

ANALYSIS OF DANCE ELEMENTS AS A CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION¹

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If dance wants to contribute to the larger aims of education, teaching has to be more than just an "imitation" of "the moving teacher".

Probably, the most important goal of this philosophy is to approach dance education from a point of view of "inspiration" rather than "imitation".

Through this analysis we try to figure out, how we can influence the behaviour of a dancer, and how a student might rediscover his body to make it more responsive and sensitive to movement demands.

The aim is to teach students to experience dance as a language and learn how to communicate through movement. This goal is achieved by a constant concern about the quality with which movements are performed.

"What" the student is doing is of only minor importance but everything comes together in "How" he does it.

Quality aspects which could be developed are:

- body-awareness
- temporal-awareness
- space-awareness.

I. Body-awareness

- This ability
- to move
 - to hold
 - to control
 - and to organize the moving body is crucial to dance

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It will give the dancer the freedom to concentrate on "How" he is moving, with the remarkable sensation of being an organized and coordinated moving body in harmony with himself.

Elements to explore this field could be:

- alignment
- centering
- gravity
- balance: - physical
 - inner balance
- breathing
- impulse
- flow
- contraction - release
- curves
- angles
- rotation
- twist
- touch
- suspension
- bodyparts.

All this seems to be purely theoretical and an assembly of only words.

In four workshops of 90 min. each, those words were extensively translated into movement. For those however who didn't have the opportunity to dance or observe the workshops Eliane De Gendt, co-author of this article, was so kind as to demonstrate some examples of these 'quality-aspects'.

II. Temporal awareness

Acquiring a sense of rhythm gives movement a dynamic and driving quality and allows the student to memorise the structure of a movement sequence.

1. In terms of motion

- dynamics
- * breathing rhythm
 - * rhythm of movement
 - * emotional rhythm
- phrasing
- swings
- waves
- bounces
- percussion - sustained

- legato and staccato
- off - balance
- accelerate - decelerate
- stop - go.

2. In terms of time

- fast and slow
- non - stop
- repetitive
- active pause.

III. Spatial awareness

This sensitivity to space is another important factor contributing to the emotional power of movement.

It is the interaction between the movement and the surrounding space: "The way of making space visible".

It is essential for the student that he becomes aware about "the lines", not only as a matter of direction but also for the purpose of "the linear significance of the body".

Elements helping to discover this spatial awareness are:

- directions - right - left
 - up and down (levels)
 - diagonal
 - profile
 - facing upstage - downstage
- body positions related to space
- counter movements
- drawing
- points in space
- focus
- space between people
- patterns
- extension.

These space-factors have within them the power to contribute much to the aesthetic effect of the final synthesis.

During the process of learning it is essential that the teacher stimulates and helps the student to know - to imagine - to create and to execute.

It is also evident that we evaluate permanently the progress of skilful execution and the growth of emotional enrichment.

A five point scale was developed in order to evaluate perceptual motor ability (Table 1). This scale allows to observe students and inform them about their progress.

The ability to connect movements to these different "quality aspects" will profoundly change the way of moving.

Working on the described quality aspects, allows the student to add a dimension to his way of moving.

Dance will become a language, a way to express oneself.

TABLE 1 : EVALUATION SCALE OF PERCEPTUAL MOTOR ABILITY

1 = weak	2 = unsatisfactory	3 = satisfactory	4 = good	5 = very good
BODY -AWARENESS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - very inaccurate - has no conception of body placement - has difficulty in picking up the steps, no learning result - completely lacking proper control of movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insensitive to nuances - can not combine movements - uncontrolled tension in the way of moving - moves in a disorganised way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mostly well placed movement, good body control - attentive to move with the desired tension - mostly well coordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - picks up movements quickly - moves uninhibited - moves efficiently with the right tension - good coordination in general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evident self confidence - sensitive to details - moves efficiently : physically, intellectually and emotionally integrated - capable to move economically
TEMPORAL AWARENESS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fails to differentiate tempo, bar structure, melodic sentence - always guessing - unsteady, undecided - hides in the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uncertain, no confidence - doesn't grasp principals; working more incidentally - often hesitates - has difficulty in distinguishing the bar structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hears the bar structure immediately - has a sense of rhythm - is aware of the beat and moves in tempo - can copy a rhythmical pattern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reacts immediately - recognises the melody - reacts immediately when tempo changes - recognises the bar structure in music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - able to translate a rhythmical structure into a movement immediately - easily reproduces complex rhythmical sentences - immediately distinguishes unusual bar structures : 3/4, 5/4, 7/8 ... - has a sentence of melodic climaxes
SPATIAL AWARENESS				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moves in a cramped, confined way - small restrained movements - lacks sense of space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sometimes makes expansive movements - not able to translate guidance into larger movements - instructions provide little or no help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has sense of space - moves spaciouly - conscious of directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - projects movements in space - makes space visible through movement - the linear awareness of the body creates the movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong spatial awareness - moves in relation with the surrounding space - expansive movements