

Watching and Listening to Dance

Study aim: To investigate the current practice of dance AD systematically, and explore similarities and differences between the experience of watching a dance piece and the experience of listening to its AD.

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Research Questions & Methodology



RQ1: How is dance currently audio described?
What are the main strategies used to verbalise
this highly visual art form?

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Linguistic analysis of a purpose-built
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RQ2: To what extent can the effectiveness of these strategies be empirically demonstrated? How are meaning, enjoyment and appreciation derived from watching dance VS listening to its AD?

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Combination of RQ1 and RQ2 findings

Multimodal Dance AD Corpus



SUB-CORPORA	No OF SCENES/CLIPS/SCRIPTS	No OF WORDS
1. Dance scenes from films and series	259	23589
2. Online clips	24	45862
3. Scripts from past performances	22	77627
TOTAL No OF WORDS		147078

Linguistic Analysis: Design



- Preliminary analysis of dance AD corpus combined with notions from reviewed literature
- Identified recurring patterns and features, and conceptualised into 7 description strategies
- Manually tagged instances of strategies across the corpus
- Systematised analysis through Sketch Engine and extracted all tags
- Also extracted frequency lists of adverbs, adjectives, verbs, nouns; and key words in relation to three other corpora.

Tags and Word Lists



On one pointed toe she turns in `<tech>arabesque</tech>` and sinks into a playing pose. [...] The cello flies the young Jackie high, as her older self `<tech>pirouettes</tech>` across the space.

Dropping them to pick up a brief toe tapping folk dance. `<rep>Cross, side, step, tap, cross, side, step, tap.</rep>` Dragging them again by the wrist.

He lifts her close, she nestled on his shoulder. He swirls her `<fig>as light as a cloud.</fig>` Hug. `<dir>Do not let go.</dir>`

Top 5 key words*

1. Pointe
2. Arabesque
3. Barre
4. Nutcracker
5. Centre

Most frequent verbs

1. Be
2. Turn
3. Spin
4. Lift
5. Hold

Most frequent nouns

1. Arm
2. Hand
3. Leg
4. Side
5. Dancer

*Ref corpus: LSMDC Dataset

Reception Study: Design



- What does a sighted person see when watching dance?
- 14 sighted + 14 BPS participants (8 blind, 6 partially sighted)
- Comparison between the experience of watching dance and that of listening to its AD: construction of meaning, engagement, enjoyment and aesthetic appreciation
- Same dance clips, without and with AD respectively
- Open questions + think-aloud sessions.

Reception Study: Materials



CLIP	Dance Style	Narrative Elements	Dancers
Takademe	Contemporary (with other influences)	No	One
Grand Finale	Contemporary	Yes	Group
The Secret Theatre	Ballet (classical repertoire)	No	One
The Cellist	Ballet (not from classical repertoire)	Yes	Group

Reception Study: Data



Takademe, Robert Battle



AD: Turning in place, he feels around his body *<fig> as if being attacked by insects </fig>*. He stares ahead.

S: Sighted; PS: Partially Sighted; B: Blind

Like he is being bitten by insects or something! [laughs] (S P2)

Yeah to me that almost seems like he's possessed, and he's trying to understand where this thing kind of... something is moving inside his body and he is trying to either locate it in a way or make sense of it. (S P11)

The bit where it says "as if being attacked by insects" is very good to help you visualise. (B P5)

I wouldn't have thought that he was attacked by insects, no. That was an opinion that was planted. (PS P3)

Reception Study: Data



Grand Finale, Hofesh Shechter



AD: Dropping the wrist to scoop them up underneath their arms, to hold their lifeless bodies in a close embrace. Stepping side to side, the women's limbs dangling.
<rep>Step, cross, step, tap, step, cross, step, tap</rep> and turn.

S: Sighted; PS: Partially Sighted; B: Blind

Well I thought it was rather sad, generally speaking. Because you know, they were clearly mourning the loss of someone. (S P2)

It made me really sad actually, had a sort of end of the world or apocalyptic feel, or like some type of war scene, you know. (S P6)

It was quite sad, I would say. Yeah. (PS P6)

Very sad. Well it sounded sad, in parts. Like the bit where they're saying 'he holds her lifeless body' and stuff, it's... Makes you feel quite sad in parts. (B P5)

Reception Study: Thematic Analysis



CODE	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLES (Sighted: S; Partially Sighted: PS; Blind: B)	THEME
"This reminds me of / looks like / feels like / sounds like..."	Associations between what participants see or hear and cultural products/ inanimate objects/ lived experiences	"This kind of reminds me of <i>Reservoir Dogs</i> ." (PS P3) "They look like ragdolls." (S P4) "He looks more like he's looking for his phone in his pockets." (S P7)	Meaning-making
References to dancers' skills / physicality	Comments on dancers' skills/ technique/ athleticism	"And I mean, it's stunning, what she can do with her body." (S P9) "She's got gorgeous arms." (PS P7)	Aesthetic appreciation / enjoyment
Emotive responses / reactions	References to emotions elicited by/emotive responses to what is seen or heard	"Yeah that bit I thought was quite... almost disturbing, in a way. When they flip them and drag them like that. It's quite violent."(S P11) "It took me back to my childhood, which was very lovely. So it took me back to really good times. It made me feel good." (B P1)	Emotional impact of dance

Reception Study: Thematic Analysis



CODE	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLES (Sighted: S; Partially Sighted: PS; Blind: B)	THEME
Amount of information / speed / pace (AD)	References to amount of information given by the AD, level of detail and pace	"It was a lot of information to retain." <i>B P14</i> . "I think for me, the speech is quite fast." <i>PS P10</i> .	AD-specific
Use of technical terms	References to or comments on the use of dance-specific terminology in dance AD	"The more description of ballet steps we get, the better, really. I think it's... I think with modern dance it's difficult because it's very subjective. But with ballet, we all know what a pirouette is, and an arabesque, and a flick and a balance." <i>PS P3</i> . "But most of the descriptions I had listened to didn't tend to refer to technical terms for dance. They would just say something like... They would give a very brief description." <i>B P11</i> .	AD-specific
References to music/sound	References or comments on auditory aspects of the clips (other than the AD)	"This bit, this is very recognisable because of the music and it's nice to see the movements in coordination with the music." <i>S P1</i> . "From the sound of it you can tell it's Nutcracker straight away, isn't it?" <i>PS P7</i> .	Multimodality



Thank you!

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