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Pirouettes and Phytoplankton

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Opinion Piece

Sometimes, women in science are also women who dance. [In Spring 2014, dancer Jody Sperling accompanied a 43-day scientific expedition to the Chukchi Sea. The expedition's goal was to study the relationship between phytoplankton blooms and the thinning Arctic ice.](#) Phytoplankton blooms develop where the ice melts and leaves room for the sun to warm the surface water. Phytoplankton blooms are evidence of rising sea temperatures because where [sun rays have access to surface water, phytoplankton breed](#). Jody Sperling was the first-ever choreographer-in-residence aboard the boat as a part of an outreach team meant to educate people on climate change. "On my journey" she said, "I fell in love with sea and ice and wanted to tell its story." She wanted to inspire her audience to also fall in love with the ice caps, and work to protect them. Her passion for arts and the scientific discoveries behind climate change came together in her dance entitled *Ice Floe* [here](#).

In a flowing white costume, Sperling beautifully blends into the white background. In this timelapse piece, the dancer symbolically becomes one with the ice caps and thus shows the importance of ice cap preservation. She is passionate about the connections between sea ice and its connections to the human body. ["\[Sea ice\] undergoes radical transformations throughout the year. It's porous and, amazingly, has the same mathematical structure as human bone."](#) The human body is, of course, the main tool in the art of dance. In *Ice Floe*, Sperling connects her own body and the art it creates with both the ground she danced on and the intricacies of the melting polar ice caps.



Project entitled Ice Cycle. A clip from the time lapse video of Jody Sperling's dance on the Chukchi ice caps entitled [Ice Floe](#).

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