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Choreomusicology I Corporeality | Social Relations



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• Cover illustration: Female musicians Ni Kadek Listya Depi and Ni Putu Sri Pebrianti taking a pose in a *gender wayang* competition, Bali Arts Festival, Denpasar 2015. Photograph by Ako Mashino.

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The Corporeal Dynamics of Choreomusical Interactions in *sabar* Dance Events

Elina Seye

Abstract

The sabar dancing and drumming in Senegal takes several forms, but in most performance contexts improvisatory dancing and the interaction of dance and music are central. Both dancers and musicians refer to the knowledge about the tradition, the dance rhythms in particular, as the common ground for dance-music interactions. However, what appears to be central is also a certain kind of tension, or “intensity” to use Nketia’s (1988) term, which enables and motivates this connection, in addition to the shared knowledge of dance movements, their accompanying rhythms and the habitual relations between certain movement patterns and musical solo phrases. This article thus explores the use of energy, the dynamics of tension and release, as a possible factor that connects sabar dancing and drumming. For this purpose, the analysis here focuses on the corporeal dynamics of individual dance solos, their points of connection to the dynamics of the music, as well as the dynamics of the whole dance event.

Sabar dancing and drumming in Senegal takes several forms, but most performance contexts include improvisatory dancing that ideally forms an interactive relationship with the accompanying music. When asked about the connection between dance and music, dancers usually refer to the tradition and, in particular, their own knowledge of the dance rhythms, whereas the musicians often say that they follow—and actually anticipate—the feet of the dancer(s) and interpret their movements musically. However, the relationship of the dance step rhythms and their sonic interpretation by the solo drummer presents only a fragment of the interactions between dancers and musicians, let alone the performance event as a whole.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to complement my previous analysis of the dance and music interactions in *sabar* events, in which I approached dance as part of a musical whole and concentrated on the rhythmic qualities of the dancers’ movements and their relationships to the rhythms played by the drummers (Seye 2014:70–76).¹ Since movement has several other dimensions in addition to rhythm

and timing, I will focus here primarily on body movements in order to arrive at a broader understanding of the choreomusical interactions of *sabar* dance events and to explore in more detail the principles that connect *sabar* dancing and drumming.

In addition to the perspectives presented in the preceding introduction to the corporeality of sound and movement in performance (Mashino and Seye in this volume), I will base my analysis on observations from literature specific to West African traditions of dance-drumming. Of particular interest is what J.H. Kwabena Nketia has called “intensity,” a tension or energy that may be created through various culturally specific means, but which is needed to make a performance enjoyable and keep the participants involved (Nketia 1988:56–57 *et passim*). To explore what constitutes intensity in *sabar* dance events, I will consider the dynamics of sound and movement as well as the relationships between the body movements of different participants, which may have a sonic dimension or not.

This article is based on fieldwork in Dakar, Senegal, and occasionally elsewhere, which has included the learning of *sabar* dancing and drumming with several teachers as well as the practical participation in dancing during the *sabar* events I attended and often also filmed. Some of the verbal phrasings of my teachers that I am referring to in the following stem from dance lessons and informal conversations rather than interviews and have not been recorded. The exact formulation and context of the original statement is thus not available for evaluation, and I am of course fully responsible for any failings of memory.

Interrelations of music and dance in West African contexts

Several scholars have noted the interdependence of dance and music in many African traditions, and in particular the importance of considering the related dance when analysing African drumming (*e.g.* Villepastour 2018; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2015; Djebbari 2012; Chernoff 1997; Merriam 1982; Nketia 1965). Kofi Agawu (2016:182; see also Agawu 2003:73), in particular, has repeatedly emphasised the unity of dance and music in many African traditions:

The polyrhythmic textures performed by dance-drumming ensembles should never be interpreted without reference to the dance or movement patterns that they make possible. [...] Dance conveys a synoptic sense of locus, beat, or weight; the dancer’s feet convey the centers of gravity.

Furthermore, Agawu (2003:77) has noted that African music often plays with combinations of sounded and unsounded beats, resulting in what in Western music theory one would call syncopation. It is often in the dancers’ feet where the underlying regular pulse of the music expressed is most easily found. Avoiding emphasising the beat sonically may be disorienting to someone not familiar with the tradition in question, but for people accustomed to this type of music, the lack of sonic accents on the beat may create an urge to participate through movement, such as stepping

or clapping, thereby feeling the beat physically in relation to the sonic patterns produced by musicians.

Previous analyses of dance-music interrelations in African performance traditions have mostly focused on temporal-rhythmic aspects, although Gerhard Kubik (1979:227) has already suggested forty years ago that one should approach African music as “a system of movement patterns” rather than through the analysis of musical sounds. According to him, the movement patterns that African music consists of have both a sonic and nonsonic dimension (*ibid.*). Still, very few scholars apart from Kubik himself have attempted to analyse African dance-drumming as patterns of movement rather than sound, although some, such as Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2015) and myself (Seye 2014), have included the nonsonic dimension of dance movements in the analysis of musical structures. Others, such as Agawu (2016:161–162) and Amanda Villepastour (2017:271–272), have for their part illustrated the fluid boundaries between the categories of music, dance, gesture and speech in West African contexts.

The focus on rhythm and timing when discussing the interrelations of dance and music is not specific to research on African traditions. For example, although Judith Lynne Hanna (1992:318) lists time, space, dynamics and the human body as components shared by both dance and music, she still states that “[t]he use of time merges dance and music.” Similar statements can be found in literature dealing with specific traditions, such as Karin Eriksson and Mats Nilsson’s (2010:262–263) discussion of Swedish folk music and dance. László Felföldi (2001:160), in his summary of Hungarian research, also takes the primary focus on rhythm for granted, although he does mention other possible connecting factors between music and dance.

Looking at the possible similarities between the movements of musicians and dancers thus remains a largely unexplored possibility for choreomusical analysis, even though there is an increasing amount of research on musicians’ body movements and on musical gestures (see Mashino and Seye in this issue). For the study of West African traditions of dance-drumming this should be of particular interest, since music and dance are often intricately intertwined in their performances, as previous studies have shown.

Sound and movement in *sabar* dance events

In the *sabar* dance events I have observed and filmed, the roles of musician and dancer are quite clearly divided in terms of sound and movement: most of the sound is produced by the drummers, whose movements are relatively limited, and the movements of the dancers do not produce much sound, in any case no sounds loud enough to rise above both the piercing stick stroke beats and the lower bass notes of the *sabar* drums that pervade the soundscape of the dance space (and far beyond). The sphere of sound is thus dominated by the musical rhythms performed by the drummers.

Further sounds heard during these occasions of social dancing typically include clapping, speaking and exclamations by various participants, also shrieks, screams and laughter may be heard from time to time. Another category of sound commonly heard is rhythmic chanting, which may be a *taasu*, humorous and suggestive spoken poetry (see e.g. Heath 1994), or a chanted phrase that is part of a *bàkk*, a fixed rhythmic composition played in unison by the *sabar* drum ensemble (see e.g. Tang 2007:112–123). Songs may be sometimes performed, too, especially at bigger events, but songs are not a staple element of *sabar* dance events. Apart from casual chatting among participants and the musical sounds of singing or chanting, these sounds are mostly reactions to someone's dancing. Singers and performers of *taasu* may similarly be supported with clapping or responded to with exclamations, such as an approving *waaw waaw* (lit. "yes yes" in Wolof).

Movement in *sabar* dance events obviously includes dancing, which is the centre of attention. The social dancing seen on these occasions takes the form of very short improvised solos of only 10–20 seconds that anyone present may perform whenever they want, taking into consideration that the lead drummer can only follow one dancer at a time. Therefore, apart from the short bursts of dance movements, there is a more or less continuous movement of participants/dancers from the sides of the dance space (which is often lined with chairs) to the centre towards the drummers and back again. The shortness of the dance solos is counterweighed by the often fast and strongly accented dance movements typical of *sabar* dancing.

The movements of musicians mostly concentrate on the hands and arms and seem overall rather economical in the sense that the drummers rarely move much more than necessary to produce sound. They hardly ever move their feet or sway their bodies to the beat of the music while playing, although such movement can be seen sometimes. Movements that do not serve the production of sound commonly include visual cues to other musicians and other kinds of communicative gestures specific to the situation, of which a fairly common one would be lifting both arms up in the air for a moment as a gesture of appreciation for a dancer right after her solo. However, drum ensembles sometimes also perform specific show pieces that do not serve as accompaniment to dance, which can include more movement that is not functional, such as the group of drummers walking in formations while playing, as well as various hand movements that do not produce sound.

Using the categorisation presented in our preceding article (Mashino and Seye in this issue), relationships between sound and movement at *sabar* dance events could be approached from the viewpoint of the dancer or the drummer, because the other participants rarely play an active role in the choreomusical communications of the dance event, unless they take the decision to move from the role of spectator to the role of dancer. What is of interest, here, is therefore how the dancers respond to sounds and/or influence the drummers' playing and how the drummers produce (through movement) sounds that provide a musical framework for dance movements and present an interpretation of the movements of the dancer. The latter is the duty of the soloist of the drum ensemble, a role that may shift from one musician to another

but is mostly occupied by the leader of the group, who also directs the ensemble through sonic and kinetic signals.

A dancer's movements relate primarily to the sounds produced by drummers as a collective, *i.e.* the rhythmic whole of a dance rhythm formed by cyclical accompaniment patterns.² In addition to adjusting their movements to the dance rhythm being played, the dancers have expectations of what their movements should "sound" like, in other words, how they expect the soloist to respond musically to their dance movements (see also *Seye* 2014:74–75). Although *sabar* dance solos are improvised, they consist of conventional movement motifs and phrases, which have corresponding musical equivalents that will be used by the soloist in his sonic interpretation of the dancer's movements. Quite often, the dance movements also relate to the movements of another dancer: Sometimes there is more than one person dancing at the same time, either accidentally or by choice, and in the latter case the dancers will usually try to mirror each other's movements, but in some situations one dancer may try to cut short the solo of another dancer by entering before she is finished and trying to shift the drummers' attention to herself. One may also see a dancer imitating the movements of the previous dancer, although it is sometimes hard to distinguish between imitation and simply using the same movement motifs as the previous dancer, because the most common movement motifs for each dance rhythm will in any case be used by the majority of dancers in their solos. If a dancer does not get a musical response to her movements, or if the musical response is different from what she expects, the dancer is likely to stop, apparently judging the situation as a failure to communicate one's (musical) idea to the soloist.

The drummers, for their part, relate to other participants in the event primarily through sound (drumming, speaking, and chanting) and their movements are mostly functional but, as mentioned above, they sometimes use physical gestures for expressing certain things. Since the *sabar* rhythms always consist of interdependent accompaniment patterns as well as solo phrases and specific musical formula for beginning and ending, intra-group interactions are essential. The leader of the ensemble obviously plays a key role and communicates with the group members in various ways, most commonly through musical signals and simple physical gestures, such as marking the beat with hand movements or lifting up one arm to give advance warning of a musical signal that is coming. On the reverse side, the leader mainly relies on sound in his relation to the rest of the ensemble, because his visual focus has to be on the dancer(s). The leader also often functions as the musical soloist, who may improvise freely if no one is dancing, but mostly the solo part consists of musical interpretations of a dancer's movements. Thereby, the dancer's movements indirectly influence the whole ensemble because the rest of the group adjusts their parts to what the soloist is playing. It is hard to estimate to what extent the other drummers follow the dancer directly or to what extent they follow the soloist's musical phrases, which the other drummers are probably able to anticipate if they can see the dancer's movements.

The relationship between the dancer's movements and the sounds played by the soloist of the drum ensemble form the crucial nexus in the choreomusical interrelations of a *sabar* dance event, but both of these individuals also relate to the sounds of the drum ensemble, whereas the members of the drum ensemble continuously interact with each other within the group.

As mentioned above, it is the task of the soloist to make the dancer's movements audible by playing a sonic interpretation of them in the form of musical phrases that correspond to the phrases of the dance movements being executed. This means that the soloist actually has to anticipate the dancer's movements for the musical interpretation to be heard in synchrony with the dancer's movements. Most musicians that I have interviewed or talked with state that they follow the feet of the dancer in order to respond to the dance movements, and indeed movement phrases in *sabar* dancing usually begin with a preparation step that precedes the beat "one" of the rhythmic cycle and thereby serves also as a cue for the soloist to start his phrase on the "one".³ However, according to my observations, the interpretation of what the dancer will do next cannot rely simply on the dancer's feet but needs to be based on further clues about the kind of a movement she might perform next. Although the dance solos typically consist of only a few characteristic movement motifs and their repetitions, there is still a lot of variation in how these motifs are executed and combined by individual dancers. Furthermore, a dancer sometimes catches the attention of the drummers with her "presence" as soon as she has stepped into the dance space, before she has performed any dance movements. Also, while dancing, one can quite easily spot dancers with more "presence" than others and who are therefore likely to attract not only the attention of the soloist but also exclamations of approval from the spectators.

Energy, presence and intensity

As Tomie Hahn (2007:163) has stated, presence "remains an elusive quality of dance." It is also an aspect that has rarely been discussed or even mentioned in studies focusing on traditional genres of performance, and especially rarely in relation to social dancing. Presence has possibly been considered something more relevant to stage arts than to social dancing, but in *sabar* the dancer's—and probably also the drum ensemble soloist's—presence still appears as something that is likely to play a part in building an interactive choreomusical relationship during the short duration of a dance solo.

Although one can usually quite easily recognise when a performer has a strong presence, it is much harder to explain what constitutes "presence" and how it manifests itself. In her study of the Japanese *nihon buyo*, Hahn (2007:59–60, 163) connects presence with the concept of *ki*, energy or power, the awareness and control of which is developed through training and experience. A sharpened awareness of the *ki* energy then enables the performer to project it outward to the audience. Made

Hood (2017:43), similarly, presents the concepts of *bayu*, energy, and *ngunda bayu*, a performer's use of energy, as the connecting force between music and dance in Balinese performance contexts. In Hood's account one can also see the connection of energy to presence: "*Ngunda bayu* assists dancers with the physical demands and endurance but also imbues their performance with an energy that convinces audiences of their character portrayal." (2017:46) Furthermore, *bayu* relates to breathing, which is also used as an analogy for the transfer of energy between dancers and drummers (2017:44).

Through my observations and experiences of participating in *sabar* dance events, I can see resemblances between the choreomusical interactions of *sabar* dancers and drummers and Hood's account of the *bayu* as the connecting force between a Balinese dancer and drummer. However, the Wolof do not voice similar explicit theorisations about energy and the ways to control it as the Balinese do, but primarily refer to the tradition and the dance rhythms as the common ground between music and dance. Also, breathing is something to which only one of my Senegalese dancer teachers has paid explicit attention,⁴ although breathing both as physical movement and as a musical gesture is quite commonly used in other contexts by dance and music teachers when teaching phrasing and accentuation.

Nevertheless, the idea of a certain kind of energy flow and presence would also seem to be acknowledged by the Wolof as a characteristic of good dancing: One of my Senegalese dance teachers, Astou Faye, used the word *doole* ("force" or "power" in Wolof) to refer to the kind of strong accentuation of movements that she wanted me to develop. Another teacher, Yama Wade, has stated that one should dance with *fulla ak fayda*, which could be translated as "firmness and determination", but these words actually evoke wider notions about the Wolof idea of a respectable person and a way of presenting oneself as such in front of others, a certain kind of dignity combined with self-confidence (see Sylla 1994:90). Such demonstration of respectability is not necessarily associated with dancing in Senegal (see e.g. Heath 1994, Seye 2016:37–38), which makes this statement all the more fascinating. In any case, both teachers seem to refer to a kind of presence and confidence or intentionality that can be developed with practice and that is observable in the movement qualities, especially in the dynamics of dance movements, but probably also in the posture and focus of the dancer. In the context of *sabar* dancing, the presence of dancers and their use of energy would thus be something that can be seen, although these aspects may be hard to describe.

A related concept is intensity, the effects of which Nketia (1988:57) describes as follows: "the intensity factor can make all the difference between what is judged to be a dull performance and a bright, spirited or exciting performance of the same music." Intensity would thus be for the whole performance what presence is for a single performer; a certain kind of energy or tension that motivates participation and in particular the choreomusical interactions of *sabar* dance events. For his analysis of a Ghanaian ritual called *kple*, Nketia (1988:57–60) lists various factors that may contribute to the intensity of a performance, ranging from verbal contents of songs

to specific musical patterns and the interplay between different actors or elements of the performance. Further means used to support the intensity of the performance, according to Nketia (1988:60–62), are improvisatory elements mainly related to what could be collectively referred to as dynamics, for example volume, repetition and variation, and the creation of rhythmic contrasts.

Thus, tracing the seemingly obscure concepts of energy, presence and intensity leads to dynamics. To analyse the dynamics of movement at *sabar* dance events, I will turn to Rudolf Laban's concept of "effort." According to Laban (1980:11, 20–21), all movement is a result of effort, an inner motivation or need (conscious or unconscious) to move, which becomes visible through the elements of weight, time, space, and flow. Rather than describing the exact shape or form of bodily actions, these "effort qualities" relate to what is more commonly referred to as the dynamics of movement (*e.g.* Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg 2002:70).

Laban (1980:69, 77) himself characterises the effort qualities of movement with varying wordings, which may be summarised as follows:⁵

- the use of weight may be firm or gentle (strong or light);
- the use of time may be sudden or sustained (may manifest as quick or slow speed, short or long durations);
- the use of space may be direct or flexible (straight or pliant);
- the movement flow may be bound or free (stopping or fluid).

These qualities are best understood as continua rather than binary oppositions (see *e.g.* Freedman 1991:338), and they may form many kinds of combinations in movement, although certain combinations are more likely to occur than others. A particular dance genre or style can hence be described in terms of the effort qualities typical for them, on a "cultural level" (Freedman 1991:339), in addition to using Laban's terminology for analysing particular dance movements by individuals. For example, *sabar* dancing could be characterised by a relatively strong use of weight, predominantly sudden use of time, a direct use of space and a movement flow that alternates between bound and free. More variety can, of course, be observed when looking at specific dances or movement combinations and the individual variations in the execution of the same movements. Furthermore, as for example Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg (2002:64–65) have noted, following Laban's thoughts, human movement is based on the balance of opposites, since body movements are based on the tension and release of muscles, including inhaling and exhaling. Similarly, any sequence of movement is likely to fluctuate between the extremes of the continua of effort qualities.

In the following analysis I will use Laban's effort qualities to describe the dynamics of body movements in *sabar* dance events, focusing especially on the choro-musical interactions between the dancer and the musical soloist. Both the body movements of individuals and the movements of the collective "body" of the different groups of event participants are considered in an attempt to interpret what draws the participants into a *sabar* event and into participating in the dancing, and how the intensity of the dance rhythms as well as the whole event is built and sustained.

Dynamics of movement in a *sabar* dance event

Sabar dance events generally proceed according to the same overall structure, starting with an introductory phase that consists of rhythms not meant for dancing and continuing with dance rhythms that are played in more or less the same order, with optional elements such as songs introduced at various points especially at larger events (for details see Seye 2014:59, 85–89; Tang 2007:99). In terms of what could be described as intensity, the event typically starts very casually with people still arriving to the dance space and greeting others, while the drummers have already switched from tuning and warming up to the introductory rhythms of the event. At this stage one often sees quite a contrast between the high intensity of the musical sounds and the intra-group interactions of the drum ensemble with the behaviour of the rest of the people present who sit down, quite relaxed and maybe chatting with each other, or have just arrived and are looking for a place to sit down. At this point, most of the spectators are seemingly not paying much attention to the focused performance of the drummers, despite its loudness.

During the introductory phase, the spectators will slowly start to pay more attention to the drummers. The most eager dancers might even try to go and dance but are likely to be discouraged by the lack of response from the drummers. As soon as the drummers switch to dance rhythms, the situation visibly changes: The focus of most participants now shifts to the drummers and the dance space. Some of the participants will soon get up one after another (and sometimes simultaneously) and move towards the drummers to dance and, after their solo, return to the edge of the dance space. There are no rules as to who should dance when, except that the organiser of the event should be the first to dance, but even this principle is not always followed. The drummers also prefer—and often remind participants—that only one or two people should dance at the same time, because otherwise it becomes difficult for the soloist to follow anyone’s movements.

Judging by the amount of dancing or movement in general, a *sabar* dance event can be said to intensify as it proceeds, but there is also a continuous fluctuation in the intensity of movement, as well as the intensity of the sounds. Typically, some people will dance to the first dance rhythm, and when there is no one dancing anymore, the leader of the ensemble will give the cue for starting the next dance rhythm, which is followed by dancing, and so on. Sometimes the tempo of a dance rhythm rises with the energy of the dancers’ solos to the point of becoming hard to play and/or difficult to dance to, and the leader will then have to slow it down, either with gestures marking the desired tempo or by stopping the rhythm and restarting at a slower tempo. The drummers might also take small breaks between dance rhythms to re-tune the bass drums, to negotiate with the organiser(s) the details of the event, or to accommodate performances by singers. This leads to a kind of ebb and flow of movement, with phases of dancing and other kinds of movement (e.g. clapping) in reaction to the dance solos alternating with phases with less movement or less intense movement. The phases of movement tend to get longer, and the phases with

less movement shorter, as the event continues, and in this sense one can notice an intensification in terms of visible action. Very often the end of a *sabar* dance event is characterised by a nearly chaotic state with several people dancing simultaneously in front of the drummers, and a continuous movement of people into the dance space and back to the sides, until the drummers decide that it is time to stop and play the musical signal for ending the event.

Interestingly, the tempi of the dance rhythms do not at a first glance align with the increasing amount of visible action I have described. The first two dance rhythms played (*farwujar* and especially *ceebujën*) are relatively fast and thereby call for a very high-energy style of dancing simply because the tempo of the rhythm calls for movements that can be described as firm with a sudden use of time and a mostly direct use of space, whereas the two following rhythms (*ndëtt* and *baarambay*) are somewhat slower and therefore also allow more sustained and flexible dance movements. After this point, there is more variation in the choice and order of the dance rhythms, and the drummers may also switch back to rhythms that have already been played if they notice that the dancers prefer certain dance rhythms. The tempi may thus alternate between slower and faster during the event, and towards the end there is quite a lot of variation depending on the nature of the event, but they do not end the event with slow rhythms. With faster rhythms, also the functional movements of the drummers tend to get firmer and quicker, although the difference is not as clear as with dancers, because the ideal sound quality demands a certain firmness from the hand movements of the drummers even when the timing of the strokes does not. Rhythms with lower tempi, thereby, allow non-functional movements and gestures more easily, but also offer the drummers a welcome respite between faster rhythms.⁶

What Nketia calls intensity is likely to depend on different aspects depending on the nature of the dance rhythm being played, such as the specific rhythmical structures, the tempo, the dance movements, the variations of rhythms and movements, meanings and connotations of certain dance rhythms, and the verbal contents of possible *taasu* and *bàkk*, which can be combined with certain rhythms but not others. However, the interaction of dance and music is a central factor in all dance rhythms. For example, the intensity of the first two dance rhythms clearly relies on their fast tempo, and especially the rather straight-forward rhythmical structure (with steady bass strokes on the beat) of the second dance rhythm *ceebujën* always attracts plenty of dancing, whereas the following slower rhythms offer more space for variations, both in movement motifs and their combinations and through different versions of the (musical) rhythms, and thus offer a different type of intensity than the preceding faster dance rhythms.

To investigate in more detail the role that movement plays in the choreomusical interactions at *sabar* events, I have continued analysing a video recording that I made at a night time *sabar* event (*tannëbéer*) in the neighbourhood of Liberté VI in Dakar on 29 April 2006 (Seye 2006). I described and interpreted the same event in my PhD thesis (Seye 2014:76–84), and a shortened version of the video footage,

including cuts of all dance rhythms that were played during the event, can be viewed on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Hwz5oNRuP9w> (Seye 2017).⁷

There could be several further points of interest for looking at the dynamics between sound and movement, but I will give only a few examples of how the drum soloist—instead of simply looking at the dancer’s feet—actually seems to adjust his movements and energy level to that of the dancer when interpreting her movements musically. This can be quite clearly seen for example in the solo of a dancer in a light blue dress (in the YouTube clip starting at 4:52): She enters the dance space from the side and does not face or even directly look at the drummers, but dances with very firm and direct movements with strong accentuation that give the impression of determination, which stands out especially after the less definite movements of the previous dancers. The solo is quite short, but one can see that the drum soloist’s left hand (holding a stick) and arm move up and down in synchrony with the movements of the dancer’s right arm and leg.⁸ This synchronicity becomes particularly evident at the end of the solo, where the dancer steps three times with her right leg to her side (towards the soloist) and then ends the solo with an exaggerated raising of her wrap-around skirt and letting it fall on the last beat (the “one” of the rhythmic cycle). Already before the clearly synchronised part, the movements of the soloist’s arms and upper body seem to show a “breathing in” before the main accents, a visible lifting up that is more emphatic than the upward movements at other points. It is hard to see if this reflects the dancer’s breathing or rather the musical phrasing that is aligned with the dancer’s movements, or possibly both.

At a later point (starting at 9:53), the same dancer dances to a different rhythm and the soloist is a different musician from the drum ensemble. The soloist plays the low-sounded *cool* drum (see Seye 2014:152; Tang 2007:37), holding it between his legs and bending forward to play it. Due to this rather uncomfortable posture he probably cannot even see everything that is happening around him. Still, he is clearly attuned to the dancer’s movements and high energy level. When the dancer ends her solo with a strong forward-directed accent of her arms and legs—after having opened her arms to the sides and also turned her knees outwards in preparation for this accent—the soloist plays this accent with both his stick and hand, and immediately jumps up from his crouched position as if he had been attacked by the dancer (they are maybe 2 meters apart), which causes his drum to drop to the ground. This results in a rather dramatic effect as if physical energy was suddenly transferred from the dancer to the soloist, even though the soloist picks up his drum right away and continues playing for the next dancer.

A similar impression of determination in movements, mirrored in approving reactions both from the spectators and the drummers, is also visible, for example, when a dancer in a brown dress runs (at 6:18) into the dance space towards the drummers, and the soloist catches her first dance movements immediately, despite the fast tempo. In this moment of interaction, the soloist again appears to tune his body into the movements of the dancer rather than consciously calculating her next steps which seem relatively difficult to predict. When the dancer jumps and lands low with

her legs spread and simultaneously bows her upper body forward, resulting in a very low position that is not very common in *sabar* dance solos, the drum soloist sonically accentuates the dancer's landing accordingly. After a strong accent such as this, the soloist would normally lift his hands quite high above his drum in preparation for the next musical phrase, but probably due to the unusually low position of the dancer, he lifts his hands less than he would have had time for and that he has done at other musically equivalent points where the dancer is in a more upright position. The dancer then continues with large steps forward that cause her to sway from side to side and this swaying movement is echoed by the soloist, only on a much smaller scale, with barely visible movement.

On the other hand, when dancers show a less accentuated style with smaller and more relaxed movements, the soloist usually responds in an equally softer style of playing, but he may also try to energise such a less vigorous dancer with stronger sonic accents. One example can be seen in the dance solo starting at 8:12 in the YouTube clip, where the soloist starts with the most common solo phrase for the dance rhythm in response to the dancer's solo, but the dancer's steps are not well accentuated and seem to fall slightly off beat after the first few steps, which causes the soloist to withdraw from responding for a few beats and then continue with simple stick strokes on the beat. The dancer immediately follows this lead given by the drummer and ends her solo with a few steps accentuating the beat.

Dance-Music interrelations in *sabar* events reconsidered

I hope to have demonstrated that movement plays at least an equally important role as sound in the choreomusical interactions of *sabar* dance events. Furthermore, the communication between dancers and drummers is likely to rely not only on sound and movement but also on a kind of a transfer of energy between the dancer and the drummers as the dancer presents her movements in accordance with the sonic framework provided by the drum ensemble and the soloist tunes himself into the corporeality and movement qualities of each dancer to be able to transfer her movements into sound, which then indirectly also affect the sounds produced by the accompanying drummers. Although the dancer is expected to dance in rhythm, she also adds a new dimension to the rhythm, her movements but also the "sound" of the dance movements, mediated by the soloist.

If the dancers at *sabar* events have a "musical body" in the sense that they adjust their movements to the music and expect a certain kind of sonic response to their dance, it seems clear that *sabar* drummers must equally have a "dancing body," as Ako Mashino and I suggest in our joint article (see Mashino and Seye in this volume). The dancing body of the drummers, that of the soloist(s) in particular, not only implies that their expertise as musicians necessarily includes the internalisation of movements to create sounds, but also that the soloist needs to be able to instantaneously perceive and react to the movements of the dancer, so that he will be able

to create a sonic dimension to the dance movements as they are being performed. In the very short and often fast-paced *sabar* dance solos this would seem impossible if the musician does not have a heightened sense for the dancer's corporeality. The soloist's ability to feel and reflect the movements of a dancer in his own body while playing becomes visible at some instances, although it is usually hard to perceive. The musicians also do not seem to be aware of such a kinaesthetic connection with the dancers, although they might recognise it if the idea was presented to them. In any case, this would explain why dancers with a strong "presence" are more likely to draw the attention of the soloist to themselves in instances where two or more people dance simultaneously.

The choreomusical interactions between *sabar* drummers and dancers would thus present an example of the kind of inter-corporeality that we sketched in the conclusion of our joint article on the corporeality of sound and movement in performance (Mashino and Seye in this volume). Further attention to the movements (both bodily and musical movements) of the *sabar* drummers, as well as to the movements and presence of dancers and other participants, is likely to reveal more aspects of the complex interactions that make up the inter-corporeality of *sabar* dance events. As suggested in our joint article, it is very likely that the sense of inter-corporeality is one of the factors that contribute to what I have called above, following Nketia, the intensity of a performance.

Notes

- 1 This article is part of my ongoing postdoctoral research project "Moving Knowledge: The Changing Embodiments of Cultural Knowledge in Senegalese Sabar Performances" funded by the Academy of Finland (grant number 321467).
- 2 This would actually be an addition to our categorisation (Mashino and Seye in this volume), where the relations presented were either between individual performers or between groups, but here the first significant relation would be between an individual (dancer) and a group (drummers), although one member of the group—the soloist—also relates to the dancer individually, as well as to the rest of the group at the same time.
- 3 What I call here beat "one" (although hoping to avoid notions of Western time signatures, since beats would not be counted in the same way by Wolof musicians) is not necessarily sonically accentuated in the overall form of the dance rhythm, *i.e.* the cycle of combined accompaniment patterns, but it still has musical significance, because one would expect any solo, danced or musical, to end on an (accentuated) beat "one" of the cycle, and also the collective ending of a dance rhythm will always be on the "one."
- 4 Yama Wade, who has *e.g.* emphasised that a dancer should always "breathe together with the drummers" (rather than consciously listening to the rhythms they play) in order to dance in the same tempo as the drummers are playing—thus presenting breath as the primary connection between dancers and drummers, similarly to the Balinese.
- 5 This summary is not a direct quote from Laban but my interpretation of the several passages that describe effort in his book *The Mastery of Movement* (Laban 1980). I have presented first

the terms that I have also seen used by other scholars referring to Laban and have added in parentheses other terms or descriptions from Laban's text that clarify the meaning of these terms.

- 6 It is not uncommon for drummers to take breaks from playing if additional musicians are available to replace them.
- 7 Many of the factors I have pointed to above can be seen in the YouTube video (Seye 2017). The whole dance event lasted about 2 h 30 min, of which I filmed about 1 h 45 min.
- 8 The soloist Yirime Gueye is left-handed and therefore holds the stick in his left hand, while most drummers hold it in their right hand.

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