Choreographing the Lens with Noyam: Dance for Camera and the (Re)Presentation of Ghanaian Culture

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Abstract

Dance functions as an essential means of cultural expression as it provides views on identity, social values, and historical narratives. This research contrasts a filmed dance-for-camera project with the live performances of the NOYAM African Dance Institute; a Ghanaian dance ensemble, critically analysing how the medium affects artistic expression, cultural representation, and audience reach. By observing live performances, collecting recorded data, and conducting key interviews, the analysis was carried out using a framework guided by film theory and performance theory to interpret the cinematic aspects of the dance movements and their cultural importance. The Dance for Camera initiative shows the strategic use of focused filming and editing to project the emotional impact of traditional movements, all while adhering to ethical standards through participation and cultural understanding. While live performances are limited to specific venues, digital content makes available opportunities for preservation and the chance to reach different and even wider audiences, creating more dialogue and promoting cultural diversity. This research contributes to broader discussions about the future of Ghanaian dance and offers valuable insights for international cultural exchange.

Keywords: Dance for Camera, Ghanaian Dance, Digital Media, Authenticity, NOYAM Dance Institute

1. INTRODUCTION

Ghanaian dance is a living record of culture that holds the nation's history, values, and identity through dynamic movement and expressive performance. Jola, et al., (2012) suggest that when experienced live, these dances create a direct, powerful connection between performers and audiences. However, as digital technologies help reshape artistic expressions; how dance is created, performed, and experienced worldwide, Ghanaian dance faces a key question: How can Ghanaian culture flourish in the digital age without losing its inherent authenticity and strength?, which in essence points to the potential challenge of "Dance for camera" initiatives.

This research delves into the transformative potential of 'Dance for Camera' through the lens of a unique collaboration between NOYAM African Dance Institute, under the visionary guidance of Artistic Director Ni Tete Yartey, and the innovative filmmaking expertise of Dr. H Patten. Ni Tete, deeply rooted in Ghanaian dance traditions, leads NOYAM in blending contemporary choreography with cultural heritage, while Dr. Patten brings a wealth of experience in dance for camera and an established history of working across African countries to explore identity through film, thus creating a groundbreaking exploration of preserving authenticity and cultural understanding through art.

The emergence of "Dance for Camera" which is a hybrid art form merging choreographic practices with cinematic techniques or "screendance", shows the strength of this shift, as it combines choreographic practices with cinematic techniques to produce a hybrid art form that expands the possibilities of visual storytelling in dance (Preston, 2007). While generating unprecedented opportunities for preservation, dissemination, and expanded audience reach, this medium inevitably alters the original context and lived experience of live performance. Many Ghanaian dance groups now leverage filmed media to document performances, reach wider audiences beyond local communities, and reinterpret their cultural traditions in contemporary contexts. Among these is NOYAM African Dance Institute, a Ghanaian dance ensemble renowned for blending contemporary choreography with traditional dance elements. NOYAM African Dance Institute's commitment to blending tradition and innovation is visually represented in their promotional materials. As seen in Figure 1, the dancers are dressed in contemporary clothing but are performing movements that are rooted in Ghanaian dance traditions. The photograph's modern composition and style further underscore the company's forward-thinking approach.
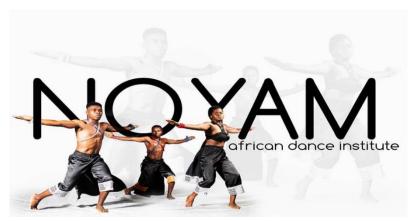

Figure 1: NOYAM African Dance Institute promotional image. The image highlights the company's youthful energy and modern aesthetic, reflecting their innovative approach to traditional Ghanaian dance forms.

source:www.instagram.com/p/Bs6AKWTI_Ru/?igsh=dDV5dXhwbXBtdml4

In contrast to NOYAM's contemporary approach, the Ghana National Dance Ensemble emphasizes the preservation of traditional forms. Figure 2 depicts a scene from their celebrated piece, Solma, highlighting the vibrant costumes, powerful movements, and communal energy that are central to Ghanaian dance traditions. This image underscores the artistic excellence and cultural significance inherent in these traditions.

Figure 2: A scene from "Solma," a performance by the Ghana National Dance Ensemble. The image showcases the vibrant costumes, dynamic movement, and communal energy characteristic of traditional Ghanaian dance.

Source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4IhFcwCZoM

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of NOYAM's live performances and their Dance for Camera projects. The objectives are to analyse how digital translation affects choreographic and aesthetic choices in NOYAM's Dance for Camera works, and investigate how digital translation shapes the representation of Ghanaian cultural identity in NOYAM's Dance for Camera (Kpedekpo, 2024). This investigation is guided by two fundamental research questions: How does the medium of Dance for Camera reshape the choreographic process and artistic decisions compared to traditional stage presentations for NOYAM? And, how can Dance for Camera be effectively wielded as a potent tool for cultural expression and preservation, specifically within the context of Ghanaian dance traditions and the innovative work of the NOYAM dance group? Ultimately, this research aims to help Ghanaian dancers, cultural groups, and policymakers understand the impact of putting live dance on screen, so they carefully adapt when necessary, and plan ways to keep Ghanaian dance alive, authentic, and globally relevant (Kpedekpo, 2024).

2. Review of related literature

This review investigates how Dance for Camera, a hybrid art form that captures the ephemeral qualities of live dance within digital video has been utilized to reimagine and reinterpret traditional dance forms, creating new perspectives and experiences for both performers and audiences. For organisations such as NOYAM African Dance Institute, this connection presents both promising opportunities and considerable challenges. Attempts to successfully bridge these mediums necessitates a careful consideration of some key questions: How can Dance for Camera be defined in a way that acknowledges the distinct traditions of both dance and film? How is the representation of the dancer's body altered through the mediation of the camera? What impact does technology have on audience perception and reception, particularly within a globalised context? And, fundamentally, how can culture be preserved and balanced with the potential for artistic transformation through digital tools? This review addresses these questions by drawing upon existing scholarly literature and providing room for understanding the specific opportunities and challenges encountered by Ghanaian dance practitioners, such as NOYAM, in their engagement with Dance for Camera.

2.1.   Defining and Conceptualizing Dance for Camera

One of the major challenges in studying Dance for Camera is in the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition. As Pajala-Assefa (2023) observes, "The fusion of dance and audiovisual media is referred to in several different terms. In English, the art form is described as dance film, screen dance, video dance, physical cinema, dance for camera, among many others. This collection of terms shows the varied approaches and interpretations within the field, often influenced by whether artists or viewers approach the medium primarily from a dance or film perspective (Pajala-Assefa, 2023). Preston (2007) supports this, noting that "Terminology used in current literature projects multiple relationships between dance and film or television medium, yet without exactitude regarding approach.

This terminological ambiguity is not simply a matter of semantics; it highlights fundamental differences in how Dance for Camera is conceptualised and practiced. Are these works primarily dance pieces employing filmic techniques, or are they films that incorporate dance as a central element? The answer shapes the criteria by which these works are evaluated and understood. The term 'screen-dance' is often used to refer more broadly to camera-related dance (Preston, 2007), raising the question of whether 'dance-film' exists as a distinct entity at all, as Preston suggests. Moreover, De Spain's (2005) review points out

that the act of capturing dance on camera inevitably raises questions about what is gained and lost in the translation from live performance to screen. The experiences of choreographers, producers, and directors (De Spain, 2005) reveal the aesthetic and technical challenges inherent in this process. For NOYAM, these definitional ambiguities are particularly relevant as they navigate the creation of works that are both culturally grounded and cinematically innovative.

Carter (1979), in discussing Amy Greenfield's pioneering work, notes that early explorations of Dance for Camera sought to expand the dimensions of dance by using the camera as an extension of the body. This perspective emphasises the potential for film to reveal aspects of movement and expression not readily visible on stage. This approach resonates with the potential for NOYAM to use digital media to highlight the nuances of Ghanaian dance traditions. However, as technology evolves and new forms of dance film emerge, a critical engagement with these evolving definitions becomes increasingly important (Preston, 2007). Understanding these different conceptualisations of Dance for Camera is crucial for positioning NOYAM's work within the broader field and for analysing its unique contribution to the art form.

2.2. Historical Evolution of Dance for Camera

Building on the challenge of defining Dance for Camera, it's helpful to understand how this art form has evolved. The history of Dance for Camera can be traced through distinct phases, from early experiments in simply capturing movement to today's explorations of hybrid forms and digital technologies. Pajala-Assefa (2023) notes that dance and film have always been closely linked, with dance playing a key role in the very first moving images. Early pioneers like Thomas Edison and the Lumière brothers filmed dancers like Loïe Fuller performing her "Serpentine Dance," showing an initial fascination with capturing physical movement on film (Pajala-Assefa, 2023).

Figure 3: A still from an early film of Loïe Fuller's Serpentine Dance, demonstrating early cinema's fascination with capturing movement. Source: www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/magazine/article/loie-fuller-pionniere-de-labstraction-dansee

Early explorations of Dance for Camera focused on capturing movement and exploring the potential of film to reveal aspects of the body. As shown in Figure 3, Loïe Fuller's Serpentine Dance utilized flowing fabrics and dynamic lighting to create a visually stunning spectacle. Later, artists like Amy Greenfield (Figure 4) began to explore the body in more radical ways, using the camera as an extension of the body to emphasize movement and emotion."

Figure 4: A still from Amy Greenfield's early work, highlighting the exploration of the body in Dance for Camera.

Source: www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/4151

Carter's (1979) discussion of Amy Greenfield's work talks deeply of a later phase, where artists started exploring the unique possibilities of film as a medium for dance, not just a way to record it. Carter points out that Greenfield's use of video, film, and holography to extend the dimensions of dance reflects a growing interest in the camera's interpretive capabilities (Carter, 1979). As Dance for Camera evolved, it also started to overlap with broader trends in experimental film and video art. Preston (2007) highlights the influence of avant-garde dance-related camera work as a hybrid form, where the dance and film relationship is symbiotic. Considering this history is important for understanding NOYAM's place in the field. NOYAM isn't just working with current technology; it is building on a long tradition of artists experimenting with how dance and film can interact. By understanding this history, NOYAM can both honour the past and push the boundaries of what Dance for Camera can be. This historical perspective also helps us appreciate the choices NOYAM makes in their own work, understanding them as part of an ongoing dialogue between dance, film, and technology

2.3.Relationship Between Dance and Camera

Building on this historical understanding, it's important to consider the relationship between dance and the camera itself. Preston (2007) argues that Dance for Camera thrives on a symbiotic relationship between dance and cinematography, rather than one being more important than the other. This means the artistic and expressive possibilities of dance are amplified when choreographic and cinematic elements are considered and integrated together. Instead of just seeing film as a way to record dance, Preston encourages us to understand how the camera itself becomes an active participant in shaping the dance.

In the context of this work NOYAM, choreographed by Nii Tete Yartey and directed by 'H' Patten, this symbiotic relationship is particularly relevant. By thinking about how the camera interacts with and influences the dance, NOYAM can use its capabilities to expand the artistic possibilities of their

performances. For example, the camera's viewpoint, movement, and editing can emphasise specific movements, create dynamic spatial relationships, or even introduce new layers of meaning that wouldn't be possible on a traditional stage. Preston's analysis encourages a consideration of how NOYAM's creative choices in both choreography and film are mutually informed, contributing to a more cohesive and compelling final product.

Furthermore, understanding this symbiotic relationship calls for a critical approach that acknowledges both the technical and aesthetic aspects of dance and film. It avoids the trap of favouring one over the other and instead focuses on how they can enhance and transform each other. This idea of symbiosis connects to the challenge of defining Dance for Camera as discussed earlier. It's not just about dance or film, but about the dynamic interplay between the two. This approach aligns with the theoretical frameworks of both Bazin and Schechner, allowing for a better understanding of how NOYAM's filmed dance performances function as both artistic expressions and cultural representations. By examining NOYAM's work through these frameworks, it becomes possible to reveal how the camera not only captures dance but also actively participates in shaping its form, meaning, and impact.

2.4. Representation and Interpretation of the Body

Building on the idea of a symbiotic relationship between dance and camera, it also becomes essential to consider how the body is represented and interpreted in Dance for Camera. In traditional, live dance, the body is the main instrument of expression, conveying emotion, narrative, and cultural meaning through movement (Pajala-Assefa, 2023). However, when dance is translated to film, new layers of mediation are introduced, which change how the body is perceive in its significance. As Preston (2007) observes, this raises questions about whether the physical body is even necessary once film has been introduced. This connects to the earlier discussion in this study about defining Dance for Camera; does the presence of a physical dancer define the art form, or can it exist without one?

Amy Greenfield's early work, as discussed by Carter (1979), also has a strong focus on the body as the main subject. By using the camera as "an extension of her body," Greenfield explored the dimensions of dance, emphasising the sculptural qualities of movement and highlighting the potential of film to reveal details not always apparent on stage. Preston (2007) indicates that the early explorations contrast with more recent approaches that deconstruct or even remove the physical body from dance film, challenging conventional ideas of dance and representation. This connection between the physical body and its mediated representation challenges authenticity, subjectivity, and the power dynamics involved in filming. As Preston (2007) suggests, the body in dance for camera is not simply a physical object but a site of cultural and social construction.

Figure 5: Close-up shot in a NOYAM production, choreographed by NiiTete Yartey and directed by 'H' Patten, emphasizing intimacy and emotional connection.

The dance for camera project utilized a range of cinematic techniques to enhance the emotional impact and visual storytelling of their dance films. Figure 5 showcases a close-up shot, emphasizing the dancers' expressions and creating a sense of intimacy with the audience. In contrast, Figure 6 demonstrates the use of dynamic editing, juxtaposing two consecutive frames to create a visual illusion and manipulate the viewer's perspective.

Figure 6: Dynamic editing in a NOYAM dance for camera production, showcasing two consecutive frames.

For NOYAM, this is particularly important, as they need to consider how their representation of the Ghanaian body in dance is affected by the camera, and how they can avoid perpetuating cultural biases (De Spain, 2005). This is where an understanding of the history of Dance for Camera becomes important, learning from past successes and failures in representing the body on screen.

2.5.   Audience Perception and Reception

The way audiences perceive and receive dance is significantly altered by digital media (Preston, 2007; Sălăjan-Morar, 2023). When dance is presented through a camera, the viewer's experience is mediated by cinematic techniques, which can influence their interpretation of the body, movement, and space (Preston, 2007). New film methods and choreography allows the viewer to see new views and perspectives that would not be possible for the audience. However, traditional stage performances give one perspective, figure 7 shows an example of a traditional stage performance that has a singular viewpoint.

Figure 7: Traditional NOYAM Stage Performance: The image illustrates how traditional stage performances have a fixed view and perspective for the audience.

Similarly, figure 8, which is also an excerpt from the dance-for-camera project, employed analogous techniques to create an immersive experience for the audience. By leveraging camera angles, movement, and editing, these sequences further disrupt traditional spatial and temporal constraints, allowing viewers

to engage with the performance in a more dynamic and multifaceted way. For instance, the filmmaker's rapid cuts between different perspectives, deliberate camera movements, and strategic framing all contribute to a sense of presence and intimacy, drawing the audience into the heart of the performance. This cinematic approach enables the dance-for-camera project to explore new dimensions of storytelling and audience engagement.

Figure 8: Juxtaposed shots in the Dance for Camera medium: By providing different views through editing, the viewer is more immersed into the dance experience. Source: NOYAM dance for camera project

Digital platforms have also democratised access to dance, allowing audiences to engage with many forms from around the world (Sălăjan-Morar, 2023). This raises a key question when thinking about Bazin: how can NOYAM use these cinematic techniques to create a sense of "realism" and authenticity for a remote audience, who may have limited prior knowledge of Ghanaian dance traditions? This increased accessibility presents a huge opportunity for NOYAM to share Ghanaian dance globally. However, it also raises questions about how digital viewing experiences compare to the immediacy and energy of live performances. Viewers can tailor their experience, pausing, rewinding, and re-watching sections, leading to better engagements but potentially losing the unique, unrepeatable nature of live performance. From a Schechner perspective, how can NOYAM create digital experiences that retain some of the "performance as event," creating a connection and shared experience among remote viewers? How can they create a digital "ritual" that can go beyond geographical boundaries?

Understanding these shifts in audience perception is however good for NOYAM. By considering how their dance is experienced through digital platforms, they can make informed decisions about choreographic and cinematic strategies that enhance engagement and appreciation. Ultimately, NOYAM needs to find a balance between Bazin's call for "realism" and Schechner's emphasis on the "performance as event," creating Dance for Camera that is both culturally authentic and engaging for a global audience.

2.6. Preservation and Transformation

Digital media gives a brilliant chance to keep and preserve dance performances and cultural heritage safe for the future, but it can also change things quite a bit (Preston, 2007). It's really important to think carefully about both dance and film when turning live dance into something digital. If performances are just filmed like a documentary, there's the possibility of missing what makes the dance special and what it means to Ghanaian culture (Preston, 2007). So, thinking about Bazin's ideas, how can NOYAM avoid just filming the dance and instead show it in a way that feels real and true to Ghanaian culture? How can they make sure the heart of the dance shines through?

Sălăjan-Morar (2023) agrees, on the need to find a good balance between using new technology and keeping traditional dance safe. Digital media can help in teaching dance, reaching new people, and protecting culture, but it can also change how dance is made, performed, and experienced. This is where Schechner's ideas come in. He's all about how a performance is a special, one-off event. So, how can NOYAM keep that feeling alive when they are filming it and showing it to people who are not even in the same room? How can they make it feel like a real event, even on a screen? This is a big deal for NOYAM. Though they are a Ghanaian dance group, their interests combine modern dance and traditional dances. So, they need to figure out how to use digital media to keep their culture alive and help it grow. They could find new ways to capture the energy of a live performance, whilst also using film to create new artistic things that were not possible before. It's all about finding that sweet spot where they are respecting the past and inventing the future at the same time.

In concluding this review, it has come to light how Dance for Camera is evolving and its influences on dance, trying to capture the magic of live dance and share it digitally. For groups like NOYAM African Dance Institute, it's a chance to show off Ghanaian dance to the world, but there are also tricky things to think about. What Dance for Camera actually is, is still up for debate. Creators will need to think about how dance and film work together, and how that changes various perspectives. Looking at the history of Dance for Camera shows us that people have always been trying to find new ways to mix dance and film. The important thing is the relationship between dance and the camera. The camera shouldn't just be recording, it should be part of the show! How bodies are shown is really important. When dance is filmed, it can change how people see the dancers and their culture. By thinking about all these things, NOYAM and other dance groups can make something really special that celebrates culture and connects with people everywhere.

3. Methodology

This project employs a qualitative research methodology to compare live and filmed dance performances by NOYAM, exploring the interplay between cultural expression, artistic choices, and audience perception. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for this study because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the nuances and complexities involved in translating dance from stage to screen, capturing the lived experiences and perspectives of the artists and audiences involved. In capturing the richness and complexity of NOYAM's dance performances, the project employed a multi-faceted data collection approach that encompasses observations from stage performances, videos and interviews with key stakeholders.

The collected data was analysed using a framework informed by André Bazin's film theory (Blakeney, 2009). And Richard Schechner's performance theory (Rosen, 1979). This framework guided the interpretation of the performative and cinematic elements of each dance, as well as their cultural significance. Transcriptions and observational notes were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, key concepts, and meaningful relationships. The findings from the different sources of data were triangulated to increase the validity and reliability of the research. Triangulation involved comparing and contrasting the perspectives of the dancers, choreographers, and film viewers to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Throughout this project, ethical research principles were strictly adhered to. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, ensuring that they were fully aware of the research objectives and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality of

participants was protected through the use of pseudonyms and the secure storage of data. The cultural sensitivities of the dance performances were respected, and the project aimed to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

3.1 Theoretical framework: Application within this study

This study employs a dual theoretical lens, drawing upon André Bazin's film theory and Richard Schechner's performance theory, to analyze the transformative potential of "Dance for Camera" in the context of NOYAM African Dance Institute. These frameworks provide complementary perspectives, enabling a nuanced understanding of how cinematic techniques and performative elements intersect to shape artistic expression, cultural representation, and audience engagement.

Bazin's emphasis on realism serves as a central principle for examining how the "Dance for Camera" project engages with the preservation of cultural authenticity within Ghanaian dance traditions within NOYAM. The study analyzes the cinematic techniques employed, assessing how specific choices, such as long takes, deep focus, and the use of natural lighting, contribute to a sense of realism and preserve the spatial and temporal integrity of the dance performances. For instance, the use of extended shots of dancers performing in natural landscapes without disruptive editing is interpreted, through Bazin's lens, as an attempt to capture the raw essence of Ghanaian dance within its cultural context. This approach is contrasted with examples of heavily edited sequences or stylized visual effects, which represent deviations from Bazin's emphasis on realism. Furthermore, the study investigates whether dance films extend beyond the dance itself to encompass elements of the surrounding environment, music, and social context, contributing to a more holistic and authentic representation of Ghanaian culture. The inclusion of traditional Ghanaian music, costumes, and cultural symbols in NOYAM's work is analyzed as a means of providing a richer and more nuanced portrayal of Ghanaian cultural identity, while the absence of these elements is interpreted as a potential limitation in capturing the full scope of cultural expression. Finally, this study explores how NOYAM navigates the tension between creating visually compelling films and preserving the realism and authenticity of Ghanaian dance, with instances where artistic choices potentially compromise realism being critically examined in light of Bazin's theoretical perspective.

Schechner's performance theory provides a framework for understanding how the "Dance for Camera" project functioned not only as aesthetic events but also as ritualistic and social activity that would engaged audiences and reinforce cultural values. Through this lens, the study investigates the attempt to capture the energy, emotion, and social interaction that are characteristic of live Ghanaian dance performances, creating a sense of "performance as event" or a digital ritual for remote viewers. For example, the inclusion of audience reactions, call-and-response elements, or participatory segments in NOYAM's works are analyzed as strategies for fostering a sense of shared experience and engagement among viewers. Conversely, the absence of these elements is interpreted as a potential limitation in creating a truly immersive and ritualistic viewing experience. This perspective also allows for examination of how NOYAM's dance performances, both live and filmed, reflect and reinforce Ghanaian social norms, cultural values, and historical narratives. The use of specific dance movements, gestures, and narratives that are representative of Ghanaian cultural identity are analyzed in terms of their social and cultural significance, and the study also considers how these elements contribute to a sense of cultural pride and belonging among viewers. Finally, this theoretical approach assists in exploring the potential for "Dance for Camera" to transform traditional cultural rituals in new and innovative ways, reaching wider audiences and fostering a deeper appreciation for Ghanaian cultural heritage.

3.2. Case study: NOYAM African dance institute

NOYAM African Dance Institute is a distinguished Ghanaian dance ensemble renowned for their innovative approach that fuses traditional Ghanaian dance forms with contemporary choreography. Established in the early 1998, the group has played a vital role in fostering cultural dialogue through dance, combining indigenous movements and storytelling with contemporary artistic expressions (Nii-Yartey, 2000). Their work epitomizes the ongoing evolution of Ghanaian dance, positioning them as key contributors to the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural heritage within modern contexts. Rooted in Ghana's rich dance traditions, NOYAM's performances often incorporate regional dance elements such as the Adowa, Kpanlogo, and other indigenous styles, thus creating a dynamic exchange between age-old practices and current artistic trends. This blending not only resonates with local audiences but also encourages a broader appreciation of Ghanaian cultural identities on the international stage (Ayettey, 2022).

NOYAM's engagement with the Dance for Camera project highlights the transformative potential of media to recontextualize cultural expressions, translating live traditions into accessible digital formats. In this project, NOYAM's performance served as a compelling case to explore how digital media influences choreographic decisions, artistic expression, and cultural representation. Positioning them as exemplars of how traditional art forms can adapt and thrive in the digital age.

4. Analysis

To fully grasp the impact of Dance for Camera on NOYAM's artistic process, it was important to examine how this medium reshapes their approach to choreography. Moving beyond simply recording live performances, Dance for Camera necessitated a reimagining of movement vocabulary, spatial considerations, and the very nature of collaboration. Through their exploration of this medium, NOYAM discovered new avenues for storytelling and cultural expression, transforming their traditional choreographic methods in profound ways. The following examples highlight these transformations, revealing the specific artistic choices made and the insights gained during the Dance for Camera project.

4.1. Changes in Movement Vocabulary

In live performances, NOYAM often emphasizes large, sweeping arm movements that fill the stage and project energy to the audience. However, in their Dance for Camera project, they experimented with smaller, more intricate hand gestures, understanding that the camera's close-up perspective would allow viewers to appreciate these nuances. As one dancer explained, "On stage, we have to think about reaching everyone in the theatre. But for the film, we could focus on the details, the little stories our hands could tell.

4.2. Spatial Considerations

NOYAM's live performances typically take place on a proscenium stage, limiting their ability to manipulate the audience's perspective. However, in the Dance for Camera work, they were able to shoot in a variety of locations, including a waterfall. This allowed them to create a sense of juxtaposition between the natural and the modern, and to explore how Ghanaian dance traditions can be reinterpreted in different contexts. In one scene, a dancer is seen moving under a waterfall, while the other dancers perform within the surrounding water around the waterfall. This effect would have been impossible to replicate on a traditional stage.

4.3. Collaboration with Filmmakers

The choreographic process for Dance for Camera involved a much closer collaboration with the filmmaker

than NOYAM was used to. According to the artistic director, "In the past, we would create the choreography first and then simply film it. But for this project, we worked with the filmmaker from the very beginning. He would suggest different camera angles, lighting techniques, and editing strategies that would influence our movement choices. It was a truly collaborative process." This signals a shift from a documentary approach to one where film actively interprets and shapes the dance, where the filmmaker had a vision and knew how it would come together in the end. It isn't simply a means of capturing what exists. He, at the same time, will need to use the dance project and find the correct camera techniques so it reaches the highest level. They will need to find the correct elements and work side by side to achieve the goal.

5. Findings and Discussion

This project sought to understand how the medium of Dance for Camera can influence the choreographic process and artistic decisions when applied to the work of NOYAM, and how it can serve as a tool for cultural expression and preservation within the context of Ghanaian dance traditions. The analysis, based on capturing NOYAM's work, reveals the potential of dance for camera, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities inherent in translating live performance to a digital medium.

5.1. Enhancing Artistic Expression and Expanding Choreographic Possibilities

Guided by the first research question, this analysis reveals the potential for Dance for Camera to enhance artistic expression and expand choreographic possibilities when applied to NOYAM's work. By exploring the camera as an active partner in the creative process, the project's filming experimented with specific camera techniques to emphasize certain movements, emotions, or narratives within NOYAM's existing repertoire. For instance, in one of the frames within the dance piece, the filmmaker used a low-angle shot during a sequence where the dancers performed a powerful earth-bound movement. The director explained in an interview, "We wanted to convey a sense of grounding and connection to the land, so we positioned the camera low to the ground to capture the strength and stability of their movements." This demonstrates how camera angles were strategically employed to enhance visual impact and emotional resonance, as well as dynamic editing.

Furthermore, exploring the potential symbiotic relationship between dance and camera led to imagining choreography specifically designed for the camera. The project led to imagining the incorporation of spatial patterns, gestures, or interactions that could be best appreciated from a particular viewpoint or through specific editing techniques, to also lead to hybrid forms that blend live performance with digital effects, blurring the line between the stage and the screen. This indicates a shift in artistic vision, a move towards performances that are not merely documented but actively shaped by the camera's presence. For example, in one of the frames, the dance piece utilizes specific camera positioning to showcase the arm gestures of the dancers, telling a story through intricate hand movements and the interplay of light and shadow on the hands. During a showing of a portion of this dance, a member of the group explained, "Our intention was that the hands would be extensions of our voices, even our spirits. We wanted the audience to engage with a new kind of dance, through the lens." This new technique helps to introduce the viewer to a dance that does not have to be understood only with the eyes but felt with the heart.

5.2. Preserving Cultural Authenticity and Reaching Wider Audiences

In response to the second research question, the filming of NOYAM's dance also opened new avenues for cultural preservation and audience engagement. While the ephemeral nature of live performance poses challenges for long-term preservation, dance for camera offers a way to document and share Ghanaian

dance traditions with wider audiences. Careful consideration was given to how the camera captured and represented the dances. In order to ensure that the cultural nuances and performative energy of NOYAM's traditions were honored, there was extensive collaboration with the filmmakers who demonstrated a deep understanding of Ghanaian culture and dance. The filmaker indicated "…the careful use of sound and the drum allowed the re-capturing of the energy and emotion of live perfomance, which helps connect those that could not be there and experience it." This emphasizes efforts to capture the original energy and emotion of the live performance to connect with audiences that cannot be there in person. The creation of this dance for camera project provided an opportunity to reach audiences that may not have access to NOYAM's live performances. By creating high-quality dance films, it has the potential to share their work with people throughout Ghana, fostering a deeper appreciation for regional dance forms and cultural traditions. For example, after showing the work to dance practitioners from other parts of Ghana, their expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to experience dance forms from NOYAM. One viewer, Kweku, commented, "I've always heard about the NOYAM dance performing dances, but I had never seen them perform before. The film was beautifully done and gave me a new appreciation for the diversity of Ghanaian dance." This feedback illustrates the potential of dance for camera to connect different communities within Ghana and promote a stronger sense of national cultural identity.

5.3.   Fostering Innovation and Cultural Preservation through Realism

This exploration of dance for camera has demonstrated the potential to foster innovation and cultural preservation through realism. To capture the nuances of Ghanaian culture, the exploration was directed toward the slow, deliberate movements and minimal camera cuts to let the cultural expression and movements be better emphasized. In doing this allows the audience to see a sense of the project as discussed by the Filmaker, who stated "… the way how I work. I will normally take a wide shot... you see the whole thing… then we start to do the close-ups and the tight shots." This approach of a wider scope ensures the whole importance of the dance project and why the cultural expression is highlighted so that the audience can see the connection and the meaning. This exploration of dance for camera's application to NOYAM's work reveals the potential for artistic innovation and cultural preservation. By strategically utilizing the camera to enhance expression, expand choreographic possibilities, and connect with wider audiences, the dance for camera project has demonstrated the potential of dance for camera to serve as a powerful tool for cultural dialogue and artistic expression.

6.   Conclusion

This project explored the transformative potential of Dance for Camera through an analysis of NOYAM, a Ghanaian dance group, revealing key insights into the interplay between artistic expression, cultural preservation, and technological innovation. By applying André Bazin's film theory and Richard Schechner's performance theory, this research sought to understand how the medium of Dance for Camera influences choreographic processes and artistic choices, as well as its capacity to serve as a tool for cultural expression and preservation within Ghanaian dance traditions. The study revealed that Dance for Camera holds significant potential for enhancing artistic expression. The strategic use of camera techniques, dynamic editing, and deliberate choreographic choices can heighten the visual impact and emotional resonance of dance. However, successful translation to film necessitates careful consideration of how to preserve cultural authenticity and integrity, and this can be achieved by collaboration with experts, and training of dancers in the technology.

This study reveals the potential of Dance for Camera to enhance artistic expression and promote cultural

dialogue. The in-depth case study of NOYAM African Dance Institute offers a rich understanding of how Dance for Camera can impact choreographic choices, artistic expression, and cultural representation within a particular setting. However, as with any case study, the findings may not be directly transferable to all Ghanaian dance groups, nor to dance organizations in other cultural contexts. NOYAM's unique blend of traditional and contemporary styles, their specific goals for audience engagement, and their collaborative relationship with filmmakers all contribute to the specific outcomes observed in this study. Future research is needed to determine the extent to which these findings are generalizable.

The study suggests several avenues for future research which could explore the impact of specific filming techniques on audience reception, as well as the effectiveness of Dance for Camera in promoting cross-cultural understanding. From a practical standpoint, this research highlights the need for more resources and training opportunities for dancers and filmmakers interested in exploring Dance for Camera within the Ghanaian context. By fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing, the dance community can harness the full potential of Dance for Camera to promote artistic innovation and cultural preservation.

In conclusion, Dance for Camera represents a promising frontier for Ghanaian dance. By embracing this hybrid art form, dancers and filmmakers can create new opportunities for artistic expression, cultural dialogue, and global engagement. Dance for camera offers a unique opportunity to amplify and share Ghana's rich cultural traditions with new and established audiences around the world.

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