

Thinking with the (Dancing) Body

David Kirsh

Hand Marking



Fig 1a



Fig 1b

Three functions of marking

1. *Marking-for-self*: dancers use their body to encode an aspect of a phrase for themselves. This may be for reinforcing memory, reflecting on sequence, or for scrutiny of spatial relations, among other reasons.
2. *Marking-for-others*: dancers use their bodies to encode an aspect of a phrase that others can focus attention on. For example, before a new performance, choreographer, choreographic assistant, and lighting manager review all phrases on stage for space.
3. *Joint-marking*: two or more dancers run through a phrase as a tightly coupled team, verifying timing and grips jointly for each other.

Small vs. Large Marking



Fig 2a



Fig 2b

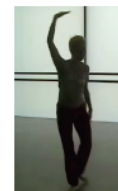
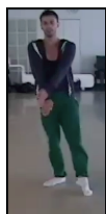


Fig 2c.

Idiosyncratic vs. Conventional Marking



3a.



3b.

Two cognitive benefits

1. Marking is a way of *anchoring projection* to a target. By providing a marked version of a target, a dancer can project a better representation of the target than imagination unaided. Marking, therefore, is a causally important way of augmenting thought. It is a component of a *distributed vehicle of thought*, consisting of an inner part and an outer part, which enables clearer thoughts. (cf. Hutchins 05)
2. Marking is a way of *priming* the neural system of a dancer, thereby enhancing imagination (or projection) by activating cortical elements that would be involved in the full-out movement. Marking is a way of enhancing the vividness and detail of imagination.

