audience engagement or appreciation of my films. It may be time to revisit one or more of these works and, immediately after the showings, to undertake audience reception research, using a combination of focus group and individual interview methodologies. This would help me to speculate on the collective and individual experience of audiences watching my films in a way that could inform my future research and filmmaking practices. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, groups have

[517] Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing:" 37.
[518] Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing:" 37.
[519] Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing: 37.
[520] Wood, "Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing:" 37
[521] There films will be introduced, in more detail, in Chapter 5.

watched films virtually on their individual screens, which may lead to new and different conclusions from those drawn from in-person, collective experiences.

Marie Fol, in her recent study on digital shifts in artistic practices of virtualized dance in Europe, found that online dance during the pandemic "enjoys a high threshold for accessibility…reaching new audiences both at home and abroad."[522] She also noted that the digital divide creates its own form of exclusion, including "the need for digital equipment and internet access."[523] Despite such exclusionary issues, Fol agrees with Lizzy Maries, a digital-content producer in the United Kingdom, that it is highly unlikely that dance companies, venues, and festivals will go back to the way it was before the pandemic. As Maries writes:

> Digital programming is here to stay. We know we have audiences who experience barriers in coming to the venue in-person, before and beyond COVID-19. Live performances at 7pm will always be hugely loved, but digital programming can be a great leveller – available to a new parent who needs to be at home with a baby, or to someone living with anxiety for example. What we need to consider, as producers and programmers, is who digital keeps out and why.[524]

Not only have audiences for screendance been increasing during the pandemic because of the art form's online presence; the number of artists has also increased. Choreographers and dance companies familiar only with in-class or in-person performances before the pandemic, found that they faced new restrictions in terms of accessing venues and performing on stage. They responded by beginning to experiment with digital dance and the production of works for

[522] Marie Fol, "Virtualised Dance? Digital Shifts in Artistic Practices," 11.
[523] Fol, "Virtualised Dance? Digital Shifts in Artistic Practices," 11.
[524] Lizzy Maries, "No Looking Back," *The One Dance U Magazine* 10 (Spring 2021). Accessed March 25, 2025. https://www.onedanceuk.org/resource/one-magazine.

the screen. Experimentation in screendance since then, as Emily May indicates, "has been encouraged by dance organizations, who are offering funding, commissions, and online screendance workshops"[525] to support creators in diversifying beyond their in-person only practices. As Fol writes, "there are new points of access available to audiences and networks, with greater potential for distribution and fewer gatekeepers."[526]

3.8 Future Funding for Screendance and Digital Dance Works

Funding for screendance projects around the world, including Canada, has always been challenging, and the situation has worsened in recent years. Beginning in the 1990s, there were several specific funding mechanisms in Canada to support screendance, including Bravo!FACT, the NFB, and federal, provincial, and municipal arts councils, such as the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council. The Canada Council for the Arts administered a Dance on Screen Fund for many years and supported a great deal of innovative screendance work; it was not renewed, however, in 2016.[527] Bravo!FACT, a fund belonging to CTV television, supported a generation of dance film practitioners, beginning in the 1990s, and, with Judy Gladstone acting as the champion of dance film within the organization, it helped finance the production and exhibition of Canadian dance films around the world.[528] The funding landscape had changed by the early 2000s, however. By then, says Szporer, diminishing sources of funding for the art form and little possibility of financial return to the producer had caused more screendance practitioners in Canada to turn to short films (five to seven minutes in length). By 2002, Bravo!FACT was the primary source of funding for "art videos under 12 minutes

[525] Emily May, "Screening Times," *Springback Magazine* (January 2021). Accessed March 25, 2023. https://springbackmagazine.com/read/screened-dance-screendance-covid.
[526] Fol, "Virtualised Dance? Digital Shifts in Artistic Practices," 13.
[527] Philip Szporer, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.
[528] Allan and Karen Kaeja, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto 2018.

long,"[529] including screendance films, providing fifty percent of production costs up to a meagre $25,000. As for private foundations, the Daniel Langlois Foundation has funded screendance and digital dance projects, such as those made by Softimage, a Montréal-based software company that focused on 3D and 2D animation productions using digital technologies.

Most sources of funding are no longer available, and, as a result, most screendance and digital dance productions today, according to practitioners like Elias Djemil-Matassov, are self-financed.[530] Faced with the gradual dwindling away of funding in Canada, screendance and digital dance artists turned to "quick and dirty" [531] projects, such as *Risible Chick* (1993), created by Nicholas de Pencier of Toronto: he produced this film for $800.[532] The trend to inexpensive productions has continued to this day, with most productions, as assessed by Canadian practitioners and scholars like Szporer, now being self-supported or funded through crowdfunding mechanisms.[533] There have been a few recent exceptions. Allen Kaeja's *Xtrordinary TO Dances: Moments in Reel Time* (2017) was made for Bell Media (Canada) and Marqueearts (UK), which starred 22 Toronto-based dance artists "representing the intergenerational, multi-practice and mosaic of the dance community, on location throughout Metropolitan Toronto."[534] Even with the general lack of public funding, a wide range of vibrant, innovative, and meaningful work is coming from Canadian practitioners. This renaissance is being driven by festivals, technology, and by the talent of Canadian practitioners.

[529] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 173.
[530] Elias Djemil-Matassov, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.
[531] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 174.
[532] Szporer, "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video," 169.
[533] Philip Szporer, telephone interview with George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.
[534] School of Toronto Dance Theatre. Accessed May 4, 2023. https://schooloftdt.org/divi_overlay/allan-kaeja/ .

The funding situation is challenged at the moment, and a stable funding base may be essential to support the creation of more technologically mediated dance products. Some indirect improvements could be made to this situation at the institutional level. For instance, in Canada, there is clearly a role for broadcasters to support the creation and dissemination of dance films. The hope is that broadcasters like CBC, TVOntario, Radio Canada, Bell TV, Rogers, and others, might increase their commitment to screendance and digital dance and that they embrace the relationship between dance and emerging digital technologies, at the same time staying true to the original concept of what dance on camera can be. As well, as more and more dance artists take to the screen to present their choreography and practice, universities and colleges with dance or media programs, may be willing to invest more attention in the professional formation of screendance and digital dance filmmakers.

Directly improving the funding situation, however, may lie in the hands of the dance community itself. At the festival level, for example, linking themes to social issues may help to increase interest, not only among audiences but also from funders. In the dance community, as well, creators need to become activists if the field is to be recognized as one of growing artistic interest and worthy of government support. Canadian creators and producers should consider aggressively lobbying federal and provincial arts councils. For instance, the Dance on Screen Production Fund of the Canada Council for the Arts ended in 2016, and it has not been replaced by a similar fund with similar objectives. As a result, practitioners have been sent scrambling to find other sources of support. In fact, the Council is now funding a Digital Strategies Fund, which has supported dance works produced using new digital media forms (e.g., *FALLOW* (2022) by Allen Kaeja). This is actually worrying some artists, such as Priscilla Guy, who feel "that new technologies are seducing both the institutions that provide funding and the artists who

feel they have to follow the money."[535] Guy, quoted by Smith, says further that "arts councils eagerly prioritize the latest digital technologies without truly understanding them…[making funding] political…[thereby taking] art-making further away from real experimental research – which is what a lot of artists are actually doing."[536]

As for large-scale industry funding for the creation of innovative productions, studios and financiers are needed to finance full-length or feature screendance films or films with screendance or digital dance elements. With the recent box office success of a number of films that include screendance or digital dance components, it is possible that some industry funders will continue to take a chance on major cinematic works that feature, as least, some screendance or digital dance elements.

Some individuals and companies have taken steps to create their own source of stable funding. In Europe, Fol found that the subscription model has worked for some online digital dance platforms. However, she concedes that such platforms are very hard to maintain by one or more individuals and even by larger companies. It may be easier for digital dance creators to premiere content on YouTube, or to look for distribution through existing platforms, rather than create their own platforms.

3.9 Conclusion

Technologically mediated dance, as an art form, is experiencing rapid evolution with new opportunities for connection between choreographers and ever-evolving technologies. The intermediality of this art form combined with new technologies is resulting in new works that are resulting in new immersive and interactive experiences for performers, participants, and

[535] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film:" para. 7.
[536] Smith, "The Evolving Story of Dance on Film:" para. 8.

audiences. Distribution and exhibition in-person, online, and through hybrid options are expanding while traditional networks continue to return as exhibition venues after the pandemic. Despite funding issues, the production of technologically mediated dance works is entering a new phase of creativity, innovation and technological advancement, for as De Spain writes, "if our dance is to reflect our lives, we must learn to create new movements in new spaces, and dance with the technology within and around us."[537] The barriers are real, but the power of screendance, and its cousins in the technologically mediated dance world, as a niche, artistic form, is such that they are likely to be overcome with a growing cadre of practitioners and scholars working in this field supported by audiences appreciating and critiquing the work being produced.

[537] De Spain, "Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans:" 16.

Chapter 4: Screendance Theory and Media Dance Practice: Embodiment, Choreographic Compositional Intention, Social Themes and Commercial Issues in Hollywood Feature-length Films, Highlighted by Examples

4.1 Introduction

Brevity has always been a strength in screendance films. This dissertation has already referenced many short, avant-garde screendance films as illuminating examples of the art form. Indeed, such films lie at the very heart of the screendance genre. Short films, where technologically mediated dance is the predominant form of expression, are readily described and categorized in terms of "screendance." These films characteristically lack coherent narrative; instead, the art, the meaning, lies in the poetic movement of a body or bodies in motion, combined with cinematic enhancement. Generally, they are directed to a relatively small, niche market of "artistic" consumer.

A larger debate arises in the analysis of Hollywood and other feature film musicals and their contribution to the genre. Under my new taxonomy, these films have been categorized as a sub-component of media dance that, with wide theatrical release through legacy or streamed distribution networks, are geared to popular, mass entertainment. In these longer films, dance is used to enhance, illustrate or advance the narrative, support character development, and maximize entertainment through spectacle. In keeping with the history of screendance, as originally presented by Fuller, screendance in feature-length narratives demonstrates the interrelation of dance and film, with choreography, cinematography, and editing all merging to create new ways of experiencing storytelling.

Analysis of hundreds of recent feature films reveals that only a handful can truly be classified as screendance films, where dance numbers, combined with a musical score and perhaps accompanying song, dominate the narrative. Historically, many screendance feature films coming out of Hollywood (and Bollywood) have been extensively analyzed in the literature, where dance has been embedded in the film's storyline. These include: *Singin' in the Rain* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1952); the works of Busby Berkeley and decades later, that of Bob Fosse (e.g., *Cabaret,* 1972); films starring Shirley Temple; and, more recently, films such as *Chicago* (Rob Marshall, 2002), which were adapted to the screen from popular Broadway musicals (including major song and dance numbers) and with major box office success. No matter how we try to delineate and classify screendance within a logical aesthetic taxonomy, there is a messiness to modern-day musicals that involve screendance elements or that could be classified as screendance feature films. Nevertheless, in all these films, Rosenberg points out that the main distinguishing characteristic for canonical inclusion are that dance numbers, on their own or mixed with songs, have "high entertainment values… and … use … dance in service to the narrative arc."[538] Those fundamental characteristics are certainly present in the film adaptations of some successful Broadway musicals, and they will probably continue to be featured as popular narrative films are remade, re-released, and, some would say, recycled in their musical versions (e.g., *Mean Girls* (Arturo Perez Jr. and Samantha Jayne, 2024), and *The Color Purple* (Blitz Bazawule, 2023)). That fact that, in these two cases, the music has gone viral through social media, has helped to promote these films both to existing and new demographics, continuing to translate audiences' love of theatrical dance and musicals into the medium of film.

[538] Rosenberg, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

In the examples presented in this chapter, I have focused on legacy films, as well as relatively recent releases where dance is an integral part of the narrative, visual or thematic structure of the feature film. An earlier attempt to quantify the ratio of dance to non-dance content, or simply to count the number of dances in Hollywood screendance films, was too arbitrary to be useful. More practically, a feature-length screendance film should be considered as one having dance numbers in most scenes. If dance numbers are not so prevalent, then the film is merely a musical with screendance elements, and it should be analyzed through that lens. Interestingly, many of the films I classify as being screendance feature films were adapted to film from successful stage productions, but they were box office failures upon release. However, some have developed their own cult following in subsequent years.

And what about audience response? Do audiences in general really like films dominated by dance, or song and dance, or do they prefer having only a few numbers in any one film? How do geographic and cultural dynamics and differences relate to audience appreciation and acceptance of screendance elements? Clearly, audience reception research is needed in this area, as tension appears to exist between screendance and narrative fiction filmmaking as dominant forms. In this section, I have attempted to rescue certain films from critical disrepute by analyzing them through a screendance lens and by providing a new aesthetic perspective. It follows that the screendance lens applied to criticism is both relevant and important.

Certain key elements are needed to transform a feature film musical into a screendance film. First, the choreography must be created specifically for the camera, the end point being the exhibition of the film on a screen or a screen-like surface. As discussed in other sections of this dissertation, the cinematography, camera work, and editing must work in harmony with the choreography and the dance movement. Second, dance must be used as an artistic and expressive

device that is central to character development or to narrative enhancement. Dance must operate not as an occasional flourish, but rather as a fundamental feature of the film's artistic language. It must play a key role in the storytelling as well as heightening emotional engagement. Finally, dance typically should add entertainment value to a feature-length narrative film. Indeed, entertainment may be the greatest contribution that screendance makes to the shaping of trends within popular culture.

I have defined certain animated feature-length films as screendance because such films do often integrate animated choreographic movement with intent into the narrative. Dance movement featuring rhythm and synchronization enhances characterization, emotion, and the story. Examples such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (David Hand, 1937)*, Fantasia* (Samuel Armstrong et al., 1940)*,* and *Happy Feet* (George Miller, 2006) are addressed in the discussion here.

The Golden Age of Hollywood from the 1930s to the 1950s was notable for such films as *Top Hat* (Mark Sandrich, 1935) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), which are legacy musicals featuring major screendance numbers. *Singin' in the Rain* offers an excellent example of a musical where complex cinematic techniques were integrated with choreography. Indeed, the film boasts iconic scenes of actors dancing on ceilings and Gene Kelly dancing in the rain. Such classic screendance elements connect emotionally with audiences and exemplify Hollywood's ability to translate dance into a cinematic language that is accessible, emotive, and timeless. A more recent film in the 20th century featuring dance is *Westside Story* (Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise, 1961). In this work, the choreography of Jerome Robbins generates real narrative force, using dance movement not only for character development but also to depict cultural diversities and emotional conflicts, and to articulate themes of belonging, conflict, and love. Bob

Fosse's *All That Jazz* (1979) similarly uses dance numbers to illustrate themes of self-reflection, obsession, and morality, powerfully expressed through a distinctive dance style and through theatrical spectacle.

Now, after a long hiatus in screendance films in Hollywood – a hiatus that has stretched out over the 1980s and 1990s – the 21st century has seen a resurgence in interest in musicals among funders, big studios, producers, and directors. This rebirth includes major screendance sequences highlighted by special effects and the use of technologically mediated dance. With renewed interest both in Hollywood and among independent studios, what do these films contribute to the discussion in the dance world of embodiment, choreographic compositional intention, and social themes? Where do they fit in terms of major issues in the industry, including commercialization, funding disparities, advocacy in support of diversity, equity and inclusion, and popular culture? These topics will be explored in this chapter, with examples, to illustrate the importance of feature-length narrative films in the evolution of screendance within popular culture and the role that Hollywood and independent feature-length films play in the global perception and reception of technologically mediated dance on the movie screen.

4.2 Embodiment

As discussed in Chapter 1, "embodiment" in screendance films refers to a body or bodies in motion as a form of artistic expression, often used to enhance the narrative or to generate an emotional effect. Embodiment is central to emotional expression and to the creation of spectacle in films such as *La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, 2016) and *Wicked: Part 1* (Jon M. Chu, 2024), where dance is used as an expression, through movement, of internal emotional struggles or desires. The choreography is planned intentionally to highlight not only physical skill, but also bodily aesthetics modified through the use of camera angles, editing, and close-ups. In other

films, embodiment is expressed in a less polished way – for example, in *The Prom* (Ryan Murphy, 2020) and *Grease 2* (Patricia Birch, 1982). Here, embodiment is expressed through more straightforward camera techniques. These capture dance movements with a rawness that mirrors the emotions of the dancers and enhances the narrative rather than exploring a theme, advancing a metaphor, or creating a bodily aesthetic.

4.3 Choreographic Compositional Intention

Choreographic compositional intention is critical to the definition of screendance. In many avant-garde or experimental screendance films, the choreographic intention focuses on the emotional, metaphorical, thematic, or artistic expression of bodies in motion. In feature-length narratives, the choreographic compositional intention tends to serve various other purposes, including commercial appeal, enhancing the arc of the story, character development, emotional expression, and spectacle as means to engage audiences. The choreography often highlights the technical and visual aspects of dance combined, in many films, with complex CGI, motion capture, and other technological enhancements. In screendance films such as *Grease 2* (1982), *West Side Story* (1961), and Steven Spielberg's 2021 remake of *Westside Story*, the characters are teenagers belonging to two rival gangs. In *Grease 2*, Patricia Birch choreographed the film with compositional choreographic intent to ensure that dance operated as an integrative thread throughout the film, supporting the narrative and providing thematic

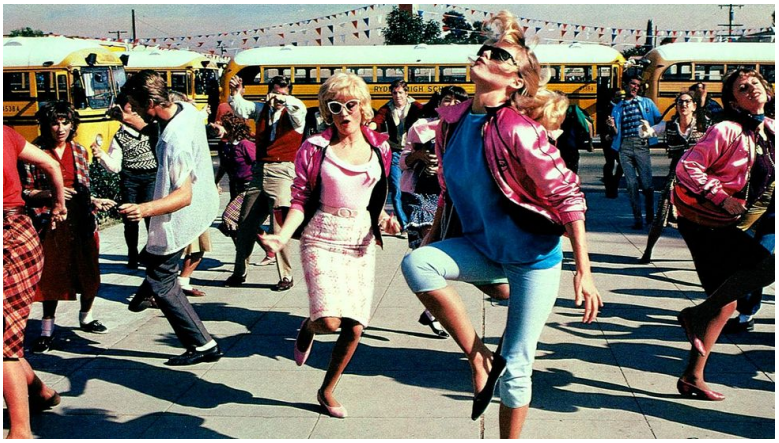

Figure 15: *Grease 2* (1982)

Source: https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200805-grease-2-the-flop-that-became-a-surprise-hit

unity. For instance, the lengthy opening dance and song number, "Back to School Again," introduces every major character. Similarly, rival groups (the Cycle Lords and the T-Birds) come to the fore through a complicated song and dance routine in a local bowling alley ("Score Tonight"), while the sexual antics of students in a biology class are celebrated in a number called "Reproduction." The plot thickens as a mysterious person dressed as a biker defeats the rival gang and disappears into the night ("Who's That Guy?"). The "Cool Rider's" identity is a mystery, even as the other main protagonist, Stephanie, begins to fall for him ("Charades"). The Pink Ladies, the girls' gang, perform at the talent show ("Girl for All Seasons"), while the T-Birds sing "Prowlin'." The "Cool Rider" defeats the Cycle Lords again and is welcomed, with his real identity revealed, into the T-Birds. Stephanie and the "Cool Rider" are a match ("We'll Be Together"), and the credits roll with a reprise of the big introductory song and dance number, "Back to School Again." As in *West Side Story* (1961) and in Steven Spielberg's 2021 remake, the dance numbers in *Grease 2* function at pivotal turning points in the plot for individual characters – for example, a first romantic dance or a climatic dance-off, with bodies in motion exemplifying the themes of rebellion, personal growth, contemporary social issues, emotional enlightenment, group dynamics, and self-expression.

Even without specifically focusing on any of the social issues of the 1960s (racism and segregation), the film captures the mood of the Rock and Roll era. Every dance draws on the 1960s in terms of steps, moves, spins, turns, and jumps, and the dancers depict the teenagers of that era, with their style of clothes, hair, and makeup defining a precise historical period, as do various other features of the film – the rock and roll score, the catchy tunes and "the phenomenal dancers."[539] In terms of social themes, these adolescents suffer all the angst of any high school

[539] Lenker, "Motorcycles and musical numbers: An oral history of how *Grease 2* became a cult classic," 11 .

society, where belonging and acceptance are always an issue. The central conflict of the film is illustrated in two teenage gangs struggling for dominance in the highly competitive culture of school, where heterosexual boys and girls vie for dominance among their peers and for attention from the other sex. The young males belong to the Cycle Lords and T-Birds, and many are characterized as chauvinistic, immature, and arrogant. They compete against each other to be the "coolest," to be the one with the "coolest" motorcycles, biker clothes, and girls. The Pink Ladies represent the dominant "bad-girl" females in the school; dominating the social hierarchy, leading the talent show acts, and "going out" with the "coolest" boys. There is yet a third group, the "Preptones" these are the preppie boys who do well in school but not with the girls. This film was sexually charged, as was the original *Grease,* with songs (accompanied by elaborate choreography) such as "Score Tonight" and "Reproduction."

Some critics have labelled *Grease 2* a "feminist" film, and there is a case to be made for that, given the strong roles of Stephanie and other female characters. At some point during the plot development, teenage films have traditionally introduced a new girl into the school ecosystem: in this case, it is a new boy who arrives.[540] This is "a gender reversal in which the male is the cardigan-wearing goodie-two-shoes, while Pfeiffer's Zinone is the "too-cool-for-school classmate everyone either wanted to be or be with."[541] Refusing to listen to men, Zinone is "just out there being her own badass…she was a bit of a feminist icon."[542] The message is that Zinone is her own woman, not beholden to anyone and nobody's property. "Maybe I'm tired of being someone's chick," is one of the most quoted lines from the film.

[540] Thorp, "Grease 2: The Flop that became a surprise hit," para. 4.
[541] Thorp, "Grease 2: The Flop that became a surprise hit," para. 8.
[542] Quote by Chris Legg, creator of *Cool Rider*, taken from Clare Thorp, "Grease 2: The Flop that became a surprise hit," para. 11.

Like *Cats* (discussed later in this chapter), *Grease 2* was largely panned by the critics, and it failed at the box office. Still, over the decades since its release, it has developed a following and a dedicated fan base. With a VHS release, fan sites, anniversary screenings, Comic Cons, sing-a-longs, and sell-out West End adaptations, it has become a cult favourite, with fans who know the words to each song by heart. As Chris Clegg, the director of *Cool Rider*, says, "The songs are so good. They're catchy, they're a bit camp, a bit ridiculous at times, but if you've seen *Grease 2*, you'll know all the words."[543] *Cats*, even just a few years after its release, may be headed in the same direction, with a cult-like following already emerging.

Hollywood choreography is often designed to serve commercial goals, in that it seeks to captivate audiences and create wide viewership through visually awe-inspiring sequences. This is certainly true in the recent release of *Wicked: Part 1* (2024). The choreography in this film casts a thematic light on stereotypic good and evil and how individuals find freedom within social constraints. The sets were designed to serve the story without extensive CGI (except for the animal characters), with many actors doing their own stunts while singing and dancing (e.g., Cynthia Erivo in the "Defying Gravity" spectacle). Unsurprisingly, this film won the Cinematic and Box Office Achievement Award at the 2025 Golden Globes Awards. It has captivated audiences around the world and continues to do so with its complex choreographic sequences.

4.4 Social Issues

Social issues in Hollywood screendance films are often explored in a way that generates broad commercial appeal, while experimental screendance films – untrammeled by massive commercial ambition – are usually able to address social issues in a more nuanced way. Given

[543] Quote by Chris Legg, creator of *Cool Rider*, taken from Clare Thorp, "Grease 2: The Flop that became a surprise hit," para. 15.

the weight of commercial constraints, Hollywood screendance films often address social issues in simplified or idealized ways, while experimental screendance films deal with social issues in a more direct, raw, and critical manner.

An excellent example of a commercially successful animated screendance film that explores social issues is *Happy Feet* (2006). *Happy Feet* builds on traditions established decades earlier in Disney animated films. This film was directed, produced, and co-written by George Miller, and it stars the voices of well-known actors Elijah Wood, Robin Williams, Brittany Murphy, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Hugo Weaving, E.G. Daily, and Steve Irwin. The film was co-produced by companies in the United States and Australia, with the visual effects and animation led by Animal Logic, a Sydney-based company, in cooperation with Rhythm & Hues, Giant Killer Robots, and Giant Studies, Inc. It involved a visual effects team of over 1,000 people.[544] Because of the demanding technical innovativeness of this film, it took four years to make at a cost of US$100 million. Producers – with the support of IBM – had to build specialized computers with sufficient memory to process the material and prepare it for release in both conventional theatres and in IMAX 3D format. The investment paid off. The film went on to win

Figure 16: *Happy Feet* (2006)

Source: **https://thecriticalcritics.com/reviews/happy-feet/**

[544] Debbie Lynn Elias, "Happy Feet," Accessed May 20, 2023. https://behindthelensonline.net/site/reviews/happy-feet/, 2.

an Academy Award for Best Animated Film in 2007, and it has since grossed more than US$384 million at the box office.

Happy Feet is literally about how we can communicate through dance and the power of the screendance art form to bring us together. Given the dominance of dance and song throughout the film, this computer-animated musical comedy clearly deserves to be classified as popular screendance, as the story is enhanced and expressed through dance accompanied by songs with appropriate lyrics to support the narrative arc. It can also be classified as a jukebox musical, as previously recorded songs were added to the film's soundtrack to fit the mood of particular scenes or characters. The story follows the main protagonist, an Emperor penguin named Mumble who, in order to find his true love, needs a Heartsong ("a unique and special sound or spirit that both identifies individuals and unites the group"[545]). But Mumble cannot sing; he can only tap dance. Throughout the film, he communicates through dance – speaking to his love, Gloria, or to humans (the aliens), telling them of the destruction that overfishing has wrought on the Antarctic environment. In fact, dance gives Mumble a powerful voice that is heard by his fellow penguins around the world. Ultimately, Mumble falls captive and is incarcerated in a zoo, and his voice is heard there by a child who watches him dance. Motion capture was used to delineate dance moves for the film,[546] with African-American Savion Glover, one of the top tap dancers in the world, collaborating to create Mumble's unique tap style. Glover was co-choreographer for dance sequences in the film, and he taught dancers – each wearing a head apparatus that mimicked a penguin's beak – to move like penguins as they interpreted music that ranges from rock, funk, Latin, pop, and rap, all the way to opera, gospel,

[545] Elias, "Happy Feet," 2.
[546] At the time, it was "the most advanced and intricate use of motion-capture photography in a film to date." Elias, "Happy Feet," 4.

and even liturgical rhythms. More than 50 dancers worked with Glover to engage in synchronous motion, which the FX creators used to develop animated scenes of more than 20,000 penguins dancing on ice in Antarctica.[547] Unfortunately, the involvement of Glover is yet another example of the erasure of race in screendance film production and the appropriation of black expressive culture for largely white audiences, a long tradition in Hollywood that only in this century is beginning to be more directly addressed.

This film was certainly conceived with choreographic compositional intention. Each scene includes choreographed, animated movement of one or more penguins, with movement not just conveying the narrative, but also shaping the story. As Tanine Allison writes, "dancing becomes a way to unite the community of penguins in a way their individual heartsongs cannot."[548] The choreography is as complex as that of Busby Berkeley. Miller kept the camera on the dancers, moving to match the dance steps and using extended shots, rather than quick edits – the norm for most animated films – to ensure that the narrative flows coherently from one scene to another.[549] With CGI and special effects, these dance moves were then animated. Mumble's dances and those of the other penguins, once they realize this is a way for them to communicate with humans about their plight, are choreographed with intent. Some numbers are danced to the music of popular songs (e.g., Prince's *Kiss*) and others to songs written especially for the film (e.g., Prince's *Song of the Heart*) or John Powell's instrumental score. Many of the dances were choreographed by Warren Coleman, "who brings together many styles, including

[547] Elias, "Happy Feet," 4.
[548] Tanine Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet*: The Politics of Race in Motion Capture and Animation," in *Special Effects: New Histories, Theories, Contexts,* eds. Dan North, Bob Rehak, and Michael Duffy (London: BFI/Palgrave, 2015), 207.
[549] Elias, "Happy Feet," 4.

Zulu, gumboot, Navajo, and Samoa slap dancing"[550] to convey the global message of the film. "We are all in this together."

Kinaesthetic affects are seen in the way that characters respond to each other in terms of emotion, but also in the way the audience responds. The physical movements of the motion-capture dancers, as well as their somatic and emotional sensations, are translated through animation into the emotions and movements of the penguins. Kinaesthetic affects influence the viewers as well, who, as they are invited into a narrative conveyed by music and dance, may find themselves tapping their feet along with Mumble. The bodies of viewers respond to the music and to the movement as they empathize with Mumble's concern with the destruction of the Antarctic habitat, and the musical message: it is time to move our bodies in sync with the rhythms of the earth before it is too late. The kinaesthetic affects, for both the animated characters and viewers, are particularly strong in the scene where Gloria sings "Boogie Wonderland," and she and Mumble dance in a Latin style with lots of bold body contact. Other penguins begin to dance too, until – in a moment of dramatic crisis – the elders break up the dancing and banish Mumble.

This is a thematically rich film, almost hectic in its references, direct and indirect, to racial, cultural, political, and religious themes. It addresses all these through the language of dance and song, and also through appearance, names, and accents used to highlight the themes of ostracism, environmental degradation, religious hierarchy, and racism (black face). Much like Rudolf in *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (Larry Roemer, 1964), Mumble is ostracized by his father and the flock of penguins for being different. His father says to him, "I wouldn't do that

[550] Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, "Happy Feet," *Spirituality & Practice*, Accessed May 20, 2023, https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/16303/happy-feet, 2.

around folks, son…. It just ain't penguin, okay?" His "difference" is feared and disliked, and his dancing is blamed for the depletion of the fish supply. The penguin leaders believe that Mumble has offended the great penguin spirit, and he is banished. On his adventure to the outside world, he encounters aliens (humans), who put him in a zoo. There, his dances attract the attention of the aliens, who follow him back to Antarctica to see if there are any more dancing penguins there. Finding others, the alien leaders get the message and declare a ban on fishing. The fish stocks begin to recover. Mumble – now nicknamed "Happy Feet" – is transformed from scapegoat into hero.

There is one dark shadow that lies across this brilliantly heroic tale, and that is race. Casting decisions may have influenced the way some of these themes were developed in the film, with one essential dichotomy: Glover, a noted African-American tap dancer, provides the digital movement for Mumble's body, while Elijah Wood, a white actor, provides his voice. The fact that Glover's body becomes invisible may suggest that a naturalization of racial discrimination has taken place. Certainly, this is in keeping with a long legacy of racial signification in animation, as is also illustrated in *Snow White* (1937) and *Fantasia* (1940).[551] Allison argues that this contradiction in *Happy Feet* between the black dancer's body and the white actor's voice concerns "American race relations, narrating, however, indirectly, the white appropriation of black culture, through both its voice and its song."[552] She contends that the motion capture of Glover's body applied to white bodies is "akin to digital blackface."[553] At the

[551] Negative depictions and caricatures of African Americans in animated cartoons and films to elicit humour through ethic jokes is described and analysed by Nicholas Sammond in his book, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation.* In this text, Sammond argues that the some of the earliest animated characters, Bimbo, Mickey Mouse, Felix the Cat, and Bugs Bunny, began the long legacy of racial signification (in both visual and movement characteristics) in animation by adapting vaudeville and blackface minstrelsy troupes (white gloves, black plasmatic bodies, wide eyes, and mobile mouths) to animated cartoons and feature films.
[552] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet*," 201.
[553] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet,*" 202.

same time, she insists, in her opinion, falsely or not, that motion capture opens up "the promise of a truly post-racial form of representation"[554] in future films. If this is the case, the penguins then "may act as symbols of interracial harmony."[555] Other outcasts presented in the film with racial and ethnic undertones are five Adélie penguins called "The Amigos." They speak and sing with Spanish accents and are short and fat compared to the tall, regal Emperor penguins, and they are clearly meant to represent Hispanics. Robin Williams provides the voice of Ramon, one of the Adélie penguins who speaks with a Latino accent, and also of Lovelace, who "evokes a number of African American caricatures."[556] Again, Allison has called this a performance of "aural blackface."[557] Other animals in the film may also evoke racism and homophobia. A group of darkly-coloured hawks (skuas) speak with stereotypical African-American accents, and they are violent and attack Mumble. A homosexual elephant seal is depicted as foul. These outcast characters may be presented as comedic and insignificant, their purpose being to make viewers laugh, but they also contribute to racializing the narrative. In addition, many of the songs included in the film were composed by black artists (e.g., Stevie Wonder, Prince, and Lionel Richie, among others), but they are performed by a white vocal cast for the film.

The white-black divide in the film highlights a form of "white privilege." For example, at the penguins' school graduation, the graduates – members of the Emperor penguin class – toss some of their clearly white feathers into the air, while Mumble's grey fuzzy feather floats sadly alone in the wind. There is a moment of dramatic transcendence that occurs within the film. The Emperor penguins – clearly the dominant group in an echo of white supremacy – do finally accept the minorities in their midst but only after they work with Mumble to stop the aliens (the

[554] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet,*" 202.
[555] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet,*" 202.
[556] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet,*" 219.
[557] Allison, "Blackface, *Happy Feet,*" 219.

humans) from fishing in their waters. In other words, members of the minority had to prove themselves in order to be accepted. This implies a "white gaze," through which minorities are seen and depicted as lesser beings and as racialized others. This may not be a flaw to the degree that it reflects reality. In fact, the depiction of such a divide may have been a deliberate directorial decision intended not only to create verisimilitude, but also to encourage viewers to understand and adjust their attitudes toward class, ethnicity, race, and the divide between "us" and "them."

Race is not the only issue addressed in *Happy Feet*. Like other films discussed in this dissertation, this film presents a large complex of social, cultural, economic, class, gender, and racial stereotypes to the audience. This seems to be a trend in many legacy and contemporary short and feature-length animated films involving screendance and non-screendance elements. There is much to study here, building on the work of Nicholas Sammond and others, in terms of audience responses to racialization and to the other social, economic, and cultural themes and issues illustrated and anthropomorphized in recent animated films.

A religious theme also runs through *Happy Feet*. The outcast fortune-teller penguin, Lovelace, has a plastic 6-pack wrapper around his neck, which he claims that mystics gave to him, along with words of wisdom. In fact, he expounds his "faith" in the film in a way that is sadly derogatory to Indigenous communities, with their focus on nature and spirituality. The head Emperor penguin, whose name is Noah, represents another cultural stream. He speaks with a Scottish accent (reminiscent of white, Scottish missionaries and the dominance of Presbyterianism in many parts of the world). His religious context is entirely European. He encourages the other Emperor penguins to be "sincere in their praise," and he leads them in

prayer. He encourages the penguins to believe in "The Great Guin," a reference to a stern and judgmental God, who "gives and takes away."

Then there is sexuality. Critic Debby Das notes that a "strange sexual tension pervades most of the movie,"[558] with many sexual references, as many of the penguins are "barely [able] to contain their raging libidos."[559] Mumble's mother is Norma Jean – a direct reference to Marilyn Monroe – who, like Monroe, wiggles and sings in a breathy voice. When she performs a song by Prince, "Kiss," she attracts many male admirers. She finds her true match with Memphis, who dances and sings like Elvis. The Amigos also brag about their ability to attract girls, incorporating mannerisms into their dances that include backside slaps and pelvic thrusts. Religious leaders are not immune to sex. Lovelace, at the end of one of his sermons, sends all the penguins away, saying that they should "go forth and multiply." He then exits with a group of females, bidding them – in a clear slap in the face to religious hypocrites – to join him on his "couch of perpetual indulgence."

Race, sexuality, and spirituality are all woven into the fabric of *Happy Feet*, but it is the environmental theme that drives much of the action after Mumble's banishment from the colony. The message is clear. *Happy Feet* "bring[s] awareness to global warming [and] the penguins' plight…as the film depicts the problematic presence of humans, emotionally influences a young demographic, and encourages viewers to think progressively."[560] The plastic 6-pack ring wrapped around the neck of Lovelace, which he sees as a necklace of honour, is, in fact, an icon

[558] Debby Das, "Unpopular Opinion: 'Happy Feet' is a Disturbingly Powerful Horror Movie," February 22, 2022. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/22/unpopular-opinion-happy-feet-sexual-tension-horro-movie/, 1.
[559] Das, "Unpopular Opinion," 2.
[560] Alexander Tum, 'Penguin Films and the Environment: The Triumph of Happy Feet and the Trouble with March of the Penguins," *Friends of the Adams Library First Year Research Prize,* 2021. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/fy_research/1, 1.

of pollution. Even in remote Antarctica, the fishing trawlers are heaving in nets that overflow with fish, degrading, through overfishing, a major food source for the penguins. Mumble makes his message explicitly clear when he shouts from his tank in the zoo, "You're stealing our fish." The film offers a solution to overfishing – "Bang up the sign, no fishing!" – and in the real world it has actually fostered real environmental activism. This is sometimes called the "*Happy Feet* effect."

Despite all the social riches of this film, the core, the truly central theme is much more personal and emotional. It is "love, friendship, courage, loyalty, individuality, acceptance, and the dare to be different and boldly go where no penguin has gone before."[561] This is the central message conveyed through song and dance and communicated through the movements of a dancing penguin, as "nobody should be shunned just because he likes to dance and you like to sing."[562]

Figure 17: *The Prom* (2020)

Source: **https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10161886/**

Another example of a feature-length screendance film focusing on contemporary social issues, this one with live action, is *The Prom* (Ryan Murphy, 2020). *The Prom* was adapted from a Broadway musical of the same name, and it addresses contemporary social and cultural themes with a focus on homophobia. Chad Beguelin and Matthew Sklar wrote the songs, and Bob Martin adapted the work for screen. The impetus for

[561] Elias, "Happy Feet," 3.
[562] Hoose, Bob, "Happy Feet," *Plugged In.* Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.pluggedin.com/movie-reviews/happyfeet/, 4.

Ryan Murphy to make the film may have come from his time directing "Glee" on TV. He may also have been inspired by his advocacy campaign "for more inclusivity in Hollywood"[563] and a desire to "create equal representation of women and minorities behind the camera."[564] Like many other contemporary screendance films, *The Prom* includes popular film stars such as Meryl Streep, James Corden, Nicole Kidman, and Keegan-Michael Key, to name just a few. The film had a limited theatrical release in early December 2020, before it began streaming on Netflix on December 11, 2020.

The compositional intention of the choreography focuses on the plight of an interracial, teenage lesbian relationship at an Indiana high school, where one of the girls has come out to her parents, and the other, whose mother happens to be the principal of the school, has not. The girls want to go to the prom together, but the PTA cancels the prom when they learn that a lesbian student (the one who is out) wants to bring a girl to the dance. At the same time, a group of Broadway stars, whose show in New York has just been cancelled, find out about the story on Twitter and travel to Indiana to try to support the girls. Through song, dance, and sometimes campy humour, relationships are transformatively reconciled. Even the disenchanted Broadway stars are changed for the better as they go on to secure leading roles in major productions.

The film is loosely based on a true story and highlights the prejudices against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in the 21st-century United States. In 2010, a high school student approached the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to complain that her high school, Itawamba Agricultural High School in Fulton, Mississippi, would not allow her to attend the prom with her girlfriend, another student at the same high school. In response to a letter from the

[563] Whitney Friedlander, "Ryan Murphy adapting 'The Prom' for Netflix with all-star cast." *CNN* June 25, 2019, para. 6.
[564] Friedlander, "Ryan Murphy adapting 'The Prom,' para. 6.

ACLU, the high school cancelled the prom and took the case to court. As a result, the high school was ordered to create a policy protecting students from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.[565] The nineteen song and dance numbers in *The Prom* draw on this story. With titles like "Changing Lives," "Dance with You," "The Acceptance Song," and "Simply Love," it presents, through screendance, the story of a community moving from discrimination to acceptance. In "Love Thy Neighbor," the students complain about the hypocrisy in their lives as "nice Christian kids who all go to church,"[566] while at the same time they violate the rules of their society in relation to tattoos, lost virginity, and divorce. The showstopper number, "It's Not About Me," is danced to tango music with gender-fluid and interracial dance moves and costuming. This number "encapsulates the culture clash of patronizing East Coast liberals emerging from their bubble to illuminate the blinkered paths of heartland hicks."[567] With high camp songs (exaggerated and sexualized) and Gene Kelly-like dance moves (a blending of tap, ballet, and jazz in a robust, athletic and acrobatic style), the film highlights the dichotomy of the "two Americas." There is restraint in the treatment of this theme, as it "portrays the conservative Midwestern [America] with dignity, even as it attacks the impulses of bigotry."[568] The message of the film is ultimately a cry for the two Americas to come together.

The cinematographic techniques of *The Prom* mimic those of historical musicals, with the cinematographer moving the camera to capture the intricacies of the dances, while overhead

[565] American Civil Liberties Union, McMillen V. Itawamba Country School District. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://www.aclu.org/cases/fulton-ms-prom-discrimination#
[566] Owen Gleiberman, "'The Prom' Review: Ryan Murphy Turns a Message Musical About Tolerance into a Fizzy and Elating Showbiz High," *Variety.com,* December 1, 2020, para. 2.
[567] David Rooney, "'The Prom:' Film Review," *The Hollywood Reporter* December 1, 2020, para. 9.
[568] Gleiberman, "'The Prom' Review," para. 12.

shots create a sense of expansiveness and depth. The big "shiny, bouncy, madly infectious"[569] song and dance numbers include some Fosse-like moves in "Zazz" ("jazz moves [including] curved shoulders, hip rolls and thrusts, turned-in knees and toes, sideways shuffling, insistent finger snaps, and the famous jazz hands"[570]). While these may mimic those of the old Hollywood studio system, the message belongs to today: everyone is welcome, everyone belongs.

As with some of the other screendance features discussed in this dissertation, *The Prom* met with mixed reviews, with some critics panning the narrative and deploring the stereotypes, as well as the dance and song performance of James Corden, a straight actor playing a gay, narcissistic Broadway actor. Other critics gave the film more positive reviews. Claire Heuchan, in *AfterEllen*, described it as "a love letter to musical theatre…a sweet homage to all the young lesbians and gays finding the courage to live and love authentically."[571] She also praised "the slick choreography, sparkly costumes, and unabashed camp [that] make it thoroughly entertaining."[572] David Rooney of the *Hollywood Reporter* said of the film that "there's something to be said for the wide reach of a Netflix feature that champions the rights of LGBTQ teens."[573] Owen Gleiberman wrote that *The Prom* is one of those musicals that came out of the closet in the 21st century to tell "a story of what intolerance does – the way it torments and crushes individuals, in this case forcing a gay teenager to hide her love away."[574] Even after recognizing that strong and important social message, many critics – including Mary Sollosi of

[569] Gleiberman, "'The Prom'Review," para. 1.
[570] Joe Dziemianowicz, "Get to know Bob Fosse and his iconic Broadway dance style," *New York Theatre Guide,* March 22, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://www.newyorktheatreguide.com/theatre-news/news/what-to-know-about-the-legendary-namesake-of-bob-fosses-dancin-on-broadway, para 11.
[571] Claire Heuchan, "Prom Review: Sequins and Sapphic Love Make this Musical a Triumph," *AfterEllen* February 18, 2021, para. 12.
[572] Heuchan, "Prom Review," para. 11.
[573] Rooney, "'The Prom:' Film Review," para. 15.
[574] Gleiberman, "'The Prom' Review," para. 4.

Entertainment Weekly – slammed the work, calling it "narratively sloppy, emotionally false, visually ugly, morally superior, and at least 15 minutes too long."[575] In the same review, she praised how "the film preaches tolerance and inclusion, both of which the world needs more of."[576]

Even these few examples of screendance feature-length films, all of which combine artistic vigour with an interest in contemporary social issues, suggest that there is more to explore in this area. More, much more, academic research is needed to determine exactly where the balance point lies between artistic and thematic integrity and commercial and popular success. In answering that question, filmmakers may also find new ways to move screendance out of its relegated niche in the direction of mass audiences.

4.5 Hollywood Screendance Films: Industry, Funding, Advocacy for Representation, and Popular Culture

Hollywood screendance films occupy a unique entertainment space at the intersection of dance, film, music, sound, and technological enhancements. Here, the potential for groundbreaking work is enormous, even as considerations of profitability, sources of funding, and mass audience preferences tend to outweigh artistic considerations.

4.5.1 Industry and Commercialization of Hollywood Screendance Films

The production of Hollywood screendance films is directly influenced by market trends and demands, and industry expectations of profitability do tend to dominate decision-making on how screendance is presented, often at the expense of artistic, thematic, and cultural authenticity.

[575] Mary Sollosi, "Please, by all means, call off *The Prom*: Review," *Entertainment Weekly* December 1, 2020. para. 5.
[576] Sollosi, "Please, by all means," para. 5.

Market forces often prioritize spectacle over narrative or relevance. As a result, Hollywood-style films tend to adopt rather simple themes, such as romance or the career struggles of a dancer, rather than the larger themes that challenge society today, such as sexual identity, mental health, or cultural appropriation.

Certainly, Hollywood has had no trouble in reaching the populace with high-quality fare, with no expense spared. Musicals in the Golden Age of Hollywood thrived as the studio system focused on high-production-value entertainment. Even before the Golden Age of musicals, Disney's animated films had massive audience appeal. Indeed, Disney was a pioneer of the genre, with screendance elements in feature-length animated films dating as far back as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Touted as "one of the most historically significant films of all time,"[577] *Snow White* – produced by Walt Disney at RKO Film Studios – was the first feature-length animated film ever made; it was also the first full-length film ever presented in colour; finally, it used dance in novel ways in parts of the film with very deliberate compositional intent.

Figure 18: "The Silly Song," *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)

Source: **tiktok.com/discover/snow-white-dwarf-yodel**

[577] Jonathan Frome, "Snow *White*: Critics and Criteria for the Animated Feature Film," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 30, no. 3 (2013): 462.

Snow White, based on a German fairytale by the Brothers Grimm and created by hundreds of animators and technicians, paved the way for the future of screendance in full-length, animated movies. The major dance sequence in the film is performed to "The Silly Song (The Dwarfs' Yodel Song)." This song introduced the dwarfs to the audience through dance in a way that defined their individual characters. This series of characterizations incidentally diverged from the original fairytale, where the individual dwarfs were more anonymous. The dance number involves singing, dancing with Snow White, and many slapstick antics among the dwarfs. Importantly, the dance provided narrative cohesion through the intentional development of individuality for each dwarf. Walt Disney Studios wanted to develop "the dwarfs' characters in a way that was both entertaining and comprehensible to audiences, as each dwarf had to be both similar to the others yet easily identified as a particular character."[578] Thus, the dwarfs are distinguished by different physical features, facial expressions, temperaments, and dress (they wear differently-coloured outfits). The two dominant dwarfs in particular, Doc and Grumpy, wear colours that reflect their personalities. Most of the dwarfs wear grey and tan clothing, but Doc's jacket is a warm, russet colour, reflecting the warmth of his cheerful nature; Grumpy's jacket is a dull, magenta colour, reflecting the dark side of his irritable personality; Dopey's clothes are mainly saffron yellow as an expression of "his comic and irresponsible nature."[579]

The characters of the dwarfs are also distinguished by dance and movement. Through appreciation of animated, choreographic compositional intention, we come to understand that Doc is reserved but cheerful; Bashful is shy; Grumpy is against dancing all together; Happy, Sneezy, and Dopey love to dance; and Sleepy is, well, just sleepy. The instruments they play

[578] Frome, "*Snow White*: Critics and Criteria for the Animated Feature Film:" 463.
[579] Frome, "*Snow White*: Critics and Criteria for the Animated Feature Film:" 463.

during the dance also illustrate their personalities, with Grumpy thumping the piano (but not seeming to enjoy it), and Dopey banging the drums and the percussion instruments in a rather loopy way. The scene is set, musically and choreographically, for a story of happy interaction between this family of dwarfs and the devoted Snow White, as she is accepted as a beloved foster mother.

As for the social context of the film, this is largely European in character. The dance movements are consistent with the choreography of European folk dances, and they reflect the location of the dance in a remote, rural area of Northern Europe. The dance, and the characters it introduces, illustrate the social norms of the time when the Brothers Grimm were writing the tale from a Eurocentric perspective of "whiteness." There are no racialized characters in this dance, and none in the movie; however, these characters are dwarfs, which, in modern times, would lend itself to analysis within the discipline of disability studies and through a lens that focuses on the "other." However, as children – perceived at the time as "innocents" – were the principal market for this film when it was first released, this aspect was largely ignored in the beginning.

Dance is no mere decoration in this film; it also moves the plot forward. For instance, the choreographic compositional intention of "The Silly Song" dance makes it integral to the emerging plot rather than just an amusing and entertaining interruption of the narrative. In fact, the dance was choreographed as an alternative to dialogue. The fact that Snow White ultimately joins the dwarfs in the dance is narratively meaningful: the dance illustrates their mutual acceptance of each other as a family united within the movement.

Like many screendance films today, *Snow White* was a technical groundbreaker. With this film, Disney revolutionized the use of rotoscoping and synchronized movement in animated films, bringing dance to animated films in a very innovative way. Although funders were initially

skeptical of supporting such a novel project, the film ended up changing the landscape. Its worldwide success legitimized animated storytelling and brought it into mainstream moviemaking; it also popularized the use of song and dance to tell at least part of a story. The film subsequently opened the door for future animated films where dance dominated to a much higher degree and with much more lofty artistic intention, as in the classic Disney film, *Fantasia* (1940).

Animation historian, John Canemaker, touts *Fantasia* as "one of the most exquisite examples of Disney fantasy ever created."[580] According to the criteria that I have elaborated, I have classified *Fantasia* as the very first full-length, animated screendance film, in that, as Mark Clague writes, "dance and movement are central and the composition and arrangement of elements in space definitely belong to the choreographic world of dance."[581] Even though *Fantasia* was later criticized for its racial content (discussed below), it is an excellent example of early animated screendance mediated by dance. *Fantasia* was a new and different form of animated cartoon, involving what was at the time a novel use of animation to visualize classical music, through dance and the visual arts, and featuring animated humans and non-humans in motion. The film brought ballet and orchestral music into the world of animation for the enjoyment of the entire family. It effectively represented the democratization of dance appreciation in that the images in *Fantasia* introduced "a host of associations, ideas, and references to music that bring new meanings to Bach and Beethoven."[582] The film went far beyond any kind of dance on stage, in that it created animated screendance sequences impossible

[580] Gabler, J., "How Disney turned Tchaikovsky's 'Nutcracker' into a ballet of the season," https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2015/03/30/fantasia-nutcracker, para. 1.
[581] Guy, "Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators," 27.
[582] Mark Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music," *American Music* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 97.

for humans to execute in person. Leopold Stokowski arranged the music for this film, and the Philadelphia Orchestra performed it, with the narrator, Deems Taylor, introducing each of the songs. So innovative was the technology used for *Fantasia* that only thirteen theatres in the United States had sound systems able to present it, given that the loudspeakers – each issuing a different set of sounds – had to be reconfigured for the production. This surround sound technology was called "Fantasound." It represented a major advancement in synchronized sound, including nine optical recorders with eight music tracks and a click track for the animation. This technology allowed the sound from individual instruments to be isolated in different speakers, giving the audience the impression that they were experiencing the sound from a live orchestra. In the end, Fantasound proved to be a technical dead end; it was only ever used for *Fantasia*.

The artistic achievement had a longer lasting impact. At the time of its release, *Fantasia* was hailed as a new kind of art form, with music and motion operating together as a novel form of artistic expression. The film brings a "chemistry of sound and image, especially with regards to how audiovisual alignment can articulate form…and how musical rhetoric and image fuse to create meaning."[583] The result has been called the "imagineering of music,"[584] where technology, creativity, engineering, and imagination were unleashed in a way that allows spectators to "see" music and "hear" pictures – in a word, synesthesia, or the activation of multiple senses within a single experience. The film brought synchronicity of sound and animation together to create a "rich network of interconnections between motion and phrase, design and motif, music and narrative [demonstrating] a new level of integration."[585]

[583] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 92.
[584] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 96.
[585] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 98.

Disney's groundbreaking idea for *Fantasia* was to use classical music to inspire the artists to animate more or less as they pleased, with, I am sure, much oversight by Disney himself, given his characteristic desire for artistic control. The work is framed by nine classical musical segments, and animators were challenged to match the music to movement and to tell a series of stories with choreographic compositional intention. The resulting collection of narratives ranged from depictions of mythology and fantasy all the way to abstraction, with settings that included the prehistoric, supernatural, and sacred. Like other screendance works discussed in this section, the collection also touched on social themes and issues such as racism and the stereotyping of the other.

The imagery for three songs, in particular, featured screendance movement with a focus on ballet: "The Nutcracker Suite," The Rite of Spring," and the "Dance of the Hours [*La Gioconda*]. "The Nutcracker Suite," written by Piotr Ilich Tchaikovsky and played in six parts[586] with flutes, horns, and strings, represented the progression of the seasons from summer to autumn and from autumn to winter. Each of the six parts represents a particular part of the natural world, with dance – that is, movement to music – by non-human things, living and non-living: leaves, flowers, spiderwebs, snowflakes, and even fairies, in a personified depiction of the changing seasons.

[586] Each of the six parts was an animated dance sequence: "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies," "The Chinese Dance," Dance of the Reed Flutes," "The Arabian Dance," "Russian Dance," and "Waltz of the Flower."

The second balletic screendance sequence is performed to the music of "The Rite of Spring" and, at 23 minutes, it is the longest musical number in *Fantasia.* The movement plays out against a sensuous score composed by Igor Stravinsky and pulling together the sounds of strings, flutes, and trumpets. The dance depicts evolution, beginning with a long zoom in on the earth from millions of miles away, outside the galaxy, and arriving finally on the Earth's surface. A narrator, after describing the splitting of single-celled life in the early seas, falls silent. The dance proceeds with the emergence of animal life on land and the rise of the dinosaurs and their ultimate demise, against a background of moving waves, a pulsating sun, and volcanic eruptions, and storms. In the end, a new creature walks up the bank of a body of water. A human being has emerged, and evolution has been illustrated in animated form through music and dance.

Figure 19: "The Rite of Spring," *Fantasia* (1940)

Source: https://thelegacyofjohnwilliams.com/2020/02/03/williamsweek-2020-day-1/

"Dance of the Hours" is the third balletic screendance sequence in *Fantasia*, with music from Act III, Scene 2 of the opera, "La Gioconda" (1876), written by Amilcare Ponchielli. The score is both playful and ominous, with strings, flutes, and brass instruments. The music traces the succession of hours between morning and night, with various animated species dancing in a comic parody of the art, each representing a different time of day: (1) morning is represented by dancing ostriches; (2) mid-day by dancing hippopotami; (3) dusk by dancing elephants; and (4)

night by dancing alligators in a sequence that culminates in the comic wooing of the portly hippo by the sinister alligator. The fifth segment is the finale, bringing all the animals together at the "end of the day."

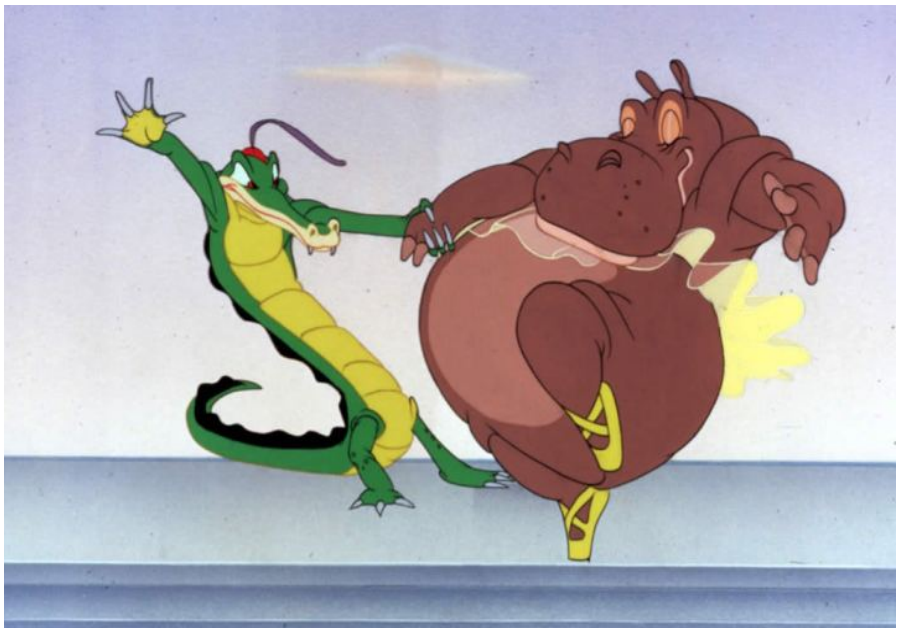

Figure 20: "Dance of the Hours," *Fantasia* (1940)

Source: https://entertainment.time.com/2010/12/03/top-10-movie-dance-scenes/slide/the-dance-of-the-hours-in-fantasia/

Fantasia was created with lofty social aspirations. Disney and Stokowski saw this film "as a vehicle to improve modern life"[587] through the "ideological imagineering of classical music."[588] They set out to use moving images and dance to open a doorway into classical music for those to whom such music was previously inaccessible. They brilliantly succeeded in their task, as new, middle-class audiences were introduced to classical music and enjoyed it through images they could understand and to which they could relate and respond. The film explicitly "appealed to middlebrow culture" as it set out "to nurture a middle-class American culture by making classical music accessible."[589]

Disney and Stokowski achieved their central goal, but not without criticism. Many controversies have since arisen as to how the social and cultural issues and themes were interpreted in the film in relation to evolution, race, gender, and class. "The Rite of Spring,"

[587] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 98.
[588] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 98.
[589] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 97.

focusing on the depiction of biological evolution, supported Charles Darwin's controversial theory long before the "laws forbidding the teaching of evolution"[590] were declared unconstitutional in the United States in 1968. Many critics from the religious right took offense, declaring that Disney had hijacked the music of Stravinsky to teach elementary science to the detriment of creationists who had an alternate view of nature. Negative depictions of races and cultures also featured in at least one of the screendance numbers in this film. "The Chinese Dance" stereotypes the way Chinese people look – with slanted eyes – and the way they move, suggesting "otherness" and promoting orientalism (i.e., implying a negative perception of Eastern cultures). There is also an element of social stereotyping: the conical sunhats depict labourers who work in rice paddies, and they move in a bowing pattern that suggests servility, as in the Chinese servants or slaves commonly represented in photographs and film in the early- to mid-20th century. None of this was seen as problematic in 1940, when the film was made. The way these images were treated reflected the social and cultural biases of the animators and attitudes that were common at the time of the film's creation. In an industry that was, and is, dominated by white males, this film successfully captured the ideological position of white culture in a particular time and place. Given that these issues continue to confront and challenge us today, the film has value not just as a technical and artistic triumph, but also as a living portrayal of mainstream representations of social and cultural life in the United States in the 1930s and '40s. In light of concerns about representation today, the streaming platform Disney Plus, which currently offers this and other legacy films for viewing, has added a content warning label to several of its movies, including *Fantasia*, which states,

[590] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music," 98.

> This program includes negative depictions and/or mistreatment of people or cultures. These stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together. Disney is committed to creating stories with inspirational and aspirational themes that reflect the rich diversity of the human experience around the globe.[591]

Such controversies aside, *Fantasia* represented an important step forward in the evolution of screendance. Notably, it led directly to the inclusion of more screendance elements in popular animated entertainment, which is something that continues in contemporary animated screendance feature films, such as *Happy Feet.*

In the late 20th century, there was a decline in the popularity of musicals. However, they have seen something of a rebirth in the first decades of the 21th century, for instance, with the rise in popularity of the television franchise, *Step Up (2006-2019)* and the release of Damien Chazelle's screendance success, *La La Land* (2016). The *Step Up* franchise consisted of six films featuring street dance battles, with a focus on hip-hop dance styles, which had wide appeal to youth and brought spectacle back to popular screendance programming. *La La Land* did the same for film with Mandy Moore's nostalgic choreography bringing a return to the Golden Age of the Hollywood musical. The huge commercial potential of screendance films is exemplified by *La La Land*, which was made with a budget of $30 million and grossed over $440 million globally.

[591] Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music:" 98.

This screendance revival, which began with *La La Land* and is continuing in the third decade of the 21st century, has been driven largely by nostalgia, captivating storylines, the involvement of well-known actors, and the broad appeal of technologically mediated dance and song numbers. It has also been energized, however, by such factors as favourable cost of production, innovative marketing, and new awards recognition for the genre. The revival has continued with the recent release of a number of very successful films, such as *Barbie* (Greta Gerwig, 2023), *The Color Purple* (2023), *Mean Girls* (2024), and *Wicked: Part 1* (2024), each of which includes screendance elements. Directors and their funders are risking the inclusion of screendance elements both as entertainment in their films and as part of the narrative arc, and that risk appears to be paying off.

Even with these examples of success, criticism of the art form persists on many of the same bases – a lack of social importance and racial misrepresentation. Many have criticised *Step Up* for not addressing the socio-economic struggles of the communities where hip-hop originated. They have also complained that *La La Land* (2016) highlights white values and aesthetics over those of the multicultural communities where jazz and swing have their roots.

Figure 21: *Cats* (2019)

Source: https://slate.com/culture/2019/12/cats-movie-review-musical-adaptation-taylor-swift.html

Interestingly, a number of very successful Broadway shows have had mixed success when made into commercial films. One film that was panned after a years-long successful theatrical run on Broadway is *Cats* (Tom Hopper, 2019). This is also an example of a feature-length screendance film that, though it was a box office failure, has since

developed its own cult following. Dance forms part of almost every scene in *Cats,* serving the narrative arc of the film, and thus making it an excellent example of a screendance feature-length film. Based on a poetry collection, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot (1939), the story is a simple one – a feline talent show in the West End of 1930s London, where the ultimate prize is a trip to the afterlife. The lyrics were adapted from Eliot's playful poems about cats, loosely woven together into a narrative for the 1981 stage production by Andrew Lloyd Webber. After years of success in London and New York, the show inspired a film version.[592] Hooper, in the hope of equaling his earlier success with *Les Misérables* (2012), put together an all-star cast of well-known actors, singers, and dancers (James Corden, Judi Dench, Jennifer Hudson, Taylor Swift, Rebel Wilson, Francesca Hayward, Jason Derulo, Idris Elba, and Ian McKellen, among others). Universal Pictures produced the film, and Andy Blankenbuehler choreographed the dances, with only one addition to the original Lloyd Webber score – "Beautiful Ghost," written by Lloyd Webber and Taylor Swift.

The choreographic compositional intention was a simple one – to present the original Broadway play, as originally choreographed, on film in a way that would engage and satisfy those who knew and loved the original, at the same time winning new admirers for the work. This was no mean task. It is never easy to move a well-loved production from the proscenium stage to the screen. Even though the film medium offered the creative team opportunities to create effects that would be impossible onstage, the film version of *Cats* struggled to compete with the stage version, with every deviation being decried by those who had experienced both. For instance, Hooper chose to use hushed vocals in the film – except, notably, when Jennifer

[592] The film ran in London for 21 years and on Broadway in New York for 18 years. It grossed billions of dollars and won seven Tony awards.

Hudson sings "Memory." It was a decision that left the audience with confused expectations, and it disappointed, in particular, those familiar with the stage production. Those who were new to the story were equally dissatisfied.

The plot – such as it is – traces the plight of Victoria, a young, white cat abandoned on the streets of London and rescued by a group of alley cats, who call themselves "the Jellicles." The Jellicles are preparing for the Jellicle Ball, where the ultimate goal of each of the competitors is to be chosen to go to the Heaviside Layer (Heaven), "where the chosen cat moves on to the next of their (presumably) nine lives."[593] The competitors set out to sing and dance their way to the top, literally. Problematically, racial bias in this film is "embodied in the representation of the cats on screen,"[594] as black actors portray marginalized characters. Actors (e.g., Idris Elba and Grizabella) "who are visibly black, are cast and costumed as the criminal and the outcast, while saviour and ingenue characters are made explicitly white."[595] Francesca Hayward – who plays Victoria – is of dual heritage, but her "skin tone [is] concealed by digital whitewashing."[596]

Critics and audiences alike panned the film version of *Cats*, though it did win numerous competitions – albeit as the "worst movie of the year." It "quickly became a must-see-so-bad-it's-hilarious for many viewers."[597] In commercial terms, it was a disaster, and the net loss for the film was estimated at more than US$71 million.[598] The bewildering fact is that this

[593] Sheila O'Malley, "Cats," December 19, 2019. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/cats-movie-review-2019, 3.
[594] Jennifer Daniel, "Cats: a box office bomb, but has anyone noticed the ethnic stereotyping," *The Conversation*, January 17, 2020: 1.
[595] Daniel, "Cats: a box office bomb," 3.
[596] Daniel, "Cats: a box office bomb," 3.
[597] Kayleigh Donaldson, "Why the Cats Move is so Bad," *Rant* January 15, 2020. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://screenrant.com/cats-movie-bad-reasons-cgi-songs, 2.
[598] Donaldson, "Why the Cats Move is so Bad," 2.

anthropomorphic fantasy, with its simple story and an emphasis on music and dance as narrative tools, succeeded on stage and failed as a film. Part of the problem may have been production problems that marred the film's launch. A rushed release meant that many errors in the CGI of the movement and in the dances went uncorrected. Human hands appeared where they should not have, faces floated away from bodies in unnatural ways, and the outline of "faces where ears have been CGI'd out"[599] created an unsettling mix of CGI with live action. The film was re-released a few days later with some improved visual effects, but it was perhaps too late for the critics.

The expectations of tried-and-true film audiences was also problematic. Used to fast moving action, they may not have been ready for a slower-paced musical with a film language consisting of screendance elements rather than dialogue and non-stop action scenes. Or maybe, given that "the Eliot estate" prevented the producers from making major changes to the poetry,[600] the storyline was too simple for a film audience used to narrative complexity and sophisticated plot twists. Or it could be that the work that film producers did to create realism and to flesh out the fantasy separated it too much from the more successful stage version, at the same time failing to win over the filmgoers.

The film did have virtues, however. In terms of choreography, the film broke new ground and gave us a prime example of what motion capture and CGI in screendance numbers can do to turn well-known actors into dancing and singing cats, where the cat costumes "enhance the suppleness of the dancers and the fluidity of the choreography."[601] In the drive to embody cats

[599] Donaldson, "Why the Cats Movie is so Bad," 4.
[600] Donaldson, "Why the Cats Movie is so Bad," 3.
[601] Sandra Hall, "It's being panned across the globe but is Cats really that bad,?" *The Sydney Morning Hearld,* December 24, 2019. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/movies/it-s-being-panned-across-the-globe-but-is-cats-really-that-bad-20191223-p53mev.html, 1.

authentically, the actors actually attended "cat school," where they learned how to move and hiss like cats. Technology did the rest, but not always well. Moving ears, whiskers, tails, and fur were added in post-production, while, at the same time, certain human characteristics were removed or distorted in pursuit of the inoffensive "U" rating. Viewers found this disconcerting,[602] and an uncomfortably erotic element remained that may not be appropriate to the "unregulated" film category. The use of technology to alter images of the human body has recently been described as "uncanny valley," which is "the slightly creepy effect created by use of technology to alter images."[603] The "digital fur technology," trying to make the actors truly represent cats, may have restricted dance movement. It may also have unnerved audience members, as they wondered, "Why does a cat have human feet and how can they go up en-pointe without shoes?"[604]

The film was arguably more appealing to filmgoers like myself, with a musical or dance background. However, I would argue that dance should and can be appealing to every audience, if fairly presented. In this case, however, the director lacked the courage of his convictions. As Sheila O'Malley writes:

> He spent so much time cutting around, changing angles, flying up to the ceiling, manipulating the images…[that the audience] is denied the sense of sustained movement, denied the simple pleasure of watching dancers dance…. There are only a couple of sustained shots in "Cats," and they stand out for the pleasure they bring. There is one moment where Hayward (Victoria), pirouettes in a large circle around the room, and the

[602] Daniel, "Cats: a box office bomb," 2.
[603] Daniel, "Cats: a box office bomb," 2.
[604] Donaldson, "Why the Cats Movie is so Bad," 4.

camera follows her, and it's a lyrical moment of graceful fluid movement. She's allowed to do the beautiful thing she knows how to do and we're privileged enough to watch.[605]

Certainly, motion capture allowed live-action actors and dancers to embody cats to considerable effect. However, the director largely squandered this appeal to audiences, in that he chose to film the dance sequences almost coyly. In most musicals in the past, the dancers were allowed to create the dance together, in real time, and the camera followed them with long takes. The effect has generally been one of sustained, unified movement. Unfortunately, Hooper did not trust the general audience to enjoy the dances for what they were, and he indulged in complex camera techniques intended essentially to disguise the fact that the viewers were watching dance.

To be fair, there were faults in production but there was also widespread refusal of the audience to accept the work. In order to succeed, this fantasy film needed not realism and clever camera work, but rather an audience prepared to suspend disbelief, to open itself to the narrative significance and spectacle of the music and dance, and to settle in for the musical ride. On the one hand, the director failed to deliver the dance honestly, despite the semi-realism of costumes and sets; on the other hand, critics and audiences generally failed to make the transition from stage to screen and to understand what the director and choreographer were trying to accomplish within the musical, screendance genre – and that is to tell a story through movement.

Despite its flaws, I loved the film version of *Cats* and appreciated the CGI, the choreography, the narrative, and the songs. In the end, however, these – the film's artistic successes – actually weighed against its popular acceptance. The fact that the film set was realistic and complete in every detail, and that the cats were much more authentically costumed

[605] O'Malley, "Cats," 3.

than the stage version, may have set up expectations of realism among filmgoers that the "cats" simply could not fulfil while its artistic strengths were actually downplayed. The challenge for future filmmakers is finding ways to pay due respect to screendance as an art form, at the same time translating that art into the language of popular film in terms of social relevance, plot, design, and pace that filmgoers have come to expect and appreciate. On the other hand, the use of innovative motion capture technology in *Cats* should motivate more choreographers and directors to tackle more digital dance challenges, as it allows each movement to be captured with unlimited editing possibilities in post-production. This movie, though it was not in itself a popular success, does point to opportunities in the future.

I believe that *Cats, w*ith almost every scene including song and dance, merits a place in the history of screendance and digital dance in the second decade of the 21st century. I also think that the film may yet come to be appreciated for its very real virtues – its commitment to telling a story through dance, its technical virtuosity, its commitment to authenticity, and its choreographic inventiveness. Like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975), *Cats* now enjoys sing-along screenings in various cities in North America, and small theatres continue to show it to local audiences.

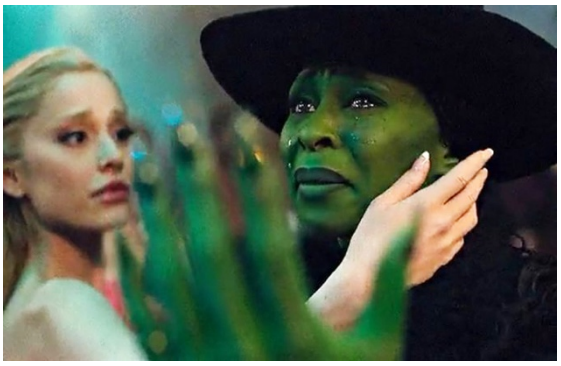

Figure 22: *Wicked: Part 1* (2024)

Source: https://img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/2024-12/2/20/asset/c91af8454e51/sub-buzz-19783-1733170094-1.jpg

The newly released film, *Wicked: Part 1* (2024) has had a very different trajectory, and it has proven to be a stunning commercial success. Produced by Universal Pictures, with a budget of $US320 million, and released in November 2024, the film had grossed more than $US681 million globally as of early January 2025. Based on the book by Gregory Maguire and adapted

from the long-running Broadway play, this film has generated a tremendous audience response and has done a lot to restore interest in screendance films. In this work, characters are embodied in each dance sequence with a rich evocation of emotions and relationships that enhances the narrative. The sets are large and dramatic, and lead actors themselves perform spectacular stunts while singing and dancing. As for the filming, it too contributes to effect. The panning of the camera, innovative camera angles, and meticulous editing create a mesmerizing sensory experience. The stage experience is effectively transformed into a grand-scale feature film, with Chu's decisions firmly based on choreographic compositional intention, particularly in developing the complex relationship between Elphaba and Glinda.

Wicked: Part 1 is also thematically significant. While the film deals with an array of personal issues – such as friendship, family, empathy, and personal growth – it also addresses social issues that have contemporary relevance, focusing on corrupt leadership, and diversity. The cast was diverse, including Marissa Bode, a person with disabilities who plays her part in a wheelchair. The discrimination against talking animals in the story plays into the themes of inclusivity and representation. *Wicked: Part 1* has been a success by any measure – commercial, artistic and technical. *Wicked: Part 2* (Joh M. Chu, 2025) is now in post-production, and the expectation is that, by drawing on the same artistic power, technological virtuosity and social relevance, it will be just as successful.

Dance is also playing a bigger role in action and sci-fi films, and, with growing public interest and positive response, more and more choreographed dance sequences are being integrated into commercial screendance films of this kind. One example is the *Matrix* triology (1999-2003), where martial arts choreography has been matched to dance movements to

underscore the kinesthetic connection between dance and physical combat. Such films powerfully highlight the cinematic potential of manipulated movement.

The role of choreographers in shaping film narratives has developed into a success factor for the industry, but this is not always recognized among filmmakers. The agency of a choreographer can be substantial – or not – depending upon the relationship with the director, the place that dance occupies within the director's vision, and how choreographic compositional intention operates in relation to the messages and themes underlying the film. Moreover, the demands of the studio, the producer, and the film editor can limit the contribution that dance makes to any given film, depending on studio priorities and a range of business-related constraints. There was a time when choreographers such as Bob Fosse and Gene Kelly, whose choreographic styles were central to their films' identities, wielded great influence over directors, studios, and editors. In more recent work, however, where the choreographer is forced to adapt an artistic vision to meet commercial demands or where dance sequences are significantly altered in post-production, choreographers may have little influence on the final product, The dynamic tension between artistic integrity and financial success has always been a limiting factor for everyone involved in commercial screendance film production, and it will continue to be so.

4.5.2 Funding Challenges

The funding of screendance films has always been a challenge, given the perception that screendance films have only niche appeal, while Hollywood prioritizes mass appeal and box office success. Many independent screendance films feature experimental technological approaches or controversial themes that may never receive wide distribution on legacy exhibition platforms. The producers of such niche products depend not on studio investment, but on grants from arts councils, crowdfunding, and private investment. When it comes to feature-length

screendance films, whether they be experimental or narrative, if innovative funding options are identified, they may help bridge the gap of underwriting films that are both works of art and that have mass, commercial appeal. This can be a risky proposition in purely business terms, although – as described here – some of the risk has clearly paid off.

The rewards of risk-taking can be enormous. The funding risks taken by Disney and his investors in the past laid a foundation for the future commercial success of animated films, many of which include screendance elements. Since then, the financial success of such legacy films has been enhanced through re-releases and remastering. As for the more contemporary success of *Happy Feet* (2006), it depended on financial support from Warner Brothers. The studio decision was carefully calculated, given that the film told a story with wide, family-friendly appeal, had a well-known cast of voice-over actors, and could draw on skilled technical teams from around the world to bring the best available technology to the production. The decision paid off. In the case of *Cats*, however, the results of the investment were catastrophic in financial terms.

The key to success in Hollywood has been always mass appeal, with commercial accomplishment lying in the identification of a product and style that will capture the interest of large numbers of people, either through a tried-and-true theme (such as romance) or direct appeal to a particular demographic (such as youth). As noted above, many screendance films, such as *La La Land* (2016) and *Wicked: Part 1* (2024), have gone on to exceptional commercial success, bringing nostalgia-driven aesthetics to the screen: nostalgia, it turns out, is a big seller. The *StepUp* franchise, which deployed modest budgets to feature contemporary, urban, and street dance styles with appeal to a mass audience among youth, was also successful. The *High School Musical* series (2006-2011) – four films, this time with a large production budget – targeted the same demographic with similar success. However, the *High School Musical* used familiarity as

an attention-grabber, and it linked its shows to well-known songs and actors. All of these films achieved financial success.

The backing of Hollywood, with a funding model that relies on box office predictions, has helped many films to reach the stratosphere through an appeal to mass interests and tastes. However, some more experimental or controversial projects also have achieved financial success. An example is *Pina* (Wim Wenders, 2011). European public arts organizations funded this 3D documentary, which, in the financial context of art cinema, went on to global box office success. Clearly, in areas where public arts funding is available and there is a good story to tell, the dichotomy between art and the box office can be erased to a degree. In this case, audiences in large numbers responded to the compelling story of choreographer Pina Bausch.

New distribution methods may also be changing the playing field in ways that privilege new kinds of popular film. Screendance films backed by streaming services such Netflix and Disney+ have already found success not in legacy cinemas, but in the home. This trend is likely to continue as the reach of these, and other platforms, expands. These services are often committed to funding high-budget, star-studded productions with broad audience appeal. *The Prom* (2020), discussed above, is an example, which not only attracted a wide home audience, but also brought attention to contemporary social issues around sexual identity and acceptance.

4.5.3 Advocacy and Representation

Screendance films, while delighting the senses, can also be effective vehicles for advocacy, social commentary, and representation (both in front and behind the camera). Dance in Hollywood films can certainly be entertaining, but the very pleasure that it engenders can make it an especially powerful tool for advocating social justice and amplifying marginalized voices. As

discussed above, films such as *Happy Feet* (2006) and *The Prom* (2020) show how screendance films can promote social change, diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental awareness and sustainability, despite critiques around authentic representation and cultural sensitivity. *Fantasia* (1940), by animating ballet and other dance styles, democratized dance appreciation. In *West Side Story* (1961 and 2021), the choreography depicts tensions between rival gangs, using dance movement as a kind of language mediated by cinematography and editing to create a backdrop of identity and violence against which a story of friendship and love unfolds.

The art form has proven its power even as it struggles with issues of under-representation. There are many flawed examples of screendance films that focus on specific cultural and ethnic representations and diversity, and yet actors from those cultures are under-represented in the product. Some examples of underrepresentation have been discussed in other parts of this dissertation, particularly where white actors have played characters from non-white cultures. A recent example is Joh M. Chu's 2021 film *In the Heights*. Based on the musical written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, the film has dance sequences highlighting Latinx culture (salsa and merengue) with only a token number of Afro-Latinx actors involved in the production.

If screendance is to fulfil its potential as a social vehicle, the challenge continues to be representing all voices and dance styles authentically. There are numerous scholarly opportunities here to explore and advocate for underrepresented dance styles, including those that are Indigenous, unique, and multicultural, and to press for appropriate representation.

4.5.4 Popular Culture

Hollywood screendance films have certainly influenced popular culture, particularly when it comes to how dance is appreciated and shared, and that is likely to continue. Often,

screendance films have triggered new trends in dance, music, and fashion. Films such as *Grease* (1978), *Grease 2* (1982), and *Dirty Dancing* (1987), for instance, inspired global dance and fashion fads and influenced pop culture with their iconic choreography. The dancing of Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey in *Dirty Dancing* (1987), and especially those spectacular lifts, has been recreated and referenced in many films since, including on social media platforms where the choreography came to symbolize rebellion, romance, and the transition from youth to young adulthood. As noted above, the *Step Up* franchise generated new interest in urban and street dance and influenced the way youth engaged with dance beyond the screen.

Changes to popular culture go well beyond the adoption of new dances and fashions, however. Screendance has proven its capacity to promote cross-cultural understanding and exchange through movement and storytelling. For instance, Bollywood has made its presence known in Hollywood screendance films. *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2008) and *Bride and Prejudice* (Gurinder Chadha, 2004), in particular, have influenced certain Hollywood films that feature a combination of Western and South Asian screendance aesthetics and choreographic style, all of which contributes to the artistic power of the art form. Those films have also acted as a uniquely compelling doorway into the experience of the "other" (defined from a white mainstream North American perspective).

Feature-length screendance films have also changed how we access culture. Historically, animated films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Fantasia* (1940) introduced young audiences to dance, and helped to create audiences for the art form, just as *Happy Feet* (2006) has done today. Such films have made animated screendance both accessible and engaging.

Screendance films have always had niche audience appeal, and that is expected to remain true in the future; however, it is entirely possible that technology will allow the "niche" to grow larger. The introduction of digital social media platforms, such as TikTok and its successors, where anyone can post screendance creations to achieve global reach, is expanding access to screendance at a viral level. In particular, the meme value of screendance on social media is attracting and sustaining interest in a younger demographic. Streaming services, such as Netflix and Disney+, are democratizing screendance films, to those who can afford these services, and delivering them to people worldwide who might not otherwise have access to live performance or legacy cinematic screenings.

Films such as *Wicked: Part I* (2024) have shown us that screendance will not necessarily be limited to "niche" distribution. *Wicked: Part I* had a lot going for it, including spectacular dances, aesthetics, musicality, stunts, and scenes. It was marketed as one of major cultural events of the year, and a far-reaching social media marketing campaign generated a great deal of public interest. So did opening nights around the world attended, in person, by many in the star-studded cast (notably, Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo). The success of this film demonstrates what success might look like in the future, and how it is to be achieved, as screendance pushes to become a more significant component of popular culture.

4.5 Conclusion

Even in Hollywood and the area of feature-length films, the discussion goes back to definition. Scholars, in order to analyze the character of screendance, its contribution to the art of filmmaking, and its role in the creation of commercially viable films, need to continue to have a healthy debate on what is screendance and what is not. Critics, especially those attempting to place screendance within the larger context of feature-length narrative film creation, are not

alone in seeking a clearer sense of where this art form fits into products that are essentially narrative in form. Funding agencies, whose attention is crucial if the discipline is to flourish, also need a well-defined category against which to evaluate applications for support. Festival curators, who play a huge role in audience creation, also need standards to evaluate applications. In the end, however, it all comes down to audiences. Film-goers are the basis of commercial success and, if they are to grow, they need to recognize, appreciate, and anticipate opportunities to enjoy screendance. Put very simply, screendance needs to be better known in order to grow in popularity. More critical attention will help to make the form better known. As for significance, the inclusion of underrepresented dancers and dance styles may generate new attention and help to build new audiences globally.

In this section of the dissertation, I have highlighted the role that Hollywood has played, and continues to play, in the evolution of this art form and the creation of audiences. In Hollywood screendance films, as in any other category of media dance, meaning is enacted or articulated through technologically mediated dance. It follows that dance must be a dominant language of communication even as the work addresses social, cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, economic, religious, environmental, and other themes and issues. As in other areas of the discipline, there must be deliberate choreographic compositional intent. This rules out accidental movement in favour of a choreographer with a deliberate artistic purpose in mind, even if aspects of improvision are included within the creative vision. Screendance has a lot to offer the craft of filmmaking, even in the Hollywood context, and in feature film musicals, as it exploits a range of creative technologies to translate movement to the screen. Screendance is anything but a passive art form. It has contributed many creative and technological improvements and innovations to the film industry, and that is something that is likely to continue.

Certainly, there are challenges facing filmmakers who hope to produce more screendance through the Hollywood system and to generate more commercially successful screendance films. These challenges include funding constraints and the ever-present tension between art and commerce, as well as the potentially flattening influence of popular culture and the hammering of thematic critiques. The recent successes of several feature-length screendance films certainly gives room for optimism. As the genre adapts to new technological realities and seizes on new on technological opportunities, the genre may continue to build audiences for technologically mediated dance movement. As new streaming and social media platforms attract new viewers, popular culture's engagement with dance could grow, and possibly at exponential rates. In the end, however, we must follow the money. Only for as long as dance continues to command or to build mass audience appeal, Hollywood will continue to add new stories and to write new chapters in the long legacy of screendance films.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Media Dance in a Post-COVID-19 Pandemic World

Screendance has a long and notable history of development at the intersection of dance (the art) and film (the medium). What was stunningly new about this art form in the early 20th century was the way in which the choreographer and/or director came to share creative authorship with the cinematographer, the film editor, and, indeed, with the camera itself. The filmmaker engaging with screendance had to move into foreign territory to embrace the possibilities of movement and dance in space and time; the choreographer, on the other hand, had to look beyond the proscenium arch and to embrace the possibilities of cinema as a means to create new kinds of work through the capture of movement on film and the power of editing and post-production. Screendance, operating at the intersection of art, technologies, and bodies in motion, is an art form with a continuing upward trajectory in the 21st century. The evolution of new technologies and new means for exhibition and distribution offers endless opportunities for creative expression through the collaboration of filmmakers, cinematographers, choreographers, dancers, and editors for this art form.

For much of the 20th century, screendance was quite simply perceived as "filmed dance" or "dance film." With the dawn of the expansion of the digital era in the opening decades of a new millennium, that definition needs to change. We have arrived at a new inflection point, in that today we live with a range of boundary-breaking technologies and methods of exhibition and distribution. For creators, film is no longer the necessary medium of screendance; for viewers, moving images are not limited to only two-dimensional screens. More than ever, given the pace and scale of change today, we need to question the comfortable old definitions we have inherited from the past. Certainly, there is still a measure of agreement about the meaning of "dance": that

is, bodies – although not necessarily human bodies – set in motion according to an intentional or improvisational choreographic scheme to express artistic meaning. Screendance has long been recognized as something different from dance, however, with artistic potential that transcends what bodies can achieve in live performance. Some decades ago, the artistic languages of dance combined with the technical language of film to create a new art form, which many scholars and practitioners proposed to call "screendance." A much-used term among scholars, funders, and film festival organizers, "screendance" has been adopted both to describe an art form and for use as an umbrella term for many different kinds of dance film. Now, however, with a new and evolving technical language in the digital age, that film-based art form is once again transforming into something new, which – given the diversity of technologies and viewing mechanisms available to us now and in the future – I propose to replace "screendance" as the umbrella category with the term "media dance," which worthily encompasses the past, present, and future of technologically mediated dance.

Within the new proposed taxonomic structure, screendance (with or without human bodies in motion) becomes a sub-category of media dance, with screendance works being subject to analysis according to the "choreographic compositional intent" of the creator, choreographer, and/or director. In the meantime, scholars and practitioners – who may or may not choose to adopt the newly proposed taxonomy – are challenged to ensure that the meaning assigned to whatever terms they are using to describe this field are clearly defined and conveyed in the academic literature, in teaching, particularly at institutions of higher learning, in the criteria for film selection and curation at film festivals, and as part of the discussion related to new media technologies and the future of technologically mediated dance.

With “media dance” operating as a new master category, there are a number of sub-categories alongside screendance, including the very rich field of “Digital Dance” (e.g., virtual reality, motion capture, hyperchoreography, holography, and so on), as well as films that might be described as “musicals” under the sub-category of “Feature Film Musical.” Not every feature-length film that features dance can be properly identified as screendance. There are some exceptions, however, where an overwhelming majority of the film involves dance, where dance dominates as a means of communication, and where most scenes are linked to a score and often an accompanying song. These are true screendance films under the new classification scheme as proposed in this dissertation. Most feature-length narratives, however, lack a robust collection of “screendance numbers” and belong not to screendance but to the Feature Film Musical sub-category, where there has been a recent resurgence of feature films incorporating dance sequences into the narratives. With the recent box office success of films such as the screendance feature-film *Wicked:Part I* (Jon M. Chu, 2024) (where dance dominates as the narrative language), and films, with screendance elements, such as *Barbie* (Gerta Gerwig, 2023) and *The Color Purple* (Blitz Bazawule, 2023), more directors may consider including dance in their films to enhance their entertainment value while appealing to a broad range of audiences and demographics.

As for “screendance” itself, a huge diversity of works can be built into the definition as long as the work includes bodies in motion, either human or non-human. Screendance also may address social, racial, religious, and cultural themes where meaning is enacted or articulated with deliberate choreographic compositional intention. Screendance films can be long or short, just a few minutes in duration to feature-length movies, and they may include animation and improvisation, as long as they predominately use dance to tell the story or present an abstract

vision. They may be narrative in character or operate as short, visual poems, using experimental techniques and innovative imagery to deliver meaning through human or non-human movement. They may include able-bodied or non-able-bodied dancers filmed in a diversity of locations and from multiple perspectives. There are only two criteria: one, the predominance of dance in the work with the screen (of any kind), as its endpoint for presentation, exhibition, or distribution; and two, the presence of choreographic compositional intention, whether a narrative is featured or not, with the choreography embodied in the dancer or dancers being recorporealized into cinematic space.

The screendance sub-category remains the subject of controversy today, notably with regard to pioneers of the art form. It is time, however, to accept the diverse and complex origin of screendance and to abandon arguments about what artist created the form. This dissertation proposes that screendance is best seen as a hybrid, incorporating aspects of both cinematographic spectacle and choreographic experimentation. As such, Loïe Fuller and Maya Deren deserve equal standing in the history of screendance, with the former doing much to develop screendance as "spectacle," while the latter focused on creating a vehicle for experimental, avant-garde, and narrative and non-narrative approaches to filmed dance. Both artists identified new artistic and technological opportunities at the intersection of film and dance, and both laid the groundwork for creative directions undreamed of in their times (1862-1928 and 1917-1961, respectively). Creative artists today continue to reap the benefits of their work and to build upon it.

From an institutional perspective at the university or college level, the scholarly study of screendance should take advantage of its interdisciplinarity by seeking an institutional home in an interdisciplinary arts or performance program or department with a future focus not only on scholarly pursuits, but also on exploring academic questions through interdisciplinary research-

creation studies. As institutions of higher learning and research funding agencies move increasingly to accept research-creation projects as a legitimate inclusion in scholarly study, both for academic exploration and artistic expression, screendance studies are the perfect field for experimentation with new curricular, research, and governance structures.

Nowhere to date has screendance been recognized as its own discipline in terms of codifying and organizing thought around the art form into a unique institutional entity. Today, the trend to interdisciplinarity may offer a solution. From the beginning, screendance as an art form, has challenged stereotypical, heteronormative gender roles while addressing a wide range of other social, political, racial, religious, and theoretical questions as well. Nevertheless, from a scholarship perspective, the field has so far been dominated by dance scholars. It is time for scholars from other fields to challenge assumptions, to bring expertise from other disciplines to bear, to apply new kinds of critical analysis, and to examine the issues raised through a variety of interdisciplinary lenses. Film scholars have much to offer, as do those from the cultural and communication disciplines, and those who focus on social justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity. By categorizing screendance as an interdisciplinary field in its own right, rather than as a sub-category of film or dance, the subject, over time, will develop its own critical scholastic base, along with a shared language of discourse and its own pedagogy and curriculum. A positive result might be catching the attention of funding agencies that can make more resources available for research and, indeed – given that many scholars have begun as practitioners and in light of a trend towards skills-based learning in today's institutions of higher learning – this may give rise to more funding for research-creation as part of academic pursuits and critical inquiry. This trend may not help the practitioner not associated with an academic institution access

funding for their individual projects, but may help to fund works, within academic institutions, created based on questions related to academic inquiry.

There are many areas of academic pursuit in this field yet to be explored from analysis of individual screendance works and audience reception, to the politics of representation and cross-cultural perspectives, to how media dance works are being created and used to analyse social and popular culture issues related to identity, social justice, racism, climate change, ageism, to name a few. In my own research future, I can see tackling these issues with a focus on combining questions of critical inquiry with research-creation to develop theories and explore questions with cultural significance.

There is another factor that has very recently sparked evolution within the art form, and that is the global pandemic of 2020-2023 (COVID-19). With live performance temporarily suspended around the world, artists turned to technology for alternatives. The pandemic provided "at home" time for many to be more creative in the conception of their works and in how to present them. Scholars, deprived of face-to-face classes, meetings, and conferences, also looked for new ways to keep their research alive. The answer lay in online technology. Just as individuals used communications technologies to salvage something of social interaction during the pandemic, screendance artists and scholars began using technology in more inventive, innovative, and creative ways in their own works, in collaborative works with others, and to disseminate and examine new work. Multi-team approaches that emerged during the pandemic depended, for instance, on platforms such as DropBox or Zoom for the sharing of work. That effort has had some permanent effects down the line. Technologies not widely used for screendance in the pre-pandemic world – cell phones, for example, and free editing packages – are now commonly used to create screendance works. Film festivals are now being live-streamed

and archived for asynchronous viewing using email or on Zoom, Instagram, Vimeo, Facebook, and YouTube. Online festivals are also becoming more common and accepted, even as in-person or hybrid events return in the post-pandemic period, along with personal collaboration and face-to-face meetings, training, and workshops. Some social media sites, such as TikTok, were virtually dedicated to the dissemination of screendance works that emerged during the pandemic. Thus, the pandemic has not only boosted interest in screendance; it has forced practitioners and scholars to seize new opportunities for the development, exhibition, and distribution of the art form. As a result of the pandemic, digital dance works were added to the massive amount of accessible content available online throughout the world. Certain platforms, never considered for the development or dissemination of screendance before the pandemic, may actually help to shape the future of this art form.

As for technology, it has taken dance into new areas, including amateur videos mounted on social media, reality television, and video games, all of which attract and appeal to a new and younger demographic. For choreographers, directors, and dancers as much as for viewers, it is a brave new world, and a new canon of exciting, surprising, and powerful work is emerging.

Social media is playing a huge part in expanding the reach of screendance and digital dance works. Social media platforms also allow another kind of social monetization to take place, as screendance works are increasingly leveraged for social advancement. New screendance works appear almost daily on social media with the groups requesting funds to support education, health, and cultural, and social needs. This trend continues to swell as new groups follow the example of such trailblazers as Masaka Kids Africana.

Technologically mediated dance works are entering a new phase of innovation. Some new works are creating novel ethical and copyright conundrums, as in the use of AI. They are

also forcing us back into the old definitional debate about what is and what is not screendance. For instance, AI was used – in particular, "text-to-video" technology – to transform a dancer from the film, *Painted* (Duncan McDowall and Dorotea Saykaly, 2012) into a crow in the animated screendance film, *The Crow* (Duncan McDowall and Dorotea Saykaly, 2021), which won the Jury Award at the Cannes Short Film Festival in 2022. The creators, using text-to-video capability, described what they wanted for each frame, and AI responded by interpreting the dancer "as a painting of a crow in a desolated landscape."[606] Clearly, a whole new way of creating screendance and digital dance is on the horizon. Just as David Hinton's *The Birds* caused controversy at the 2016 Light Moves Festival of Screendance in Limerick, Ireland, screendance films like *The Crow* are rocking the screendance universe as scholars and practitioners contemplate whether AI-mediated works can truly be classified as screendance or digital dance. Is what we see in *The Crow* really screendance, they ask, or just a technologically mediated form of visual art? I have argued in this dissertation that such new technologies should be embraced, with appropriate categories being added for new kinds of screendance (media dance) products at film festivals and in juried film competitions, online and in-person. Where a work is acknowledged to have been created with AI or any other new technology, a new category should be created to give it a home. The only really important questions relate to choreographic compositional intention and deliberate curatorial decision-making. Audiences for this art form today are used to diversity, as they watch commercial, amateur, and DIY works on shared platforms such as Vimeo and YouTube, on social media, in video games, in popular culture, on streaming and network platforms, and at film festivals. If curatorial decisions are

[606] Scott Holstad, ""The Crow" AI Dance Film." Accessed October 1, 2023, https://hankrules2011.com/2022/11/15/the-crow-ai-dance-film/ .

made and explained in terms of choreographic compositional intention, perhaps with reference to themes or dance style, the confusion as to what is and what is not screendance will diminish.

With new interactive technologies giving rise to a multiplicity of new forms, and with new immersive exhibit spaces allowing us to appreciate those forms in new ways, opportunities to create media dance with broad audience appeal is clearly on the rise. Ironically, that upward trajectory is occurring at a moment when government funding sources are shutting down, with few programs now directly supporting screendance, and only a few grants for technical innovation continuing to be available. As a result, most new works – other than those produced by major studios – are being self- or group-financed today through crowd-funding sites and with support for the production but not for the artist/creator. With more innovative funding options, including but not limited to self-funding, and an increasing interest among post-secondary institutions in the arts, screendance (media dance) will have a more vibrant future in a post-pandemic, technologically mediated world.

Despite the challenges of funding, the production of technologically mediated dance works by amateur and professional choreographers and directors is demonstrably entering a new phase of creativity, innovation, and technological advancement. Works with broad audience appeal are being disseminated at legacy cinemas and through every form of alternate medium, including social media and streaming services. As demonstrated by the many examples of academic and artistic work presented in this dissertation, the creative space for media dance in Canada is growing, and, led by practitioners and scholars, film festival organizers are doing their bit to enlarge that space. As the number of one-off, annual, and biannual festivals focusing on media dance increases in Canada, media dance continues, not coincidentally, to experience a resurgence. With growing engagement among academics and practitioners and with more stable

funding, Canada will be able to take an ever more vigorous part in international discourse and to make its distinctive contribution to the world's rich canon of media dance works.

5.2 Adapting My Scholarly Research to My Research-Creation Practice

As noted in a number of sections in this dissertation, I have produced a number of original films with major dance numbers included in them as research-creation projects for a number of university courses. I classify three of these as screendance films or films with screendance elements: *Identity Crisis (ID)* (2015); *Happily Ever After* (2017); and *The Rainbow Ribbon* (2019). I made *ID* for a course assignment in film production at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Los Angeles. For this project, I served as director, cinematographer, editor, choreographer, and dancer. The compositional intention, as I visualized and designed the choreography for *ID,* was to represent a gender-fluid persona struggling with questions of identity and how to relate to the world. The dancer (myself) wears a nonbinary costume, has no clear gender association, and moves in silence in a contemporary jazz style. The 60-second film, shot in black and white using a 16-mm Bolex camera from a static position, depicts a person struggling to define sexual orientation, while fighting internal demons. The kinesthetic affects arise from the dance movements and from the expression of the dancer; these are designed to engage the emotions of the viewers as they enter into the internal struggle of the dancer trying to come to grips with issues of sexuality. This film was shot on a church stage at night, using artificial light, referencing the homophobic battles raging in many religious communities today. Who is welcome in a church and who is not? I made this film with a thorough understanding of my own

Figure 23: *Identity Crisis (ID)* (2015)

physicality. I understood the possibilities and limitations of filming with a 16-mm camera. I also had a comprehensive understanding of the power of editing to provoke the kinesthetic empathy for which I was striving. This film was entered into a number of film festivals in the United States and Canada and won Best Dance Choreography at the 2018 Oniros Film Awards in Italy. It was screened at the Cascadia Dance and Cinema Festival in Vancouver in 2019 and profiled in a "Chat with the Director" on the Screendance Forum Podcast in October 2020.

Figure 24: *Happily Ever After* (2017)

I made *Happily Ever After* (2017) – a five-minute satire of the modern-day musical centering on the age-old motif of the "love triangle" – as part of a graduate course at Ryerson University (now Toronto Metropolitan University). I wanted to experiment with telling a story through film using music, dance, and innovative cinematographic and sound design techniques. From a cinematic perspective, I wanted to use long takes and combine diegetic sound and non-diegetic sound, similar to the filming techniques and sound design used in the making of *La La Land* (2016). I found a filming venue in a house where one room flows into another, which allowed me to use a camera on a gimbal, to follow the dancer from one room to another, and to film in one continuous take. In effect, I became the dancing cinematographer, following the lead protagonist on her jazz dance journey through the house. The music was a mash-up of two songs: "Dear Future Husband" by Meghan Trainor and "Runaround Sue" by Dion DiMucci & The Belmonts. Although one of these songs is 50 years older than the other, they share a similar tempo (BPM) and were recorded in a similar style. In juxtaposition, they created an interesting connection

between two different eras in music history. The use of diegetic foley sounds enhanced the realism of the work, and operated in counterpoint to the narrative. A bird excretes onto the shoulder of the rejected lover as he leaves the house in a moment that is both tense and humorous. Kinesthetic empathy was created through the use of close-ups and editing strategies that positioned the viewers as effective voyeurs of the love triangle. As the film used copyrighted music, it was never entered into any film festivals, as in the background information for each of these festivals, it indicated that films with copyrighted music were ineligible for submission.

Figure 25: *The Rainbow Ribbon* (2019)

As part of a graduate dance and intermedial performance course at York University, I acted as producer, director, cinematographer, editor, sound mixer, and post-production specialist for a short, five-minute screendance film titled *The Rainbow Ribbon.* Working with the dancer, I choreographed the camera movement with the intention of drawing the audience into a cross-cultural experience using music, dance, and a long multi-coloured ribbon to represent the value and beauty of diversity and inclusivity. For me, the ribbon evoked the balloon used in the film, *The Red Balloon* (Albert Lamorisse, 1956), as I adopted it as a symbol of spirituality, friendship, love, transcendence, and the triumph of good over evil. The dancer who performed *The Rainbow Dance* came originally from China and is also a Tai Chi instructor, which contributed to the grace and simplicity of the choreography. The dance was performed to a recording of a Vietnamese song, *Ben Thuong Hai*, played on a stringed instrument (guzheng) that gives an eerie, melancholy sound. The ribbon moved to the rhythm of the song, as the

choreography referenced the majesty, power, and beauty of past Asian cultures. Through the setting and its association with stained glass in a modern, Christian, Canadian church, the dance also linked that ancient civilization to the modern West. The stained-glass windows in the church, also multi-coloured, were designed by the late Austrian artist, Eric Wesselow. To create them he used fragments of glass collected from churches in Europe that were bombed during the Second World War. The rainbow-coloured ribbon was filmed from a number of cameras located in different positions around the dancer to produce an effect that contrasted with the colours of the stained glass, but also worked in harmony with them. Their shared vibrancy conveyed both balance and diversity. The dance took place in the chancel of the church with the ribbon and the stained glass uniting to represent the desire for inclusivity regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. This screendance work highlights a social imperative to establish harmony among cultures. It also illustrates the power of dance to achieve the kinaesthetic affects of peace and tranquility. Again, because the music was copyrighted, this film was not entered into any film festivals, though it was shown as part of a class film festival at York University.

Based on my desire to combine my scholarly research with my creative practice, I have many technologically mediated dance projects in mind for the future. This dissertation has given me an opportunity to explore the literature, analyse case studies, interview many of the leading scholars, practitioners, and film festival curators in the field, and explore many of the critical questions facing this field today. My life as a screendance scholar and practitioner is just beginning. I look forward to seeing where this journey takes me.

Interviews

Bench, Harmony. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

Brannigan, Erin. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2022.

Bromberg, Ellen. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

Calvert, Tom. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2019.

Choi, Sarah. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Dodds, Sherril. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

Djemil-Matassov, Elias. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Faller, Greg. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

Faller, Greg. Email exchange with George Turnbull, October 18, 2021.

Guy, Priscilla. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Kaeja, Allan. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Kaeja, Karen. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Kappenberg, Claudia. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2022.

Olafson, Freya. Interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Pruska-Oldenhof, Izabella. Interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Rosenberg, Douglas. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2021.

Smith, Kathleen. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Szporer, Philip. Telephone interview by George Turnbull, Toronto, 2018.

Bibliography

ADF's Movies by Movers, 2018. Accessed November 4, 2018. https://filmfreeway.com/Moviesbymovers.

Aitken, Ian. "European Film Scholarship." *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies*, 25-53. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008.

Albright, Ann Cooper. "Resurrecting the Future: Body, Image, and Technology in the Work of Loïe Fuller." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 715-730. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Albright, Ann Cooper. "Strategic abilities: Negotiating the disabled body in dance," In *Moving history/dancing cultures: A dance history reader*, edited by A. Dills and Ann Albright Cooper, 56-66. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

Allison, Tanine. "Blackface, *Happy Feet*: The Politics of Race in Motion Capture and Animation." In *Special Effects: New Histories, Theories, Contexts,* edited by Dan North, Bob Rehak, and Michael Duffy. London: BFI/Palgrave, 2015.

Alston, Adam. *Beyond Immersive Theatre.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

American Civil Liberties Union, McMillen V. Itawamba Country School District. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://www.aclu.org/cases/fulton-ms-prom-discrimination#.

Arendell, Telroy D., and Ruth Barnes, eds. *Dance's Duet with the Camera: Motion Pictures.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Bacon, Jane, and Vida Midgelow. "Articulating Choreographic Practices, Locating the Field: An Introduction." *Choreographic Practices* 1 (2010): 3-19.

Barker, Martin. "I have seen the future and it is not here yet…; or, on being ambitious for audience research." *Communication Review* 9, no. 2 (2006): 123-141.

Barrett, Estelle and Barbara Bolt. *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry.* London: L. B. Tauris, 2010.

Bazin, André. "Ontology of the Photographic Image." In *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, edited and translated by Hugh Gray. Berkeley: University of California, 1967.

Behrndt, Synne. "Dance, Dramaturgy and Dramaturgical Thinking," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20, no. 2 (2010): 185-196.

Bench, Harmony. "Hyperdance: Dance Onscreen, Dance Online or, What Difference Does the Medium Make?" In *Screendance: The State of the Art Proceedings, American Dance Festival*, edited by Jessica Vokoun, 89-94. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Bench, Harmony. “Anti-Gravitational Choreographies: Strategies of Mobility in Screendance.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 1 (2010): 53-61.

Bench, Harmony. “Dance on Camera 45.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 8, no. 1 (2017): 159-164.

Bench, Harmony. “Screendance.” In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies,* edited by Sherril Dodds, 219-244. London: Bloomsbury Academy, 2019.

Bench, Harmony. *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures, and the Common.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.

Benzon, William. “Walt Disney’s Fantasia: The Cosmos and the Mind in Two Hours.” SSRN Electronic Journal (November 2011). DOI:10.2139/ssrn.1966567.

Berardinelli, J “The Passion of Joan of Arc.” Accessed May 3, 2023. http://www.reelviews.net/.

Berman, A., and V. James. “Towards a Live Dance Improvisation Between an Avatar and a Human Dancer.” *Proceedings of the 2014 International Workshop on Movement and Computing,* 162-165. New York: ACM, 2014.

Biglan, Anthony. “The Characteristic of Subject Matter in Different Academic Areas.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 58 (1973): 195-203.

Birringer, Johannes. “Dance and Interactivity.” *Dance Research Journal* 36, no. 1 (2004): 88-111.

Blanco Borelli, Melissa, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Bochner, Arthur and Carolyn Ellis. “An Introduction to the Arts and Narrative Research: Art as Inquiry.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 9, no. 4 (2003): 506-514.

Boucher, Mark. “Virtual Dance and Motion-Capture.” *Contemporary Aesthetics* 9 (2011): 1-15.

Boucher, Marc. Screen Position and Proprioception.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014). http://screendancejournal.org/article/view/4520/3773.

Boulègue, Franck and Marisa Hayes, eds. *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Brakhage, Stan. *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking by Sam Brakhage*. New York: McPherson & Company, 1967.

Brannigan, Erin. *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Brannigan, Erin. "Yvonne Rainer's *Lives of Performers:* An 'Undisciplined' Encounter with the Avant-Garde." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 517-536. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Brussat, Frederick and Mary Ann. "Happy Feet." *Spirituality & Practice.* Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/16303/happyfeet.

Callahan, Mary. "Abanar Dance Company Presents Abe Abraham's Dance Film 'Salt Water'." *Dance Informa*, 14 (November 2017). Accessed May 23, 2023. https://www.danceinforma.com/2017/11/14/abanar-dance-company-presents-abe-abrahams-dance-film-salt-water/.

Calvert, Thomas. "Towards a Language for Human Movement." *Computers and the Humanities* 20, no. 2 (1986): 35-43.

Calvert, Thomas. "The Challenge of Human Figure Animation." *Graphics Interface '88 Proceedings*, 203-210. 1988.

Calvert, Thomas. "Choreographers as Animators: Systems to Support Composition of Dance." In *Interactive Computer Animation,* edited by Nadia Magnenat-Thalmann, and Daniel Thalmann, 100-126. Toronto: Prentice-Hall, 1996.

Calvert, Thomas and John Chapman. "Computer Assisted Notation of Human Movement." *Proceedings of the 1978 ACM Conference*, 731-736. 1978.

Calvert, Thomas, John Chapman, and A. Patla. "The Integration of Subjective and Objective Data in Animation of Human Movement." *Computer Graphics* 14, no. 3 (1980): 198-203.

Calvert, Thomas, John Chapman, and A. Patla. "Aspects of the Kinematic Simulation of Human Movement." *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications* 2 (1982): 41-50.

Calvert, Thomas, J. Landis, and John Chapman. "Notation of Dance with Computer Assistance." In *New Directions in Dance,* edited by D. Taplin, 169-178. Toronto: Pergamon Press, 1979.

Calvert, Thomas, Chris Welman, S. Gaudet, and C. Lee. "Composition of Multiple Figure Sequences for Dance and Animation." *New Advances in Computer Graphics* (1989): 245-255.

Calvert, Thomas, Armin Bruderlin, Sang Mah, and Thecla Schiphorst. "The Evolution of an Interface for Choreographers." *Proceedings of the INTERACT'93 and CHI'93 Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems,*115-122. 1993.

Calvert, Thomas, C. Lee, G. Ridsdale, S. Hewitt, and V. Tso. "The Interaction Composition of Scores for Dance." *Dance Notation Journal* (1986).

Calvert, Thomas, Chris Welman, S. Gaudet, Thecla Schiphorst, and C. Lee. "Composition of Multiple Figure Sequences for Dance and Animation." *The Visual Computer* 7, no. 2-3 (1991): 114-121.

Calvert, Thomas, Armin Bruderlin, John Dill, Thecla Schiphorst, and Chris Welman. "Desktop Animation of Multiple Human Figures." *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications* 13, no. 3 (1993): 18-26.

Carballido, Pauline Ruiz. "The Screen as Choreographic Space: A Pas de Deux between the Dancer and the Camera." In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes, 130-137. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Carroll, Noël 2001. "Toward a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance." *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (2001): 46-61.

Carrot, Marion. "Perpetual Becoming: Figures of Metamorphosis in the Cinematic Choreography of Movement before 1960." In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes, 114-121. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Chakravorty, Pallabi. "Sensory Screens, Digitized Desires: Dancing Rasa from Bombay Cinema to Reality TV." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 125-142. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Chapman, Owen, and Kim Sawchuk. "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and Family Resemblances." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (2012): 5-26.

Chow, Rey. "A Phantom Discipline." *PMLA* 116, no.5 (2001): 1385-1395.

Cinédanse. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.cinedanse.ca/.

Citron, Paula. "Dancing onto the big screen." *The Globe and Mail,* October 22, 2002.

Clague, Mark. "Playing in 'Toon:' Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music." *American Music* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 91-109.

Contact Dance International Film Festival. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://contactdancefilmfest.com/.

Copeland, Roger. "The Best Dance Is the Way People Die in Movies (or Gestures Toward a New Definition of "Screendance")." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 225-242. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Cork, Jo. “Dance on Film: Find Your Creative Voice.” *The One Dance UK Magazine* 10 (Spring 2021). Accessed May 15, 2023. https://www.onedanceuk.org/resource/one-magazine/.

Coyle, Rebecca. “Editorial – Sound Tracks the Place: Australasian Soundtrack Studies,” *Screen Sound* 1 (2010): 5-8.

Cunningham, Merce, David Vaughan, Thecla Schiphorst, B. Carolyn, and Laura Kuhn. “Four Key Discoveries: Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Fifty.” *Theater* 34, no. 2 (2004): 105-111.

Cyborg Circus Project, The. Accessed June 10, 2023. https://www.creativehub1352.ca/the-cyborg-circus-project.

Daniel, Jennifer. “Cats:” a box office bomb, but has anyone noticed the ethnic stereotyping.” *The Conversation*, January 17, 2020. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://theconversation.com/cats-a-box-office-bomb-but-has-anyhone-noticed-the-ethnic-stereotyping-130069.

Das, Debby. “Unpopular Opinion: ‘Happy Feet’ is a Disturbingly Powerful Horror Movie. February 22, 2022. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/22/unpopular-opinion-happy-feet-secual-tension-horro-movie.

Davidson, Andrea. “Extending the Discourse of Screendance: Dance and New Media.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 389-419. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Del Favero, Maretta. “Academic Disciplines: Disciplines and the Structure of Higher Education, Discipline Classification Systems, Discipline Differences, 2023.” Accessed February 23, 2023. https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1723/Academic-Disciplines.html.

Del Rio, Elena. *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

De Rosa, Maria, and Marilyn Burgess. *Canadian Dance Mapping Study: Literature Review.* Ottawa: Canada Council for the Arts, 2012.

De Spain, Kent. “Dance and Technology: A Pas de Deux for Post-Humans.” *Dance Research Journal* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 2-17.

Desmond, Judy. C. “Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies.” *Cultural Critique* 26 (Winter 1993): 33–63.

De Valck, Marijke. “What Is a Film Festival? How to Study Festivals and Why You Should.” In *Film Festival: History, Theory, Method, Practice,* edited by Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell, and Skadi Loist, 17-26. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

Delamater, Jerome. *Dance in the Hollywood Musical.* Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1981.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time Image.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Deren, Maya. "Choreography for the Camera." In *Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film,* edited by B.R. McPherson, 220-224. New York: Documentext, 2005.

Dissanayake, Rajitha. "The Underwater Dance that Holds Your Breath for Six Minutes is Stunning." Accessed May23, 2023. https://oceanfacts.net/the-underwater-dance-is-incredible/.

Dixon, Steve. *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation.* Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007.

Dodds, Sherril. *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

Dodds, Sherril. "Values in Motion: Reflections on Popular Screen Dance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen,* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli, 445-454. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Dodds, Sherril, ed. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies.* London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Dodds, Sherril, and Colleen Hooper. "Faces, Close-ups and Choreography: a Deleuzian Critique of *So You Think You Can Dance*." *The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014): 93-113.

Donalson, Kayleigh. "Why the Cats Movie is so Bad." Rant, January 15, 2022. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://screenrant.com/cats-movie-bad-reasons-cgi-songs/2.

Dziemianowicz, Joe. "Get to know Bob Fosse and his iconic Broadway dance style," *New York Theatre Guide,* March 22, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://www.newyorktheatreguide.com/theatre-news/news/what-to-know-about-the-legendary-namesake-of-bob-fosses-dancin-on-broadway.

Elias, Debbie Lynn. "Happy Feet." Accessed May 20, 2023. https://behindthelensonline.net/site/reviews/happyfeet.

Elley, Derek. "Rhythm n' Truths: Norman McLaren." In *Canadian Film Reader,* edited by Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, 94-102. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Pushing the contradictions of the digital: 'virtual reality' and 'interactive narrative' as oxymorons between narrative and gaming." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 12, no. 3 (2014): 295-311.

Evans, Mark and Mary Fogarty. "The Sonic World of Dance Film." In *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films,* edited by Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty, 1-13. South Yorkshire and Bristol, CT.: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016.

Faller, Greg. "From Choreocinema to Experimental Screendance: A Personal Archaeology." In *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films,* edited by Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty, 14-42. South Yorkshire and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016.

Fildes, Simon. "From Hyperchoreography to Kinaesthediting," 2008. Accessed February 24 2018. http://hyperchoreography.org/writing27.html.

Fogarty, Mary. "Gene Kelly: The Original, Updated." In *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image,* edited by Erin Brannigan, 83-97. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Fogarty, Mary. "From *Beat Street* to *Step Up 3D:* The Sound of Street Films." In *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films,* edited by Mark Evans and Mary Fogarty, 43-60. South Yorkshire and Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2016.

Fol, Marie. "Virtualised Dance? Digital Shifts in Artistic Practices." "Fit for the Future" Series. European Dance Network (EDN), August 2021. Accessed March 25, 2023. https://www.ednetwork.eu.

Fondation Langlois. Accessed May 4, 2023. https://www.foundation-langlois.org/.

F-O-R-M. Accessed May 3, 2023. www.F-O-R-M.ca.

Foster, Jeremy. "Dancing on the grave of industry: Wenders, Bausch and the affective re-performance of environmental history." *Cultural geographies* 25, no. 2 (2018): 319-338.

Foster, Susan. *Choregraphing empathy: Kinesthesia in performance*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison,* translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1977.

Friedlander, Whitney. "Ryan Murphy adapting 'The Prom' for Netflix with all-star cast," CNN, June 25 2019. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/25/entertainment/ryan-murphy-the-prom/index.html.

Frome, Jonathan. "Snow White: Critics and Criteria for the Animated Feature Film." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 30, no. 5 (2013): 462-473.

Gabler, J. "How Disney turned Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" into a ballet of the season. Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2015/03/fantasia-nutcraker.

Garcia, Cindy. "Displace and Be Queen: Gender and Interculturalism in *Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights"* (2004). In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen,* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli, 155-165. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Genre, Music and Sound. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/genre-music-and-sound/.

Gleiberman, Owen. "'The Prom' Review: Ryan Murphy Turns a Message Musical About Tolerance into a Fizzy and Elating Showbiz High," *Variety.com*, December 1, 2020. Accessed May 23 2023. https://variety.com/2020/film/reviews/the-prom-review-meryl-streep-james-corden-ryan-murphy-1234842681/.

Glen, Tim. "Performance Techniques Behind the Lens: Applying the Nikolais/Louis Philosophy of Motion to Cinematography," In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue and Marisa Hayes, 58-72. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Goldson, Annie. "The emergence of creative practice as research." *Pacific Journalism Review* 26, no. 1 (2020): 1-13.

Greenfield, Amy. "The Kinesthetics of Avant-Garde Dance Film: Deren and Harris." In *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video,* edited by Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber, 21-26. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Grierson, Elizabeth and Laura Brearley. "Ways of Framing: Introducing Creative Arts Research." In *Creative Arts Research: Narrative of Methodologies and Practices,* edited by Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, 1-15. Rotterdam: Sense Publications, 2009.

Gunning, Tom. "The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 189-201.

Gunning, Tom. "Early American Film." In *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church, 255-271. London: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Gunning, Tom. "Loïe Fuller and the Art of Motion: Body, Light, Electricity, and the Origins of Cinema." In *Camera Obscure, Camera Lucida*, edited by Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, 75-89. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003.

Guy, Priscilla. *Articulating Video-dance: Defined Roles for the Creators.* Master of Arts Thesis. Toronto: York University, 2011.

Guy, Priscilla. "Screendance as a Question: *All This Can Happen* and the First Edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screendance." *The International Journal of Screendance* 7 (2016): 200-212.

Guy, Priscilla. "Where is the Choreography? Who is the Choreographer? Alternate Approaches to Choreography through Editing." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 591-610. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Hagan, Cara. “Visual Politics in American Dance Film: Representation and Diversity.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 8 (2017): 104-112.

Hagan, Cara. “Curatorial Practices for Intersectional Programming.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 9 (2018): 133-151.

Hagan, Cara. *Screendance from Film to Festival: Celebration and Curatorial Practice.* Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2022.

Hagood, Thomas. *A History of Dance in American Higher Education: Dance and the American University.* Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

Hall, Sandra. “It’s being panned across the globe but is Cats really that bad?” *The Sydney Morning Heald*, December 24, 2019. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/movies/it-s-being-panned-accross-the-globe-but-is-cats-really-that-bad-20191223-p53mev.html.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems.” In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79*, edited by Suart Hall, 2-35. London: Hutchison, 1980.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms.” *Media Culture and Society* 2 (1980): 57–72.

Hall, Stuart. “Encoding/decoding.” In *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, edited by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis, 128-138. London: Hutchison, 1980.

Hall, Stuart. “The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities.” *October* 53 (Summer 1990): 11–23.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies.” In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler. London: Routledge, 1992.

Haseman, Bradley. “A Manifesto for Performative Research.” *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy* 25, no. 4.1 (2006): 98-106.

Hayes, Marisa. “État des lieux: Plateformes et festivals de vidéo-danse à l’ère numerique.” *Repères, cahier de danse* 1, no. 40 (2018): 30-34.

Hayles, Katherine. *How We Think.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Heighway, Anna. “Understanding the “Dance” in Radical Screendance.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 4 (2014): 44-62.

Herfeld, Stephanie. “Seeing and Moving: The Performance of Marie Menken’s Images.” In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en*

ciné-danse, edited by Franck Boulègue and Marisa Hayes, 89-101. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Hermans, Carolien. “Differences in Itself: Redefining Disability through Dance.” *Social Inclusion* 4, no. 4 (2016): 160-167.

Heuchan, Claire. “Prom Review: Sequins and Sapphic Love Make This Musical a Triumph,” *AfterEllen*, February 18, 2021. Accessed May 23 2023. https://afterellen.com/prom-review/.

Higgins, Steven. *Still Moving: The Film and Media Collections of the Museum of Modern Art*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006.

Hockey, John. “Practice-Based Research Degree Students in Art and Design: Identity and Adaptation.” In *Research in Art and Design Education: Issues and Examples*, edited by Richard Hickman, 109-119. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008.

Hockey, John and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson. “The Supervision of Practice-based Research Degrees in Art and Design.” *JADE* 19, no. 3 (2000): 345-355.

Holstad, Scott. “The Crow” AI Dance Film. Accessed October 1, 2023. https://hankrules2011.com/2022/11/15/the-crow-ai-dance-film/.

Hoose, Bob. “Happy Feet.” *Plugged In.* Accessed May 20, 2023. https://www.pluggedin.com/moviereviews/happyfeet/.

Jackson, Naomi. “A Rhizomatiac Revolution? Popular Dancing, YouTubing, and Exchange in Screendance.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 695-714. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Jacobson-Konefall, Jessica. “Dancing in the City: Screens, Landscape, and Civic Phenomenology in the Screendance of Terrance Houle.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 349-367. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991.

Johnson, Brianna Rae. “Unbecoming Human: An Online Screendance Festival.” Online Screendance Festival, April 29, 2019. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://briannaraedance.com/2019/04/29/unbecoming-human-an-online-screendance-festival/.

Jones, Sue. "Do Rabbits Dance? A Problem Concerning the Identification of Dance." In *Dance, Education and Philosophy*, edited by Graham McFee, 85-99. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport, 1999.

Jordan, Stephanie and Dave Allen, eds. *Parallel Lines: Media Representations of Dance.* London: John Libby, 1993.

Joseph, Rachel. "Longing for Depth: The Frame of Screened Stages in the Screendance Spectacles of Busby Berkeley." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 481-497. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Kaeja, Allen. *Transforming Media: Adapting the Dance Production "Asylum of Spoons" from Stage to Film.* Toronto: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009.

Kappenberg, Claudia. "Does screendance need to look like dance?" *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 5, nos. 2-3 (2009): 89-105.

Kappenberg, Claudia. "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms." In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes, 21-30. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Körper, Aeris. "The Cyborg Circus Project: Safe Words Interview," February 20, 2020. Accessed June 10, 2023. https://www.aeriskorper.com/curiosities-1/the-cyborg-circus-project-safewords-interview.

Leavy, Patricia. *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practice.* New York: The Guilford Press, 2009.

Lenker, Maureen Lee. "Motorcycles and musical numbers: An oral history of how *Grease 2* became a cult classic," *Entertainment,* April 5, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2023. https://ew.com/movies/grease-2-oral-history-michelle-pfeiffer/.

Levinson, Jerrold. "Defining Art Historically." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 19, no. 3, (1979): 232-250.

Lights Dance Festival. Accessed May 3, 2023. www.lightsdancefest.com.

Livingstone, Sonia. "Relationships between media and audiences: Prospects for future audience reception studies." In *Media, Ritual and Identity: Essays in Honor of Elihu Katz Liebes,* edited by James Curran, and Tamar Liebes, Chapter 14. London: Routledge, 1998.

Lloyd Webber, Imogen. "*Cool Rider*! The Stage Adaptation of Cult Sequel *Grease 2* to Return to the West End. *Broadway.com/buzz,* February 11, 2014. Accessed May 27, 2023. http://www.broadway.com/buzz/174501/cool-rider-the-stage-adaptation-of-cult-sequel-grease-2-to-return-to-the-west-end/.

Loveless, Natalie. "Practice in the Flesh of Theory: Art, Research and the Fine Arts PhD." *Canadian Journal of Communications* 37, no. 1 (2012): 93-108.

Loveless, Natalie. *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019.

Machon, Josephine. *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance.* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Maries, Lizzie. “No Looking Back.” *The One Dance U Magazine* 10 (Spring 2021). Accessed March 25, 2025. https://www.onedanceuk.org/resource/one-magazine.

Martnelli, Marissa. “The *Cats* Movie is a void of Horny confusion.” *Slate.com,* December 18, 2019. Accessed August 5, 2023. https://slate.com/culture/2019/12/cats-movie-review.html

Marvelly, Paula. “Maya Deren: A Study in Choreography for Camera.” *The Curriculum,* July 19, 2020. Accessed May 2, 2023. https://www.theculturium.com/maya-deren-a-study-in-choreography-for-camera/.

Masaka Kids Africana. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://www.masakakidsafricana.com/.

May, Emily. “Screening Times,” *Springback Magazine,* January 2021. Accessed March 25, 2023. https://springbackmagazine.com/read/screened-dance-screendance-covid.

Mayne, Judith. “Paradoxes of Spectatorship.” In *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film,* edited by Laura Williams, 155-183. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

McCormick, John, Kim Vincs, S. Naharandi, and D. Creighton. “Learning to dance with a human.” In *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium on Electronic Art,* edited by K. Cleland, L. Fisher, and R. Harley, 452-456. Sydney, Australia: ISEA, 2013.

McInerny, Nicholas. “‘Don’t Speculate, Participate’: Immersive Theatre.” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20, no. 2 (2010): 244-246.

McLellan, Hilary. “Virtual Realities.” In *Handbook on Educational Communications and Technology*, edited by D.H. Jonassen, 461-497, Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

McPherson, Bruce R., ed. *Essential Deren: Collected Writing on Film.* Kingston, New York: Documentext, 2005.

McPherson, Katrina. *Making Video Dance: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating Dance for Screen.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Mekas, Jonas. “Cine-Dance.” *Dance Perspectives #30.* New York: Dance Perspectives Foundation (Summer 1967).

Mikau, Aridne. “Anarchitextures: Intermedial Encounters on the Screen.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 8 (2018): 70-89.

Misi, Mirella, and Ludmila Pimentel. “The Virtual Body is Real! Phenomenological and Postphenomenological Perspectives in Mediadance.” In *The Oxford Handbook of*

Screendance Studies, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 557-571. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Mitoma, Judy, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber. eds. *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video.* New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

Monroe, Raquel. "The White Girl in the Middle": The Performativity of Race, Class and Gender in *Step Up 2: The Streets."* In *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen,* edited by Melissa Blanco Borelli, 182-198. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Morley, David. "Unanswered questions in audience research," *Communication Review* 9, no. 2 (2006): 101-121.

Myers, Andrew. "AI-powered EDGE Dance Animator Applies Generative AI to Choreography," April 20 2023. Accessed August 20, 2023. https://hai.standord.edu/news/ai-powered-edge-dance-animator-applies-generative-ai-choreography.

Northwest Screendance Exposition, 2019. https://filmfreeway.com/NorthwestScreendance.

O'Malley, Sheila. "Cats," December 19, 2019. Accessed May 20, 2023. https:www.rogerebert.com/reviews/cats-movie-review-2019.

Pearlman, Karen. *Cutting Rhythms: Intuitive Film Editing,* 2nd edition. New York: Focal Press, 2016.

Piantanida, Maria, Patricia L. McMahon, and Noreen B. Garman. "Sculpting the contours of arts-based educational research within a discourse community." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (2003): 182-191.

Polan, Dana. "North America." *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies,* 9-24. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008.

Polan, Dana. "Young Art, Old Colleges: Early Episodes in the American Study of Film." In *Inventing Film Studies*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, 93-117. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008.

Popat, Sita. "Transcending Dimensions: Physical and Virtual Dancing Bodies." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 657-676. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Pritchard, Jane. "Movement on the Silent Screen." *Dance Theatre Journal* 13, no. 3 (1995-96): 26-30.

Porter, Jenelle. "Dance with Camera: A Curator's POV." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 23-44. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Pottratz, Wyn. “Screendance Cannot be Everything: Defining the Form Ten Years after the *(Hu)Manifesto*.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 6 (2016): 182-185.

Price, Jaleea. “Review: *Perpetual Motion: Dance, Digital Cultures and the Common* by Harmony Bench (2020).” *The International Journal of Screendance* 11 (2020): 90-92.

Pruska-Oldenhof, Izabella. “Loïe Fuller’s Serpentines and Poetics of Self-Abnegation in the Era of Electrotechnics.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 45-62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Reason, Matthew, and Dee Reynolds. “Screen Dance Audiences: Why Now?” *Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 7, no. 2 (2010): iii–vii.

Reason, Matthew and Dee Reynolds. “Kinesthesia, empathy, and related pleasures: An inquiry into audience experiences of watching dance.” *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (2010): 49-75.

Regards Hybrides. Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.regardshybrides.com/en/.

Regards Hybrides. “Making Screendance.” Accessed May 3, 2023. https://www.quebecdanse.org/en/agenda/training-screendance-2022-2023/.

Rodowick, David. *The Virtual Life of Film.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Rooney, David. “‘The Prom:’ Film Review,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 1, 2020. Accessed 23 May 2023. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-reviews/the-prom-film-review-4098546/.

Rosenberg, Douglas. “Essay on Screendance.” In *Dance for the Camera Symposium.* Madison, Wisconsin, 2000. http://www.dvpg.net/docs/screendance.pdf.

Rosenberg, Douglas. “Proposing a theory of screendance.” In *Screendance: The State of the Art Proceedings, American Dance Festival*, edited by Jessica Vokoun, 12-17. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Rosenberg, Douglas. “Excavating Genres.” *The International Journal of Screen Dance* 1 (2010): 63-73.

Rosenberg, Douglas. *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Rosenberg, Douglas, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Rosenberg, Douglas. “Evolving the field: Interviews with Naomi Macalalad Bragin and Cara Hagan.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 11 (2020): 44-51.

Rosenberg, Douglas. “Reflections on *Regards Hybrides, an International Forum* (2019, 2nd ed.).” *The International Journal of Screendance* 11 (2020): 34-43.

Rosenberg, Douglas. Website. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://www.douglas-rosenberg.com/.

Roy, Alisha. “Masaka Kids Africana: On not giving up and returning the childhoods of Uganda’s children.” *Gulf News*, November 24, 2022. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://gulfnews.com/friday/art-people/masaka-kids-africana-on-not-giving-up-and-returning-the-childhoods-of-ugandas-children-1.1669207932281.

Ryman, Rhonda. “Teaching the Computer to Dance: Creating Ballet Animations in LifeForms.” *Proceedings of the International Dance and Technology Conference.* Columbus, Ohio: Fullhouse Publishing, 1999.

Sammond, Nicholas. *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the rise of American Animation.* Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2015.

Sarkar, Bhaskar. “Postcolonial and Transnational Perspectives.” In *SAGE Handbook of Film Studies*, 123-144. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2008.

Scarlett Entertainment. “3D Video Mapping Explained.” Accessed March 24, 2023. https://scarlettentertainment.com/ca/blog/entertainment-insights-3d-video-mapping-explained.

Schiphorst, Thecla “Computer and Dance: A Dancer’s Perspective.” *Conference Proceedings, Instituto Nacional de Belles Artes, Centrol de Investigacion y Documentation de la Danza,* 16-25. Mexico, 1989.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “LifeForms: Design Tools for Choreography.” *Dance and Technology I: Moving Towards the Future, Proceedings of the International Dance and Technology Conference,* 46-52. Columbus, OH: Fullhouse Publishing, 1992.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “The Choreographic Machine: A Design Tool for Character and Human Movement.” In *Cyber Arts: Exploring Technology,* edited by L. Johnson, 147-156. San Francisco, CA: Miller Freeman, 1992.

Schiphorst, Thecla *A Case Study of Merce Cunningham’s Use of the Lifeforms Computer Choreographic System in the Making of “Trackers.”* Master of Arts Thesis. Simon Fraser University, 1993.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “Merce Cunningham: Making Dances with the Computer.” In *Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements*, edited by D. Vaughan. Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 1996.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “Making Dances with a Computer.” In *Choreography and Dance: An International Journal, Special Issue: Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements in Choreography* 4, part 3, edited by D. Vaughan, 79-98, 1997.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “Soft, softer, softly: whispering between the lines.” *aRt+D: Research and Development in Art* 2 (2005).

Schiphorst, Thecla. “Breath, Skin and Clothing: Using Wearable Technologies as an Interface into Ourselves.” *International Journal of Performance Arts and Media* 2, no. 2 (2006): 171-186.

Schiphorst, Thecla. “Body Matters: The Palpability of Invisible Computing.” *Leonardo* 42, no. 3 (2009): 225-230.

Schiphorst, Thecla and Thomas Calvert. “Creative Collaboration: The Evolution of Software for Dance.” *Computational Culture, a Journal of Software Studies, Special Issue on Software Practices in Digital Performance*, 2013.

School of Toronto Dance Theatre, The. Accessed May 4, 2023. https://schooloftdt.org/divi_overlay/allan-kaeja/.

Screendance and dance 360 VR films at ZED Festival. Accessed March 24, 2023. https://unatc.ro/ccoc/screendance-and-dance-360-vr-films-at-zed-festival/.

Slattery, Patrick. “Troubling the contours of arts-based educational research.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (2003): 192-197.

Simpson, Jürgen. “Sound as Choreographic Object: A Perceptual Approach to the Integration of Sound in Screendance.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 281-302. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Smith, Kathleen. "Micro/Macro: Dimensions of Dance on Film and Video.” *The Dance Current* 14, no. 3 (September/October 2011): 41-51.

Smith, Kathleen. “The Evolving Story of Dance on Film: An Overview of New Forms Then and Now.” *Dance International* (Summer 2018).

Sobchack, Vivian. *The Address of the Eye; A Phenomenology of Film Experience.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Sollosi, Mary. “Please, by all means, call off The Prom: Review,” *Entertainment Weekly,* December 1, 2020. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://ew.com/movies/movie-reviews/the-prom-review-netflix/.

Solnit, Rebecca. *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West.* New York: Penguin, 2004.

Sparshott, Francis. *A Measured Pace: Toward a Philosophical Understanding of the Arts of Dance.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

Sparshott, Francis. "On Knowing What Dancing Is." In *Dance, Education and Philosophy*, edited by Graham McFee, Chapter 5. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd., 1999.

SSHRC. "Definitions of Terms." Accessed October 27, 2020. www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#22.

Sullivan, John L. *Media Audiences: Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Inc., 2013.

Sumi, Glenn. "Unreeling dance." *Now Magazine,* November 2, 2006.

Szporer, Philip. "Northern Exposures: Canadian Dance Film and Video." In *Envisioning Dance on Film and Video,* edited by Judy Mitoma, Elizabeth Zimmer, and Dale Ann Steiber, 168-175. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Szporer, Philip. "Motion in Motion." *The Dance Current,* (2003). Accessed November 3, 2019. https://thedancecurrent.com/review/motion-motion/.

Szporer, Philip and Marlene Millar. "Moving In(To) 3D." In *Dance's Duet with the Camera,* edited by Telroy Arendell, and Ruth Barnes, 225-237. London*:* Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016.

Taggart, Emma. "Artist Performs Stunning Underwater Choreography in the World's Deepest Pool," May 4, 2018. Accessed May 23, 2023. https://mymodernmet.com/underwater-dance-julie-gautier/.

Tangente. Accessed May 4, 2023. https://tangentedanse.ca/en/.

Taylor, Diane. "Acts of Transfer." In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, edited by Diana Taylor, 1-52. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Thain, Alanna. "In the Blink of an Eye: Norman McLaren Between Dance and Animation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 167-185. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Tharoor, Ishaan. "'The Dance of the Hours' in *Fantasia." Entertainment.time.com*, December 12 2010. Accessed August 5, 2023. https://entertainment.time.com/2010/12/03/top-10-movie-dance-scenes/slide/the-dance-of-the-hours-in-fantasia/.

Thorp, Clare. "Grease 2: The Flop that became a surprise hit." *BBC,* August 10, 2020. Accessed May 26, 2023. https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200805-grease-2-the-flop-that-became-a-surprise-hit.

Thompson, Cheryl and Miranda Campbell. eds. *Creative Industries in Canada.* Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2022.

Tikka, Pia and Mauri Kaipainen. "Screendance as Enactment in Maya Deren's *At Land:* Enactive, Embodies, and Neurocinematic Considerations." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 303-320. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Toronto Arts Council, The. "Safe Words: Offering Social Support through Community Arts." Accessed June 10, 2023. https://torontoartscouncil.org/impact/featured-stories/1/safe-words.

Tum, Alexander. "Penguin Films and the Environment: The Triumph of Happy Feet and the Trouble with March of the Penguins." *Friends of the Adams Library First Year Research Prize, 2021.* Accessed May 20, 2023. https://digitalcommons.ric.edu/fy_research.

Turnbull, George. "The Shoestring Renaissance." *Dance Current* 22, no. 3 (2019): 32-39.

Tusing, David. "Viral Masaka Kids Africana group to perform at Sharjah Children's Reading Festival," *The National News,* April 30, 2023. Accessed July 14, 2023. https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/pop-culture/2023/04/30/viral-masaka-kids-africana-group-to-perform-at-sharjah-childrens-reading-festival/.

Ullmann, Katrin, and Elisabeth Nehring. "Hybrid Advance, Making a Festival First for the Future." Digital Think Tank, January 2021. Accessed March 25, 2023. https://https.//www.tanz-bremen.com.

Uytterhoeven, Lise. "A to Z of Key Concepts in Dance Studies." In *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies,* edited by Sherril Dodds, 421-438. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Vincs, Kim. "Virtualizing Dance." In *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies,* edited by Douglas Rosenberg, 263-282. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Vise, Lesley. "Music and the Body in Dance Film." In *Popular Music and Film,* edited by Ian Inglis, 22-38. London and New York: Wallflower, 2003.

Walon, Sophie. "Screendance Sensations: Multi-sensory Experiences in Thierry De Mey's Screendance." In *Art in Motion: Current Research in Screendance / Art en mouvement: Recherches actuelles en ciné-danse,* edited by Franck Boulègue, and Marisa Hayes, 21-30. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

Waxman, Nava. "Variations on Broken Lines." Accessed March 25, 2023. https://www.vaahartspaces.com/nava-waxman-2.

White, Marcus. “Narrative Shifts: Race, Culture, and the Production of Screendance.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 9 (2018): 155-170.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations.* Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Limited, 1953.

Wood, Karen. “Audience as Community: Corporeal Knowledge and Empathetic Viewing.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 5 (2015): 29-42.

Wood, Karen, Rosemary Cisneros, and Sarah Whatley. “Motion Capturing Emotions.” *Open Cultural Studies* 1 (2017): 504-513.

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro. *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000.

Youngblood, Gene. *Expanded Cinema.* New York: Dutton, 1970.

Zanotti, Marisa, “Digital spaces, analogues thinking: Some thoughts on screendance.” *The International Journal of Screendance* 10 (2019). http://www.screendancejournal.org//article/view/6569/5231.

Zoller Seitz, Matt. “The Prom.” *Roger Ebert.com,* December 7, 2020. Accessed May 26, 2023. https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-prom-movie-review-2020.

Zryd, Michael. “Experimental Film and Development of Film Study in America.” In *Inventing Film Studies*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, 182-216. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008.

Mediagraphy

Abraham, Abe, dir. *Saltwater.* New York, NY: Abraham Abe, 2018. 5 min., 45 sec. Film.

Ardolino, Emile, dir. *Dirty Dancing.* Beverley Hills, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1987. 1 hr., 36 min. 1987. Film.

Armstrong, Samuel et al., dirs. *Fantasia.* Hollywood, CA: Walt Disney Productions, 1940. 2 hrs., 6 min. Film.

Atlas, Charles, dir., and Merce Cunningham, choreographer. *BIPED.* New York, NY: Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and the Institut national de l'audiovisuel, 2001. 1 min. Film.

Atlas, Charles, dir., and Merce Cunningham, choreographer. *Suite for Five,* 1956. New York, NY: Merce Cunningham Dance Company, 2008. 25 min., 29 sec. Film.

AtoM-r. *Field Anatomy.* Chicago, IL: Boston Dynamics. 2013. Film.

Bacon, Lloyd, dir., and Busby Berkeley, choreographer. *42nd Street.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 1933. 1 hr., 29 min. Film.

Bacon, Lloyd, dir., and Busby Berkeley, choreographer. *Footlight Parade.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 1933. 1 hr., 42 min. Film.

Badham, John, dir. *Saturday Night Fever*. Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1977. 1 hr., 59 min. Film.

Baylaucq, Philippe, dir. *Lodela.* Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1966. 26 min. Film.

Bazawule, Blitz, dir. *The Color Purple*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures., 2023. 141 min. Film.

Berkeley, Busby, dir. *Flying High.* Beverley Hill, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1931. 1hr., 20 min. Film.

Berkeley, Busby and Mervyn LeRoy, dirs. *Gold Diggers of 1933*. Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 1933. 90 to 96 min. Film.

Bhansali , Sanjay Leela, dir. *Dola Re Dola*. Mumbai, India: Bhansali Productions, 2002. 174 min. Film.

Birch, Patricia, dir. *Grease 2.* Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1982. 1 hr., 55 min. Film.

Boyle, Danny, dir. *Slumdog Millionaire.* Los Angeles, CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures, Celador Films, and Pathe, 2008. 2 hrs. Film.

Butler, David, dir. *The Little Colonel.* Los Angeles, CA: Fox Film Corporation, 1935. 1 hr., 20 min. Film.

Cecchetti, Marisa, dir. *All of this and nothing.* Marisa Cecchetti, 2015. Film.

Cecchetti, Marisa, dir. *Freediving Dancer.* Marisa Cecchetti, 2017. Film.

Cecchetti, Marisa, dir. *(No) Detachment.* Marisa Cecchetti, 2018. Film.

Chadha, Gurinder, dir. *Bride and Prejudice.* London, UK: Pathe Pictures International, Miramax Films, and Band It Films, 2004. 1 hr., 51 min. Film.

Chaplin, Charlie, dir. *The Gold Rush.* Hollywood, CA: United Artists, 1925. 1 hr., 35 min. Film.

Chazell, Damien, dir. *La La Land.* Santa Monica, CA: Summit Entertainment, and Black Label Media, 2016. 2 hrs., 8 min. Film.

Chouinard, Marie, dir. *Cantique n^{o}1, 2001.* 15 min., 30 sec. Interactive Installation.

Chouinard, Marie, dir. *Cantique n^{o} 2,* 2003. Interactive Installation.

Chouinard, Marie, dir. *Cantique n^{o} 3,* 2004. Interactive Installation.

Chu, Jon M., dir. *Step Up 2: The Streets.* Burbank, CA: Touchstone Pictures, Summit Entertainment, and Offspring Entertainment, 2008. 1 hr., 38 min. Film.

Chu, Jon M., dir. *In the Heights.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 5000 Broadway Productions, and Lilely Story, 2021. 2 hrs., 23 min. Film.

Chu, Jon M., dir. *Wicked: Part 1.* Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, Marc Platt Productions, Moving Pictures, and SKY Studios, 2024. 2 hrs., 40 min. Film.

Clarke, Shirley, dir. *Bridges-Go-Round.* Shirley Clarke, 1958. 7 min., 39 sec. Film.

Collins Avenue Productions, creator. *Dance Moms.* Collins Avenue Entertainment, 2011-2019. Television Show.

Crosland, Alan, dir. *The Jazz Singer.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 1927. 96 min. Film.

Cummins, Stephen and Simon Hunt, dirs. *Resonance*. Sydney, Australia: Resonance Productions, 1991. 10 min., 52 secs. Film.

Cunningham, Merce, dir. *Nearly Ninety.* New York, NY: Merce Cunningham Dance Company. 2009. Film.

Davies, Siobhan and David Hinton, dirs. *All This Can Happen.* Siobhan Davies Studios: London, UK, 2012. 50 min. Film.

De Keersmaeker, Anna Teresa, and Thierry De Mey, dirs. *Rosas danst Rosas.* Brussels, Belgium: Rosas. 8 min., 23 sec. 1997. Film.

Deren, Maya, dir. *Meshes in the Afternoon*. 1943. 14 min. Film.

Deren, Maya, dir. *At Land*. 1944. 15 min. Film.

Deren, Maya, dir. *A Study in Choreography for the Camera.* 1945. 2 min., 11 sec. Film.

Djemil-Matassov, Elias, dir. *Sarah.* Elias Djemil-Matassov, 2017. 7 min., 31 sec. Film.

Djemil-Matassov, Elias, dir. *Franciszka.* Elias Djemil-Matassov, 2018. 7 min. Film.

Djemil-Matassov, Elias, dir. *Lucia.* Elias Djemil-Matassov, 2018. Film.

Donen, Stanley, and Gene Kelly, dirs. *Singin' in the Rain.* Beverley Hills: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1952. 1 hr., 43 min. Film.

Dreyer, Carl, dir. *The Passion of Joan of Arc.* Joan of Arc Pictures, Inc., 1928. 1 hr., 50 min. Film.

Edmunds, Becky, dir. *This Place.* Becky Edmunds, 2008. 5 min. Film.

Epic Games, developer. *Fortnite,* 2017. Video Game.

Erlich, Shay, dir. *Love Letters to Willow.* The Cyborg Circus Project. 2023. Film.

Erlich, Shay and Jenna Roy, dirs. *Provocation on Wheels.* The Cyborg Circus Project, 2019. Film.

Erlich, Shay and Jenna Roy, dirs. *Safe Words.* The Cyborg Circus Project, 2019. Film.

Fildes, Simon and Katrina McPherson, creators. *Big.* hyperchoreography.org, 2001. 8 min., 22 sec. Hyperchoreograhic Work.

Fildes, Simon and Katrina McPherson, creators. *The Truth.* hyperchoreography.org, 2004. Hyperchoreograhic Work.

Fleischer, Dave, dir. *Minnie the Moocher.* Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1932. 8 min. Cartoon film.

Fleischer, Dave, dir. *Old Man of the Mountain.* Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1933. 6 min., 57 sec. Cartoon film.

Fletcher, Anne, dir. *Step Up.* Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox. 1 hr., 43 min. 2006. Film.

Fosse, Bob, dir. *Sweet Charity*. Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1969. 2 hr., 29 min. Film.

Fosse, Bob, dir. *Cabaret.* Century City, Los Angeles, CA: ABC Pictures Corporation, 1972. 124 min. Film.

Fosse, Bob, dir. *All That Jazz.* Century City, Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox, 1979. 123 min. Film.

Fuller, Loïe, dir. *Serpentine Dance*, 1895. 50 sec. Film.

Fuller, Loïe, dir. *Le Lys de la vie,* 1920. Film.

Fuller, Simon, and Nigel Lythgoe, creators. *So You Think You Can Dance*. Fox Broadcasting Company. 2005-present. Television Show.

Gautier, Julie, dir. *Ashes and Snow.* Nice, France: Les Films Engloutis, 2005. Film.

Gautier, Julie, dir. *AMA.* Nice, France: Les Films Engloutis, 2018. 7 min. Film.

Georgescu, Constantini, dir. *Spin.* Constantini Georgescu, 2009. Film.

Gerwig, Greta, dir. *Barbie.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 2023. 1 hr., 54 min. Film.

Giwa, Max, and Dania Pasquini, dirs. *StreetDance 3D.* London, England: Vertigo Films, 2010. 1 hr., 39 min. Film.

Greenfield, Amy, dir. *Transport.* Amy Greenfield, 1971. 5 min., 29 sec. Film.

Hand, David, dir. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* Hollywood, CA: Walt Disney Productions, 1937. 2 hrs., 23 min. Film.

Harding, Matthew, dir. *Where the Hell is Matt?* Matthew Harding, 2006-2016. YouTube Videos.

Harmonix Music Systems, developers. *Dance Central.* Boston, MA: MTV Games, 2010. Video Game for Xbox 360 Kinect.

Helse, William, dir. *Annabelle Serpentine Dance.* West Orange, NJ: Edison Studios, 1894. 45 sec. Film.

Hinton, David, dir. *Birds.* Part of *TAKE7,* Liz Aggiss, dir. Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire: Xanadu Productions Limited, 2000. Film.

Hitchcock, Alfred, dir. *The Birds.* 1963. Encino, CA: Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions, 1963. 1 hr., 59 min. Film.

Hooper, Tom, dir. *Les Misérables.* Universal City, Los Angeles, CA: Universal Pictures, 2012. 2 hrs., 32 min. Film.

Hooper, Tom, dir. *Cats.* Universal City, CA: Working Title Films, Amblin Entertainment, Perfect World Pictures, Monumental Pictures, and The Really Useful Group, 2019. 1 hr., 50 min. Film.

Houle, Terrance, dir. *Landscape.* Terrance Houle, 2008. Film.

Irani, Ardeshir, dir. *Alam Ara.* Bombay [Mumbai], India: Imperial Film Company, 1931. 2 hrs., 4 min. Film.

Jackson, Wilfred, Clyde Gernonimi, and Hamilton Luske, dirs. *Cinderella.* Hollywood, CA: Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1950. 1 hr., 14 min., 28 sec. Film.

Jackson, Wilfred, Clyde Gernonimi, and Hamilton Luske, dirs. *Alice in Wonderland.* Hollywood, CA: Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1951. 1 hr., 15 min., 11 sec. Animated film.

Kaeja, Allen, dir. *Sweet Exit.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 2014. 3 min., 8 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen, dir. *Xtraordinary TO Dances: Moments in Reel Time.* Toronto, ON: Bell Media (Canada) and Marqueearts (UK), 2017. 25 min., 36 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen, dir. *Farewell to Honest Ed's*. Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 2017. 5 min., 41 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen, and Karen Kaeja, dirs. *FALLOW.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 2022. 26 min., 52 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Witnessed.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 1997. 5 min. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Sarah.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 1999. 6 min., 38 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Zummel.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 1999. 6 min., 34 sec. 1999. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Resistance.* Toronto, ON: Kaeja d'Dance, 2001. 23 min., 49 sec. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *1939.* Allen Kaeja and Mark Adam. 6 min., 52 sec. 2001. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Departure.* Allen Kaeja and Mark Adam. 6 min., 47 sec. 2003. Film.

Kaeja, Allen and Mark Adam, dirs. *Old Country.* Allen Kaeja and Mark Adam. 25 min. 2004. Film.

Kaeja, Allen, and Douglas Rosenberg, dirs. *Of the Heart.* Allen Kaeja and Douglas Rosenberg. 6 min., 58 sec. 2008. Film.

Keaton, Buster, dir. *The Cook.* Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1918. 22 min. Film.

Kleiser, Randal, dir. *Grease. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures,* 1978. 1 hr., 50 min. Film.

Lake, Alan, dir. *La-bas, le lointain.* Québec City, PQ: Alan Lake Factori(e), 2012. 13 min. Film.

Lake, Alan, dir. *Jardins-catastrophes.* Québec City, PQ: Alan Lake Factori(e), 2014. 17 min. Film.

Lake, Alan, dir. *Ravages.* Québec City, PQ: Alan Lake Factori(e), 2015. 13 min. 59 sec. Film.

Lefebvre, Sarah, dir. *Les Loups* (the Wolves). Montréal, PQ: Sarah Lefebvre. Film.

Lamorisse, Albert, dir. *The Red Balloon.* 1956. Film.

Lyne, Adrian, dir. *Flashdance.* Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1983. 1 hr., 37 min. Film.

Marcotte, Pascale, dir. *Revolver Tango.* Pascale Marcotte, 2004. 5 min., 4 sec. Film.

Marshall, Rob, dir. *Chicago*. New York, NY: The Producer Circle Co., 2002. 1 hr., 53 min. Film.

Masaka Kids Africana. *Masaka Kids Africana.* http://www.masakakidsafricana.com. Daily videos on social media.

McDowall, Duncan and Dorotea Saykaly, dirs. *Painted.* 2012. Film.

McDowall, Duncan and Dorotea Saykaly, dirs. *The Crow.* 2021. Film.

McElroy, Francis, dir. *Black Ballerina.* Philadelphia, PA: Shirley Road Productions, 2016. 54 min. Film.

McLaren, Norman, dir. *Pas de deux.* Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1968. 13 min. Film.

McLaren, Norman, dir. *Ballet Adagio.* Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1972. 9 min. Film.

McLaren, Norman, dir. *Narcissus*. Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1983. 22 min. Film.

Méliès, Georges, dir. *The Magic Lantern.* Montreuil, France: Star Film Company, 1903. 5 min., 21 sec. Film.

Menken, Marie, dir. *Visual Variations on Noguchi.* New York, NY: Marie Menken, 1945-46. 4 min. Film.

Mehra, Nitya, dir. *Baar Baar Dekho*. Mumbai, India: Eros International, 2016. 141 mins. Film.

Miller, George, dir. *Happy Feet.* Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures, 2006. 1 hr., 48 min. Film.

Mossanen, Moze, dir. *Roxana.* Toronto, ON: Theatre One, 2006. Film.

Murphy, Ryan, dir. *The Prom.* Hollywood, CA: Ryan Murphy Productions, 2020. 1 hr., 11 min. Film.

Nauman, Bruce, dir. *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square.* San Francisco, CA: Bruce Nauman, 1967-68. 10 min. Film.

Obermaier, Klaus, dir. *D.A.V.E.* 1998/2000. 5 min., 46 sec. Film.

Obermaier, Klaus, dir. *Apparition, Part 1*. Klaus Obermaier and Ars Electronica Futurelab, 2004. 5 min., 52 sec. Film.

Ortega, Kenny, dir. *High School Musical*, *High School Musical 2*, and *High School Musical 3: Senior Year*. Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2006-2008. Television film.

Parker, Alan, dir. *Fame.* Beverley Hills, CA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 2 hr., 13 min. 1981. Film.

Peers, Danielle and Alice Sheppard, dirs. *Inclinations.* 2019. Film.

Perez Jr., Arturo and Samantha Jayne, dirs. *Mean Girls.* Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2024. 97 min. Film.

Pencier, Nicholas de, dir. *Risible Chick*. Canada: Nicholas de Pencier, 1993. Film and video.

Rainer, Yvonne. *Hand Movie.* Chicago, IL: Video Data Bank. 6 min., 17 sec. 1966. Film.

Robbins, Jerome and Robert Wise. *Westside Story.* Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, and The Mirisch Company, 1961. 2 hrs., 32 min. Film.

Roberts, Adam, dir. *Hands*. London, UK: BBC/Arts Council, 1995. 5 min. Film.

Roemer, Larry, dir. *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer.* New York, NY: NBC Universal, 1964. 47 min. Television movie.

Rosenberg, Douglas, dir. *Song of Songs.* Douglas Rosenberg, 2021. Film.

Ross, Herbert, dir. *Footloose.* Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1984. 1 hr., 50 min. Film.

Sandrich, Mark, dir. *Top Hat.* Los Angeles, CA: RKO Radio Pictures, 1935. 1 hr., 39 min., 46 sec. Film.

Sandrich, Mark, dir. *Shall We Dance.* Los Angeles, CA: RKO Radio Pictures, 1937. 1 hr., 48 min. 51 sec. Film.

Schiphorst, Thecia and Thomas Calvert, creators. *LifeForms/DanceForms*. Vancouver, B.C.: Simon Fraser University. Software.

Serra, Richard, dir. *Hand Catching Lead.* New York, NY: Richard Serra, 1968. 3 min. Film.

Sharman, Jim, dir. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Century City, Los Angeles, CA: 20TH Century-Fox, 1975. 1 hr., 40 min. Film.

Simon, Michael, and Ryan Polito, dirs. *America's Best Dance Crew.* Season eight. Aired on July 29, 2015 on MTV and MuchMusic. Television Show.

Spielberg, Stephen, dir. *West Side Story.* Universal City, CA: Amblin Entertainment, and TSG Entertainment, 2021. 2 hr., 36 min. Film.

Stevens, George, dir. *Swing Time.* Los Angeles, CA: RKO Radio Pictures, 1936. 1 hr., 43 min. Film.

Strauss, Samantha, and Joanna Werner, creators. *Dance Academy.* Encino, CA: Werner Film Productions, 2010-2013. Television Show.

Szporer, Philip and Marleen Millar, dirs. *Lost Action: Trace.* Montréal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 2011. 3 min. Film.

Taler, Laura, dir. *The Village Trilogy.* Laura Taler, 1995. Film.

Tennant, Veronica, dir. *a pairing of SwanS.* Veronica Tennant, 2004. Film.

Thompson, Chris, creator. *Shake It Up.* Los Angeles, CA: It's a Laugh Productions, 2010-2013. Television Show.

Turnbull, George, dir. *The Umbrella Dance.* George Turnbull, 2010. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *Black and Gold.* George Turnbull, 2013. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *Identity Crisis (ID).* George Turnbull, 2014. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *Hanging On.* George Turnbull, 2015. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *HVUC Fitness Club.* George Turnbull, 2016. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *Happily Ever After.* George Turnbull, 2017. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *The Rainbow Dance.* George Turnbull, 2019. Film.

Turnbull, George, dir. *Where Can I Run.* George Turnbull, 2023. Film.

Ubisoft, developer. *Just Dance.* Montréal, QC: Nintendo, Ubisoft and Level-5. 2009. Updated frequently. Video Game Series.

Van Keeken, Frank, creator. *The Next Step.* Toronto, ON: Temple Street Productions, Radical Sheep Productions, and Boat Rocker Studios, 2013-present. Television Show.

Vardanis, Fenia, Richard Hopkins, and Karen Smith, creators. *Dancing with the Stars.* Los Angeles, CA: Television City Studios, 2005-present. Television Show.

Verdin, Walter, dir. *Monologue.* Brussels, Belgium: Walter Verdin, 1994. Film.

Wachowski, Lana and Lilly, dirs.. *Matrix Trilogy.* Los Angeles, CA: Warner Brothers Pictures and Village Roadshow Pictures, 1999-2003. Approximately 2 hrs., 10 min each. Film.

Waxman, Nava, dir. *Variations on Broken Lines*. Toronto, ON: York University, 2023. Multimedia installation.

Wenders, Wim, dir. *Pina.* Berlin, Germany: Road Movies, 2011. 1 h, 43m. Film.