

THE ANIMATED SCREENDANCE:
CINEMA, BODY, CHOREOGRAPHY, AND DISNEY'S *FANTASIA*

by

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Stephen Charbonneau, School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, and has been approved by all members of the supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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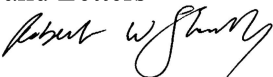


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ABSTRACT

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The animated screendance presents a meaningful experience through the medium of cinema as seen emerging from Mickey Mouse's early cartoons, *Silly Symphony's* experiments, and *Fantasia* (1940). The core focus of this research investigates the emotional and affective identifications of the audience engendered through the qualities of animation and the screendance. Drawing from the theories of the animated screendance, a term that shows how cinema can construct affective characters across the artistry of their inherent dance, I argue that these films elicit new understandings of the choreographed body. This is derived through the lens of artistic cartoon animation along with the emotional experience of the spectator by examining the critical body, dance, and film practices that form these bonds. Taking a qualitative approach by analyzing the many films in question through robust textual analysis while including theory on mythological narrative and physiognomy brings us to associate the elements of the body and screendance that influence culture and society. The reason for this approach leads us

to recognize the importance of the animated dancing body as an imaginative form that can be controlled and manipulated by the pre-conceived ideas of the animators and human labor dictating these images. The screendance also provides additional layers of signification by including the construction of narrative and psychology through the processes of cinematography and editing, which is further placed onto these characters to increase their believability and emotional connection. All the bodies in question have similar elements that refer back to the human referent and focus on the choreographies that create meaning for these beings. The findings indicate that audiences are emotionally connected to the animated dancing characters on the screen through the importance placed on the representation of human form and cinematic structure to create memories and magic.

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my Mom, Dad, Sister, Brothers, Grandparents, Friends, and all of those who love me in their own way.

As Barry Manilow so eloquently sings, “This One’s for You, wherever you are.”

THE ANIMATED SCREEN DANCE:

CINEMA, BODY, CHOREOGRAPHY, AND DISNEY'S *FANTASIA*

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INTRODUCTION

In *The New York Times* review of *Fantasia*, Bosley Crowther closes with a note that speaks directly to the essence of this film and the many before it. Specifically, Crowther connects to the innovations that led up to *Fantasia*'s release and its potential to resonate with its audience emotionally and affectively. The article says:

Mr. Disney said himself the other night that there are many problems he has yet to lick, that 'Fantasia' is a frank experiment. Perhaps so, but it is also the most original and provocative film in some time. If you don't mind having your imagination stimulated by the stuff of Mr. Disney's fanciful dreams, go to see it. It's a transcendent blessing these days.¹

This observation provides firsthand reasoning to begin this study of experiments in animation, dance, and affective experiences that propel the mind and experience into new realms of fantasy and perception.

Why do I write about dance, bodies, and animation throughout the cinematic medium? Perhaps it is a fascination for the musical, with its focus on music, song, and dance to perpetuate a narrative or just a recording of a performance. It could also be a perpetual nagging of questions that I have had throughout my whole life of being fascinated with movement on the screen and how I become so emotionally and viscerally impacted by the images that come through my eyes into my soul. The following exploration of Disney cartoons and *Fantasia* through the altering body-centric lens of the screendance substantiated with hand-drawn animation situates this theory of sensory

¹ Bosley Crowther, "The Screen in Review: Walt Disney's 'Fantasia,' an Exciting New Departure in Film Entertainment, Opened Last Night at the Broadway," *The New York Times* (November 14, 1940).

immersion and identification. The animated screendance produces choreographed bodies that have significance beyond their basic form, an imaginative and psychologically profound non-corporeal body or object.

Much of the following discussion is predicated on expanding the ideas and concepts by Douglas Rosenberg and Erin Brannigan, who have reignited the field of screendance and dancefilm, respectively. Ryan Pierson and Maureen Furniss explore animation aesthetics and force within cinema. The basis of animating choreography, modernist technology, and the mythology of *Fantasia* and Disney's productions come from the likes of Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, John Culhane, Mindy Aloff, and J.P. Telotte, who all focus on the Disney output as their object of analysis. Moving forward, I will be using Walt's name to signify the man, the mythological figure, who can be considered the Balanchine of animation, the novel choreographer of the animation; therefore, when I use "Disney," that could be associated with the studio and creative collective.²

My question is, how do audiences and consumers inscribe meaning onto bodies, representations of humans and non-humans, that do not have a physical, corporeal body? The theories behind the screendance, the focus on body gesture and camera movement, even if just concocted by animators, are the keys to producing an affective cinematic experience. The key to all of these pieces for the animated screendance is that these bodies, choreographies, and musical moments increase the dimension and depth of the

² Choreographer George Balanchine was a frequent guest and collaborator with Walt Disney during the production of *Fantasia* and other projects. This friendship is evidenced in Culhane's *Fantasia* and the Roadshow pamphlet accompanying the exhibition. Both men reconsidered the possibilities of meaningful dance on stage and screen.

experience. These further perpetuate psychology and reactions through the music's impact and the dancerly conventions for the spectators' consumption.

The structure and methodologies will primarily rely on close textual analysis in exploring the various films and performances that frame this study. Ultimately, it is set up against the theory of dance, film, and the body that will guide the logic and comparisons of media objects. To accentuate the theoretical approaches, I will be utilizing various art form critics to gauge how these cultural representatives have received these films and representations to propose the power of cinema in shaping engagement, immersion, and identification with one another. I will also be using archival research of pamphlets, older cartoons, story meeting archives, and other marketing materials to incorporate the language that the studio was using to describe how their characters were guided to impact the audience along with other elements they produced or incorporated to increase the effect of this incorporation of property, consumer, and culture.

The first section of this dissertation provides a profound theoretical and ideological basis for the study while focusing on various Disney productions, from the early Mickey Mouse cartoons to the *Silly Symphonies*. The body is considered in Chapter One, exploring the dancing and imaginative body through the spectrum of real to animated cartoons. Further emphasizing how it is constructed and imparted with meaning from its pieces, this will be the site of how to begin conceptualizing and constructing bodies to be considered affective beings capable of identification. While using films from Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, and Martha Graham, the particular media objects will be early Mickey Mouse cartoons, which will introduce our beloved mouse as a central figure throughout the study and the formation of American culture.

Further instilling meaning and affect into these bodies, Chapter Two focuses on including music in this paradigm to provide these characters with purpose and soul. Exploring the ways that technology and music provide a sensory and ideological deepening of our perception focuses on this through the *Silly Symphony* cartoons to demonstrate the expansion and layering of Walt Disney's fascination with introducing choreography set to music to mass audiences and people.

The latter section culminates these ideas and structures to break down *Fantasia* into different sets of bodies, cameras, and cinematic perspectives. Chapter Three provides the glue to the animated sections of *Fantasia* by concentrating on the indexical body, focusing on the live-action and real people who make up the conductor, narrator, and orchestra. In this discussion, the labor of the practitioners and how they become represented in cinema, primarily through the tricks and illusions afforded through the art, comes to the forefront. The actual indexicality of their being provides a smooth transition into the visualization of transforming the real into an animated play of light and color.

Moving into the animated portions of the film is the crux of the analysis in Chapter Four, detailing the anthropomorphic body and use of the multiplane camera. This chapter will also explore the use of the mythological narrative that guides the audience through the hero's journey through the condemning and resolution between images of heaven and hell, which act as identifiable stories to further assist in bringing these characters and screendances to life. Further, the bodies discussed here will have real-world referents. However, there are many instances of mythological hybridization that advance and nuance these dances and expression of movement throughout the filmic spectacle.

After having images and bodies representing these animal and human amalgamations, the study will begin to curb with Chapter Five, which looks at abstraction and how Disney constructs these non-formal beings to be affective and meaningful. The segments of abstract bodies present a descriptive way to look at the animated screendance as an avant-garde and experimental practice by exploring the fragmented and symbolic being guided by music and narratology.

To conclude, I will wrap up these ideas while providing a glimpse of what this project can evolve into. While this study focuses mainly on the hand-drawn animation of cartoons, it is imperative to look at the next stage, which came about in the 1990s. In this era of animation, domestic and global audiences saw the beginnings of digital cinema and the further expansion of space and bodies moving through it. This sprinkling of digitality with the hand-drawn bodies presents new and exciting ways to expand upon the animated screendance. Also, there is a connection to the modern Disney legacy with the theme parks and immersive audience experiences, which are heightened by the inclusion of these dancing and affective bodies. The influx of digital technology and compositions further expands the dimensionality and depth of the frames that shape our perspective of these environments.

There is a direction of how our bodies are connected to these animated characters through choreography within these spaces, thus emulating how non-corporeal beings are imbued with meaning and affective compositions. The conclusion will offer some insights and demonstrate how *Fantasia* and the early Disney cartoons allowed for a tradition of cinema, the extensive animated screendance, to blossom.

CHAPTER 1: DANCING BODY AND DIMENSIONAL MEANING

One of the underlying questions to qualifying the animated screendance is to consider the question: *how do audiences inscribe meaning onto bodies, representations of humans and non-humans, that do not have a physical, corporeal body?* This question will underline this study as it will attempt to answer the query by dissecting animation and dance into various parts, ultimately using *Fantasia* to examine this root. This chapter will explore the different layers of meaning attached to the image, that of the body, from each unit of meaning to the doubling and shadowing of the dancing body to show it further in an animated setting. In terms of the animated screendance, the body is significant to deconstruct and figuring out how each of its pieces operates to make the larger figural illusion of dance. According to Rosenberg, “In order to particularize a discussion about a work of screendance, then, it is necessary to further excavate both form and content – the method of rendering as well as the choreographic language.”¹ This dissection of form and content will be one of the bases that guide this study by centering around these bodies and how they evoke the meanings they are guided explicitly towards.

Though this chapter is anchored around Mickey Mouse’s early body design, there should be an understanding that the body is being used universally to describe humanity and representations of that concept. Concerning these early cartoons and prior incarnations, “Disney and his animators [would] discover looser character animation. As

¹ Douglas Rosenberg, *Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 117.

they expand the ways the body can be stretched, squeezed, and twisted, they also make their characters aware of their bodies.”² While some of these examples and case studies are not necessarily dance-based, in the popular understanding of the term considered by Aloff or Joy, the audience must consider that these cartoons are choreographed with planned gestures and movements, which removes spontaneity from the characters.³ Through this understanding of animation and dance, many of the characters and ideas discussed focus on a dance of various types and physical conceptions. All in all, there remains a concern with the ways that these dancing bodies, moving from real to animated, are constructed with dimension to present meaning through identification and choreography.

While this project revolves around *Fantasia*, the reason for choosing this film is because it marks a thought-provoking time in cinema history. Other dances and screendances have inspired the experiments and innovations that Walt Disney performed, making it imperative to put *Fantasia* within its historical and conceptual context. Examining how cinema audiences have arrived at animation, gazing at the indexical, real bodies like those of Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, and Charlie Chaplin, who have expanded their bodies with the use of cinematic effects involving shadows and duplications, achieves this descent into our feature film. This leads us to unfold and continue the discussion regarding the importance of shadows and special effects in dance, which clues us in to the early Mickey Mouse and *Silly Symphony* cartoons. These cartoons present the

² Russell Merritt, “From Alice to Mickey,” in *The Walt Disney Film Archives: The Animated Movies 1921-1968*, ed. Daniel Kothenschulte (Cologne: Taschen, 2020), 32.

³ This is in reference to the basis that choreography is a dialectical battle between body and environment, which signifies the growth potential. The dance that is present in these early cartoons is more in line with gags and jokes that see movement as humor and little narrative, which Thomas, Johnston, Culhane, and many other Disney animation historians and practitioners would confirm.

innovations and experimentations of corporeality and technologies to present these two-dimensional worlds with depth and dimensional perspective, which increases how to identify and interact with the bodies presented on the screen. Characters and other forms become instilled with life and emotional affect.

The Mickey Mouse cartoons, *Silly Symphonies*, and *Fantasia* were produced through the mind and ingenuity of Walt Disney, who exuded the persona of a modernist and dreamer of expanding entertainment to mass audiences.⁴ This included modernism's imaginative use of formal cinematic elements and many of the experiments of movement and gestures that will inform the above question. Though *Fantasia* is the main subject, it does not mean that I will avoid other influences throughout or put this study in chronological order. History, in this case, and especially in this chapter, is used to highlight where certain cinematic and perspectival innovations and influences are positioned in attempting to understand how an affective and meaningful cinematic experience without physical or indexical body representations comes to be. So, the order in which these films are mentioned is determined by the theme and challenge it provides to strengthen the animated screendance hypothesis.

Finding meaning in the body, in the physical and animated form, opens up the possibilities to further understand how audiences and consumers are attracted to and affected by other forms of being. In a world that is increasingly dependent on artificial beings and personas, looking at the production of American culture through Disney's output and the qualities of the animated screendance that present the most affective body

⁴ Walt's status as a modernist, like Ford, with his assembly line of animation and characters with soul, is documented in Telotte's *Animating Science Fiction* (2017) and *The Mouse Machine* (2008), as well as in Robert Sklar and Nicholas Sammond's work. Though this is most aligned with the symbolist and expressionistic theater movements. Walt has similarities of innovation with Bertolt Brecht's style.

presentation might begin to help us define our role in inter-personal and machine relationships. So, I go decades back to focus on how hand-drawn animation was conveying these sentiments and forms of identification through dance, music, and perceptual dimension and depth. This is predicated on the grounds that, “‘In our animation,’ said Walt [Disney], ‘we must show not only the actions or reactions of a character, but we must picture also with the action...the *feeling* of those characters.’”⁵ Emotion and context are the pieces of the analysis through the body and eventually, once the music is imparted the feelings that are imparted onto the dancing animated bodies are a twofold cinematic phenomenon. Between the persistence of vision to bring movement to these characters and the perspective of the bodies being manipulated by the camera and editing. Starting here is important to set the basis of theoretical and material understanding of the body as figures and forces of objects that come together before looking at the sonic element in the following chapter. Ultimately, this chapter will focus on a corporeal philosophy that follows Walt Disney’s emphasis for these films to have the bodies and music synchronized in affect and performance. The critical awareness of this study is trying to separate these two realms of emotive beings to deeply cut into the core of how audiences watch and identify with the images on the screen of dancing and musical-like performances.

What Meaning is Being Inscribed?

Before investigating the material components that meaning is being inscribed onto, I want to focus the attention on the types of meaning that can be used to expand our notion of these animated characters and bodies. David Bordwell’s *Making Meaning*

⁵ John Culhane, *Walt Disney’s Fantasia* (New York: Harry N Abrams Inc., 1987), 26.

presents much of the framework and categories to place among these characters and situations. This also sets up an understanding of the metaphorical and phenomenological presence of these bodies as being created through the writing and composition of their text.⁶ This is the basis of the analysis to examine the very text that constructs and substantiates these animated dancing bodies, so I have to build up their language and structure. These animated screendance qualities are formed through imaginative and fantastical representations and manipulations of the body, representational or abstract.⁷ This also includes the formation of the myth, as narrative veracity, with Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, who believed that the human mind and the psychology of expression were the structures that assembled society through linguistic units, like reading of cinema and dance.⁸ Further lending to the animism of these cartoon characters dancing to emotionally impact and shape cultural experiences with lessons and creative entities. The meaning of these bodies comes to fruition when the audience can perceive them, which allows the formation of identification and affect. On the other hand, Bordwell's ideas represent historical poetics, where meaning comes about in the multitude of textual cues to construct and interpret history and criticism.⁹

⁶ Though being an aside and theoretical rabbit hole, here I call upon Jacques Derrida's *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). This book acts as the basis for introducing phenomenology and perception through the writing of the text.

⁷ Ryan Pierson, *Figure and Force in Animation Aesthetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) 6-7.

⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955), 431.

⁹ David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 2-3.

For this study, textual analysis becomes the primary tool to analyze the images and film for their creative choices, which also allows room to be made between the theoretical and historical realms, thus allowing breath for growth of these ideas and media objects. According to Rick Altman, “The normal process of meaning attribution...involves an author, a text, an audience, and an interpretative community,” are pieces that are being put forth in order to expand upon what bodies and beings constitute these messages and experiences.¹⁰ This is especially important because the images of *Fantasia* and the other Disney cartoons have incredible amounts of labor, performance, and thought put into each frame, lending to the apparently infinite layers of meaning. In addition to this, Sherril Dodds recognizes these tiers of meaning, parallel to Bordwell, associated with the dancing body on the screen as, “constructed through the film...apparatus and different technical and aesthetic approaches are employed in order to create particular representations of dance.”¹¹ By studying the films closely, in this case peeling back the layers of image, sound, and movement, it uncovers how spectators use these Disney films to identify meanings through the “obsession with depth and simulating three-dimensional space,” perhaps the major key of how animated films can create lasting emotional impacts on audiences.¹² One of the keys to how animation and live-action cinema become more realistic and identifiable is through the depth and layers of meaning that they bring.

¹⁰ Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3.

¹¹ Sherril Dodds, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, 36.

¹² Mihaela Mihailova, “Realism and Animation” in *The Animation Studies Reader*, ed. Nichola Dobson et al., (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 49.

Depth and dimensionality are some of the dominant contributing factors to understanding how meaning is inscribed on non-corporeal bodies.¹³ Bordwell astutely notes, “In watching film, the perceiver identifies certain cues which prompt her to execute many inferential activities – ranging from the mandatory and very fast activity of perceiving apparent motion, through the more ‘cognitively penetrable’ process of constructing, say links between scenes, to the still more open process of ascribing abstract meanings to the film.”¹⁴ From the act of viewing the illusion of movement on the screen to putting together the ideological connections, watching cinema is an act of making meaning. Culhane asserts, “the word ‘animation’ is used to designate the creation of artificial movement by cinematic synthesis.”¹⁵ This view of animation is centered around cartoon and hand-drawn images that are enabled with the *illusion of life* solely from the cinematic apparatus the produces all of these sensory spectacles for audience engagement. Specifically, in terms of this paper, how meaning is effectively found in the various combinations of body, music, and composition. This sentence though seems to deepen when discussing animation because the viewer is doing all of these acts while also making sense of the fantastical elements drawn and coming to life. To briefly expand this idea, the Mickey Mouse cartoons and many of these early forms of squash-stretch animation, the style that limited rigidity and added weight to the character’s bodies, really came into effect since they, “precisely synchronized visual and acoustic stimuli, to the

¹³ The apparatus of cinema and the invention of the multiplane camera (Thomas and Johnston, 1995; Culhane, 1987; Telotte, 2008) has lasting impacts in producing space and dimension in these films for these bodies to grow and breathe life into. These physical incarnations of textual depth and dimension lend to the character’s development of life through dance and planning of the animator as a choreographer.

¹⁴ Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 3.

¹⁵ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 22.

degree that one would become inseparable from the other.”¹⁶ The view of the combination of body and sound as inseparable remains persistent in the literature, but separating them allows for the text to open up and expand our understanding by deconstructing the animated screendance. All of the images and gestures that make up the animated body, in whichever form it takes, are all impacting how it is being perceived and affecting, this clash reminds us of the linkage between Walt Disney and Bertolt Brecht’s yearning to clash the experience and engagement of characters, though Disney still catering towards a mass audience.¹⁷ Furthermore, the theoretical realm of animation in the combination and clashing of images to produce visual cohesion and verisimilitude can be understood with the expert theories of Norman McLaren, who founded and programmed the National Film Board of Canada’s animation sector:

Animation is not the art of drawings that move but the art of movements that are drawn; What happens between each frame is much more important than what exists on each frame; Animation is therefore the art of manipulating the invisible interstices that lie between the frames.¹⁸

The combination and clashing of images to produce visual cohesion and verisimilitude of movement becomes clear in the production of these illusions of life. It is the spark of change between frames, the slight difference of continuity, that produce the kinetic vision of choreography. A complimentary view of animation is formulated and constructed through an imaginative element that places heavy consideration onto the body, thus

¹⁶ Chris Pallant, *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 21.

¹⁷ The Epic Theater, for Brecht, aimed to instigate and rewrite the text of how audiences were influenced and probed through the material, which changes the perception and engagement between art and spectator. *Brecht Sourcebook* edited by Martin and Bial.

¹⁸ Norman McLaren, “Definition of Animation,” quoted in Maureen Furniss, *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) 5.

becoming a clear sign of how to instill the illusion of life and purpose into these characters and figures that have occupied the cinema screen and audience's hearts. While McLaren gives us a technical viewpoint of cinematic animation, Byrne and McQuillan postulate through a humanistic lens:

To animate is to give life, or to inspire; to be animated can variously mean to be full of life or its opposite, to move as if alive. To be animated is also to be full of spirit, or, put another way, in possession of animus, spirit, possessed by spirits. That which is animated may be inanimate but to appear to be alive, as *Pinocchio* and 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice' in *Fantasia* show.¹⁹

What is provided from this quote is an alternative reasoning for the placement of the soul or spirit within these characters that emphasizes the humanistic qualities that audiences attach to. The animation being produced by the cinematic apparatus allows the spark of imagination to flourish.

Furthermore, Bordwell outlines four types of meaning that can be made of a film. Inadvertently, recognizing this structure points out that *Fantasia* can be considered a montage of various forms, both animated and indexical, evident in the earlier descriptions. So, it is not just these various types of bodies that become imparted with meaning, but rather the environment that they are nurtured within. In other words, looking at each segment as fostering each element it contains will be helped by including Bordwell's types to begin further basing how viewers can have meaning on these images, sounds, music, and movement. Back to the list, the four types of meaning include the concrete world, conceptual meaning, symbolic and implicit meanings, and repressed or symptomatic meaning.²⁰ Many of the films and cartoons that are analyzed and examined

¹⁹ Eleanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney*, 1st ed. (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 69.

throughout contain pieces of all of these meanings, some more explicitly than others. Pushing back against Bordwell for a moment, I believe that having fragments of each of these types of meaning, especially when discussing animation, is important to making these drawn and manipulated movements and worlds more impactful than the real world. This is why details are central to constructing the whole picture, where minimalism can impact audiences with the same veracity as a milieu of ideas. Sherril Dodds clearly asserts, “Yet these are not simply bodies inscribed with technical devices: they are also bodies that carry social, cultural, political and economic meanings.”²¹ This list can be expanded when discussing the animated dancing bodies that can exist beyond the typical understandings and realities that humans exist within, especially through the anthropomorphic fantasies that the Disney studio was famous for. More instances and elements of meaning can be added, even if manipulated, through animation and the bodies that creatively grace the screen and the audience’s perceptions. So, my pushback would be that having, “only four possible types,” negates the visionary processes of animation and modernism’s symbolism and imagination since the many combinations and possibilities of movement and emotional engagement promote an infinite number of types and arrangements of meaning.²² Animation allows the audience to use their imaginations and, in this case, it does not assume that they are unintelligent, but rather these people are able to comprehend, a term that Bordwell frequently uses as a way to

²⁰ Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 8-9.

²¹ Sherril Dodds, *Dance on Screen: Genres and Media from Hollywood to Experimental Art*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, 36. This book is influential for the resurgence of screendance or dancefilm scholarship, especially from a strictly academic prevue. She focuses on the influences of social and cinematic conventions that shape the ways that we see bodies and situations on the screen for audiences to consume for entertainment and amazement.

²² Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 8.

show that meaning was properly constructed within the individual, beyond the constructs of reality, moving into a new realm of movement and dance in other worlds, where Disney's *Fantasia* and cartoons bring us.

Bordwell's list blends nicely with the various types of bodies that readers and I will deal with in *Fantasia* and the larger conception of animated screendances. Since cinema uses editing and cinematography to help construct a narrative and uncover new visions of being, it is imperative to show how these moving and choreographed bodies, already instilled with their form of meaning, are layered onto these conceptions of the body. The forms focused on will be looking at the indexical body, anthropomorphic body, and abstract body, each of these bends the conventions of their form, both in the cinematic and sonic sense. There is a limit to the grounding elements of the concrete world, especially since the only indexical bodies of Deems Taylor and the Orchestra are subjected to the contortion of their bodies with shadows, a concept that I will discuss a bit further on. Along with the focus on animating an interpretation of classical music, most of the meaning that the bodies convey is twofold, conceptual and symbolic. They are either whole concepts detailing a particular mythology, as with the anthropomorphic, or seeds for the audience's imagination to build their individual diegetic space, a practice of projecting a psychology onto the images that are sparked with purpose between the frames, predominantly aligned with the abstract beings.

The vessel and system of projecting these meanings comes through in the terms for the animated screendance. Ultimately, its goal is to put music and choreography together through the medium of the cinema in order to create images not possible in reality, a spectacle construction of mythological narrative. Brannigan has identified some

of the gaps in the screendance, or dancefilm in her parlance, field such as, “Film theory offers approaches to the moving body and the moving image that are particularly valuable for developing discussions of dancefilm in relation to screen performance, cinematic presence and gestural articulation, categories of cinematic movement, framing and editing, spectatorship, and the historical film avant garde.”²³ For this, I look towards Rosenberg's understanding and setting the terms of the Screendance, which has more influence from animation than reality. This combination of dance and cinema "is less a performance than an elaborate, deconstructed photo session, unfolding temporally, frame by frame...to find the most efficient and esthetic methods of framing movement."²⁴ This brings to light how the animated body, through the mechanics of cinema, produces emotional and physical sensations through choreographed dances.

According to Harmony Bench, “Screendance thus becomes an extension of dance-as-entertainment, attracting audiences looking for distraction, spectacle, or technologically assisted virtuosity.”²⁵ The creation of extraordinary visuals, whether through shadow or hand-drawn methods, still has to emphasize the cinematic qualities. The camera offers the dance new capabilities of presenting movement, in fragmented ways, to be reconstructed and refigured with new meanings of bodily and emotional affect. The films that will be discussed are predominantly produced on celluloid utilizing

²³ Erin Brannigan, *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

²⁴ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 1.

²⁵ Harmony Bench, “Screendance: Inscribing the Ephemeral Image by Douglas Rosenberg; Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image by Erin Brannigan,” *Dance Research Journal* 45, no. 2 (2013): 135, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0149767713000053>.

traditional cinematic methods, thus emphasizing the camera's production and editing's syntax in parsing what makes the dance important.

Choreography: Purpose Behind Movement

According to Usha Iyer, “when we consider film performance through the lens of movement and dance, acting becomes reconfigured as a choreographic phenomenon.”²⁶

With this idea, spectators can consider animated dances that are choreographed with particular movements to create a desired effect on the audience and an illusion of life within the film. Aloff also leads us into this more pointed consideration of the animated screendance and choreography of images by prefacing the ultimate goal of Walt Disney and our experience as, “to arrange what are essentially abstract lines and colors so that they connect with an audience emotionally.”²⁷ I am simply looking specifically at the multimodal body from this point on, which means that choreography is imperative to define. Approaching the term, “choreography,” concentrates on the method, arrangement, and purpose that activates the movements and gestures displayed through the medium of the body.

Moving forward, it is imperative to view the animator as the choreographer.²⁸

Through the process of animation, the focus on each frame and the freezing of emotions and movements are detrimental to compelling the audience to have empathy and allow

²⁶ Usha Iyer, *Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 10.

²⁷ Mindy Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu: Dancing in Disney Animation* (New York: Disney Editions, 2009), 102.

²⁸ Hannah Frank’s book, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* focuses on the labor of animation and the army of people who bring these cartoon images to dance. As I will be discussing particularly chapter 3, these films are produced with an army of people. Saying this, the analogy of “animator as choreographer” should account for the many layers and variations of the task and role.

identification with these characters. Animators must create these illusions within their planning and choreography by considering whether the camera needs space to navigate the diegetic terrain as well as the dancing body. The choreographer is responsible for writing the text of this body, instilling it with purpose and perception within the world that it is inhabiting. Foreshadowing, by looking at animation through this lens of choreography, it becomes apparent that each instance of the presentation has to be planned, which intensifies the meaning behind the gesture since the intended effect has to be considered before production. This study inscribes the notion and dialectic of the *animator as choreographer* for the purposes that these artists are instilling and forming purpose and reason through their craft of mobilizing these hand-drawn evocative bodies.

Jenn Joy's interest in choreography is considering the ways that these movements and gestures are given these meanings through where, "choreography becomes an explicit form of knowledge production and distribution, an economy of transversal ideas."²⁹ In typical dances, the body is considered the site of knowledge production, how the body is affected and transformed through the interaction within the space, but in animation, the production of knowledge comes way before any objects are instilled with mechanical movement through the projector. So, this leads us to query where meaning and purpose are produced across these various bodies. Aloff offers a definition of choreography within the realm of Disney cartoons, the exemplary mixture of these two realms, "a pattern of movement set to music that incorporates nondance aside and reactions, as well as the dance steps and gestures."³⁰ All of these pieces seem to fit together to explain an

²⁹ Jenn Joy, *The Choreographic* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 15.

³⁰ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 51.

intensely expressive and impactful combination of human, cartoon, mechanical movements, and labor to create imaginative and fantastical animated choreographies and screendances.

Joy succinctly and descriptively provides a textured understanding of the body in relation to space, movement, and gesture. In order to express this, first, astutely observe how this is closely related to Rosenberg's research and appreciation of screendances and performative art, which gives the impression that the flat terrain of cinema is given dimension through the dances and presence. Rosenberg's specific look at the screendance focuses on the ways that choreography is further intensified on the screen through the added layers of editing and cinematography that already hold their own ideological weight in film theory and narratology. Though, in the process of looking to find where audiences construe meaning from the body, Joy resolves this by presenting choreography as a dialectical battle of body and environment. This is evident in her high use of language that, "invites a rethinking of orientation to relationship to space, to language, to composition, to articulation, and to ethics."³¹ Looking at how the different elements of the space impact its consumed participant helps foster an understanding of the bodily dimension, especially in animated forms. These elements include, in both Joy's perception and the focus for our forthcoming inquiries, aural and sonic landscapes, fantastical interpretations through animation, and the illusion of depth in character development and transformative depth.

Constructing and visualizing a fantastical and imaginative image is at the heart of animation, thus allowing artists and audiences to move beyond their reality. Through

³¹ Joy, *Choreographic*, 1.

choreography of the animators and artists, who must plan and execute articulations and perceptual movements, crafting their textual existence, explains how these bodies are instilled with meaning. This restraints and meticulous planning of choreography also separates real-life bodily performances from the animated screendances. Brannigan sums this up while opening many paths for this study and conception of choreography through different states of being, with, “The tendency of dance toward unrestrained, hyperbolic motility and unexplained stasis, and the film’s tendency to order, restrain, frame, and cut, work upon each other in [animated screendance] to produce limitless variations and experiments that test the limits of cinematic production.”³² Going through Disney’s history, where giving life to these drawings was a major concern to these master manipulators of illusions helps connect choreography to cartoon animation. Having achieved this, they are still constantly improving and growing in the semantics and form. So, while converging on the processes of meaning-making, audiences and scholars have to consider how choreography is used in a few ways: to characterize identification, to give depth and dimension to specific gestures, to signify tension between the body and environment, and to give weight to the intended effect that will be presented.

It is no reach to look at legendary dancers on film or within dancefilms³³ to begin to understand these concepts, but care must be taken on animation’s lead to further expand our perception and understanding to recognize other forms of bodies that are impacting us. It is important here to distinguish and develop the definition of

³² Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 15.

³³ Here Dancefilm is used for purely syntactical pleasure, but it refers to the same idea of the Screendance. Although it is much different from dancers on film because the dancefilm/screendance provides the space to have alternative bodies than humans. Dance and choreography are everywhere, even in the basic motions of the universe, it really just becomes important when provided with signification and focus.

choreography beyond the human body, and to now accept the affective tendencies of a new materialism, whether it be animation, animals, or abstract interpretations, as these all have the same power of identification.

The body is the site where meaning is placed upon, thus allowing us to consider it through various texts and symbols that parse out each component of these corporeal constructions. Moving closer to the animated body, I must restrain my eagerness and fandom in order to discuss the real, a materiality of biological familiarity, because these conceptions of being have their roots within the corporeal realities of the human body. There is a debate regarding the corporeal presence between live theater and recorded cinema, started by many of the early cinema critics, like Walter Benjamin, André Bazin, and Béla Balázs. Bazin's idea is that theater has rooted itself in the corporeal presence of human performers, who possess "flesh and blood," and the cinema is conceived of photochemical representations of these bodies that are frozen in a temporal instance.³⁴ It is necessary to consider the role of the body in these spaces, especially once it is mechanized through the projector, where the production of the dance is an illusion, even with the corporeal presence and somatic identification.³⁵ This debate is centered around the conception of the individual and how the presence of the camera disturbs the wholeness of the body and how it produces meaning.³⁶ Audiences witness this in many of the early Hollywood musicals of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, where the dance was recorded predominantly in long shot to capture the whole dancing body with minimal

³⁴ André Bazin, "Theater and Cinema, Parts One and Two," in *What is Cinema? Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray, 76-124 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 97.

³⁵ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 13.

³⁶ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 9.

edits.³⁷ These examples, and many others, support Bordwell's understanding of the "concrete world," since there is only the larger image, the wholeness of the environment, to contribute to the body on the screen. Therefore, by introducing a camera's perspective and cinematic persuasion to these performances, it adds an extra layer of meaning in terms of what can be seen and how it impacts the spectators.

Ideally, this critical debate can be taken a step further to look at this dichotomy between recorded physical bodies in cinema and animated hand-drawn bodies, especially with the importance of cinema technology in this conception. Most of the issues that arise from these critics and practitioners are relegated to live-action cinema that mechanicalizes the body into frames on celluloid to be reanimated through the projector, yet the question raised concerns the presence of the corporeal being that made the dance. Here the dance is ephemeral, yet concrete, thus losing its aura of a unique exhibition. So here, "the motion picture camera that captures and diffuses choreography while remaining outside of it," must be reconsidered when discussing animation.³⁸ Rather than the physical body existing and performing with unique movements each time, perhaps captured on celluloid, the animated exists in that form before and after it is captured on film. Each frame of the choreography can truly be a frozen moment in time, preserved in

³⁷ Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (1987); Sean Griffin, *Free and Easy?*, (2018); Mordden, *The Hollywood Musical* (1981). This also represents the focus on full-body spectacle, where the theater or vaudeville experience was present in the narratives and executions of dance numbers in early Hollywood, the 1930s-1960s. The expression comes from the full formed choreography of the whole body widely expressing, so the move towards the body, viewing it in fragments, changed how audiences perceived and identified with these figures on the cinema screen. The membrane of the screen also changes its delivery from theatrical to stylistic, thus having a new relationship with the spectators who can see the performance through specialized views.

³⁸ Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.

the drawn image, where the drawn body does not lose its aura. Perhaps its value is greater than a physical body. This is a question of the intrinsic value of art and performance, but for the sake of brevity, let us bring up that these drawn bodies, whether in the performance, materialized by each drawing, or animated on the screen always have the same reproducible meaning attached to them. The indexical body can never do the same exact movements and gestures, even in the right controlled setting, to achieve this level to affective meaning making.

To reframe and restate my position and direction in this study, questioning the bodily construction and purpose is essential to inquire further on this idea: *What makes animated movement a dance?* Perhaps it lies in the music and body in time together or the combination of specialized movements to imply specific meaning rather than simply walking or existing. Another view is that the animators, in their concern for realism, needed somehow to avoid the previously untheorized Uncanny Valley while getting as close to life like as possible.³⁹ Meaning arises from the gestures and movements of cartoon bodies that are focused on exaggerated features in order to make these appeals to the audience more fluid and dimensional.⁴⁰ In making an animated dance, these gestures emphasize real-world movements with the illusion of perspective to construct empathetic images that the audience can identify alongside without being detracted by its non-human human nature. As seen with *Steamboat Willie* (1927), even Mickey Mouse bobbing up and down while whistling, even with his action of turning the ship's wheel, becomes

³⁹ The Uncanny Valley was theorized and published by Masahiro Mori in 1970, where he hypothesized the emotional reception of robots in relation to their aesthetic features. This can be found in many places, but initially within the book, *Bukimi No Tani*.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Randell Upton, "Music and the Aura of Reality in Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)," in *The Disney Musical on Stage and Screen: Critical Approaches from 'Snow White' to 'Frozen'* edited by George Rodosthenous (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017), 25-26.

evocative of how audiences can appreciate and believe this animated drawing as being an affective body.⁴¹ In addition, the *Silly Symphonies* were working towards making the body the figure of force through its controlled yet lifelike dance and bodily movement experiments, even though music seemingly controlled the narrative. Furthermore, these bodies, the many different types that are present in the output of Walt Disney's studio, are captured through different camera setups, which produces the illusion of added dimension to an already construed character. The following chapters and project are going to parse the different forms of the body, animated and real, in order to uncover how the already stylized form of the screendance is further accentuated with hand-drawn animation elements and cinematic artistic qualities.

Dance requires a body to perform its function, though grounded on the cultural truth that bodies come in many different forms.⁴² Rosenberg's concern with the dancing body is that it has a focus on the texture that is constructed through the tactile and physical nature of the indexical human within the space. The texture is important to give character to the nature of the movements and gestures while also providing the subject with dimension through their perceived mentality and physicality, injecting substance to base on these affective identifications. There is a link between the psychosomatic

⁴¹ *Steamboat Willie*, directed by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks (Walt Disney Studio, 1928), <https://www.disneyplus.com/movies/steamboat-willie/1Lh1k4ammOG5>. This cartoon is the first appearance of Mickey Mouse in a public space and the introduction of a successful mainstream cartoon with synchronized sound along with the picture. The inclusion of sound is instrumental in jump-starting the implementation of dance and cartoons, but it also allows for the expansion of psychology and space for these characters to emit their charms.

⁴² Jo Read, "Animating the Real: Illusions, Musicality and the Live Dancing Body," *The International Journal of Screendance* 11 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.18061/ijsd.v11i0.7100>. This puts emphasis on the lived dancing body to conceive the performance and outward reflection of perception to the spectators.

material of these characters and the texture that secrets from their figural construction. When it comes to animation with shadows and hand-drawn paintings of images, observers begin to lose the perspective of dimension and texture, the objects and mend into one hybridic form. The images composited on the screen or canvas become shells and amalgamations of bodily representations, which is an issue that Sergei Eisenstein assimilates to the concept of *plastics*. Through this lens, the dance loses its impact on the audience since the body is no longer capable of holding substance. The animated bodies, at a closer look, have texture and dimension through the brushstrokes and kinetic lines that make up the images. Also, by having them projected on the cinema screen, the illusion of life is realized, and with some ingenious tricks of perspective in the drawing and camera, the animators can achieve in putting meaning and dimension onto these animated dancing bodies. Texture and presence are restored due to the marriage of technology and movement, which leads to Rosenberg's conception of the screendance as the doorway into the way that these bodies can impart affection and meaning onto the audience, even moving beyond the troubles of lacking outward identity.

The Important Pieces of the Animated Dancing Body

The first part of this overarching question insists that there is a meaning to be placed upon the body, one that is universally known to the audience, yet what constitutes an animated body? Further, how can spectators and theorists impart the ideas central to the screendance with animation and find out how to mold them together for compatibility?⁴³ In order to begin this inquiry, Brannigan will be placed against both of

⁴³ Much of this discussion falls into the realm of aesthetics and signifying the pieces that create the whole. These questions and concerns are brought up in Pierson's *Figure and Force in Animation Aesthetics* (2020) and Furniss's *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics: Revised Edition* (1998). Also, Thomas and

the figural and aesthetic animation theorists, Pierson and Furniss, to begin a conversation with each other to combine and agitate these traditions of cinema practice and theory. I am framing this grand impression of Disney cartoons and films against the coda that, “‘As far back as I can remember,’ Wilfred Jackson said, ‘Walt wanted his drawing that were animated to seem to be real things that had feelings and emotions and thoughts, and the main thing was that the audience would believe them and that they would care what happened to them...and he used to stress that!’”⁴⁴ Before dissecting the dances as compositions of meaning and affect, this study relies on establishing an understanding of the various components of the animated dancing body. There is tension when it comes to placing meaning on these objects, but through breaking them down and understanding the force of each place on the whole, it becomes apparent that animation is constructed on the tensions between detail and milieu. In many ways, this can be extrapolated by these two scholars of dancefilm and animation aesthetics, respectively, whose conception of the body, movement, and gesture tug at each other while helping frame a well-rounded understanding of *Fantasia* and other animated screendances.

Brannigan, as is Rosenberg, is concerned with the ways that cinematic technologies represent and fragment the dancing body to create new conceptions of bodily presence and movement, using Balázs’ focus on the face and individual pieces of the body. Brannigan’s focus on the shift in dance-centric cinema, moving away from musicals in long shots, witnesses “a more intimate movement vocabulary...and shifted

Johnston’s *The Illusion of Life* belongs amongst this list for their theoretical and practical expertise of aesthetics and demonstrating different forms.

⁴⁴ Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*, New York: Disney Editions, 1995, 35.

from subtext in a live performance to text in a particular type of dancefilm.”⁴⁵ In other words, the peripheral movements of the performative body do not have the same signification as that afforded by the cinema’s ability to capture details. Pierson, on the other hand, is also concerned with the individual units of the body, but he places it in the view of gestalt psychology, where the mind is constructed by surrounding stimuli, so the overall milieu is taken as the totality of being and understanding. Pierson also grounds his theory of animation aesthetics within gestalt psychology, which focuses primarily on how the whole picture impacts the individual, grasping the whole environment in constructing one’s perception. Though this mode of inquiry is helpful in understanding human perception and the impacts of the world on the individual, I would push back a bit because this does not really allow us to look at the detail. Through my understanding, the gestalt would blend all details with their larger units of force, in a way, that the smaller unit would be engulfed by the larger. On this quest to find meaning in these objects, it is sometimes the minute details that really make the affective impact, which is where Brannigan would clearly contribute to rounding out how animation’s reliance on the close-up, in dance, and details of figure and form. Her focus resides on, “how the close-up in dancefilm creates a specific cine-choreographic order by extending and redefining the parameters and nature of the screen performance and thereby extending the parameters of the dance.”⁴⁶ Now this does not mean that gestalt psychology is useless because its discussions of phenomenology will help demonstrate how these composited units do have a strong impact on the audience, but also how the human minutia is

⁴⁵ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

important in animation theory. Pierson focuses on how the individual units come together, along with other sensory stimuli like music and sound, to construct reality or the perception of reality in terms of the imaginary fabrications of animation. The details dissolve by looking at the larger picture, and I must return this animation aesthetic to the subtext of looking at it from a distance. Rather, as with Brannigan and Rosenberg, there is pertinent importance in allowing the film to guide my eye with the filmmakers' intentions, though Pierson's theory of figure and force is significant to combine.

When it comes to animation, it becomes a bit more complicated to place meaning on movement and the animator's intention of gestures. According to Pierson, animation is composed of various units that are bound together to create a figure. These units are the baseline understanding of animation and are placed upon a spectrum from abstract to representational animation. Pierson notes, "at the abstract end of this spectrum would lie explorations of geometric shapes, strong graphic relationships, and nonnarrative temporal patterns. At the representational end would lie Disney's imitations of physical forces, spaces, and bodies".⁴⁷ At the heart of the matter, these units merely represent an aesthetic object that flashes across the screen but have to figure out where meaning can be instilled. In order for these units to have a purpose, they are connected to a figure, thus Pierson argues that the pieces are insignificant before the whole. On the other hand, Brannigan looks at the close-up as an opportunity for the pieces to become signifying components with the help of cinematic technologies, where rather than having a spectrum, the body is construed as an ebb and flow of being. The close-up allows for the units to be geometric shapes and representations of bodies at the same time, "becoming a

⁴⁷ Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 7.

cine-choreography specific to the close-up in dancefilm—a dancing field of micro-movements.”⁴⁸ What is witnessed on the screen is animation’s imagination and modernism reconsidering how the body can move and be set in its diegetic world. Also, this movement and comingling between these two ends of the spectrum allow audiences to subvert their expectations and preconceived notions of reality and move into these worlds that defy logic and physics.

Fantasia contains the spectrum of units and forces but even goes a step further by including human representation, thus having these realms interact. Yet, when it comes to Mickey Mouse and gang, who are anthropomorphic animals with human-like features, I have to reconsider what Pierson’s representational animation is referring to. Does he intend that the human form is what manifests a sort of bodily representation, like the legs, hands, and faces of these characters? In these early cartoons, viewers also see non-anthropomorphic animals, plants, and objects dancing or reacting to their environment with performative choreographies, hyperbolic to physics. These elements, which do not have representational agency, still have a rhythm and tempo, and are not just relegated to abstract shapes and forms. Here both ends of the spectrum contain the same importance in their conceptions of bodily being, these units of hands, faces, leaves, record-playing goats, and many other examples still have the full force that a whole figure would contain. The close-up here does not have to restrict the view of the whole, but rather animations focus on the details and specifics of the image. It is financially and labor intensive to animate, so working on individual pieces of the whole, like a head turn with a static body, is the lucrative way of accomplishing the goal of breathing life into these

⁴⁸ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 42.

images and characters. To tie this together, there is a representational being in all elements of the animated image, made up of many smaller units that foster itself the details.

As broadened and explored in the discussion on shadows and abstraction of the body, the human referent shares a quality with animation, and that is, “a figure is not exhaustively definable as a fixed, closed shape.”⁴⁹ Rather both of these notions of bodies, especially in cinema, move beyond the biological and ideological pretexts that they are singular beings. Through the imaginative filmmaking and conceptions of bodily being, it is possible to understand the images bursting out beyond their signification. In my search, and now inquiry, into meaning-making, Pierson, at times, seems to diverge from this perspective of fragmentation and the animated screendance being impactful onto audiences through these parts. Though these ideas are not entirely opposite, his account and conception of animation, “places its emphasis on how image and sound are organized, not on our identification with characters in the diegesis (or on the incompatibility of those characters’ actions with our physical world.”⁵⁰ As seen before, figures are not defined by their borders or shape, this is the space where affective physicality, or the rendering of such, comes into the discussion. This removes any room in creating the meaning of the body through the imagination, just like identifying with superheroes who perform actions beyond our physical ability. Furthermore, the identification that audiences connect with is in a large part of how the cinema allows audiences to be engrossed in the action, or in this case, the dancing bodies. Continuing

⁴⁹ Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

the discussion of the marriage of image and sound, which is especially crucial to animation and dance, separately and together, but a little bit later on, I am interested in the images and formations of bodies that expand our notion of being and affective engagement with audiences.

Imaginative Shadows

Shadows continue to pervade the cinematic image and animation tradition. The figure and form of Mickey Mouse's shadow has become an iconic symbol of American culture and global recognition. This has extended to the famous picture of Walt casting a shadow of Mickey, signifying the confluence and conjoined nature of the animated body and the creator of this tradition.⁵¹ In *Fantasia*, shadows guide the audience into their first instance of animation and transitions the indexical body into abstraction, into imagination. By displaying these forms of shadows and the imaginative way of using color and light, while later addressed, I am not naïve to the history that brings us to this point. It is my intention, in this section, to present a few instances in cinema that more or less had some influence on Walt, that present shadow-images of dancing bodies in early conceptions of animation. Even though these films depict various narratives and characters that brush alongside the conceptions of animation, their modernist flare places them in the same ideological arena and helps us arrive at the main analysis. These films are, "engaged in a modernist enterprise: foregrounding form, making the viewer cognizant of the screen as screen, as a surface on which is projected representations of the world imaginatively conceived."⁵² Robert Kolker, unaware of this project, demonstrates

⁵¹ Mike Buckhoff, "Walt's Working Way," D23, June 8, 2020, <https://d23.com/walts-working-way/>.

⁵² Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness, Fourth Edition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12-13.

how modernism has a strong focus on the projection screen in the creation of imaginative images and representations of the body, in these cases, dancing to produce meaning. This section is primarily focused on the materiality of lights, screens, and cameras to help lead us to an understanding of the animated body in transitional practice. From Charlie Chaplin roller-skating close to the edge of a department store level, Fred Astaire gracefully tap-dancing alongside towering silhouettes, Gene Kelly dancing with his ghostly image, to Martha Graham's choreographed bodies consisting of corporeal physicality grounding themselves in meaning, these representations will lead us to uproot the body and bring us to a formal conception of animation to contextualize and dissect.

The imaginative freedom from direct address allows audiences to abandon any expectations of reality and move beyond. For instance, the camera special effects in Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush* (1925) or *Modern Times* (1936) brought audiences beyond the reality of the situation into the comedic potential by proving freedom to movement and gesture. By choosing these two films, which is not an easy task from his entire catalog of films, opens the door to exploring the cross-sections of the physicality and cinematic production that will later prove a valuable backdrop to inform how Mickey Mouse will move in humorous and calculated fashions that produce immense emotional reactions. Rosenberg sees Chaplin as a rich source of "a particular type of physicality and an acknowledgement of cinema's ability to create and illuminate movement through editing."⁵³ Chaplin's films, while typically including a traditional dance, a tradition of silent cinema to promote moving bodies, present comedy acting as a sort of dance where the body is choreographed to perform specific routines. This is where the animated

⁵³ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 42.

comedy and inherent dances they perform first began to transform in screendances. When Chaplin is pushed off the side of a mountain, out of the small house, he is seen trying to hold on while kicking his feet as if swimming back to the surface.

Perhaps with more ingenuity and presence in the mid-1930s, *Modern Times* presents a modernist view of industry along with the irony of the body. This irony comes into the form of changing how it operates in movement or by placing it in a situation where the outcome is imaginative. For instance, in the roller-skating sequence, Chaplin is captured in each graceful sway around the room while the music is swelling from the department store's PA system. The long shot, capturing his entire body, and deep focus, providing the layout of the store, allows for the comedy of the dangerous drop in the floor to come to life. With each skate and covering of his eyes, he edges towards becoming a roller skater to a ski jumper, yet it really is the graceful and confident movements that the ignorant Chaplin maintains is what provides the comedy. There is little doubt that Chaplin influenced Walt Disney and his team since it seems that these visual gags seem to show up in many of the cartoons. The fear of the *close call* and the blissful ignorance provides the comedy of many of Mickey Mouse's early films. Furthermore, like how Chaplin subverted expectations when not rolling off the edge, he was still creating entertainment that relied on pushing back from reality and entering the fanciful comedy.

This imaginative freedom also impacted the means that dances were envisioned by paths of shadows and optical doubling, a pepper's ghost type effect, that showcased how the body can be cinematically manipulated to construct images of fantastical nature. Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly, two of the kings of modern film dance, frequently pushed the boundary of capturing dance on film in order to exhibit it with the utmost affective

presence. One of the features of these dances is their propensity for the whole singular body without fragmenting it with editing or tight camera distances. In the following section, I will be examining Astaire in his 1936 RKO picture, *Swing Time*, which features a dance number that finds Astaire's body dancing in front of two large projected silhouetted shadows. Now this point is also highlighted because the indexical figure in the foreground is also further manipulated by the camera's speed, which effectively slows down the performance and allows us to inspect each movement and gesture with microscopic scrutiny. In this dance alone, the imagination and innovation of cinema shines on through to promote the novel marvels of modernism. This is precisely the material that Walt Disney would have been engaging with, especially since, at this point, the company was working on the animated musical, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).⁵⁴ These films presented new and imaginative methods of telling narrative, using the dancing body and its extensions by manipulating the technology and experimenting.

Moving from Real to Drawn

After much of this theoretical basis, let us begin to fully transition into one of the key lenses of this project, which is to show the various bodies and how they are affected and inscribed through the camera and cinema apparatus. The bodies now discussed will span from the indexical corporeality of Astaire and Kelly to the cartoon hybridizations, myth, and the abstracted form, in order to demonstrate the basis for these instances of identification. This process will also demonstrate where and how these drawn characters

⁵⁴ Three essential studies of this landmark of animation cinema and audience engagement are J.B. Kaufman, *The Fairest One of All: The Making of Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, (San Francisco, CA: Walt Disney Family Foundation Press, 2012); Richard Holliss and Brian Sibley, *Walt Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs & the Making of the Classic Film*. 1st ed., (New York: Hyperion, 1994); Eric Smoodin, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, (London: British Film Institute, 2019).

have a basis to expand their dimensionality of body and space through references to reality and choreography based on physicality and somatic responses.

Before getting entrenched into the animation traditions, it will benefit this study to explore some ways that the dance and choreographed movement have been presented in cinema with physical corporality. Also, mentioning both realms that occur in *Fantasia* allows this study to be well-versed in a variety of ways that bodies are presented on the cinema screen. Pierson puts it as, “actions in animated worlds are not bound to the physical laws of our world in the way that events in live-action film tend to be, and animation therefore offers us an escape from that reality.”⁵⁵ According to Martha Graham’s *A Dancer’s Life*, the body of the dancer is dictated by discipline that exists through the absolutes of their state of being. For instance, the foot is either curled or uncurled, there is not an in-between. The only freedom that the dancer receives comes from the work they put in during their practice in the studio. This methodology and mentality exist for the type of dance that lives on the stage, in full corporeal reality, and marks one of the major turning points for expressive and psychological-based dance in America during the 1940s and 1950s. Graham was initially resistant to the camera because, as Nathaniel Kroll recalls, she did not have control of her body and voice, as she could command an audience on the stage. This seemingly comes from the camera’s ability to focus and reinterpret the images and visual messages by closing in on the larger milieu and providing a deeper examination of the minute details. The change of perspective effectively presents a new text and reception of the dancing body by the audience of theater or cinema. This change of conception marks the shift in constructing

⁵⁵ Ryan Pierson, *Figure and Force in Animation Aesthetics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, 3.

characters embedded with traditions of symbolism and expressionism, which influence characters' perception through their psychological identification. The character, in this case, does not need to be animated, but the indexical body on the stage can also be given purpose and reason for their actions and movements.⁵⁶ This concept will be returned to later, but this difference of stage dance and screendance are extremely important. This moment of the creation of the screendance, in this instant since there are plenty of examples in the decades prior from Edison to Walt Disney, positioned the camera as the point of liberation. With the ability to change perspective and capture multiple instances of any choreographed moment, the dancer's body is no longer stifled with discipline, but rather provided the freedom of movement and change.

Another example, and perhaps directly influential in *Fantasia*, would be the "Bojangles dance" in *Swing Time* (1936). This dance can be broken down into a few components, such as the element of blackface and minstrelsy, the physical body and performance of Astaire, and the use of shadows that dance alongside in a way that distorts the indexical body.⁵⁷ Fred Astaire is centered on the stage in minstrel blackface,

⁵⁶ The inclusion of psychology on the dancing character, real or animated, corresponds with the ability of choice in their existence and textual being, similar to the acting styles of Konstantin Stanislavski and eventually Lee Strasberg, with his focus on psychology or Stella Adler, who made choices through sociological elements. Though Brecht's style is also close to this full embodiment, he believes the Method provided a lack of texture in the performance (French, Philip. 2008. "Philip French's Screen Legends: Charles Laughton". *The Guardian*. 21 September 2008. Web. Accessed 17 June 2023.). This can be further investigated with some great studies from David Krasner, *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*, 1st ed (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). For more discussion of the impact of psychology and acting, which further imparts significance to the animated characters from Disney and elsewhere, you can turn to Butler, Isaac. *The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2022.

⁵⁷ For a great study of minstrelsy and the formation of the medium of animation in American culture, which does have influence on Disney productions, and the wider field, read Nicholas Sammond's *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

exaggerating racist stereotypes of human aesthetics, which effectively erases his facial features to become a figure, like the towering shadows accompanying him. Astaire is donning his typical formal wear that accentuates his pose of airiness, height, and weightless nature, thus initiating the shadow as not being tied to Earthly physics and reality, which present him at odds with his environment. The battle of body and space becomes the guiding force that changes the perceptions of the audience, especially as the Bojangles dance continues by showing his dancing body in slow motion, the imaginative cinematic techniques now allow for each movement and gesture to be accentuated and focused intently by the spectators. Behind him are two shadows, probably reproduced bodies of his performance, but spectators see the nature of these bodies being placed behind the main star. In another filmic world, Gene Kelly has innovations through dance in the film *Cover Girl* (1944) and the cinematic reproduction of a ghostly body, simply a shadow with the physiological features visible. This adds some dimension to the concept of the shadow because now it is able to emote through its animation and proximity to the indexical Kelly, who is completing the illusion by interacting with it. Even if these films were before and after *Fantasia*, they present experimental and imaginative ways of putting dance on screen.

By including these films, I clearly note that these animated dancing bodies, while relegated to the background, can still have a major influence on the audience identifying and understanding the impact being made on them. In *Fantasia*, audiences see many forms of shadows and silhouettes that pose a heavy sensory and emotional impact on the narrative and audience resonating with the images. *Swing Time* attempts to push beyond the cinema screen and verisimilitude in its performance by making it appear to be live on

stage with added dimension and illusion of the larger-than-life dancing shadows complimenting Fred Astaire's strong stage presence. Here viewers get a mixture of bodies and how the choreography presents us with synchronicity and the feelings of connection that comes with identification. This is similar to how the bodies in *Fantasia*, specifically of the brooms and the fairies (in separate sequences), are granted with diegetic dimension, and the body is granted purpose and substance. In highlighting these performances, this study can now move into the animated realm, with the background, to demonstrate how the movement becomes the dance through the new technologies and gesticulations that Disney will continue to experiment with.

The mechanical process of feeding celluloid through the projector is also the ideological method of animating. According to Jean-Louis Baudry, "Projector and screen restore the light lost in the shooting process, and transform a succession of separate images into an unrolling which also restores, but according to another scansion, the movement seized from 'objective reality'"⁵⁸ Having each sprocket catch the film along at 24 frames per second to be then illuminated on the screen is what gives cinema its movement and duration, though a simulation and fabrication of what audiences would perceive of reality. In some sense, all cinema is animated in this process since it takes still images and speeds them up to insist a persistence of vision, or the illusion of motion. Baudry was also concerned with the position of the cinematic subject, who is provided with depth and dimension through the processes of perceiving their place in the space. The apparatus can further expound on the animated body, in their means of identifying

⁵⁸ Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," in *Critical Visions in Film Theory*, ed. by Timothy Corrigan, Patricia White, with Meta Mazaj (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's 2011), 36.

with the spectator, where this confluence through the screen provides their figural force and weight that is recognized. Animation and these imaginative bodies of *Fantasia* and the early Disney cartoons can be considered through an alternative apparatus that Philip Brophy attributes to better understand animation. Outlined and detailed by Brophy, in his article, “The Animation of Sound”:

An animatic apparatus would be a similarly generative machine of effects to that of the cinematic apparatus, but one that is interested in frames, images, cuts and parts more as events and occurrences than elements or components; attuned more to the speed and tempo of fragmentation than the formal sequencing or structural organization of fragments; concerned with film and photography more as a transition than a process; and focused on animation more as a method of caricature than an apparition of lifelikeness.⁵⁹

In other words, Mickey Mouse’s charming and captivating presence allows the audience to provide him with placement within the space, the projector can illuminate his bodily form for all to enjoy. When it comes to dance on film and the screendance, astute readers and scholars can explore this art form as the ultimate means of movement and gestures that relies on having the technology present the body in accurate ways that the dance is choreographed, with the precision of identical replication with each viewing. Felicia McCarren details that in modernism there are two forms of *economies of gesture* that demonstrate how machines produce and expand the notions of movement, especially when it comes to the body on the screen.⁶⁰ In a similar fashion to Pierson, the machine is a component of the whole body where each element has its own force to connect along with the other pieces to complete a gesture, a form of meaning. Here I am shifting the methodology by moving from a conception of screendance that focuses heavily on the

⁵⁹ Philip Brophy, “The Animation of Sound,” in *Illusion of Life: Theories of Animation*, edited by Alan Cholodenko, (Sydney: Power Publications 1991), 68.

⁶⁰ McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 10.

human body of the dancer towards one that integrates the labor of the animator, orchestra, and artists of animated beings.

In the journey to find out how non-corporeal bodies are imparted with meaning; it is critical to reassess what the machine consists of between real and implied bodies. No longer is it just the body that is shown as a mechanized being that is controlling each limb and gesture to produce a certain affect, but while looking at the role of the camera and projector. Throughout the history of the early Disney cartoons, there was constant experimentation and play with the cameras to continue to produce images that represent life and dimensionality. When it comes to these Disney films and cartoons, looking at the form of the machine, in the image of the many types of bodies, that, “implies a very different meaning...not minimized movement but movement defining and powering the universe.”⁶¹ The machine, in both industrial and bodily, bring the world into full force in *Steamboat Willie* (1928) and *Plane Crazy* (1929), where the boat and plane are provided with other gestural features to compliment Mickey Mouse’s bouncy being.⁶² While these are not features present in the pure machine versions, the reader and onlooker cannot forget that animation is already processed through a machine, the projector, and thus the product can just remain artistic.

Furthermore, the movement and gestures across the board are implied from human movements but added with the layer of “Squash and Stretch,” which produces a sense of rigidity and material to these bodies, thus providing it the illusion of weight and

⁶¹ McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 11.

⁶² J.P. Telotte, *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 24-25.

presence within the space that it is traversing.⁶³ This presents one way to transition from the human body to these animated bodies and objects because, “the squashed position can depict the form either flatten out by great pressure or bunched up and pushed together. The stretched position always shows the same form in a very extended condition. The movement from one drawing to the next became the very essence of animation.”⁶⁴ While these images described are found in animated cartoons, there continues to be the presence of the animator as the choreographer, in some ways this is the indexical being using the repetitive process of drawing the action with small incremental movement to maintain some semblance of figure and form. According to McCarren, when discussing the view of Etienne-Jules Marey, one of the early innovators of cinema, he focuses on indexicality as, “a proximity or contingency to its subject that provides a resemblance beyond visual reproduction and thus an iconic status.”⁶⁵ Since the concept of gravity is not present in animation, the Disney animators, in their search for realism, had to account for timing, on the page and through the apparatus. Timing, a human and machine concern, was integral to eliciting the sensation of, “weight...and how far a character moved and how fluid the action was.”⁶⁶ However, this quality benefitted from live-action cinema and studying how the human, indexical, body acts and reacts within the world. By taking these notions of indexicality and animation, even if the bodies or objects presented behave in a dancier manner through their bouncing and embodied rhythm, it comes down to the presence of

⁶³ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 47-48.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁶⁵ McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 26.

⁶⁶ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 35.

the recorder, the camera capturing the image. Mickey Mouse dances on the screen, as do the vehicles, Steamboat Willie and the crazy plane, all in the same way that Martha Graham, Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, or Charlie Chaplin grace the screen.⁶⁷ This occurs, and meaning can be placed on bodies and objects of all sorts because, “cinematic images of dance qualify not simply as icons that resemble their subject but also as indices – indexical images linked to their subject through physical proximity.”⁶⁸ The presence of some form to identify alongside is necessary to instill meaning because it depends on the context and purpose of that body for the audience to base their interpretation. This is also one of the reasons that mythological narratives guided the *Fantasia* and early cartoon programs, because they provided audiences with situations that were easily identifiable and gave empathy to the characters on the screen.

One of the guiding principles of the Disney studio and company is to create entertainment for children and adults to enjoy together, audiences of these cartoons and films are from all different walks of life and perceptions of the world. This presents a gap in the scholarship, since much of the forthcoming scholarship, primarily from Rosenberg and Brannigan, is situated against avant-garde presentations of the screendance. This study will focus on the mass entertainment value in creating these meaningful bodies, relatable widely. This is important because it sheds light on inquiring about the ways that audiences would react to the theory behind these films and how this is imparting onto

⁶⁷ Including all of these figures and personalities also raises the question of how to reconcile their performances with the props and objects that enhance the meaning, such as Chaplin’s shoes (either too large or has wheels) or Astaire’s top hat and coat. These objects animate their real bodies by incorporating new texts into their physical attributes and kinetic talents. I will discuss the animated objects and alternative dancing bodies, like these mentioned vehicles, who become animated dancing bodies that affect the audience. The object and prop body are keys to the animated screendance conception.

⁶⁸ McCarren, *Dancing Machines*, 26.

more mainstream pictures. The history of the screendance is based on experimental and alternative presentations of the body dancing on the video, albeit sometimes digital, screen. Both of these instances of cinema discussed, primarily animation and screendance, both are linked in their modernist themes and tones. Unlike the body-grounded films featuring Martha Graham's troupe, my goal is to dissect the underpinnings of what makes up a screendance, in Rosenberg's understanding, to construct a retrospective interpretation of experimental yet mainstream animation that relates to audiences. Making meaning on a non-corporeal body would get eclipsed in the avant-garde tradition, so attempting to gauge a wider audience with material that is equally as innovative and experimental is the objective and ambition through the following analyses. The next step of viewing the body through this imaginative and abstract manner of corporeal being would be to focus on a key innovation of visual storytelling, which puts focus on the use of shadows and bodily compositions with light.

Bringing in Animation

Fantasia was selected as an exemplary film that demonstrates the animated screendance because of the many innovations and implementations of experiments in animation and musical history. However, before dissecting that film, it is imperative to go backwards on the chronological timeline and look at how cultural engagers have arrived at this moment in our study. I have already situated the readers on how dance has been presented in cinema, inscribing meaning on the indexical bodies of Martha Graham's choreographies, Charlie Chaplin, Gene Kelly, and Fred Astaire. What will help engage further is taking notes and ideas from some theorists of animation aesthetics and materialism (the construction of the bodies, not the Marxist look at history, even though

there is some relevance there) to see how animation is placed onto the screendance as a new way to view these experimental and avant-garde films and perhaps place it earlier in history, before the video and digital age.

The following corpus of films will begin with the earliest synchronized sound and then move through the Mickey Mouse and *Silly Symphonies* cartoons traversing our path toward *Fantasia*. It is very important to discuss these films and history because the innovations of cinema, dance, and music did not appear overnight but rather through a calculated and thorough plan. According to Thomas and Johnston, by studying photographic images that link animation to dance, “Our most startling observation from films of people in motion was that almost all actions start with the hips.”⁶⁹ From this point, there are a slew of movements that can be made, but always in seemingly choreographed and anatomical manner. The animated screendance also comes from an idea that dancefilms, in general, do not usually include verbal dialogue, rather it presents physical communication through the movements and gestures of the body. Some of the first Mickey Mouse cartoons, like *Steamboat Willie* and *The Gallopin’ Gaucho* (both produced in 1928), feature dance moments that make interesting use of the new synchronized sound technology. Telotte, in the discussion of animating science fiction, highlights Walt Disney as a modernist, albeit “low modernist” opposite of the high art that animation constantly evades, who, “seemed to celebrate movement...typically embodied in their emblematic and highly energized characters.”⁷⁰ For the purposes of this study, the screendance is also concerned with the cinematic technology that brings the

⁶⁹ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 72.

⁷⁰ Telotte, *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination*, 4.

body beyond physical reality. One of the keys, beyond these cartoons that brought the Disney studio to fame was their attention to “hyperrealism” when it came to their feature films.⁷¹ They were moving beyond the squash-and-stretch focus on the gag films and moving towards realistic bodies and serious narratives. With this mixture of modernist experimentation and formalist aesthetics, Disney was setting up for a new realm of possibilities of what can be done with dance and performance in fantasy and hyperrealistic, though with artful embellishments. These settings will be seen in *Fantasia* through the various performances. Though the bodies seem to change from cartoonish to realistic, they still hold the same value of texture and dimensionality in their state of movement and reliance on the dance to provide them with a clear illusion of life.

Animation provides that channel between states of being and affective encounters, thus examining how to look at the ways that the camera and production demonstrates this move towards modernism and new forms of considering movement and gesture as dances. The modernist manner of Disney emanates in part also from the energy and essence that is instilled in the characters that were technologically infused with movement, thus being, “machine products, part of a machine culture.”⁷² Through the distinctive style of these characters or objects, put through the process of animation, they produce an imaginative instance of life, in a similar vein as Fred Astaire’s towering shadows provided earlier. Whether it is the hand-drawn body or manipulation of light, these early cinematic animations are enigmatic of, “Their own sort of visual estrangements or comic exaggerations are both born from and give insight into these

⁷¹ Pallant, *Demystifying Disney*, 40.

⁷² Telotte, *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination*, 4.

technological roots.”⁷³ These films both have dance sequences that focus on the bodies of all of the characters being contorted in ways that break free from the humanly constraints that would only be possible by alternative methods of capturing images. Yet, these films present dance in similar ways to choreographies on the stage and screen, though afforded new perspectives and manipulations of the bodies that are presented. The lack of consistent dialogue allows for the other qualities of communication to permeate, thus emphasizing the pantomime and shadow quality of animation, similar to early silent cinema.

***Steamboat Willie* and Other Mousey Bodies**

The modernist tradition that Walt Disney was firmly cemented in would be a calculated way to impart meaning onto non-traditional bodies through formalist methods of textual analysis. As Robert Kolker comments about modernism, as experimentation against a system of formula, “modernism asks a variety of responses from its viewers, one of which is to be moved and excited by formal experimentation and to use that excitement to challenge convention through the act of critical viewing and analysis.”⁷⁴ This is precisely what the innovations and experiments of animation bring to the above concepts of freedom and liberation from the camera. These concepts can be further demonstrated with Walt Disney’s and the world’s first synchronized sound cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*. In this case, the film’s animation is reliant on the camera and cinematic mechanisms to produce the effect of motion and life. Furthermore, Walt Disney understood the value of this new sonic innovation, but was still proficient in capturing

⁷³ Telotte, *Animating the Science Fiction Imagination*, 4.

⁷⁴ Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, 10.

moments of emotion in a universal manner without dialogue, in a similar fashion to early silent cinema.⁷⁵ What he was now provided was control of shaping the tone and mood of the characters, more than physically, with music and sounds that seem to emanate from the hand-drawn character's being, even if it is ephemeral and constantly in flux. Music acts as the glue to keep the believability of the character by bridging each projected flicker and change of the pencil stroke. Movement and music are two elements of animation that lend to understanding the body and how it is able to dance and make meaning on the screen, especially when discussing animation. Rosenberg introduces the idea of *mediatization* within the screendance, even though he is discussing a time that is more within the digital age, the cross-sections of instilling life within the animated characters through dance can be located. While this study will continue to look at *Steamboat Willie* and some other examples from the *Silly Symphonies* because Walt Disney used these films as cinematic experiments in making emotive and affective experiences through the construction and choreography of animations and meticulously planned movements.⁷⁶ To define the term, "*mediatization* refers to the way in which dance is transcribed from its state of liveness to a kind of objecthood as a product of mass media technologies."⁷⁷ Rosenberg's definition is looking at the live-action dance and how it becomes a commodity of cinematic process and is manipulated by the technological and digital interference. In other words, the physical becomes the object to be dissected; however, it is essential to flip this discourse in order to fit within the reality of animation,

⁷⁵ *Walt Disney Presents Gallery and Exhibits*, Walt Disney World's Hollywood Studios, 2022.

⁷⁶ Leonard Maltin, *The Disney Films, Fourth Edition* (New York: Disney Editions, 2000), 4-5.

⁷⁷ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 73.

even though these unaltered ideas will be useful in our discussion of *Fantasia* and the physical orchestra and personalities.

Disney's *Silly Symphonies* and Mickey Mouse cartoons typically present weighty nature and anthropomorphic characters, ones who represent inanimate or non-human objects, and through the technological processes afforded by the cinema, audiences are greeted by images and situations that present a cartoon life and reality. Using one's imagination, audiences can be transported to new worlds with their own physics and milieu that is accentuated by the dance or movement that turns the objects into responsive beings. In *The Gallopin' Gaucho*, Mickey rides into town on a flexible ostrich-esq animal with a neck that responds to each gallop by moving up and down, which creates a tempo and rhythm at the start of the cartoon. Audiences also immediately abandon any sense of reality and accept the fantasy and imagination of the artists. Mickey is standing on the back of the speeding bird-horse imaginary animal, which comes to a halt in a cloud of dust. Here the cloud of dust appears in the background, with a horse in the foreground, but the illusion of dimension as the cloud gets closer really is just the animators playing with scale. The next movement of the dance and cartoon comes when Mickey ties his steed's neck around the hitching post and uses its backside as a diving board. He plans out his jump, a prime example of choreomusicking, thus giving him a machismo and quality of control since the music is synchronized with his movements.⁷⁸ The music and sounds affect Mickey's actions and timing, which guide the comedy and emotional responses towards the audience. This includes the innovation of keeping tempo along

⁷⁸ Iyer, *Dancing Women*; Matthew Rahaim, *Musicking Bodies: Gesture and Voice in Hindustani Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012). Both of these studies are focused on Hindi Cinema operating in response to Hollywood success.

with the music in order to properly line up along the action, which ensures the highest quality emotional reaction.⁷⁹ Mickey then enters through the window, where audiences finally see Minnie Mouse and the band dancing and performing in a wild, uncontrolled manner. This camera captures the whole environment since the beginning, and while it typically stays in a long shot, there are some shots that present it tighter, but rarely in close-ups, which is an innovation that will be explored later on, specifically in *Fantasia*. Perhaps the dances are animated in long shots lends to the tradition of the Hollywood musical and the lore that Fred Astaire, famed dancer of the movies, wanted audiences to see every part of the body move in relation to one another. Though moving in closer, Mickey and Minnie are placed in a dance of battle, where the two different ideologies are expressed through the body language and at odds with their diametrically opposed movements. Mickey is posed with a tall and robust stature, where the effort of his actions occurs in the linear shapes on the obtuse angle of Minnie, if seeing this through the artistic composition on a 180-degree cross-cut plane. Minnie plays the submissive role in their dance, leaning back. The background and their movements of stepping create the sensation of movement, but the camera does not actually move, but rather the movement comes from the breaking down of the choreography into their discreet moments of time. Unlike a staged or filmed dance with physical performers, the space that is being used is flattened onto paper or cels that remove the quality of dimension. So here, the dance is

⁷⁹ This process was constantly improved through the years, yet never abandoned, and it is basically still being used in modern digital productions. According to the souvenir program for *Fantasia*, “Musical beats for an animated picture must be strictly timed before Disney artists take up the task of drawing. Walt inspects the tempo-recording machine as some of the music is played back.” This was received from: *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia* (Walt Disney Productions, 1940), 17.

just existing on a two-dimensional axis that does not allow the dance to have the depth it needs to resolve the battle of space and sex.

In the 1929 cartoon, *The Opry House*, Mickey Mouse plays a piano at a concert hall with the dexterity of a real-life musician. In the contorted fashion, audiences see how the object of Mickey's arms, fingers, and head become instances of life and believability. This film is a great example of how the Disney studio was consistently experimenting and working on the craft of affective animation because even though spectators are focusing on the body and not the sound, an abundance of meaning comes from the actions, like in silent cinema, that provides us with the sustenance of bodily action and emotion. There is a clear connection to *The Opry House's* use of conducting to connote dance and choreography of the band and instrument playing that leads us into much of the spectacle that *Fantasia* is predicated on. The body, animated and indexical, produces these identifications through the many details in the drawings and gestures.

The camera, like with the previous example, captures each instance of the movement, and provides the ability to adjust and reanimate, however, these movements are drawn. The body of Mickey Mouse is based on the many meetings of the Story team, who would act out everything in order to give the animators some bodily reference to base the cartoon on, but never locked into any definitive shape or effort. This provides Mickey the gaiety of bouncing along as he whistles, but audiences can look at this iconic scene with the pretense of freedom that the camera provides the dance. Mickey first appears, though merely a speck consumed by the boat's lively movements along the river, in the pilot deck of the boat in a long establishing shot, the image that most resemble a stage performance, which helps us, the audience, gain our bearing on the surroundings

and how the body should exist within it. *Steamboat Willie's* funnels are moving up and down with a vivacious effort that resembles a beating heart hard at work, and since the sound and music are synchronized, it creates the effect of life and initiates the dance, even if they are rudimentary movements, that the rest of the ship's crew and cargo will have. The next shot brings the audience closer to Mickey, where the illusion of camera position and movement have provided us with more detail and specificity of movement in the drawings. Mickey is now seen whistling and bobbing around where it seems that the music has infiltrated his body, and his dance is a direct implication of it. This idea of music entering the body in order to provide a vivacious life dance comes up many times, but because of the action's move away from realism, cinema spectators encounter an animated screendance that demonstrates the very essence of what the field encompasses.

The figure of Mickey Mouse is first shown in a long shot that captures his whole body and the surrounding spaces. The camera moves a bit closer, focusing on his face and more specifically his lips and cheeks. Since *Steamboat Willie* is the first presentation of Mickey and the beginning of synchronized sound cinema in cartoons, the focus on these two units is important because this is the source of the sound. As he pierces his lips together and inflates his cheeks, a whistle emerges, and these movements are the becoming of the cause of movement. The main movements, in these first brief moments of the lips and cheeks, represent how animators and choreographers can instill meaning into the drawings of animation. The figure of the lips and cheeks is filled with force, and purpose in their intention of change in motion, and the character of Mickey is provided with emotion and affect that can impact the audience. From this point, audiences have reconciled the tune and beat that drives the body and the movements are justified.

Mickey's jovial bobbing up and down to his own tune represents further the characterization that rebels against the counterpoints, with the antagonist Pete, of his plan and the basic whistle tune. This point of the discussion begins to explore how the music and sounds produce the framework that can investigate and analyze the animated screendance. These bodies, in their various animated forms, represent the possibilities of the imagination and this drives what the body is capable of.

During *Steamboat Willie*, the goat gets a hold of Minnie Mouse's sheet music and guitar, which she dropped when being placed on the ship, and in the characterization of the animal, it eats everything. While consuming the sheet music, each bite and morsel is chewed, and the drool that comes out is revealed to be some of the musical notes that fall from the rest of the masticated score. This moment of music consumption seemingly offers the goat with ingested musicality and a dance, which the animated screendance provided by the synchronization of animation between the camera's ability to provide it life and the music's essence of a soul. The goat, after eating the guitar, now delivers Mickey and Minnie with a new instrument to play with. The body of the goat with the music ingested becomes the tool, like a dancer, where it can postulate new meanings through its movements and situation, whether you consider the music to be a physical or psychological addition to the body. This sequence shows how music and dance can be embodied by a character, and in cartoon fashion it is completed by consuming the notes and instruments, but this also connects to the ways that the technology of the late 1920s allowed for synchronized sound. The change in cinematic technologies instilled the bodies with music, sounds, and voice, thus giving them a life that resembles reality a bit clearer. Like the goat, cinema consumed this technology, and it pervaded the art form. In

relation to the animated screendance, the camera is able to move beyond the reality that synchronized sound seemingly enhanced by continuing to capture drawn images that went into the realm of imagination. This sequence also makes a great metaphor for how the animated screendance, especially with *Fantasia*, expands the screendance field while also welcoming new questions and observations.

When audiences view the moving and gesturing body of Mickey Mouse or Hyacinth Hippo, they are drawn to the features that audiences can mirror onto themselves, thus increasing the imaginative process of being and building the spatialized environment in which it exists. These bodies are given aesthetic features that foster identification, but the screendance is predicated on how the music influences the choreography through the presence of the camera. These bodies will expand and be given depth with the presence of sound effects and the programmed music. Mickey Mouse will continue to expand and be influenced by the mythology and music narratives that guide his growth and transformation of character and psyche. Now I will take it a step further, still with human and animated bodies, but observing how sound instills function and form within the presence and choreography of these characters.

Concluding the Body

The importance of body movement in animation is to, on the one hand, reconsider what constitutes a body and, on the other hand, to instill the importance of the camera and other cinematic technologies in recording, capturing, and projecting. This process may be a psychological idea of projecting the desires of life through the projector, as well as the act of giving motion to the celluloid and character in the film. For the technological and corporeal combination, Rosenberg, Pierson, Joy, and films like *Steamboat Willie* and

other earlier Walt Disney cartoons set up the following discussions to be much more succinct and focused on the cartoons. Furthermore, Brannigan and Balázs presented the micro-choreography and micro-physiognomy of the characters, which will push forward in the processes of gesture and reacting to the music and environment. Rosenberg distinguishes the scale of production and dissemination of other affective forms, when the camera is introduced, because of how close the audience turns to the creation. “The site of creation moves from *workspace* to a *workflow*, in which production is not sequential or centralized but is rather a simultaneous fabrication of disparate parts, self-contained units that will be reconfigured in the future.”⁸⁰ The body, in its many forms and figures, comes together to form a text and perception, which the animated screendance expands in order to provide it with dimension and depth.

Parallel to these cartoons, in their early forms, Rosenberg discusses how choreographers moved away from the space of the gallery, which opened up the scale of their dances and grew the artist’s, “agency, presentation, and the nature of site as context.”⁸¹ I see this as a familiar growth of the artist and medium with Walt Disney’s ideas, even though a couple of decades earlier and situated in a context of a war that held pride and honor. The continual experimentations and advancements with animating bodies and sonic landscapes change the site of the performance and characters, from the rudimentary dances of the first Mickey Mouse cartoons to the dimensionality of *The Skeleton Dance* (1929) or *The Old Mill* (1937). These changes in the body and space will

⁸⁰ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

show the expansion of these worlds and character ideologies, while the dances will demonstrate that by becoming more complex and emotive.

Now after looking at the ways that the body can be shown and constructed to produce meaning, this study will have to move towards a discussion of how the meaning is instilled and inflated with purpose and reasoning through the acoustic, sonic, and technological pieces of the cinematic exhibition. The inclusion of sound is extremely important for the presence of a Concert Feature and the guiding force of the body in the screendance. Taking a note from Rosenberg, the images and bodies can only add dimension and texture to an experience to a point. The following chapter will round out these theoretical studies and the application of the early cartoons to round out the filmmakers' focus on realism by looking at the ways that music and sound are used and manipulated to bring life and purpose to these two-dimensional bodies.

CHAPTER 2: MUSIC AS SOUL

Focusing on the sonic and musical elements of *Fantasia* begins to investigate how these animated bodies are provided with emotions beyond the aesthetic features, but rather inwards to the mind and soul. The maestro, arranger, conductor, and musical visionary of *Fantasia*, Leopold Stokowski, was quoted in the publicity program for the film:

The beauty and inspiration of music must not be restricted to a privileged few but made available to every man woman and child. That is why great music associated with motion pictures is so important, because motion pictures reach millions all over our country and all over the world. Their influence is immensely powerful and deep. We cannot measure how greatly music and motion pictures contribute toward a higher standard and enjoyment of living, increasing the well-being of each one of us, as well as our nation, by giving us not only recreation and pleasure, but stimulation and nourishment of the mind and spirit.¹

The potential for music and sounds is great for expanding the imagination and engagement with the images and bodies dancing across the screen. For Stokowski, the power of the sonic realm, especially with the new surround sound technologies known as Fantasound, produces vivid imagination and magical moments. With Walt concerned about the animated visual experience, which, “are much less symbolic and abstract,” that solidified symbols that the audiences were supposed to construct themselves, Stokowski presented the purpose that drives the characters and bodies, even though the viewers’ perception.² Through the medium of animation, this music is made accessible to

¹ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 3.

² Horace B. English, “‘Fantasia’ and the Psychology of Music,” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter, 1942-1943, Vol. 2, No. 7, 29.

audiences of all ages, providing context to the compositions and reasoning for the images on the screen. Robin Beauchamp connects this with the theory that, “Music philosophers believe that music is symbolic of our subjective feelings...Certain musical selections become symbolic links to their personal experiences and emotions.”³ In other words, the music and sound produce an accessible narrative, which the animated screendance can further expand upon through its cinematic and choreographic perspective.

The animated screendance demonstrated through *Fantasia*, places emphasis on the music in constructing the purpose of the dancing body. Horace B. English notes, “it is the music which is the fundamental structure; the music does not grow out of, but rather is supposed to lead up to, the visual forms on the screen.”⁴ This progression is noted through the animated cartoons of Walt Disney’s *Silly Symphonies*, especially how the images and bodies are centralized to the imaginative properties of music. These cartoons and experiments that serve music primarily go against the popular discourse of constructing the idea and ego of a body, especially when it is not real and imaginative, since “the visual production – the acted drama – has been primary; music has been used merely to enhance the story.”⁵ Stokowski’s excitement of this new form of sonic perception and audience engagement through psychological immersion is the novel experiment that *Fantasia* brought to full effect, even if this creative involvement was not fully appreciated at the time.⁶ Music and sound must be expanded upon in order to justify

³ Robin Beauchamp, *Designing Sound for Animation* (Amsterdam: Elsevier/Focal Press, 2005), 43.

⁴ English, “‘Fantasia’ and the Psychology of Music,” 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁶ The appreciation of *Fantasia*, which was not as strong in the 1940s, would come to full force in the 1970s and 1980s. This era introduced the hippie culture with the psychedelic and abstract compositions

this process of animating to the emotions and form of music, especially with the previous discussion about the formation of the body.

This chapter is concerned with how music can be materialized and realized within the dancing and choreographed animated body to provide it with meaning and reason. It is important to understand how sound and music, two separate terms that will overlap, add dimension and life into these characters, especially in constituting the choreography into a dance. Brannigan notes that the bodily presence is a piece of the totality of understanding choreography and identification on the screen, “Just as cinema instituted new categories of ‘presence,’ so too did the emergent technology create new corporeal experiences for the viewer.”⁷ One of the main methods of using technology to affect the audience further is the invention and implementation of sound in cinema. While Brannigan does not view choreography and music with clear delineation, there is a strong relationship between these subjects and how they are constructed. Telotte views this edge of technology to give presence and depth to these emoting bodies through, “what we might term a sound compulsion... a display of the power of sound that has been unleashed... that suggests how an element of the fantastic might linger at the core of the Disney films.”⁸ This added such an expressive and impactful layer to the images of movement and increase the fantasy that graced the screen in front of the emotive and impressionable audiences.

to accompany the music that would be conjoined with enhanced volume and drugs. These stories are detailed in Culhane’s *Fantasia* and other volumes about Disney’s impact on culture and experience. The film gained a new public appreciation, even if for the subculture, where the bodies and music became transmutable and fluid through the perception of the audiences.

⁷ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 13.

⁸ J.P. Telotte, *The Mouse Machine* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 35.

Fantasia is unique in the history of cinema because it begins to add psychology to characters through the overlapping of music and sound, lending to the notion of Walt Disney being a modernist. “*Fantasia* is an early example of Disney’s ‘imagineering,’” according to Mark Clague, who concentrates on the spectacle of the sonic ability of animation, “Its images and stories introduce layers of signification to sound that add meaning to and comment on music.”⁹ These two qualities of the animated dancing bodies are achieved by the invention and adoption of sound and music put towards creating a narrative. Erwin Panofsky observes, “In a film, that which we hear remains, for good or worse, inextricably fused with that which we see; the sound, articulate or not, cannot express any more than is expressed.”¹⁰ The idea that sound is a static function that cannot provide layered experience, thus being limited to what it can offer, might be appropriate for many films in early cinema, but I see there being much more to constructing and giving purpose to these bodies. This is achieved through the music and sound, which acts as the material to interpret and the force that gives reason to the interpretation. To expand upon this, I will be focusing on the ways that music is integral to Disney’s experimentations of the *Silly Symphonies*, the forerunners to *Fantasia* and how audiences and I arrive at this point in animation history. I will be referring to Culhane’s seminal study of *Fantasia* to build off of his observations and research in the production and innovations of the film, as well as focusing on a history and criticism of the innovations and legacies of a few *Silly Symphony* cartoons that paved the way to forefront music at

⁹ Mark Clague, “Playing in ‘Toon: Walt Disney’s ‘Fantasia’ (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music.” *American Music* (Champaign, Ill.) 22, no. 1 (2004): 96.

¹⁰ Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Motion Picture,” in *Three Essays on Style*, ed. by Irving Lang (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 100.

the center of building a narrative and characters surrounding its power and reverberance. Leonard Maltin places heavy influence on color in these cartoons, which provide another layer of dimension and character development,¹¹ but sound and music are the figural forces that spectators and I have witnessed to bring these characters to life, in a manner that expands their psychology and purpose for choreography and transformation.

Figures of Force and Implementation

Fantasia's focus on the music and sound is not considered secondary to the interpretation of the animated dances and images, because then it would just be a music concert, but it transforms the main attraction into the innovation of the cinema experience. The unique nature of the film, "seems to suggest that we see [sound technology and exhibition] as part of a natural aesthetic trajectory...designed to see just how closely fantasy images might be matched with fantastic sounds."¹² Before exploring the marriage of image and sound, I must assess the creative forces that are supplying the music and dramaturgy. This idea, through the music and sound, was captured by critic Pare Lorentz when he observed, "[Walt Disney] has developed an entirely new method of recording and projecting music, immeasurably broadening the potential use of music and pictures."¹³ The recording and projecting became the main methods of creating a naturalistic soundscape while retaining the level of imagination and magic that Disney was synonymous with. Though, Brophy argues that this usage of music to bring life to the animated character is an issue of "dynamism while the cartoons are founded on

¹¹ Maltin, *The Disney Films*, 9.

¹² Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 23.

¹³ Pare Lorentz, *Movies 1927 to 1941: Lorentz on Film* (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, Publishers, 1975), 205.

animism,” where the dialectic of these forms exists as, “an organic life force – musical composition – being combined with an artificial life force – image animation.”¹⁴ This marks where the screendance takes importance with its attention on the combination of the music and body to produce new perspectives and efforts of choreography and space. The addition of animation to the music helps dissolve both their forms into a new consciousness of how the audience is able to interact and reverse Brophy’s conception with these dynamic dancing bodies and objects, influenced by the time and space of perception and choreography, because of the artificial musical dramaturgy that develops imagination, narrative, and mythology of these situations. Brophy dismisses the animism for the dynamism, but the music that provides psychology to the characters and purpose for the audience to follow is shaped by the material fragmentation of the whole, where Stokowski and Disney are separating the layers of the music to intersperse alternative modes of delivery and affective experiences with cartoon images. The music and sounds provide dynamic models of affect for these non-corporeal animated bodies through the imaginative animism of these layers and the people who provide the knowledge to recognize this lively operation of creating the forces of animated screendances.

Much of the importance associated with the music that follows throughout the rest of this study is attributed to two people. The most direct influence on our sonic experience is Leopold Stokowski, who conducted and arranged the music for *Fantasia* and is responsible for the decisions of each of the composition’s details of how it would be performed for the screen and animated dancing bodies. Stokowski’s collaboration with Walt Disney helped realize one of Disney’s goals with sound cartoons, “to build that

¹⁴ Brophy, “The Animation of Sound,” 74.

capacity to orchestrate change into the film's soundtrack...emphasize the reality of the images...[and] build a sense of spatial reality by suturing off-screen space to on-screen."¹⁵ One element that Telotte misses is that the music, for *Fantasia* and others, is decided for its transformative and narrative growth that it provides the images and characters. In other words, the environment, and characters, all constructed by the artists and animators, relies on the sonic and aural premonitions to be given this life. Maltin tells of Stokowski's premonitions as, "He knew that here was a way to create a new medium of presenting this music, not to reduce it to the lowest common denominator, but to enhance the music's inherent qualities with the addition of visuals, and thus intrigue a segment of the public that had kept a closed mind with regard to classical music."¹⁶ Stokowski provided the musical content to be enhanced by a specific form of imagination and artistry that elevates the music through the animated screendances, while Deems Taylor gave audiences the context and reasoning to instill meaning and soul onto these characters by bringing contextualization to light and certain elements of the music to the observer's attention.¹⁷ The inclusion of these two musical figures substantiated *Fantasia* and the larger structure for the animated screendance to thrive. According to the film's promotional pamphlet, "Both men have been active leaders in bringing a wider understanding of good music to the general public. Both are deeply interested in the

¹⁵ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 27-28.

¹⁶ Maltin, *Disney Films*, 43.

¹⁷ According to Culhane and Maltin's respective histories, most of the editions and releases of *Fantasia* that are available for public enjoyment do not have the original orchestrations or versions of the songs that would have been heard before the 1980s.

experiments to improve the quality of sound reproduction,” and inevitably the modern presentation of music and sound.¹⁸

For the element of the ideological dimension of the viewer’s experience and contextualization, Deems Taylor is the subject, “the popular musicologist whose reputation for making music meaningful to American audiences (notably on New York Philharmonic radio broadcasts),” had the role of writing, narrating, and guiding the audience through each musical interlude.¹⁹ In the *Fantasia* promotional program, Taylor is credited as, “an important factor in the selection of the eight numbers which comprise the score of the production, but makes his feature motion picture debut by appearing on the screen between selections, commenting on the music in his well-known manner.”²⁰ The knowledge of the musical selection and the context that he provided to the music to guide the audience’s perception and mind shows the impact that his embodiment and sonic reverberance have on steering the animated screendance experience. In the same fashion, readers should not discount or overlook the power of the voice in *Fantasia*, especially since it grounds and molds our expressive attention to the source material and imaginative interpretations. Though Taylor’s role does not involve dancing or any real expressive movements, his physical presence places him as a singular point of human identification, which is the transition into the characters and musical numbers he will be leading the audience into. By doing this, the audience is focused on some aspects of the music, not worried about understanding, thus they can now appreciate it and inflate their

¹⁸ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 8.

¹⁹ Maltin, *Disney Films*, 39.

²⁰ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 4.

imaginations. Taylor facilitates the marriage of music and the animated screendance by bridging the gap of knowledge, inviting new interpretations of what the music intends, and showing how Disney animators were rendering their idea of the visual narrative. I have reluctantly avoided discussing the presence of Taylor's actual voice in his presentation of the dramaturgical information, but in a remastering of the film, his authorial voice was removed and replaced with some rewrites of the information. Maltin recounts, "Disney purists were even more upset. Deems Taylor was no longer in the film. If one accepted the premise that *Fantasia* needed modernizing, this might have made sense – after all, Taylor is virtually unknown today – but his *narration*, in some ways the most dated aspect of *Fantasia*, remained intact, spoken by an unidentified voice (actor Tim Matheson)."²¹ The images and sounds that present a divide of embodiment and knowledge materialize with the editing and replacement of voice and presence of Taylor. Though perhaps this further emphasizes the craft of animation, which is what surrounds these live-action segments, where images and sounds are interpreted to be realistic in synchronization, even when it constructs fantasy hybridity of the forms. In the previous chapter, I discussed the visual meaning and interpretation of the dancing body, both real and animated, but these two figures further completed the construction by providing reason, purpose, and importance to these characters and objects dancing around. In other words, they provided the soul with the sonic and ideological narrative for these bodies to imbue and enact with meaning through choreography and presence. Music and sound become the bridge for these illustrations and animations of the body, real or not.

²¹ Maltin, *Disney Films*, 45.

The idea of production and a guiding force of my choice of cartoons is controlled by the music. Like before, focusing on the body can only be pushed so far without attention to what drives the motivation and experience within. In the early cartoons, the narratives were loose and focused around the gags and jokes, as “in the Mickey Mouse films it was the job of the composer and/or musical director to fit the music to the action,” which limits the expansion of characterization so far in regards to the environment and external stimuli.²² Characters are shaped by their surroundings, and subsequently Mickey, the vehicles, and other animals only grow when they begin to internalize and adapt their being and mind to the situation. Audiences would witness, “in its early usage, sound existed largely for the purpose of furnishing additional gags, that is simply for comic effect,” without a strong reason or dimension of this image and sound marriage.²³ This is the reactive choreography that audiences witness moving into the *Silly Symphonies*, where the characters, bodies, and objects are guided by internal motivations, which are typically demonstrated and embodied by the music of the piece. It is possible to chart the evolution of animation where, “[Walt Disney] had created the Silly Symphonies in 1929 precisely to let music take precedence over action in some of his cartoons,” which I argue is the experimentation needed to achieve the technological and experiential superiority of *Fantasia*’s many different animated forms and exhibitions.²⁴ These characters’ psychological progression, another element of modernism, ground the

²² Culhane, *Fantasia*, 13.

²³ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 24.

²⁴ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 13.

exploration the music's role in giving the characters purpose and reason for their movements and gestures.

Furthermore, there remains a curiosity about the ways that various forms of cognition and presence are inculcated across the whole form and figures of what is considered the animated dancing body, especially from what was previously discussed in terms of bodily identifications with non-human conceptions and forms. Andrew Selby's ideas on animation comment on this concept with the notion that he, "further contends that, in animation, music is an important tool for creating an atmosphere, enhancing the sense of drama and expressing subtle changes in the psychology of an animated character, thereby enabling the audience to perceive and appreciate all the elements of narrative development."²⁵ The ethereal and delicate environment becomes the space in which music sets the tone for character growth and transformation. In other words, the setting shapes the characters through the mood and tone of the music and sounds, which also provide animation to our senses and dance to the visualizations of these perceptions. When it comes to the overall focus of the paper, music is incredibly significant to constructing the body, its being, and consolidating the purpose of the dance. These elements of experimental nature exhibit bodies in cinema differently than on stage, especially since animation requires the cinematic apparatus, which will bring us closer to identifying the importance of the screendance in classifying how audiences impart meaning to these animated dancing and singing cartoon bodies. Following this exploration of the meaning and the pieces of the animated body in this process, I must

²⁵ Wu, Jun, Jiede Wu, et al, "A Study of the Influence of Music," 142. This paraphrase comes from Selby's portfolio, history, and practical theory book, *Animation* (London: Laurence King Publishing 2013).

then look at the ways that music plays an important role in providing reason and a soul. Clague abridges this concept succinctly, “In *Fantasia*, image does not simply explicate sound, it introduces a host of associations, ideas, and references to music that bring new meanings to Bach and Beethoven.”²⁶ *Fantasia* is predicated on the music that Deems Taylor composed to derive direct meaning through proper musical conditioning and culture or abstract meaning through experiential interpretation. Specifically, how it mixes drawn bodies in various forms and the music to demonstrate a harmony of affect and composition.

Form of Sonic Dimension

In the previous chapter, I explored the form of the body, both real and animated, in order to discover the ways in which it provides the audience with meaning and affective identification. Form is the basic sense of this makeup; it provides the building blocks of how perception and reaction to these dancing animated bodies engrosses the cinema. When discussing how to add in dimension and depth into these animated dancing bodies, I must include the presence of sound and music as the elements that give shape to these movements.²⁷ Like with Stokowski and Taylor, their voice gives purpose, the stature of knowledge with authority, and reasoning to the images that accompany the musical composition. When it comes to *Steamboat Willie*, Walt Disney provides the voice for Mickey Mouse, delivering the first layer of dimension in the creation of the character. Though this is not Mickey’s first appearance, it is the first demonstration of the voice and

²⁶ Clague, “Playing in ‘Toon”, 97.

²⁷ Eden Davies, *Beyond Dance: Laban’s Legacy of Movement Analysis*, (London: Brechin Books, 2001). The term shape is in reference to Rudolf Laban’s study and practice of movement analysis, also known as LMA, which characterized movements with qualitative descriptions. These categories, body, effort, shape, and space each mark a quality of the body moving and being influenced by its surroundings, which are further emphasized by the music and sound included within the cartoons.

arrangement of the harmonic high-pitched whistle tones qualities, which moves closer to the realism of expression and affective identification. These bodies, which are affected by the music, present a shape, perhaps more explicitly in animation; nevertheless, this shape signifies the effort and space of the dancing body that is driven and inspired by the music and sounds.²⁸ So, I have to recognize the importance of voice, music, and the somatic transformation caused by these affective agents as the process of contextualizing and grounding the audience experience. This marks one of the first forms that introduce psychology and the character's existence that accentuates their body construction and choreographic qualities.

The screendance is predicated on the use of cinematic techniques to construct a narrative through the editing of images and composition of sonic pieces, which then provides the dances with new perspectives of seeing the body interact within its space. These editing and cinematography conventions provide cinema with dimension and movement within the frame, but the sound is also a factor in constructing space, though a bit more subtle. Telotte notes that in framing the animation as natural, “we hear a variety of natural sounds, all set in time to a musical accompaniment...a kind of natural cacophony – or symphony – and one that underscores its naturalness by having sounds bridge from one shot to another and by effectively demonstrate how much (and how quickly) Disney had developed in the melding of sound and animation since *Steamboat Willie*, particularly in creating what we might describe as a normal sound environment.”²⁹

²⁸ Mary C. Broughton and Jane W Davidson, “Action and Familiarity Effects on Self and Other Expert Musicians’ Laban Effort-Shape Analyses of Expressive Bodily Behaviors in Instrumental Music Performance: A Case Study Approach,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (2014): 6, <https://www.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01201>.

²⁹ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 30.

This idea of a normal sound environment is the form that sets the animation up to be received by the audience, but it is the variations of normal that bring the conflict into the narrative. Case in point, in these cartoons, the normalcy is demonstrated by natural sounds and movements of the environment, but the conflict comes in the form of movements and sounds that push against nature and bestows a “sound fantasy.”³⁰ The form that sounds and music provides these cartoons is the moral and mythic qualities of *good vs. evil*, or the classical narrative progression and transformation. Here the sound is able to transform the body from natural to fantastical, which leads to the animated tradition of having imaginative characters and bodies codified by contrapuntal sounds or music, it provides the means of growth.

Moving on, considering the form of music and how Disney was able to build a system that would attempt to recreate reality and the beauty of music traveling through space as closely as possible in order to impact the audience emotionally. This is done to reach the purest dissemination of emotion and transformation through the sonic narratives that are set in place. The natural essence of the music and sound within the space of the cartoon allows for the illusion of spontaneity within the character’s choreography in a manner that the score and body can, “play a little in each performance with the way the movement addresses the music.”³¹ Music reveals, in very romantic terms, “in a wider and more comprehensive sense, proportion, ordered arrangement by which beauty is made to emerge, disentangled from the merely individual and accidental, and thus lifted to its true

³⁰ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 30.

³¹ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 49.

significance.”³² The music’s role, according to Phillips’ understanding, is to provide whatever it is impacting with resonance and melodic purpose, which in turn is the reason and transformation that is shown through the choreography and performance.

The heading is intentional and mentions, “Form of Dimension,” as I am concerned with how the music and sound inform the body to realize the cinematic potential of the animated screendance, while the content is secondary. To achieve this, I will be looking at *The Skeleton Dance* and *The Old Mill*, two cartoons that represent the priority of sound in forming action while also appealing to an, “effort-shape analysis [that] draws on processes of visual and kinesthetic movement imagery.”³³ These cartoons provide prime examples of how the shapes and efforts of the dancing body, through animated texts and constructions, are impacted and transformed in terms of their affective position with the audience. Through their imaginative lens, the formation and appearance of these dancing bodies is predicated on the qualities and presence of the music’s breath and development. The *Silly Symphonies* are the predecessors to *Fantasia*.³⁴ Further explained as Walt Disney Studios are innovating and experimenting with the ways that animation is able to put meaning and affective forms of identification into non-corporeal characters, with a deep personal connection, so the subjects are interchangeable, noting that the methods are the object of focus in this portion of the study. Through the *Silly Symphonies*, the experimentations of depth and emotional realism are at the forefront,

³² Claude Phillips, *Emotion in Art*, ed. by Maurice W. Brockwell (England: W. Heinemann, Ltd., 1925), 118.

³³ Broughton and Davidson, “Action and Familiarity Effects,” 6.

³⁴ This notion and idea come up through the literature time and time again, especially regarding the fact that *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* was initially developed as a *Silly Symphony* until Stokowski and Disney consolidated their focuses on presenting music to a wide audience, thus “the concert film, *Fantasia*, was born. Reference Culhane, Maltin, Aloff, Gabler, or any of the authors who drafted through this history.

which will lead the following case study of creating a space that will foster *Fantasia*'s emphasis on the marriage of sound and image, or body in our case. Kolthenschultz remarks, "Even before a ribcage is played like a xylophone in *The Skeleton Dance*, an abstract storm of light and dark had audiences of this graphically advanced film on the edge of their seats."³⁵ Here the sonic cues of the music and effects guide our viewing experience and participation with the animators' goal of bringing audiences into the world of the cartoon. Deeper explorations of this content create new appreciations and historicity to the processes of identification and verisimilitude that guided these artists and animators to shape these worlds through movement, physical and sonically.

The Skeleton Dance: Case Study

The first *Silly Symphonies* cartoon, following the modernist psychology-driven Mickey Mouse shorts, is *The Skeleton Dance*, released in August of 1929. The focus on the title card brings forth the importance that Walt Disney and fellow animator Ub Iwerks put into visualizing the music and sonic landscape that Carl W. Stalling composed. This featured a new realm of "expressiveness" in the composition of the environmental sounds and musical score to construct a space that envisions the transformation of good and evil, a theme that will repeat throughout the rest of these examples. The music by Stalling represents modern and upbeat music that would foster and promote dance through these macabre figures, thus instilling a fun proto-narrative for the characters and environments to be influenced by.³⁶ Pushing the music further, his dialectic of morals and performance

³⁵ Daniel Kothenschulte, "Walt's Arcadia: Silly Symphonies," *The Walt Disney Film Archives: The Animated Movies 1921-1968* ed. Daniel Kothenschulte, (Cologne: Taschen, 2020), 54.

³⁶ The history of the *Silly Symphonies* presents a change of animation and focus on narrative among the production teams and leadership at Disney. Much of this history can be found by: Jim Korkis, "The Skeleton Dance," *Cartoon Research* (blog), July 30, 2021, <https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/the-skeleton-dance/>.

links the music with the choreography in an effort to demonstrate dimension and transformation of the characters.³⁷ I should make note of Jenn Joy's earlier discussion, in the previous chapter, of Didi-Huberman's aesthetic representation of bodies are, "a dialectical engagement of distortion, conflation, and repetition."³⁸ When combined with the music and sound, the image of the animated dancing skeletons and other images are engaged with the viewer through movement within an expanded environment, but in a way that pushes against what audiences and spectators expect.

The images of fantastical objects and unrealistic movements do not correlate to the realistic soundscape that is constructed, but this seems to pull us in further with fascination and affective identification. While the sounds have a naturalistic tendency, the sonic conflict between image and sound increases the imaginative nature of the film's morality. The moral transformation is evident as, "dusk surrenders to deep night and morning eventually dispels the darkness. Marking that shift is a change in the very 'music of the night,' as a medley of natural sounds gives way to those produced by a host of skeletons, which are, in turn, replaced by the natural sounds associated with dawn's breaking."³⁹ Telotte does provide a nicely detailed account of this film, but with a strong focus on the sonic realism that is constructed through these effects and compositions. Digging a bit deeper, what becomes of the body images when explored through the lens of choreography that is presenting the conflict of the body and environment becomes more evident and clearer in purpose. This conflict and morality, which is something

³⁷ Joy, *Choreographic*, 4.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 30.

present in all of Disney's narrative-based cartoons, is further accentuated by a heightened sense of realism due to the music and sound. Thus, presenting a new form of cartoon engagement that began with Mickey Mouse, only now realized through innovative tactics and full-bodied capabilities of dimensional and dynamic proficiencies. As for the bodies, which are influenced heavily by the environment and sonic landscape, inspiration was taken from, "English cartoonist Rowlandson of skeletons dancing...[Ub] Iwerks experimented with different perspectives as well to provide an experience not previously seen by movie audience."⁴⁰ This is a great example of how *Silly Symphonies* placed prominence on music to drive the narrative and in turn how the bodies behaved within the space. To add to this account, I want to see how these specific sonic decisions help create dimension and transformation in the characters to uncover the choreography within the image in relation to the aural experience.

Similar to most cartoons and films in the 1920s, this cartoon begins with a title card, that evokes some eerie tone and mood. This occurs from the typography of the title, where the eloquent "The" is followed by the crooked and deviating font of "Skeleton Dance". This comes after the creative title, the first in the series, of *Silly Symphonies*, where the musical focus is visible in the use of musical notes to symbolize the "S" letters. This presents the primary element being the music that will eventually transform and epitomize the bodies that are affective within the landscape, represented physically and sonically, through the melding of these two cinematic elements. Once again, the screendance's focus is brought forth to show the qualities of transformation and fragmentation of musical note and letters, the bodies, through the perception of the

⁴⁰ Korkis, "The Skeleton Dance".

screen. Transitioning through this title card reveals the sound of laughter, a menacing and devilish placement of emotions and presence of a figure, phantomlike in nature, but filling in space, nevertheless. This further emphasizes Telotte's argument, but also puts the idea of realism onto the body, with the literal and figurative framework of this identification through the bones of the title and eventual bodies. When all but the title fades away, the visuals spark attention with flashes of white and black lighting dancing across the screen, which presents the affective identification with the audience, causing them to jump from the startling and imaginative representation of sensory excitement. The lightning transitions, with animated ease, into an eye, which fills the screen. The animation is looking at the audience while they reciprocate the stare and gaze into the character's eyes to form a connection through the process of scopophilia, like Laura Mulvey pronounced, this is an ideological and corporeal connection between the parties.

The transition and connection are made possible by the sonic cues of the music and sounds that bridge the two realms of corporeality and sensory, furthermore visualized by the owl that provides the audiences with this knowledge, setting up for the awaiting sensory terror as the overlooker of good during the night. These animals and objects have been dancing in a manner that brings kinetic energy to the landscape, alive with the sonic realism, but also the bodily movements that are given purpose through the audible cues. The owl fills its lungs with air and gives off a chilling hooting whistle, along with the music playing a march-like song, signaling the entrance of this storm. The body of the owl becomes distorted, blowing up like a balloon, the body pushing against realism and the environment in which it exists. This distortion signals a choreography of putting power and dominance over the space of the screen and animated landscape while being

accentuated by the music and sounds of the owl. The wind dances across the owl, blowing its feathers and showing its weight and form by nearly pushing the owl off of the tree branch, which repeatedly tries to reach and grab the owl. This repetition of this action, between the owl and the hand branch demonstrates those choreographed moments that are not guided by the sounds, but rather by the music and the psychology that is placed within. The movements come from the guidance and framework, in this case the eerie and spooky tones, that the music is laying forth, while still being able to operate as a singular object in conflict with each other. The wind and owl begin to demonstrate a choreography, nature and subject in conflict and growth, given reason with the music's use of whistles and wind sounds to provide the context to the bodies within the landscape. The eerie music and sounds of wind, which seems to be a common aural and environmental trope to connote hellish movement, open this cartoon. The visual wind dances through the setting to instill movement of the surroundings, the life above ground. These movements of the natural world are foregrounded as reality-based, but hand-drawn animation can move beyond that. The cartoon's dancing bodies of nature and animals are pushed beyond the boundaries of real and fantasy.

What the *Skeleton Dance* provides to future cartoons is the method of putting a focus on the effort and gestures that can be combined with the music, while still acting as a simple visual interpretation. One of these visual themes, in the dialectic tradition, is the body's inflation and deflation. The animals and storm are fluctuating in size and power, a premonition of the same images that counter the eventual skeletons and their minimalistic bodies. Audiences see this inflation of the body in the creation of sounds, of an owl hoot or dog bark, as the push back towards the setting's howling winds and powerful gusts of

invisible weight and gesture. Whereas the sound provides substance and context to these figurative bodies, it is the form of being that is uncovered when it interacts with its surroundings. This dialectic, as previously mentioned, shows how animated bodies hold reasoning so that the wind, owl, and dog can begin to show identifying pieces for the audience. Illustrating the counterargument, in the sequence before encountering the chiming bell, swinging with wild abandon, perhaps in a manner that draws out the urgency and passion of its being, does not conform to how audiences would identify with this world. These moments, of the bell, spiders, and other objects obscuring the image and encompassing the audience within the horror and fear, bring out the imaginative world, which also transforms how the music and sounds shape our experience. Following this, the skeletons begin to change how spectators and I conceive the notion of a body before perceiving their somatic forces. Through this moment, viewers have seen full fleshed bodies, visible and invisible, where the corporeal frame is stretched and squashed beyond reality, feeding into the imagination of the animated medium. Now, with the skeletons, the rigidity of the bones is pushed beyond its limits of flexibility, yet they present a dance and choreography that is bare and simple to the forces and weight of bodies without flesh and identifying features.

Moments before the skeletons appear, the animators have returned to their way of making a gag cartoon, where the narrative is not as substantial, with the cats taunting each other. Perhaps it is a moment of humor before the terror and takeover of the dark forces, which makes use of the distortion, conflation, and repetition considered by Huberman to enhance the images of battle that are being witnessed, both explicitly and symptomatically. The cats are pulling and spitting on each other, in a back-and-forth

manner, which makes the labor of animation much simpler, but also presents a break from the naturalness that Telotte focuses on and moves towards the choreographed fabrication of the screendance. This moment of the dueling cats presents the transition between real and imagination, in a manner that animation can successfully maintain, while also presenting the ultimate transformative conflict of the cartoon, life and death.

The dance of the skeletons is the main focus and spectacle of the cartoon, especially showing how animation can produce such impactful and immersive experiences. The dances, which are pieced together like gags, follow the music to keep with the purpose for these sets of bones to have movement, but also use the sound effects to expand the environment. Their bodily construction is emotive because of their flexible facial structures and limbs, but malleable and manipulated by the music to control their movements and gestures. They represent the imagination and dimension of their bodies in space through their ability to adapt and change the configuration of their bone structures, something that human dancers are not afforded outside of animation practices. By having the bones chatter, the environment is spatializing the sonic realm by what can be seen, while the music still imparts the physical nature and metaphysical reasoning of the dance. The natural sounds are further interrupted when the skeleton detaches its skull and throws it at the owl, which makes its feathers explode off its figure. The owl is left graphically powerless, with its small body overpowered by the imaginative dead. Furthermore, the dance would not be possible if not for the mechanical nature of cinema and the synchronization of the drawings, projection speed, and the orchestration, thus reinforcing the importance of animation and the screendance as experiments of sound and image composition. Returning to the topic, the dances continue until the darkness is resolved

when the cartoon rooster emerges to welcome the day, thus putting the skeletons in a frenzy. They detach once again and find a final form as a horse, presenting their last moment of imagination and bodily manipulability in order to retreat and restore naturalism. As the skeleton's playful social dance is culminating, their control over the environment is coming to an end in conjunction with the resolved narrative within the music, marking that these characters are usually overpowered by the world and larger forces, which will become apparent as I continue examining other cartoons and *Fantasia*. These sonic qualities that impact the action and dance demonstrate the end of the myth's journey and will remain the inspiration for the narrative that the music will provide to the actions in *Fantasia*. These tropes continue to show up through many, if not all, of the cartoons discussed before and later on.

The Old Mill: Dimension of Space and Sound

Grounding in the belief the idea that the *Silly Symphonies* act as the experiments of animation that would later feed into *Fantasia*'s grand spectacle, I turn our attention to *The Old Mill*, which will prove to be one of the most influential cartoons in this process of formulating the animated screendance. This film was released in November of 1937, nearly eight years after *The Skeleton Dance* and three years prior to *Fantasia*, which benefits from this cartoon's dimensionality of music and body within the expanded space. For animator and historian Dave Bossert, "This is one of my favorite Silly Symphony shorts because it had no dialogue and relied solely on the visuals and music to tell the story."⁴¹ The experiment and innovation of the implementation of the multiplane camera expanded the perspective and force of the environment's space in relation to the action,

⁴¹ Dave Bossert, "The Old Mill Celebrates 80th Anniversary," *Cartoon Research* (blog), November 4, 2017, <https://cartoonresearch.com/index.php/the-old-mill-celebrates-80th-anniversary/>.

will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, but notwithstanding, I am interested in looking at how this expanded dimension in the image is extended through to the soundscape and characters. Ultimately, this textual analysis will uncover the ways that audiences identify with the animals and objects in the cartoon. In *The Old Mill*, dimension is presented through three perceptual texts and their confluence on each other, the choreography of nature and animals, the innovation of the multiplane camera that expands space and planes, and how the music shows narrative and emotional progression. This all happens simultaneously when the once peaceful animals, who are illustrated with an increased human resemblance to raise the identification of their emotions and movements, are encumbered by the hellish storm, their world is consumed by the bombastic music, which causes the conflicts through the bass-heavy instruments and percussions. The wind violently sweeping through the landscape causes the environment to be upended and the status of the animals, to be disturbed as they are moving and adapting against the storm's demons. The choreography is directly connected to the composition in order to show the narrative progression and conflict of the animals, who represent visual metaphors for the musical arrangement and tonal experience. The beauty comes through in the alternative nature of the heavenly melody that follows the storm. Here the conclusion of the narrative is shown with soft blankets of light that wrap and move in syncopation with the animals, which is the resolution of the horror and fear that consumed the screen. The dichotomy of good and evil, a theme that comes up in the following chapters and examples, but here specifically through the form of the music and how it composes an image and choreography of imaginative conflict and resolution, is put at the forefront of the viewing and conceptual experience.

The Old Mill demonstrates how the sound and music provide concise reasoning and meaning to the soul of the bodies that are impacted throughout the cartoon. Whereas Telotte focuses on the sonic realism of the film as making it more impactful to the audience, there is still an imaginative essence and fabrication that allows the animation to appear more dramatic and nuanced in its effect. Just like Stokowski's careful deliberation of the music for *Fantasia*, the dramatic moments of the score and sound effects are heightened by the images, which shape the sonic and visual experience. This is especially important in a cartoon that does not have much of a narrative semblance, since real life does not have the action or conflict readily present for a compelling story, except for the conflict and resolution of the storm impacting the animals and structures.⁴² Whereas the sound influenced the movements and gestures of the skeletons in the previous example, the sound and music become the invisible body and antagonism of the wind and storm that challenges the sonic realism indicated by the animals. This details that the soul that is imparted through the sound while music emanates up from the conflicts and dialectics of nature, cinematic animation, and production. The soul is the screendance, which is accentuated by the animation to increase the affective impact and catharsis of the musical number.

There is a close parallel of this experiment to the "Night on Bald Mountain/Ave Maria" sequence in *Fantasia*, as using a storm and religious imagery to demonstrate mythology and reclaiming and championing of the body against nature. What should be noted is that moving forward with the narratives placed into the animation is that Walt Disney typically rooted his cartoons in the moral dichotomy of good versus evil, where

⁴² Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting*, 1st ed. (New York: Regan Books, 1997).

the positive natural world was able to overcome the trials and tribulations. Furthermore, the natural world follows a framework of realism, while the evil and trouble come in the forms of imaginative and non-human bodies that replace the form with a sinister comportment. The overcoming of good over evil, humanity over nature, and realism over imagination is realized. With the true-to-life sounds, Disney effectively envisioned the horror of the storm and how the music guides the moral sentiment and perspective of relating the on-screen bodies with the audience. Further fleshing out these concepts are accomplished by continually adding dimension to the image and characters to reach our goal of how the animated screendance allows us to place meaning onto non-corporeal bodies in *Fantasia*. This occurs in the repetition of the characters and objects moving through the space, putting their bodies at the forefront of our engagement and identification.

The Guiding Soul: Imaginative or Realistic

When composing the music that makes up *Fantasia*, Stokowski focuses on musical arrangements that provide vibrance and emotion to the images that were inspired and animated through the planning and filming process. The conception of music and image, just like with dance numbers, typically focuses on how the body reacts and conforms to the setting and environment that the music's tone sets. The power of music is given precedence in the *Silly Symphonies* to help guide the imaginative and naturalistic environment. Meaning comes in the form of this music as it is composed to expand the world and characters beyond their two-dimensional and codified world. Historian and critic Claude Phillips observes regarding the importance of music on art that, "What gives to this work its unique beauty and significance is that music is here seen transforming all

that it envelops, making its own atmosphere, through which human effort – joy as well as sorrow – appears lifted, transfigured.”⁴³ If this is one way of observing how the music is composed to make us feel something, I will look at the transformative qualities between the audience and the animated characters. Growth is a large component to the narrative, which also relies on transformation through conflicts of interest, ultimately visualized by the characters to give the audience assistance in putting narrative onto the music. This further implicates the audience to participate and allow the music to affect them in order to properly formulate the appropriate emotions and ideologies to be in conversation with the images and actions presented on the screen and through the surround sound speakers. The dancing bodies would not have any context to the visual emotions they are portraying or the graphic choreographies if it were not for the transformations that are brought upon by sonic and melodic cues. Music is the soul and transformative force in the dancing figures because the sounds and tones influence how these bodies move, learn, and adapt in their situations. Additionally, the music presents the myth through the tonal and affective reverberance of conflict and barriers that shape the environment and presents the body with a narrative with objects to overcome and succeed.

On the November 30, 1955, broadcast of *Walt Disney's Disneyland, The Story of the Animated Drawing*, he presents a history of animation in the solidified Disney style while also including some filmic examples.⁴⁴ Through this narrative, one of the primary concerns in constructing believable characters is that they possess material being, or symptomatic bodies as a result of the music and animated imaginative forces. While this

⁴³ Phillips, *Emotion in Art*, 123.

⁴⁴ This particular program presents an artifact that may not be present in all modern-day exhibitions of *Fantasia*, which is the original orchestrations, sounds, and unaltered images.

falls in line with David Bordwell's earlier conception of making meaning, it is achieved by combining music along with the dancing and choreographed bodies.⁴⁵ Once again, what makes *Fantasia* the exemplary film to discuss the animated screendance and concept therein is that it displays so many of the different elements of animation, also including its use of music and sounds in experimental and imaginative ways. As discussed previously, this animated screendance is interested in creating a relatable world. This is the product of, "abstract films of the 1920s and *Silly Symphonies* [because they] share a concern with developing rhythmic relations among multiple figures onscreen".⁴⁶ In terms of modernism, this film's use of music to ground the images, though imaginative, into a coherent and interpretative presentation makes this revolutionary. Also, in terms of technology and practice, through its experiments with surround sound, which creates dimensionality to the settings, characters, and overall gestalt.

Harkening back to the story about the restorations and redubbing of *Fantasia*,⁴⁷ there is the possibility of listening to the original score, albeit digitized and probably not streamed through the proper speaker setup. In the 1955 television program, *The Story of the Animated Drawing*, viewers get to watch the "Nutcracker" sequence as it would have appeared and sounded in theaters in the initial release. This version that is heard today comes from a re-recording and scoring from the 1980s, the tone and vibrancy of the

⁴⁵ Bordwell's *Making Meaning*, and *Walt Disney's Disneyland* television program, each through different approaches, demonstrate the metaphorical nature and textual construction of the animated body, especially when it is imparted with musical soul, or partial narrative to give purpose and reason.

⁴⁶ Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 8.

⁴⁷ Culhane, *Fantasia*; Maltin, *The Disney Films*; Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*.

music clearly shows how multi-channel speakers and methods of surround sound add the dimension of reality and thus the illusion of life into the whole environment and experience. The final product becomes the entirety of perception surrounding this animation of dance, synchronized with the music, within an expanse of fabricated realism. *Fantasia* was restored in the 1980s, where the degraded sound elements had to be replaced; therefore, the unusable celluloid components were unfortunately discarded, losing a rich and dynamic soundtrack and some of Stokowski's authorial touches.⁴⁸

Though the new recording was meticulously recreated, there can never be a perfect recreation or duplication, even with modern digital restorations. Without such a negative effect, Walt examines a segment of the aforementioned Nutcracker Suite in *The Story of the Animated Drawing*, and since the broadcast is from 1955, this version includes the original score, even though it is now digitized and also stored in a different format of exhibition (television signal) it is accompanied by the original soundtrack musical recording. This novel recording presents orchestration and Fantasound recording to experience the depth and space that was breathed into these drawn images, which effectively adds an extra level of dimensionality to their beings. This also presents the ways they did recording methods and early experiments of surround sound systems and mixes.

As I have theorized and witnessed, music acts as the soul and guiding essence of the animated body, providing the illustrations with elements of musicality such as rhythm, tempo, purpose, and certain principles to behave. This is evident when looking at

⁴⁸ The dimension and depth that Stokowski provided through the whole process, including the soundtrack recording, has been described as having brighter tones and some deep bass notes, ideally to be enhanced through the elaborate surround sound speaker system, Fantasound.

the technology and innovations of the Fantasound system, which will be discussed further in the following section. To show the close connection of the music and images, “a ninth channel was added” to the multi-channel surround sound experimental system being developed to provide crisp and realist sound playback, “which recorded a ‘beat’ or tempo to aid the animators in timing the various sequences.”⁴⁹ Not only are the bodies and images dancing as reactions to the music, but now the form of the animation is related to the function of how it is producing affective identification. There is a connection between the beats and rhythm of the music to how the bodies are placed alongside the meaning. Through this conception of music as soul, I have explored some iterations of cognitive theory and gestalt psychology that helps us understand how the song component is linked to the body through ways of identification and imparting a mind on these objects. Now I must take these conceptions to the concrete world, to explore the ways that sound and music are exhibited and impactful for the spectators. Shining light on the technological and physical nature of imposing sound through the synchronization and dimensionality of the characters is the focus of this following section. There is an important consideration of the audience and how they construct these figures in their minds to allow the animation to affect them emotionally and physically.

Sound and Music Technology

The purpose of this upcoming section focuses on how the technology and innovations are used to add dimension and depth to these characters, although this history, beyond *Fantasia*, is extremely complex and ever-changing. I will expound on this concept, with the images and visual objects of *Fantasia*, in the coming chapters, but I

⁴⁹ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 39.

want to focus on building the experience of these animated films through the technology that is specific to the presentation. Walt Disney invented the novelty of surround and multi-channel speakers and soundscapes, in order to recreate the depth and clarity of live orchestras and performances. The purpose of Fantasound, as it was dubbed, aimed to bring surround sound to the general public, a novel for the early theater configuration. This system, “in collaboration with RCA, have designed a revolutionary system of sound reproduction...which gives a directional and third dimensional effect.”⁵⁰ The quick changes to the sound material and exhibition have changed the experience from the original compositions and narration. Maltin has detailed this tumultuous history of the technological symptoms of *Fantasia* and the innovations that were planned through the company, revealing that the original intentions of Walt Disney and Leopold Stokowski are hard to achieve with the breath and dexterity required, because of financial and logistical reasons. In the 1970s, *Fantasia* was re-released and re-recorded on different occasions to benefit from new “awareness of such process as digital stereo and Dolby noise reduction [making] it imperative that *Fantasia* be completely rerecorded with state-of-the-art technology.”⁵¹ The focus on creating a sonic and aural experience has been a legacy of this production, but also continues to create a space that focuses on impacting the audience and having them identify with, “the picture’s overpowering display of visual imagination.”⁵² The link between the body and sound occurs initially with the audience and technology, especially the methods used to deliver sound in realistic manners.

⁵⁰ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 8.

⁵¹ Maltin, *Disney Films*, 45.

⁵² Maltin, *Disney Films*, 45.

From this point on, I have been attributing Disney to modernism and the innovations and experimentations that come with the movement to present new ways of exhibiting and experiencing cinema, music, and the culmination of the animated screendance.⁵³ There are some who would not see it the same way. Chris Pallant would see Sergei Eisenstein's feedback and theorization of Disney, in terms of the coming of sound as, "appropriate that [Eisenstein's] commendation centers on the industrial aspects of Disney's sound production...not as innovator, but as a producer whose works announced a newfound cohesion between animation and sound."⁵⁴ Furthermore, all of these musical decisions and nuances would be lost if it were not for the innovations of stereophonic sound and recording methods, to create the most full and robust soundtrack for the experience. Chris Pallant's book *Demystifying Disney* is helpful in expressing the grandiose impact and innovations that are typically associated with the studio and company, though Pallant expands on the less successful elements that guided Disney's success. The book also gives the proper history and credit to who actually is responsible for innovation; however, I do want to point out that I will be just focused on how the sonic or animated innovation impacts *Fantasia* and its surrounding films. This book provides us with a good start at how technology impacts and adjusts along with the form that was just discussed. For instance, the dimension and impact of the music would not be able to achieve the same experience through alternative speaker setups or theater layouts.

⁵³ Walt was attempting to redefine the cinema and exhibition practices, through the experiences of the cinema, thus lending towards representing a modernist with symbolist conceptions of radical change, though still family friendly. This can be seen in the Disney company's total revisionist method of the theme park industry, another way of producing affective and immersive storytelling with careful construction of the mind through imaginative bodies and sounds within alternative environments.

⁵⁴ Pallant, *Demystifying Disney*, 21.

This would lend once more to adding dimension to the images and choreographies, which only would help breath more life into the animation and emotion into the dance.

To further add dimension and the illusion of space, which gives the characters area to dance around, Walt Disney considered how the sound would be controlled and played in order to provide a realistic viewing. Pallant, in pushing back against David Cook's notion that the modern sound film was a result of Hollywood innovating for improved ticket sales, attributes the invention and execution of Fantasound as being the actual element of the change in the sonic landscape. The technology and practice of recording and playback had to be reconceived, "Disney, desperate to recreate the ambience of an orchestral performance with his 'Concert Feature' (*Fantasia* [1940]), turned to William E. Garity and Leopold Stokowski to help accomplish this."⁵⁵ Format specificity is serious to animation form, as it can change any experience, especially when it comes to providing sound. To achieve the Concert effect on the screen and with animation, the importance of Fantasound was imperative because it had to properly ground the audience to the performance. In order to achieve this, the speaker set up of, "three sound horns behind the picture screen instead of the usual one, plus sixty-five small house-speakers placed strategically throughout the auditorium."⁵⁶ What this began to accomplish is the sensation of distinct instruments and channels performing, as if live in front of an audience, without the mudding or crossing of these sounds. Furthermore, the new technology that was heralded with Fantasound was the Togad system with the ability to adjust gain and ambient noise within specific theaters and space arrangements.

⁵⁵ Pallant, *Demystifying Disney*, 23-24.

⁵⁶ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 20.

What this achieves for the purposes of how they advanced dancing animated bodies on the screen is to allow the sound compositions to, “produce both a more naturalistic sound experience...and fantastic aural effects through its capacity for isolating and manipulating individual sounds.”⁵⁷ Suppose it is possible to isolate sounds and provide focus onto specific aural qualities. In that case, this matches the idea of the close-up that Brannigan was discussing with the dancefilm, where this focus on the small allows for heightened identification. Focusing on the nuances of the music to allow the audience close engagement, which is coupled with the bodies to extrapolate all of these meanings. The modernist in Disney comes through in the experiments that were conducted in the *Silly Symphonies* and *Fantasia* in order to add dimensionality to the images and affective identifications with the audience.

Technically speaking, this conception of multi-channel audio recording and playback worked in a manner that would avoid each distinct sound and tone from crossing over and distorting its reverberance on the audience. While there are many accounts of the technical wonderment, from Culhane, Telotte, and William Garity, I am concerned with how this helps progress the animated screendance to make it more emotionally and physically charged with audiences. The idea that using multiple channels to clear up the sonic landscape brings forth the idea that the technology developers, animators, and audiences can have the convergence of realism and imagination as long as the guiding force of these characters and objects remains the anchor. In other words, there is a soul that emanates from these technological and theoretical constructions of sound and music.

⁵⁷ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 39.

Form and Technology as Soul

As I began this chapter by attributing Stokowski and Taylor with providing the sonic and ideological soul to the bodies of the animators and Disney's collective imagination, now I want to focus on this and how to achieve the depth and purpose with technology. I also looked at the ways that "The Skeleton Dance" and "The Old Mill" contributed to our understanding of music impacting the animated dancing bodies through imagination and realism. This was followed by a look at the new innovations in cinematic and sensory technology to achieve these goals, but now I would like to touch on how all of these elements come together to form a soul of the animated screendance. Continuing with chapter one's focus on producing meaning in the body, I am going to explore how adding an extra layer of depth and intention through these sonic events. Here meaning can be placed on the non-corporeal bodies, the animated bodies, through the songs and sound effects that seem to produce some remnants of a soul and being. The inclusion of sound and music, through the dimension of the dramaturgy and technology, helps convey a soul in the characters because as audiences perceive in the sound of Mickey Mouse cartoons and *Silly Symphonies*, these added senses allow for character growth and transformation. As Telotte observes with these early examples, "that power of transformation is bound up in the film's aural dimension, as Mickey emerges not simply as an embodiment of change, but, almost literally and far more importantly, as a *conductor* of change."⁵⁸ The synchronization of the image and sound allowed for the gag-laden cartoons to have an identifiable illusion of life and dimensional experience for the characters, who now have new ways to interact and react within their environments.

⁵⁸ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 27.

These bodies, because of the aural and world-building, become instilled within the space, not just floating non-reactive beings that can visualize, “the labor of dance, a specific technology of the body.”⁵⁹ Like the cinematic apparatus giving the motion and movement to the gestures from before, the speakers and recording of Fantasound and surround sound for *Fantasia*, a novelty that is now common, also provides the technological aspect that instills a sprawling conception of a soul.

Fantasia is predicated on the music that Deems Taylor elucidates is composed to derive direct meaning through proper musical conditioning and culture or abstract meaning through experiential interpretation. Pierson’s focus on the “emphasis on how image and sound are organized,” is important in understanding the marriage of cinematic elements to construe meaning and life.⁶⁰ I will look at this organization and hierarchy through the lens of the body and voice, especially with Taylor’s graphic blocking at the center of the frame in a position of knowledge power. The power of the voice reaching the audience is exactly how audiences are impacted by these films, through the technology of the microphone and amplification. The innovations of *Fantasia* produce new experiences of how sound and music impact the spectators through dimensionality, which is similar to how cinema was changed with the inclusion of sound in 1927, where the singing voice added another layer of realism for the medium. The voice projects and fosters identification between film and audience, effectively acting as the primary tool for Taylor, in a similar fashion to the voice of Al Jolson, whose career, on stage, lent him as the ideal choice for *The Jazz Singer* (1927), since the vocal qualities were so brilliant and

⁵⁹ Joy, *Choreographic*, 21.

⁶⁰ Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 4.

vibrant that it reverberated an emotional connection with the audience. For *Fantasia* and even present in the *Silly Symphonies*, this voice or utterance was the technological element that shapes the form and affective nature to be emphasized by the cinematic manipulability nature of the screendance. Though I am still hesitant to give all the credit to Pierson because he does believe that identification does not play a large role, which is counter to the argument that I am making, but at what point can audiences form the relationship? I believe it is in those moments where the movements and gestures of the figures are instilled with a force of the soul, the music. So, in some ways, the initial identification with the figure is the moment where these organized elements can be relatable. This swiftly leads into phenomenology, an element of the gestalt psychology, and exploring how the music can be layered onto the animation, or really how the animation is choreographed specifically to the music, in order to make the audience react to the Screendance and tap their feet or snap their fingers along with the music. This phenomenon is then layered with the movements on the screen in order to put life into the characters. For instance, during the “Sorcerer Mickey” sequence, the brooms are given life once Mickey does a magic spell; however, peeling back the layers show that the brooms are synchronized with the music, an overbearing and strict syncopation that makes them scary and menacing.

On the one hand, in our examples, there are sound effects and the occasional utterance, but for the most part the synchronization concerns the music and the dance. The form of these cartoons is predicated on the ability to announce sound within a theater, so now my considerations of the animated screendance have moved on from amplifying the voice towards amplifying a synchronized set of sounds and images. Also,

in *Steamboat Willie*, the importance of synchronized music and sound effects, besides being a technological innovation, allowed for the proper essence and characterization to be placed on Mickey, Minnie, Pete, and the rest of the anthropomorphic cast. The animated screendance places importance on the body moving to create new meanings by the fact that animation is instilled with life and now a multi-billion-dollar corporate image, because of how the music was able to sync with the movements and create a character who would be consistent for all audiences in the musicality and soul that Mickey possesses. For the *Silly Symphonies*, these films benefitted from the liveliness that audiences have witnessed being placed upon these drawn animations, but I must also look at the importance of dance and music coming together. In *The Skeleton Dance*, the boney and sonically rhythmic bodies of the skeletons are composed and informed by the music that is being played, in this case it is non-diegetic music. The experiment here is to explore how to mix dance and sound properly and entertainingly to music. This seems to be the guiding principle of this entire series of the films.

Conclusion

On the quest to figure out how non-corporeal are instilled with meaning and dimension through the animated screendance, I have just explored the importance of sound and music in that process of animism. Now that I have had in-depth discussions that conceptualize the body as a malleable form of imagination and sound as psychological depth, moving forward I will begin to focus on the ways that *Fantasia* is able to display and create these animated bodies in a perpetual dance.

Focusing on three different types of bodies, music, and cinematic production methods of capturing these affective mythological somatic guides this study further in the

following section of chapters. Although through our discussion, the subjects might have been introduced, the methodology will highlight the filmic text and emotional impact by means of composition. The first will be of the indexical body, looking at the basis of where the sound is given context and purpose. This brings back the likes of Stokowski and Taylor to begin to find how the human body is used as a reference point for the dances and music to guide the imagination and music into this imaginative space. Now let us dive into the world, exclusively of *Fantasia*, and uncover how it epitomizes the spectacle of the animated screendance, a lasting legacy of Walt Disney Studios.

CHAPTER 3: THE REAL: REVITALIZED

One of the main traditional components of the screendance is how the camera captures the real indexical body in a manner that differs from the exhibition or performance on the stage. Forthcoming analysis and descriptions will explore those moments in *Fantasia*, where audiences witness real people through the orchestra, conductor, and narrator interact within the diegetic space as if it was a concert stage on the screen. There are also moments of abstracted performances where the bodies become casted as expressionistic silhouettes while directional and colored light is used to manipulate these appearances. Blending the indexical and fantasy, there is a moment of Mickey and Stokowski shaking hands, the animated reality and the indexical reality coming together in harmony. Real bodies and conventional cinema, in *Fantasia*, establishes the importance of light, mise-en-scène, and cinematic technologies to create these moments that bring the human form beyond our conceptions of what a body should do and look like. All of this material sets up the animation while leading us into the abstract bodies, which really prepares the audience for these instances, as well as allows the audience to suspend their disbelief and expectations.

While these bodies are only on the screen for a fraction of the film, they provide the reference for realism and how viewers can then subvert those expectations of being, which leads us into the animated sequences. The real bodies also give us dramaturgical information that allows the audience to situate themselves within the film and guide their expectations of the concert film experience. Indexicality becomes one of the most

important elements of the bodies witnessed, while also recognizing how the body constructed the film, to present audiences with the imaginative dances and spaces.¹ The labor that the animators put into the film can be seen through each line stroke and gesture performed by the characters.² In total, the focus of this chapter will be on how human bodies are used as sources of information, transition, and creation. The indexical body acts as the labor of the cinematic process, capturing the image and framing the narrative.

The Human Body and Cinematic Camera

The Hollywood Orchestra,³ who embody this shifting actualization of the corporeality, somatic engagement, and dance are physical through their presence and performing the music that the film will be based on, but in their cinematic composition, they become subjected to the visual transformation. So, they personify this notion of dimensionality and depth, which has been the focus of making meaning since they present the bridge between producing the content and bridging with the form of their being and animation. The body of Deems Taylor presents the labor of conceptualizing and guiding the audience's imagination. His presentation and demeanor have a large

¹ There is plenty of scholarship and criticism about realism and the presence of the real body in front of the camera, which is a key interest of André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer. Both of them have extensive writing about the camera as an eye, reconstructing what is in front of it, especially with shadows and light.

² Studies of animators and labor: Nathalia Holt, *The Queens of Animation: The Untold Story of the Women Who Transformed the World of Disney and Made Cinematic History*, First edition. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019); Eric Smoodin, *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993); this is in addition to many Asian animation studies and the following work in this chapter.

³ I denote the on-screen Hollywood orchestra for the filmic bodily presence since they were not the recording players for the film's musical sequences. This feat and credit are given to the Philadelphia Orchestra, who recorded the compositions for the Fantasound system and program. This separation of music and film soundtrack with the image is discussed by Culhane, *Fantasia* (1987); and Mark Clague, "Playing in 'Toon: Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) and the Imagineering of Classical Music," (2004). The bodies on-screen represent similar qualities of the animation, especially the layering of music and performance through their corporeality.

impact on the ways to relate and identify with him, thus making it easier to bring in a wide audience into the idea of high art. The authority of Leopold Stokowski presents the artistic vision and the figurative meeting of forms with the handshake with Mickey Mouse. Finally, the body and presence of the animators and artists can be seen with the precision frame by frame. These forces come together to produce a knowledge of expanded perceptions and the hope that *Fantasia* will, “suggest to the great composers of [their] day, a third medium – a medium where color and motion are restricted only by the limits of imagination – the medium which is giving to the public *Fantasia*, that new kind of entertainment which has been described as ‘seeing music and hearing pictures.’”⁴ Each of these laborious elements of the film lend different pieces to its rich emotional and physical experiences for the remainder of the film to progress on. All of these elements come together to construe meaning onto the larger idea of the animated screendance, to present a new form of cinema, choreography, and a cultural exchange.

I frame this chapter by considering the live-action segments of *Fantasia*, as equally important to the animated screendance by focusing on the concept of indexicality, otherwise described as, “that every indexical has a single unvarying character, but may vary in content from context to context.”⁵ When spectators look at the human characters, they exist as the basis of reference for audience identification, but as the film progresses, it is uncovered that they possess other functions and significations in the process.

⁴ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 8. This quote also represents the importance of the mass consumption of this new discernment and conception of cinema’s dancing animated bodies. This notion of the expanses of the imagination will come up later, in the conclusion, through the brief discussion of Disney’s foray into the theme park industry, where imagination takes on new forms of immersion, like *Fantasia* did with its sensory expansion.

⁵ David Braun, “Indexicals,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/indexicals/>.

Technically, all of the bodies in this film are indexical, but it is the human form that is the only concrete body that remains consistent, even if our perception shifts. For Paul Willemen, in dialogue with Laleen Jayamanne and Gilles Deleuze, the conventional and early cinema, “is primarily an indexical process, film does not and never has consisted of indices only. Icons and symbols have always also been part of the cinema’s signifying materials.”⁶ Meaning and purpose of the body are constantly changing and being impacted by the images and visual fluidity of the iconography, especially through *Fantasia*’s premonitions of metaphor and mythology. The other reason to focus on the human characters as the basis for the indexicality and realism is based on the linguistic nature of the index, in terms of a *true demonstrative* where the human figure is simple, as a clear icon, to signify an “intention to refer to a particular object.”⁷ When the Deems Taylor and the Orchestra are providing the framework of the music and images, they are referring to ideas and imagination; however, when audiences view these people, there is a clear delineation between the segments, either human or animated.

This concrete notion of the human body within real space remains merely a fragment of the *Fantasia*’s run time, since the perception and experience of the body and space, the choreography of being, are in constant flux, visually and ideologically. For Disney and his animators, now considering these technological advancements of the cinema, Robert Sklar focuses on the studio’s premonitions of fantasy as, “They could draw worlds different from any experienced world, lead audiences into uncharted realms as far as imagination or daring could take them. Blank paper gave them a chance to

⁶ Paul Willemen, “Indexicality, Fantasy and the Digital,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2013): 113.

⁷ Braun, “Indexicals”.

reinvent the world.”⁸ Sklar’s observation closely resembles how these artists would conceive and manipulate vision with the indexical bodies of the orchestra and conductor. This quote is especially poignant when looking at how the stage was set for these segments with the use of the white backdrop, which becomes painted with color, light, and shadows in order to transport the audience’s sensitivity to new dimensions of cognition. The film presents the orchestra as being both in proximity to their surroundings and placement to the camera while also animated when transformed to choreographed conceptions of the mechanized body. Playing instruments is choreographed and automated simultaneously because it is controlled movement and gesture of the body with the instrument as the tool to layer meaning. Here the Orchestra embodies the music and level of affective engagement with the audience, arguably having the first interactions with the audience. Their bodies, ready to play their instruments with the same precision and dexterity that you would find with a dancer, are presenting the initial layer of dimension that the body is presenting and foregrounds the impact that the animated corporealities will have on this musical interpretation. This motion produces specific arranged sounds and cadences that influence the audience in certain ways. In addition to this, when the orchestra is relegated to the background, either covered in shadow, stylistic light, or behind the animation, they are producing music that gives them purpose in a similar way to these animated figures. Their mastery of this art form and performance adds soul and purpose to their presence, real or hybridic fantasy.

The presence of a traditional cinematic production in these sequences fosters the concrete world with a bridge into the body as symptomatic of the screendance’s impact

⁸ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies, Revised and Updated* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 198.

on the body. In taking, once again, from David Bordwell, it becomes evident that the human body, the ultimate form of identification, is situated within the world of the film, which demonstrates a naturalism and realism surrounding the animated action. The interpretation of these bodies, in cinema, is of realism and naturalism. These bodies provide us with the knowledge and concrete being to ground the remainder of the artistic interpretations. Drawn out by Bordwell, “Interpretation is then a kind of explanation inserted between one text or agent and another.”⁹ It is at this junction that I can insert new visual considerations into the body, provided they are engaged in their musical-inclined choreography. To transition from traditional cinema frames to cel-animation,¹⁰ using the properties of the screendance in creating new perspectives and narratives surrounding the choreography, I can properly move forward and view the cinematic form as, “beginning with the camera’s framing of its subject, [thus] allows for a constantly shifting, ever-fluid definition of place and time,” and then I can consider the human bodies place within that spatiotemporal logic.¹¹ The human body becomes the content that is shaped by a new form, it demonstrates new meanings and layers of being through its manifestation of stylistic *mise-en-scene* and editing. It is this section of the film that counters, yet manifests, the animated segments ability to, “fantastic independence of the natural laws [that] gives them the power to integrate space with time to such perfection that the spatial

⁹ Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 1.

¹⁰ Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 134. The traditional cinema has the exposed celluloid being cranked past the lens at about 24 frames per second. Animation of cartoons relies on the capture of a single frame of the composition, laid out in front of the camera, where the image is adjusted before the subsequent capture. The latter relies on the prearranged choreography of the animators to produce believable motion at the proper frame rate. For this history and theory of the frame speed, reference Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006). Also, Martin Quigley, *Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1969).

¹¹ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 29.

and temporal experiences of sight and hearing come to be almost interconvertible.”¹² This provides the point for animation’s impact and the liberties it takes to produce it, but there is a link with the human body that binds these experiences together and should be connected. Nevertheless, it remains integral to this study and to understand the intersection of animation and screendance to place the indexical body at the forefront of the cinema. Bordwell strengthens this argument with his notion that, “Comprehension and interpretation thus involve the *construction* of meaning out of textual cues.”¹³ Those *textual cues* remain the structure and form of the human referential and indexical body, which progresses us into the discussion of how to begin manipulating it through cinematic conventions.

On *Fantasia*, the director of photography is credited to James Wong Howe, who is famous for his composition and flexibility with the camera and lighting.¹⁴ Though many of the accolades come from his compositions towards realism and naturalism, *Fantasia* acts as an imaginative and creative explosion of style and principles. According to Howe’s biographer, even though *Fantasia* is not mentioned in favor for the traditional productions, Todd Rainsberger attributes the career qualities as, “Using lights, a camera, and film, he made the inanimate speak, the two-dimensional screen reach depths of infinity, and silent actors articulate their emotions.”¹⁵ It is remarkable, with these

¹² Panofsky, “Style and Medium,” 104.

¹³ Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 3.

¹⁴ Perhaps the production credit comes after the fact in the history and archive digging by Culhane, this is not even mentioned in Howe’s biography of his work or the promotional pamphlet for the film. This presents an odd omission from the records, perhaps this is a new line of investigation.

¹⁵ Todd Rainsberger, *James Wong Howe: Cinematographer* (San Diego and New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, Inc., 1981), 3.

credentials, that Howe did not produce more of the film's animated portions. These sequences, composed by Howe, demonstrate the imaginative, colorful, and presented depth and perspective with the dimension of shadows and bodies on different planes. Yet, for the live-action portions, this composition and mastery of lighting provided Disney and Stokowski the base for the presentation of the animated sequences, that transform bodies and music through the visual intensity presented on screen. This liveliness and propensity for movement is a key feature of Howe, which translates succinctly with *Fantasia* and the figures of the orchestra and Stokowski, on his dais in shadowed profile, the beginnings of life and choreography. The sense of kinetic energy, through the colorful and sparkling *mise-en-scène*, demonstrates Howe's contribution to this film on the aptitude and presentation of the camera and indexical human characters as pieces in the larger screendance idea. The orchestra becomes the primary figures that are viewed through varying perspectives, eventually amalgamating into animated abstraction. The camera is a large contributing factor to this entire production and illusion of life, with the real or animated, where "images which went far beyond mere illustration to create a visual world which told the story more eloquently than words ever could."¹⁶ Howe's cinematography is a clear and precise example of using the cinema to manipulate and transform bodies and perspectives toward a vision of imagination and hybridity.

One of the base principles of the screendance is the combination and marriage of capture and practice.¹⁷ On the one hand, you must have the cinematic production

¹⁶ Rainsberger, *James Wong Howe*, 64.

¹⁷ For Brannigan and Rosenberg, the screendance and dancefilm are situated on the presence of a live dancing body in front of the camera, though at the mercy of fragmentation and abstraction by the shifting mechanical perspectives of the lens and photochemical emulsion or sensors. This presents the concept of capture, through the camera viewpoint and accentuated by the imaginative *mise-en-scène* and the choreography of the body or object performing.

technology, like the camera, to commit the act of capture and recording; however, on the other, without something or someone, an object and body, in front of the camera are left with the paradox of falling trees making sound. What will be captured in front of the camera if there is nothing placed before it? Focusing back to the screendance, Rosenberg, in his propriety of the field, is a practicing dancer and screen artist. Here without his insight and physical demonstrations, scholars, and audiences, would not have a basis to impart meaning across the screen barrier.¹⁸ This is the same for the animated screendance having to acknowledge the physical practice that goes behind the later artistry of drawing. Now, I am not here to recount every single person or troupe that has influenced *Fantasia* or other Disney productions but rather open up the dialogue to explore the bodies that help us ground and base these cinematic experiences off of. The influence of the Ballet Russe and of the pantomimes offered during the famous Disney story meetings will be explored beyond the surface level of description, and I am going to intervene through the ways that this movement, of real-life bodies, impacts, directly or indirectly, the audiences.

Pointing to The Orchestra and Narrator

Part I: Painted Beginnings

The emotional engagement and labor producing and crafting the live-action segments need to be considered for its position and arrangement of the screendance principles, leading us into the animation segments. These filmmakers composed images to expand the choreography and presence of these on-screen personalities. Disney

¹⁸ The audiences for Rosenberg and Brannigan are predominantly academics and practitioners, with the expertise and level of engagement that is above the public. Also, their analyses present strong ties to phenomenological (perception and identification) and body theories.

suggested, in a story meeting to plan the sequence, ““We will tie everything together at the start [of the film], Stokowski and the orchestra, then go off into the abstract forms in the *Fugue*, then come back and mix the two at the end, then come back to the orchestra. We can get the effect of depth”¹⁹ *Fantasia*, as the through line example, features a number of sequences that use real actors and through the imagination and fantasy that cinema and animation-qualities afford viewers, the animated screendance can release these bodies from their restraints. The composition of the live-action segments features the orchestra and the freedom of colored lights, which presents flexibility and imagination for Howe’s cinematography. *Fantasia*’s compositions complement the artist’s vision, especially in his use of lights and bodies, “The composition began with the careful placement of objects and people; they provided a kind of rough framework. The lighting then filled in the framework and drew it into a coherent whole.”²⁰ Usually overlooked in the handful of close readings of *Fantasia* is the live-action sequence of the film, though accounting for a relatively small portion of the running time, demonstrating ways that I arrive and transition into the animated screendance and the importance of physicality in constructing movement and gestures. With this in mind, I can expand upon the goal of Walt Disney to, “further experiment in interpreting the tone colors and sound patterns of music in the colors and moving patterns on the screen.”²¹ James Wong Howe, who acted as director of photography for the live-action sequences, followed the vision of Stokowski and Disney to create a multidimensional space to allow bodies, though not a

¹⁹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 41.

²⁰ Rainsberger, *James Wong Howe*, 100.

²¹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 36.

central concern at the time, and musical form to expand and express itself gradually. Culhane details some of these meetings at great length, so rather than reiterating it, I will demonstrate how these decisions shaped the screendance space during the transitions into animation. By doing this, I will be pointing to and signifying the bodies and subjects that lead us toward gaining knowledge and perspective throughout the film.

Fantasia opens to a black screen, and then the stage is revealed, though not in the same fashion as a stage production would have. In the theater, when the curtain reveals the stage, the curtain is typically drawn upwards, in a vertical reveal of this new world; however, this film positions the stage as a cinematic world and opens the doors, imagined as a horizontal wipe moving simultaneously right and left split down the middle, to the audience. Filming the opening allows the world to align with the screendance's reforming of space and the audience's perception of it since it does not have to conform to the traditions and forms of the medium. Introducing the audience to the aesthetic space firmly places *Fantasia* as an imaginative experiment of the form of cinema and the implementation of the qualities that help define it, like movement images and sound.²² The expressive and stylistic set prepares spectators for an experience that has seldom been witnessed before, which grounds the film and allows for so much discussion about the first few frames of the film, lasting merely seconds. From this moment, the cinema's prominence and power will be shaping the film, along with engagement and consideration of the material. The transition, emerging into a new space of wonderment, reveals a blue backdrop, lit in a manner that places the stage at the bottom of the frame in

²² The status of the audience is also constantly in flux throughout this film, the framing of the stage places it at a perspective as if it was in the physical space, so they are positioned as both the theater and cinematic spectator.

silhouette.²³ Besides this tiered stage, the impact and brilliance of the color transports us into a world that acts like a canvas, blank with some affective properties, which allows the viewer's imagination to be actively constructing and construing their awareness and engagement in regards to their identification. Until this point, the imaginative mise-en-scene has shown simple dimension, a black screen into a blue screen, but without subjects to act as a reference of perspective, the cinematic quality leaves the audience wondering about the nature of this film and experience. There is no indication that this is recorded from a camera to show the indexical space, as this is harkening back to the prominence of shadows in animation to replicate and manipulate the senses and perception of reality.

The scene continues as the background changes when the light is disturbed, and shadows of figures emerge from backstage, first their ghostly shadows, then the silhouetted body. Again, this does not provide us with any indication of indexicality, rather it begins the film's dominance of animation and the concept of composing with color and light. The visible shadows seem to be of humans and instruments, but they are stretched and enlarged on the backdrop, yet also seemingly hybridized from the lack of spatial discernment due to the placement of the body and lighting. The concept of backlighting, in cinematic composition, places the dominant light source behind the subjects in order to starve the camera of the information that it requires to capture the dimensionality and brilliance possible within the image.²⁴ This can be done to keep anonymity in documentaries, but in our case, this process is shaping the space to foster

²³ Like in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (dir. Mel Stuart, 1971), with the "Chocolate Room" reveal through the small and large door, changing perspective to the wonderment and fantasy of the space and body in relation to this spectacle.

²⁴ David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, and Jeff Smith *Film Art: An Introduction, Twelfth Edition* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2020), 126-127.

imagination and create the illusion of two-dimension with the three-dimensional human characters. According to Miles E. Pike, a special effects animator on *Fantasia*, ““The idea of using silhouettes...was *developed* to show a relationship between the picture and the music, not only in form and color, but in instrumentation as well.””²⁵ Evidently, the focus on the animated body was not at the forefront of this discussion but rather with the attention on instrumentation. Since the creators are highlighting the music, I can begin to extrapolate and enhance the purpose of the flattened body in an ever-shifting space. What this effect accomplishes is the grand emergence of these bodies coming up the upstage stairs, revealing their dimensionless form. It is not until these figures have taken their seats, still in an animation limbo since they move but on the same plane in this imaginative space.

As the players walk to their seats, audiences are met with the first edit, which moves the camera placement from a wide establishing shot towards the stage right portion of the stage. The screen presents more details, such as the penguin-like nature of the tuxedo and the shimmer of the instruments that are being carried. The vibrancy and brilliance of the color are the product of Disney’s proprietary use of the three-strip Technicolor through the live-action and animated segments thus allowing for rich hues and deep saturation of the palletted.²⁶ Vibrant shimmering orange light quality on the instruments provides a sparkle of life and dimension to the objects that will be providing the soul and purpose to the forthcoming animated dancing bodies. Orange compliments

²⁵ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 42.

²⁶ Telotte, *The Mouse Machine*, 43. The chapter has deep historical and theoretical implications of Technicolor for Disney’s Silly Symphonies and forward, through two-strip and three-strip processes. Thomas and Johnston’s *The Illusion of Life* also have great discussion of the impact of the technicolor aesthetic on character believability and the spaces that are given saturation and dimensional shading.

the blue background, working together to demonstrate the harmony of this space, calm and neutral, like the blue color suggests. Basking the space in different colors and diversifying the planes could also be one of the first instances that Disney, possibly inadvertently, had some *pixie dust* bring inanimate objects to life and provide it with extra layers of possibility and meaning.²⁷ The narrative progresses along this consistency of vision when the band is warming up, the first instance where the music is changing the landscape and purpose of the bodies on the screen. Instruments are imbued with meaning and substance, as they are played and symbolically basked as they are lit up with bright reds and greens, another set of complimenting colors that bring in another layer to the environment. The blue/orange combination is the base tone and mood of the film until the red/green highlighting of the instruments introduces the conflict and transformation of the environment. This is a choreography between the playing bodies and the neutral artificial nature of the setting, two expressions of being that are now in conflict and have to adapt to these updated conditions, the body reacting in a choreographic manner.²⁸ Dramatic staging of this with real people and spaces determines the altering of landscape with new ideologies, especially the ones that playing the instruments brings to one's sensory experience and psychology. Further accentuated by the editing of this opening sequence, where the filmmakers chose to use a crossfade transition to link the space and time

²⁷ I am referencing the Walt Disney production of *Peter Pan*, which would have been produced and released in 1953. Though, I am inadeptly referencing the rewriting of the text that brings a magical and fantastical quality to a space and the people within, harkening back to Derrida's conception of textual forming of objective symbolic being.

²⁸ Jenn Joy's idea of the choreographic comes into the play, where the body is in a conversation with the space to produce the possibility of movement and reaction. Brannigan also comments on this through her focus on the camera's ability to shape the body within a space, beyond the experience of reality. These are two dialogues that impact the placement and possibility of textual growth and transformation of these beings.

together, thus showing the cohesion of the cinematic frame and bodies performing, a quality that will come in handy as the film progresses and moves towards the scenes of abstract bodies. However, it is also the presence of the indexical bodies that form the basis of power and purpose that will shape the characters for the rest of this experience.

A couple of crossfades before the prior scene, there was a long follow of two ladies who sat down at the harps, thus bringing in the nurturing and comforting elements to the compositions. The soothing nature of the harp and the attention given to the moment is twofold, on the one hand, it presents a gendered separation in the creation of this music, where it is customary that men dominate who produce power and affect, while these women are continuing a tradition of a cinematic motherly instinct.²⁹ The harp's music is soothing and comforting in the formation of these animated dancing bodies, who are being created by this medium. The indexicality of this moment, with them walking to their seats after the men have begun their warmup, the gazes placed upon them single them out and focus on their gendered being and form. There is no imagination or animation needed to recognize the presence and purpose of these two harp players. Some of the bodies, mainly playing the strings and brass instruments, are shown in their full form on the screen, but it is the percussion players that are given the visual cue of power and overbearing strength, in the shadows overlooking the rest of the orchestra. One could argue that this section, consisting of the deep bass instruments, provides the heartbeat to the music and eventually the tone, tempo, and rhythm of the animated characters.

Composing the image in this manner places much emphasis on the importance of these

²⁹ This presents the dated societal and popular notion of differences in gender and sex, one of the pitfalls of having a company product that spans generations without the ability to update the message. This occurs with all media objects and ideas, but obvious through the cinematic lens of blocking and lighting of men and women.

players, but at the same time leaves them in a space of manipulation and malleability, they give form to the blank canvas, yet remain impacted by the open space and freedom of nuanced expression to be stylized.

The orchestra warming up creates a visual foreshadowing of the abstract images that will be dancing across the screen, with the batons and horns moving in syncopated waves. This movement is connected with the music by witnessing the creation and formation of non-contextualized bodies in an arrangement of preparation for the audience's experience. As faces and individual limbs moving become visible and emphasized, these players are also beginning to take form, which completes fleshing out the space. Finally, having then arrived at every dimension that the film will operate on. This phenomenon is only capable in the cinema by altering the bodies and movements through the perspective of the camera and the narratology of the editing. Let us turn our attention to the next part of expanding upon and fleshing out the purpose of these bodies in creating an affective experience for the audience.

Part II: The Body of Knowledge, Personified

It is not until the lighting scheme changes and the camera moves from the imagination to reality does *Fantasia* make its commitment to identification when spectators can see the human bodies holding their instruments and situate themselves within this hybridic landscape. This occurs when the three-point lighting becomes the dominant style of the film, though still heavily influenced by the colors and spectacle of Technicolor. In this portion of the film, there is little to no dance, rather it is centered around the physical presence of bodies and the authority that it connotes. The stylistic animated form has transformed into the indexical concrete nature of cinema's attention to

realism and capturing what is placed in front of it. Though maybe not immediately apparent, the film's opening lacks the traditional screen credits and title cards that typically frame the beginning and end of the filmic story. A formalistic element that once again separates *Fantasia*'s experience from traditional cinema and theatrical productions, thus presenting a new conception of cinema in the animated screendance experience from the onset. Unlike many of the films that Disney did and will produce, animated and live-action, many of them were bookended by the images of actual books opening and closing, signaling the focus on storytelling and narrative to construct the characters and experience. Without these symbols, the audience must reassess their expectations and the signification of the concert film and experimental experience. This little sidetrack provides an understanding for the audience's perception and how it must be reconsidered throughout.

The audience and distinguished guests to this roadshow film attraction are welcomed by the narrator, Deems Taylor, whose role is to situate the audience and introduce each number along with some insight into ways to view and understand contextual and substantial features of the choreomusicking composition. Taylor was quite helpful during the abstract sequences, especially when trying to reach a wider audience, by shaping the narrative to allow viewers to relate with these ideas and the delivery of contextualization. This is cinema's ability to convey messages and ideas through image, sound, body, and cadence for the audience to become attuned to the film. Howe achieved putting Taylor at the center of the film's theoretical and cultural context by framing him at the omniscient point and perspective, surrounded by orchestra players, who are listening in on this conversation to place the music at the same level as the audience, with

the classical three-point lighting.³⁰ The orchestra players produce the music, even though the on-screen players are simply characters pantomiming their placement, but also identify with the audience with their inquisitive nature to Deem Taylor. Perhaps the erudite nature of the music lowers its barrier for the spectator, from the orchestra's curiosity, and this makes identification and immersion easier into this imaginative realm.

Focusing back onto the three-point lighting scheme, Disney, Stokowski, Taylor, and Howe conduct the audience's gaze and attention while they counter the stylistic and imaginative use of color and shadow moments before, and it connotes a moment of serious attention, a visual cue for the audience. This setup also makes the image clear and free from shadows or doubt, the information that is being relayed is aligned with the images presented on the screen, which will eventually be upended when *Fantasia* moves into the abstract and anthropomorphic narratives and animated screendances. The presence of Taylor, with his long stature situated behind a podium, provides the first sense of grounding and indexicality, especially when his posture becomes more relatable to the audience. Rather than maintaining his air of superiority, Taylor puts a hand in his pocket and leans a bit while the camera slowly tracks into him, from a long to a medium shot. During this movement, the lighting begins to remove some of the shadows around his face, thus composing a shot that puts him on the same level as the audience. Before he even speaks, the cinematography has positioned Taylor as a relatable figure of knowledge and context, mainly through the cinematic framing and production.

Between the orchestra warming up and introducing Deems Taylor, in his layman's stance and gestures, *Fantasia* has clear instances of the screendance's ability to influence

³⁰ Bordwell, et al. *Film Art*, 128-129.

how the audience reacts and becomes invested. This aligns the audience so that they can mimic and understand what they should be doing, the social equivalent of tapping one's foot and bouncing to the dance in their seat. This seems related solely to the demonstrative quality of the image and music, becoming synchronized, like that of the audience with this unique experience, which is then further qualified by Taylor's narration and context of this cinematic concert film. Very much like the structure of this study, the film is divided by the form of the music, with the body being a side effect of the process. This is especially true since, "Stokowski was 'seeing' the music in his imagination...And Walt, who was 'hearing' the pictures," was the *modus operandi* of the production.³¹ The bodies were conceived, designed, and choreographed as abstract and imaginative forms that would complement what was being heard. Construction and textual implication of the bodies, what has been postulated and considered, demonstrates the need for indexicality to signify the value of meaning within the images on the screen. Moving on, in the narration, Taylor informs the audience of the type of music being presented before framing the opening sequence:

Now, there are three kinds of music on this *Fantasia* programme. First is the kind that tells a definite story. Then there's the kind that, while it has no specific plot, does paint a series of, more or less, definite pictures. Then there's a third kind, music that exists simply for its own sake. Now the number that opens our *Fantasia* programme, the "Toccata and Fugue," is music of this third kind, what we call *absolute music*. Even the title has no meaning beyond a description of the form of the music. What you will see on the screen is a picture of the various abstract images that might pass through your mind if you sat in a concert hall listening to this music.³²

³¹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 41.

³² *Fantasia*, produced by Walt Disney and Ben Sharpsteen, 1940.

There is a synchronization and depth created in this moment that frames the audience's perspective, guiding them on how to experience the choreomusicking and cinematic vision. The troubled part is that with the description of absolute music, which begins the films, there is an outright neglect of the prominence of the indexical and abstract body throughout, which have been pointed to in providing context and signification to the form of the movement. These real bodies have framed our experience of the imagination and spectacle to focus on the significance of what is being witnessed on the screen. The abstract images do not just pass but come to be through the transformation of the real images that have been examined thus far, with the orchestra and Taylor setting the stage.

In this sequence, the body and camera do not move as a traditional dance, but rather it allows the light and shadows to exist and accentuate the performances of knowledge production and relatability with the audience. Stylistically and ideologically, pantomime and use of shadow has been a tradition of animation for decades, even going back to the Magic Lantern shows, which used shadow and light to create mass entertainment. Shadow and light present the basis for the reconfiguration of the signifiers projected on the screen by reinterpreting the image's impact on the spectator.³³ Deems Taylor and the orchestra present a shifting body of knowledge and immersion through their presence and the spectator's ability to enter the film's ideological and somatic affective absorption. The shadows of the orchestra act as an intermediary of indexicality, or physical real-life bodies, and the drawn or constructed body, with the help of artists

³³ For engaging books about the early history of cinematography and then how it has evolved, reference: Stephen Neale, *Cinema and Technology: Image, Sound, Colour* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); H. Mario Raimondo Souto, *Motion Picture Photography: A History, 1891-1960* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2007); and Patrick Keating, *The Dynamic Frame: Camera Movement in Classical Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

and animators. On the one hand, they exist within the space, but their form is easily manipulated with the changing of lights and camera position. Their position in reality will be questioned when Mickey Mouse and Leopold Stokowski shake hands, which will be examined more later on. In these sequences, the body and camera are moving and changing positions in a similar vein as the experimental and animated screendance. We, the audience, and scholarly spectators, can thus be moved and affected by the dance of images and color that are presenting an experiential performance, one that does not offer direct correlations to the meaning of the music or image, but uses a sort of trance to allow the audience to associate their experiences and ideals. This presents one of the film's first experimental moments and begins to dissolve the body into an abstraction, a sort of portal and gateway for allowing the animated sequences to impact and envelope us so greatly.

Part III: The Man at the Top of the Mountain

The final element that ties all of these real human bodies together with the music and animation would be the presence of Leopold Stokowski. Presently on the podium, a visual and metaphorical peak of knowledge and transformation potential, where he is delivering the materials that will affect our thoughts and perception. In other words, the idea that choreography is a push and pull of space and form in resolution and conflict simultaneously.³⁴ Stokowski is providing the conflicts and counterpoints through the music to let the dancing body grow and be endowed with psychology. He was excited when developing this sequence, ““The music explains the screen, and the screen explains the music. We must make it clear.””³⁵ The presence of the conductor, even if in a stylistic

³⁴ Joy, *Choreographic*, 17.

³⁵ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 36.

silhouette, defines these terms and places authority on these experimental animations. The real informs and solidifies the fantastical.

Similar to Deem Taylor's framing, Stokowski's position and stature plays a significant role in this film. Not only does his body signify authority, but there is also a clear visual motif of the gestural human body conducting the formation of the world, imagination, and space around him. The figure of Stokowski, standing straight up with his legs together and arms spread apart, gives the impression of heavenly freedom while remaining grounded in the space of the real. This image and connotations are explored numerous times throughout *Fantasia*, especially in the scenes of heavy myth and morality, where the dances appear to be flitting and free, but Stokowski keeps it corralled and maintained. The audience can observe, "Stokowski walk up to the podium, call the orchestra to attention with his hands (he never used a baton), and start conducting against a background that responds to the music."³⁶ He keeps total control of the music and consequently of the bodies with his own corporeality and indexicality, in a similar vein to Fred Astaire's previously discussed dance from *Swing Time*. With the importance placed on his hands to conduct, he is literally pointing out and signifying the instruments, orchestra, and audience. This will instill them with an affective codependence on one another in the process of making sense of the body and music being codified within the cinematic experience. The hands and body of Stokowski inform those pieces onto the characters and audience.

The body of Stokowski is further imbued with conceptual and symbolic meaning when framed on a podium that overlooks the figurative concert and performances. The

³⁶ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 35.

podium also frames him in the center of the screen, only influenced by the changing colors of the background, thus compositing an image of power and good morals. The music and experience will be ensured by his bodily position and presence, a guiding hand throughout the film. Culhane views this object metaphorically, “The podium as a mountainlike dais, giving prominence to whoever occupies it.”³⁷ This image will come up throughout the film’s performances, especially with the anthropomorphic bodies and how the filmmakers are able to impose moral conflicts and mythological narrative with this image of tiered height and the dimension of being.

The moment that changed animation and the screendance comes when Mickey Mouse and Leopold Stokowski, all in backlit shadow, take a break from the music and shake each other’s hands. This moment marks the coming together of the real and animated, a melding of formal aesthetics and a need for life and movement. The gesture was strong with the partnership showcasing how to approach animation by instilling and mirroring, both in psychoanalytical framings, the life within it. The shadows are provided with the same emotional and metaphysical ramifications because of the movement and gesture, especially concocted through the cinema camera and various qualities of mise-en-scene and technological innovations. These elements come together to place these two spheres in unison and harmony.

To continue this study, it would be benefitting to bring up the human bodies that were tasked with creating the components of the animated screendance so that it has the most emotional, psychological, phenomenological, and visceral impact on the audience. In other words, I am going to highlight how the creative people were able to place their

³⁷ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 35.

bodies into this world and effectively demonstrate a choreography and dance of their own on the screen. Although, they do not represent the visualized bodies, these artists and personnel provide their soul and being into these characters and objects.

It should be noted that the opening sequence did not have true closure, but rather it transitions into the first animated segment, which moves away from the human playing of the instruments and presents the abstract and impressionable forms of the bodies that are embodiments of the imaginative interpretations of the music. I will continue to be discussing this transition between human corporeality and animation later on in relation to the mythological narratives and rich characters that have captured the cultural wonderment of many people around the globe through the techniques discussed throughout, which might seem like a fragmented narrative, but it really does allow for a clean separation of bodies and capture.

Labor of Sound and Music Production

Before moving into the labor involved in the production of the visual elements in the film, I must focus on the impact that the musical production had on the overall experience and reception. Art cannot be produced without the human creative factor that allows an object to transform from concrete to symbolic meaning, especially in the case of music that is being interpreted and conceptualized through specific frameworks, as I just recognized in the discussion of Deems Taylor and Leopold Stokowski. I also have to look at the actual recording orchestra, not just the on-screen version, to recognize the labor of producing music that is capable of imparting psychology and soul into the dancing characters, even before they are given movement.

In order to capture the vibrancy and resonance of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the team behind Fantasound had to figure out ways of capturing the sonic landscape, especially with the technological hurdles needed to be overcome, such as capturing multichannel sound. This does not come from one person, rather there are large teams of real people who need to create fantastical imaginations. Even finding someone to overlook editing the sound mixture in order to be dimensional while synchronized to the choreographies of the animated sequences, the qualifications had to go beyond the basic film editing knowledge, “Not only must an expert music cutter be able to ‘read’ a complete orchestral score, but he must know how to find corresponding notes on a film sound track.”³⁸ For this job, Stephen Csillag was tasked with the laborious pressures of crafting the sonic experience across the film. This represents merely the production team that was put together without mentioning nearly enough names, as was the lack of credit provided during this period of cinema and the power of creative personally. The sonic landscape also relies on the independent theaters to expand their offerings and invest capital into the infrastructure, in order to house the new array of speakers surrounding the audience. The impact of *Fantasia* is felt beyond the film, constantly impacting the real life to conform to the needs of the film’s goal to expand its experiential influence onto the audience, near and wide. In this sense, the real world is impacted by the animated screendance qualities, thus having us dance and emote around this vision and representation of imagination and fantasy.

Many of the ideas to expand the aural soundscape begin with Walt Disney himself, as he was always seeking new ways to innovate and experiment with his

³⁸ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 16.

cartoons, a true mark of a modernist. The real-life labor of producing these sound experiments usually fell onto Bill Garity, who was tasked with inventing “a unique system of speakers that would surround the audience with sound,” while adding layers of dimension that, ““is very effective and can produce a degree of dizziness on the part of the listener.””³⁹ This system of distributing sound through a multichannel process, like with Disney’s early use of abstract expressionism, led to innovative results in adding depth to the film and dimension to the experience. The labor to produce this illusion is as important as the music recorded because all these pieces come together for a totality of perception. Yet, the end product of *Fantasia* and all of the cartoons that were mentioned thus far must be remembered by the physical and psychological labor from the animators who choreographed their dances and the audience’s pathway into identification and the commiserating with the messages that the characters represent.

The Labor of Visual Production

To look at the film is only giving a partial picture of how spectators can identify, especially since cinema takes many people to create and even more to make it impactful. Here I want to take a moment to pull back the animation cels and celluloid in order to view the bodies and minds that created the images, sounds, and exhibitions for the affective *Fantasia*. These sequences, although storyboarded and planned by Walt Disney and his story team, focus lands on the cinematography, in its complexity, that is helmed by James Wong Howe, who is known for his work with shadows, color, and emotional complexity through composition, all elements present within these sequences.⁴⁰ The

³⁹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 38.

⁴⁰ Rainsberger, *James Wong Howe*, 64.

technological prowess of Howe brings the cinematic technologies to the forefront in creating these sequences, allowing the basis of the rest of the film to be considered as an object that goes above and beyond what is traditional even before I consider the position and effect of the composer. The aptitude of the cinematography and the dreaming innovation of Disney sets *Fantasia* as a cinematic innovation of presenting images and incarnations of the dancing and moving meaningful body.

The visibility of this artistic labor falls into, “the paradox of cartoons,” where the spectacle of the screendance shines over, “all of this carefully choreographed work [that] disappears the moment the image springs into action,” unlike the work and presence of the Hollywood orchestra (shadows of the Philadelphia Orchestra), Deems Taylor, or Leopold Stokowski.⁴¹ I can continue to acknowledge the personalities that put their own being into the characters and choreographies that spectators and fans witness on the screen. This is especially important when recognizing that each musical movement is accompanied by its own director and team, which means that each moment and dance is unique to a set number of styles and practices of whichever animator is in charge of the movement or gesture. Each of these motions has to be thought out with detailed precision, “Using [an exposure sheet] the director could choreograph the actions in time by showing the animator exactly how many drawings he wanted him to use to create an action on the screen.”⁴² Now, when these pieces come together, they must have continuity, or else the illusion of the animated screendance will be a convoluted set of

⁴¹ Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 2.

⁴² Culhane, *Fantasia*, 25.

experimental expressions without coherence, which is uncharacteristic of the Disney Studio productions at this time.

Until this point, the physical labored production of *Fantasia* has not been expanded and analyzed, but rather inquired about the state of dimension and depth in the bodies of the animated screendance. I have to look beyond the image to the animators and human labor, who become visible in the prominence of each brush stroke. This labor force is comprised of, “the Animation Department, the Ink Department, the Paint Department, and the Camera Department.”⁴³ These levels of production demonstrate the layers of dimension and meaning that have been instilled within the characters, from the individual artist manipulating the image and effect. These artists, in the earlier days of cel-animation processes, were innovators and experimenters of the medium, trying to uncover a specific effect and illusion of life. This labor and means of production harken back to early photographers capturing dance since both are working in a temporal frozen moment. Rosenberg brings up the idea, “The photographer, composing the frame, actively participates in the ‘choreography’ of the picture. The resulting image is a moment of choreography, suspended in time much like a single frame of film lifted out of succession.”⁴⁴ Without the individual frame or the many artists being involved, the image and characters would not have the dimension and propensity for affective engagement. Note, this also goes for the production of the music, especially since *Fantasia* is predicated on the basis of interpreting classical music for a wide-ranging audience.

⁴³ Frank, *Frame by Frame*, 3.

⁴⁴ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 35-36.

The most impactful piece of the labor that the animators put forth can only happen by looking closely at the moving frame, not just intently, but physically putting your nose up to the screen. When studying the film, if you look closely, there are subtle imperfections between each frame, but rather than hindering the film's affective qualities, it presents another human quality. Imperfection occurs in nature, nothing is ever pristine, something that the digital has trouble avoiding, thus making the hand-drawings and coloring even more impactful because there is a quality in the labor that makes the images approachable, avoiding parts of the Uncanny Valley. The effort that was put into each dance is one of the defining pieces of how the human labor had to be consistent and affective. An excerpt from Culhane's study that demonstrates the importance of human labor, with its abilities and faults, follows as, "The story could only reach the screen through what he put on that paper, and there is no record of Rumpelstiltskin ever helping an animator. Walt constantly reminded everyone that the ultimate success of all his stories depended upon that solitary pencil-pusher's ability to dramatize personality in action."⁴⁵ This even goes for the choreography and how it is made to be more relatable because of the imperfect nature of the process.

Conclusion

One of the ironies that befalls our quest to find out how meaning is placed on bodies that lack corporeality is that in these sequences, where real bodies are not as whole as they appear. The body of Deems Taylor, while being presented on the screen, is not wholly embodied in the presentation, yet audiences still have full identification with his words and mannerisms. The voice and accompanying soul provide the knowledge, while

⁴⁵ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 25-26.

the shell of his being guides the audience's eyes and close attachment. After looking at these real bodies, this example presents how spectators are closely impacted by characters who might not be whole representations of their being, thus even though they are fragmented pieces, the consumer can piece them together to connect with some somatic experience. So here, the one instance where it seems that the indexicality of the body is complete, there remains a separation of the elements that make it just another shadow of light and sonic qualities that create an illusion.

This idea will lead us into the next portion of this study, where I look at anthropomorphic bodies and the ways that they were captured with the multiplane camera. What is presented is the spatialization of the environment and the bodies within, but it is taken a step further by increasing the dimensionality of the character's mind and effort. In *Fantasia*, these elements are demonstrated through the choreography and imagination that occurs through the artistry and cinematic apparatus. I will explore these bodies, music, and experience as the most impactful sequences in terms of affective identification. These two pieces had to be synchronized in perfect harmony, just like the cartoons of *Steamboat Willie* and Fred Astaire's "Bojangles" number, to achieve the effect of life. Instead, the bodies on the screen are experimental illusions, another form of animation of real-life rather than hand drawn, that see the marriage of the voice and body to breathe life into the beings on the screen. Because of the technical problems and the solutions to fix the characters so that fans, audiences, and I can enjoy *Fantasia* today, unexpectedly brought us closer to seeing that the body, even if human, can be animated and imparted with a new visual and kinetic context through new manipulations of

soundtracks, cinematic aesthetic conventions, and the animation principles guiding the illusion of life.

CHAPTER 4: DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERS

The purpose of continuing through the animated sequences of *Fantasia* is to purposefully understand how the anthropomorphic bodies are constructed, choreographed, and exhibited.¹ Through the primary example of *Fantasia*, and the corpus of characters and objects, readers and viewers will witness the expansion of their dimension and depth in regard to the psyche, somatic engagement, and interactions with the environment. Representational figures present a clear relationship between body and environment, especially for Disney, where the “imperative to build personalities carried with it an imperative to suggest physical forces to which those personalities were subjected.”² Mickey Mouse, Chernobog, and Hyacinth Hippo symbolize embodied mythologies and ideologies that spectators identify with and become affected by alongside these demonstrations of layered beings.³ The following discussion focuses on the segments that demonstrate spectacle through images that are closely related to our understanding of reality and the fantastical imagination that becomes amalgamated produced by cartoon animation.

¹ This chapter was the subject of a talk I gave at the Mythopoeic Society’s 2023 Online Midsummer Seminar, “Fantasy Goes to Hell.” The embedded presentation and transcript, crafted from this dissertation’s material, can be found at <https://dc.swosu.edu/oms/oms2/schedule/11/> for further engagement with these animated characters through a mythological lens.

² Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 6.

³ The layering of purpose and meaning can be found in their aesthetic structure and narrative drive, which are discussed in Pierson’s *Figure and Force in Animation Aesthetics* and Furniss’s *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics*.

Constructing space and expansions of the character's ability materializes two theoretical guidelines from Brophy, "Rhythm is the experience of Time" and "Movement is the sensation of Space."⁴ Once again, the structural elements of these bodies and the dances, choreographed with familiar rhythms and movements, denoting the component's point of singularity where meaning comes from, is the basis for much of discussion on the figural force and mythology.⁵ These are two structures, bodily and narrative, that can be further expounded when broken down into the small units of signs, which will be engrossed in signification. Brophy's understanding of time and space presents a bridge into the inclusion of mythology, especially if this repetition of rhythm and movement is long repeated in history, then it captures the power of cultural significance and reasoning.⁶ Further implanting these dances into the animated characters provides a deeper mythology that comes through in the audiences' acceptance and embrace of the following cartoons and situations. Through the animated screendance, these bodies can move and gesticulate in imaginative movements and choreographies that emphasize the affective nature of the medium.

Informing the Aesthetic and Narrative Fragments

The narratives of the representational and dimensional segments follow the structure and idea of the myth, generally the "dualistic narrative of the creation through

⁴ Brophy, "The Animation of Sound," 71-72.

⁵ Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," 430.

⁶ Here is the confluence of the discussion of American Culture creation through the lens of Disney at the forefront; even Sergei Eisenstein was enamored, albeit critical, by the animated cartoon output of this studio and its global influence. The mythology of American culture is further implemented into the cartoons and dances (central to the screendance's techno-art form) that have become icons of signification in history and Hollywood's domination of meaning.

the rivalry of God and Satan.”⁷ Heroic and conflicted characters establish a style and form that is closely situated to the narratives that Walt Disney produced since they typically have lessons from the “blunder...the result of suppressed desires and conflicts.”⁸ The majority of Stokowski’s selections, in this realm of music with inherent narrative, presents the classical form of mythology, with the call to action, journey, and resolution of religious symbolism, typically of Godliness and purity, becoming the dominant aesthetic surrounding the character within the newly transformed space. The anthropomorphized animated characters mentioned above, and the ones in the forthcoming discussion, present the mythological characters as “mixed, hybrid, semianimal-semihuman form...or ‘unrealistic,’ wildly imaginative, or even grotesque forms.”⁹ The bodies of Disney’s characters feature this mythological hybridity, where the human and animal forms are not simply spliced together, rather they represent new features of these characters, mainly the identification through their choreography and the cinema’s binding of frames, like McLaren brought up earlier. Mythology presents narrative and aesthetic conflicts that begin the process of association and empathy between the character and audience, especially through the heightened manipulability of the body through animation’s imaginative drawings and figural forces.

⁷ Andreas John, “Slavic Creation Narratives: The Sacred and the Comic,” *Fabula* 46, no. 3-4 (2005): 259. In this article, John is specifically discussing the Slavic mythology, which Culhane brings up for *The Night on Bald Mountain/Ave Maria*, which presents the bookend example in *Fantasia*, though the structure threads throughout.

⁸ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 42.

⁹ R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Anthropomorphism,” Encyclopedia, last modified August 3, 2018, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/other-religious-beliefs-and-general-terms/religion-general/anthropomorphism>.

Moving into the animation sequences, the animated screendance is perceived in a new form that reinvents which bodies are being captured, how these bodies behave, and whom the bodies belong to. Through the animated medium, the focus on bodies, in their many forms, was a point of attentive detail within production, while “making *Fantasia*, Walt would insist on these three qualities: clarity, simplification, and a reason for everything done on the screen.”¹⁰ In this case, it is visible with dancing animals, mythical creatures, dinosaurs, and Mickey Mouse with Brooms. In all of these cases, these are bodies moving through an expanded space, with multiple planes of perspective, and showing bodies that are imagined, hybridic, and conglomerated forms, in order to increase their affective nature. “According to Walt Disney, dancing...first and foremost offers a window into the personality of a character in the course of telling a story,” as described, and how Aloff views this inclusion of choreography into the animated cartoon.¹¹ Furthermore, I am also reassessing the function of the camera from capturing the body on a horizontal axis to moving to a vertical, two-dimensional up and down capture, which utilizes the multiplane camera system.¹² Dimension is produced with this system to both recreate the illusion of perspective and to instill realism into the cartoon, presented by instilling these imaginative and hybridic bodies with, “a more definite narrative, which give the music a cause-effect anchoring.”¹³ Ideologically, the conflict and resolution of the mythological narrative, through the music, which imbues the soul, allows for transformation and growth within these fantasy spaces of kinetic choreography

¹⁰ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 39.

¹¹ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 49.

¹² Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 25.

¹³ Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 28.

and texture. The space is further emphasized and textured with contributions of the “Technicolor multiplane” camera¹⁴ that immeasurably contributes to animation history and our focus of placing meaning on non-corporeal objects is, “a realistic sense of perspective and depth and a more convincing illusion of three-dimensional space.”¹⁵

While the dance of the characters provides the necessary emotional and mental depth, this camera setup provides physical space to allow the movements and gestures to expand their function as far as need be.

Going further into this deep dive, as I will continue in relation to the segments, the close-up provides detail to the characters and action, but it also takes away from the overall choreography by fragmenting.¹⁶ Brannigan’s focus on the close-up and Balázs’ physiognomy will be explored as means to create micro-choreography and meaning in the details of the body or objects. Placing this in conversation with Pierson and Furniss expands the conversation about the ways that each animated piece emanates aesthetic and symbolic force to expand these characterizations and dancing bodies. Brannigan opens up a new perspective of the body within the dancefilm, as well as the animated screendance’s imaginative and hybridic qualities of the centaurettes or Chernobog that will be discussed below. Furthermore stating, “Micro-choreography consist of *tendencies*

¹⁴ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 1. Disney Productions used this language to market the visual innovations and experience when the film was released. This was not the first use of this technology, but it remains the most experimental and long-form within the corpus of the studio’s earlier output.

¹⁵ Mihaela Mihailova, “Realism and Animation” in *The Animation Studies Reader* edited by Nichola Dobson, Annabelle Honess Roe, Amy Ratelle, and Caroline Ruddell, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 48.

¹⁶ This refers to the two conceptions of filmic choreography and capturing the dance. Between the gestalt long shot, capturing the entire milieu and essence of the space, favored by Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly to witness the whole labored body, and the fragmentation of body and perspective, reminiscent of the experimental avant-garde dancefilms and installations described by Rosenberg and Brannigan.

towards movement that never actualize as a crossing from position A to position B, but constitute an expressive force as acentered resonations.”¹⁷ This abstraction of these body part positions provides new understandings of experience and corporeality, which is then augmented with hand-drawn animation that is present in *Fantasia*. Now let us explore how these two elements of microscopic analysis and dissection are used to expand and provide depth to these characters and narrative compositions.

The bodies of these animals and objects are anthropomorphized and hybridized, functioning, and identifying similarly to the human audiences, which presents a consequence of animation using a human reference of movement and gesture to construct these planned dances and camera movements.¹⁸ These scenes represent the absolute spectacle demonstrated in *Fantasia*, which is one way to view these complete full form imaginative bodies. According to Guy Debord, “The spectacle, grasped in its totality, is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society.”¹⁹ How this represents the cartoons, and these dimensional characters remains through the anchor of human referents and identification points presented through the close-up and cinematic conventions. At the same time, they represent images that are not bound to reality but by the imaginative and fantastical mythologies at play in the film and ideologies of the animated screendance. The presence of the mythology allows for easily

¹⁷ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 49.

¹⁸ The form of these bodies is technically considered theriomorphic, although the Disney aesthetic provides it with features, inherently dancier, that lend to the artistic manipulation of screen images projecting and mirroring between the two forms of being. This is textual and symbolic, Derrida and Metz, visual linguistics in writing the text of the image through the imagination.

¹⁹ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983), 3.

identifiable narratives that audiences can relate closely with, thus further interpreting empathy or dissonance onto these characters. These lessons and conflicts are simple enough to be passed through in the form of choreography, the anthropomorphic metaphors, and interpretations of animation and the cinematic manipulation of the screendance. This is represented through the caricature of these animals and objects, which is deeply connected to choreography since “In each case, the artists look for real characteristic of movement to exaggerate.”²⁰ This combination of spectacle and caricature will help present bodies that are imbued with various meanings and affective qualities, from the long shot totality to the close-up microscopic gestures.

It is this layer, the imaginative that can produce bodies that are layered with meaning, since they consist of complex constructions between the form and content. For instance, the ways that Hyacinth Hippo is instilled with dance and purpose, even with the unlikely body type for a graceful ballet dancer, will be expanded upon. Imaginative combinations of the bodies and commitment aligns with Brannigan’s view of Balázs as, “the face is the ideal of the close-up and physiognomic effects are the means of attaining anthropomorphic transformations that grant every *thing* an equal potential of express.”²¹ The camera provides this dimensional view, moving away and towards a subject, including the ability to focus on details with the same power as the whole figure. This is the spectacle of all these segments, where these bodies, that foster identification, are further signified through the ways that camera captures and spatializes the environment and larger conception of the diegesis. In other words, audiences and I see the spectacle in

²⁰ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 167.

²¹ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 47.

the form of the dancing animated bodies, but there are supplementary mechanisms underneath that are guiding the underlying ideologies and forces. Relating to the myth narrative and the cinematic production, these visionary and fantastical images and bodies are representations of the Disney artists' imagination, piecing bits of themselves into the larger faction. Campbell writes, "Symbols are only the *vehicles* of communication; they must not be mistaken for the final term, the *tenor*, of their reference."²² This will help us understand how these anthropomorphic bodies are given psychological and physical depth in relation to these exciting and affective surface images. I do not want to overwhelm this with the deep philosophy of the spectacle in society, but rather look at the following examples as layered text and hand-drawn animated images, which happen to be dancing and moving across the screen.

Through this reference point, I will begin to theorize about the various ways that bodies are constructed and imbued with meaning exemplified through different segments and perceptions in *Fantasia*. Presented as choreography and innovations of the earlier *Silly Symphonies*, readers can begin to follow that legacy and how it changes the outlook of these anthropomorphic and dimensional cartoons. Ideally, what will be discussed is how audiences can watch these bodies because of the modernist approach of the Disney studio, especially with the experiment that, "addressed the problems of how to make animated dancing look physically and emotionally authentic and believable, how to make choreography reveal character, how to exaggerate the contours of dance steps and gestures for comic effect with sacrificing the credibility, and how to integrate dance sequences into a narrative."²³ *Fantasia* is able to produce a credible and entertaining form

²² Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 202.

of concert and art, a mixture of two realms because of the *Silly Symphonies*. Ultimately accomplishing a way to view the animated screendance through the lens of dimensionality and spatialization of the environment while also dealing with the ways that spectacle changes the interaction between these spaces and bodies. To help describe these dances, I will use some of the language that Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) has brought forth into the field of dance studies in order to explain the ways that effort and motivation are present in each character.²⁴ Analyzing the LMA onto the animation and mythology will border on appearing to be about human and non-human objects that are important to our understanding of emotional identification across the screen onto the audience.²⁵ There have to be human qualities within the animated imagination, that is why consumers feel and empathize so strongly with these characters, thus making them cultural icons.

One of the key elements of this chapter is to break the medium down into its components, with a focus on the *micro*-perspective of production, dance, and body. The capture of the movement also changes, with the camera capturing one frame per

²³ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 79.

²⁴ Davies, *Beyond Dance*. This is the main source for using these terms as substantial context for the overall dances, such as looking at the shape and effort combined with these cartoon animations. For other insights to this choreographed language, I turn to the teachings of Jacques Lecoq and David Bradby, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*. (London: Routledge, 2006); and Jacques Lecoq, Jean-Gabriel Carasso, and Jean-Claude Lallias, *The Moving Body: Teaching Creative Theatre*, 1st Routledge Hardback ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001). They present a language and context for affective dances and body configurations, which animators complete as the fantastical choreographer.

²⁵ This presents the phenomenological correlation between the images and spectator who will eventually synchronize their experience of dance, emotion, or cultural mythology. This occurs heavily through the close-up and focus on the eyes. Reference Jennifer M. Barker's *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); or Susan Kozel, *Closer: Performance, Technologies, Phenomenology* (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 2008).

movement change, which is different from the standard 24 frames per second. In the animated screendance, movement is a qualitative analysis when combined with an image through the constitution and choreography that aesthetically and ideologically accumulates; however, in indexical screendance, the time of the camera's capture is quantified through the actual time and frames per second that the body must use.

Movements never fully stop and cut into the next set of action but rather Walt instilled various categories where the body is gesticulating or reacting to the environment, known as the "follow through" and "overlapping action."²⁶ The focus on the various body parts to keep in reactive motion emphasizes the individual frame and should disappear when animated, otherwise, the stalled image deteriorates the effect where, "the flow of action was broken, the illusion of dimension was lost, and the drawing began to look flat."²⁷

Due to this, the animated screendance emphasizes every movement, large and small, to provide a consistent affective viewing experience of imagination and artistry through each frame of detail. Each instance of the choreography must be mapped out frame by frame in order to construct a cohesive animation of smooth and meaningful movements. The breakdown of the dance into these components helps develop the way that Mickey Mouse or Hyacinth Hippo can be so impactful, through the execution of their choreography as calculated and tested, without human error or interference.

Continuing on, I will attempt to discuss the ways that the dances and bodies are used to convey strong emotions and ways of identification. Unlike other forms of textual analysis, I am concerned mainly with the animated image in relation to the music, but

²⁶ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 61.

²⁷ Ibid.

without much focus on the underlying narrative of the music, especially since these stories are visual interpretations of how Stokowski, Taylor, and Disney envisioned and experienced it. It would be sufficient to focus on the narration before each segment, which I will include what is necessary while attempting to avoid regurgitating non-analytical pieces of exposition.

The Process of Dimension

The attributes of dimension and depth predominantly scrutinize the bodies of the characters that are fully formed imaginary beings, typically anthropomorphic and affective. Animators and artists are expanding the bodies of animals and objects, “by giving the characters gestures that would make their personalities more believable, and by adding gags and developing continuity.”²⁸ Of the characters that have undergone this process, I will focus on a number of them, including Hyacinth Hippo, Ben Ali Gator, Chernobog, the Centaurs, brooms, and of course, Mickey Mouse. What these characters have in common with each other is that the process of animation and choreography provides each depiction with a psychology and dimension of their physical and mental capacity, especially within the imagination and fantasy realms. Instilling psychology, a take on the imaginary signifier and symbolic nature of these animated bodies, by way of the micro-physiognomic nature of facial expressions and bodily gesture produces spontaneity in the dance, which forms a connection between the body and music. This naturalness is then implanted upon the audience, who begin to identify with these imaginative situations over practical means of expression, predominantly with the extremities of the hybridic body. The characters have some real-world pieces that bind to

²⁸ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 25.

their mythological cartoonish constructions that guide the illusion of life, especially within these examples. These segments represent, but not limited to, the highest forms of identification because of their grounded nature, unlike the abstract transformations that are witnessed throughout the remainder of *Fantasia*.

One of the key innovations to introduce the illusion of dimension into the 2D animation is the multiplane camera.²⁹ The mode of capture allows for various planes to appear within their own perspective and scale, a feature of parallax views, including relation to reality and understanding the surroundings. Thomas and Johnston recognize, “Few inventions have made such a difference in the appearance of the product,” thus increasing the value of the animation process besides the fluidity and artistry of the image.³⁰ Culhane details, “Many *Fantasia* scenes were photographed on Disney’s legendary multiplane camera, which was developed to give the illusion of depth to scenes,” especially when the anthropomorphic bodies are attempting to expand the visual milieu into fantastical realism.³¹ This camera is significant to how viewers perceive these bodies on the screen because it places them within a distinct space where each plane is moving at the correct scale with the audience. The audiences are pulled in with that sense of reality they can identify with, even if it is hand drawn cartoon. Following this logic, the multiplane camera helps separate from theater and dancing bodies on the stage, by introducing the cinematic apparatus into the process of bringing movement to these screendances. According to Erwin Panofsky, one of the keys to adding narrative to

²⁹ Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 25.

³⁰ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 310.

³¹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 28.

cinema is, “defined as *dynamization of space* and, accordingly, *spatialization of time*.”³² Dimension and space are key factors in creating compelling cinematic narratives and diegeses, but they also provide these animated dancing bodies the ability to move and gesture within a world and not just a stage. What this further expounds upon, in terms of space and dimension with the body, is that audiences can begin to look at specific elements apart from each other to understand the multifaceted whole. Brannigan asserts, “This can often produce a *detrterritorialization* of the body so that any part of the corporeal whole can operate as a site for dance and, thus, meaning production and expression.”³³ Especially with animation, each piece of the body does not have to alter or connect with another, thus increasing the bodily possibilities to expand how active spectators sympathize and move along in this layered dimensional diegesis.

Through this process, analog animation refers to hand-drawn illustrations, “that appear to think, make decisions, and act of their own volition; it is what creates the illusion of life,” albeit in cartoonish and fantasy spaces.³⁴ These physical and digital experiences arise from this tradition of transposing the body into a realm of fantasy and manipulating the body’s aesthetic and function through digital animation, influencing how spectators interact with the images they see on the screen. The character’s bodies are sold to consumers who continue to align themselves with the emotional, mental, or personality traits that make up the “sensual dimension” among these films and characters, “toward embodied spectatorship.”³⁵ The bodies, either of abstract form or of the indexical

³² Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Motion Picture,” 96.

³³ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 43-44.

³⁴ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 9.

being, present sources of an excess of emotion and appeal that is projected onto the consumer audiences. The human body is fully present in these animations, “dance is the beneficiary of a particular kind of longing for kinesthetic stimulus that emerges from the space of optical media.”³⁶ In cinema, the camera’s focus and gaze tend to be on the subject’s body, as it is intrigued by the motion and connection it has with an audience. On the other hand, the camera is much more illusory in animation, because it does not move or capture quite the same way as it can with physical dancing bodies. The difference lies in how the camera is positioned to capture, such that, “2D animation today generally are mounted on a vertical stand...[while] Live-action images are recorded horizontally.”³⁷ The space that occupies the frame does not look at the same angles. The animation seems to composite layers, while the live action is formed by moving in relation to the three-dimensional subject. Rosenberg postulates how the screendance and choreographed animated bodies, “rely on camera space as the portal by which dance or bodies in motion are framed.”³⁸ Here the framing of the characters by the camera, or the animator’s placement, is a predetermined and practice set of illustrations that are reproduced with subtle changes that have a large impact when sped up. Thus, the drawn body is typically a choreographed body that allows intuitive communication with audiences which depends on how the body is filmed and captured.

³⁵ Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 3.

³⁶ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 14-15.

³⁷ Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 63.

³⁸ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 19.

Another key feature that spans all on these bodies and cartoons is the emphasis of the eyes and pieces of the human body. For this concept, Aloff provides a detailed account of the ways that Disney used and manipulated dance in order to get the most affective material, especially with a focus on the human counterparts of compositing and performing for the animation. From the opening shot of the all-knowing Owl in *The Skeleton Dance* to Mickey Mouse in *Steamboat Willie*, and the change in *Fantasia*, there is a focus on the eyes and vision of the expanded space. For Aloff, “in the case of animated films, the illusion of spontaneity, like the illusion of life, is a product of intensive labor at every stage.”³⁹ I can separate from the stage through this discussion of the eyes due to the presence of the camera, to allow varying distances and movements surrounding these bodies, which leads us to the idea that the close-up during a dance creates affective identification and glimpses into one’s kinetic and mental psyche. Brannigan attributes the close-up, “As a type of cinematic shot, the close-up has traditionally had a strong connection with narrative storytelling and the construction of the star personae.”⁴⁰ These qualities are deeply rooted in their execution in *Fantasia*, but they also expand our notion of dimension within the animated characters. All of these pieces come together to produce work that ideally will impact the audience, especially through the form of animation and the screendance. For Thomas and Johnston, “there is actually a double potential for this type of personal expression; first, in the emotion of the characters in the film that arouse additional responses in the audience, and, second, in the artistry of the work itself.”⁴¹ The potential of the film comes through in each frame,

³⁹ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 49.

⁴⁰ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 39.

which is meticulously prepared and considered in order to produce new layers and dimensions of the choreography and fabrications of the body. I have mentioned before the placement of narrative and purpose within the body through the music, so it becomes the role of the close-up, and other cinematic conventions, to solidify them and produce an icon that relates to the audience. Identification begins at the eyes of the character and gives us the space to dramatize an anthropomorphic being, and even more an articulated dancing body.

Piecing together these ideas of the multiplane camera's perspective and the close-ups dimension, I am left with the ways that space is filled and altered to adapt to the meanings that are being made. Both of these pieces, "drastically altered the scale of things in a process of magnification that impacted on screen performance and the manifestation of filmic space and time."⁴² As I will eventually bring up, through the various segments of *Fantasia*, is a way that audiences can see these characters through the most meaningful lens. Brannigan continues to discuss the human subjects of these films, but even though the viewers are looking at animation, there are close aesthetic features that are shared between the goals of each study; nevertheless, "when dealing with human subjects, depend upon modes of filmic performance that subvert the primacy of the spoken word, seeking alternative ways of drawing meaning out of the performer's body. The close-up is significant in granting *access* to these bodies."⁴³ The anthropomorphic bodies do not speak in the film, with the brief exception of Mickey, so

⁴¹ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 473.

⁴² Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

it becomes the focus on their bodies and faces to expand how perceiving their purpose and the use of space to grant access to the mind and fleshed-out physicality is effectively utilized.

Now I can analyze the filmic text of some of the segments within *Fantasia* that represent the animated screendance as a manner of imparting music and dance together with conceptions of bodily form. I will begin to focus on the mythological nature of the hybridic body and provide choreography and animation to imaginative beings. This constitutes the combination of the micro-physiognomy, psychology, dimensionality, and perspective to provide an understanding of affective identification on the screen. Though some of the segments blend in with each other, looking at every instance would be painstaking and repetitive, so I have decided to analyze four segments. This provides a clear framework of the most iconic dancing and moving bodies in order to show the mythological, moral, and dialectical nature of the narratives that embody these characters. Also, these represent the most facial and gesture-heavy characters through the imaginative musical interpretations and score.

Hybridized Bodies in Mythology

Within this segment, as with many of the ones featured in *Fantasia*, the choices and compositions are rich with detail and developed in length, so I want to emphasize specific moments and techniques that represent the animated screendance. In order to accomplish this, I have to understand and enunciate the mythological hybridity of the characters and how their presence foresees the narrative and bodily conflicts necessary for affective dance and movement. For Helen King and Natsu Hattori, the body's importance emanates from its perspective, "the original source of sensation and

apprehension that gives rise to all questions and all attempts to answer them.”⁴⁴ The imaginative element in the bodily construction and the perspective of dimension, in the space and of the being, which will continue to exemplify the characters in *Fantasia*. The mythology provides conflict to the narrative, creating a story, but also in the creation of these characters and their affective ability through their dances set to the music, they are conflicted constructions.⁴⁵ The mythological hybridization lent to the imaginative animation and the creative choreography to solidify the images, “whose physical forms embody paradox and impossibility,” until Disney and Stokowski perceived it.⁴⁶ Let us venture on to see how *The Pastoral Symphony* should be used as an example of these ideas. The animated screendance is developed through the mythological narrative and the manner of providing meaning and resonance to these characters.

Most of the narratives that accompany these anthropomorphic and dimensional sequences follow a mythological form through their moral and conflict resolution. This becomes apparent in “The Pastoral Symphony” sequence that visualizes centaurs and other mythological figures set against the musical narrative of Beethoven’s composition that offers the title of this sequence. The mythical creatures still exhibit some of those human-like qualities that foster the identification, even if it is just the eyes that help make the characters more expressive, but there is also a reference to real animals. When discussing swans and horses, Walt came up with the “reference point in reality,” which

⁴⁴ Helen King and Natsu Hattori, "Mythology and the Body," *The Oxford Companion to the Body*, *Encyclopedia.com*, May 25, 2023, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/mythology-and-body>.

⁴⁵ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 174. This is in relation to the power of objects after they are destroyed or manipulated through God’s intervention, like the animators creating these worlds and bodies.

⁴⁶ King and Hattori, "Mythology and the Body."

Culhane contributes as the ideological anchor of “all good animated fantasy.”⁴⁷

Spectators have seen full anthropomorphic bodies and objects given life. This marks the mixture of corporeality that fosters identification and guides the audience into the imagination of the mythological nature and choreography. The inclusion of dance provides these bodies with new ideas of movement, which come directly from the imagination and experiments of animation.

While the behaviors might appear to be realistic, there still is a fantastical node that these creatures bring upon with their form within a layered reality of embodied ideas and aesthetic functions. For instance, the Pegasus, a winged horse, had been depicted in static form for centuries, but Walt Disney, with his focus on reality references of swans and horses, realized the manner to give this creature flight. The innovation of this choreography was partially attributed to the ways that it could glide and maneuver through the air, in a similar way that Mickey had to swim through the castle, but it clearly brought the most attention to the landing of the Pegasus. The screendance is conceived on the ways that it can develop inventive ways of moving and perceiving the body, which now closely resembles the problem with the added dimension of cartoon animation. According to Culhane, “[the Disney animators’ problem] was the problem of showing whether such beasts landed front legs first, or hind legs first, and how their powerful wings might have moved.”⁴⁸ These choices of initializing this movement for all to see and be affected by the graceful grandeur of this creature would be an enormous task for any choreographer or animator.

⁴⁷ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 134.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

The key to these dances is the use of the multiplane camera to expand upon the bodily conceptions, special effects, and imagination of the images that animation and cinema are textually constructing. Brannigan discusses the close-up in terms of how it provides a new perspective of the body, and the intricacies of the miniscule gestures that produce profoundly emotional results while primarily focusing on the human qualities of the dancer with the imaginative nature of cinema. The style of these cartoons does take more from the realistic side of nature, not like the stretch and squash bodies of the Mickey Mouse or *Silly Symphonies* productions. Unlike these early cartoons, the bodies were provided with depth through the facial animations, even if the bodies were hybridic and blank slates to choreograph. For instance, the centaurettes, a mixture of young girl and horse, were created as the opposite being to the male centaurs, who demonstrate strength and grounded being.⁴⁹ The choreography through the animation of females had to be much gentler, keeping in the 1930s with American cultural ideals, so their movements appear to be lighter and graceful, but the real innovation comes with their faces. The animators were able to focus on the close-up view of these characters, a privilege not always provided through the stage dance, and carefully construct a facial dimension that presents subtlety. This is observed by, “British caricaturist Sir David Low,” as he remarked, “Compare the play of expression in the face of Snow White with that in the faces of the centaurettes in *Fantasia* and mark the striking improvement.”⁵⁰

The face, animal or human, becomes the space where imaginative bodies are given

⁴⁹ The shape and effort, according to LMA, present many different bodily constructions between both of these figures, even though hybridized and fantastical, they have different somatic and corporeal reactions to the environment, which impacts the choreography and perpetuates their differences of gender and sex.

⁵⁰ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 141.

dimensionality, through the multiplane space and characterization, because of the hybridic bodily construction and focus on affective areas that produce meaning with the aid of cinematic conventions.

The Pastoral Symphony brings out this expressive nature of the imaginary bodies more so than *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* because the conflict that arises in this segment comes about from various characters finding their movement and place within this newly formed world. I can begin to see the conflict emerge through the bodily constructions, how they dance, their involvement within the space, and how meaning is placed within their hybridic nature. This further expands the collective narrative in order to develop the diegesis and dimension of this world. The purpose of the animated screendance is to put music and choreography, two forms of narrative and mythological potential, together through the medium of the cinema in order to create images not possible in reality. This is where the biggest conflict of this sequence comes from, the critical disavowal of putting Beethoven with these choreographic moving images. The *Fantasia* promotional pamphlet remarks about George Balanchine viewing the pieces of the dancerly and musical production, where he championed Disney. The pamphlet reads, "A leading ballet figure of the country, Balanchine declared that the Disney treatment of the dance reached a new high of technique."⁵¹ He chimes into this issue of narratology and choreography regarding the music providing individualized images through the perspective of each audience member, which then complicates the matter. He questions, "Now how can I, a choreographer, try to squeeze a dancing body into a picture that already exists in somebody's mind? It simply won't work."⁵² I resist this sentiment and offer the idea that

⁵¹ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 24.

cinema and the multiplane camera provide the space to *squeeze* meaning into these expressive bodies through these abilities of providing dimension to flat drawings. The animator's choices and decisions provide these characters to initiate and explore the music that guides their movements and expressions. The innovation of the multiplane camera fosters the expansion and texturing of the environment, visual and sonic landscape, to help expand and alter the space where the dance occurs. There becomes a new way to imagine the choreography of the body with these various elements of the environment, especially with the mythical nature of this fantasy, by layering the image. This layering occurs with the characters, especially in their mythological hybridity, the movement through the space, and how the film provides a coherent affective spectacle of the narrative with animal, human, and alternative bodies set to the affective music's narratology.

Through these examples of the mythological presence within *Fantasia*, the many imaginative and expressive bodies that are provided with dance and meaning become visible and important to the underlying movement-based narrative. This is the framework that I can see the field of the screendance advance towards, in this understanding, but further presented through these realistic and fantasy constructions. Moving forward, I will be examining a few other segments to explore these ideas and ways to further explain animation. I have already discussed the body and music, then focused on the indexical forms that make up these concepts, but with this framework, I am curious to see how the animated anthropomorphic bodies are engaged with before concluding with abstract forms. So, out of order in *Fantasia's* program, the next set of analysis goes along

⁵² Culhane, *Fantasia*, 134.

with “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” the iconic cartoon featuring jovial Mickey Mouse, marching hybridic brooms, and an overtly powerful Walt Disney-esq Sorcerer.

The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: Ideas and Upgrades

Arguably the most iconic sequence during *Fantasia* has Mickey Mouse in the starring role and is a demonstration of how the body and mind of these animated dancing characters are perceived. Mickey’s body, silhouette, and likeness might be one of the most recognizable symbols for the Walt Disney Company, and since both influence each other, the American culture. In terms of the screendance, it is the body that is focused on and drawn towards the audience, which is transformed through the special effects and antagonists in the form of anthropomorphic brooms. These images are constructed and manipulated through the lens of the camera that is capturing the composition of a layered landscape, bodies, and effects. Besides, the infamous handshake with Stokowski that immediately follows this segment, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” presents iconic anthropomorphic choreographed bodies that are captured with the multiplane camera and layered visuals to create a sequence steeped in character and environmental dimension within the imaginative animated realm.

The body of Mickey presents a great example of expanding the depth and dimension of his animated being through design, composition, and form. As witnessed when watching *Steamboat Willie* and the other cartoons, the full body presence is evident, but one key factor of identification is missing, which resides in the pupils. The original design for Mickey’s eyes were simple black dots until the 1938 redesign.⁵³ These pupils

⁵³ Benedikt Taschen, Daniel Kothenschulte, J. B. Kaufman, David Gerstein, and Anna-Tina Kessler, *Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse: the Ultimate History* (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2018), 239. This design is reminiscent of the retro design that has returned in the late 2010s and 2020s, developed by Paul Rudish.

present a figurative entrance into the mind of the character, so by focusing them on the midst of the white portion, animators are able to provide expressivity through the vision and perspective of animated characters. The pupils express by moving and dancing around the eye, adding an additional layer of psychological and formative subjectivity for audiences to identify and construct the dualism of the theriomorphic, or the human-animal hybrid. This illustration and animation of the feature limits the expressivity and deep expanses of the emotional and physical demeanor, so *Fantasia*, in its innovative and somatic focus of dance sought to redesign this cultural icon. Harkening back to the discussion about the human labor in the making of *Fantasia*, I turn my focus towards Fred Moore for a moment. Symptomatic of a meeting with Walt, which usually fostered imaginative ideas and dreams that could be placed onto the animated screen, Moore, the “Mickey expert” was set to redesign Mickey in order to increase the identification with the audience. One of the main pieces that Moore did was that he, “gave Mickey pupils in his eyes for the first time to increase his range of expression,” thus providing the ability for the narrative and psychology building that allows for the iconic, “guilty upward glance at the Sorcerer.”⁵⁴ It is the little embellishments of the body and face that make “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” sequence impactful and one of the reasons that Mickey is decidedly the central figure of the film.

Before the first moment of this sequence, audiences are introduced to the music by Deems Taylor. In this narration, Taylor’s address provides less of an interpretation of how the viewers are to perceive the music, but instead how the audience is set up with the history of this movement that has been produced thus far. The animated sequences should

⁵⁴ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 25.

set itself apart from the indexical and real-life productions that have been set on stage or screen in order to attempt to achieve making the objects devoid of human control, although ultimately providing these non-human dancers with their own psychology and motor drive. Dimension marks how perception of this sequence through the bodies of Mickey Mouse, the brooms, and the Sorcerer eliciting the growth and transformation based on the conflicts that occur. Inserting Panofsky into this perspective, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” is set apart from its other staging because through cinema and especially animation, the space becomes dynamic and imaginative, expanding beyond what can be perceived on the stage and in cinema. This also occurs because the narrative is set, thus allowing the room for expansion of the mind, since the audience does not have to dive into the recesses of their psyche to conjure up some connective materials in the piece. The spatialization of time, letting the animation evolve from a singular drawing to a multilayered struggle between body and environment, is another byproduct of having a clear narrative. The characters are provided the opportunity to move and dance around the space because of this process afforded through animism and the cinematic apparatus, conjured up from imagination and conflict through choreography. So, it is evident that narrative, just like in the discussion of sound and music where the elements are the source of this process, demonstrates the hybrid nature of the body becoming the problem and solution, through the symbolism of the imaginative body creating struggle. This impact comes from the conflict of the body within the space, or as will be witnessed, the folly of laziness that summons the problems for Mickey. Laziness, or eagerness,⁵⁵ drives the

⁵⁵ *Fantasia* (dir. Wilfred Jackson, et al., 1940). The narration by Deems Taylor provides an optimistic tone for Mickey’s choices and reasoning, stating that, “He was a bright young lad, very anxious to learn the business. As a matter of fact, he was a little bit too bright, because he started practicing some of

conflict in this piece, perhaps in all of these segments through different manners, yet the work of Mickey walking up the pales of water provides stasis within this world, it is not until he is left to his own devices that Mickey conjures up the ambulating broom. Skirting this responsibility, Mickey's creation follows the task without fail or pause, which creates the problems within the choreography, between body and environment, of literal flooding and symbolic drowning, creating the obstacle within the hero's journey. The dynamization and spatialization that cinema and narrative provide to the animated screendance will guide the viewing of this iconic story of morals, the dialectical struggle of work and laziness, by expanding psychology and consequences across all realms of the image's plane.

The *Sorcerer's Apprentice* formally begins with the image of the Sorcerer, with his large eyes filled with tiny pupils, overpowering with the gaze and sentiment of authority. His hands are pointed and discerned, maneuvering in the air with waves of the wrist and arm, casting spells. I am drawn to this image, not only because of his human qualities, but from the eerie sense of his face and mannerisms that exaggerate these mystic features. His eyes are wide, almost bulging out, with the tiny pupils and "endowed with Walt Disney's famously arching eyebrow," thus demonstrating the power and eminence that is bestowed upon his figure.⁵⁶ Audiences are quickly given the counter of this static and stoic body, with Mickey Mouse coming down the stairs in his jaunty step and carrying two heavy buckets of water. Right away, the redesign of Mickey seems to be effective by drawing us to the warm and jovial nature of his face and gait, this character

the boss's best magic tricks before learning how to control them...he found he'd started something he couldn't finish" (Narration by Deem Taylor).

⁵⁶ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 155.

is one that can be idealize alongside. The Sorcerer is seen cooking up some spells, with each move of his hand spectators are met with pointed beats of the music, and then begin to see the formation of what seems to be a demon transform into a butterfly. This instance not only foreshadows *The Night on Bald Mountain's* sequence, but it presents the mythology and morality of this segment and the overall sentiment of the film. This transformation of the magical clouds, visions of good and evil, present the manner in which Mickey is also going to transform his character and the other pieces that drive this film will operate on. While not so much of an expressive dance, this moment with the Sorcerer shows how the focus on choreographed movement and gesture is guided by the music's internal narrative and the depth of the psychology instilled within these animated bodies. The Sorcerer's wide eyes and hands present the way that audiences can approach the film and be immersed within the action and characters because those pieces are the doors into feeling emotions through the cinema. This could not be accomplished with the same effect on the stage, but rather the cinema's ability to move into a close-up, which this segment begins with, focuses on the emotional and ideological possibility of these hand-drawn and composited characters. Yet this simply begins this segment, it continues with Mickey taking the Sorcerer's hat, the iconic cone with stars, and bringing a broom to life with the effort shown in each reach of the hands exerted and strain in the face. This yields the broom to walk in a waddling seal-like manner, and the addition of hands just rounds out its expressive ability.

The music and newfound assistant lead Mickey to move and dance, through the space, with the dancier qualities that emphasize his expressive nature. The dance demonstrates the effort of waddling and muscling the task of transporting water as if the

audience is looking from afar. The screendance piece comes from the ability to focus on the emotion through the minute gestures of the hands and smaller extremities, such as the hand's gripping or the bristles folding against the floor, demonstrating the weight of water. The lack of eyes, unlike the Sorcerer and Mickey, provides the broom with a militant stride and gait, which gives off a menacing and eerie quality to its bodily hybridity.⁵⁷ Without eyes, the broom is devoid of identification and a soul, rather it marches to the orders of the magical realm, conjuring images and statures of fantasy and imagination to further propel the problems created. Mickey moves through the space with the dexterity of the feet and hands, scheming and striking, making small movements to emphasize his plan to make the work go faster. In these moments, the background is relatively static, and the camera clearly captures the action, this helps bring forth the body as the main focus. His face has wide eyes, which are less piercing and warmer than his mentor's, but coupled with the smile and bouncy dance, it is apparent that animating the broom proved to be easier for him. This positioning of Mickey, besides the imagination of this scenario, does not hold much spectacle, rather than seeing simple bodies choreographed. The face can be explored through these minute features, noting that the animators choreographed each feeling and emotion. This represents a layering of gesture and movement on the body and also the face, two spaces that bring out the meaning of corporeality and conflict through the music and dance, where the visualization demonstrates the hero's folly, Mickey's laziness. As a result, Mickey takes slumps into

⁵⁷ Taschen, et al, *Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse*, 239. There were reference sheets and sketches that placed eyes onto the broom army, which would have reached the limits of the uncanny valley because of the overload of problematic images and faces present through the already affective dance and music.

the Sorcerer's large chair, comfortably fitting, evident from the spreading and relaxing of his body, and falls asleep, ready to journey his perception into a new fantastical space.

The mythological narrative clearly reveals itself after the introduction of the broom and Mickey's eventual slumber and dream. Mickey's full-formed body is seen lying in a chair with his legs resting on the desk, sleeping in a folded manner, a graphic opposition to the overlooking and encompassing Sorcerer, Mickey presents here the fault of the hero's journey. According to Joseph Campbell, "With the personification of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian'...Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe."⁵⁸ Inputting the narrative and characters into this mold would be quite easy, with Mickey as the hero and the Broom presenting the danger, through the hero's folly. The Sorcerer presents the parental figure, who removed the watchful eye on Mickey. The unknown fate and danger are not present, even though Mickey is unaware, as are the spectators who are focalized and identifying with his jovial spirit, expressed through the choreography. The dreamlike nature of the frame sets up the music and image to be imbued with fantasy and imagination rather than staunch realism, the representation of spectacle at the onset of this cartoon segment.⁵⁹ The dream presents the faculties for Mickey's movements to be airy and light, prancing and allowing the cinema to construct his idea of his destiny, although it might be unachieved due to his

⁵⁸ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 64.

⁵⁹ Pierson, *Figure and Force*. Presents the image and bodily constructions of the representational being moving through fantastical and abstract landscapes, the castle versus the dream.

laziness and naivety.⁶⁰ The peaceful sleeping Mickey Mouse has a face that has color and boldness, besides his hiding pupils, breathing and dreaming, starting to place a tempo and rhythm to the music and dance that will conflict with his peace and stasis of his world.

From the onset of the dream, viewers see a ghostly clone rise above his grounded body, now giving him the ability to float and dance while being stationary in slumber. Visually, Mickey is presenting an alternative form of his psyche, the personification of his dream and perception, achieved through the cinematic reproduction and manipulation of the body image. Some of the spectacle comes when Mickey begins to cast the spell, unknowingly setting his fate and inviting further problems, but this is where the layer of the unreal masks the surface reality. In this dreamlike moment, audiences are directed to look at the ways that Mickey's world is being transformed and spatialized, thus creating space that fosters the conflicts and increasing depth of this narrative. This also expands Mickey's worldview and psychology, which is now riddled with new experiences, evident from the inquisitive looks on his face, his eyes widening, and his mouth gaping with astonishment. This spectacle begins in the dream, the unreal layer that presents the most exuberant images is the dominant force that is dispelling its meaning and fantasy context onto the audience. This duplicity of Mickey follows into the dream, where he goes to the peak of a mountain and begins to manipulate and control the stars and water, which can be seen as the two realms of various mythologies, the gods of land, sea, and the heavens. His gestures become grand with a lot of grand effort to reach the limitless skies and the depths of the water, while a close-up of his face and hands show the passion and fantasy of his dance. In one instance, Mickey is prancing down the stairs, and now, in

⁶⁰ Davies, *Beyond Dance: Laban's Legacy of Movement Analysis*.

his dreamlike embodiment, he is grounded to the mountain and controlling the stars, which swoop down with speed and veracity, demonstrated by the artistry of enhancing the stars with tails and sparkles, making them leap out of the screen. The waves of the water break and become the clouds that Mickey is standing upon, these waves move around him like canons of glory, blasting high above him, a wondrous sight. Each of these movements is controlled by Mickey's gestures, radiating from the face and hands, the expressive nature of his body becomes the force that moves the stars and water, which layer depth to the character and dimension to the space and environment. Within the dream, the body and environment are cooperating through the choreography, but this is merely an illusion because it becomes evident that back in the cartoon's reality, the broom begins to flood the castle with water. This presents the conflicts and means for the transformation of Mickey, no longer in harmony, but rather audiences see Mickey trying to stop the broom and stay afloat in this situation.

The use of shadows and color in this screendance provides an extra layer of meaning on top of the bodies that have illusions of life associated with them. In the startling choreography, Mickey resorts to violence in order to stop this broom, by taking an axe and swinging with swift yet panicked motions, it comes down and splinters the wood of the broom's core, thus ideologically cutting down the antagonistic tree. At one moment, he was in harmony with the elements and world, but now his fear has become the destruction of nature and this characterization. Harkening back to Fred Astaire's "Bojangles" dance, with the towering silhouettes, spectators and audience members witness Mickey's body destroying and committing this violence through the removed nature of the shadow. Mickey finds the axe and then steps in time through the door,

offscreen, where his shadow grows, and his character metamorphoses into a shadowed hybrid of a monster and Mickey. Due to this, this duplicity and shadows demonstrate the body's dimension and do not have to be ideologically attached to Mickey's full form, but perhaps through a doubling of states. The choreography presents a splintering of characters for Mickey and the Broom, the dance's signification changes, and this signals a shift in the ways that are supposed to identify and recognize our own being and body within the conception of the action and dance.

The extreme nature of this situation, emphasize through screendance elements, is further emphasized by Mickey emerging from the room, leaning on the door in a breathless limp, and the film switching between color and monochrome. For Mickey, this transformation of character and psychology is played visually through this change from color to black and white in a smooth dissolve transition. Audiences witness the emergence of a new psychosomatic drive, one that realizes that hard work is good, but are still early in this realization since the color does not fully restore following this scene of violence. The scene cuts to the splintered broom, in a gloomy monochrome, signifying the death of this being, however, viewers begin to see broom spawns from the splinters into a syncopated army, though this time as the music breathes in new tones, choreographed with intense and consuming graphic blocking to overwhelm the spectator's perspective, and constrain the narrative journey. This cinematic ability to alter the worldview brings up this shifting of character presented through the dance-like qualities of the movement that is layered with ulterior meanings. This quick transitioning of color follows the musical score, thus adding another dimension to the dance where the music is impacting the process of looking, seeing, and the vision that is provided to us.

These striking movements, which do not behold the jovial bounce but rather straight and rigid lines, are the force that continues to follow Mickey, especially when the magic is restored within each piece of the wood that begins to spring up and come together to multiply their power and stature.

The embodiment of this laziness and the conflict that arises from playing with the magic haphazardly comes in the form of waddling brooms and explosive water, each with a choreographed effort that extends their body and myopic control beyond their signified being, pushing against the symbolic broom that cleans up messes. The brooms begin to march in droves through the castle, walking into the water like breathless drones, completely drowning out the rooms with the water, submerging Mickey into the storm, extended by the visual and emblematic whirlpool, challenging this journey and life.

Whereas the dream showed his ability to control the elements, viewers now witness that in reality, beyond the spectacle, he might not be ready as he rides the spell book in horror and fear. His body moves closer and farther from the audience, spectators get to witness a perspective that focuses on this dance and emoting of the cries for help. The antagonistic forces, as a result of the laziness, are the brooms that methodically march and move water. Here I look at the absence of features for the animated screendance in order to explore what works. Unlike Mickey's clear image and identification with the cultural milieu, the brooms lack the features that would give them sympathy and affective forces. This is from the lack of their face or eyes, rather they are just objects that waddle around through the persistence of magic, devoid of humanity or reality. Yet they are given ambulation with their flipper-like movements of the bristles, but also arms and hands that come from the handle body. The grip of the hands gives weight to the bodies and a grip

on their environment, thus substantiating their gestures and movements. This demonstrates the importance of the eyes and the close-up when constructing character bodies, because Mickey is not just gesturing with his arms and legs, but synchronized with this is the psychological forces that are visualized through the facial expressions. The deterritorialized nature of these brooms makes it harder to empathize and follow along with their bodies, except as countering Mickey's grand gestures to interrupt their monotonous actions and destruction.

As for the sheer number of brooms that are overtaking the action, the blocking and composition create the perception of depth, both physically and emotionally. The multiplane camera is able to couple the perspective of multiple animation cels into one singular frame, which creates the illusion that the midground is further behind the foreground plane, visualized by the way that audiences view the horizon in relation to closer objects. All of the brooms do not disappear when the foreground moves along, rather our perspective is constantly bombarded by these objects from all possible angles. This ocean of water is further emphasized by the graphic blocking of the army of brooms, marching across the screen in every direction, heightened by looming shadows and highlighted yellows to bring forth their being and life. Mickey Mouse becomes overwhelmed by his foolish decision and consequently begins to drown in the waters of his mistake. The dimensional nature of these brooms is also transposed and composited by the force of the water, which is the environmental dialectic that also hinders Mickey's goals and prosperity. The effect of the water, in this dire conflict, triggers the transformation of character and the decision to put himself into action. The water becomes another force of conflict that is given its own dance and choreography, which

lends purpose through the sorcery forces and magic. The innovations exemplified by having this water move around and submerging Mickey's reactive body is based on the multilayering of its position within the frame, where the multiplane camera is able to capture the water's body in different planes and the camera composites these images with the illusion of subtle differences in aspect, a three-dimensional moment that provides characterization.⁶¹

The conclusion shows the Sorcerer's force of dispelling the water and recovering Mickey through a menacing glare. Mickey removes the hat and returns to his bubbly manner, demonstrating that he was not prepared for the responsibilities endowed by the hat and exhibiting his maturity level. The premeditated dance, from the choreography of the animator, countered the ideological childish qualities that caused Mickey the conflict, but in the end, this realization becomes the transformation that is required for the narrative and closure for the audience to recognize the movements and gestures as meaningful symbols and experiences. These lessons and qualities of mannerisms continue to show up, especially in the following segment, which deals with imaginative bodies in spacious, realistic environments, the clear transition into looking at the ways that mythology provides context to the choreography and capture of the action. The journey for the mythology was not the hero's destiny, but rather it demonstrates the lessons and transformations of the character developments. The lessons are visualized through Mickey's pouting gaze, with a quick guilty smile in close-up, before getting thwacked in the behind, in this scampering away back to the task and equilibrium of body and mind, relinquished of the threat. Dimensionality and expressive mannerisms helped

⁶¹ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*.

Mickey become a cultural icon, within the ever-increasing world he lives in, but now I can begin to move towards more interpretative images.

Dancing Hippos and Alligators

According to philosopher Guy Debord, when conceptualizing the idea of the spectacle, he writes, “The spectacle in general, as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living.”⁶² While I doubt he is discussing a singular object or idea, Debord brings up an interesting point that the “Dance of the Hours” embodies, which is that the visible layer of reality is just a projection of the underpinnings of society. I do not see the process of creating this dance or animation, what is witnessed appears to be the illusion of life emphasized to a new realism. Viewers believe battle and conflict between the hippos and alligators, both through our view of nature and the imaginative dimensionality imparted into this screening experience. Having imaginative grandeur almost seems that animation lends to the spectacle better than other practices because of the illusion of the animated body with movement and gesture is deliberately choreographed and concentrated to a certain artistic interpretation, which is able to affect audiences with greater power and techniques. Debord’s quote, within the much larger context of his study, really helps paint the picture and experience of *Fantasia*, especially how it uses animation to attract the viewers without revealing the societal mechanisms that allow us to empathize and offer dimension to these characters.

Arguably, this discussion of spectacle could have begun much earlier in this study, but I do feel that this has primed our vision of the animated screendance to now allow for a clearer understanding of this notion. The fact that this sequence does not have any

⁶² Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 2.

outside force, except for the music, to drive these animals must indicate that this presents the filmic spectacle that the audience will allow without barriers disturbing their screening. This all begins when being introduced to Hyacinth Hippo, a graceful full-formed hippo with expressive pupiled eyes and facial features, wearing a thin veil of a tutu. Hyacinth is graceful and nimble, an immediate subversion of expectations, thus emphasizing the image beyond the structure. Nevertheless, audiences have fell in love with Hyacinth because of her position as the hero in the beginning of the song.

The spectacle is further enhanced by the caricature, a practice of exaggerating features through cartoon drawings of real figures, and the abstraction of the bodily form. The mythological hybridity that characterizes the animated screendance is presented by visions beyond the nature of reality. This combination is considered by Culhane as, “the strength of a Disney caricature lies in the subtle similarities its movements reveal between human beings on the one hand and animals, plants, and even inanimate objects on the other.”⁶³ Immediately, the audience witnesses anthropomorphic animals, in their true form, instilled with dances that show the hybridity of the imagination. It seems counterintuitive that the dancing ostriches, hippos, and alligators, all with different body types and linear forces, even in this imaginative world, could be graceful and ideologically impactful. The animals, in their shape-dominated form, are able to take the notion of the ballet further through cinema. Caricaturist and co-director of this segment, T. Hee, began the imaginative process of composing these characters by looking at the form of the dance through the lens of cinema narrative construction. He explained, “Ballet, of course, is an abstraction, in the way of movement, of story telling,” so when

⁶³ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 167.

combined with the abstract interpretation of music and cinema editing, I can begin to see the power of this hybridity to comprehend how audiences and theorists can rearticulate these dancing bodies to provide new and affective meanings.⁶⁴ The ostriches, hippos, and alligators each represent a different conflict of body type and movement while layered with the time of day that transition in and out between each other. This abstraction is a productive byproduct of combining these different forms, especially if the art comes from the imaginative manner to piece these ideas together. The playful nature of this segment represents the ability of producing these dancing bodies to convey specific meanings from a basic conception of lines and shapes moving and interacting with each other through time and space.

Basing this segment on the history and tradition of the Ballet Russes, a repertory company that set the style for ballet in the early 20th century and probably even earlier, Disney and the audience can begin to focus on this hippo-alligator duet, a parallel of male-female dances.⁶⁵ Emphasis is placed on the mythological and choreographical conflicts, pretty much from the beginning of this project, emphasizing the hybridic body of imagination of form and movement.⁶⁶ The construction and execution of the screendance take animal bodies with human expression into new realms of dexterity and control based on the imaginative choreography through cinema's symbolic text, envisioning these improbable combinations. The ballet is situated to stray away from the post-classical notion that sex is the only viable explanation of this dance, but really, I

⁶⁴ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 166.

⁶⁵ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 25.

⁶⁶ Pierson, *Figure and Force*.

must turn this perspective towards the imaginative freedom of having layered representation, and gags with serious art. Also, in the battle between nature and choreography, these animals show the dialectical nature of their existence through the ballet, but in place as a metaphor for nature's hierarchy.

Through this conflict, *Fantasia* is boasting its largest spectacle of the animated screendance by having the smooth animation and intricate camera setup working together to bring forth a vision that defies all truth without the explicit use of magic or sorcery. "Dance of the Hours" presents the most explicit form of the ballet in terms of movement and spontaneity. The background of the dance takes place on a traditional stage, enhanced with camera movements and dimension, thus expanding the stage beyond its physical confines, and giving these characters the space to express and gesticulate with imaginative freedom. For Aloff, this imagination leads to varying interpretations, but I can explore this male-female duet beyond its surface, because "what matters is not what the choreography *represents* but what it *is* in terms of its dance quality."⁶⁷ This ballet works because of the human qualities given to these animals and the drive of the dance through the music's narrative, thus making this interpretation seamless. As for the idea of the spectacle, especially on the cinema screen, there is a hyper-focused on the images that suspend our disbelief and blur the mechanics of what is operating it beneath.

After watching this ballet of anthropomorphic comedy, *Fantasia* switches its mythological narratology and interpersonal identification to the horrifying and dramatic opposite that contributes to the animated screendance's tradition, imaginative depictions of the world, and bodies that defy corporeality and identification that present horror and

⁶⁷ Aloff, *Hippo in a Tutu*, 157.

fear. The segments, to this point, have been imaginative but did not present any inkling of an abstract body or characterization, so by examining “Night on Bald Mountain/Ave Maria” will present two opportunities. On the one hand, I can continue to view these imaginative bodies through the lens of spectacle, caricature, and dimensionality of being, while on the other hand, I begin to transition our discussion to the abstract nature of these compositions, visually and sonically. All of these units coming together to create a tonally dark perspective and dimension of alternative animated bodies dancing. In terms of continuing the moral narrative, this coming sequence counters the brighter and fantastical whimsy of the film’s opening musical numbers. Stokowski’s focus on composing a concert of interpretation leads up to the ultimate battle of good and evil, perhaps harkening back to older *Silly Symphonies*, I can begin to show the innovations of animation through his arrangement. Suppose Hyacinth Hippo and Ali Gator represented the exaggeration of movement and emotion for comedic effect that would drastically change how *Fantasia* was using the music and setting the overall tone of the selection. In that case, I have to begin the descent of this discussion and start towards the tragic end of humanity with Chernobog embodied nature of destruction of life and humanity through the mythological and narrative parallel that closes out the *Fantasia* cinematic concert experience.

Visualizing and Imagining Hell

Now that I have dissected and analyzed this segment, it is prudent to discuss the significance that this brings to the animated screendance and the mythological nature of the piece. According to Culhane, “All of Disney’s best work is allegorical representation of the triumph of life and hope over the powers of despair and death...But none of these

representations had the mythic force of Chernobog, who is the god of evil in Slavonic mythology.”⁶⁸ The final segment of Walt Disney’s ambitious animated screendance classical concert, *Fantasia*, is the visualization of Modest Mussorgsky’s composition *Night on Bald Mountain* followed by the resolution of Franz Schubert’s *Ave Maria*. This scene depicts the rise of Hell bringing forth the Devil, known as Chernobog, the Black God, into the world, summoning a storm of darkness and demons before resolving into beauty and holiness of a beautiful and bright world. Much of the composition and background for the animation comes from mythologies and stories from Slavic myth prior to their Christianization, which makes the endcap and narrative of this piece interesting because it provides reason and resolution to this Disney production.⁶⁹ By adding *Ave Maria*, the filmmakers are providing a religious resolution to the fears and death brought upon by Chernobog. This paints a unique image of Hell in our world, since it implies that the basic idea of good versus evil has to be simple and visually rectified. Ultimately, the medium of hand-drawn animation provides this message, and it imbues dimensionality to the bodies, choreographies, myths, and fantasies. In other words, the marriage of music with imaginative moving illustrations provides the context and space for interpreting Hell and its resolutions in a simple and understandable manner, thus pushing forward Disney’s cultural and moral influence through entertainment. The perspective of the camera transports the audience into another realm of existence, demonstrating the cinema’s position among the dancing figures and ideologies, which are

⁶⁸ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 182.

⁶⁹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 182.; John, “Slavic Creation Narratives,” 257.

artfully and symbolically conceived to emote through their transmutable shape and evanescent efforts.

Putting all of these techniques together brings us to the magnum opus of *Fantasia*, which is the ultimate visualization and dance between Heaven and Hell. Whereas, in *The Old Mill*, the storm is only visualized through its transparent wind and how it impacts the animals and environment, the sequence of *Night on Bald Mountain* embodies that wind and storm as the demons of Hell and the grandeur of Chernobog, the Slavic myth for the Devil.⁷⁰ Thematically, this is also reminiscent of *The Skeleton Dance*, but rather than focusing on the sonic realism of bringing that setting to life, this segment focuses on the fantasy and narrative from the music to cast the world to darkness, “the epitome of universal Despair and Evil.”⁷¹ In terms of dimension, the characters change the complexion of the world and life through a dance of various forces impacting our perception through complex movements and blocking of characters. Here the anthropomorphism is imaginative and follows the dark mythologies that the salvation of religion will eventually round out. The religion is presented through the musical composition of *Ave Maria* by Schubert. Mythologically, the dilemma presented in this piece demonstrates the metaphysical transgression of the conscious and unconscious psychology, which continues the idea and imagery of the whirlpool through its destructive inclusion to the maneuvering for life provided to the fighting hero. Further

⁷⁰ John, “Slavic Creation Narratives,” 257. John focuses on the creation of the myth in terms of Slavic traditions and histories; *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 27. The pamphlet, through its focus on the imaginative and artistic choreography of the animated screendance experience, there shows a discrepancy between my study and this one program since the spelling of Chernobog is “Tchernobog,” which follows the grammar and linguist nature of the Russian language and Slavic lineage of the “Black God” character. Although, most Disney historians, like Culhane, Aloff, Thomas, Johnston, and most of the American-based marketing, remove the “T”.

⁷¹ *Walt Disney Presents Fantasia*, 27.

lending to the artistry and dance of the symbolic and ephemeral demons that represent the perception of a narrative in conflict, only to be relieved and humanity replaced with the Godliness, the resolution of myth emphasized through choreography and cinema's ability to visualize Hell.⁷² This presentation of God is seen as the light and vibrance of the scene, with the characters emerging from the darkness, acting as the intermediaries of this embodiment, allowing the audience to identify with their expressions and reactions to this change. The two dancing forces, the dialectical nature of the piece, is God and the Devil within Heaven and Hell. Readers and viewers have witnessed the animated screendance through all of the components that have been laid out and interpolated thus far.

This sequence in *Fantasia* is focused on the visual and tonal messages; therefore, this presentation is going to discuss how these bodies are constructed, captured, and nuanced to divulge the mythological hybridity and chaotic choreography to emotionally charge the spectator. The segment begins with the figure of Bald Mountain blocked in a manner that overpowers the frame and emphasizes mise-en-scène with dark storm clouds culminating around it, presenting the ominous terror that was present in *The Old Mill* and *The Skeleton Dance*. The multiplane camera is in full effect in the shot, for the moon remains at the same scale as the camera seemingly tracks toward the ever-growing mountain. The different planes provide an expanding perspective of the environment and landscape while emphasizing the grandeur of this event. Similar to both *Silly Symphonies*, this begins with the same striking dynamism, presenting objects being moved, in syncopated time, by invisible forces and the animals being impacted by such. The music's eerie cadence and tone, with screeching string instruments, sends chills down the

⁷² Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 222.

audience's spine, and expands our senses and experience of this musical piece. The Devil emerges, with wings, fangs, and claws spread out and ready to remove the light by blanketing the landscape with darkness, when the ghosts and ghouls emerge from the imaginary and fantasy choreographed throughout the film. They float from the ground as the camera pans across the changing material and texture of the landscape, rather than having owls and skeletons signaling this transition, the idea of darkness and ghosts marks this moment of hellish dance, providing the layer of spectacle, albeit terrifying.

The main interpretative figure and imaginative body of this piece is the mythological Devil, Chernobog, who summons all the souls and creates a hellish landscape. It is important to note, that the design closely resembles a human figure, not the animal-centric depiction. Remember the Sorcerer discussed earlier, the spells that visualized the foreshadowing of this segment, well the parallel also comes in the form of bodily construction. The large and overbearing depiction is present in both the Sorcerer and Chernobog's position as a figural force that controls and presents authorial change. This addition to the landscape, not only in terms of his presence, but for the additional layer of meaning, the embodiment of Hell, presents the spectacle and vision of wonderment to round out these feelings. The presence of these marvelous qualities constructs images that go beyond reality into the unreal imagination of constructing a fantastical being, gesture and all. The human-like decision allows the animators, especially Bill Tytla, "to achieve strong emotions and convincing acting," that audiences could further identify with, in a similar vein to the earlier discussion of Mickey Mouse and features of the face and extremities.⁷³ Animating this sequence, especially in 1940,

⁷³ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 188.

the filmmakers are granted artistic liberties and imagination to envision the fall and rise of humanity.

The demons present most of the kinetic energy between these hellish figures, by presenting a choreography of suffocation and horror. These figures have identification elements, but also are devoid of full figure form, which will begin to transition us into the ideas of the animated abstract body in the following chapter. Some of them resemble a touch of what they used to be, but audiences are also greeted with images of animals, like black horses, ephemeral and grimly, with the ghosts moving and charging with them. The surround sound system provides an all-encompassing sonic experience, especially in this scene, where the environment has turned against all, so the dimensions of the sensory experience are heightened. This is further accentuated by the quickening pace of the music with brighter notes, providing kinetic energy to these images and increasing the dance's compelling nature with increased efforts of these bodies. Before I get ahead of myself, I should explore how these bodies contribute to the meaning of the piece and the terrifying ways that the audience responds to the dimensional choreography and space. The rise of the action and conflict in the visuals is predicated by the music's involvement dictating the environment's tone and bodily presence. It becomes apparent how animation effectively constructs Hell as a multi-dimensional space that audiences can move through by looking close at the visual and sonic text of the film. The music provides us with the context of how to perceive this space, although *Fantasia* also demonstrates the cycle and what can become of these scary spaces with the blooming of life afterward. The dance of the demons and environment impacts the audience and forces us to face the fears and connotations of Hell.

Postulating this musical composition and accompanied visuals as the conflict between chaos and order can be demonstrated through the dance and imaginative bodies that present these significations to the audience. The demons, when they reach the peak of the molten Bald Mountain, they dance a mixture of celebratory and ecstatic styles, where the animated movements emphasize the imagination behind these drawings. The small demons also act as the kindle to grow the fire that spreads this hellish belief around the world. The conflict that emerges; however, conflict in this manner is the celebrated fire and horror, where the resolution, the malignant counter for Chernobog's being, is the light and Godliness. The demons' dance is erratic and that is countered by the order and light that provides symmetry, visually and musically. Before the animation and music began, Deems Taylor reminds the audience that the two concluding pieces of music are very different in style and present varying ideas that have been interpreted against mythological lore to make sense with clear identification and affective understanding. This mythological hybridization that has appeared so much through *Fantasia* is presented once again, relatively briefly, but with the flame girls, who have full human referential form, moving smoothly and with seductive manners to show off their bodies. With the sorcerer power that Chernobog possesses, he transforms these feminine figures of light and fire into ugly and scary animals, striking fear in the image through its realistic animal bodies, focusing on the grotesque lines and shading. All of these dances are dramatized to contribute to the hellish environment, where the bodies are at odds with existing, and the choreography shows this struggle. A number of times, these bodies transform into different mobile forms, each with a dance that simulates the freedom and horror of the flickering of the flame, especially with different bodily conventions. This all occurs while

under the devilish gaze of Chernobog, with his yellow glowing expressive eyes, though unlike the Owl or Mickey's, these do not have pupils, rather they are large glowing holes of energy without soul, and just glare down upon the earth in a menacing gaze. The expression comes from the widening of their shape, like having connected eyebrows, in a similar manner to the Sorcerer and Walt, in demeanor, but also demonstrating how audiences can psychologize and rectify this demon.

As the demon dance continues, the space is further expanded as animators continue to increase our vision and immersion into this world. The shadows of the demons produce double figures, similar to the earlier scenes of Mickey and Broom or the orchestra warming up. This doubling of their being or seeing the female figures emerge from the smoke begin to show how these imaginative mythological bodies are engulfing the world and beginning to suffocate any static forms. This interpretation instigates the animated screendance as a free form and alternative way of perceiving movement and time. The action and kinetic energy from the animation continue growing with skulls and winged demons flying and gliding towards the screen and audience, presenting the fears and beauty that spectators and observers can witness through this imaginative medium. The clashing colors and falling anxieties are complimented by the musical arrangement and the chaos that has engulfed the perception and idea of the world, swiftly moving, and emoting for the audience to engage directly with and feel these culpable feelings of fretfulness and angst. This culminates with Chernobog summoning all these demons and flames, parallel to the Sorcerer dispelling the flooding waters, and with similar gesture and grandeur, then forcing the flames down. This illuminates Chernobog with his face, arms, and wings lifted up in glory and victory of this conquering, envisioned with artistry

that uses yellows and highlights to express the size and effort of this dance, a choreography of graphic blocking and framing.

This culmination of emotions and frightful bodies dancing is strikingly resolute with the ringing bells of dawn, distracting Chernobog, and changing the environment once again. The demons of darkness are shown in different forms when the light is shone upon them where the space is smoothed of texture their movements are cowering back into the jagged darkness. The music transitions from frantic to angelic, with the camera gliding with the ghosts back down the mountain towards humanity and the religious soul. With one last stretch and expression of power, Chernobog wraps himself in his wings and once again becomes the peak of Bald Mountain. This segment showed the importance of the animated screendance to provide dramatic and imaginative bodies and choreographies of chaos, further emphasized through the power of cinema's distance and fragmentation of bodies, as well as reconfiguring audience perception of horror and narratives of Hell.

The multiplane camera constructs the image to illustrate the mountain dissolving into the background with the lines of people making their way through the foggy landscape with dimensional perspective. This is the first moment, besides earlier with the orchestra, that animated humans are signified and presented as, lending to the Godliness aspect of this resolution. Deems Taylor dramaturges these moments as, "the procession in the *Ave Maria* as 'a vast host of worshippers' of the God of Light, in contradistinction to the worshippers of the Prince of Darkness."⁷⁴ At the finale, a new innovation was produced to expand the number of bodies and characters on screen. The *Ave Maria* sequence presented the challenge of filming the longest processional of cartoon and

⁷⁴ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 203.

animation figures that was attempted up until the point, just demonstrating the continual innovations and experimentations among the Disney artists. While this walking and motion is not a dance, the symmetry and holiness that comes through the watercolor and delicate nature of the image present dimensional and meaningful layered compositions for audiences to be deeply affected by, especially after the audience's senses were deeply bombarded merely moments earlier. To achieve this feat and pull off this emotional moment, "Walt decided on a long, continuous scene, nearly 220 feet in length...the camera would move slowly and steadily," with the strategic placement of light they would have created, "a fantasy world just at dawn, giving a spiritual feeling for the end of the film."⁷⁵ This dancing and movement of the camera brought the resolution to the action and dissolving of Hell and Chernobog, through its swift and symmetrical manners and the gestures of purity that provided by the scene. This is considered where the dancing bodies ends in *Fantasia*, but I have to return to this piece in order to understand how to further dissect the layer of spectacle and mythology that had been uncovered. The dancing body and camera both acts together in order to provide the most affective rhythm and dance between the subject and audience that is possible within this animated realm. Through the many innovations of artistry and image capture, audiences are able to enjoy these mythological narratives and the resolutions that they present to our imagination and curiosity. All of these pieces come together to emphasize how the formal elements of the screendance can operate as a form of expanding engagement and identification with the audiences. These imaginative bodies are underscored by the magic of the cinematic

⁷⁵ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 264-265.

technologies that expand the dimensionality of *Fantasia* and the many segments to produce modern conceptions of dance and capture.

Concluding Anthropomorphic Multiplane Dimensionality

This idea and section title is a mouthful, but I believe that the material used to understand it is extremely masterful and artistic, that makes it all palatable. Exploring the instances and bodies that fill *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *Night on Bald Mountain* begins to present the mythological and conflict-based narrative, each with the connotations of Walt Disney representing the two realms of good and evil. As for the animated screendance, the mythological hybridity, imagination, and fluidity of movement have been introduced as some of the features that characterize the style and form of cinema. *The Pastoral Symphony* and the *Dance of the Hours* represented the symbolic figure where the text of the film and reality was purposely rewritten to expand the dimension of the characterization and the spectator's imagination. *Fantasia* presents clear examples of these ideas through the focus on the anthropomorphic construction and identification through the micro-physiognomy of the eyes, hands, and full body shapely conception. These bodies are further accentuated by the mythological additions that add the repeated morality and lessons that further grasp onto the audience's emotional receptors. Although the fluidity of these lines, shapes, and colors provides a clear transition into the next idea that becomes possible through the animated screendance, which is the abstraction and manipulability of these images into new visions and affective forces against the music and audience.

Now I will continue with the final chapter to round out the last feature of the animated screendance which is prominently featured in *Fantasia* and the larger animation

history of the Walt Disney Studios for that matter. The focus to round out this study is the abstracted body and experimental nature of the camera in capturing these forms and figures, which describe the most imaginary and symbolic figures throughout the premise of *Fantasia*.

CHAPTER 5: ABSTRACT BODIES OF VISION

In *Time Magazine*'s review of *Fantasia*, on November 18, 1940, the author mentions the moments of abstract forms within the filmic experience as, "Others (the wave and cloud sequences of Bach's Fugue, and a queer series of explosive music visualizations performed by a worried and disembodied sound track, posing diffidently on the screen like a reluctant wire) ... show how musical sensation may be transferred to visual images."¹ This demonstrates the final conglomeration of the body and cinema that piece together *Fantasia*'s multisensory, enigmatic, and imaginative presentation. What follows uses all of the conceptions of the body and camera that these ideas have built up on, once again challenging how to perceive the image on the screen, and what elements constitute a dance. *Fantasia* includes animations of nondescript shapes and lines that manipulate their aesthetic and spatial qualities in order to affect the audience's emotions through an imaginative choreography.² The argument of abstracted objects, shapes, and lights is provided life and dancerly qualities because of the movement that the cinematic apparatus provides. These objects seemingly perform movements and gestures through the technology of cinema and the abstraction of lines and colors. While there is no concrete and realistic reference for the abstracted bodies, thus being extended from spectacle, they just become the dance of lines, shapes, and ideas. One of the issues arises

¹ "Music: Disney's Cinesymphony," *Time*, November 18, 1940, <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,777534,00.html#>.

² Pierson, *Figure and Force*, 32-33.

in the form of the camera and its capture of the subjects and abstraction, especially when it comes to constructing the dimension of the space and character.³ Methodologically, I am pushing the ideas presented in the previous chapter a step further, where the animated cartoon is deconstructed beyond its pieces and becomes experimental, imaginative forms of movement.

The image and sound are linked, a product of the cinema, to create an experience of abstracted bodies dancing along the screen, impacting the audience differently than when seeing real human bodies, even in silhouettes, or anthropomorphic bodies. At times this can be more impactful in the construction of an animated screendance experience because there are no limitations with the visual or sonic imagery that one constructs in their head.⁴ Unlike the anthropomorphic bodies that are grounded to some reference, these bodies are not stymied by reality and physical constraints to maintain identification. The meaning associated with these bodies, abstractions of form and vision, are both symbolic and repressed to use Bordwell's terms because in order to understand them, they must be instilled with the lived experience and perspective of the audience.⁵ This hypothetical audience member, maybe you or me, will probably see the same subjective expression moving across the screen, but how it relates and impacts one's own senses and sensibilities is processed through the symbols and ideas of the viewer's deep psyche. The

³ Ideally, Brannigan and Rosenberg would offer the fragmented body through cinematography as the solution, but this abstraction introduces questions of scale, shape, and effort into the discussion of perspective. This combines the aesthetic views of Pierson, Furniss, Thomas, and Johnston with the descriptive movement analysis of Davies, Lecoq, and Laban. Abstraction, for these animated screendances, demonstrates bodies without structure that still have psychosomatic connections with audiences.

⁴ The only limitations would be physical technology, which Walt Disney and the company is always trying to push those boundaries of immersion and contextualizing the formless into cognition.

⁵ Bordwell, *Making Meaning*.

two objects that impact the audience include the perceived dance and choreography of these bodies and their relation to the music, which acts as the anchoring of reason and purpose in the psychological underpinnings given to these images. This level of processing modifies the meaning and heightens the abstract nature of these segments, bodies dancing across the screen in spectacle and the two-dimensional capture and space that these figments are provided.

The inspiration for these segments from Walt was to have corporeal reactions, visual understanding, and appreciation for the music that was being presented. Much of the inspiration comes from the works of Len Lye, a New Zealand-based experimental animator working on direct animation, which focused on the material of the medium to manipulate rather than capturing through a camera.⁶ Lye's work, "was indebted to a tradition of painterly gesture and abstraction, his primary interests were in the aesthetics of motion and cinema's privileged role as a medium in portraying motion."⁷ For Disney, through his medium of cartoon animation, the experimental nature of the fairly new cinematic medium and innovations brought to the field impacted him deeply, evident in *Fantasia* and the other visions he had for his films. Many of the segments that Walt envisioned reimagined the medium of cinema and the exhibition of the material, thus leading to Lye's conception of how sound is mounted and disseminated for a deeper practice. Discussing later on about the "Meet the Sound Track," this animation of the embodied sonic filmic material, the emulsion that blocks the light from being interpreted

⁶ Furniss, *Art in Motion*, 40-44.

⁷ Andrew R. Johnston, "Signatures of Motion: Len Lye's Scratch Films and the Energy of the Line," in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. by Karen Beckman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 170-171.

into sound, brings an imaginative play to direct animation and this legacy.⁸ In some sense, these cartoons, moving off the comic or newspaper page, can be considered abstract ideals of lines and shapes, especially in their construction of stretch and squash and other techniques to give them presence and weight. The fascination of the truly abstract comes a bit later on, which is reflected and recounted by Culhane:

Disney said that he had been interested in abstract films since he saw Len Lye's animated abstract film, *Colour Box*, in the mid-1930s. "There was an Englishman named Len Lye who did color and movement to music," wrote Disney. "He applied this directly on film by painting on the film itself." And Stokowski had once conducted an experimental concert which combined the music of the Philadelphia Orchestra with a color organ. So Disney decided to make the first selection on the *Fantasia* program a further experiment in interpreting the tone colors and sound patterns of music in the colors and moving patterns on the screen.⁹

The purpose of this abstract use of color, light, and music is to demonstrate, according to Andrew R. Johnston, "a sensual experience of pleasure generated through color whose abstract and direct appeal avoided narrative forms and the kinds of associations that Lye believed plagued realistic imagery."¹⁰ From this inspiration and aspiration to construe light and color in abstract forms, Disney began the process of animating the imagination and interpretations of the many people working on this project. Bodies of varying shape and size, filled in with various colors and effects, becomes the forms that have emotion and personality attached to them in the famous Disney fashion. Narrative is formally instilled through the process of placing an audience in front of the screen to experience the movements and graphic blocking, which shows up as a process of identification in a

⁸ Pallant and Telotte provide the technological innovations and history that bring the audiences closer to the affective experience of sensing these objects and bodies through many different layers of perception.

⁹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 36.

¹⁰ Johnston, "Signatures of Motion," 167.

different way than with Mickey Mouse, but usually with the music or narrator of the piece.

So, through this, I must follow up on everything that has been discussed so far in order to reach our final form of the body and cinematic recording, even though it resists finite shape and form. The key to the following examples and discussion, just like Walt's inspirations, is that the images are never concrete, and the bodies are constantly shifting and transforming, even if an animator has provided it a form because it always has to pass through the perspective and lived experiences of the audience to make meaning for them.

Abstracted Bodies and What Are They?

Up until this point, the bodies that I have been dissecting to uncover their animated screendance qualities have been primarily human or imbued with real bodily qualities. Yet our conception of the body goes beyond this materialism as the only true foundation for a body moving into the concept and execution of visual patterns when animated that are connoted as bodies. I have considered and engaged the ideas of Balázs and Deleuze through Brannigan's conception of the close-up and the importance they place on the face and body parts but should reevaluate the role of these ideas when looking at bodies without these features.¹¹ During *Fantasia*, this conception of the affective body comes in the form of music-guided shapes and lines emanating from the imaginary and fantastical realm, with no anchor of reality. Rather I must begin to look beyond biological cues of identification and look at how artistic qualities can lend to an understanding of an abstracted body. Unlike the bodies of animals, humans, or demons,

¹¹ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 44.

there are expressive beings that live within simple lines and shapes. Their affective nature is expressed through changing aesthetics that complement these forms, such as color, size, weight, shape, and position.¹² These aesthetic representations of bodies do not hold a significance of a specific object but rather, “adhere instead to the thesis that the aesthetic dimension corresponds to a relationship with the world, to a certain mental attitude.”¹³ The signification of these abstracted bodies, enhanced by the music, is able to claim a form that is based on imagination and interpretation of the soul. This can be, and usually is, different for each individual person, but the process is visualized and compelled through the animators and artists at Disney. This can be achieved through any type of cinema, specifically with the power of the close-up and fragmenting the subjects through the vision of the camera and projection.

Using abstract music permits the images to flow and transfigure with animated grace and folly, thus demonstrating a reaction to the environment. In conceiving these bodies, the music is not initially imbued with narrative, rather it acts merely as a form of expression. The animated screendance relies on this sonic form factor to guide the image and perspective of the audience, even more so than in the previous examples, these abstract animated dancing bodies represent the avant-garde explicitly. To consider the music’s ability to change perception and conception beyond reality and into the visual and sonic spectacle, Culhane observes:

Abstract music is reflected visually in abstract images that resemble both violin bows and swallows, and flit like swallows; musical calls and answers are

¹² Davies’ *Beyond Dance* and Pierson’s *Figure and Force* present the components of these abstracted bodies that are producing an effort. Thomas and Johnston present the animation principles that include these pieces to consider the construction of the character body and impact.

¹³ Susana Temperley, “Toward an Aesthetical Approach to Screendance,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, trans. Silvina Szperling, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 503.

interpreted as changes of color washing over the screen or as moving spots of color, or as string bass shapes calling and their shadows answering. Shafts of light build up on a black screen until they, too, suggest the recurring podium image. Interestingly, the end of *Fantasia*'s first number is an abstraction of the end of *Fantasia*'s final number.¹⁴

There is a constant building and forming of images, hybridization of various objects and subjects, and the instilling of vibrancy and dimension with the use of color and shadows to fill in these bodies and ideologies; therefore, the music's prominence and dominance of meaning-making guides the audience through the film and controls how to experience images of varying states. What are also witnessed from these films and observations is the abstraction of the many themes in *Fantasia*'s other segments, which clearly shows how the concept of abstract bodies and forms can hold meaning when connected to a concrete idea and practice.

The screendance produces this idea with its use of the camera to capture a dance or choreographed movement because it can divert perspective of the body's formal meaning and transform it beyond recognition. Brannigan's consideration of the abstraction comes in the focus on micro-choreographies, and the close-up from Balázs, which show a "dissolving of the boundaries between the dancing body and the dancing film image...introducing cinematic forms of bodily expressivity that demand a redefining of filmic performance."¹⁵ The form of expression, looking at the previous animated examples, is just combinations of lines, color, and changes in perceived motion between the images. These images include eyes and hands, two expressive forces of expression, but this effect does not have to have a definite form, and cinema allows this expression of

¹⁴ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 35.

¹⁵ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 46.

size, weight, shape, and dance. It becomes possible to draw animated images not captured from reality or the illusion of dimensional realism, through the imagination and technology of producing movement and gestures. While the body might not be recognizable, it continues to hold affective ability and character through the music and animation, blending purpose and resonance within the figure.

Due to the physical construction and the processes of bringing the abstracted body to the screen, this presents evidence of the possibility of the meaning existing as a spectacle. This experience of visual and sonic spectacle, which has been a quality of the animated screendance for some time, for its emphasis on movement, music, and imaginative beings, lends to providing the cinematic experience with depth and dimension. The essence of abstraction provides the space to expand our minds and perceptions. The animation provides the space and time for the audience to be moved and consider the images and affective stimuli implicating them into the screendance, thus expanding the realm of the visual, sonic, and lived forms, exemplified through *Fantasia* and the other Mickey Mouse or *Silly Symphony* cartoons discussed earlier. Especially in the animated screendance and *Fantasia* segments, the spectacle comes through in the experience of the music on the audience's psychological presence and the power that allows the music to affect them. For Martin Rubin and Rachel Joseph, the spectacle provides a break from the narrative and guides the body towards a construction removed from the linear experience and performance. Joseph remarks on Rubin's work regarding Busby Berkeley, which is considered as a form that these abstract bodies and ideas exist on, "Rubin defines the musical number as an instance of spectacle. He concludes that, 'all musical numbers are spectacles, by virtue of the way in which they function as

semiautonomous exhibitions somewhat distinct from the discourse of the narrative.”¹⁶

The unrealistic layer of perception that is in place to excite and expound upon the text or material provided is precisely what this interpretation of the music is doing with these bodies. *Fantasia* and the animated screendance allow for the abstraction of outwardly expansive style and form since these bodies and aesthetics are based on the interpretations of feelings and perceptions of the audience.

Abstract Capture: Perspective without Dimension

The process of capturing these elements and interpretative bodies is a bit different than previously discussed with that of the multiplane camera. Rather than providing dimension through the environment and dancing body within, this form of capture uses the two-dimensional nature of the camera and the drawings. Does the body get bigger from the prominence of the music within the set vision of space, or does the camera move closer and track along the body in motion? This question of perspective and scale is reminiscent of the nature of the screendance, with its focus on the camera replacing the audience’s long peripheral perspective with the concentrated and specific view of body subjects within a world. This also reimagines the formula for choreography, where abstract bodies and space are still at odds, even though the question lurks at what scale. For Brannigan, “The close-up drastically altered the scale of things in a process of magnification that impacted screen performance and the manifestation of filmic space and time.”¹⁷ The dimension of this imaginative body comes in the form of the expressive

¹⁶ Rachel Joseph, “Longing for Depth: The Frame of Screened Stages in the Screendance Spectacles of Busby Berkeley,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance*, edited by Douglas Rosenberg, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 482.

¹⁷ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*, 42.

shapes and colors, which transform the understanding of perspective and scale when projected onto the screen and interacting with the audience. The role of the animator, as with the choreographer, is to construct the body's placement in the world, constantly questioning, "Is the scale correct? Is it drawn to give the best advantage to the character? Does it support and fortify his personality so that he feels dominating or timid or clumsy or defiant, or whatever he is supposed to be?"¹⁸ The images on the screen are meant to be affective expressions of music through intimate concepts of dance. In other words, the spectacle initiates the dimension provided to the abstract body, although the camera, with its abstract perspective of scale and presence, cannot provide a sense of reality or concrete awareness.

Drawing the characters, as with the previous chapters, focuses on creating them within a perspectival scale and congruently realistic within the space that they occupy, but this changes for these abstract segments and conceptions of bodies and choreography. While this is a byproduct of the cinema and fragmented isolation of different body pieces, in order to convey new understandings and perceptions of their function, in the screendance, the inclusion of animation provides the already abstract nature of space and time to this idea. For Thomas and Johnston, "You make the drawings that will stage each idea in the strongest and the simplest way before going on to the next action... You make sure the camera is the right distance from the character to show what he is doing."¹⁹ The form and figure provide the weight and reasoning to the image, with the assistance and use of music. The capture of the body is focused on getting the whole action, yet the

¹⁸ Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, 222.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

question continues of how the impact of these bodies is dependent on the presence of the camera and its position on the subject in the frame. The concept of camera distance is tricky when dealing with bodies that do not occupy any dimensional space, making the multiplane camera an even more impressive invention, but it does impact the ways that audiences engage and relate to these bodies and abstract characters. The combination of distance and scale produces an effect that engages the audience through the presence of the body, which thoroughly provides the spectators with direct engagement. Even though these bodies cannot move and dance around the illusion of space, the flat plane provides enough engagement and linear movement for the subject to increase and decrease its manifestation and affective presence with the audience.

The camera does not need to physically construe dimension, like the multiplane camera, but rather it acts as seemingly absent from the viewers' attention. How the whole process of animation is completed, but most noticeable with the abstraction of bodies, is that "these 'cel set-ups' were photographed one frame at a time onto a continuous roll of film."²⁰ The process does not have the same mechanical nature of rapidly capturing of the world or whatever is placed in front. Rather there exists a methodical and calculated process of choreography and experimenting on what makes the movement and gesture of these abstract bodies meaningful. Audiences are witnessing images in motion where there was no presence of the camera in the immediate production of these movements, perhaps just a projector, magic lantern, or some apparatus to display images. The abstract nature also removes any sense of space and environment, so these bodies are moving within empty and scaleless space. I have to inquire where the conflict emerges from since there

²⁰ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 28.

are no dialectical problems in the choreography. To answer that, I must focus on how these abstract bodies, seemingly dancing and moving, are dependent on the music and projecting method to, for lack of a better term, project onto the audience their emotional interpretation and imagination.

Orchestra into Shapes and Emotions

The experience of *Fantasia* truly begins at this moment when the orchestra begins playing the program compositions while also presenting one experience of the animator who choreographs the values of music into visual cues. According to John C. Flinn Sr. in *Variety*, in a review from November 12, 1940, “Deems Taylor has explained that the first offering is a flight of sheer fancy on the part of the Disney illustrators. The Bach number is nine minutes of pictorial kaleidoscope, in the course of which various gay and bizarre representations of musical instruments are flashed in grotesque shapes across the screen.”²¹ According to Bosley Crowther, writing for *The New York Times*, he had an experience of, “The first number is Bach's Toccata and Fugue, illustrated abstractly on the screen with brilliant colors flowing and merging, lacy figures cometing through space, a sky-writing cipher tracing patterns and sprays of falling stars. It is intended, obviously, to create the necessary mood of reverie, of immaterial detachment necessary to the complete comprehension and enjoyment of the entire program.”²² The structure of these components comes together in a manner that might not seem to have a story, but with the music, there is a mythology that comes through in the poetry of the artistry.²³

²¹ John C. Flinn Sr., “*Fantasia*,” *Variety* (November 12, 1940).

²² Crowther, “The Screen in Review”.

²³ Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” 430-431.

The shapes and bodies that will represent this perceived motion from the music comes from Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor," which is music that was composed for means of experience, as opposed to the narrative compositions that has been witnessed in the other segments. The poetry of the shapes and movements, in conjunction with the musical composition and movements (using the double-meaning of the term) presents a new narrative to understand this junction of visual and sonic choreography. The production decisions surrounding the experimental and imaginative process of putting color and shape to this classical and intentional music have creative consequences for our experience of movement and symbolism on the screen. This poetic value of cinema and the animated choreography presents a balance of aesthetics with meaning to express the signification of the abstract moments. Audiences then imply the narrative with their knowledge and experience to create a personalized involvement of the animated screendance.²⁴ These abstract sections allow for participation in the consumption and mesmerizing dance of visualized dreams and emotions. The abstract is similar in construction to Metz's "imaginary" where the constructed nature of the piece is aligned with the real base, of the music, that emphasizes the dislocation of the spectator when entranced with the images on the screen. Further allowing for the creation and dislocation of the ego through the combination of image and psyche that constitutes endless variations of significance.²⁵ *Fantasia* does not shy away from this.

²⁴ Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," 15.

²⁵ Mary Ann Doane, "Caught and Rebecca: The Inscription of Femininity as Absence," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 74-75. Doane is focused the power of looking and the manipulation of the ego, especially in placing new signification and meaning onto images with ulterior contextualization. This is further emphasized by the concepts of the imaginary and how the psyche is made by a combination of abstract and concrete sensory forms infiltrating the spectator, from Christian Metz, "The Imaginary Signifier," 15.

One piece that helps emphasize the animated screendance qualities is Walt's intention to expand the dimensions of the characters and audience engagement of the medium. His intentions and modernist mentality are evident through a conversation with Cyrus "Cy" Young, an animator on *Fantasia*, "'We have never dealt in the abstract; we have given things a reason for existing, and tried to convince the audience that it could happen, or was possible. I think, even in this, if we take the sound track and use that and build through on that, it furnishes a reason for what we are doing on the screen.'"²⁶ To expand the realm and space of these abstract images and music, even though experimental, Disney was able to transfigure the perception of dancing bodies and produce new meaning into them, all the while making the high-art music of Bach easier to digest and experience for a mass audience.

When the orchestra is basked and transformed through the shadows of the light, they transition the visuals into animated, synesthesia-esq interpretations of the music. The animated screendance presents the imaginative body on film as various shapes of varying sizes and colors to affect the audience and their experience of the musical track in this multi-dimensional sonic and perspective experience.²⁷ Synesthesia is the experience of viewing shapes and colors through the process of hearing music, which can be interpreted into movement and dancing of swatches and pallets of color and light.²⁸ In *Fantasia*, this

²⁶ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 39.

²⁷ Christoph Cox, *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

²⁸ The concepts surrounding Synesthesia originate from the painterly compositions of his impressions of classical musical performances, usually of Richard Wagner and Arnold Schönberg, which demonstrate the ways that the senses are connected to the perception of colors and shapes, for the individual, and further expressed by the Disney artists and animators in *Fantasia*. References of theorists for this concept also include Christoph Cox, "Seeing is Not Hearing: Synaesthesia, Anesthesia and the Audio-Visual," *Art or Sound* (Milano, Italy: Fondazione Prada, 2014). For the aesthetic visual abstraction

comes into a form where, “on the screen are pictures of shifting abstract images that might pass before the mind’s eye as we sit in a concert hall listening to this music.”²⁹

While many do not experience this phenomenon, it becomes the act of the animator and choreographer to produce a similar experience to push more instances of affective cinematic performances.

This focus on putting color and light in the place of musical composition and performance leads us into the cinematic transition between indexical and abstraction, mixing the two perspectives to form a new experience. The arrangement of the orchestra playing their instruments becomes the process of becoming what they signify, which is a hybridic formulation of body and object into an idea. For instance, the trombone player becomes conjoined with his instrument through the composition of shadow and light, thus presenting an abstraction of form and new consideration of the presence in the film to make an impact on the audience.

As the orchestra emotes and plays, based on their performative choreography, as observed by Flinn in *Variety*, the camera begins to obscure their bodies, which were previously encountered while warming up, and focuses on their forms being abstracted into shadows and pantomimes of their performance. The colored light paints the cyclorama background and the hybridizations of bodies and instruments, which appear to

look at Jelena Hahl-Koch, “Kandinsky, Schönberg and their parallel Experiments,” *Schönberg and Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67-87. Deeper understanding of the conceptual frameworks that allow for this expansion of the mind and perception of the sonic and visually stimulating environment and world reference, Geeta Dayal, “Experimental Music and Performance: David Tudor, John Cage and Merce Cunningham,” *Art or Sound* (Milano, Italy: Fondazione Prada, 2014), 202-205. Also, Sandra Naumann Sandra Naumann, “The Expanded Image: On the Musicalization of the Visual Arts in the Twentieth Century,” *See This Sound: Audiovisuology: A Reader* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2015), 505-525.

²⁹ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 35.

be one body and image through the shadows flattening of images. This develops onto the screen with translucence-like shadow puppets providing new narratives of these bodies. The playing of instruments and now embodying this experience becomes an abstraction of these bodies with the camera not focusing on the dimension. Rather, it is just capturing the basics of light and shadows, basic cinema. The inclusion of color is produced through the three-strip process of Technicolor, which combines three-color strips of color dyed black and white film to produce vibrant and brilliant presentations.

After the orchestra transforms, viewers are met with a synesthetic experience of color and light, animated to the tempo, and beat of the music, which makes up the basis of the abstracted form of the body that will be discussed. These images move, but not in the same way that the anthropomorphic or indexical characters that have a human reference, rather the movement and gestures come through in the marriage of music and psychology. The audience perceives a dance by piecing together and filling in the gaps where the music is acting as the soul, and the image is given purpose to move and create a metamorphic dance. The choreography relies on the vision of the camera to frame each shift in space with the emotional aptitude that Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly would have encroached.

Meet the Sound Track as Abstraction Visualized

At the intermission of *Fantasia*, audiences are introduced to the soundtrack, which visualizes the waveforms printed onto the celluloid, which is an interpretation of light and shadows to construct form and figures. The unique pattern of emulsion produces the key for the speaker system to translate the passed through light to determine tone and vibrations, thus inducing the production of sound. At the heart of this process, it acts as

an analog process of light and shadows to produce meaning, as has been discussed with the orchestra, but *Fantasia* takes it an imaginative step further. Culhane notes, “Every sound has a pattern of its own, and Disney decided to create animation based on those patterns. Then, being Disney, he endowed the sound track with a personality.”³⁰ This segment brings forward the physicality of the medium and the artistic qualities of bringing essence and substance to these moving figures and forms, especially since they are attached directly to the cinema.

The segment presents these waveforms and patterns as animated lines and exaggerations of their moving ability. The music is the force that moves them, but in their existence, they are the force that allows for the music, a conundrum of subsistence and being. This lend to their abstract nature and form since they are designed to produce a specific form and body, but in their expression and deviations from their being, they can produce wildly different products and experiences for the audience. Due to this, I can begin to utilize *Meet the Sound Track* as an exercise of imagination and hybridity to provide anthropomorphic values to non-descript bodies. This segment consists of the sound track, a character of various forms and expressions, and the narrator providing the conflict that gives reason and dimension to this basic construction of linear being. When the narrator announces for a new instrument to be played, as if the visual representation can produce music without the need for the orchestra, then the shape, color, and pattern is transformed. Each instrument emits different tones and reverberance, which is perceived and experienced by the viewer, who will be focused on the artistic interpretation and

³⁰ Culhane, *Fantasia*, 128.

recognize how they interact with those images, to be emotionally impacted differently through abstract identification.

The narrator introduces the Sound Track character, as a figure that is not always seen by the audience, but really does have emotional and expressive reverberance to the audience. This back-and-forth is playful yet deeply cinematic in construction since the animated form is given life through the narrative that demonstrates the processes of sound production, editing, and the mechanization of animation. The capture of this segment, like with the screendance, focuses on the camera's perspective of how it wants to interpret the world and images placed in front, even though they are predetermined and choreographed without dimensional movement. These lines expound on the two-dimensional nature of cinema, especially with the sound track's simple changes of the body occurring on this linear plane.

After all of this filmic presentation, the screen turns to black, transitioning away from this animated spectacle of music and the body of that cinematic process towards the color-filled image of the orchestra and Stokowski, on his dais, preparing to perform their next number. Focusing on the fact that they are preparing to begin playing brings light to the notion that they were not present before, thus providing the illusion that the sound track embodiment was singularly responsible for the production of the abstract visual and sonic compositions.

Making Sense of Abstraction: Closing Comments

This focus on abstract bodies and the ways that audiences capture and engage with them helps solidify the understanding of movement and choreography in experimental settings in the quest to formulate *Fantasia* as an exemplarity animated

screendance. It appears that these segments are the most experimental and focus on the possibilities of what animation can do to portray new forms that expand our understanding of bodies. Disney and the animators are able to instill personality and psychology into these flat forms that would have typically been lifeless, which supports the claims of Disney's modernist tendencies. The process of making life out of new technologies and conceptions of the life, similar to the science fiction images that Telotte mentioned earlier, brings a new conception of life to our reality. Further explorations of this section follow the logic of synesthesia and the experimental sound and visual intersections of perception, perhaps finding the correlations with Wassily Kandinsky and Walt Disney.

Abstraction and expansion of perception with moving and choreographed bodies that are influenced by music is the ultimate instance of dimensionality and expanding the perception of the audience and animated screendance. The blending of abstract and real, through the conjuring of imagination and perception, has allowed for this form to exist. The perceived motion of these lines and shapes, with their different weight, size, scale, and position, demonstrates how cinema and dance are able to work in unison to make affective and kinetic experience come from beyond reality. Although our discussion of the 1940 version of *Fantasia* has found its footing within the realm of the animated screendance, its legacy of placing meaning and affective experiences on non-corporeal bodies has evolved. Concluding this discussion of hand-drawn traditional cinematic animation ultimately opens up our discussion to explore the Walt Disney Company's future, and how they progressed this legacy with specific projects that develop and innovate the animated screendance for further historical and theoretical considerations.

CONCLUSION: EVOLVING THE MYTH AND LEGEND

Fantasia packs an incredibly affective and immersive sensory, somatic, and psychological experience for audiences while simultaneously helping them to grasp the concepts of how the animated screendance produces affective and meaningful text that is imparted onto these imaginative animated cartoon bodies within space presented in depth and dimension. The expansion of space can be further extended into the character construction and moving forward with new innovations of cinema, the environment, and character body can perform new choreographies, and meaningful transactions between the film and audience. The purpose of this conclusion is to expand into future areas of study, methodology, and curiosity while looking at the legacy that *Fantasia* and its predecessors immortalized. Gleaning from Rosenberg and Brannigan, this study can continue to move forward to explore alternative realms of perception and image production within this system of identification in the cinema and beyond. Setting my sights on the continuing legacy of this project has many ships on the horizon, but for now, one of my focuses is on how can I incorporate these conceptions of life, the body, and the soul in other realms? How can the animated screendance inform us of alternative materialism, bodies, and ways to move with meaning?

What I have been witnessing in the film and screen culture is the slow movement of the digital influencing the bodies and environments, as well as the eventual totality and

“paradigm” of cinema, as Alan Cholodenko notes.¹ Looking at the future of the animated screendance, with the slow integration of digital cinema placed alongside the hand-drawn work, provides a sense of closure and opening into the new forms of expression that is afforded by this medium and material. This also demonstrates the legacy of this production and its place in history since, ““Disney and Stokowski feel that it is not a finished product but an indication of the great possibilities the future may develop in this new entertainment medium...*Fantasia* is not the final expression of this new union of color and music and action. It is the beginning of a new treatment and technique for the screen, as well as an indication of the greater development of sound recording and reproduction.””² The knowledge and passion for continuing this medium and style of animated screendance were never realized on the level that it was planned, but the legacy of *Fantasia* and the innovations of the production studio remain within the company.

To conclude, I want to offer a few paths that the Walt Disney Company, and its ancillary departments, have fabricated in order to continue the experimentation and innovations that continue to bring depth and dimension to bodies of varying types and forms in the emerging different forms of the animated screendance. The innovation that makes these stand apart from the first half of the 20th century is the inclusion of the digital, which brought about non-linear methods of modeling and compositing images rendered in the computer, not by the hands of animators. Furthermore, the digital supplants our perspective and immersion of the material beyond how consumers navigate and build the space it occupies. In figuring the place where digitality is present, Tom

¹ Alan Cholodenko, “‘First Principles’ of Animation,” in *Animating Film Theory*, edited by Karen Beckman, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 99.

² Culhane, *Fantasia*, 31.

Gunning, looks at paintings as image creation, “with its control over pixels...rather than the supposed indexical enthrallment to reality that photography entails.”³ The previous discussion of the *Silly Symphonies*, Mickey Mouse, and *Fantasia* was predominantly based on the indexical human referent to bring identification forces to the bodies and dances, using cinema as the mechanical and formal process of animating these. The digital realm produces the replacement of the human form with a boundless and transformative being, enabled and manipulated in endless ways through the cinematic technology. This accomplishes the ability to create intricately designed and flexible forms for the body and environment that maintain their arrangement even through complex movements of the imaginary camera moving through the space. This new technology has impacted every industry, especially the film and theme park industry, which are two of the larger pieces that make up the Walt Disney Company in our modern era.

Throughout this study, I have been looking at the various elements where the animated screendance takes shape, such as dimensionality, mythological hybridity, imaginative spaces, and bodies, to name a few. These pieces are all impacted by digital cinema and culture through the expansion of possibility and manipulation of their constructions and allowing for more spontaneity of movement, perspective, and formal being. I will briefly look at these through Disney’s only continuation of their original visions, albeit with different creative forces and economic decisions, with *Fantasia 2000* (1999), and examples of space and body expanded with *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and then a glimpse of a theme park attraction that focuses on expanding our perception with a

³ Tom Gunning, “Animating the Instant: The Secret Symmetry between Animation and Photography,” in *Animating Film Theory*, edited by Karen Beckman, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 37.

dancing purple dragon, known as Journey into Imagination with Figment. The purpose of this conclusion is twofold.

On the one hand, I want to demonstrate, through modern digital examples, that the hand-drawn animation screendance provides a long-lasting legacy of emotionally impactful connections with characters, spaces, and entertainment. On the other hand, the Disney company is still full steam ahead with producing and implementing new technologies. Though I am discussing the digital implementation into traditional animation, I do not want to push too far ahead and go down the rabbit hole to explore full digital animation. This realm of cinema and immersive experiences can fill an entirely separate study, deserving of its own attention, which would be the plan for continuing this project. Here I will briefly discuss some of these ideas without encroaching or straying from the initial purpose of looking at two-dimensional animated figures to uncover how they are instilled with affect and emotion through the process of the animated screendance.

Digital Animated Screendances

The tradition of animation and the screendance has persisted before and after Disney produced *Fantasia*, but I want to conclude by looking at the next major innovation that would utilize all the techniques previously used to expand the world and space. The inclusion of digital cinema and computer-generated imagery (CGI), specifically in the 1990s and early 2000s, ushered in the expansion of space and these dancing bodies to bring a new level of dimension and depth to the characters. These bodies are also impacted by the postmodern sentiment that removes the immediacy of truth from the form and medium, now audiences are subjected to an image that, “is

fractured, atemporal, ubiquitous, and extends and expands film's appetite for movement, voraciously consuming every aspect of popular culture."⁴ The following observations will examine bodies and experiences that lead the audience closer to the text, moving towards full-immersion, through the expansion and perception of space and characters. Whereas the multiplane camera innovated the inclusion of dimension, this postmodern digital provides the ability to move around and beyond that added dimension. The dancing body is given a new form, compositions of the world, and more expansive space to express and affect the audience. In this exploration, I will look at two films, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *Fantasia 2000* (1999), both of which place these dancing animated bodies in the imaginative tradition of *Fantasia* to expand the dimension of being and affective identification.

The art and craftsmanship of these films are not lost with the addition of digital cinema but somewhat enhanced while fully utilizing the flexibility that the medium offers. According to Nicholas Rombes, these digital spectacles, when discussing live-action cinema, "makes moving images more natural in the sense that they correspond more closely than ever before to our experience of everyday reality."⁵ Now if this breaks down the form and function of the cinema, in that digital technology expands our perspective and ability to capture without the need for the apparatus, it has an opposite effect when combined with animation. This seems to be the case because the form is still based on the classical idea of production where, "rendered through the elaborate, expensive apparatus of classical cinema, human beings were, for the most part,

⁴ Rosenberg, *Screendance*, 79.

⁵ Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), 20.

configured as objects to be arranged in screen space”.⁶ The fact that animation continues the same processes of constructing affective bodies, especially in the 1990s, that were practiced in the dances and musical numbers of *Fantasia*, allows the inclusion of digital technology to expand the spectacle. It also has to do with the idea that animation, both kinds, is not as open to mass practice, where it involves intricate craftsmanship. So rather than becoming a disassociated cinema, hand-drawn and CGI help expand the space and spectacle that the characters traverse within the larger spectacle, accelerated choreographies, and emotionally encompassing images and sounds.

The bodies and choreographies now have the ability to go beyond the imagination lent to them by hand-drawn animation due to the non-linear mode of operation that allows for spontaneity and detailed complex action. This is possible through the new forms of animation that do not necessarily rely on an artist repeating the drawing frame by frame, but through the computer, they can paint and compose the images with precise details preserved through each image. Also, the capture of these dances and movements does not require the illusion of the projector to pass the animation cels through the light at a particular speed, rather the data is sent through the projector with rapid refresh rates. These rates determine the smoothness of the image since it becomes a change of signal and not material data that is shown on the screen. What the digital provides to the identification and choreography is the rapid acceleration of forms that are shifting their content and meaning. These bodies and spaces have changing signification in this digital realm, which determines how humans observe and react to these images in the process of trying to make sense of them, even though they could be mutable.

⁶ Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, 21.

The following observations belong here as a reference to the point where the animated screendance has evolved with the inclusion of postmodernism and digitality. These symptoms of society and culture mark what could be the follow-up study to this focus on the traditional animation and cinematic forms of the early days of experiments. So, what follows represents pieces of the digital-animated screendance, in its many iterations of identification and immersion, to show where this dimensionality of the dancing body and environment has led to and continues on from. Dimensionality is predicated on the idea of imagination and abstraction that was previously discussed by expanding the realm of perception within a new environment and body construction. The materiality of these bodies, in the digital realm, is clearly more data-driven and manipulatable from frame to frame, thus producing new conceptions of placement and choreography within this ever-changing dimension and plane of transitory existence. This is not an exhaustive set of descriptions, but simply the closing of an idea by demonstrating how it has evolved and continued to build the legacy of Walt Disney animation and the screendance.

Observation I: *Beauty and the Beast*

Beauty and the Beast presents an animated film with the digital sprinklings of the 1990s, which allows for new dancing bodies and environments to be envisioned moving and choreographed with precise detail in each frame. The “Be Our Guest” musical number sequence uses digital compositing to intertwine hand-drawn and digital characters to allow for more intricate choreography and dances of these objects and transformation of space. If the choreography that was discussed before demonstrated the push and pull of the body within the environment, then by bringing in the digital, I

perceive bodies in hyper-animated motion to increase the kinetic fluidity and affective intensity in imagination. In other words, the animated screendance allows for new affective experiences through the process of expanding the world and perspective of motion. This sequence has many examples of hybrid animation styles, mixing the traditional with digital, but in each instance, they are used to show intricate designs and movements of the objects that are choreographed full of kinetic energy in a way that would be very difficult to express by drawing frame by frame.

On the other hand, these digital moments do not have the fine detail or gestural complexity at the time of this production that would allow for the characterizations necessary for the emotion and affective identification with the audience. For this reason, the utilization of the digital bodies and choreography, mixed with the camera perspective, are used for simply shaped objects, like the plates, glasses, and forks, to give them dances that expand the space with movement and create a dimension that adds to the spectacle of the number. The digital objects, of the environment, like the chandelier or chorus line of candlesticks, do not have intricate movements but have complex designs, like individual crystals, which would be difficult to reanimate consistently, but now it adds depth to the scene. As for the animated screendance, this sequence represents the ways that the body is envisioned through the imagination and realized through the perspective of the computer, so once again, the dance has dimension as the combination and amalgamation of these two realms and forces working in unison to produce affective spectacle through the cinematic variations of dance.

When Walt Disney introduced the multiplane camera in *The Old Mill*, he brought a new perspective to cartoons that were not previously seen, adding the illusion of reality

and parallax to our eye. This scaling of the different planes in the two-dimensional image provides a dimension that follows the same experience that digital brings to the screendance, especially with its way of expanding and traversing space with fluid movement and bounds. For this, I look at the titular song and dance sequence of the film. In *Beauty and the Beast*, the animated bodies of this human and fantastical character, in a composition similar to Mickey Mouse and the Sorcerer, or demons and Chernobog, dance around the ballroom with grace and elegance. The camera is tracking alongside their descent down the grand staircase, following close with a focus on their small gestures of nervousness and excitement. As they begin to dance, the couple is framed in a medium shot that moves to a long shot, emphasizing their moving bodies and the psychology instilled within their characters. Up until this point of this romantic dance sequence, the characters have been perceived as close to reality as the film leads us to believe, but this changes as the music swells and the camera moves as if it was on a crane that matched the emotional reverberations of the music. The camera moves through this space with fluid motions, and the decorations all maintain their scale and shape in relation to the dancing bodies, showing the digital space as expanding the possibilities of romantic and atmospheric dimensionality.

The legacy of *Beauty and the Beast* has been upheld through a Broadway production, a live-action adaptation, and a hybridic television anniversary. These expansions of these narrative worlds and characters have added more choreography and ways that audiences can engage with the characters. While the 2017 film version expands the reality with CGI and live-action characters, it remains grounded in natural movements to conceal its bodily fabrications. With the Broadway and television productions, the

characters' bodies were accentuated with costumes, the dances were instilled with more purpose, and the imagination delighted audiences. Another convention of the screendance is the exhibition on television, a medium controlled more by sound than movement.⁷ The 2022 television production of *Beauty and the Beast: A 30th Celebration* presents a hybridized vision of the experience that shows the original animated cartoon, live-action performances, and highly stylized choreographed dances engaging with modern interpretations of the narrative and emotional journey. Once again, the screendance elements lend to the new and engaged vision and mythology, which is the structure that keeps these enduring stories, music, and lyrics absorbed in the global understanding of the Disney product. The fans, consumers, and guests of Disney products are numerous since they engross entire cultures and engage with the characters, music, and narrative. Nevertheless, through the synergistic and conglomerated corporate satisfaction reports, the company continually returns to the dance scenes to resonate with intense emotions and connections across the thresholds of enchanting cinema and immersive world-building spaces.

Beauty and the Beast provides plenty of further discourse with the many Disney adaptations and culture production, even beyond the immediate conglomerated familiarity. Exploring this further is inevitable when discussing how the animated screendance is able to remain significant as the mode of engagement to so many people through the narratives and identification with the characters' dances. This franchise and legacy, fixed heavily with all of the films mentioned above, makes this a prime point of

⁷ Michele Hilmes, "Television Sound: Why the Silence?" *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* 2, no. 2 (2008): 153, <https://doi.org/10.3828/msmi.2.2.10>. In this article, Hilmes makes mention of the studies of television sound initially conceived by Rick Altman and John Ellis. They both studied the importance of the sonic dimension in television over the movement and aesthetic-centered cinema.

expanding imaginative bodies through modern dance and stories, implanting the core elements of imagination and fantasy into the souls of many.

Observation II: *Fantasia 2000*

When Leopold Stokowski and Walt Disney envisioned the original *Fantasia*, they planned on continuing to update it through the years. These updates would demonstrate the new technologies and innovations in animation and cinema through the lens of putting images onto other musical compositions. Unfortunately, the original release of *Fantasia* did not achieve box office success, even though it is culturally significant, which forces Disney to reconsider this dream in preference to keeping his business afloat. The expansion of the company into the theme park industry and the continuation of animation through the years helped demonstrate these ideals of putting bodies and music together in a concert and dance experience. Not until 60 years after the initial release did the Walt Disney Company, in an era of economic and creative growth, come out with the subsequent iteration of this animated screendance with *Fantasia 2000*. For this, I want to expand on how some of the previous animated screendance qualities have transformed through the digital kaleidoscopic and postmodern freedom of form and ways of seeing the world. The presentation of *Fantasia 2000* demonstrates the company's expansion as the cornerstone of American culture, where it is hard to come by someone who did not know and consume the Disney brand in some way. This film presents the reach in entertainment, culture, and the imaginative presentation of the body through digital means, which, unlike hand-drawn cartoons, has to exist within the cinematic sphere for proper exhibition.

In this film, audiences are welcomed with the same form of music and dance, indexical, anthropomorphic, and abstract, yet now with the development of digital cinema. The nonlinear aesthetic is immediately apparent with the set becoming alive with movement and transformations of images and sounds, each element with its own reason and purpose, but without a presence of grounded concrete reality. The digital and nonlinear approach to narrative and image production is arguably the most significant innovation in the field since it allows new forms of expression and dimension through the characters and space. These ideals are reminiscent and present in *Fantasia 2000*, perhaps to the extreme of trying to demonstrate these innovations as a showcase and not as an expansion of the audience's experience and interactions with the choreographed bodies on the screen.

Another critical piece is the ability of the camera perspective to move and put kinetic energy into the frame, even more so than a real camera has the ability to view the world. Many moments in the film have perspective and camera movements around large objects and spaces, which counters the traditional animation's framing of a shot that contains the action within the temporal engagement with framed actions. Through digital animation, the bodies do not have to be comprised and blocked with specificity in the initial production of these bodies and dances to have an impact on the environment since it is all composited together to show how it influences one another. The camera is able to move through the space without the force of the character to guide its perspective, but rather this unhinged movement expands each plane and dimension that the characters move within.

The digital bodies allow the film to observe many copies of these dancing paper birds or humpback whales, with quick and intricate movement. Though interestingly enough, the CGI, at the time, did not have the ability to demonstrate precise and intricate details, so the eyes on the whales were animated using traditional methods and composited on which becomes evident during the close-ups and microscopic examination of the image.⁸ What CGI allows for is the control and manipulation of many animated points that would be otherwise difficult to continually draw, thus these large figures can be expanded beyond the screen through the imagination of postmodern aesthetics and corporeality. Furthermore, the abstract lines that form and contort in shaping the world of New York, encapsulating the George Gershwin jazzy classical composition, *Rhapsody in Blue* segment, represent the free flow and endless digital dimensionality that provide dance and meaning to the images, constructed from lines and colors. This provides a more postmodern aesthetic and tone than that of structuralism, especially since there are no anchor units to determine how the meaning is built. This section is free-flowing and filled with the imaginative body, yet without the clear mode of engagement or connection. The line is given the freedom of movement by the computer data provided, thus freeing the body from a grounding in the space and expression of its form. The abstract nature of the digital body presents possibilities beyond imagination through world-building, where the body and environment are conjoined in their conflict and transformation.

The mythological dance, accompanied and imagined through the *Firebird Suite – 1919 Version* by Igor Stravinsky, at the end, presents the expanded hybridity of the body

⁸ David Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, Fifth Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 701-705.

and nature, transforming through conflict with the speed and grace that puts the animated screendance into a new realm of cinematic engagement with the choreographed body. The effects and images that are composited demonstrate how animators can push the boundaries for ways that dancing bodies avoid corporeality and materialism for the development of presenting the choreography with visionary configuration. The space is also transformed through the mythological forces and narrative to demonstrate the rebirth and impact of the body, in transformation and dance, on the environment, which is a clear example of impactful choreography that has been expanded and nuanced with the inclusion of digital cinema and animation.

Observation III: The Journey into Imagination with Figment

Moving into the realm of theme parks, Disney is the leader in creating immersive experiences that focus on affective and somatic intensity. They achieve this by including narrative and characters that move around with you on the ride, sort of like Deems Taylor's role in *Fantasia* or the music's effect of instilling meaning and purpose behind the objects that spectators consume and perceive. The particular ride that I am referencing is The Journey into Imagination with Figment, which opened in 2002 and is the third iteration of the ride and characters present, it is found in Walt Disney World's EPCOT in Orlando, Florida. For the purposes of brevity and concluding, I want to look at the theme of the ride's narrative song and the main character, the mischievous purple dragon, Figment. He acts as our body and guide to the ensuing diversion, changing our perception through the bodily senses and identification through the digital and immersive space of the attraction. Recently, further engagement with Figment has come in the form of a "Meet and Greet" where guests can congregate with an embodiment of the character, thus

growing the engagement and tactility of these affective bodies.⁹ Yet, this is beginning to engage in the concept that the theme park, especially the type that Walt Disney revolutionized, is a form of media. The media here is the engagement and immersion into objects that are being engrossed within the Disney culture. Like with the screendance, the audience is immersed with the materials to feel some somatic connection and expand the audience's involvement further, similar to a film or television show they might be interested in. This section provides another point of theoretical and practice exploration, how do the animated screendance and theme park converge on the premise of being media objects that grow culture and shape social structures?

The narrative of the ride is centered around a tour of Nigel Channing's (Eric Idle) Imagination Institute with a focus on the different human senses. However, with some indexical and animated hybrid drama, this tour is hijacked by Figment, the mischievous embodiment of our imagination. The purpose, as projected through the ride's song, is that the immersed rider can create imaginary experiences through various illusions of our senses, playing tricks in our minds. I see many instances of this experimentation coming from the experiential goals of *Fantasia* and providing audiences and guests with alternative ways and methods to experience the world, especially with the help of reorienting our position and expectations. Just like the way that *Fantasia* brought imaginative bodies and dimension to a seemingly flat surface, the theme park ride allows for our changing perspective, like that of a camera, to be immersed and guided through a

⁹ As of September 10, 2023, in EPCOT at the Walt Disney World Resort. The opportunity offers guests to meet a full-bodied costume character, but there are alternative digital representations that have been in development at Walt Disney Imagineering. Specifically, a digital projection of this character, and other smaller versions, that present them in relative scale to their animated composition. Through this flexibility, Figment is provided the ability to move and dance in his fantasy choreography to engage with guests on a further emotional level, much more than the inarticulate costume.

truly three-dimensional space. Figment dances around the ride vehicle and through the sets, guiding our focus on how theme park guests can experience the choreography of digitally animated bodies to be removed from linear narrative and demonstrate the expansive possibilities of imagination and dimension through digitality.

The song that accompanies the ride is “One Little Spark,” written by the Sherman Brothers, the legendary songwriting duo known for the focus on imaginative depth in their music and imagery. It has lyrics that look at the processes of creating images and experiences through the senses. One of the most impactful lines that corresponds through all of the projects and cartoons discussed throughout is, “We all have sparks / Imaginations! / That's how our minds create creations / We set them free and oh what they can do! / Those magic sparks from me and you.”¹⁰ These lyrics evoke the notion that our minds and the psychology that these animated characters possess are sparked from the creativity and images of choreography that impacts our emotions and identification with the surroundings and characters that are guiding us through contextualizing this space.

The innovation compiled through *Fantasia*'s production and legacy further demonstrates how surround sound is used to redefine a space and how observers conceive perspective with sounds. Figment appears in one of the few animatronic forms and begins to play different sounds and effects, which forces the guests to reconsider their position and role in this space. Just like in *Fantasia*, the innovation of Fantasound provides the audience with a multidirectional and expanded perspective of the space in that Stokowski's music was being exhibited. The imagination is able to expand the narrative

¹⁰ Robert Sherman and Richard Sherman, “One Little Spark,” Walt Disney Imagineering, 2002, https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/One_Little_Spark#Journey_Into_Imagination_with_Figment_Version.

and possibilities that these bodies exhibited, which is now further refined and demonstrated in an actual space. The choreography of the animated body is now imparted onto our indexical beings, thus forced to articulate how riders and the captive audience operate and exist as a push and pull of the environment. Perhaps I have to reidentify where the screendance exists because our perspective of the dancing bodies must begin to include ourselves into the picture and capability. In one of the scenes that demonstrates the sense of sight, the guests are placed in front of an eye chart, but before the proper demonstration can begin, Figment creeps into the chart and begins to rearrange the words. After spelling his name, riders are led to sing along with the song on this animated eye chart. This demonstrates the hybridity of digital and reality by showcasing the fluidity of the space and involvement with the choreography that is not bound to a linear form of experience or consciousness. The song that plays is trying to show how guests can be tricked and influenced by our perspective and view of the world, especially when these forms of entertainment are made to deceive.

Looking Back on *Fantasia* and Disney's Cartoons

Coming back to the point of this study, I have led you, the reader, through a journey across an expansive theoretical and practical exploration of the body, dance, animation and how they come together to demonstrate increasing the dimension of these beings, psychologically and physically, even though they resist pure corporeality. What has emerged is a new understanding of the qualities that the animated screendance provides to the field of cinema studies and the process of American culture creation through images and symbolism. Walt Disney represents the fuel for creativity, American mythology, and entertainment innovations, which further involve and immerse audiences

within the intellectual properties of the studio through means of presenting new perceptions and dimensions of animation and reality.

Fantasia represents the qualities that make imagination and fantasy merge seamlessly into reality. Leopold Stokowski and Deems Taylor represent the indexical being, setting the basis of knowledge and direction, while the Orchestra players embody the ideals of transmutability through shadows and cinematic presentation. This leads to the discussion of these anthropomorphic beings, like Mickey Mouse and Chernobog, representing the dimension and depth of a body within a constructed space, which allows the music to instill purpose for movement and choreography to textualize these dances in relation to the audience. Furthermore, imaginative bodies and mythological hybridization represents these forceful figures, which are visualized through the imaginary signification of the cinema, like Christian Metz and Jacques Derrida have postulated for the power of mutable perception. The possibilities of the close-up and editing allow for the ability for these bodies to be emphasized through their calculated gestures and minute aesthetic features, such as the limitless boundaries of the eyes and pupils. The other side of this puzzle is the abstract symbolism that comes from the shape and colors to construct bodies of meaning without any identifying properties for the audience to connect emotionally. Finally, the power of the music and compositions, through the dimensional innovations of Fantasound surround sound, expands audience perception and identification with the imaginative sonic diegeses with the fantastical animated characters dancing throughout. These pieces are the qualities that have expounded the animated screendance well beyond the avant-garde circles, where Disney is able to produce these artistic representations of fantasy and imagination for popular culture and mass audiences.

The spectacle that emerges from *Steamboat Willie*, the *Silly Symphonies*, *Fantasia*, and the droves of other films within this corpus and the studio's catalog, presents the legacy and our commitment to the characters, narratives, and musical moments of song and dance that brings joy and happiness through these methods and practical ways that they foster identification through artistic song and dance. The study that is now ending represents the ability of the cinema and animated body to conceive of new meanings and conceptions of our engagement with other worlds and perceptions. Connections between reality and fantasy, between humans and cartoons, become substantiated by the levels and the ways audiences and consumers allow themselves to believe in the fantasy, which is becoming more real every day with the immersion of digitality and bodies of engagement. So, to answer the question posed much earlier, how does meaning get placed on non-corporeal bodies? Ideally, spectators, theorists, and I have to look towards ourselves to recognize what humans project and mirror from our own psychology and body. Transforming ourselves into these cartoon characters, who foster instances to emote and empathize alongside, through codes and texts of the active imagination and dimensionality of life, provides the key that the animated screendance, thus exposing us to and the legacy that has shaped so many childhoods and adulthoods to imagine, pretend, and dance with wild abandon like these characters that the small world of audiences and spectators love so much.

“The world loves Mickey for many reasons, most of all because he never fails to make us smile, and the world is a better place for that!”¹¹

¹¹ Bob Iger, “Foreword,” in *Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse: The Ultimate History*, edited by Daniel Kotheneschulte (Cologne, Germany: Taschen, 2018), 7.

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- Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. Directed by Mel Stuart. Paramount Pictures, 1971; Warner Bros. 2021. 100 min. Blu-ray Disc.