

DANCE COMPOSITION WORKSHOP FOR DANCEWORKS

Presented by Kelly Brownlee – January 2018

A. Intention

“A movement without motivation is unthinkable”

Doris Humphry

I am for movement which comes from conscious motivation, in favour of communicating to people about people. All movement composed in this class will have honest intention which will be clearly communicated through technical proficiency. When making all choreographic decisions, refer to your intended meaning FIRST for movement outcomes.

B. The Sacred Stage – Entrances and Exits

“I never in my life set foot on a stage without thinking of its magic and my destiny”

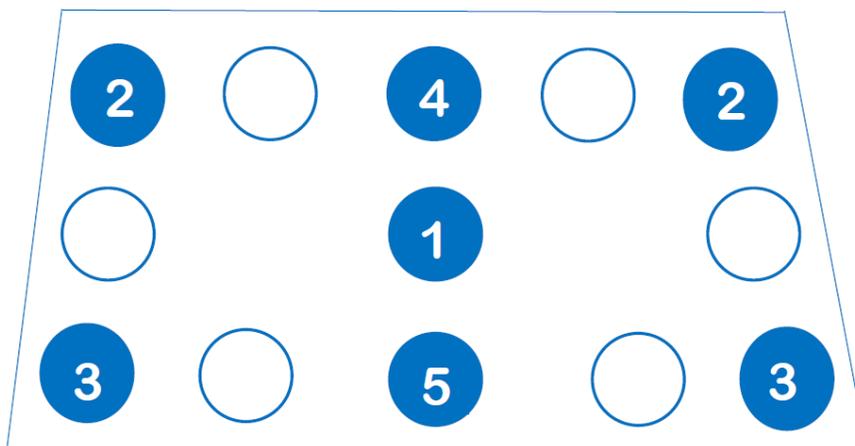
Ruth St. Denis (modern dance pioneer)

The lesson to be had here is that areas of the stage will support and enhance various conceptions, or they will negate them, and it is necessary for the choreographer to make conscious choices.

Follow these simple rules when considering the development of shapes, formations and transition patterns in your blocking and choreography.

1. There are 6 weak areas and seven strong areas on the stage.

- Strong areas on the stage in rank order of powerful impact
- Weak areas on the stage



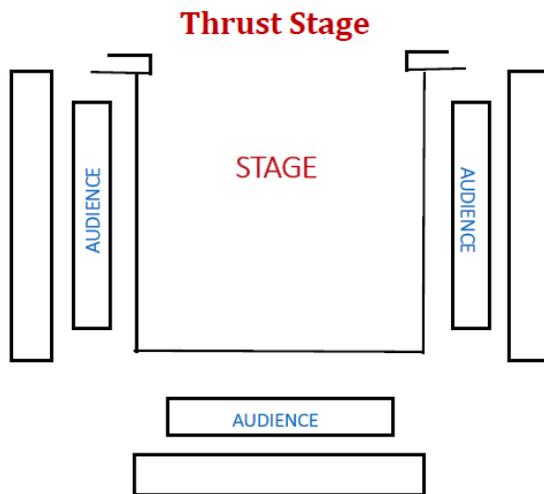
2. Movement loses power as it retreats upstage beyond dead center and gains power moving down stage.
3. The sides are weak entrances and exits and any form of movement.

4. There is an inherent waxing and waning rhythm of power for any part of the stage and none must be overused. The stage is not static but full of vibration and sound with the dance composer in control of the volume.
5. Upstage is for characters who must maintain power and regency, they are remote here, untouchable, unknowable. Downstage is for the personal, intimate and empathetic characters and should be used to lure or seduce the audience.

C. Thrust Theater

In theatre, a **thrust stage** (also known as a **platform stage** or **open stage**) is one that extends into the audience on three sides and is connected to the backstage area by its upstage end.

BENEFITS	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Greater intimacy – an opportunity to impact the audience emotionally.</p> <p>Easy access to stage from backstage and some opportunity to enter through the audience.</p> <p>Audience feels they are continually part of the action – opportunity to involve them in your performance.</p> <p>Each movement can be observed at every angle – makes for a more interesting audience experience.</p>	<p>Blocking is less effective as audience is so close, actors run a high risk of blocking one section of the audience at any time and frequent facing adjustments must be made to perform to all sides.</p> <p>More difficult to get the audience to focus where you want them to.</p> <p>Performers must remember to perform to audience members on all three sides.</p> <p>Performers are exposed to all audience reactions, may be difficult for young performers to stay focused and in character.</p>



D. Composition of Dance

1. Impulse (Meaning, Intention, Impulse)
2. Design (Shape, Relationships, Space – Pathways and Formations)
3. Dynamics
4. Musicality

E. Cleaning Process

1. Slow it down, break it down (Edjing, YouTube)
2. Chunking / Naming / Verbalizing / Drilling
3. Video Feedback – make this available on line to the students along with the track
4. Reflection (WWW, EBI, Overview and individual responsibility)

F. Contact for Choreographers

What to expect from your clinicians:

1. Professionalism (being on time, appropriate dress and conduct, etc.)
2. Preparedness (choreography, sharing track, etc.)
3. Rapport with students
4. Delivery

TIPS FOR LEARNING CHOREOGRAPHY MORE QUICKLY

Presented by Kelly Brownlee – January 2018

Look at Me

You need to get it into your head before your head can direct it to your body.

1. Sightreading

Watch the movement many times to prepare your mind and body what to expect when learning specific movements. It is a cousin to quickly learning a script in drama or reading sheet music. This includes knowing the technical repertoire used when you see it, recognizing which movements occur when in association with a piece of music, so this means not only learning movements in sequence, but in rhythmical order and/or syncopation. There is an additional layer to understanding what a choreographer wants from you, you must translate the textures of the movements demonstrated by the choreographer into your own body so you convey the desired effect and message.

2. Take It Slow

Walking through the steps of your choreography slowly when learning it will help you remember more quickly.

This technique heightens your awareness of every movement, and how it should feel. This accelerates muscle memory as well as mental memory. It is good to have an app which can slow down music too.

3. Verbalize

Verbalize what you are seeing.

4. Look Away

Keep your eyes off the choreographer as much as you can.

We have a natural tendency to keep our eyes on the choreographers as we dance, staring them down and mirroring them as they're teaching. But once you dance without them, you have no idea what you're doing. It's important to study the choreographer to properly understand their movement, execution, and timing, but try to wean yourself off of the choreographer. Push yourself to reduce the amount of times you have to keep your eyes on the choreographer before you try it without watching them. The instant you feel you understand their choreography, try to stop depending on the choreographer and refer to them for notes and fixes. Stay mentally engaged, and you'll get there.

5. Chunk It Up

Learn the choreography in chunks that logically connect or tell a story.

Most choreography has distinct phrases or groups of steps. Most teachers introduce choreography in these phrases. Think about the common characteristics between the movements included in each group and give the section a name. Videos are always made available to you to aid your practice. Make sure you are motivated to take advantage of this. You can rerun a sequence on video 1,100 times. You will never get that amount of repetition from a teacher in class.

6. The Cue In You

Develop personal not external cues.

It is very easy to associate choreography to specific points on your practice floor, the sound of your coaches' count, or a piece of music that you practice to. The problem is that in a competition, none of these will be there to help you. Instead of external cues, develop cues in your own mind and body. A particular weight shift can signal the next group of steps, or you can associate an arm moment with a step that you frequently forget. Transitions from one dance phrase to another are as important to memory as they are to the fluidity of the dance, but you need to consciously define them as memory triggers to make this technique work.

7. Drill It

If there is a part you are struggling to get, drill it 5 times or more.

8. Do It Again

To learn anything quickly and long term, set a well-established schedule for repetition.

After the practice or lesson where you have learned new choreography, repeat it immediately on your own. Then take a 10 minute break and repeat it again. Then repeat it physically and/or in your mind an hour later. And then repeat it again the next day, and still again no more than a week later. This schedule can help you quickly learn almost anything. You can think of it as a way to embed information in your long term memory through a lot of early repetition to get it established in your mind and body, and then allowing brief but increasing spacing of time to let it sink in.

THE RESULT = MASTERY

Memory is a skill that improves the more you do it, just like anything else.

DANCE CONCEPTS – THE ELEMENTS OF DANCE

Presented by Kelly Brownlee – January 2018

From the Book: Gilbert, A. G. (1992). Creative dance for all ages: A conceptual approach, Reston, VA: National Dance Association

A. The Concept of Space

- **Place** – self space / general space
- **Size** – big / small, far reach / near reach
- **Level** – high / low
- **Direction** – forward / backward, right / left, up / down
- **Pathway** – curved / straight / zigzag
- **Focus** – single focus / multi-focus

B. The Concept of Time

- **Speed** – fast / slow
- **Rhythm** – pulse / pattern / breath
- **Musicality** – lyrics / beat / imagery / tone

C. The Concept of Force

- **Energy** – sharp (sudden) / smooth (sustained)
- **Weight** – strong / light
- **Flow** – free / bound

D. The Concept of Body

- **Parts** – head, neck, arms, wrists, elbows, hands, fingers, pelvis, spine, trunk, legs, knees, feet, toes, ankles, heels, shoulders, etc.
- **Shapes** – curved / straight, angular / twisted, symmetrical / asymmetrical
- **Relationships** – body parts to body parts, individuals to groups, body parts to objects, individuals and groups to objects; near / far, meeting / parting; alone / connected, mirroring / shadowing, unison / contrast, over / under, above / below, around / through, beside / between, on / off, gathering / scattering, in / out, etc.
- **Balance** – on balance / off balance

E. The Concept of Movement

- **Locomotor:**
 - a. Basic: walk, run, jump, hop, leap, gallop, slide, skip, crawl, roll
 - b. Combined: step-hop, waltz run, two-step, grapevine, prance, slither, creep, etc.
- **Non-Locomotor** – bend, twist, stretch, swing, push, pull, fall, melt, sway, turn, spin, dodge, kick, poke, lift, carve, curl, lunge, slash, dab, punch, flick, float, glide, press, wring, shake, rise, sink, burst, wiggle, etc.

F. The Concept of Form

- **Recurring Theme** – theme in variation, canon, round
- **ABA** – a=one phrase, b=different phrase
- **Abstract** – a geometric form, not representational
- **Narrative** – in the form of a story, representational
- **Suite** – moderate beginning, slow center, fast end
- **Broken Form** – unrelated ideas, often used for humour