

Prometheus, the Titan chained to a rock in punishment for giving fire to human beings, may seem an unlikely subject for modern performances of Greek tragedy based on movement and rhythm. For one thing, the tragic play *Prometheus Bound* attributed to Aeschylus is markedly static. The aim of this paper is to explore two of the earliest productions on the subject to have been recorded on film, in which dancing by the bound protagonist himself or the Chorus of the Daughters of Oceanus takes centre stage. The theatrical production of *Prometheus Bound* by Eva Palmer Sikelianos, performed in Delphi in 1927, was one of the highlights of the first dramatic festival to take place in modern Greece. Ted Shawn's dance *Prometheus Bound*, choreographed to the symphony with the same name by Alexander Scriabin, was first performed in 1929 and quickly won a lasting place in Shawn's repertoire as a solo dancer in the USA. Palmer's theatre performance and Shawn's dance on the subject of Prometheus are interesting not only because of the close and well-documented collaboration between the two and the various aesthetic and political preoccupations they shared but also because of the wider issues they raise about choreography and cinema and the ways in which they can be understood as metaphors for the encounter of modernity with antiquity in the 1920s. The fact that both productions are based on dance and that both have been recorded on film is not a mere coincidence but a manifestation of an aesthetic of movement which blends and juxtaposes ancient and modern rhythms in search of a utopian social order.

Dance combines the freedom of bodily movement with the need to follow the discipline of choreography. The dances of Palmer and Shawn piece together into a coherent whole disparate gestures and movements derived from a wide range of sources which include not only the personal experiences and memories of the dancers themselves but also ancient vase paintings, Orthodox church music, modern Greek folk dances, Jean Jacques Dalcroze's eurythmics, and modernist experimentation with musical and choreographic abstraction. Film, in its turn, is marked by the paradox of still frames giving the illusion of movement. It is not just an unmediated record of a stage spectacle but a composition and reconfiguration of individual segments of that spectacle: frozen images taken from different camera angles are brought together to form a narrative which, however continuous and self-effacing it might appear, is marked by the ruptures and discontinuities of point of view, framing, and editing. The body of the actor and the eye of the camera, the physical and the mechanical, are not just closely interwoven in the Prometheus productions under examination but in fact they are homologous, combining as they do movement and stasis, freedom and control, aesthetics and ideology.