dance poems

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Thanks to Tim Peterson and EOGAH where Merce Cunningham “Nearly Ninety” originally appeared. Thanks also to Steven Fama for encouragement and the original cover image. Special thanks to the choreographers, composers and dancers who made these poems possible.
JEROME ROBBINS
“IN G MAJOR” (EXCERPT)

repel air
seed drift
O
mote respite
divide

echo
runner atlas branch

marionette
atom scribe
sibyls
join
kite
brush
picture
lift
PETER MARTINS
“THE WALTZ PROJECT” (EXCERPT)

Magnet figure
   limp
pendulum
   wing
globe
   yellow clock
   crab
   minaret
   track
   slide
   sweepere
Sisyphus
   over
   hail

tango sock

child’s drain bird
   sleep
   without
   coy
   return
malade  ant

bubble  compass

cross—

red windmill  to tear
drop

over  wick flame

staff  launch

fairy bird

cube

breathe

watcher  go

ball

polis  match

days  over
RICHARD TANNER
“EPISODES & SARCASMS” (EXCERPT)

 chiaroscuro  pyramid

  labrys  corridor  rune
 accordion

  black  bloom

 sunflower  eye  lurker

 scout  bastion

  blinder

 Eurydice

  heartbeat

 moth  night

 splay  moon

 new

  dusk  orphan

 wedge  heart

  pump

 gather  sentinel

 briar  spoke

 crane  eclipse
GEORGE BALANCHINE
“VALSE-FANTASIE”

cloud line
tuck satyr
snake shadow
ionosphere
echo green
grown over
summon liege
run
tube ripple
arrow
chime

mist pulse
lift over part
GEORGE BALANCHINE
“SERENADE (EXCERPT)”

Eyed lemniscate

right fade

bola swing

parallel fold

box slalom ricochet

opal pillowy white dwarf

fuchsia alpha

mountain wedge

junction
delta

vineyard blanc

5 slide

earth water

air ether fire

spiral galaxy bar
tack

alight pentagon

spark

swarm form lines
steeple

down bridge

levitate

kaleidoscope surge

carousel ring eye

parapet whisper herald

arch rectangle prone
JEROME ROBBINS
“DANCERS AT A GATHERING” (EXCERPT)

spangled       peek
all the day gnomon
in garden
summit
mounting       fanfare
arrest         diagonal
divining       ground

center
plasm          akimbo
floater
bow
strider        white
astride
pulsar
noble
trace
filigree      slither

orbit
velocity
taper
rush line
MERCE CUNNINGHAM  
“NEARLY NINETY”  

I.  

Periphery pantomime chime  
    scale chroma  

rippling scaffold aubade  

    semaphore edge delta  

nesting pivot bowstring right  

green fire invert  

    gibbous sun arc  

behold Korova  

tower stance  

pendulum hover  

rearer relay  

prowlers down a settler  

slope spun  

pixel refuse automata full automat  

fold cursor channel  

spine
oak process, post & lintel
process

moon & star
mosque
dumbwaiter light

ozone spell formation

compass slash
green shadow

ghost gantry please

stop punch punch

laughed

lost pact

cut high

cut brass cut lamp

ripper

remote froid

observe rupture

balustrade antenna

truss corps

corpuscle

percolate hour

glowing ink spurt

mountain figure
clock gnomon steeple
air regard squat scissor
happen at iris
interference smoke
grand bumper
third tangle
wedge
spun spectre
Artemis
vector pull
industrial overshadowing
a race to the pile buried piles
fist heart
aorta ripple
in the east
windmill
Doppler people
floor vector echo
half of
hurt polar capillary
droid shadow
field
help walk
spirit pump
modern harridan
sky globule
she is the taker
lifting driller
this construct
seeps
backwards heap
These are the makers of yours
the first ones

a stage tonsure

theta

overlay

solve for variable

blind finder

Samsara

C-closure

sea aleph

eye

walked

umbilical

pixie

dangle

the old window

the scope

of

outside the

sculpture

ditto

F

tree

the signer

the border

the margin

the lever

flag of time

torpor Atlas

the or

the ever

echo curl

rod body
sayer
wedger
switcher
this arm
anchor
bounce of
wasp mover
lost
prime mover
being form from
water
open
turbine
plumbing the ovoid
feral over
open
twist nostalgia
thrum basso
disappearer
thumb aria

-centaur
scripture
Nessus
ancestor

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum

-thrum
cobalt candle emblem

over

gatherer

hover

birther

over

husher

winnowed

placer

of holder

is autre

teller thus

bread for

again

to lay

it

& exit

these my mover

& after

the now into

together

the ever

over year

year

fathom geo

figure

of day
PAUL TAYLOR
“BYZANTIUM”

I.

Nile crawl

wound ibis
  sick crowd
shot mensch

  skitter

bug

twist limb lawn mover spin

throng creep pinnacle

furl skim

offering prone

II.

Chorus blanket

spangle diaphon

Quadrant fold grape crazy

limb pry

rhinegold head square orbit

beta march storm lathe
usurp
sun game

salvation
doubleoon
breeze
spill

archon Chiron
apostate whirl

fury star
putsch
gold haze

III.

It light corps
carry
circle
dog spin
magnet
gaze vector ghost

bow
azimuth point
cradle

pin wreck
broken mime speech

2 korous
jungle
dark
spout step
hemisphere
    sigil
troika
snakerise
    splinter slip
weave ransom spot
cross courting stance
dusk

deck
wind motor
    clay bolt
model rotor
    into air deflect

Da Vinci prowl
spider road
switchback topple
metronome    set petal
gel & dissolve
snow window    days
TRICIA BROWN
“O COMPOSITE”

Air wheel

sky

white record
trapeze

furl left arrow around point

rooster twist
whirl scrawl
duck outer

leg orbit point

collapse horse dredge

ringing one

pulling

hex ring

noose grab— archer

eccentric orbit

layer axle
magnet birth logroll

static march

basso

glass swing
frog
she walks, purrs
tree-swing down
dividing leg
catapult ring
arm/ledge
crane swing
pillar whisperroll— arch
tape loop
running her over
bird north
shine wall line lower
table into space
together
over level swing
spin
gate gyroscope
weightless levitate dram church

shifter puller lifter pointer pillow

mermaid dawn spool
BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY
“MAX”

Lotus pillar

leaf spine snap

prostrate reversal

pneumatic lung deadpan
waltz regions

rumbling

blink

illumine male

corner

reverse

hear alone enter delta
cadre
flutter

eidolon rise shimmer

flee retun

wound light gesture

twitch & restart twitch & restart

patter amoeba

muscle of shadow seizure center
speaking line
angle whisper
reach heron last
tint walk
high arc black switch
burn & restart & burn & restart & burn
blood light fury
loop hurt back & fro
to spin pop
frame spin windmill spark caught
horizontal ebb jade turn
gloom cell
clock arm—
cruciform moss
gate
wrest ballet
chalice is parallel fallen
burn 3
eye rhyme
limbo rerun
bird head fight
delta zone
wrong one
machete stance
malfunction see
piston piston piston

cup band
tract walk
1 2 3 4 5
program arch arc

parallel
allele

jagged throat

pull
learn trumpet fuck
part

kid ditty

warpath count

usurp lurch

beguile breathing

decay into purple advance

lift symbiote heart

wedge shriek
TRICIA BROWN
“L’AMOUR AU THEATRE”

Orbit
   pair
   reverse

contrapuntal whirl—
   stepping leg cross box
   lock car

   carry
   to arm

   pull steeple trident

spin glass luster

   sun arc over a hill

   seahorse pose

broken away

   rock both
   seashell fan

weather

   swan crawl

   case when clock

   cardinal swills

   multiplying line
horizon osmosis
interrupt graft

glissando echo
dive drained
eater opal
grey pearl gray
Can’t advance
wrestle over
driven

topple grope

bastion

thrasher advance

jagged line

of over go
Libra scale
rotate

dusk slider
to train switch part
pulled coppery organism

how arch

hexagon of moon tilting
swing acrobat
a bird stalker arms

into boats horse play into teepees

lifting imposition
PETER MARTIN
“HALLELUJAH JUNCTION”

Pointing line
  quincunx       white eye
limb alphabet & piano ghosts
jump circuit
  chiaroscuro wave
here is the steeple       flag zag
gyre lycra magnet
moth mouth
human gnomon
  shoal whorl
telegraph beat pirouette
  troika beat

crab obeisance, pendulum
ascend pop
  bolo orbit       pair loop
topple corridor

Dead Sea line scheme
MELISSA BARAK
“A SIMPLE SYMPHONY”

Semaphore blue
stag
chevron, X, diamond
firebird
gull angle
dash dissipate
duet
gate
mirror carry
polar
a downward glance revolves
osmosis
sliding center
allele division
3/6 dichotomy
missing
mottle listen
binary full stop center stage
mana smoke offering
again phoenix
held wheel
DAWN
bridge topple
pistil row
quadrant
hexagram
molting arrow
hydrogen story
CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON
“MERCURIAL MANOEUVRES”

Ruby silhouette
ziggurat door
Mondrian palette purple overlap skitter

Soviet relay trumpet
slash
air step

crown jewel arc
jamb light stalk
blood dream pace
black / white subject prison—
leaning creep
mill rotor—
remove the mirror film in the united schism

a pinion for the gravity angel

Fortune wheel
gable shadow eye point
gloaming bird
whereupon
light path
clock circle
cerulean pause
sky tint

perpendicular

brow oblique
dolphin upon silver

albatross column

ocean sun

hourglass

transverse mars

bejeweled hand

code switch
t
transistor trash diagram

trumpet blow patter

foot rain

beach days gone

chalice bubble

bright

row

hand

center
CHRISTOPHER WHEELDON
“DGV: DANSE À GRAND VITESSE”

Ambient slide

hopper

sheer wing

Maya

furl

eidolon shadow

veil

metal

gnomon

plough

prow

mast

level spire

emerger
closer

procession

speaker commence

runner piston

wrist

flicker vaudeville

run line dissolver

TV waver folly

lantern

float

flora

Abraxas tongue

O so carried

benign grasp

melt pause

agile caesura
upon intimate swim

after slider

prey lift

tally

last lost crowd

wings backstage

tamer

retravel

drink

bird torso

swing lower

revealere

tremolo tumult

re

waterfy

creep roll

chaser over

pacer least long
over

glimmer         congeries

return

turn            sketch

ground rise     emblem rise

to

white

broad

serial

re-spin

syncopate      green

farewell

thrum

motion pearl

gate parcel

congeries

was intoned
mannequin  

triumph

revolver

down

lane  temple

speed

chiaroscuro

branch  field

steeper steeple

arm crucible continuum

heart head shadow

blinking  sheen

stutter  around  hung

edge  nearer  away

focal  mane
crosseter

maker

spanner body future

wheelbarrow line

run into

lissome weave

carried
TRICIA BROWN
“GLACIAL DECOY”

Shift shift
triangle reach wall
tulip
sea margin
pendulum margin
urn brake shadow
atom smasher
window
fader find binocular
spin when clouds
spun leap
still
when
over
tilt windpump
lure spin bob
in third start
rotate
angry bridge walk car
join bronzes frame
advance freight
camera frame
    drifting
morning arch
when the horse ghost prowls
mirrors are television
    enter air fore
water stalk over
stair diagonal swing
    skin slide creak
disrupt close closure
WILLIAM FORSYTHE
“DECREATION”

Window strut
crow
line bug spin
robo slug
skin walk
neo-foot
erotics
spinner wall
in backup
twiddle
3
drawer
choke
lift
rump
mist
sphinx
slap
roar
heat
table
9 step
pinion pile
drive
asterisk
orbit
lightning
dinner spun
table water
chair
raven
construct figure amoeba
experience

sword

said

spake

stake

knead

brass

bolt

crash

orbit

fire

over swivel

melt

base

plinth

jagged

melee

burst
gore
percolate
rip
here
gore
torpor
gasp
HATE
over
last
other
photo
hand
hand
fingers
freeze
when
broke
star
fist
was
first

stall

pair

blast

siren

over

sharp

base

was

drip

loon
oval
lotus

arrow

drum
blossom

lens
of
push

kneel
stiffen

arraign
blast

face
other

face

her

was
switch

itch

scratch

sodden

eyes

was

hurt

hold
rife

splay

ego

over


cruel

air

furnace

break

was listing bumper

push hustle torpor

was

space

lost

in

look

might walk

walker
storm

bird

scythe

blank water washed

maestro

rate

interrogate

rattle tale

fire crouched

leap hand harp

scraper

jangley

over

spear

spare

blast
burst

ship drum

causes boom
tussle

trestle

din

white

false static

window

over

said

split

self

back

hanger

once

clay

paper

furl
LEONID LAVROVSKY
“WALPURGISNACHT”

Verdure
equinox

loam spirit

brazen

shift

over-
feral

satyr lurch

hover
doer

bridge chasm slider

green

fire

aisle

over dove

trestle

pinion gambol

hoof staccato
archer over drill

fracture scalpel

echolalia velocity

crimson peaked

petal drift

chaser

spider frond

rim splice

leaper carrier

lift likely dusk
MARÍA PAGÉS
“SOLEÁ”

String              breath
weary                circuit
divide                interior
so blue               long last
reliquary            bridge
brown     flame   gnome
simmer                grave

graven

burn magenta
blossom beat

aorta              pulse
riser—

schist
mill                motion-
graver
earth oil
row

fire
ÁNGEL CORELLA
“STRING SEXTET”

Movement 1.

Braid arc

cowseye  clockwork

brusher

fold point

aerial

sculpt

reverse

scissor

gaze  focal

engine of

mirrors

burnish

oval

landscape  skirmish

Reina  elope

ripple

strand  coterie

slash

ripple

pace  dull

armature
Movement 2.

Apparition  film  semaphore

wraith  nymph  circuit

ingot  gloam

shun  sable

rectify  tandem  magnet

compass feet  lately  dangle

broken  reign
Movement 3.

Snow cavalcade
alleles
maestro
flayed
everything is order stage
pile layer
Miró line
eraser

Movement 4.

Arch swing
river loop gazelle
dim comet spool
shadow after
ricochet ablaze
water hammer
wall
windmill figure
churns  blossom  train

tree  Othello  diagonal  symmetry

taken  starry

asterisk move

more

spun balls

limning white  film

grommet

diurnal

schism below

flower popping

branch logic
Author’s Note

These poems were written in the darkened theater, during the performances mentioned in the titles of the poems. Care was taken to preserve the spacing of the originals, handwritten on small grid-ruled pads. Since the writing surface cannot be seen during the writing process, there is a certain element of chance involved in the composition. Likewise, lines scrawled in the dark are not always easily deciphered, so this is another layer of translation (or decomposition) from the initial, generative event. Insofar as the poems are written in “real time” as the performance is taking place, they constitute a kind of synesthetic transcription of the original dances in verse form. In order to preserve the abstract quality of sound and motion, music and dance vocabulary was specifically avoided, only when no other word would do. The poems are the dances’ siamese twins—discrete sentient entities, but fundamentally conjoined; they are intended as such, please refer to the original dance pieces whenever possible when considering the poems.
Colophon