

“We are dancing, We are flying”: The Feeling of Flight in Dance Scenes from Recent Popular Film

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This file includes the abstract, keyword list, bibliography, and related material for the video essay, “We are dancing, We are flying’: The Feeling of Flight in Dance Scenes from Recent Popular Film” by Chelsea Oden. This video-essay may be found at <https://vimeo.com/societymusictheory/smtv091Oden>

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**Abstract for
“We are dancing, We are flying”: The Feeling of Flight in Dance Scenes from Recent Popular
Film**

by Chelsea Oden, *SMT-V9.1*

Flight is a popular visual metaphor in partner dance scenes, but what about these scenes evokes the *feeling* of flight? This video examines four partner dance scenes from recent popular film to explore how musical meter and timbre can cause even the most visually grounded dance to feel airborne. Drawing on theories of embodiment, I show how these scenes use triple and compound meters to create a sense of weightlessness through lilt and a sense of timelessness through lyric time. From a timbral perspective, I propose three sound envelopes—sparkling, lyrical, and buoyant—that reference embodied experiences to evoke starry skies, gliding flight paths, and a playful push and pull against gravity. Together, I argue, timbre and meter in partner dance scenes can sweep us off our feet, making tangible the famous words of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Prince and Cinderella: “We are dancing, We are flying.”

Short Keyword List

Music Theory, Timbre, Meter, Film Music, Dance, Flight

Extensive Keyword List

ADSR, Attack, Bass, Bouba-Kiki, Brass, Buoyant, Chattah, Cinderella, Cinema, Cinematic, Compound Meter, Cook, Cox, Dance, Dance Scenes, Decay, Dragon Prince, Electric Bass, Embodiment, Film Music, Flight, Flying, Gliding, Gopal, Gravity, Hammerstein, Harp, La La Land, Lilt, Lyric Time, Lyrical, McKee, Melodic, Meter, Monelle, Music Theory, Netflix, , Oden, Piano, Pixar, Release, Rodgers, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Sound Envelope, Sparkling, Spinning, Strings, Sustain, Ten Minutes Ago, Timbre, Timelessness, Timpani, Triple Meter, Viennese Waltz, WALL-E, Waltz, Weightlessness, Witcher, Wind Chimes, 10 Minutes Ago

About the Author

Chelsea Oden is an instructor of music theory at Adams State University. She earned her PhD in Music Theory from the University of Oregon in 2021 with the dissertation, “There is a Body in the Sound: Timbre and Embodiment in the Overlap of Film, Music, and Dance.” Her nationally and internationally presented research on film music reflects a special interest in the ways timbre and embodiment are expressive in scenes that toy with physics (such as sublime encounters, spellcasting, and partner dance). Her chapter, “Timbre—Making Magic Through Tone Color” is forthcoming in *Music Analysis in Film: Counting Up the Score*, edited by Frank Lehman.

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