



Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance

By Susan Leigh Foster

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"This is an urgently needed book – as the question of choreographing behavior enters into realms outside of the aesthetic domains of theatrical dance, Susan Foster writes a thoroughly compelling argument." – *André Lepecki, New York University*

"May well prove to be one of Susan Foster's most important works." – *Ramsay Burt, De Montford University, UK*

What do we feel when we watch dancing? Do we "dance along" inwardly? Do we sense what the dancer's body is feeling? Do we imagine what it might feel like to perform those same moves? If we do, how do these responses influence how we experience dancing and how we derive significance from it?

Choreographing Empathy challenges the idea of a direct psychophysical connection between the body of a dancer and that of their observer. In this groundbreaking investigation, Susan Foster argues that the connection is in fact highly mediated and influenced by ever-changing sociocultural mores.

Foster examines the relationships between three central components in the experience of watching a dance – the choreography, the kinesthetic sensations it puts forward, and the empathetic connection that it proposes to viewers. Tracing the changing definitions of choreography, kinesthesia, and empathy from the 1700s to the present day, she shows how the observation, study, and discussion of dance have changed over time. Understanding this development is key to understanding corporeality and its involvement in the body politic.

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Editorial Review

Review

"May well prove to be one of Susan Foster's most important works."

- Ramsay Burt, De Montford University, UK

"This extremely well-documented book is a marvelous addition to the literature on choreographic thought. Highly recommended."

- L. K. Rosenberg, Miami University, USA

About the Author

Susan Leigh Foster is professor of choreography, history and theories of the body at UCLA. Her work has been supported by grants from the National Endowment of the Arts, the National Endowment of Humanities, and the Rockefeller and Jerome Foundations. Ph.D., History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz; M.A., Dance, University of California, Los Angeles; B.A. Anthropology, Swarthmore College. She has created several solo concerts which have toured the United States, Canada and Europe.

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