

## **Elements of Composition:**

**Shape:** The outline and contour of the body that creates a specific form or figure. Curved, linear/angular, symmetrical, asymmetrical, twisted, flat, distorted, very small, very large, elaborate, simple, jagged, smooth, etc.

**Level:** Height in relation to place. High (releve or airwork); Middle (standing or bent legs); Low (kneeling, sitting, lying down).

**Size and Range:** Size—how large or small; Range—The amount of space a movement moves through (small to large, large to small)

**Focus:** Where attention is aimed, including eyes and body parts. Points of focus—inner/outer (internal or external), near/far (near body or distant from body), single/multiple (one point of focus or many).

## **Use of space:**

Direction: Line of movement through space

Direct: Straight, forward, backward, sideward, diagonal

Indirect: Meandering, Circular

Floor Pattern: Pathway through space (straight, circular, winding, spiral, designs)

**Dynamics:** Variations in the amount of energy, intensity or power given to movement; Subtle variations in the treatment of movement contrasts.

**Tempo:** The speed of the music. Fast, slow, moderate, changing or mixed speeds.

**Rhythm:** Combination of long and short beats.

**Effort:** The amount and type of exertion of physical power. Bound/free, sudden/sustained, direct/indirect, strong/light

Flow effort: the continuity of movement—bound flow/free flow

Weight effort: attitudes toward using the weight of your body—strong/light

Time effort: inner attitude toward time—sudden/sustained

Space effort: attention toward the use of space—direct/indirect

## **Movement Qualities:**

Swing: Pendulum-like; Combination of suspend-collapse-suspend-energy

Suspend: Continuous release of energy with a feeling of being held

Sustained: Even release of energy that stays constant; constant flow of energy

Percussive: Sharp bursts of energy

Collapse: A total release of energy

Vibratory: Very, very quick sharp bursts of energy

## **Choreographic Forms:**

Sequential forms: Phrases are arranged one after the other:

Two-part (AB): Two contrasting phrases are explored and developed

Three-part (ABA): Two contrasting phrases are explored and developed and there is a return to the first phrase.

Rondo (ABACAD...): A continuation of the three-part form to explore many phrases or ideas.

Free sequential form (ABB, ABCA, ACDAD): Contrasting phrases are explored and developed

Theme and Variation: A structure that allows the phrase to be developed by manipulating the elements of dance (elements are listed on the previous page). The original movement travels through a series of transformations.

Contrapuntal forms: Phrases are arranged in contrast to each other.

Ground Bass: A short movement phrase that is not fully developed and is repeated over and over again in contrast to a solo, duet, or group.

Round or Canon: Form that has two or more dancers repeating the same phrase at delayed intervals as a means of counterpoint (example: row, row, row your boat)

Fugue: Original theme plays "tag" with itself, appearing and reappearing. The theme may be inverted, reversed, augmented, or diminished.

## **Choreographic Devices:**

Augmentation: Act of enlarging or increasing size, degree, amount, etc.

Diminution: Act of reducing the intensity, volume or force of a movement

Inversion: Doing the movement upside down

Repetition: Doing the movement again

Retrograde: Doing the movement in a backward order

Reverse: Doing the movement backwards

Sequence: Changing the order of movements in a phrase

Transference: Doing a movement on the left side that was originally done on the right side and vice versa, or doing a movement in one part of the body and moving it to another part of the body (i.e. a head roll, shoulder roll, body roll, etc).

## **Choreographic Principles:**

**Contrast:** Movement or phrase that is strikingly different

**Group Relationships (mass):** Movement in relationship to other figures or groups in space

Unison: Movement of individuals or groups at the same time

Opposition: Movement of individuals or groups that work against each other

Succession: Use of individuals or groups one after another

**Use of coherence:** Harmony in parts of space

Symmetry and balance: equal arrangement of line, design, objects weight, floor pattern

Emphasis and proportion: Arranged so essential ideas are given intensity by means of contrast, variety, stress. Parts are brought out due to their relative importance

Unity and harmony: All parts of the whole have some common relationship

**Variety:** Avoiding sameness throughout the phrase or dance

**Choreographic Processes:** Structuring movement to convey an idea to an audience. The process usually involves exploring possibilities, collecting ideas and materials to inform improvisation, recording improvised movement material, choosing and developing movement material, reworking and structuring movement material, rehearsing and refining choreography, and finally performing choreography.

**Choreographic Structures:** Forms that help a choreographer develop movement phrases into a complete dance composition, and that are used as a part of the choreographic process.

**Improvisation:** Spontaneous movement. (On-the spot movement discovery).

**Structured Improvisation:** Planned improvisation around a theme, image or idea.

Activities to guide improvisation (movement discovery):

Asymmetry/symmetry activity: Explore balance and unbalance in design at all levels

Symmetry: Both halves the same. Balanced.

Asymmetry: Irregular design, off balance, uneven.

Positive vs. Negative space: Explore the negative space of a partner or group.

Positive space: The space a dancer's body occupies.

Negative space: The area between, in, and around a dancer (or dancers).

Mirroring/opposites: Copy the movement of a partner you are facing; Do the opposite of a partner you are facing.

Shadowing: Copy the movement of a person who is in front of you

Leading/following: Initiate movement for others to follow/copy movement initiated by another person. (example: flocking)

Meeting/parting: Move toward/away from another dancer

Movement conversation: In partners, create movement that goes back and forth between individuals and mimics a conversation...some movements repeated, some exchanges quick or slow, etc.

Sensory awareness; Utilize touch, smell, hearing, kinesthesia, sight, or taste as a means of inspiration for dance

Music motivation: Use melody, rhythm, and musical structure as a motivation for dance.

Text interpretation: Use written word as a means of inspiration for dance (newspaper, book excerpts, magazine article, poems, etc.)

Movement variations: Change/modify movement material based on the different elements of dance

Literal (gesture/pantomime): Representational, real, true to fact, not exaggerated

vs.

Abstract: Non-representational, exaggerated or distorted, expresses a quality or characteristic

## **Ideas to guide improvisation and choreography:**

1. Take risks
2. Be as physical as possible
3. Be as clearly defined as possible
4. Bring your technique with you

Goals: simplicity, total involvement, clarity, transform emotion

Continuity or flow: Transitions are as important as the movement itself.

A sense of belonging: Does every movement belong with every other movement? Do they all contribute to the same thing? If they don't, the mental and emotional flow of the viewer will become confused. Don't create a fragmented phrase; create a phrase that is unified.

Development: Does your series of movements build an interest? Does it go somewhere?

Climax: Somewhere near the end, the inner drive of the phrase should reveal itself in such a way that the dominant energy can be brought to rest, or can change to something else, or repeat itself with satisfaction.

Beginning, Middle, and End: The beginning must attract the onlooker; the middle must take him somewhere; the end must reveal the significance of what has happened.