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# AESTHETICS AND SYNESTHESIA IN KALULI CEREMONIAL DANCE

*Steven Feld*

## Introduction

Four ideas from the work of two important dance anthropologists will introduce my topic, and serve as cardinal markers which, like guideposts all pointing inward, center my approach to aesthetics and synesthesia in Kaluli ceremonial dance. The first two concepts come from Joann Kealiinohomoku. "Dance-eventing" is her notion, in one dynamic poly-verb, of the dance performative complex as an intersection of macro-social and micro-body motion attitudes, processes and products [1972:399]. "Dance-eventing" is a way to conceptualize performance in the broadest cultural terms. Kealiinohomoku's work on the spatial and temporal interplays of body motion in the silhouette (unpublished) illustrates how gross visual features can convey extraordinary cultural differences and subtleties. Her work points to the importance of costume and bodily affixed or held musical instruments vis-à-vis formalized body motion per se, to the multi-sensory dimensions of staging, and to physical and social space/time as completely interrelated features of dance.

Two other concepts that inform my perspective come from Adrienne Kaeppler. First is the idea that the organization of bodies in time and space that we call dance is dependent on a particular kind of creative formalization

of movement, a kind of formalization that Kaeppler compares to the auto-referentiality of verbal poetics. In other words the cultural forms we call dance creatively result from an intensification of motion parameters somewhat parallel to the way the cultural forms we call poetics creatively result from an intensification of linguistic parameters [Kaeppler 1989:452]. A second notion concerns aesthetics across modalities of expression, that of "homologies," of "...consistency relationships between various cultural and social manifestations and the underlying structures that they express" [Kaeppler 1978:261]. Kaeppler shows that in Tonga, various visual, verbal, choreographic, material and musical forms have the same underlying tri-partite abstract pattern, a pattern that produces parallel yet distinct surface forms in different media and modes. Hence, *fasi* (melody, leading part, essential features), *laulalo* (drone, space definers) and *teuteu* (decoration, elaboration of specifics) are Tongan concepts and practices that apply across different modalities of expression but ultimately constitute an ethnoaesthetic common denominator, pointing not only to the interrelationship of Tongan arts, but also to an aesthetic manifestation of a pattern which is also a significant organizing motif in Tongan social structure.

The substance of this discussion will con-

cern these four notions: "dance-eventing" (performance), "silhouette" (visual, motion, costume, and stage time/space interactions), "poetic intensification" (focus on the message form apart from content, and for its own sake) and "homology" (cross and intermodal metaphors). I will focus on how they meet in the matter of the aesthetics of Kaluli ceremonial dance, and in particular its synesthetic experiential dimension.

## **Kaluli people and their ceremonies**

Twelve hundred Bosavi people live in the tropical rain forest of the Great Papuan Plateau in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. There are four Bosavi subgroups, culturally identical yet differentiated by geography and slight dialect variations. Of these four the most centrally located subgroup is known as Kaluli, and it is with them that I lived in 1976-1977, 1982, and 1984. Even though I refer here specifically to the Kaluli, most of my remarks apply equally to all Bosavi people. On several hundred square miles of rich land, at an altitude of about two thousand feet, they hunt, fish, gather, and tend land-intensive swidden gardens that yield sweet potatoes, taro, pandanus, pumpkin, bananas, and many other fruits and vegetables. Their staple food is sago, processed from wild palms that grow in shallow swamps and creeks branching off of larger river arteries that flow downward from Mt. Bosavi, the collapsed cone of an extinct volcano reaching eight thousand feet.

Bosavi people live in about twenty distinct longhouse communities; in each, most people reside in a single communal house, compris-

ing some fifteen families (sixty to eighty people). Social life for the village is centered around the longhouse, where primary face-to-face interaction occupies most of the time that people are not in their gardens, on the trails, visiting relatives in other communities, or staying at small garden homes or sago camps for major food processing activities.

This is a small and classless society. Traditionally no occupational specializations, stratifications, ranks, professions, ascribed or achieved statuses formed the basis for social differentiation. This was also a generally egalitarian society in matters economic and political. With no appointed or elected leaders, speakers, chiefs, bosses, or controllers, Bosavi people hunted, gathered, gardened, and worked to produce what they needed, taking care of themselves and their associates through extensive cooperation in food sharing and labor assistance. In such a system, egalitarianism refers to a general lack of deference to persons, roles, categories, or groups based on power, position, or material ownership.

This pattern began to break down with the advent of colonial government contact, particularly in the late 1950s. But it was evangelical missionization which brought radically sweeping changes to the area beginning in the mid-1960s and principally in the early and mid-1970s, followed by a new wave of national government impact in the late 1970s and 1980s. Presence of airstrips, a hospital, schools, aid post stations, mission station, and government development personnel, and particularly local pastors have introduced forms of deference based on ascribed and achieved status, and forms of differentiated wealth, particularly with a cash base. These changes have had a significant and escalating impact on the nature of stratified social categories in Bosavi life, and also on the demise

of various traditional practices, especially Bosavi ceremonialism.

Three major ceremonial dance complexes (one of local origin, two of more recent regional appropriation) were performed in Bosavi during the three periods of my research. These ceremonies are from dusk to dawn affairs performed in a longhouse by male members of a guest community for the benefit of their hosts at occasions marking important inter-longhouse relations. In all of these ceremonies the house is the primary location of the activity. Depending on the specific ceremonial type, costumed dancers move back and forth along the house's center hallway either singly, in facing pairs, or as shoulder-to-shoulder groupings in lines of two, three or four. The central corridor in which they move is lit by resin torches held by bystanders along the sidelines as well as by one or two specifically designated uncostumed ceremonial attendants who move throughout the corridor keeping pace with the dancers.

The ceremony of local origin, and indeed the most powerful and important of Kaluli ceremonies is called *gisalo* [Schieffelin 1976]. *Gisalo* involves four dancers who perform singly in turn; they wear a distinct costume type that features a cassowary feather headdress, and the use of an important percussion instrument, the *sob* mussel-shell rattle. The *gisalo* ceremony contrasts with another called *ko:luba*, which came from the southern side of Mt. Bosavi, probably around the turn of this century. It involves twelve dancers who usually perform in pairs; they wear another distinct costume type that features a cockatoo-feather-frame headdress and the use of another percussion instrument for accompaniment, the *degegado* crayfish-claw rattle. In addition, ceremonial drumming, *ilib kuwo:* is performed by up to five costumed dancers, al-

ways as a late afternoon warmup for a few hours before any other ceremonies, including *gisalo* and *ko:luba*. The *ilib kuwo:* drumming costume is identical to that worn for the *ko:luba* ceremony, and also comes, like the conical drum itself, from south of Mt. Bosavi. While *gisalo* and *ko:luba* involve songs based upon very different melodic and textual structures, and different compositional dynamics, many features of their staging are identical, and they also share several features of dance structure, organization, and movement motifs.

At Bosavi ceremonies, pre-composed songs are performed all night long by the visiting costumed dancers as they dance back and forth along the central hallway. *Gisalo* and *ko:luba* songs both incorporate models of repetition and segmentation in their formal structure that correlate with singing positions in the house. This assures that hosts seated at either end or in the middle of the house will hear a full rendition of a song and witness the passing and pausing of a single dancer or group of dancers somewhere near to where they are seated [see Schieffelin 1976:179 for the *gisalo* pattern]. The key performative work of the ceremony involves poetic evocation. The hosts find the song texts of their guests to be sad and evocative because they concentrate on maps and images of the places in the immediate, surrounding forest, places to which the hosts have a sentimental attachment. The performance usually provokes the hosts to tears, and to a sung-melodic-weeping performed in polyphony with the ongoing song to which they are responding. The intense grief and sadness experienced by the members of the host community results from their being reminded of the dead who have lived, worked, and shared many experiences with them at the places sequentially mentioned in

the song. While dance movement is not as focal to this evocation as is the song text, it is surely the case that staging, costume, demeanor, and the image of the dancer in motion is a central persuasive force in the performance.

## Aesthetics and style in Kaluli ceremonial dance

By aesthetics my concern is, to use Robert Plant Armstrong's phrase, "form incarnating feeling" [Armstrong 1975:11]; specifically I'm interested in how works of what he called "affecting presence" [1971] are witnessed as "a direct presentation of the feelingful dimension of experience [Armstrong 1975:19]. Like Armstrong I am less concerned with an aesthetic focused upon reified notions like virtuosity, excellence in execution, and beauty, and more concerned to locate just what it is that Kaluli find affecting and moving; what they experience and interpret as powerful. In other words I wish to locate the concepts and practices, what Raymond Williams called "structures of feeling" [Williams 1977:128-135], that animate the Kaluli sense of evocation. I want to know what Kaluli find compelling in expressive forms and their presentation, what they find overwhelmingly forceful and how they rationalize and value just that as an essence, a distilled, crystallized gem of experience that leaves them drained yet euphoric, agitated yet soothed, heightened in awareness yet centered in their sense of identity. This takes us to how the mind is in the body just as the body is in the mind.

To begin at the local beginning is to probe the specificity of Kaluli ideas. The key Kaluli concept for style and aesthetics is that of *du-lugu ganalan* "lift-up-over sounding" [Feld

1988]. This is the term that prescribes and describes natural sonic form for Kaluli, and given my primary interest in the realm of sound, I at first thought that it was a notion that referred exclusively to that domain. Instead, this term is a spatial-acoustic metaphor, a visual image set in sonic form and a sonic form set in visual imagery. By calling attention to both the spatial ("lift-up-over") and temporal ("sounding") axes of experience, the term and process explicitly presuppose each sound to exist in fields of prior and contiguous sounds. In practice this is quite the case because the antithesis of "lift-up-over sounding" is unison. All "lift-up-over sounding" sounds are dense, heavily blended, layered; even when voices or sound types momentarily coincide, the sense is that the unison is either accidental or fleeting, and indeed, it is entirely by chance.

The essence of this "lift-up-over sounding" idea involves two components. One is part-relations that are *simultaneously in-synchrony while out-of-phase*. By "in-synchrony" I mean that the overall feeling is of togetherness, of consistently cohesive part coordination in sonic motion and participatory experience. Yet the parts are also "out-of-phase," that is, at distinctly different and shifting points of the same cycle or phrase structure at any moment, with each of the parts continually changing in degree of displacement from a hypothetical unison.

A second component concerns timbre (the building blocks of sound quality) and texture (the composite, realized experiential feel of the sound mass in motion). Timbre and texture are not mere ornaments; a stylistic core of "lift-up-over sounding" is found in nuances of *textural densification* - of attacks and final sounds; decays and fades; changes in intensity, depth and presence; voice coloration and

grain; interaction of patterned and random sounds; playful accelerations, lengthenings, shortenings; and the fission and fusion of sound shapes and phrases.

In the forest, sounds constantly shift figure and ground; examples of continually staggered alternations and overlaps, at times sounding completely interlocked and seamless, are abundant. For Kaluli this is the naturally coherent model for soundmaking, whether human, animal, or environmental: a constant textural densification constructed from "lift-up-over sounding" that is simultaneously in-synchrony yet out-of-phase.

Turning now from sound to visual form, the face painting styles associated with two major Kaluli ceremonies, *gisalo*, and *ko:luba* as well as with *ilib kuwo*: drumming (with its identical costume) involve a singular figure and ground principle. Deep earth red (*bin* from the pods of *Bixa orellana* or from ground clay) and shiny tree resin soot (*aso:n*) are painted on the dancer's face in a figure and ground, with white clay (*sowan*) outlining between them to create relief, yielding a juxtaposed sense of layers, density. As the paints dry the effect of the shininess of the black and dullness of the orange/red intensify and is enhanced by the quality of resin torch light, which picks up and reflects the highlights of the resinous black. Backgrounding the eyes hides the singer/dancer's identity concealing and at the same time beaming the gaze of the singer/dancer. This facial figure/ground contrast is realized in both a shiny/dull texture contrast and black/red color contrast. These contrasts visually mirror sonic "lift-up-over" and the effect was identified as such by Kaluli commentators who viewed color pictures taken at earlier ceremonies. Hence we have in face painting a visual homology to the sonic principles of "in-synchrony yet out-of-phase"

and "textural densification."

A similar homology is evidenced in the costume. The overall *ilib kuwo*: and *ko:luba* costumes mix many types of materials, layering possum fur, frame headpiece with white cockatoo feathers; painted body (face, arms, stomach, legs) in red, black, and white; shell necklace surrounded and centered by woven cross bands reaching under the arm; flapping feathers strung from bamboo in arm, belt and knee pieces; waist belt with attached *degegado* crayfish-claw rattle in rear, emerging through *fasela* palm streamers densified with cordyline top pieces. Costumes project layered density. The sound emanates from shells and streamers in motion as the dancer bobs up-and-down, "lifted-up-over" by the drum and rattle in *ilib kuwo*: or by voices and rattles in *ko:luba*. The sounds of stamping feet on the longhouse floor (about 130 beats per minute in an up-and-down motion) and the indexical shaking of the longhouse mix out-of-phase with the pulses of the shell rattles and the shimmer-flapping of costume streamers. For *ko:luba* the streamers and crayfish-claw shells make high frequency sounds which evoke the presence of a forest waterfall. The performer's voice "lifts-up-over" the waterfall so as to sound like that of a bird that rests in a nearby rock gorge. Thus there is a visual/bodily/sonic textural densification in costume, dance, and sound that merges with a visual/bodily/sonic in-sync and out-of-phase sensation.

The *gisalo* dancer's costume includes similar materials. The primacy of the streamers is matched by the use of the *sob*, the mussel-shell rattle whose high frequency sounds pulse indexically to the dancer's up-and-down motion at about 120 beats per minute. As in *ko:luba*, the voice of the dancer carries over the streamer/rattle high frequency waterfall sound

as the movement arches up-and-down either in place or back and forth along the corridor. The cassowary head feathers, and the Raggiana bird of paradise arm band feathers (another black/red contrast) flap and flow with the vertical dance motion, densifying the sound and blur of flowing streamers in complementary colors, textures, and body positions to the black, red, and white paints, and woven string and shell ornaments.

A final "lift-up-over" touch that completes

all costumes is called the *tamin*, a single white cockatoo feather, or a pair of same, placed in the top center of the dancer's headdress. This *tamin* feather (a name derived from the verb for "lead" or "go first") is attached to the end of a long pliable piece of bamboo that springs up from the headdress. As the dancer bobs up-and-down, the *tamin* swings backwards and forwards in a long arc continuously outlining a backward then up-and-over pendulum. This swaying arc flows in synchrony directly



Figure 1. Two *ilib kuwo*: dancers, Sululib Village, Bosavi.

[Photograph by Steven Feld, 1982.]

with the dancer's vertical movement, but is also out-of-phase by virtue of mapping the opposite (horizontal) motional plane. The *tamin* then "lifts-up-over" the rest of the costume both materially and motionally. It completes the sense that all costume materials are in layered multiple visual/sonic/motion figure and ground relationships. Hence a costume homology to "lift-up-over sounding" parallel to that of body painting.

Having presented the pattern of sound, instruments, paint and costume, it is now possible to re-state this whole set of homologies starting from the centrality of structured body motion. First it is motion that produces the isometric rhythmic pulse (from about 120 to 125 in *gisalo* to about 130 in *ko:luba* to up to 135 or even 140 beats per minute in *ilib kuwo:* drumming). In *gisalo* this is a matter of the *fasela* rear streamers, as well as the other affixed feathers and shell ornaments and the *sob* rattle, making their sounds indexically to the motion of the dancer. In the case of *ko:luba* and *ilib kuwo:* this is also a matter of the *fasela* rear streamers, as well as the other affixed feathers and shell ornaments and the *degegado* shell rattle and drum sounding indexically with the motion of the dancer. And in the cases of *ko:luba* and *gisalo* there is also the relationship of the voice to this overall sonic and motion complex, and the relationship of the textual poetic segmentation in relationship to the dancer's position in the longhouse vis-à-vis his audience. So what are the dancer's motions that animate this activity in space and time?

Kaluli dance motion, as it occurs in place or as individuals move along the central corridor relates to and indeed is modelled on that of the *wo:kwele* bird, the Giant Cuckoodove (*Reinwardtoena reinwardtsi*). Cuckoodoves nest in rock gorges near waterfalls, and their calls are always imitated by Kaluli as a two part

*wo:k-wu*, the voice heard "lifting-up-over" the sounds of water. In motion the bird moves up in place on the first syllable (*wo:k*), and down on the second syllable (*wu*). The sound symbolism here is telling. Kaluli sound symbolism systematically exploits a contrast between the high and low back vowels [u] and [o:] such that [u] sounds phonesthemically carry the sensation of downward-moving sound and [o:] sounds phonesthemically carry the sensation of outward-moving sound. So, for example, the downward flowing sound of a waterfall is imitated *gululuu* where the radiating outward sound of a butcherbird is imitated *go:lo:lo:o:*. Note in both cases the way continued carrying in time is iconically marked by reduplication and final lengthening. This contrast is part of a larger paradigm of vowel sound and motion symbolism, and it is quite a regular and productive paradigm, with about 300 lexicalized onomatopoeic terms [Feld 1990:144-150]. So the precision here is incisive: the dancer moves upward as outward on the syllable *wo:k*, then downward with the syllable *wu*, like a *wo:kwele* in front of a waterfall.

It is not only in the area of formal movement modelling that *wo:kwele* is significant; there is an affecting dimension here as well. In 1984 I was with a group of men and women outside the longhouse community of Wasu where a *gisalo* was to be held. One of the dancers-to-be, a young man named Gowan, was wearing a long *wo:kwele* tail feather in his hair, a decoration that Kaluli previously had told me is important for dancers to wear when travelling to a ceremony, as it instills a sense of smooth fluid movement, and serves as part of the paraphernalia and ethos of ceremonial anticipation. I casually noted the presence of the feathers in an aside. Without pausing Gowan looked right at me and said: *wo:kwele, wo:kwele, ge niyo: gisalalikiyo: nilowa me-*



*seya:biyo:*, meaning, "*wo:kwele, wo:kwele*, when I *gisalo* you'll stay with me" a sort of invocation stressing a sense of "stand by me," "be there with me." The invocation did not have anything of the religious connotations that sometime accompany those English paraphrases, but there was a feeling in what he said that was both matter-of-fact and deep, and this indeed is what birds are about for Kaluli.

The basic up-and-down bobbing motion, from the ball of the feet with knees slightly bent and opened outward (usually more-so specifically in *gisalo*) accentuates the up-and-arching forward, then bouncing more directly downward, slightly straightening the body. The heels do not bounce on the floor; the point of lower flexing is centered at the ball of the foot. The cumulative tension of this up-and-down motion centers right above the knees, and indeed after several hours of dancing Kaluli only complain of muscle aches in this area. The only other place of bodily tension is in the upper chest, right at the point of the shoulders. This tension is a result of arching the whole body slightly forward on the upward motion and then straightening the plane in a more upright fashion on the downward motion.

At the rear of the costume palm streamers spring from the waist to the shoulders and then fall down to ankle level. These streamers, called *fasela*, make a *shhh* shimmering sound as they move in an up-and-over flowing motion like a waterfall as the dancers move up-and-down. The high frequency sounds of the mussel-shell rattle in *gisalo* and crayfish-claw rattle in *ko:luba* also contribute to the sensation of hearing a voice and feeling a presence at a waterfall. The movement produces this downward flowing image and sound sensation as the dancer's voice "lifts-up-over" above the continual *shhh* of the waterfall, like the voice and motion of a *wo:kwele* bird in a rock gorge

near a waterfall ledge.

It is important to underscore here that the *sob* mussel-shell rattle and *degedado* crayfish-claw rattle are not conceived or articulated as autonomous musical instruments. They are affixed, carried percussive devices whose sound results from the movements of the dancers. The *sob* shells are attached to a string so that when the dancer extends upright in the *wo:k* position they reach the floor. As the dancer bobs down into the *wu* position the shells all strike each other and the floor and then spring up with the dancer. The rattle sounds indexically to the dancer's flow, and this is one reason why even though the pulse is regular and isometric, there is never a discrete sound/silence dynamic to the sound. Rather the sound of the rattle is "lift-up-over sounding" to the sound of the feet on the floor and the rest of the costume and voice, and is constituted as dense textural accompaniment to the voice. Rhythmic pulse comes from the body and is a complex figure-ground relationship between formalized up-and-down motion, costume sway and flow, and poetic metrics and vocal delivery.

Similarly in *ko:luba*, the sound of the *degedado* crayfish-claw rattle is in no way autonomous of the dancer's movement. This rattle consists of a piece of thick cane arching up-and-springing out of the dancer's bark belt, and bent around to suspend a cluster of fifteen to forty individual crayfish-claw shells, loosely woven together into a packet with bark string. When the dancer moves up-and-down, the crayfish-claw packet follows the flow with a flick, producing an afterimage of the up-down motion, less than two-tenths of a second behind. Hence they both contribute to textural densification and to an in-synchrony yet out-of-phase sound-image, staggering in layers from the sounds of the feet on the shaking floor, the

sound of the flowing streamers, and the sound of the rattle. The sound symbolism of these two rattles is also related. The *sob* mussel-shell rattle is always imitated as *gede gede* and the *degedado* crayfish-claw rattle as *dege dege*. In Kaluli vowel symbolism [e] sounds are soft and crisp like what English speakers call crackle and crunch sounds. These sounds have immediacy at their source but little spatial resonance. They draw acoustic attention to the immediate surround of the costume as it wraps and bounds the presence of the moving dancer.

These same issues are important in the symbolism and practice of the drum-dancing. Drummers begin in place, bobbing up-and-down as they perform. Once the sound has begun to pulsate strongly, a single group of four or five may split into two, or, if they began as two groups they may move directly down the long corridor with a skipping step, and switch positions at the front and rear entrance-ways to the house, then return to their own starting points. In group drumming several "lift-up-over sounding" sonic layers are evident. For each drum there is the separation of fundamental and overtones; as a group there are staggered entrances and overlaps of the four drums; rattle and costume sounds interlock with drum sounds, for each dancer and among the whole group. All of these relationships are enhanced and multiplied by the spatial configuration of the drummers, dancing back and forth along the longhouse corridor, sometimes as much as fifty feet apart, sometimes passing by each other, sometimes dancing in place next to another drummer at house ends.

The drum pulse is regular and isometric, beating between 130 and 140 times per minute. The envelope shape of each pulse is marked by a sharp and definite attack with no hesitation, a brief but full body sustain, and a long decay with no trailing effect. Each pulse continues to

and overlaps with the next; there are no discrete sound breaks or silences in between one pulse and the next. In this the drum is quite like the rattles spoken of earlier. The immediately salient acoustic features of drumming are the loud intensity and regularity of pulsation, the denseness of the sound as a continual overlapping throb, and the layering quality of the pitches, with clear overtone octaves and the inner fifth constantly shifting figure and ground.

In order to understand why the drum has an evocative power similar to that of a voice singing a plaintive texted song it is necessary to mention that the process of constructing a drum involves magical mediation that imparts sonic pattern to the material object and infuses it with aesthetic power [for a full explication of drum sound symbolism, see Feld 1986]. Kaluli sacrifice a *tibodai* bird to make a drum; its throat and tongue are placed on the bridge that separates two hollowed-out sides of a tree segment and then the bridge is cut through from top to bottom while a magical saying is softly recited by the maker. *Tibodai* is the Crested Pitohui (*Pitohui cristatus*), more commonly known as the Papuan Bellbird. The name derives from the way this shy little bird calls from tree perches with a continuous throbbing sound. The features of the bird's remarkable call—equal pulsation at the same pitch, extraordinary length and consistency, throbbing quality, and resonant carrying power—are in fact the most desired acoustic properties of the drum. Thus, breaking through the voice of the drum with the voice of *tibodai* is a process that insures the drum its basic sonic character.

For Kaluli, birds are not just birds, they are also *ane mama*, "gone reflections," spirits of their dead; and categories of bird sound, color, motion and other behavioral realms are keys to spirit categories. *Tibodai*, like *wo:kwele*, is in the group of birds who "says its name" and

who "whistles." The "says-its-name" classification relates the name *tibodai* to the onomatopoeia in *tibo tibo tibo tibo*, a vocal representation of the pulsating song. The "whistle" classification is more significant. Birds with whistling voices are considered a special category of spirits, and their sounds are often associated with spirits of dead children. Thus we have the notion that bird sounds are not only natural indicators of the Bosavi avifauna; they are equally considered communications from the dead to each other and to the living. As such, bird sounds and sound categories are powerful mediators; they link sonic patterns with social ethos and emotion. Hence the voice of the drum is empowered evocatively, as is the movement of the *wo:kwele*.

Drumming must be a full bodily sensation, not just a slap of the wrist or palm onto the skin surface. The drum is usually held in the left hand; as the body moves up-and-down, the left hand pumps the drum so that it both angles down toward the floor and meets the right hand which is swinging in a side-to-side movement. The right hand strikes the four *kol* beeswax bumps, that are centered on the drum head, squarely against the thick parts of the upper palm and lower portion of the third and fourth fingers. There is just the slightest flex of the wrist. When teaching me to drum and dance, Kaluli always stressed that I should feel the pulsing sensation in my upper arms and chest, not just in the lower hands and fingers. The up-and-down knee bend is in-sync and out-of-phase with the out-and-across swinging of the drum and striking of the palm. The contact between hand and drum tends to take place just as the dancer is moving downward on the *wu* motion. There is a fraction of a second split between the floor contact of the heel of the feet, the hand contact with the drum, and then the after-sound of the crayfish-claw rattle.

The acoustic sensation of the overlapping crisp high-frequency rattle and booming low-frequency drum is very dense indeed, and Kaluli point out that the double-pulsing is like that of the *tibodai* bird as well. They vocally render the interaction of the drum and rattle with the two syllables of the *tibo* onomatopoeic bird call; *bo* for the strong drum pulse, *ti* for the sound of the rattles. Again there is a strong iconic relationship between the resounding character of the drum sound and the syllable *bo*—with a plosive and mid-back vowel—and the high-frequency of the rattle sound and the syllable *ti*—with a dental and high-front vowel. So not only the drum itself, but the drum and rattle together call forth the presence of the bird. Again, more "lift-up-over sounding" and more homologies between sound, motion, and costume.

Additional dimensions of the performance experience involve conventions of lighting, staging, overall dance positioning, spatial and temporal sequencing as they interact with the specifics of form. Kaluli performances attempt to create a mood: of a bird at a waterfall, a voice in the forest; and of course, this mood has other dimensions that are visual and olfactory. Visually much is accomplished by lighting the longhouse with resin torches. These have an immediate bright glow that drops off quickly; many are held by bystanders, or are set on the sleeping platforms to rest on a rock or lie dripping into the firepits. The smoke from these torches has a lingering quality that of course mixes with the smoke from the fireboxes that line the sides of the house. As the torches drip a resinous tree sap, they give off a pungent smell, a bit reminiscent of piñon incense. The smoke, and the flickered uneven lighting patterns highlight the outlines and bright reds and whites of the dancer as well as the bright cordyline leaves

and light yellow-green streamers at the rear of the costume. Kaluli liken the lighting to the splashing of light in the rainforest, the way a bird's image flashes through the canopy for an instant as steamy light rises and meanders through the dense vegetation.

A voice and a small spotlighted sensation are what usually announce the presence of a bird in the forest. And the *fasela* streamers bounce bright specks of white light and sonic luminosity into the surrounding greenery and

darkness just the way a waterfall emerges so spectacularly from the dark patina of rocks and deep green gorges covered in by thick forest. Not only do sound, text, movement, and costume signal the presence of a bird at a waterfall, but features of stage lighting and olfaction, and the surrounding density of people and sounds, all contribute to the "lift-up-over sounding" feel of forest presence and immediacy right in the longhouse.



*Figure 2.* Waterfall Gulusa, near Sululib Village

[Photograph by Shari Robertson, 1984.]

Thus far the discussion has concerned performance production; it is now necessary to consider the role of participant reception and response. The issue here is not so much about what all this dense replete symbolism of sound, costume, dance, staging does to Kaluli people, but rather what Kaluli do with and about it. This recalls Armstrong's concern with "witnessing" [Armstrong 1975:19-20] as well as the more general anthropological concern with recognizing the active social role of audience co-presence in constructing an emergent bounded mini-reality in performance [Schieffelin 1985]. How do Kaluli sense performance? By this I mean, how do they actively deal with it, become part of it, appropriate it, feel it, make it theirs emotionally?

One place to start, again a place where Kaluli often start, is by unpacking a central metaphor for the feel of effective dramatic performance; what Kaluli call its "flow," *a:ba:lan*. Like a waterfall situated nearby in the forest, whose water "flows" beyond perceptual immediacy, although it is still known to be moving at other locations, sound and motion must have a physical presence at their moment of performance, and a staying power that carries beyond the moment. Performance, like the substance of sound and motion, must be dense, layered, collective, thick in connotation and resonance; this is what makes it "flow." The term for "flow" emanates from a rich semantic field of nouns and verbs (including many onomatopoeic nouns and verbs) for water motion. Why is this domain so important to an understanding of form and performance?

All Kaluli terms for water motion, waterway parts, and particularly waterfalls are polysemous with the semantic field of sound, and many also have motion connotations. Terms for musical intervals, contours, and other structural aspects of song form are invented

this way. Song parts are metaphorized as bends of waters and all forms of motion are either indicated like bird or water movements. Like song, drumming, dance and costume must "flow" like a waterfall, and indeed the arching up-and-over, and flowing downward motion of the *fasela* streamers with each bounce is an act of bringing the waterfall into the center of the arena and keeping it in motion, flowing so that the singer's voice and rattles are heard over the edge.

Kaluli speak of two co-extensive realities, one visible, the other a reflection, as components that comprise the world. The dead return as *ane mama*, "gone reflections" to the visible from the invisible, usually in the form of birds in the forest treetops. Like this duality of the cosmos, Kaluli assume dualities to all expressive forms; the idea is conventionally expressed by the notions of *sa*, "inside" and *heg*, "underneath." Intentionally symbolic behaviors are not transparent; they must be interpreted, and the act of interpreting them is what the Kaluli call searching for and finding the "inside" or "underneath." Sometimes these meanings are quite conventional. Even so, the interpretive turn Kaluli take is one that assumes concentration, attention, and active listening. "In-sides" and "underneaths" are what make things dense, layered and thick, as well as what it takes to tease out all those figure/ground relationships and make social and personal sense of them.

Sounds, poetic texts, costumes, and movements have "insides" and "underneaths" because not only are they a dense "lift-up-over sounding," but also are felt as the reflected images of birds. Birds in turn are spirits, and the particular set of emotional and personal associations with spirits, spirit places, and the like are deeply forceful for Kaluli. Additionally, poetic song texts are cast in a language of "bird

sound words" (*o:ba: go:no: to*), and these have various conventional and deeply ambiguous "underneath" which involve a variety of obfuscatory, mystifying, and evocative devices. Kaluli listeners are not passive participants in symbolic affairs; they engage in a kind of active social interaction based on the interpretive assumption that there is always a reflected "inside" or "underneath" meaning to the entire ceremonial production.

The visible and invisible inhabitants of the Bosavi rainforest are always "lift-up-over sounding," and the Kaluli are always tuning in, appreciating, and interpreting "insides" and "underneath" in these everpresent pulsations. These terms extend the notion of "lift-up-over sounding," filling in some of its process and activity implications in terms of engagement. If "lift-up-over sounding" is the overall Kaluli metaphor for natural sonic form, *halaido: doma:ki*, "making hard" and the resultant *halaido:*, "hardness" evoke its competent formation, its achievement as emotional persuasion. "Hardness" is force, the attainment of that evocative, charged, energized state. The continued holding power of that "hardened" state is its *a:ba:lan*, its "flowing." "Lift-up-over sounding" flows when it enters and stays with you, residing in memory and consciousness in ways it once did not. Engagement is the sensing of "underneath" and "inside" of patterns that "lift-up-over," and, interpreting their *mama*, "reflection" or "shadow" by feeling their associational force and possibilities. Notice here that "reflection" is not a visual notion, like that of a "mirror image." Rather, the sense is more like a "reverberation," a projected image or shadowed essence that is sensately internalized as a vibration, an idea and a feeling. The feeling of "flow" is the entire reverberant sensory bombardment of the performance and the interpretive process of absorbing it.

Participation, then, invokes a local Kaluli clustering of interpretive moves: hear the "lift-up-over sounding," feel it "harden," let it "flow," find the "reflected" "insides" and "underneath." Here metaphors not only have their own consistent linguistic partners but those partners help us understand the specific experiential-feelingful dimension evoked by the whole. The totalized visual-spatial-acoustic-temporal-motional-olfactory coherence of "lift-up-over sounding" is scaffolded by its "insides," "underneath," "reflections," "flow," and "hardness." The poetic of aesthetics becomes the aesthetic of poetics.

In the case of texted song in *gisalo* or *ko:luba* ceremonies, it is the cumulative climaxing structure of poetics that "hardens" the process of flow and emotional evocation. Sad songs about lands, places and memories bring forth deep feelings and tears about the ruptures of loss and abandonment. For the *ilib kuwo:* drumming, Kaluli say that this process of evocation is dependent upon the "hardening" of the drum sound in performance. Once the drummers "harden" the sound the throbbing drum voice is no longer heard as a bird voice calling *tibo tibo*, but is now heard, on the "inside" and "underneath" as a dead child calling *dowo dowo*, "father, father." This is the point when Kaluli listeners are completely absorbed by the sound, reflecting on its inner meaning rather than its outer form. It is this "hardening"—from drum voice to bird voice to child's voice—that moves listeners to thoughts of deceased children and to tears.

## Experience, aesthetics, and synesthesia

Synesthesia concerns the notion of concomitant sensation. Usually this is studied in

terms of how and when a sensation registers in a sensory domain other than the one directly stimulated, for example the visualizing of color resulting from the stimulus of hearing a sound. Synaesthesia involves simultaneous joint perceptions, a harmony (to use a Western cross-modal metaphor) of different sensory modalities. In the Kaluli ceremonial context there is a thorough interpenetration of sonic, visual, movement and olfactory components such that synesthesia becomes not only an aesthetic principle, but the very means by which that aesthetic is produced and consumed.

A prototype for Kaluli ceremonial and artistic synesthesia might be the experience of the rain forest itself, where in a sensually involuntary and culturally conventional manner, features of sound, texture, space and motion are interrelated. In the tropical rainforest height and depth of sound are easily confused. Lack of visual depth cues couple with the ambiguities of different vegetation densities and ever-present sounds (like water hiss) to make depth often sensed as height moving outward, dissipating as it moves. "Lift-up-over sounding" seems to code that ambiguous sensation of upward as outward. My own major adaptation to this environment was learning to feel and distinguish the height and depth of a sound in the absence of visual correlates. Even though I was aware of psychological evidence that humans are better at horizontal than vertical sound localization, and often subjectively sense high tones to be higher in space than they in fact are, I was acoustically disoriented in the forest for months. Kaluli laughed when they saw me look up to hear a sound that was deep, whether high or low to the ground. And they quickly learned to reach over and put a hand on mine to

move the microphone when I mistakenly was pointing too far up to record a bird of the deep forest.

To return now to the four points with which this essay opened: "Dance-eventing" indicates that performance production and interpretation involves a dynamic interaction of concepts and practices that empower individuals and reproduce social relations in both their structural and feelingful dimensions. What Kaluli are doing with their ceremonies is celebrating Kaluli-ness, which is to say, Kaluli identity in the most complete sense. Next, the "silhouette" concept indicates that dance is a crystallized composite image of sound, costume, movement, posture, and staging that instantly communicates both its locally rationalized and valued specificity, and the density of interconnected media and expressive modes. A silhouette image of a Kaluli dancer makes it clear that motion is projected *as* costume and sound, just as sound is projected *in* costume and motion. For the idea of "poetic intensification" it is clear that to understand Kaluli structured movement is to understand the behavior of birds and the motional contours of water, just as it is to understand vocal and instrumental sound, costume, and staging. The more channels, media and modes simultaneously enunciating the same formal pattern, the more intensified the emphasis on message form, the more focused the spotlight on style itself. And for the issue of "homology" we see that ultimately ecology—birds, waterfalls, forest presences—is the domain of the natural that Kaluli culturalize, while dance, song, costume, and poetics are domains of the cultural that Kaluli naturalize. We then not only have homologies in a pervasive sense, but they are metaphori-

cally and hence sensorily and emotionally integrated, as trope. And this takes us to synesthesia. Experience reverberates through the senses and is emotionally and cognitively united there. The unity of the arts, may indeed,

as the psychophysicists told us almost one hundred years ago, be but a surface manifestation whose deep source is the unity of the senses.

## NOTE

This paper was presented in an oral form, accompanied by slides, audio, and video, as the keynote address at the eleventh Dance Ethnology Forum at UCLA on February 2, 1990. The present version has benefitted from thoughtful readings by Adrienne Kaeppler and Camille Brochu. Portions of this essay draw on material presented in more detail in Feld

1988. The orthographic /o:/ represents phonetic open o, the vowel sound in the English word "bought," while the orthographic /a:/ represents phonetic epsilon, the vowel sound in the English word "bet." Otherwise in the spelling of Kaluli words all English characters take standard phonetic values.

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