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**Saying *soul* as the body does... (a study of dancers' rhetoric in phenomenology's shadow)**

“The curtain goes up and you reveal your heart and your soul.” These words, spoken by Judith Jamison, Artistic Director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, raise concerns about the relationship between dance, rhetoric, and phenomenology. Choreographer Jerome Bel ridicules the all-too familiar formula “dance, dance, dance, enjoy, enjoy, enjoy, feel, feel, feel, express, express, express.” Questioning the concepts of being, presence, and character, I interrogate the divide between Jamison’s acceptance and Bel’s rejection of the notion of “expression.” When is dance rhetoric a supplement to or substitute for that which exceeds language? Do dancers inherently approach their work phenomenologically? Keeping in mind issues of accessibility, authenticity, and race, what are possible motives for self-consciously framing one’s performance in metaphysical terms—or not? Examining the limits of a phenomenological approach to dance studies, this paper will place Bert O. States in conversation with Merleau-Ponty and recent dance scholarship.