

Collaboration, Movement, Projection: The Interdisciplinary Structure of Lucinda Childs's Dance, 1979

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Abstract:

In 1979, postmodern choreographer Lucinda Childs, minimalist artist Sol LeWitt, and minimalist composer Philip Glass combined their disparate mediums to create a collaborative, multimedia performance work titled, simply, Dance. To date, this interdisciplinary work featuring a unique combination of movement, sound, and film has received virtually no scholarly attention. Childs's recent 2009 reconstruction of Dance provides a timely opportunity for a close examination of its component parts, one that reveals several key aspects that initially gained prominence among the 1960s practitioners of interdisciplinary art; particularly the visual artists, dancers, choreographers and musicians associated with the Judson Dance Theater; and continued to resonate in the outpouring of multimedia installation and performance-based work in the 1970s. These themes include collaboration, non-traditional forms of movement, the grid, and the screen, elements with clear ties to experimentation in postmodern dance, to Minimalism in both art and musical composition, as well as to uses of the moving image outside of strictly cinematic spaces. The currently touring version of Dance, however, is not simply a historical reenactment. While Childs's reconfiguration reveals that the factors that she, Glass and LeWitt, explored in 1979 share clear similarities with specific precedents, the re-staging also gestures towards the continued relevance of these major themes. A sustained exploration of the work's individual elements will in fact reveal the hybrid form of this collaborative effort, one that is at once a historical performative object, and a contemporary work of art.

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View Lucinda Childs Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. Kate Wiener will discuss the visualization of time and motion in the multimedia performance "Dance" (1979), a collaborative project between choreographer Lucinda Childs, composer Philip Glass, and visual artist Sol LeWitt. Save to Library. by Kate Wiener. Lucinda Childs's company performs her seminal 1979 work, "Dance." Live dancers are overlaid by and seemingly mingle with ghost-like, larger-than-life projected images of the original performers. (Sally Cohn/Sally Cohn). But the passage of time has been a boon for one important creation — a collaboration among three pioneers of postmodern art that has found new life and fuller appreciation more than 30 years after its premiere. Simply called "Dance," the hour-long piece, created in 1979, features light, springy, rigorously linear choreography by Lucinda Childs — one of dance's original abstract experimentalists. Lucinda Childs's 1979 "Dance" is a vision of how we would all move in dance paradise: an endlessly flowing, buoyant sweep of simple steps that sends dancers tirelessly weaving across the stage to the ever recharging rhythms of Philip Glass's music, as Sol LeWitt's film of the same work provides a ghostly echo of the live performance. Part of a larger program presented at the Joyce Theater on Tuesday night, "Dance" is a work full of paradoxes. But their relentlessly identical movement, oddly, eventually reveals them as individuals, since "Dance" insists on musicality but not conformity. Through its rigorous geometry of structure, "Dance" offers liberation through confinement, infinite variation through sameness; it conveys the elemental desire to move to music, to dance.

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