

# Review: 'For Claude Shannon' Visualizes the Links Between Text and Movement

By BRIAN SEIBERT FEB. 22, 2016



From left, Liz Santoro, Marco D'Agostin, Cynthia Koppe and Teresa Silva in "For Claude Shannon," at the Kitchen. Julieta Cervantes

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When you walk into the Kitchen to watch "For Claude Shannon," the work's four dancers are already onstage, warming up. In addition to the usual limbering, though, they appear to be thinking especially hard, going over something in their heads. According to the program note, that's exactly what they're doing: preparing to perform a long and complicated dance they've only just learned.

"For Claude Shannon" is named after [the mathematical engineer](#) who connected symbolic logic with electronic circuits. [Liz Santoro](#) and Pierre Godard have devised a lexicon of 24 movements for arms and legs. Before each performance, a sequence ("one of nearly 30 billion possible sequences") is generated using the syntactic structure of a sentence by Shannon. The performers, who include Ms. Santoro, have two hours to learn it.

The dance, which had its premiere on Thursday as part of the Kitchen's "From Minimalism Into Algorithm" series, looks like the output of a fairly simple computer program. In a mechanically even rhythm, arms are raised and lowered semaphorically, feet are extended and retracted, but elbows and knees are rarely bent. Because of the reliance on a small, set vocabulary, the dancers' orientation — which direction each is facing, in relation to the others — assumes greater importance. The work is not about the steps. The dancers go in and out of unison, revealing a logic. Sometimes they stop, but the sequence continues.

At first, all this occurs in silence. But Greg Beller's electronic score introduces an airplane hum and static and then random clicks that resolve into a metronomic beat; the beat slowly accelerates, acquires rumbling bass and eventually compounds into a polyrhythmic dance track.

The dance follows a similar process as the performers lock in to the beat and the acceleration imparts some drama and suspense: Will the machine go too fast? Yet, although the dance loosens, it doesn't break out nearly as far as the music: a few kicks, hops, arabesques. Where the dancers resembled automatons before, now they admit inklings of human individuality. The hips of Marco D'Agostin sway as if he can't hold them back any longer. The dancers' faces show strain, a mental effort one might (wrongly) fail to associate with dance. On Ms. Santoro's face, there's occasionally a hint of a smile, as if this exercise, which holds a viewer's attention, gives her pleasure.

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"For Claude Shannon" continues through Saturday at the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, Chelsea; 212-255-5793, Ext. 11, [thekitchen.org](#).