

CONCURRENCE: A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
CHOREOMUSICAL MODEL

by

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In this thesis, I use the research of Elizabeth Sawyer, Inger Damsholt, and Stephanie Jordan to identify the origins of my current thoughts on choreomusical relationships in dance work premiering in the last half-century. From their ideas, I propose “concurrency” as a term capable of describing the relationship between dance and music in these works as two equal elements creating a unique common end. I then analyze works by Damien Jalet, Amanda K. Miller, and Alice Klock, three choreographers who approach choreomusical relationships with this method. Through these analyses, I illustrate how “concurrency” can be applied in multiple ways to describe a number of choreomusical relationships.

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Introduction

To quote Stephanie Jordan: “Dance is virtually always music-and-dance, unavoidably interdisciplinary and ready for ‘marriage.’”¹ The tradition of concert dance, expectedly, includes a divide between audience and performer, observer and participant, and focuses principally on a relationship between music as necessary for the existence of dance. Under this model, choreomusical theories successfully describe what is observed. Theorists Elizabeth Sawyer, Inger Damsholt, and Stephanie Jordan, use specific terms for describing their observations that remain pertinent to understanding the works that founded their point of reference.

The analytic processes used by these theorists to describe choreomusical relationships often follow a specific pattern: synchronization versus alternatives. Under those two headings, a number of “alternatives” have been proposed, mostly focusing on everything that synchronization is not. Definitions developed for “synchronization” focus on the relationship between what the audience can see and hear. They are entirely built on the perspective of the viewer as the key observer.

In this thesis I propose, not an alternative to replace, but an additional tool. Recent works often bend these long-standing traditions of concert dance, and therefore cannot be fully described with the same terminology that Sawyer, Damsholt, and Jordan have used or developed. This isn’t to say that they cannot be used at all, but that they cannot describe the relationship in its entirety, as the relationship itself between music and dance is constantly changing, requiring the inclusion of more perspectives. The word I have chosen to represent this collection of perspectives is “concurrency,” a noun

¹ Jordan, Stephanie. *Choreomusical Conversations: Facing a Double Challenge* (Dance Research Journal, 2011), <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/446665>), 43.

referring to the combinatory result of having dance and music living in the same performance space at the same time, without requiring that this result come from a direct interaction. I want to address the relationship as I understand it, as a student and interpreter of this current period of concert dance work and the choreomusical theories that precede me.

Inherent in “synchronization” is the idea of structural or ideological alignment of one or more elements of music and dance in a performance, with careful attention to rhythm. Elizabeth Sawyer’s working definition of the term in her text, *Dance with the Music: The World of the Ballet Musician* (1985), includes an allotment for any “attempts to mirror musical form and technical structure.”² Describing this as a “mirror” implies the sort of “music first” dictum that Sawyer associates with synchronization: that these elements are “all dictated by music”.³ In the case of more recent interactions of dance and music, their performance or presentation often happens side-by-side, or simultaneously, without requiring any sort of aural or clear visual relationship. Rather, it is their to contribute to the overall dramatic arc of the performance, so they are unified in usual definition of synchronization refers to this simultaneous occurrence, without any sort of indication as to which element came first. This is similar to other terms that address simultaneous occurrence, such as “simultaneity”(which I address later) but does not specify how the performance was developed. Since simultaneity and synchronization have taken on specific definitions under many studies of choreomusical theories, I wanted to offer a term that could encapsulate another perspective on this

² Elizabeth Sawyer, “The Relationship of Movement and Music,” in *Dance with the Music: The World of the Ballet Musician* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 25)

³ Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 24.

existential relationship without intruding upon or overlooking the contributions made by the tenets inherent in the basic idea of synchronization in the past.

The term I propose, “concurrency” obviously derives from *concur*, whose secondary definition, “to act together to a common end or single effect” is my focus. This definition encapsulates my understanding of the choreomusical function in recent concert dance works. When combined, the relationship between these two mediums creates an independent experience, regardless of the way one or the other is performed. As two time-based forms, recent works have shown that there is a myriad of interactions possible, not simply synchronization or some alternative. Each of these possibilities has been debated over and over by those involved in production, as well as those in the audience, as to which draws more attention, and in turn which distracts from the other, but originates from a questioning of the constant use of multiple mediums in a performance, especially as seen in recent works. Rather than to say that one effect is subordinate or superior to the other, the effect produced by the coexistence of both forms in a space at all is separate and distinct. By occupying the same space, they work together to create a distinct effect, which is their common end. This type of collaboration does not specify the process of creating the work but details the process of *performing*, the ultimate result. This sort of living process, that can involve the observer, creator, and performer all at once, is the specific process I seek to examine with using the term “concurrency” for analytic purposes.

Additionally, this term does not require that one medium precede another temporally in the process of making a piece. I am not seeking to examine the dominance of music or movement in a piece, rather to analyze or emphasize the unified and

singular effect they produce together. The main work that I analyze in the pages that follow is an excerpt from Damien Jalet's *Les Médusés* from 2015. I then dive into smaller analyses of an excerpt from Amanda K. Miller's *Field Days* from 2010, and Alice Klock's *Hues* from 2017. These selected works provide concrete examples of a need for new terminology in choreomusical terms. Though they may have other observed relationships that can be described using terms used by Sawyer, Jordan, or Damsholt, there is another, overarching relationship that approaches choreomusicality differently, and therefore requires new language.

Organization and Limitations

This thesis is organized around prior choreomusical analyses by addressing the contributions of Sawyer's, Jordan's, and Damsholt's contributions before offering my own analytic addendum. The intent with this is to posit "concurrency" as an additional tool, not a replacement, which aptly describes works that have been created with more perspectives in mind than just that of the observer. Concurrency is my offering of a descriptive term and is intentionally non-specific about the viewer's perspective on the choreomusical interaction, so that it can be used in conjunction with other types of analytic language to form a more well-rounded analysis. The meaning of the works that I am analyzing is also up for interpretation, so I find it fitting that my contribution also leave room. I will follow with individual analyses of my selected works using "concurrency" to illustrate its use.

On Their Side

Elizabeth Sawyer, Stephanie Jordan, and Inger Damsholt are all established and respected figures in the study and development of choreomusical theory of concert

dance. “Choreomusical,” a term I frequently use throughout this study, was coined by theorist Paul Hodgins as a way to describe the direct music to movement relationship.⁴ Sawyer, Damsholt, and Jordan each offer important perspectives on the field and have laid the foundation for my own analysis, just as their forebears and contemporaries helped establish theirs. The manner in which I discuss their work is thorough but should not be understood as a complete survey of their research, nor am I seeking to give a full survey of the entire history of choreomusical discourse. The segments of their research that have been most influential on my rationale are the ones that I focus on, to show and give credit to the origins of my thinking.

Each points to specific elements of choreomusical history as the framework for their theorems, which I identify and include accordingly, some of which are mentioned multiple times. I have chosen to reference these points of choreomusical history as they are mentioned, not as they occur chronologically, as choreomusical methods do not follow a linear pattern of development. The assertions each of these theorists makes are drawn from, and made in reaction to, different points in history. This thesis seeks to build upon these assertions by focusing on recent works, and my own witnessing as dancer, choreographer and audience, to address trends in last half of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century.

Sawyer, Damsholt and Jordan, are all in dialogue with each other, frequently citing each other's work and comparing and contrasting perspectives. Further than that, they each regard dance and music as isolated fields, and approach choreomusical relationships as interactions between the two throughout the course of a concert dance

⁴ Paul Hodgins, *Relationships between Score and Choreography in Twentieth-Century Dance: Music, Movement and Metaphor* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992))

piece. In the next few chapters, I give an overview of my understanding of their research, especially as it pertains to my own.

I also use additional phrases to describe certain elements involved in my research. The most important of these is “musical landmarks,” which I use to refer to musical gestures that are marked in some way in the whole theatrical context (such as rhythm, instrumentation, or structure); this term is used to identify such choreomusical relationships.

Chapter 1: The Perspective of the Musician

Elizabeth Sawyer's work is primarily focused on the analysis of ballet and represents a classic analytic model of choreomusical relationships. Published in 1989 (based on decades of work as Anthony Tudor's pianist at Juilliard), Sawyer's view holds that movement becomes a form of expression through its connection to music, specifically, connection to rhythm. She states rather summarily that, "... movement can exist without the five ballet positions, story, stars, sets or, even at times music, but the one essential which transforms it from disjunct motor activity to a form of expression is rhythm."⁵

Attributing the expressive capacity of a work to a specific musical element creates a desire for perceived musicality. She describes the combinatory sensations that are created by simultaneous aural and visual perception, which, she asserts, "create an illusion of oneness."⁶ This is what I would call an early reference to the idea of choreomusical relationships resulting in a concurrence, but it comes from a perspective of viewing music as a way to imbue artistry into movement, which I will contest later in this thesis. Of course, she is looking at the genre of ballet, which has its own musical history, but her use of the phrase "disjunct motor activity" would suggest that her ideas about music and dance extend beyond genre names. She continues her argument by addressing these "attempts" at stressing the "independent nature of dance" by stating that "at the most basic level it is obviously not independent or autonomous in the

⁵ Elizabeth Sawyer, "The Relationship of Movement and Music," in *Dance with the Music: The World of the Ballet Musician* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 15)

⁶Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 16.

manner of painting, say, or literature.”⁷ Here is an assumption that dance cannot exist in an artistic form without music, that “dance and music are complementary” inherently, and seek a sense of “harmony.”⁸ This complementary relationship assumes limitations to the relationships between dance and music, and therefore limits the ways in which choreomusical relationships can be articulated.

The work I refer to, a chapter from *Dance with the Music: The World of the Ballet Musician*, is where Sawyer classifies the different methods of developing this harmony, like “synchronization,” which I discussed earlier. She goes into depth about three choreomusical relationships specifically: synchronization, opposition, and assimilation. Each is based in Sawyer’s foundational idea that dance is not autonomous or self-sufficient, though it retains some individuality. So, choreographers use certain musical landmarks to determine a choreomusical relationship. Sawyer contends in a section called, “art vs. acrobatics,” that an over-emphasis on visuals makes ballet a “sterile art.”⁹ In this context, it makes sense to develop an analytic model that focuses on relationships that make a piece an expressive through direct choreomusicality to avoid an overemphasis on acrobatics or visual elements.

“Synchronization” and “opposition” are easily recognized as a sort of dichotomy. “Synchronization” depends heavily on the use of these structural landmarks, with a total of five sub-definitions, each attending to a relationship with a specific musical element.¹⁰ These include elements like meter, tempo, musical phrasing, musical structure, and texture, but Sawyer also includes music that she considers to be “neutral,”

⁷ Sawyer, 23.

⁸ Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 23-24)

⁹ Sawyer, 18.

¹⁰ Sawyer, 24.

as in it only “contributes a metrical framework.”¹¹ The idea of music being used only as a metrical framework still assumes that these “rhythmic” landmarks are the foundation for a work’s choreomusical relationship.

In fact, Sawyer makes certain allocations in her descriptive terms for different approaches, but her classification system still relies on landmarks as a point of reference and evaluation. Her definition of “opposition” includes “stylistic disparity” and “dramatic antithesis,”¹² (relatively common contemporary concepts), which could be relationships all their own, but are instead presented as signs of “opposing” the music.

Her definition of “assimilation” is perhaps her most complex and open-ended, which she admits. She refers here to nuanced musicality, as well as the combining of synchronization to specific musical landmarks with opposition to others. For Sawyer, this is the category that “ballets generally considered to be outstanding” fall into.¹³ It operates as a classification as much as an evaluation of a piece’s quality. Still, Sawyer’s “assimilation” speaks to a concept that holds true for current works: the existence of multiple relationships within a single piece, all contributing to the full work. Further comments by Sawyer also propel this idea as she notes the use of “two mediums” in a dance work: “the visual one of embodied space, and the aural one of sonorous space.”¹⁴ She notes the impossibility of music or dance to exactly replicate each of the other’s contributions, but Sawyer approaches this as something to be wary of on the part of the choreographer. She refers to the negative effects of a technique associated with the film-music term “Mickey Mousing” (from the Disney classic *Fantasia*, which Inger

¹¹ Sawyer, 25.

¹² Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 26.

¹³ Sawyer, 27.

¹⁴ Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 29.

Damsholt addresses specifically) that is centered around the sort of cartoonish over-adherence to “the illusion of movement in music,”¹⁵ or attempting to exactly mimic visual image to musical form.

Sawyer's choreomusical analysis comes from two foundational ideas important to my thesis: 1) that Dance cannot be self-sufficient, and 2) that a piece is successful based on its relation to associated music. Sawyer values direct choreomusical relationships and suggests that certain choreomusical methods are more valuable than others. This evaluation determines whether the piece in question is successful at using these more valuable methods and is a judgement of the work. Elizabeth Sawyer's background as a musician orients her analysis. Though she provides terminology to describe relationships between certain visual images and specific musical elements that are helpful for describing observed interactions, this evaluation of a piece based on its connection to music is not representative of recent modes of choreomusicality, and cannot entirely encompass some approaches taken by current works. Sawyer looks at older ballet works as the foundation for her mode of analysis while Damsholt and Jordan discuss works that explore their current state and the future of choreomusical analysis as her contemporaries. Because she looks at older works, her model is representative of older choreomusical relationships, and is not representative of recent works that push against these older models or are outside of the genre of ballet. Still, within this older model, Sawyer gives room for more exploration with the term “assimilation” that allows for works that don't fit cleanly into “synchronization” or “opposition” to be described. Choreomusical discourse is not linear, and many of these ideas will exist in the same chronological period, just as many of these described

¹⁵ Sawyer, 30.

relationships can exist within a singular piece. With that acknowledgement, Sawyer opens a door to describe works that do not fit cleanly into the models of the past.

Chapter 2: Damsholt and The State of Discourse

Inger Damsholt's 1999 dissertation begins with a gentle critique of Sawyer. She ends her introduction by saying "any study of the relationship of choreomusical relations ought to move beyond the standard recognition of 'Mickey Mousing' or the lack of it."¹⁶ But Damsholt is not critical of 'Mickey Mousing' in the same manner as Sawyer. Rather, she uses the term to highlight the value system of certain choreomusical relationships she perceives within the discourse. She asserts that there has been an oversimplification of dance and music relationships that impedes the continuation of analysis beyond the mid-twentieth century. Damsholt looks at early choreomusical discourse, stemming from the Renaissance era, as the foundation of twentieth-century ideas about the reliance of dance on music, as well as the centrality of music as a key element in the theatrical production of dance. These are ideas that I perceive as having been adapted by Sawyer. She states that, "... choreomusical discourse is conditioned by the notion of *dance as joined with music* as an *ideal* or a natural relationship which ought not to change but 'last as long as the world.'"¹⁷

Damsholt uses this to contrast the twentieth-century idea of "music visualization," which refers to the capacity for dance to visualize music, both structurally and emotionally. Sawyer was critical of this capacity, especially when she believed it was over-utilized (enter "Mickey Mousing"), and Damsholt notes that it is not understood as an aspiration of choreomusical relationships by twentieth-century discourse.¹⁸ This is part of a perceived binary used to understand choreomusical

¹⁶ Inger Damsholt, "Choreomusical Discourse: the Relationship between Dance and Music" (dissertation, 1999), p.4

¹⁷ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 39.

¹⁸ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 78.

relationships within the twentieth century, which posits “counterpoint” opposite “music visualization,” and values “counterpoint” over the other. Damsholt defines “counterpoint” as being, simply, when dance “does something else.”¹⁹ Like Sawyer’s classifications, the assumption is an observable relationship between sound and movement, and anything contrary is “other.” She notes that this binary focuses on multiple aspects of a musical relationship by using “parallel parameters,” which identify certain choreographic choices as being parallel to certain musical elements. She cites Emile Jacques-Dalcroze’s system of classification, known more generally as Eurythmics, from a chapter of “Rhythm and Music Education” from 1919, which gives a list of musical components and their corresponding “moving plastics.”²⁰ Damsholt includes Jaques-Dalcroze’s definition of “moving plastics,” which are “complete art directly addressed to the eyes of the spectators.”²¹ Jacques-Dalcroze’s description references an attention to the observer as a judge of a piece, playing into the early value in spectator versus performer. I understand this system as a forebear of Sawyer’s, though she focuses on a classification of relationships, not physical landmarks.

Damsholt uses Eurythmics to assert the limitations of using similar analytic models as she recognizes a shift in choreomusical relationships. Her research into this shift highlights important foundational ideas for my thesis. Damsholt identifies specific problems with existing modes of choreomusical analysis that identified a need for more choreomusical specific language, capable of describing multiple relationships within a work.

¹⁹ Damsholt pp. 60

²⁰ Damsholt pp. 61-62

²¹ Damsholt, 62

Cage and Cunningham's Collaborations

A key part of Damsholt's dissertation orients Jaques-Dalcroze's system as a counter to John Cage and Merce Cunningham. John Cage and Merce Cunningham's collaborations are considered a keystone in current choreomusical discourse for the poetics they developed through their work. Damsholt mentions their impact when she says, "...the implicit assumption of critical dance theory seems to be that 'John and Merce' have dissolved the relationship between dance and music, and therefore a history of choreomusical relationships must necessarily end somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century."²²

The Cage/Cunningham choreomusical poetics seems to be a moment of pause in this discourse. The stripping away of musical landmarks introduced by Jaques-Dalcroze, the metrical framework developed by the remnants of rhythmic structure would fall under what Sawyer would call "neutral music."²³ John Cage and Merce Cunningham went even further, with each of them developing separate metrics in choreography and music composition.²⁴ Cage and Cunningham's work is anomalous in its time for this experimentation with choreomusical and theatrical relationships, but though I credit their approach as laying the foundation for recent ideas, it is far from the last word. Damsholt acknowledges that Cage and Cunningham's work is aware of the use of "parallel parameters" in identifying choreomusicality, and quotes Cunningham directly: "The one element that music and dance have in common is the use of time. I

²² Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 2.

²³ Sawyer, 30.

²⁴ Leta E Miller, "Cage's Collaborations," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 151-168, p.156)

think everything else is intellectual about it, everything else is figured out. But they both exist in time.”²⁵

This is an important acknowledgement. Any validation that there is a relationship purely in an existential form between dance and music is a start to looking at dance and music as equal tools, regardless of historical relationships. Cage and Cunningham’s work furthered this idea, rejecting causal relationships between music and dance through “parallel parameters” in favor of a “modernist notion of autonomy,” as Damsholt describes it.²⁶ Cunningham describes his own work as dance that “is not performed to the music,” rather he calls it, “essentially a non-relationship.”²⁷

Damsholt disagrees with this as a “non-relationship,” as do I. She argues that though observers may “predominantly experience the two as disconnected,” dance and music in Cage/Cunningham’s work “are related because they exist alongside each other.”²⁸ Cunningham’s statement still suggests that choreomusical relationships are determined by music, although he refers to their connection through time, with reference to their simultaneous existence. Damsholt breaks up the idea of a non-relation, then goes on to describe how choreographers since have used music, citing theorists like Allen Vogelsanger and Jonathan Kramer’s work to describe this changing dynamic to music, one that allows for music to create a “slowly changing emotional space,”²⁹ or a musical space that subverts or “dissolves time.”³⁰ It is an embrace of dance and music as two time-based art forms. This embrace highlights the relationship dance

²⁵ Cunningham (1980) as cited in Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 71.

²⁶ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 76.

²⁷ Cunningham (1970) as cited in Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 74.

²⁸ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 134.

²⁹ Vogelsanger as cited in Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 137.

³⁰ Kramer as cited in Damsholt, 137.

and music have through their connection as existing in time, one that underlies all other observable relationships.

Need for Language

Damsholt's conclusion is that a major point of contention in the overall state of choreomusical discourse is the lack of attention paid to its semantic influences.

Damsholt perceives that choreomusical relationships are discussed in a limited sphere that gives a centrality to the music without discussing what could be described as subjective content, like emotional affection. Through this perspective, the systematizing of choreomusical relationships and meanings is understood as being too simplistic to ever account for the variety of possibilities and affectations involved in the perception and analysis of a work. Still, Damsholt admits that "it ought to be an important task of future choreomusical analysis to develop a language in which we can account for the semantic content of music/dance relationships."³¹ This is what my thesis is attempting to do.

Though developing specific analytic language has been used as a tool in past choreomusical analysis, Damsholt values language as the future for choreomusical discourse. What I believe is missing from the terminology, is language that can account for the often-subjective perceptions of a piece without determining value or meaning. Jordan's term "choreomusical" does this well, as it identifies a relationship between music and movement without giving specific definitions of its nature. It can be applied to several works without conflation and is still descriptive enough to be an effective comprehension tool.

³¹ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 208.

I agree with Damsholt's assertions that are concerned with the problems surrounding choreomusical discourse. However, I disagree with the subtext in her dissertation that compares and contrasts dance and music as individual fields within their relationship while discussing choreomusical partnerships, perhaps a response to the circulation of Sawyer's type of perspective that claims dance as reliant on music for full form. Despite her acknowledgements of existential relationships, dance and music are still understood to be isolated forms that directly interact, not smaller sections of a whole compositional form.

A term derived from John Cage and Merce Cunningham's collaboration, often referred to as "simultaneity", encompasses ideas about a relationship between dance and music through existence without this direct interaction, but also includes the specific work dynamic of John Cage and Merce Cunningham's collaboration.³² This work dynamic does not involve collaboration in the middle of the developmental process, and so it remains specifically referential to that type of collaboration. Damsholt's work identifies a need for choreomusical terms capable of describing more than just one method of work development. But I feel that these terms also need to move away from the isolationist ideology that sees dance and music as parts of a binary.

³² Conversations with Professor Christian Cherry, 2020.

Chapter 3: Stephanie Jordan and Concurrency

Stephanie Jordan's recently published work from 2011, *Choreomusical Conversations*, makes multiple statements that I consider to be the source material of my research. She examines the nature of this validation of dance and music as individual fields by looking at their independent histories. Her body of work is extensive and has been recognized as invaluable research for understanding choreomusical relationships. This text was where I first encountered choreomusicology, and it is full of many important reflections. The influences I gather from her work are not necessarily straightforward, but certain statements she makes are reflective of much of my perspective.

To begin, she talks about the "centrality of music within dance" as being an "unquestioned fact of life."³³ Her approach is not to immediately oppose this idea, but rather, she dives into the ways in which the thorough history of music and musicology have allowed for music to be thought of as an individual field.³⁴ Dance, with its emphasis on the performer and not the choreographer, opposite music, with composition at the forefront and a classical neglect of the performer. Dance as a form, has proven more difficult to notate, and therefore more difficult to analyze with the same "formal" connotation as Western music analysis.³⁵

She makes these comparisons as a means of identifying them as individuals, in a time where she recognizes that "they are becoming more mutually permeable, and in relation to their shared interdisciplinarity."³⁶ Here, she intends to validate their

³³ Jordan, Stephanie. *Choreomusical Conversations: Facing a Double Challenge* (Dance Research Journal, 2011), <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/446665>), 43.

³⁴ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 43.

³⁵ Jordan, 44.

³⁶ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 43.

individuality before discussing how they are developing considerable overlap. Her section on Intermedia Research and Choreomusical Theory is most influential to my present thoughts.

Damsholt's focus on "parallel parameters" opposite counterpoint was oriented as a critique of the discourse she had encountered. *Choreomusical Conversations* is not intended to focus on the discourse, but rather the changing nature of choreomusicality in works. Jordan writes:

Rapidly disappearing is the old hard binary of parallelism and counterpoint (even though these concepts serve usefully to identify a continuum of possibility within formal analysis). In the case of music and dance, we are dealing with a composite form. Whilst we might still be able to trace their separate development, especially in the case of music that already exists outside the dance and might preserve something of its original identity, these two sensory planes now meet to affect each other and to create a new identity from their meeting.³⁷

This is an exact description of the recent environment in the concert dance world that I have come to know, and the phenomenon that I have recognized in it, which I call a "concurrence." Jordan recognizes that dance and music are not being understood in the same manner as before, and this in turn affects choreomusical relationships in more recent works.

Intermedia Research and Choreomusical Theory

The most important section to my research, and the one that has contributed most to my present ideas, is Jordan's section concerning Intermedia Research as it applies to Choreomusical Theory. I take this as Jordan's answer to the perceived shift in choreomusical method and refers to film music and linguistic theories to better

³⁷Jordan, 47.

represent dance and music as a “composite form.”³⁸ She quotes film music theorist Claudia Gorbman’s idea of “mutual implication,” which addresses the conversation between music and image in a work.³⁹

In this section, she analyzes various pieces like Mark Morris’ *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) and Paul Taylor’s *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)* (1980) with standard music-based formal analysis.⁴⁰ However, she also discusses how music and movement mutually contribute to each other. In Morris’ work, she discusses how the gesture interacts with the text, “movement highlighting sung words selectively.”⁴¹ The sung text in Morris’ work is understood in her analysis to give meaning to the gesture, but the use of specific gestures at the same time as specific words in the text highlights their meaning, also known as “word painting.”⁴² The text is still reference material for the gesture, but the relationship between the two is composite.

By looking at the mutual contributions of each element, Jordan lays the groundwork for “concurrence.” Jordan’s approach, despite its use of elements of formal analysis, acknowledges other relationships between music and dance as part of a multi-media work. Jordan’s analysis is incredibly accurate in describing the works that she chooses to analyze, but recent works seek to continue further from her recognitions. Though Jordan refers to multiple terms like “visual capture”⁴³ and “mutual implication” to describe similar relationships, “concurrence” is the singular term I am proposing to discuss them all.

³⁸ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 47.

³⁹ Jordan, 48.

⁴⁰ Jordan, 49

⁴¹ Jordan, 49

⁴² Conversations with Christian Cherry, 2020.

⁴³ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 50.

Concurrence

As Jordan, Sawyer, and Damsholt note, dance is already not an easy form to analyze, as it is very rarely translated or recorded into a notation comparable to a data set. This accounts for research and analysis available stemming from existing notation systems, like Labanotation, or the use of other systems of analysis, like those stemming from musicology, which Jordan and Damsholt frequently refer to.⁴⁴ Sawyer uses the latter, as well as ideas from psychology (aural versus visual perception), to form the foundation of her classification system.⁴⁵ Dance analysis has also pulled from areas like ethnography, social philosophy, and the language of artistic movements, like postmodernism in the sixties.⁴⁶ It is a constantly changing field, that Jordan recognizes as needing to account for “cultural issues, our aesthetic judgments, as well as the varying dance and musical experience of experiment participants.”⁴⁷ Damsholt refers to this as dance’s “semantic content,”⁴⁸ content underserved by existing systems and classifications but that can be found in every dance work.

This constant referencing of other classification systems and language points to a difficulty in describing movement. Even with these outside references, like Jordan’s comparisons to linguistic theory and film music terms like “mutual implication,”⁴⁹ the analysis often avoids talking about “semantic content” because of its subjective nature.

⁴⁴ Jordan, 46.

⁴⁵ Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 13-43.

⁴⁶ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 46.

⁴⁷ Jordan, 51.

⁴⁸ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 208.

⁴⁹ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 48.

Moving Forward

A common theme among many descriptive terms and concepts is an attempt to be solely definitive. “Synchronization,” “music visualisation,” “Mickey Mousing,” all speak to an observer’s perspective on the piece. They place roles for sound and movement and make assumptions as to how they relate to one another in a singular form. Music is either represented through the visuals of the movement, or the movement pushes against it, but they are relationships “like a marriage,” which Damsholt and Jordan recognize as a familiar metaphor.

These terms work well for relationships where a musical element or specific movement are understood as intending to “go together.” Pieces that are described as interpreting the music, use music as a reference point that allows for the determination of whether there is synchronization, opposition, or some other form of referential relation, potentially an emotional arc or mood. But some work from the twentieth to the twenty-first century is not made with the same musical approach, or adds other layers of cross influence, so it might benefit from other analytic methods. These works often involve a deeper attention to the emotional milieu of the pieces or even rely on “semantic content,” and use multiple mediums to “complete” their whole. The comparison of these newer works to previous models of those that “go-together,” is not unlike comparing an oil painting to a mixed media work. The oil painting has a subject and a medium. Comparably, many of the works analyzed by Sawyer, Jordan, and Damsholt posit music, sometimes unintentionally, as the subject and dance as the medium. This doesn’t mean there are restrictions on realism (a direct representation like synchronization or music visualization) versus abstraction (opposition, counterpoint,

assimilation, etc.), just that the assumption is that the movement is organized as an interpreter of the music, or is referential.

Mark Morris' work receives substantial praise for its "music visualization," defying "formal" value systems that push against it, like the praise of "counterpoint" that Damsholt discusses.⁵⁰ Jordan also recognizes the choreomusical relationships present in Morris' work, and refers to one of his solos from 2007 as a prime example of "visual capture."⁵¹ Speaking on visual and aural capture, Jordan writes

Is there not a degree of mutual enhancement here between music and dance? Yes, certainly. But could this also be a case of auditory or visual capture? The argument for visual capture is that the physical movements at these particular points are especially powerful (or, in science language, "salient") within their context. They stand out from their context, as five major accents, more so than the "accompanying" musical syncopations, which are part of the regular style of the unfolding long, long melody. And this "freeze phenomenon" (another concept from psychology)⁸ undoubtedly disturbed the expectations that I had from already knowing the music by itself. I also experience a sudden "lift" or "tension" within my body when I encounter these moments: they structure my experience of the whole solo. But it is important that their effect draws from music and dance *together*.⁵²

The way that Jordan discusses Morris' work is still subject through medium, not as her only concern, but still as a substantial one. She talks about the "physical movements... within their context" as being especially impactful, but it is pertinent that their impact comes from the context of "music and dance *together*," with use of other theatrical elements like lighting or costuming. The way she describes this reminds me of the way that painting techniques are discussed, how brush strokes are used to create the image of the subject. For this reason, I often regard Morris' work as an abstract oil painting.

⁵⁰ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 78.

⁵¹ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 51.

⁵² Jordan, 51.

There is still a desire for the entire music to play a referential role regarding the movement, though Jordan differs from more classic analytic models by acknowledging a “dynamic interaction,”⁵³ one that is capable of change throughout the work.

This metaphor could also extend to works that have more than one “subject.” *D-Man in the Waters* (1989) by Bill T. Jones was a landmark work addressing the AIDS epidemic at its peak but is just as recognized for its musicality. The work was choreographed to Felix Mendelssohn’s monumental *Octet for Strings*⁵⁴, and Jones paid special attention to match the melodic swells, and the structure of the music with visual images created by his dancers. This connection is one of the most recognizable features of the work, and is often described as being “deeply mutually attuned”⁵⁵ between the music and the movement. Though this work focuses on the AIDS epidemic, Mendelssohn’s music is also a subject of the work. Movement is the sole medium for depicting both “subjects.” The *Octet for Strings* directly influences the structure and shape of that medium on the stage space, making it an “oil painting.” In the case of *D-Man*, the relationship of which musical landmarks are painted by the choreography changes throughout the work, highlighting a shift towards dynamic interaction.

What distinguishes many works of the recent half of the twenty-first century from works of this nature is the use of music and movement as multiple mediums to develop multiple subjects. This is where the “mixed-media” idea comes in. Rather than looking to music to establish the structure of the movement, or serve as referential material, they are combined in any number of ways to depict the subject, each

⁵³ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 47.

⁵⁴ (Maison de la Danse, 1993), <https://www.numeridanse.tv/en/dance-videotheque/d-man-waters>)

⁵⁵ “Financial Times,” *Financial Times*, March 27, 2013, <https://www.ft.com/content/1ed75426-96ce-11e2-a77c-00144feabdc0>)

contributing a unique element to the work. We can understand each element as contributing to a whole, without requiring labels for the manner in which they behave or the roles they play. Jordan makes note of this, and uses film theorist, Nicholas Cook's, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (1998) to address it.⁵⁶ His terms, "conformance," "contest," and "complementation," address the relationship between these kinds of mixed-media works, and discuss dynamics like "incompatibility" and "essential contradiction," but are founded on similar points of reference as Sawyer's "synchronization," "opposition," and "assimilation."⁵⁷ How well these elements seem to partner is part of the evaluation, and still makes room for a judgement as to how well they respect each other. Inherent in this is a need to examine the relationship from the perspective of each element as part of a direct relationship. In order for something to "contradict", there must be a point of immediate reference. This is comparable to examining how well the watercolor might interact with the illustration in a mixed-media work. It looks at a specific relationship for its "compatibility," making a referential judgement, but doesn't manage to describe the work as a whole. It is still classifying and comparing the two individual fields to one another. This requires dance and music to be in a direct relationship with each other for them to be discussed together. I understand their relationship in recent works more like the relationship between two individuals in a crowded restaurant: both are customers, both are existing in the same plane, both are contributing, and so they have a sort of existential relationship, contributing to the scene, without needing direct reference to each other. They might still have direct interactions, but it is a label-free relationship.

⁵⁶ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 48.

⁵⁷ Sawyer, *Dance with the Music*, 13-43.

The power or effect of combining these elements can't usually be replicated by each individually, so there is a necessary relationship at play that can be dynamic. But past choreomusical discourse seems to require a direct interaction, when they might in fact just be intended to create by mutual presence. Of course, describing this as a choreomusical relationship implies interaction, but just as Damsholt understands a relationship in Cage and Cunningham's work, dance and music in pieces from the last half-century can still be described as having choreomusical relationships with or without direct interactions.

The shift is that recent works are not seeking to argue for the value of one or the other, and formal choreomusical analysis like Sawyer's, or even the linguistic theory of Nicholas Cook, often contain connotations of judgement, valuation, or determination from one to the other. Recent relationships are more existential than that: there is simply what exists, for any purpose. The overall interaction and result from the combination of these elements is what I describe as a "concurrence." A concurrence does not refer to the observed direct relation between the movement and the structure of the music, nor does it make an evaluation on the value of each field, but is an effect and dynamic of treating both music and movement as equal contributors in the creation of a work. It refers to their existential relationship as elements existing in the same space at the same time. The process involved in this description is one of being in the work at the time of its performance, not necessarily the way it is developed. The perspective of the performer has always been present in concert dance but discussing choreomusical relationships as existential allows this perspective to contribute to a work's analysis.

Still, there may be observed direct relationships between elements of those mediums, ones that could fall under terms like “synchronization” or “contest.” But identifying a concurrence suggests that these are not the sole relationships of the work, and that they may be insufficient as tools for describing the overall effect. Just as Damsholt desires language to account for effectual or intangible content, like semantics, she is against classifications of all choreomusical relationships.⁵⁸ A concurrence can describe personal interpretations without defining what those interpretations must be.

This is not a new concept I am discovering. Cage and Cunningham laid the groundwork for it (as noted by Damsholt⁵⁹), one that Jordan points to extensively in her study of *Intermedia Research*⁶⁰, and is the shift away from the traditions of choreomusical discourse that Damsholt describes. Concurrence is simply a different term that may be applied descriptively, one that is not borrowed from another field like film-music or musicology or even sociology, but one that can belong solely to choreomusical analysis.

It is also a term capable of capturing semantic content without being definitive. “Mood” is a term that has been used to describe an element that also falls outside of these medium/subject relationships, specifically an emotional one. It often falls under “assimilation” as a contributor to a work, but not one that fits cleanly into any existing choreomusical terminology. These medium/subject relationships do not describe an emotional perception of the work, focusing instead on the ways in which the medium structurally or physically responds to the subject. “Mood” alone does not describe an interaction or relationship, but only a product, and has often been avoided in “formal”

⁵⁸ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 208.

⁵⁹ Damsholt, 71.

⁶⁰ Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 47.

analysis to appeal to logic or tangible evidence. In a concurrence, the result of the combination of music and movement may fall under the description of a “mood,” while simultaneously describing the relationship between the two as it produces this “mood.” By being able to include emotions as a product, with the relationship that created it, “concurrence” can also describe elements and interactions outside of the reach of past medium/subject descriptive terms. This is just to say that “concurrence” gives room.

Each of the works I choose to analyze in greater depth exemplify these uses. I have chosen these works for their clarity in demonstrating a concurrence. They each have existential relationships in them that cannot be fully described by other terms. Their content is not necessarily about form or structure, but may be personal, or effectual. In my analysis, I reference smaller relationships in the pieces before describing their concurrence as a way of acknowledging the existence of multiple relationships as a time. They are just a few of the many works within the last century that have taken a different approach to dance-music relationships, and so require a similar change in approach to their analysis. This change in relationship dynamic has been already recognized and identified, but lacks descriptive language, in part because past choreomusical discourse approaches language as incapable of representing multiple perspectives. “Concurrence” is intentionally open for this reason, so that the need for terminology is resolved while avoiding evaluative or systematizing approaches.

Chapter 5: Damien Jalet's *Les Médusés*

One quote from Damien Jalet, cited in an article in the Guardian about Jalet's work, references his three-night immersive production in the Louvre from February of 2013, *Les Médusés*.⁶¹ Adjacent to his comments on the everlasting nature of the sculptures in the famous gallery, Jalet states "we were doing a performance that would only live in the moment."⁶² These few words encapsulate the overall effect of the work, with all of its elements combining to produce a unique, living, experience. The "choreographic journey" was comprised of a collaboration between dancers from the Eastman company, students from the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, and musicians Winter Family, Sofyann Ben Youssef, and Mahabub and Sattar Khan.⁶³ The live performance was orchestrated in a gallery style format, often with different sections of choreography overlapping each other chronologically in different parts of the museum, foregoing the traditional theater venue and giving the audience a sort of free will to move about the museum. The spectators thus become a part of the composition, providing a sense of engagement with material that is never forcefully presented, but chosen by the audience member. They are as much a part of the performing process as the dancers and musicians themselves.

⁶¹ les médusés - a choreographic journey by Damien Jalet in Le Louvre - Paris (Vimeo, July 23, 2013), <https://vimeo.com/70849036>)

⁶² Chris Wiegand, "Body Shock: Suspiria's Damien Jalet Unleashes His Headless Dancers," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, April 8, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2019/apr/08/suspiria-damien-jalet-interview-headless-dancers-choreographer-vessel>)

⁶³ les médusés, Vimeo.

Les Médusées

The section I have chosen to analyze is titled *Les Médusées*, and features live and recorded music composed by Gabriele Miracle and played by Winter Family, performing with dancers Meytal Blanaru, Clara Furey, Vittoria De Ferrari Sapetto.⁶⁴ I chose this section specifically because it references other previously discussed music-movement relationships, while still including a specific element that allows for it to be described as a concurrence. I also chose this section because the nature of the development of the music in relationship to the movement is not specified. I have been unable to find any description of the developmental process, so my analysis is founded on observations of the full performance. I am also only referencing a specific evening of the three-night event, further isolating my analysis to a specific performance

The music is a recorded composition by Gabriele Miracle, accompanied by what seems to be live Philicorda and live speech, often used by Winter Family in their music.⁶⁵ The recorded rhythm and live elements create a layered soundscape, with a temporal consistency provided by the recorded rhythm for each of the three nights of the concert. The structure of the music is not dense and is centered around the distinct ticks of the rhythmic composition, though the live elements have a power of their own. Sawyer would describe it as "neutral,"⁶⁶ laying a foundation for something else. The ticks punctuate the space, composed of a woodblock and triangle. The woodblock offers a hardened knock, while the triangle adds a high-pitch twinkle between or in

⁶⁴ *Les Médusées*, *Les Médusées // Trio Féminin S'Inspirant De La Nature Ensorceleuse Des Nymphes De Marly* (YouTube, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYtrTNbzQZQ>

⁶⁵ "Winter Family," Winter Family, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://winterfamily.bandcamp.com/>

⁶⁶ Sawyer, 30.

complement to these knocks. Though Miracle's rhythmic composition fronts the soundscape, the live elements played by Winter Family create a specific mood for them to inhabit. The Philicorda creates a mythical undertone to the soundscape which stretches out and fills the airspace with a mysterious tone. The indecipherable speech seems to fade in and out of the perceptible score, only adding to the mystical atmosphere. The music fills the aural landscape and immerses me into its perception of time.

The movement is clear and precise. "Formal" analysis might describe the trio of women as seeming to move in accordance with the rhythmic ticks, what Elizabeth Sawyer would describe as "synchronization." Each knock and triangle hit are accompanied or associated with either the specific movement of a particular dancer, the movement of a body part (joint, limb, torso, head, etc.), or a restructuring of the dancers formation. Isolated, there is no obvious flow or continuity to their movements, which are mostly positional, save for the occasional slight elongation of a position, which could be described as a melt or a stretch from the initial shape. This could be called shaping, due to a seeming lack of fluid transition or morphing from one position to the next, but here it comes across as living sculpture taking shape during the performance. As a trio they create a story of sculptural forms, with different facings addressing the rounded space they are performing in. The alternate facings of the trio shape this gallery/stage space by providing a sort of living architecture, complementing the ancient Greek sculptures that frame the composition.

The Concurrence



Fig

ure 1: A still from Damien Jalet's *Les Médusées*

This is a screenshot from a recording of *Les Médusées* that was published on Vimeo by Jalet himself. It is part of a filmed version of the full length work that includes edits and transitions.⁶⁷

The ways these elements work in tandem with each other suggests more than just a synchronous choreomusicality. What seems like sharpness and precision in the movement when viewing the full performance becomes softer without the presence of the rhythmic knocks in the soundscape. The tasseled costumes show continuity of movement with residual swinging of each section of draped rope. Similarly, without the images of the movement, the Philicorda fills the soundscape without anchor, the knocks and tings of the rhythmic section floating above. The speech travels with the Philicorda, extending on and on without barriers. In this way, the music serves to forefront the movement as much as the movement anchors the sound in the gallery space. Both the music and movement exist in their own intriguing realms, but neither can replicate their combined effect alone. This phenomenon doesn't fall easily under Sawyer, Jordan, or Damsholt's concepts, as it doesn't necessarily indicate a direct relationship between the

⁶⁷les médusés, Vimeo.

sound and movement, nor does it ascribe the creation of this effect to one or the other. Though terms like “synchronization” can be applied to describe an aspect of their relationship, the relationship cannot be entirely encompassed by these terms. This is where “concurrency” can be used. The combination of the soundscape with the movement works together in the moment to create a common effect, one that cannot be replicated without the other. Unlike past music-dance relationships, there is a logic present to each element in isolation. The movement creates a stimulating visual, has its own gestural vocabulary that references the statuesque nature of the dancers. The music is ethereal but also pushes its own processing of time with the knocks and tings of the rhythmic composition. But a different narrative rises with a concurrency. Like the rest of the choreography for the evening of work, inspiration was drawn from mythology, linking the dancers to specific mythic idols or stories. In the case of *Les Médusées*, these women are comparable to nymphs, powerful and alluring figures that often have specific connections to their environment.⁶⁸ Traditionally, this would refer to their connection with nature, but within the context of this work, it is not unrealistic to imagine their connection as being with the aural environment. I observe their connections to the knocks and tings of the rhythmic composition clearly through their simultaneity, but their mythic quality comes through from the encompassing organ and speech. By using the movement of these musical elements provide the mood for the trio, and so bring to life Damien Jalet’s mythic inspirations.

The Concurrency in this work creates a mythic narrative. It is the purpose for, and effect created by, the presence of music and dance respectively in the space.

⁶⁸Les Médusées, Youtube.

Though Jalet's work contains what could be perceived as a direct relationship, it is not required to have one to present a concurrence.

Chapter 6: *Field Days* and *Hues*

Recent Work Underserved

The most recent works are often under-represented in research. It makes sense to analyze a work with some distance, especially in the case of changing choreomusical methods. However, since “concurrency” is a term I developed in tandem with recent observations, I want to apply it to more recent pieces. Amanda K. Miller’s *Field Days* (2010) (which premiered even before Stephanie Jordan’s *Choreomusical Conversations*), and Alice Klock’s *Hues* (2017) are two works that have very little available research. They were performed by artists from widely acclaimed companies (Nederlands Dance Theater⁶⁹ and dancers from Northwest Dance Project⁷⁰). The descriptions that I found come directly from the choreographers. My analysis of these works is subjective, and I present my own analysis. “Concurrency” as an open term suits subjectivity well and is no less descriptive in this context.

Field Days (2010)

I found one video source of Amanda K. Miller’s *Field Days* from 2010, published by Miller herself. Miller herself is a very accomplished figure in the concert dance world, being the founder, Artistic Director, and choreographer for the *Pretty Ugly Dance Company* based in Germany.⁷¹ The video description includes a short commentary from Miller about the process of working with the NDT dancers and with

⁶⁹ "Field Days" NDT 2010/ Amanda K. Miller , "Field Days" NDT 2010/ Amanda K. Miller (Youtube, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWp6XhzMJD8>

⁷⁰ Excerpts from "Hues" (Vimeo, July 19, 2017), <https://vimeo.com/226247595>

⁷¹ “Amanda K. Miller | Dance Program,” Duke | Dance Program, September 11, 2017, <https://danceprogram.duke.edu/amanda-k-miller>

composer, Fred Frith.⁷² In this description Miller writes, “I loved working with the dancers and parts of the choreography with their improvisations. They understood how Fred and I work together and the sensations of listening.”⁷³ Miller implies a relationship, a collaborative relationship with Frith.

For this piece, I am looking at a snippet starting at about 12:54 into the video, and ending at 13:30. There is a perceived shift here. The ensemble of dancers move across the stage like a transition, leaving a duo and two other dancers in the lit stage space, another dancer receding into the shadow upstage. Another duo enters the lit space, and the two dancers come together to begin a duet. Their movement is push and pull, supporting and moving with each other through the space, seemingly in a sense of “play.” At times, they move to observe the other dancers in a sort of jog, pointed feet giving a sense of lightness and avoidance of gravity and the ground.

Frith’s music prior to this moment is an intense and full composition of rhythmic kick drum keeping time, with a plucked string and whistle accenting a tense string background. This seems to dissolve into a composition marked by notes of piano, a string accent, and the continuation of a deep drum. The sound of a gong also appears and disappears throughout the soundscape. Each appears over the now subdued string background in a specific order: piano, string, drum, piano, string, drum, piano, string, cymbal. The appearance of the two strikes of the cymbal is indicated by a sort of “statement” from the string, a small rise and fall. With this pattern, the composition creates space. There is time between each of these events, and so there is a sort of mysterious tone. The time of the piece doesn’t follow an obvious meter, so it seems as if

⁷² "Field Days" NDT 2010/ Amanda K. Miller , Youtube.

⁷³ "Field Days", Youtube.

these accents might happen at any given moment. There is surprise and maybe fear in this unpredictability. The deep drum creates an ominous almost foreboding quality. The full composition in this section has some element of play, but its mood is serious.

Fred Frith's score is mood-establishing, like Miracle's and Winter Family's work in *Les Médusées*. But rather than anchor an element of the music, the movement provides a mood of its own, adding a sense of lighter play to the piece. At 13:30, a dancer walks from upstage to downstage holding a flashlight under her face, distorting her features and creating an imposing figure.⁷⁴ The image seems to match the emotional energy of Frith's score, but the gesture is one I personally recognize from childhood, inspiring memories of scary stories, but mostly a sense of play. It is a tense, but also childlike, gesture that stands out against the imposing musical atmosphere. Presented together, there is almost an introspective tone, one that is youthful but serious, like a child's fears.

The use of both the score and the movement to generate different associations within the audience, part of Damsholt's "semantic content," is an example of a concurrence. The combination of these individual associations is what allow for my interpretation of the work's meaning and is an effect that neither element can individually replicate alone. The movement and the music are both compelling individually, yet again, but they would seem to have no other direct relationship besides the one Miller describes when she talks about how her dancers understood the "sensations of listening."⁷⁵ It is enough for them to exist in the same space to create my

⁷⁴ "Field Days" NDT 2010/ Amanda K. Miller , Youtube.

⁷⁵ "Field Days" NDT 2010/ Amanda K. Miller , Youtube.

own associations and interpretations, and that relationship, indirect or direct, is a concurrence.

Hues (2017)

Perhaps one of the best ways to utilize the possibilities of a concurrence is by looking at a piece that uses music with lyrics. Just as Damsholt describes how her surrounding choreomusical discourse disapproves of “music visualization,” the choreomusical discourse I was exposed to as a student widely, though sometimes subtly, disapproved of the use of music with lyrics. During my composition courses, lyrics were understood to be a potentially distracting element, something that would take away from the movement by introducing its own narrative. This is not unlike the ways in which movement was judged for its representations of the music in that the choice of music is being judged as once again not “going together” with the movement, or impeding the overall effect of the piece. Recent works do not have to mimic the narrative of the lyrical music in order to make a cohesive work, though they are free to do so. It is formal analysis that says that lyrics in concert dance are a hindrance. By respecting the narrative of lyrics and not taking them on as the narrative of the piece, the work respects music as its own form while allowing it to coexist in the same space as movement, together creating something from this coexistence.

Alice Klock’s *Hues* from 2017, is one such example. One half of the duo FLOCK, a choreographic team of Klock and Florian Lochner, her work is developing a following among many companies like Hubbard Street Dance of Chicago.⁷⁶ *Hues* (2017) was performed by dancers from Northwest Dance Project’s Launch program,

⁷⁶ “FLOCK,” FLOCK Works Dance, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.flockworksdance.com/>

which serves as a choreographic and professional platform for young dancers in the concert dance industry.⁷⁷ The piece uses music by Gregory Alan Isakov, a folk singer-songwriter, as well as compositions by Aaron Martin, Nick Cave, and Warren Ellis. The section I focus on is the fifth excerpt included in Klock's film, "Excerpts of 'Hues.'"⁷⁸ This section specifically uses Isakov's "Master & A Hound."⁷⁹ Isakov's music is emotional and melancholy, with lyrics:

and the wing-nut turned
the song that we both know
sent us flying round the carnival
you can throw all your lucky coins on me⁸⁰

The movement is a tender duet between two dancers. They support each other, and at times create room for the other to mold into their shape, creating a new image. There is a care and attention being paid to each other in the stage space, and in the space they create for each other as dance partners. At 3:05 in the video, they separate, and one dancer performs a solo toward the other, who then lays face down. In the end of the excerpt, the soloing dancer gets into a similar position, still oriented towards their former partner.⁸¹

The movement itself seems tender and intricately woven, while the music gives this air of sorrow and loss. The ending of this excerpt seems to suggest that the relationship between the dancers will continue in some way, with the parallelism

⁷⁷ "LAUNCH," NW Dance Project, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://nwdanceproject.org/projects-intensives/launch/>

⁷⁸ Excerpts from "Hues" (Vimeo, July 19, 2017), <https://vimeo.com/226247595>

⁷⁹ "Master and a Hound," Gregory Alan Isakov, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://gregoryalanisakov.com/songs/master-and-a-hound>

⁸⁰ "Master and a Hound," Gregory Alan Isakov.

⁸¹ Excerpts from "Hues", Vimeo.

between their positions creating a connection between the two individuals. The music doesn't present this continuation, its message seems more finite like a loss. The concurrence in this work is not based on a "mood," but seems to be based in a narrative. The movement suggests that even though Isakov's story seems to retain sorrow and loss, something will continue from it. Song lyrics are always up for interpretation, and rather than distract from the movement, they retain their narrative while the movement contributes its own story. The combination of these two stories through their overlap in space is the concurrence of the work, as it creates a new joint narrative without altering the narratives of each element.

Through "Hues" a concurrence can be centered around intention and subjective interpretation of meaning, as much as the contributions of structural or design components within dance and music.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I seek to make three key assertions concerning the use of older analytic methods to describe choreomusical relationships in the last half-century. The first contention that I want to disrupt is that movement and music need a direct relationship in order to be interacting. The choreomusical relationships in more recent works do not require each other to be in a “marriage”⁸², but are possible with a more existential relationship that allows them to create a “common end” simply by existing in the same space at the same time.

The second contention I want to undermine says that a singular choreomusical relationship be representative or indicative of the entire work. As Stephanie Jordan concisely states, “we are dealing with dynamic theories of interaction.”⁸³ By looking at music and dance as multiple mediums that offer different contributions, a multitude of observed choreomusical relationships can surface, each one using different formal choreomusical methods, or even addressing “semantic content.”⁸⁴ Each of these are important to the whole, but none of them can describe the entirety of the work.

This brings me to a final troublesome contention: that descriptive, analytic choreomusical language is proscriptive and limited to one relationship at a time between elements. Terms like “synchronization,”⁸⁵ “visual capture,”⁸⁶ and “Mickey-Mousing”⁸⁷ describe specific relationships between music and movement in concert dance, with only a few including some room for multifarious interpretation, like “assimilation.”⁸⁸

⁸² Jordan, *Choreomusical Conversations*, 43.

⁸³ Jordan, 47.

⁸⁴ Damsholt, *Choreomusical Discourse*, 208.

⁸⁵ Sawyer

⁸⁶ Jordan

⁸⁷ as mentioned in Damsholt

⁸⁸ Sawyer

Some of these terms carry specific evaluative connotations that make a judgement of the work, like the negative connotations of “music visualization.”⁸⁹ Others require a binary to be understood, like terms that simply refer to when dance “does something else.”⁹⁰ Additionally, many of these terms originate in fields outside of choreomusical analysis, taking inspiration from linguistics or film-music theory. Jordan describes a need for a “more integrated approach”⁹¹ to choreomusical analysis, an approach Damsholt sees as possible using language.⁹²

To resolve this, I propose “concurrency” as a descriptive term. A concurrency is simply a unique result of combining dance and music, or other elements, in the same space and time. It does not require the elements to relate to each other in any specific way, nor does it describe what the unique result may be, it is simply combinative. By being open in this way, it can be applied to a multiple dance/music relationships, making it suitable for the way in which recent works experiment and explore the use of music and movement in their performances. “Concurrency” can also be used in conjunction with terms like those espoused by Sawyer without requiring that any one relationship define the choreomusical methods of the work.

With “concurrency,” I intend to propose a term that might address perceived shifts in choreomusical methods identified by Damsholt and Jordan, inspired by the works of artists like Cage and Cunningham and Mark Morris. In fact, “concurrency” may come into use as a general placeholder term until more language to describe these new relationships is developed. Just as dance and music are constantly evolving,

⁸⁹ Damsholt, 60.

⁹⁰ Damsholt, 60.

⁹¹ Jordan, 51.

⁹² Damsholt, 208

constantly being experimented within this multimedia-immersed world, so is the field of choreomusical analysis. It is my hope that the language may continue to evolve with this recent existential perspective on sound and movement as tools for creation and experimentation. One of my specific shortcomings in this process has been the inability to actually interview dancers in these works. I offer my perspective, with a performer's background, but their experience living the work is the perspective I hope comes to be represented even further. In the meantime, "concurrency" may fill a need for descriptive language as a term belonging entirely to the analysis of relationships in theatrical dance. I am thrilled to see the field moving in directions that ask for reflection on valued perspectives, just as the worlds of music and dance do the same.

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