



Selfpolyfication and Arriving on Choice: Africana Dance Practice Revised

Talawa Prestø

Abstract

This paper introduces *selfpolyfication* as a way to understand how dancers in African and African Diasporic traditions move with multiple centers, histories, and intentions at once. Rather than treating movement as something singular or fixed, selfpolyfication describes the ability to generate layered motion, rhythmic complexity, and spiritual presence without conflict or collapse. It challenges Western ideas of choreography that focus on linear progressions or isolated expression, instead presenting dance as a system of choice-making, memory, and connection.

Grounded in the author's Talawa Technique and Cognoscape framework, the paper treats movement as both knowledge and method. It explores how dancers learn to move from many centers at the same time, how rhythm is shaped in real-time collaboration with drummers and community, and how tradition and innovation come together in every gesture. The concept of the *rhythmokinetic sphere* describes the flexible field of movement possibilities that dancers navigate in relationship to gravity, memory, and rhythm.

Across sections that range from technique and training to spirituality and ancestral presence, this work frames dance as a way of thinking, remembering, and becoming. It argues that Black dance practices are not just expressive but function as technologies of survival, connection, and world-making. In doing so, it provides language and structure for understanding how dancers move with spirit, history, and future simultaneously.

Introduction: Positioning the Work

Introducing Dr. Talawa Prestø—A Dance Artist, Scholar, and Methodological Architect

I am Dr. Talawa Prestø, a dance artist, movement theorist, and scholar, internationally recognized for my development of **The Talawa Technique**, a movement methodology rooted in African, Caribbean, and Afropean dance traditions. My work refines, preserves, and innovates the epistemologies embedded in Black movement systems, ensuring that the intelligence of the moving body is treated as an ontological, **cognitive, and structuring force**.

My research and practice move beyond conventional ideas of movement as expression or aesthetics. I engage dance as a **kinetic intelligence system**—a structuring methodology that governs choice-making, relational presence, and world-building. The body does not simply execute movement; it processes information, negotiates space, and structures interaction in real time. This study examines how Africana dance practices offer an alternative way of thinking, moving, and structuring knowledge, one that is rooted in recursion, fractal intelligence, and the simultaneous negotiation of multiple centers.

The Cognoscape: Writing and Knowing Through Movement

The *Cognoscape* is a methodological framework developed to reflect the polyrhythmic, polycentric, and fractal nature of African and African Diasporic movement traditions. It is not simply a way of writing about dance; it is a way of writing as dance. The Cognoscape treats knowledge as dynamic terrain—mutable, recursive, and in motion—mirroring the very principles that underpin embodied movement systems in Africana traditions.

Unlike traditional Western models of academic documentation, which tend to treat knowledge as extractable, linear, and final, the Cognoscape resists closure. It privileges rhythm over sequence,

relation over classification, and recursion over resolution. Where Western methodologies often rely on distanced observation and singular authorship, the Cognoscape affirms situated knowledge, multivocality, and the interweaving of experience, spirit, and intellect. It is a choreoepistemological framework—grounded in the idea that movement is itself a method of knowing.

Guiding Principles of the Cognoscape

To maintain its alignment with Africana movement epistemologies, the Cognoscape operates through three core principles. Each principle reflects a distinct but interconnected logic of movement-based knowledge production.

1. Recursive Structuring

Recursion is not repetition. In the Cognoscape, ideas return—but each return is altered, deepened, thickened. This principle reflects the logic of polyrhythmic dance traditions, where a rhythm or motif cycles back not to repeat but to *evolve*. Recursive structuring creates a spiraling movement of thought, in which understanding grows through layered returns.

- In practice: A concept introduced early may reappear in a later section, now in conversation with a new idea, historical insight, or embodied experience. The writing thus builds like a dance: looping, shifting, and reasserting itself with altered weight and meaning.
- Impact: This allows for sedimentation of thought, mimicking the way dancers build phrases through rhythmic accumulation and re-entry, rather than sequential progression.

2. Fractal Expansion

Fractal expansion recognizes that knowledge is never linear or singular. Instead, it behaves like a fractal: a self-replicating pattern that reveals complexity at every scale. Each conceptual unit—whether a paragraph, a term, or a movement description—contains the potential for infinite

elaboration. This reflects the structure of Africana movement, where one gesture often implies an entire cosmology.

- In practice: A single idea might be approached through its embodied, sonic, spiritual, and philosophical layers, allowing readers to enter the Cognoscape from wherever they stand—in body, in background, in belief.
- Impact: This breaks down hierarchies of knowledge and opens the text to multiple readerships and interpretations, encouraging intellectual polycentrism.

3. Multi-Positional Engagement

This principle insists that knowledge cannot be fully understood from a single stance. The Cognoscape engages thought from multiple positions: the dancing body, the archive, the witness, the teacher, and the ritual practitioner. It deliberately collapses the artificial binaries between theory and practice, spirit and scholarship, and fieldwork and introspection.

- In practice: A concept might be unpacked through a scholarly citation, a memory of training, a rhythm breakdown, and a spiritual insight—all within the same section. This reflects how dancers know—not only through analysis, but through repetition, feeling, resistance, and relational tuning.
- Impact: It affirms Africana ways of knowing as legitimate, rigorous, and intellectually generative—while making space for contradiction, multiplicity, and emergent logic.

Toward a Living Epistemology

In summary, the Cognoscape is not a passive terrain—it is a living, breathing ecology of thought. Its form mirrors its function: recursive, relational, rhythm-based, and open to revision. It does not seek to fix knowledge in place but to move with it—through spirals of memory, layers of experience, and the pulse of intellectual becoming.

By writing *through* movement, rather than *about* movement, the Cognoscape affirms that Africana epistemologies are not only worth documenting—they are modes of documentation in their own right.

The Talawa Technique: Training Selfpolyfication in Motion

Where the **Cognoscape** structures the articulation of movement knowledge, the **Talawa Technique** structures movement itself. It is a **neuromuscular, cognitive, and proprioceptive training system** designed to develop a dancer's ability to process **polyrhythmic, polycentric, and multi-layered movement logics**.

This technique **formalizes the principles of selfpolyfication**, training dancers to multiply choices in movement without cancellation. This technique formalizes the principles of *selfpolyfication*, training dancers to multiply choices in movement without cancellation. By *cancellation*, I refer to instances where the activation of one movement center, gesture, or weight shift negates or undermines the efficacy of another. For example, engaging the hips in a grounded, spiraling motion may be unintentionally neutralized by a counteractive pattern in the chest—such as a contraction or lift that redirects energy vertically and interrupts the intended pelvic trajectory.

In contrast, the practice of selfpolyfication develops the dancer's capacity to layer movement across multiple centers—hips, chest, spine, limbs—so that these engagements operate in *accumulative, collaborative, or complementary* ways. Rather than competing, these movements amplify each other, expanding the range of expressive and structural possibilities. This means learning to manage opposing forces, directional energies, and center-specific weight shifts in such a way that one does not nullify the impact of another.

Through this training, dancers cultivate the ability to maintain clarity and intentionality across simultaneous movement pathways. This results in a kinetic intelligence where options are not reduced by complexity, but multiplied through it. In essence, *selfpolyfication without cancellation* is the development of internal rhythmic and spatial negotiation—where every center adds to the choreographic field without erasing another.

It ensures that **movement remains in continuous negotiation rather than fixed form**, allowing dancers, musicians, and performance spaces to remain dynamically interconnected rather than predetermined.

Key Features of the Talawa Technique

Expanded Proprioception

Talawa Technique trains dancers to heighten bodily awareness, spatial orientation, and kinetic control. Movement choices emerge not from imitation but from a deep understanding of how the body relates to itself, others, rhythm, and space.

Polyrhythmic Mastery

Dancers learn to embody and layer multiple rhythms at once—moving through several time signatures and rhythmic accents simultaneously. This trains the body to operate across multiple temporal dimensions, rather than locking into a single beat or count structure.

Polycentric Articulation

Movement is initiated from several centers of the body—pelvis, chest, spine, shoulders, and feet—at the same time. Rather than relying on a singular point of articulation, dancers develop control and independence across these centers, allowing for complex, multidirectional movement.

Rhythmic Acumen

Talawa dancers are trained not just to follow rhythm but to manipulate, shape, and redirect it. Rhythm becomes a field in which they compose and intervene. Movement becomes generative—producing rhythm rather than simply responding to it.

Movement as Epistemology

At its core, Talawa Technique treats movement as a form of thinking. Dance is not just expression or performance—it is a methodology for inquiry, interpretation, and meaning-making. Through movement, dancers generate knowledge, make decisions, and build relationships with time, space, and community.

Methodological Orientation

The Talawa Technique moves beyond aesthetic and expressive goals. It is a structured method for developing agency, precision, and authorship in movement. Dancers trained in this system do not merely react to music—they engage rhythm as a compositional partner.

Rhythm is treated as a dynamic, living system—not a fixed sequence to be followed, but a terrain to be navigated, stretched, reshaped, and built upon. Movement becomes a negotiation: Each gesture is both a response to what has already sounded and an initiation of what could emerge next.

In this way, the dancer becomes not only an interpreter of rhythm, but a *shaper* of it—someone who actively composes within time rather than simply dancing along to it. Talawa Technique trains dancers to expand, layer, and redirect rhythm in real time, reinforcing their agency as choreographic thinkers and rhythmic architects.

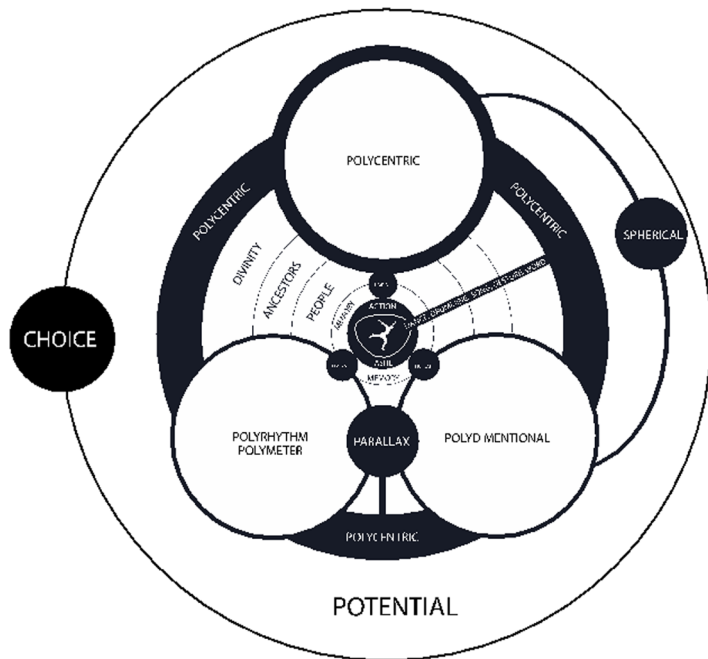


Figure 1: The Aesthetic Cosmogram, created by Thomas Talawa Prestø (2021).

The Aesthetic Cosmogram: A Rhythmokinetic Framework of Africana Movement, Knowledge, and Becoming

The **Aesthetic Cosmogram** is a dynamic, multi-layered framework that maps how Africana performers generate, organize, and transmit knowledge through movement, rhythm, and relational presence. It fuses **kinetic logic** with **cosmological structure**, offering a visual and conceptual model for how rhythm and dance operate as living, co-creative systems of becoming.

At its core lies **Arriving on Action**, the co-creative field where movement and rhythm emerge not from fixed sequences but through the continuous negotiation between **Gravity, Intention, Memory, and Connection**:

- **Gravity** grounds movement in the physical and sonic weight of the body, made audible through drumming.
- **Intention** drives motion before it manifests, shaping rhythm through energetic will.
- **Memory** carries ancestral and personal archives, activated through gestural citation and rhythmic motif.
- **Connection** weaves dancers, drummers, audiences, and ancestors into a relational network, structuring presence as communal.

Surrounding this core is a **concentric cosmological structure**, composed of five interlocking realms:

1. **Ashe**: The innermost realm of spiritual energy, where motion activates transformation.
2. **Memory**: The archive of gestures and histories embedded in the body.
3. **The People**: The social realm where movement is witnessed, affirmed, and echoed.
4. **The Ancestral**: The temporal fold where dance bridges the living and the departed.
5. **The Divine**: The outermost realm, where performance becomes channeling, invoking deities and cosmic forces.

These realms are navigated through three expressive principles:

- **Polycentricity:** Movement arises from multiple bodily centers, reflecting a non-hierarchical logic of expression.
- **Polyrhythmicity/Polymeter:** Rhythm is layered, simultaneous, and often non-linear, reflecting the multiplicity of time.
- **Polydimensionality:** Movement spans physical, emotional, spiritual, and temporal dimensions at once.

Together, they form a **spherical and parallaxic system**, where time curves, perspectives multiply, and meaning spirals. The outer spheres of **Potential** and **Choice** affirm that every gesture is a decision drawn from infinite ancestral and energetic possibilities.

The **Cosmogram** functions as a technology of presence. In Africana movement systems, presence is not just about being seen—it is the charged embodiment of community, spirit, and ancestry. It is a co-somatic practice in which one feels and is felt *within* others' bodies. Through rhythm, dancers activate shared memory, step between realms, and bend time into a liminal field where becoming is multiplied. Presence is ancestral, ethical, and rhythmic. It is trained, not assumed.

This system holds that:

- **Ontology is fluid**—dancers perform shifting, communal, and ancestral selves (*selfpolyfication*).
- **Axiology is relational**—movement is valued by its ethical, spiritual, and communal resonance.
- **Epistemology is embodied**—knowledge is not just thought, but danced, drummed, and breathed.

Rhythm, in this framework, is not accompaniment—it is the audible form of choice, energy, and historical charge. Movement is not choreography—it is a method of knowing, a recursive act of becoming, unfolding across a shared field of memory, spirit, and intentionality. The Cosmogram **structures this possibility, guiding dancers to show up fully, in multiplicity, and in relation.**

Selfpolyfication in Practice: The Field of Kinetic Possibilities

Selfpolyfication expands the field of movement beyond singular embodiment, linear progression, and hierarchical structuring. While many Western dance paradigms organize movement around a centralized axis, a singular self, or a coherent arc of development, selfpolyfication activates multiplicity. It enables dancers to embody several intentions, rhythms, or presences at once—operating across layered temporalities, centers, and affective registers.

Here, the body is not bound to one line of motion or one coherent identity. Instead, it becomes a site of *kinetic simultaneity*, where ancestral memory, communal presence, and spiritual force can co-inhabit the moving form. Rather than moving as one, the dancer moves *with many*—feeling others within the body (co-somatic), allowing spirit, rhythm, and relational presence to co-compose the action. In this way, selfpolyfication offers an expanded model of embodiment: plural, recursive, and polypositional.

Selfpolyfication takes form within what I conceptualized as the **Field of Kinetic Possibilities** (2020)—a dynamic, adaptive structure grounded in Africana movement systems, where motion emerges through multiple centers rather than a singular axis. In this field, the body is not organized hierarchically or bound by linear progression; instead, it operates through layered articulation, fractal rhythm, and distributed spatial negotiation. Movement unfolds as a fluid interplay between intention, weight, and ancestral resonance, allowing for a constant recalibration of choice and relation.

A clear example of selfpolyfication within the **Field of Kinetic Possibilities** can be observed in a **dance cypher**, where a dancer moves through shifting rhythmic fields while responding to the energy of the circle. A selfpolyfied dancer does not simply execute isolated moves but actively navigates multiple layers of movement:

1. **Engaging multiple movement centers at once:** The shoulders may maintain one rhythmic cycle while the pelvis executes another, creating a polyrhythmic dialogue within the body.

2. **Anticipating and responding to musical and communal feedback:** Adjusting movement based on subtle shifts in the drum or vocal call-outs from the audience.
3. **Multiplying presence:** Projecting simultaneous expressions of rhythm, energy, and intention across multiple movement centers, ensuring that their kinetic identity remains fluid, adaptive, and expansive.

Within this framework, polycentricity structures the Field of Kinetic Possibilities by enabling multiple centers of movement to operate at once, ensuring that the body does not follow a singular trajectory but instead exists within an expansive range of articulations. This allows movement to be recursive, polyrhythmic, and multilayered, engaging multiple spatial and rhythmic orientations simultaneously. Rather than being bound by a fixed kinetic logic, the dancer negotiates and expands movement possibilities in real time, responding to rhythmic interplay, weight distribution, and spatial intention.

Selfpolyfication, then, is not just about being in the dance—it is about generating multiple realities of movement at once, continuously folding and unfolding presence to create new **kinetic possibilities**.

The polycentric body does not just move—it composes, shaping and reshaping itself in relation to time, rhythm, and the unseen forces that animate the dance. Within this field of kinetic possibilities, movement is not a singular event but an unfolding negotiation, where rhythm, weight, and space converge in an ever-evolving act of becoming.

The Rhythmokinetic Sphere: Navigating Kinetic Possibilities Without Cancellation

The *Rhythmokinetic Sphere* is the fluid, dynamic field of movement potential surrounding the body, structured by rhythmic decisions, kinetic forces, and spatial conditions. This sphere is not a fixed container—it continuously contracts, expands, and reshapes based on tempo, weight distribution, alignment, and polycentric coordination. A dancer does not simply execute movement; they navigate a constantly

shifting field of possibility, where every choice is made in relation to rhythm, gravity, and multi-centered articulation.

What distinguishes the Rhythmokinetic Sphere from general notions of improvisation is its emphasis on *structured co-existence* rather than spontaneous emergence alone. Improvisation often foregrounds freedom of movement or moment-to-moment invention; however, the Rhythmokinetic Sphere is not just about emergence—it is about the sustained, curated layering of multiple kinetic trajectories without cancellation. Movements do not simply happen in succession; they are architected to remain *in conversation* across the dancer's body and through time.

This sphere facilitates overlapping, multi-directional, and rhythmically layered motion, but unlike improvisational practices that may prioritize expressive freedom or novelty, the Rhythmokinetic Sphere demands *relational coherence*. It requires the dancer to maintain multiple directional pulls, centers of power, and rhythmic intentions simultaneously—*without any single gesture negating another*. This is not mere accumulation; it is *intentional negotiation* within a kinetic field where rhythm is both structure and possibility.

Rhythmokinetic Acumen: The Coordination of Kinetic and Rhythmic Decision-Making

To navigate the rhythmokinetic sphere effectively, a dancer must develop **Rhythmokinetic Acumen**, the ability to **make kinetic choices that align seamlessly with rhythmic structures in real time**.

Rhythmokinetic Acumen is not just about moving on time—it is the ability to structure movement decisions dynamically as an integral part of rhythmic generation. Every movement choice must not only engage the body **but also alter the rhythmic landscape, ensuring that each kinetic choice enhances rhythmic engagement rather than diminishing it**. This involves:

1. **Kinetic Acumen:** The ability to make strong movement decisions in relation to gravity, weight shifts, and spatial organization. Polycentric ability.

2. **Rhythmic Acumen:** The ability to align movement choices with polyrhythmic structures, maintaining fluidity between contrasting rhythmic cycles.

When these two forces operate in tandem, they multiply each other's effectiveness. The dancer does more than react to rhythm; they anticipate and structure kinetic responses that amplify rhythmic intention. This ensures that movement choices are not isolated but exist within an expanding field of rhythmokinetic negotiation. A high-level practitioner does not "hit the rhythm" but instead offers their own interpretation inside the polyrhythmic structure, shaping the space of possible movement outcomes.

Through Rhythmokinetic Acumen, a dancer develops the ability to make good kinetic choices quickly, ensuring that each decision contributed to rhythmic expansion rather than limiting it. This is what allows movement to remain generative rather than restrictive—each choice creating new pathways for motion rather than closing them off. This simultaneous structuring of kinetic and rhythmic acumen multiplies movement potential, ensuring that movement remains adaptive, responsive, and generative rather than limiting.

Efficiency in this context refers to the dancer's ability to make timely, precise, and impactful movement decisions that support and expand the rhythmic field without excess or interference. It is not about doing less, but about doing *what is necessary* with clarity and purpose—ensuring that each kinetic action contributes meaningfully to the rhythmic architecture.

An efficient rhythmokinetic decision amplifies existing rhythmic structures or introduces new ones without creating chaos, collapse, or contradiction. Efficiency is thus a function of discernment, coordination, and rhythmic intelligence: the ability to recognize which gestures *fit*, *extend*, or *transform* the current rhythmic moment, and to execute them with optimal force, duration, and spatial calibration.

This kind of efficiency ensures that the dancer can remain improvisational, layered, and polycentric without overextension or

internal contradiction. It allows for **rhythmic complexity without fragmentation**, and for **movement density without confusion**.

Momentary Expansion: Weight Shifts, Alignment, and Heightened Possibilities

Erudite Africana Dancers expand their movement range; they momentarily reshape their kinetic possibilities by shifting weight, optimizing alignment, and activating multiple centers in coordinated collaboration. This creates the illusion of surpassing biomechanical limits, not by defying physics, but by working in concert with gravitational forces, kinetic redirection, and rhythmic structuring.

- Sabar (Senegal): Dancers momentarily expand their jump height by adjusting pelvic tilt, spinal articulation, and weight distribution, allowing them to access a higher kinetic plane than what static alignment would allow.
- Zinli (Benin) and Yanvalou (Haiti): The seemingly “boneless” undulations are not reliant on extreme flexibility. Instead, they emerge from an understanding of kinetic sequencing, where multiple centers of articulation collaborate in curvilinear motion, ensuring that movement flows through the body rather than being segmented.
- Africana dance traditions: Grounding techniques do not simply root the body; they render gravity visible, ensuring that it becomes a palpable structuring force in the rhythmokinetic field.

A dancer with high rhythmokinetic acumen does not fight against these forces but plays within them, ensuring that movement aligns with the natural momentum of kinetic energy rather than resisting it.

Forces That Shape the Rhythmokinetic Sphere

Understanding the forces at play in and around the body is essential for navigating the Rhythmokinetic Sphere. The body is never moving in isolation—it is always in dynamic conversation with gravity, inertia, rhythm, and spatial resistance.

1. Gravity as a Structuring Force

- Gravity is not an external constraint; it is **the foundation of movement articulation**.
- Grounding techniques in Africana dance **do not resist gravity—they reveal it**, making its presence visible through kinetic choices that **utilize weight shifts and structural support**.
- The rhythmokinetic sphere is shaped by **how gravity is engaged**, determining whether movement unfolds **with resistance, suspension, or acceleration**.

2. Alignment as an Expanding Force

- Proper alignment allows dancers to **redirect forces, minimize resistance, and create kinetic chain reactions** that enhance movement range.
- Alignment is not about rigid positioning but about **optimizing pathways of least resistance**, allowing movement to unfold **fluidly and expansively**.

3. Multi-Centric Coordination as a Liberating Force

- When multiple movement centers operate in **complementary patterns**, movement potential **expands exponentially**.
- Rather than relying on **single-axis articulation**, the body **engages multi-layered sequencing**, allowing movement to unfold **in expanding spirals rather than linear paths**.

Connecting Rhythmokinetic Spheres to Selfpolyfication

The ability to **expand, contract, and shift the rhythmokinetic sphere in response to rhythm and spatial negotiation** is central to **Selfpolyfication**. This structuring force allows dancers to:

- **Inhabit multiple rhythmokinetic spheres simultaneously**, ensuring that movement exists across **different spatial and rhythmic planes without cancellation**.
- **Engage in polycentric and polyrhythmic layering**, ensuring that movement choices are not dictated by a single rhythmic pattern but remain **fluid and adaptable**.

- **Expand movement potential dynamically**, ensuring that each movement choice **multiplies rather than limits kinetic expression**.

A dancer **does not move inside a fixed sphere**—they are in **constant negotiation with rhythm, gravity, and relational structuring**, ensuring that the **sphere of rhythmokinetic possibility** remains a **living, adaptable field** rather than a static boundary.

The Rhythmokinetic Sphere as the Nexus of Kinetic Intelligence

The **Rhythmokinetic Sphere** is not just a conceptual space—it is the **lived, experiential field** through which **Africana dance practitioners** navigate **rhythm, force, and kinetic intelligence**. It governs how movement **expands, contracts, and reshapes itself** in response to **time, rhythm, and bodily alignment**.

Mastery of the rhythmokinetic sphere requires **Rhythmokinetic Acumen**, ensuring that movement choices are made **with clarity, relational awareness, and kinetic foresight**. This acumen is **multiplied through Selfpolyfication**, which allows dancers to exist within **multiple spheres of movement potential simultaneously**.

Through this framework, **the dancer becomes an architect of possibility**, ensuring that movement remains **adaptive, expansive, and generative rather than fixed**. The rhythmokinetic sphere is not a **passive space**—it is an **active field where movement is structured, negotiated, and continuously redefined**.

Manifesting the Imaginacope: The Dance of Imagination, Motion, and Rhythm

The *Imaginacope* is a core element of training that develops the dancer's ability to move with clarity, trust, and full integration of self. It refers to the dancer's capacity to generate clear kinetic intention—to move without hesitation, overthinking, or fragmentation. When the *Imaginacope* is active, the dancer does not second-guess; they enter

motion decisively, with a grounded sense of purpose, even when improvising or navigating the unknown.

This clarity comes from a deep internal alignment between mind and body. Rather than the mind directing the body from a distance, the two operate as one—making choices together in real time. The dancer does not analyze while moving and is not disconnected from the action. Instead, they are *inside* the action, trusting that their training, instinct, and rhythmic awareness will guide them moment to moment.

The Imaginascope also extends beyond the individual body. It includes trust in the full rhythmokinetic environment: the drummer or music, the space, the costume, and the energetic conditions of the moment. These elements are not external—they are felt as extensions of the dancer's body and intention. Activating the Imaginascope means stepping into a field of co-creation where dancer and environment move in concert.

This is trained through exercises that focus on body language, intention, and presence—encouraging dancers to amplify their personhood within the movement. Rather than breaking movement down into isolated parts (e.g., arms here, legs there), the training works holistically. The dancer is asked to show up fully—spiritually, rhythmically, physically, and expressively—in each gesture. Over time, this approach removes the tendency to compartmentalize or hesitate. The dancer learns to commit to motion with full presence and trust, making the imagined not only visible, but also inevitable.

Africana dance traditions understand that motion and rhythm share a common origin—they are manifestations of the imagined made physical, the internal given form, the unseen (internal or spirit realm) becoming seen and felt. Bringing rhythm into motion is an act of making imagination actionable, a process where the dancer draws from kinetic memory, lived experience, and the infinite rhythmokinetic field of possibility to manifest motion into reality.

This process does not belong to the dancer alone. The drummer does not simply play the rhythm—the drummer **dances it into being**, using the **hands to articulate motion across the drumhead**, much like

a dancer **uses their feet, torso, and limbs to shape rhythm in space**. The drum itself is a **divine amplifier**, translating the **intangible** into the **tangible**, much like the dancer's body renders rhythm visible through movement.

From an Africana perspective, **musicians do not simply play instruments—they dance them**. The relationship between movement and rhythm is **not hierarchical**—the rhythm does not control the dancer, nor does the dancer control the rhythm. Instead, they co-create, existing in a **recursive feedback loop**, continuously structuring each other in real time.

Thus, **body percussion, foot stomping, tap dancing, drumming, and instrumental play** are all dance. The distinction between dancer and musician is not one of **action** but of **perspective**—both are engaged in kinetic structuring, shaping rhythm and motion in tandem.

Poly-Spirit Praxis and the Sacred Technologies of Movement

Selfpolyfication as a Bridge Between the Seen and Unseen

If selfpolyfication expands kinetic possibility in the physical realm, it also extends beyond materiality, serving as a bridge between the visible and the unseen. In many African and African Diasporic movement traditions, dance is not simply about what is seen by the eye—it is a vehicle for spiritual transmission, an energy technology that allows the dancer to communicate across dimensions.

Movement operates at the intersection of time and spirit, and selfpolyfication allows the dancer to navigate between them without contradiction. The spirit exists outside of time, while the body is bound by time—thus, dance becomes the site of negotiation between these two forces. Through rhythmic engagement, the dancer offers their corporeality, emotional intensity, and sensory experience to the spirit, which in return provides insight, guidance, and ancestral intelligence from beyond the limits of linear time. This is a form of bartering between the body and the spirit, where movement is the currency of exchange.

This perspective places dance at the center of much of Africana cosmology. Dance is not a secondary ritual element—it is the primary mode of divine contact. It is through the dancer’s activity that spirit enters the communal space and that ancestors, deities, and even gods are made manifest. Without the dancer, the community is disconnected from its lineage and from the divine. But more than that, the divine itself dances. The gods not only dance, but they also dance with and among us. The cosmological significance of dance in Africana traditions is not metaphorical—it is structural, ontological, and necessary for the transmission of spiritual force and communal coherence.

However, selfpolyfication as a framework does not just provide a language for spiritual channeling—it also flips how we conceptualize what a dancer does. Rather than asking whether a dancer dances their own urgency, we must ask:

- Is urgency capable of possessing a dancer?
- Can historical conditions, communal tension, or the suppressed energy of a people be that which dances the dancer, much like Oya, Ogun, or Damballah would?

If so, this reframes how we understand Hip-Hop, Ballroom, and other dance forms emerging from communities under pressure. What does it mean to dance in the pressure cooker? How do movement traditions born out of stress, oppression, and urgency act as both resistance and spiritual channeling?

This section explores how selfpolyfication functions as a sacred and historical practice, where movement is not just an expression of agency but a means of channeling ancestral, spiritual, and communal forces, including those that emerge from lived historical realities.

By engaging with polyrhythm, optic-sonic-tactile-ethero rhythm, rhythmic encoding, and drum technology, the dancer folds time, activates memory, and structures presence in ways that allow them to exist in multiple dimensions at once.

The Urgency That Dances the Dancer: A Paradigm Shift in Performance Studies

If we accept the premise that **urgency itself can possess a dancer**, much like a deity, ancestor, or spirit in a ritual setting, then we must radically reframe how performance studies interprets agency, intention, and authorship in dance. This perspective **decentralizes the notion of individual expression as the sole force driving movement**, instead situating dance within a **broader field of social, historical, and spiritual urgency** that animates the dancer. It challenges the dominant performance studies paradigm, which often assumes that movement is either choreographed from an external source (the choreographer's vision, institutional constraints, formal training) or emerges from a dancer's internal creative impulse. Instead, this view suggests that a dancer's movement **can be structurally, historically, and spiritually compelled by forces beyond the individual self**, making performance not just an act of creation but an act of survival, invocation, and negotiation with the unseen.

This reorientation has profound implications for how we understand **Black and African diasporic movement practices**, particularly within urban and street dance cultures. Consider the Hip-Hop cypher or the ballroom vogue battle: if we move beyond the lens of individual artistry and competition and instead view the dancers as **being moved by urgency itself**, these spaces become **ritualized sites of channeling communal struggle, historical weight, and embodied resistance**. A dancer in a krump battle, for instance, is not simply "expressing" anger or power—they are, in a very real sense, being *moved* by the historical and systemic forces that have necessitated krump's emergence as a form of embodied defiance. The dancer is **not just responding to rhythm but responding to the urgency of survival**—an urgency that exists in the lived experiences of the community and *uses the dancer's body as its vessel*.

In **performance theory**, this shifts how we define the very act of dancing. Instead of assuming a binary where dance is either **deliberate (choreographed, structured, designed for aesthetic**

impact) or improvised (spontaneous, freeform, self-generated), we must recognize that dance can be a form of possession by communal and historical forces that animate movement beyond the dancer's individual will. This complicates Western notions of improvisation, which tend to focus on the **dancer as the source of agency**, rather than seeing the dancer as a **conduit for something larger than themselves.**

This lens also deepens our understanding of social dance and underground performance cultures. If urgency moves the dancer, then every cypher, battle, and dance floor is a site of historical and spiritual intervention. The vogue dancer's dip is not just a final pose—it is an assertion of survival. The breaker's freeze is not just technical mastery—it is a statement of defiance against forces that seek to render them invisible. The krumper's chest pops are not just aesthetic—they are convulsions of urgency, rage, and history demanding to be embodied.

By viewing urgency as an animating force, performance studies must begin to account for how oppression, survival, and historical memory exist not just as themes in dance but as forces that move the dancer at the deepest, most ontological level. This expands the field's understanding of movement, making space for a kinetic epistemology where dance is not simply a human act, but a historical, spiritual, and communal necessity—one that emerges not just from individual desire, but from the urgent need of a people to be seen, heard, and felt in the world.

Poly-Spirit Praxis: Dancing Between Worlds

Poly-Spirit Praxis is the application of selfpolyfication in sacred and ritual contexts, where movement acts as a medium for ancestral and spiritual engagement. This is not merely an aesthetic function—it is an ontological process that governs how movement summons, channels, and activates forces beyond the individual self.

Across African and Diasporic traditions, there are **four primary ways movement serves as a spiritual technology:**

1. **Call-and-Poly-spirit answers:** In Vodou, Candomblé, and Orisha traditions, movement does not just invite the presence of the divine—it makes the body an instrument for divine embodiment.
2. **Kinetic Memory Encoding:** Movement is a site of **historical preservation**, where the dancer’s body carries **ancestral imprints** that are **activated and performed** across generations.
3. **Energy Navigation:** Certain movements are designed to **manipulate and direct Ashe (spiritual energy)**, ensuring that movement does not just express power but channels it with precision.
4. **Temporal Disruption:** Ritual dances often function **outside linear time**, creating a **polyrhythmic relationship with past, present, and future simultaneously**.

This process of **dancing between worlds** aligns with the **five realms of the Aesthetic Cosmogram**, ensuring that movement is **not just physically performed, but spiritually enacted**.

REALM	POLY-SPIRIT PRAXIS IN ACTION
Ashe (Innermost Realm)	Movement generates kinetic Ashe , activating energy flow and amplifying spiritual force.
Memory	Dance encodes ancestral knowledge , ensuring that each step carries the imprints of those who came before.
The People	Movement serves as a communal act of call-and-response , reinforcing dance as a shared spiritual practice.
The Ancestral	The body becomes a portal , bridging past and present through rhythmic activation.
The Divine (Outermost Realm)	Movement ceases to be individual and becomes a site of divine embodiment , where the dancer is both present and beyond presence.

A crucial distinction must be made here: a body that has moved in a poly-spirited way moves differently than one that has only

ever carried a singular spiritual presence. Ancestral spirits and divine spirits have danced through multiple bodies over an extended time. This manifests as kinetic knowledge and movement virtuosity, forming a legacy of embodied intelligence that does not fade but remains present in the dancer's body. A dancer who has moved in a poly-spirited way does not move the same again. They gain polycentric and polyrhythmic acumen gleaned from the knowledge of the temporally shifted spirit.

Point of Specificity

While certain aspects of Poly-Spirit Praxis may resonate with other Indigenous or land-based spiritual systems, it is important not to conflate these frameworks under a generalized notion of "the Indigenous." Similarities in energy, movement, or cosmology must be understood within the specificity of each tradition's deep cultural context, lineage, and cosmological logic. I speak from within African and African Diasporic systems to which I am both initiated and culturally accountable. It is not my role to assert resonance across traditions, but to articulate these epistemologies from within their own authority. While other Indigenous practitioners recognize shared principles or choose to engage in dialogue—which is their sovereign choice—distinction must be preserved alongside any affinity.

The Talawa Technique and Poly-Spirit Training

This understanding is at the core of **The Talawa Technique**, which I have developed as a means of taking **ancestral knowledge seriously and training the body to a level where it dances as if poly-spirited**—even when not in possession or poly-spirited states. This includes:

- **Heightened proprioception**—a refined awareness of bodily positioning and energy shifts.
- **Expanded range of movement**—the ability to execute movements that push beyond one's personal physical history.

- **Greater power, balance, and precision**—derived from the ability to process multiple movement logics simultaneously.
- **Enhanced polycentric processing capabilities**—the ability to navigate and synthesize multiple movement vocabularies at once.

The **Talawa Technique** is designed to refine the body into a vessel capable of receiving, processing, and executing movement in a way that aligns with poly-spirit praxis. This technique does not simply train dancers to imitate movement; it conditions them to become receptive to the ancestral, energetic, and polyrhythmic forces that animate Black dance traditions. A dancer trained in poly-spirited intelligence, whether by spirit or by disciplined practice, moves differently. They carry something larger than themselves—a kinetic inheritance, a movement virtuosity passed down through generations.

A dancer trained in the **Talawa Technique** learns how to:

1. **Engage the multiple centers of the body in conversation with each other**—developing a fully activated, polycentric motion capacity.
2. **Translate the unseen into kinetic force**—moving not just from the muscles but from the energetic and spiritual centers of the body.
3. **Create multi-directional rhythmic dialogues**—engaging in call-and-response with the drums, fellow dancers, and unseen forces at play.

Selfpolyfication as Rhythmic Intelligence and Multi-Modal Structuring

Selfpolyfication is not simply the expansion of movement choice—it is a methodology that governs the body's engagement with rhythm, space, and energy across multiple planes. In Africana movement traditions, rhythm is never confined to sound alone. Rhythm operates as a multi-sensory and metaphysical structure through which time, space, memory, and emotion become tangible, perceptible, and co-created by dancer, musician, and witnessing community.

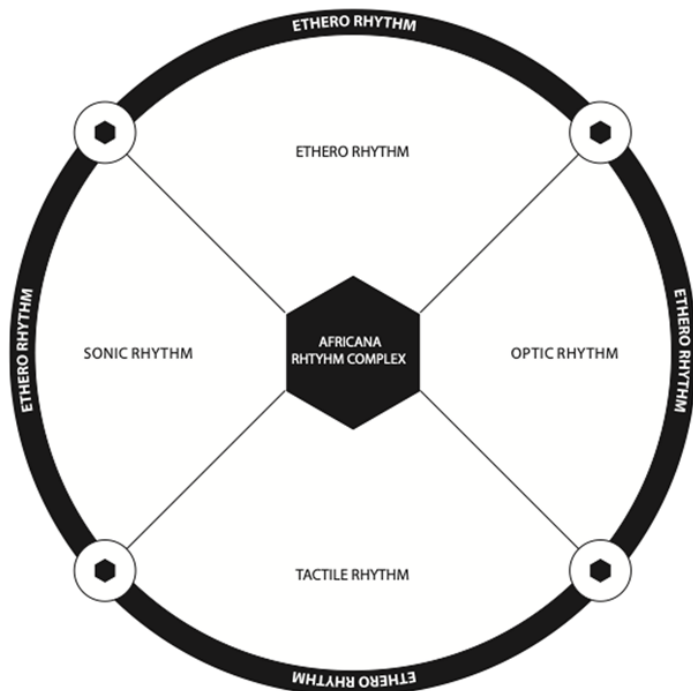


Figure 2: Prestø, Thomas Talawa. 2024. *Talawa Aesthetic Cosmogram*. Image created in relation to Ph.D. dissertation *Anansis Web—Entanglements without Tripping*.

The selfpolyficial dancer does not react to a single beat—they navigate a complex field of rhythmokinetic engagement, where rhythm becomes an immersive structuring force experienced across sensory and spiritual registers. This is a field where rhythm encodes not only movement possibilities, but also ancestral memory, relational presence, and the logic of interdimensional connection.

The Four Modalities of Rhythm and Rhythmomodal Synaesthesia

The Talawa framework identifies four primary modalities through which rhythm is experienced and encoded in the body: **sonic, optic, tactile, and ethero**. These modalities do not function in isolation—they operate simultaneously, creating what I describe as **rhythmomodal**

synaesthesia: the cross-sensory perception of rhythm as a single integrated field of embodied knowledge.

1. ***Sonic Rhythm—Rhythm as Sound***

This includes all percussive elements, audible phrasing, beat accents, and musical structures that interact with the dancer's movement. It also includes body-generated sound (footfalls, breathwork, claps), vocal responses, and instrumental calls. The dancer's sonic alignment allows rhythm to become a shared text that can be read, written, and answered.

2. ***Optic Rhythm—Rhythm as Visual Motion***

Optic rhythm emerges from how rhythm is made visible through kinetic phrasing, spatial orientation, speed shifts, and gesture. A dancer may appear visually smooth while creating sharp rhythmic tensions sonically. Conversely, they may visually dislocate the rhythm through isolations while maintaining sonic coherence. This is rhythm that can be seen.

3. ***Tactile Rhythm—Rhythm as Felt Sensation***

Tactile rhythm is rhythm experienced through the body's sense of weight, pressure, tension, release, vibration, and proprioceptive feedback. It is rhythm as it is lived through the skin, joints, muscles, and fascia. Tactile rhythm is what allows dancers to remain in rhythm without necessarily "hearing" it—it is rhythm embodied and internalized through sensation.

4. ***Ethero Rhythm—Rhythm as Memory, Imagination, and Internal Projection***

Ethero rhythm operates through memory, intention, ancestral imprinting, and the inner ear. It is the imagined rhythm, the remembered phrasing, the projected pulse of what could be. Ethero rhythm allows dancers to pre-hear, pre-feel, and pre-move—structuring time before it is physically expressed. It is what makes anticipation and rhythmic prophecy possible.

When all four of these modalities are engaged, the dancer enters a synaesthetic field where rhythm is no longer perceived linearly

or exclusively. Instead, it is felt, seen, heard, and remembered as a total architecture of possibility. This state, where the dancer operates across all rhythmic dimensions, is where selfpolyfication thrives.

The Drum as Divine Microphone: Multirealm Translation and Rhythmic Structuring in Africana Performance Systems

In Africana dance systems, the drum functions as more than a percussive instrument. It is best understood as a **divine microphone**—an interface through which motion, intention, memory, and spirit are received, translated, and amplified across multiple perceptual and ontological realms. This concept recognizes the drum as a **multi-realm resonator**, capable of receiving kinetic signals from the dancing body and projecting them simultaneously into sonic, communal, and spiritual fields. The drum is not played in isolation; rather, it enters a real-time feedback loop with the dancer, the musician, the observer, and the unseen.

This dynamic aligns with the concept of **Arriving on Action**. The dancer and the drummer do not operate in sequence but in shared intention. Each is attuned not simply to what the other is doing in the present but to what the other is about to do. Movement and rhythm do not unfold in reaction; they unfold in **mutual anticipation**.

“The dancer does not dance what the drummer is playing, but rather the intention of what the drummer is going to play. Similarly, the drummer is playing the intention of what the dancer is going to dance, and they arrive on action together.”

This anticipatory logic constitutes a **co-manifestation system**, where rhythm and movement converge through probabilistic tuning, kinetic foresight, and rhythmic intentionality.

Material and Cosmological Composition of the Drum

The drum is materially composed of multiple living and formerly living substances, each contributing to its capacity as a trans-dimensional mediator. These materials can be mapped onto the **Aesthetic Cosmogram** as follows:

DRUM ELEMENT	MATERIAL REALM	COSMOGRAM REALM	FUNCTION
Wooden Shell	Plant	Memory/The Ancestral	Embeds land memory and temporal grounding.
Animal Skin Head	Animal	Ashe/The People	Encodes vibratory life force; transduces movement into sound.
Drummer's Hands	Human	Present/The Seen	Real-time kinetic translator.
Vibration	Immaterial/ Aether	The Divine/ The Unseen	Projects movement into spiritual space via acoustic resonance.

Through this schema, we understand the drum not as an inert instrument, but as a **multi-layered interface** for kinetic translation. Its design and use instantiate the recursive, layered, and inter-relational logic central to Africana performance epistemologies.

The Drum in the Logic of Selfpolyfication

The concept of **Selfpolyfication**—the ability to multiply oneself without cancellation—is in part made possible through the drum's function as a translator of movement across multiple temporal, rhythmic, and spiritual registers. The drum amplifies the dancer's polycentric motion and polyrhythmic intention, allowing the movement to be extended across space and into multiple domains of witnessing: physical, sonic, energetic, and ancestral.

By responding to and amplifying not just movement but its intention and directional energy, the drum allows for motion to be translated into rhythm even before it is completed. This feedback system extends the dancer's **rhythmokinetic field**, allowing kinetic information to be looped back to the dancer, to the drummer, to the audience, and to the unseen entities present within the space. The dancer multiplies their presence not only through spatial expansion or rhythmic layering but through the **drum's acoustic inscription of their movement**—turning physical motion into sonic trace.

Rhythmic Feedback and Recursive Structuring

This sonic feedback loop plays a central role in **gestorhythmization**, the curation and encoding of rhythmic and gestural data within the body over time. As the drum responds to and archives movement, it inscribes both gestural history and new rhythmic propositions into the performance space. This process is recursive, in that the dancer then responds not only to the drum's echo of their own movement, but also to the newly emergent rhythmic terrain that the drummer proposes. This cycle deepens the dancer's **rhythmic acumen**—the capacity to make complex, responsive rhythmic decisions in real-time—and reinforces their ability to operate within selfpolyfication.

This recursive structuring of rhythm and motion, mediated by the drum, affirms the epistemological structure of the **Cognoscape**: knowledge is never fixed, but circulates in layered, recursive patterns that deepen understanding through reentry, redirection, and relayering.

Acoustic Ontology and the Structuring of the Unseen

Through its acoustic power, the drum participates in what might be called a **sonic ontology**. That is, it does not merely reflect what is present—it **structures what can become present**. The drum projects into space not just sound, but **invitation**. It invites presence from the community, from the dancer's memory, from the ancestral field, and from the spiritual realm. In many ritual contexts, the drum is the first to sound because it must make the place ready. It calls, not simply as a signal, but as an act of **world-structuring**. It is the sonic architecture within which selfpolyfication becomes possible

Dancing with the Ancestors***Dancing With the Ancestors: Rhythmic Encoding, Poly-Spirit Praxis, and Ancestral Transmission***

Dancing with the ancestors is not metaphorical. It is a literal, kinetic, and rhythmic engagement with ancestral presence through embodied practice. In Africana movement traditions:

Rhythm encodes cultural memory. Dance decodes it

The body becomes a decoder ring—interpreting, challenging, embodying, and extending the rhythmic archives left behind by those who danced before us. This is not merely reenactment; it is recursion—recursion made visceral through the logic of selfpolyfication.

Each movement, each gesture, and each rhythmic accent encodes a piece of ancestral knowledge. Rhythms are not just sonic—they are mnemonic. A rhythm once attached to a harvest dance, a preparation-for-war sequence, or a call to ceremony carries within it the gestures and energies of the bodies that first generated it. In the process of dancing today, we engage in *gestorhythmitization*—that is, the transmutation of rhythmic and gestural knowledge through the kinetic body, folding historical data into present expression. In this process, the dancer's role is both archivist and innovator, accessing ancestral files while layering them with contemporary nuance.

This engagement does not occur through sound alone. Rhythm in Africana traditions is always multi-sensory and multi-relational. The process is iterative and recursive:

- The dancer moves, generating rhythm through the body's articulations.
- The drummer responds, translating the dancer's kinetic decisions into rhythm, amplifying them sonically.
- The community validates through call-and-response, vocally, gesturally, energetically confirming the arrival of action.
- The rhythm becomes archive—inscribed in memory and muscle, stored in drum patterns, dance motifs, and collective recall.
- In the next generation, a new dancer moves to this rhythm—first decoding the kinetic logic that inscribed it, then rendering their own interpretation.
- They weave in, out, and around the original rhythm, scatting their body across the ancestral groove, layering new meaning and presence onto the foundation.

Rhythm is not static—rhythm is unfolding memory

This is how polyrhythm becomes a site of intergenerational discourse. It is not about fixed memory. It is about rhythmic conversation across time. The dancer does not simply remember the ancestors—they respond to them. And that response, performed in rhythm and in motion, becomes part of the archive that the next generation will then decode and rearticulate.

The cyclical layering of gestures across generations means that polyrhythmic structures—when combined with polycentric movement and selfpolyfication—become the site of intergenerational discourse, where the body is no longer bound to a singular voice or present moment. Through this structure, the body becomes host to more than one kinetic voice at a time—voices from different generations, different historical contexts, even different realms. This is poly-spirit praxis in motion. The body becomes a vessel for multiple temporalities. The dancer is both memory and moment, vessel and instigator, archive and disruption.

The practice of selfpolyfication makes this layering possible. It allows for motion to unfold in multiple dimensions simultaneously. One center of the body may be responding to an ancestral rhythm; another may be projecting forward into an imagined rhythmic future. These layers do not cancel each other—they exist in coordinated tension. The dancer, through selfpolyfication, manages these tensions, ensuring that every gesture participates in the wider dialogue across space, rhythm, generation, and spirit.

This is what happens when the dancer dances with the ancestors—not just invoking them, but answering them. It is the realization of temporal recursion as a living act.

We are not simply performing a history—we are participating in its future

This temporal complexity becomes even more pronounced in poly-spirit possession, where the dancer embodies not just multiple temporalities, but multiple presences—ancestral, divine, communal. The dancer moves both inside and outside of time. Their gesture is shaped by the past, made urgent by the present, and aimed at the future. The movement is not their own—but it is through them. This is

not choreography as a sequence. This is choreography as recursion, as temporal multiplicity, and as ancestral resonance made flesh.

The drum facilitates this entire process. It is not simply a rhythm-keeper—it is a divine microphone, amplifying the body's gestures, translating motion into sound, and extending it beyond the immediate space. The drum bridges the body and the unseen. It records the dancer's gesture into rhythm and broadcasts it into both the community and the cosmogram. It is through this process that *Arriving on Action* occurs—not as a reaction to rhythm, but as a co-creation of it.

They converge on action, not because they are synchronized in time, but because they are unified in temporal intention

Through rhythmic encoding, decoding, and recursive rendering, we do not just preserve Africana movement traditions—we expand them. We ensure that they do not stagnate but continue to breathe, evolve, and respond. We ensure that each rhythm is not an echo of the past but a call into the future. Through selfpolyfication, we take that call, render it, answer it, and call again.

This is how we dance with the ancestors. This is how we speak with them. Not through silence, not through stillness—but through rhythm, through movement, through the multiplicity of presence that selfpolyfication enables, and through the body as a field of temporal convergence.

Through this praxis, dance is no longer bound to the present moment. It becomes a site of multigenerational memory, of spiritual technology, of rhythmic intelligence, and of ancestral futurity—moving ever forward, ever outward, and ever inward, all at once.

Arriving on Action: Rhythmic Co-Creation and the Expansion of the Rhythmokinetic Field

At the heart of Africana movement traditions is the practice of **Arriving on Action**, a principle that ensures that rhythm and movement are not separate entities but are continuously shaped in dialogue with one another. This is a practice deeply embedded in the **circle of rhythm**, in the reciprocal structuring of sound and motion, and in the **expansion**

of the **rhythmokinetic field**—the shared space where rhythm, movement, and intention interact in real-time.

Yet, a common misconception arises when people mistake **a specific rhythm for a core practice**. The rhythm is not the starting point; it is the **result** of a deeply ingrained **praxis**, a **kinetic intelligence system** that intertwines with aesthetics, preference, and communal validation. This misunderstanding is particularly evident in **Western dance classrooms and workshops**, where the pedagogy often confines rhythm into fixed structures and then teaches students to “hit the rhythm.” This approach isolates rhythm as an external target rather than recognizing its **organic emergence from the body’s logic**.

In reality, **the body produces rhythm first**. The **dancer’s movement generates accents and cross-rhythms**, which the drummer **translates, transcribes, and amplifies into sound**. The rhythm should not be something external that the dancer follows—it should be something **co-created, filled in, and shaped in real time**. This dynamic interplay between **movement and rhythm, sound and action**, ensures that each rhythmic event becomes both **a conversation and a negotiation** between dancer, drummer, and the active spectating community.

“The rhythms are the recorded steps of our ancestors calling us forward, and we answer them back with our movements, which are transcribed into, around, and through the existing rhythms.”

Arriving on Action enacts this entire cycle. Just as Ella Fitzgerald does not sing the melody directly but scats around it, the Africana dancer does not copy steps but reshapes rhythm in real time. The tradition lives through extemporation—through the dancer’s ability to engage rhythm as a living structure rather than a fixed pattern. It is not about “correct” dancing—it is about meaningful response.

“A drummer does not play a fixed rhythmic pattern for a dancer to execute predefined steps; they play the body, any body, and anything the body can do.”

The Drummer as Sonic Translator: Weaving Motion into Sound

In Africana performance systems, the drummer is not merely an accompanist; they are a **rhythmic interpreter**, translating the dancer's kinetic actions into audible language. Rhythm does not preexist the dance—it is rendered, shaped, and expanded through the dancer's movement. The drummer reads this movement in real time, responding not only to what is visible, but to what is becoming.

This co-creative exchange is governed by four interwoven forces:

AXIS	WHAT IT IS	HOW THE DRUMMER TRANSLATES	EFFECT
Gravity	The dancer's relationship to weight, descent, and rebound.	Deep bass tones for grounding; silences for suspension; syncopation for compression and release.	Makes the invisible force of gravity audible; rhythm begins in the body's negotiation with the floor.
Intention	The internal impulse that animates motion before it is visible.	Accents for shifts in direction; rolling tones for sustained buildup; dynamic phrasing for energetic projection.	Rhythm anticipates movement, expressing what is forming before it arrives.
Memory	The dancer's embodied archive—ancestral gestures, styles, and communal vocabularies.	Referencing known motifs; layering polyrhythms to echo familiar forms; reactivating tradition.	Rhythm bridges past and present, keeping memory in circulation through live reinterpretation.
Connection	The web of relations among dancer, drummer, audience, and ancestors.	Call-and-response structures; textural shifts; interactive phrasing.	Rhythm becomes a social contract, not a solo performance—it lives through feedback, witnessing, and resonance.

Intention is the kinetic seed from which rhythm grows. In Africana performance systems, the drummer does not simply wait for movement—they listen for the will behind it. Through their drums, they render intention audible, giving shape to energy before the body fully reveals it. This requires deep attunement, not to what is done, but to what is becoming. In this way, intention, not just movement, initiates rhythm, ensuring the relationship between dancer and drummer remains one of mutual becoming rather than hierarchy.

Memory as Kinetic Archive: The Drummer Activates What the Body Holds

Within the field I call **Choreoepistemology**—and, more specifically, **Africana Choreoepistemology**—memory is not only cognitive; it is also kinetic. Movement knowledge is stored in the body through repetition, genre training, social dancing, ritual, and lived experience. A weight drop, a torso spiral, a hand cut—each may index training, lineage, or community practice.

This memory is activated in relation. The drummer's role is pivotal. Through rhythmic calls, breaks, and shifts in phrasing, the drummer can surface stored pathways in the dancer's body. A pattern may cue repertory; a timbral shift may evoke social dance memory; a polyrhythmic layer may activate ritual or ancestral recall.

Activation operates on several levels:

- Personal training memory (phrases, habits, genre technique).
- Communal/stylistic memory (shared vocabularies circulated in parties, ritual, or classrooms).
- Ancestral/spiritual memory (patterns that resonate across lineages, sometimes below conscious recall).

When these cues land, the dancer does not simply repeat the past; they reorganize it in the present time. Memory becomes material—selectable, variable, and ready for rephrasing inside the current rhythm field.

In this exchange, the drummer is not an accompaniment but a catalyst. They prompt, reference, and extend what the body already carries. Through that loop, memory stays live: not archived as fixed content but returned, altered, and sent forward in motion.

Connection: Co-Creation in the Rhythm Field

Connection in Africana performance is not background ambience—it is the structuring ground. In the dancer–drummer relationship, connection is both immediate and extended. It links the dancer to the drummer, to the surrounding participants, to ancestral presences, and to the unseen rhythmic architectures in the room.

The dancer does not simply perform in front of a rhythm—they are in active conversation with it. The drummer reads weight shifts, phrasing, spatial choices, and rhythmic timing, then responds with sonic adjustments. Likewise, the dancer listens for calls, breaks, tonal shifts, and rhythmic tension. This continuous exchange shapes not only what happens, but also how it happens.

Connection is trained through:

- **Timing Literacy:** Reading and interpreting rhythm in real time.
- **Responsive Phrasing:** Adapting movement to rhythmic signals without breaking flow.
- **Energetic Listening:** Feeling what is being asked—not just sonically, but spiritually and communally.

In the strongest moments, this connection becomes recursive. The drummer not only responds to what the dancer is doing, but also pushes it forward. The dancer absorbs the shift and restructures their choices midstream. Neither leads nor follows; they build the field together.

This is not about perfection but attunement. Connection holds when the dancer misses a cue but recovers in rhythm, or when a gesture triggers a new rhythm entirely. What matters is not control but relation—rhythmic, energetic, and kinetic.

Arriving on Action: The Convergence of Sonic and Kinetic Knowledge

Arriving on Action is the moment when rhythmic intention, kinetic readiness, and environmental sensing converge into decisive, embodied motion. It is not improvisation in the casual sense, nor choreographed repetition—it is the trained ability to make high-quality choices in real time, under rhythmic pressure.

This act depends on a well-developed rhythmokinetic field and requires:

- **Sonic Knowledge:** The ability to read polyrhythmic cues, understand their timing logic, and anticipate shifts in musical structure.
- **Kinetic Readiness:** The capacity to translate sonic perception into movement decisions without hesitation, collapse, or delay.
- **Internal Alignment:** A state in which Actionable Rhythmic Intentionality (ARI) is activated, allowing the dancer to move from grounded presence, not mental analysis.

In this frame, Arriving on Action is not simply “doing something”—it is the arrival of the self in motion, multiplied and fully synchronized with both internal intent and external rhythm. It signals the collapse of multiple kinetic and rhythmic probabilities into a single, decisive action.

This moment may appear spontaneous, but it is built on practiced recursive skills: listening, phrasing, pausing, resisting, and re-entering. The dancer learns to recognize when the groove demands stillness and when it opens a window for risk. They learn to trust that the right movement will surface—because it has already been rehearsed at the level of rhythm, sensation, and spirit.

In Africana performance systems, Arriving on Action is the point at which selfpolyfication becomes legible. The dancer, grounded in multiple temporalities, does not just respond to rhythm—they materialize it, giving body to the unseen, timing to the unsounded, and shape to ancestral intention.

Conclusion: Returning to the Choice to Arrive

To arrive on a choice is not to settle on a single answer—it is to commit to the practice of movement as recursive unfolding. This paper has articulated *selfpolyfication* as a kinetic, cognitive, and spiritual methodology embedded within African dance traditions. Across the rhythmokinetic field, dancers trained in systems like the Talawa Technique do not merely execute movement—they *generate presence, compose within rhythm*, and structure multiple temporalities in real time.

By theorizing frameworks such as the *Cognoscape*, *Poly-Spirit Praxis*, and the *Rhythmokinetic Sphere*, this work has expanded the language available for understanding how Black dance operates not just as performance but as a structuring force—one capable of navigating memory, ancestral intelligence, and improvisational futurity simultaneously. Rhythm is not background. It is not a fixed sequence to be followed. It is a field of negotiation, of invitation, of encoded urgency. And it is through *selfpolyfication* that dancers move not with rhythm, but *inside* it, *across* it, and *beyond* it—layering choices that remain in dialogue rather than conflict.

This framework also reorients agency. The dancer is not simply a subject who expresses emotion or executes form. The dancer becomes a vessel for ancestral memory, a translator of gravitational force, a generator of rhythmic architecture, and a participant in a transdimensional conversation. In this view, movement becomes a practice of temporal navigation, of spiritual activation, and of communal reciprocity.

Where many dominant choreographic systems emphasize control, clarity, and coherence, *selfpolyfication* privileges layering, multiplicity, and mutual transformation. It proposes that the highest form of virtuosity is not singular precision but the ability to inhabit multiple realities at once without collapse. This is not improvisation in the Western sense, but a recursive, embodied conversation with the past, present, and possible.

Africana dance traditions do not need external validation to be considered epistemological—they already structure knowledge, transmit history, and craft cosmologies through motion. What is offered here is not a discovery, but a naming: a framework to describe what dancers have long known, practiced, and transmitted through the body.

To arrive on action, then, is not to land. It is to open. To remain in co-creation with rhythm, to listen for the next invitation, to answer not only with the body, but with intention, memory, and multiplicity. It is to say yes to the call—not just of the drum, but of the ancestors, the urgency, and the still-unfolding future that dances through us.

Bibliography

Thomas Talawa Prestø, *Talawa Aesthetic Cosmogram*, image created in relation to Ph.D. dissertation *Anansis Web—Entanglements without Tripping*, 2024.