SCHROEDER, NANCY LEE. "Cast Methyl Methacrylate." A Video tape of the dance is available for consultation at the Walter Clinton Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. (1975) Directed by: Dr. Lois Andreasen. Pp. 26.

It is this choreographer's belief that when a dance is created the needs of the audience must always be taken into account. The main motivation for "Cast Methyl Methacrylate" came from a desire on the part of the choreographer to produce a dance in which the audience would remain interested as well as enjoy. Six-foot colored plastic tubes are used in a unique and aesthetically pleasing manner in order to achieve a continuous element of surprise. This is accomplished throughout the dance by using a variety of stimuli which include properties, costumes, and the manipulation of time and light. Humor and the element of surprise can serve as a release from tension for the audience. "Cast Methyl Methacrylate" is divided into three separate and yet interrelated sections.

Section I opens with a duet. The dancers explore the properties, discovering how they feel, how they move, and how they can affect the dancers' range of movement. The tubes serve as impetus for much of the movement as well as becoming extensions of body parts and extending the range of movement potential. An eerie, absurd aura permeates the entire piece and is introduced at the beginning of this section.

In Section II the tubes are used as manipulated properties and as set decorations. It is comprised of unexpected, unnatural and abstract body postures and gestures. Unison movement dominates in order to create a sense of strength and force and to grab and demand the audience's constant attention. A great deal of the movement focuses

on isolated body parts and the use of these parts in an unnusual, spastic manner.

Section III is a trio, in which the eerie, absurd aura is working at its full force. This time movements that are abstract and unnatural are used. There is a great emphasis on facial expression and varying degrees of focal intensity. The dancers are working in such a way that they are at all times aware of each others' actions on stage, even though they are not moving in unison. They react to each others' movements and are attuned to all degrees of emotional change.

The accompaniment for the dance is three compositions by John Cage: "Imaginary Landscape No. 1," "Six Short Inventions for Seven Instruments," and "Construction in Metal." Six cast methyl methacrylate tubes, approximately six feet tall, measuring four inches in diameter and one-half inch in width are employed. The tubes are used as manipulated properties and/or set decorations depending upon the choreographic intent of the section. Each dancer is dressed in a tank top leotard and tights to coordinate with the color of her tube. The choreographer wishes to maintain a clear well-defined body shape, free of all extraneous materials. The impact of the costumes is that of line and simplicity.

CAST METHYL METHACRYLATE

by

Nancy Lee Schroeder

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1975

Approved by

Lois E. Andreasen
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Adviser Lois E. Anderson

Committee Members Lois M. Stevens

Arthur B. Hunkins

11/21/75
Date of Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation and production of my thesis dance and paper would not have been possible without the help, assistance and understanding of the following persons, to whom I am extremely grateful:

Dr. Lois Andreasen

Professor Virginia Moomaw

Ms. Lydia Schwartz

Ms. Linda Alvarez

Mr. Stephen Adams

Mr. R. Benkleman

The Dancers:

Lois Andreasen

Polly Brandman

Lori Daren

Sally Harrell

Madeleine Lord

Lydia Schwartz

Cecelia Tenser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MUSICAL ANALYSIS

The 25-year Retrospective Concert of the Music of John Cage

by

John Cage

Arrangement for the Dance

Section I	Imaginary Landscape No. 1 (1939) (First Seven Minutes)
Section II	Six Short Inventions for Seven Instruments (1934) (Entire Selection)
Section III	Construction in Metal (1939) Manhattan Percussion Ensemble (First Seven Minutes)

Recorded at: Town Hall, New York City, New York.
(May 15, 1958)

Printed by: Ivy Hill Lithograph Corporation
New York City, New York.

INTRODUCTION

> "The choreographer of the modern dance is concerned with basic and legitimate elements and is imbued with the urgency of pursuing the fleeting banshee of his individual vision."[1]
>
> Alwin Nikolais

During the creation of "Cast Methyl Methacrylate" the choreographer chose to concern herself with the reactions to the dance by the audience. This dance resulted from the solving of a problem: to produce a dance that would keep the attention of the audience, that would entertain them and yet result in a viable artistic statement. Any conscientious artist must remain true to her art form. It is the belief of this choreographer that a work of art cannot be successfully created for impact alone; it must be expressive and communicative. During the creative process the choreographer adhered to two basic premises: that an artist has a responsibility to the audience and, secondly, that there is strength and beauty in simplicity.

This choreographer chose to look at and use basic choreographic concepts. In her book, The Art of Making Dances, Doris Humphrey stated that in group design simplicity is a must.[2] A bombardment of visual stimuli will not grab an audience's attention. It would confuse them and inhibit their power of concentration. According to Humphrey, in order for the use of more bodies to indicate less complexity, more simplicity in linear design is a must.[3]

A thorough knowledge of the stage upon which the dance will be performed is a necessary requirement for the choreographer. Stage areas will support and enhance various conceptions or they will negate them, and it is necessary for the choreographer to make conscious choices.[4] Direction, level and size relate to the perspective of the audience as well as to the space of the stage. If the performer is on a traditional stage, there is a characteristic set of spacial problems which are predetermined by the stage. Any given performing area contains its own assets and liabilities of perspective and dimension. It is obvious that a choreographer must be keenly aware of the prospective performance area as she designs a dance movement. A choreographer should explore the power and weaknesses of moving and stationary figures on every part of the stage area. Exits and entrances must be examined from all possible places, the dancers' focus of attention should be determined, and varying numbers of dancers must be observed in different relationships, both to each other and to the peculiarities of the stage perspective.[5]

The four corners of the rectangular box stage form a frame of reference for position and action of the dancers. To the audience upstage appears remote and deep in distance; downstage as it fans out broadly, is closer, and therefore more intimate.[6] The position of the audience determines the relative directions of forward, backward, sideward and diagonal. As the dancer moves forward toward the audience, his figure becomes larger, more direct and obvious, simply as a result of perspective. As he moves backward, away from the audience, he appears

smaller, impersonal, and usually less important. As he moves diagonally forward across the performing area, he gains the combined strength of the powerful diagonal, plus the increasing size of his figure.[7]

A choreographer is a maker, a creator of dances. She seeks to create an expression by having dancers move according to her design. Choreographers, as all other creators in the arts, are concerned with content, form, technique and projection. These words describe particular aspects of the choreographic process. All of them are necessarily present, but any one of them may be given more or less emphasis, depending upon the choreographer's intent. Content refers to the underlying significance, the central concern of the work. The content must result from the choreographer's intentions. It is the effect that the choreographer is attempting to promote that will direct the selection of movement, control its organization, govern its form and modify its action. Form is the shape, the sequence, the organization of the action. Certain actions appear to belong in certain places, and it is the choreographer's task to determine where. Technique, like form, is the means to the end of communicated significance. Obviously the dance with potentially excellent content cannot come into full performance if the form is vague or the technical ability of the dancer is inadequate. Projection, which is controlled by the dancer - performer, is the magic rapport of the choreographer's plan with an audience's perception. While the form of the dance and the performer's technical ability are important, it is only when a bridge of communication between the audience and performer is complete that dance comes to life.

Sincerity, conviction, involvement, and discipline must blend with movement skill and the concern for interpreting the choreographer's intent.[8]

Expression in dance comes about as a result of the total act of moving--not because of any particular gesture, rhythmic trick, or good intention. The place where the dancer is, what he is doing, as well as the space around him are all important. The rhythm, design and dynamics are all consciously manipulated and controlled. The very process of selecting some movement out of many possible movements is in itself a primary act of creativity.

There is no single way to choreograph a dance--the process is unique to each dance and extends from the choreographer's personality. Martha Graham, the great dancer - choreographer, is accustomed to drawing her work out of her deepest feelings and rationalizing afterward, and reacts to dance as a total experience. She often does not know what direction a particular dance is going to take until she completes it and is able to look at the finished product. Hers is the instinctive approach that proceeds from feeling, not thought.[9] Twyla Tharp, a contemporary choreographer, is the exact opposite. For her, feelings play a secondary role to thought and careful mental planning.

This choreographer tends to agree with Paul Taylor, a contemporary dancer - choreographer, when he states:

> "I like the idea of change, not entirely for variety's sake, but for the sake of the people in the concert audience, who may have to sit through a whole evening of one choreographer's work."[10]

Clearly the choreographer must be aware of her underlying convictions. If she believes dance should dazzle or simply entertain an audience, then she might seek movement to display the technical virtuosity or rhythmic complexity that does this. If she considers art as a representation of beauty, grace and harmony in the world, than she should stress the grace and flow of pleasing and natural movement. If she believes dance to be an abstraction of the natural, than she will search for imaginative ways to convey such a modification of nature.[11]

The only certain basis for projection of a dance idea is dependence upon movement itself. Obviously, the staging, lighting, sets, costumes, accompaniment, and technical performance are all important, but they are secondary to the movement. A good dance will evoke some response from an audience, particularly if all aspects of design, performance and production are complete.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

An eerie, absurd aura permeates the entire dance and was introduced at the beginning of Section I. New and unusual movements tend to capture the attention of an audience and this became the primary aim of the choreographer throughout the development of "Cast Methyl Methacrylate." The attempt to meet this aim was made through the use of simple movements and the element of surprise. It is this choreographer's belief that a dance need not be flashy or choreographically intricate to appeal to an audience. The use of simple movement patterns dynamically executed can often be more effective than complex choreographic phrasing.

Properties selected for "Cast Methyl Methacrylate" were six foot tall, cylindrical cast methyl methacrylate tubes in various colors. These tubes were originally manufactured for use in industrial machinery. The machinery in which these tubes are used operates with an optimum degree of efficiency, allowing for no amount of superfluous, unnecessary movement. These same qualities exist in the dance, with the tubes serving as an integral part of the overall choreographic makeup. Since the tubes were used in a manner so diametrically different from their intended function, getting the dancers to feel comfortable with and capable of manipulating the properties was an initial problem. Therefore, during early rehearsal periods the dancers were given time to explore and improvise with the tubes individually. It was necessary to

deal with a variety of technical problems which arose concerning the properties. Even though the tubes were of a very uncomplicated and simple construction, if not treated properly or if their abilities are disregarded or ignored, they could fall and possibly shatter. Unless the ends of the tubes were perfectly flush with the floor they would fall and this did occur during rehearsal sessions. If this were to happen during the performance the dancers were given the following instructions to remedy the situation:

> "Whoever is nearest to the tube which fell immediately drop to a crouching position on the floor. Everyone else stop what you are doing and stand rigid with your head back and fingers hyperextended. Hold that position until the crouched dancer rises and executes the pre-ordained movement phrase which returns the tube to its upright position. When the tube is upright, continue the dance."

The properties and dancers relied completely upon each other; there was literally a mutual guidance and support.

The dancers created a variety of definite contrasts because of body shape and size. A thin dancer created a different image standing behind a tube than did a heavier person. Also, a short dancer was more challenged by the height of the tube than was someone taller. A cast composed of similar bodies would not result in effects as interesting. The proportions of the tubes were so exact and uniform that it was necessary to oppose them with a number of different body types. In addition, the tubes were contrasted with round and smooth movement as well as with angular and sharp movements.

The music selected was "Imaginary Landscape No. 1," "Six Short Inventions for Seven Instruments," and "Construction in Metal," composed by John Cage. The selections were edited in length in such a way as not to damage the integrity of the compositions. The music and the choreography were independent entities. Performance cues were all movement oriented and not based upon the music. The dance completely relied upon chance in that it was at the discretion of the dancers whether they used a slow or a fast tempo. These particular musical selections were chosen because they have the same eerie, absurd qualities as did the movement. Although it was not intended that the music and movement be correlated, at numerous instances they complimented each other. The dancers became aware of this and often adjusted their movement tempos to coincide with that of the music.

The performers encountered many challenges while performing "Cast Methyl Methacrylate." The success of the performance was largely dependent upon the dancers, since the choreographer wanted each individual to find and use a comfortable rhythm in which to execute movement phrases. But unless the rhythms were exciting and varied the results could have been monotonous. Not only were all of the movement cues visually oriented, but also the whole feeling of the dance relied upon the interrelationships of the dancers and the tubes. The eerie, absurd aura was also achieved through facial expressions, focal intensities and exact body positionings. It was the obligation of the choreographer to communicate her intentions clearly to the dancers so they in turn could relate to the audience. This choreographer's main instructions

to the dancers were to exaggerate and to project. Unless the dancers projected to the fullest extent with their eyes, faces and bodies, communication with the audience would be lost. The title gave no indication as to the content of the dance; therefore, it was the dancers' responsibility to interpret the mood of the dance through their movements. The dancers had to perform "Cast Methyl Methacrylate" with a high degree of projection in order to have a direct impact upon the audience.

SECTION I

Tubes Used as Properties

The choreography in Section I dealt with two dancers exploring the properties, discovering how they felt, how they moved and how they could affect the dancers' range of movement. The movement occurred in front of and behind the tubes, to the sides of them as well as under and over them. The dancers and the audience should have felt as if they were mutually exploring the tubes for the first time. The audience hopefully experienced the same sensations visually that the dancers experienced kinesthetically. The dancers carried, felt, looked through, rolled and ran with the properties. They should have left no questions pertaining to the tubes' capabilities unanswered.

When the curtain opened two dancers were lying on their backs holding the tubes, which were standing upright behind their heads. Shortly after feeling the properties with their hands the dancers rose, with one dancer standing behind a tube facing forwards, and the other in front of a tube with her back towards the audience. The next series of movement phrases were danced as mirror images. Most of these phrases, as well as the rest of the choreography in Section I, was developmental in nature, the action being stark and technically simple. The dancers now proceeded to lift the tubes, executing a series of sharp and angular poses. After placing their properties on a specified diagonal line, the dancers left the tubes for the first time. Their movements were softer and more rounded. They returned to the tubes, picked them up and assumed the same position which opened the section, except this time

facing away from the audience. They pulled the properties down on top of their bodies, pushed them off into the wings and then exited the stage by transposing the rolling movement of the tubes into their own bodies.

SECTION II

Tubes Used as Properties and Set Decorations

This section involved five dancers. The first two dancers came onto the stage by crawling under the upstage cyclorama. Almost immediately the other dancers emerged from various stage wings, propelling tubes in different and unnatural ways by pushing the tubes with noses, faces and backs. In the beginning portion of this section unison movement dominated in order to create a sense of strength and force and to grab and demand the audience's constant attention. Throughout Section II there was a sense of tension and heightened expectancy.

The dancers stood with their eyes closed, spastically flailing their lower arms, hands and fingers, while intermittently banging on the tubes. All movements were abstract and strange and were exaggerated to the point of unnaturalness. A strong emphasis on focal intensity was stressed in Section II. While the eyes were closed the hands became the guiding force. At other times wide open eyes were the only moving parts of the body. For every movement phrase there was a specified eye position, either entirely closed or wide open.

After the dancers had become fully acclimated with the tubes, the properties were placed on the stage in set positions. Once the dancers

became free of the tubes, their locomotor patterns expanded spacially and became more frequent. There were many crossing patterns with rapid entrances and exits. The dancers needed to be totally aware of each other as well as aware of the stationary tube properties and the audience. Especially while the tubes were used as set decorations, timing was of the utmost importance. Movements had to be exact or numerous collisions would have occurred. This was made more difficult due to the fact that transitions were at irregular intervals in order to maintain a feeling of unexpected surprise. The dancers removed several tubes at the end of Section II so that a major portion of the stage was left clear for the trio following in Section III. The remaining tubes served as points from behind which the next dancers entered.

SECTION III

Tubes Used as Set Decorations

As the final dancer in Section II slid under the upstage cyclorama, one dancer entered from the upstage right wing to begin the third and final section. The tubes in this section were used only as set decorations; hence, the element of surprise depended solely upon the dancers' movements. The dancers' opening movement phrase was in canon form. Each executed an identical locomotor pattern, with variations in timing, attack and rhythm. The dancers entered from the extreme upstage left wings. Their spacial separation from the audience was altered as they moved as far downstage as possible.

All movements in Section III were entirely unnatural and abstract; the dancers' bodies were not intended to be pretty, but were instead contorted and spastic. Shoulders were raised, fingers hyperextended, eyes were made as big as comfort allowed and heads were often held back. The dancers were staring at the audience, but their eyes registered nothing besides the specified focal points necessary for the execution of movement. The dancers were free in Section III to interject their own personal styles. Various subconscious nuances were added, a bit of the individual surfaced. The dancers were free to react to whatever stimuli they chose.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Selma Jean Cohen, The Modern Dance - Seven Statements of Belief. (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1965, 1966), p. 65.

[2]Doris Humphrey, The Art of Making Dances. (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1959), p. 94.

[3]Ibid., p. 93.

[4]Ibid., p. 78.

[5]Lois Ellfeldt, A Primer for Choreographers. (California: National Press Books, 1959), p. 5.

[6]Ibid., p. 11.

[7]Ibid., p. 13.

[8]Ibid., p. 25.

[9]Don McDonagh, Martha Graham. (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 95.

[10]Cohen, p. 99.

[11]Ellfeldt, p. 71.

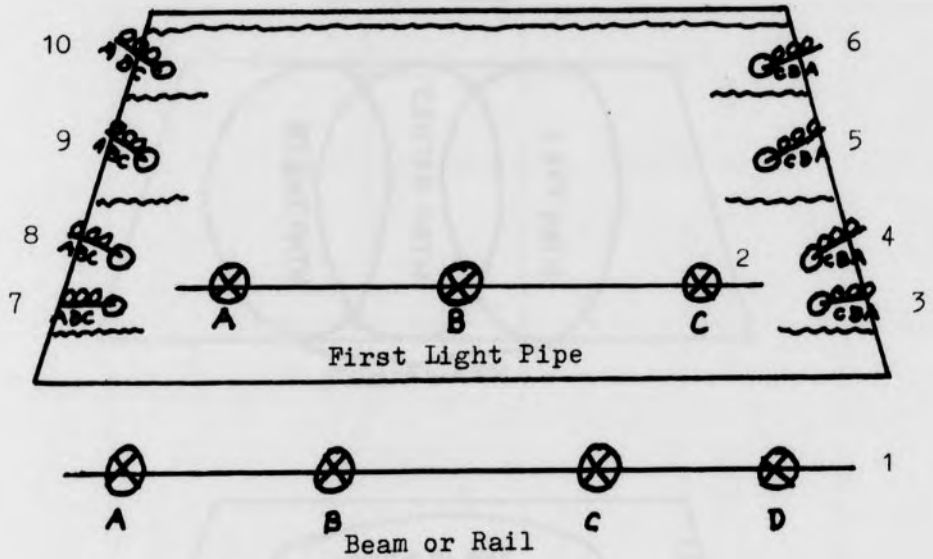
COSTUMES

Each dancer will be dressed in a tank top leotard and tights to coordinate with the color of her tube.

PROPERTIES

Six cast methyl methacrylate tubes, approximately six feet tall, measuring four inches in diameter and one-half inch in width are employed. The tubes are used as manipulated properties and/or set decorations depending upon the choreographic intent of the section. The colors of the tubes are red, black, white, orange, amber, and yellow. Each tube weighs approximately four pounds.

STAGE AREA FOR LIGHTING



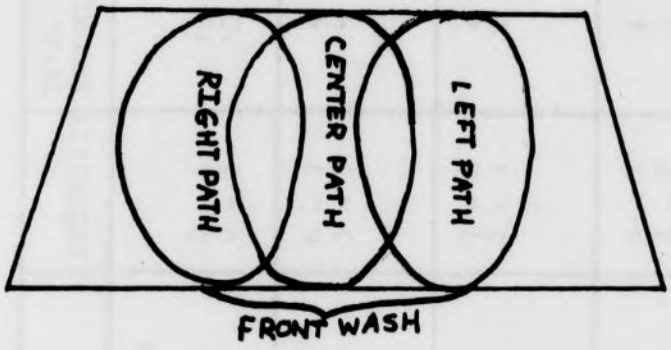
= leg or wing

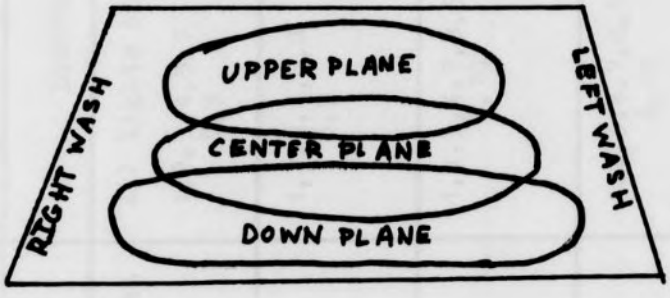
= side lighting on poles

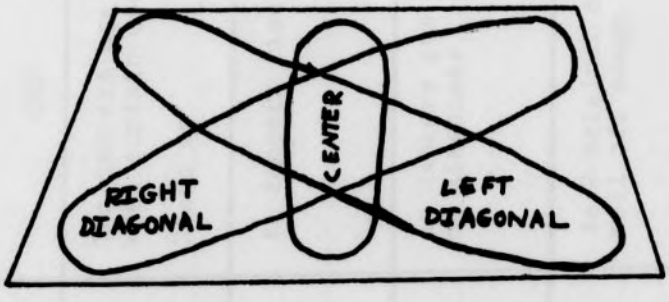
= overhead lighting

Instrument		Gel
Pipe #1	A, C	Roscolene No. 825 No Color Pink
Pipe #2	B	
Pole #3	A, B, C	
Pole #4	A, B, C	
Pole #5	A, B, C	
Pole #6	A, B, C	
Pipe #1	B, D	Roscolene No. 856 Light Blue
Pipe #2	A, C	
Pole #7	A, B, C	
Pole #8	A, B, C	
Pole #9	A, B, C	
Pole #10	A, B, C	
Pole #3	C, B	Roscolene No. 802 Bastard Amber
Pole #4	C, B	
Pole #5	C, B	
Pole #6	C, B	

LIGHTING AREAS







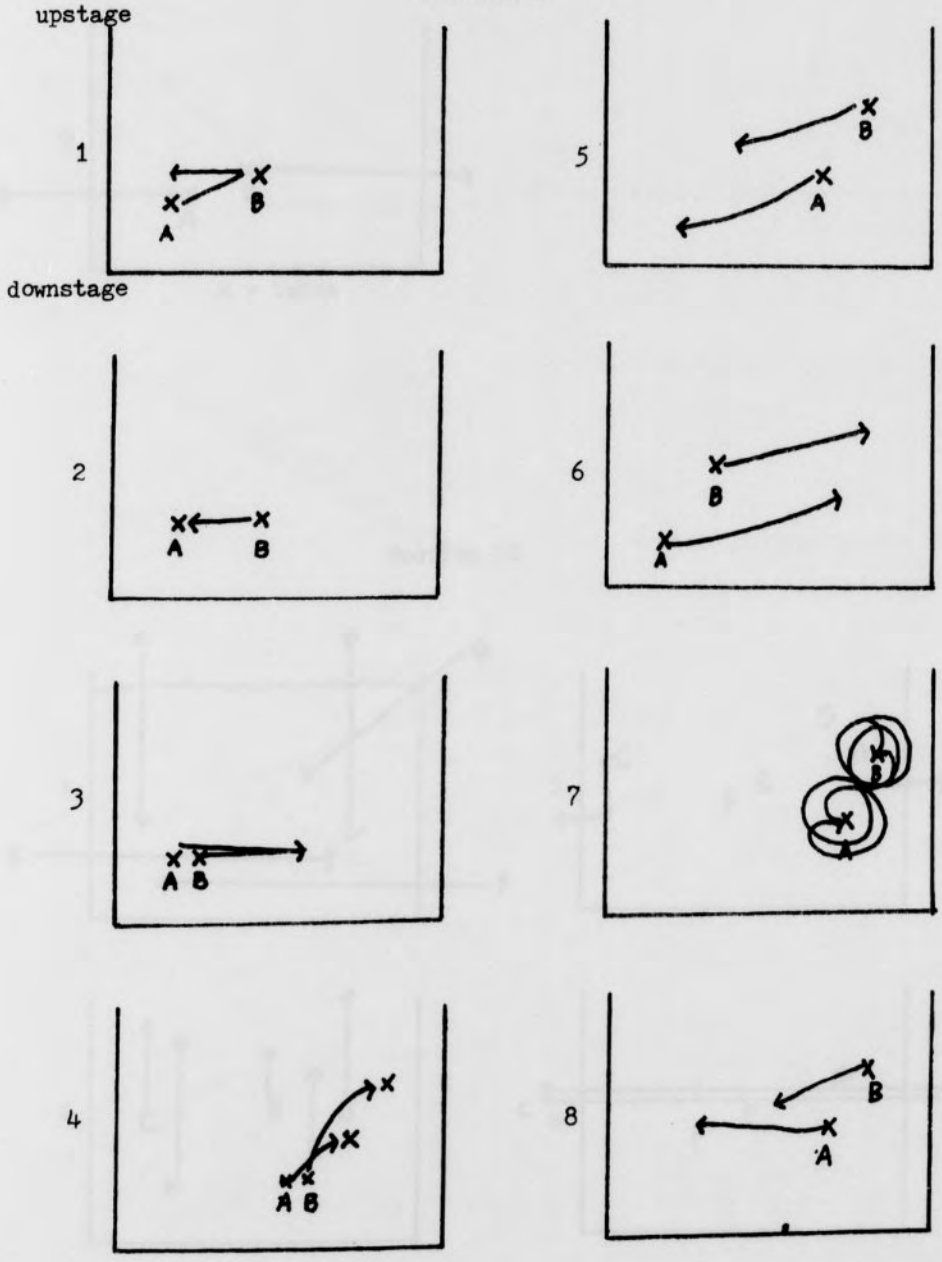
LIGHTING AND CURTAIN CUES

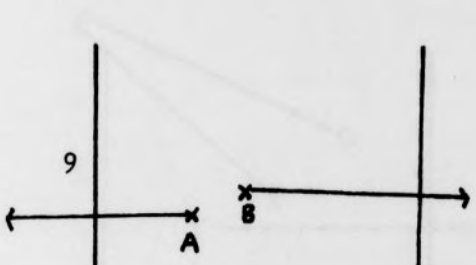
CUE #	CUE	LIGHTS	INTENSITY	TIME-SECONDS	
1	Two dancers are on stage when curtain opens	All lights on poles			SECTION I
	Music on	1,2,3,4,8,7 5,9	0 - 6 0 - 5	10 10	
2	As dancers rise	1,2,3,4,7,8 5,9	6 - 7 5 - 7	5 5	
3	As dancers put poles on diagonals	1,2,3,4,7,8,5,9 6,10	7 - 8 0 - 4	4 4	
4	As 2 original dancers roll off stage	1,2,3,4,7,8,5,9 6,10	8 - 7 4 - 8	4 4	
1	Entire section	1,2,3,4,7,8,5,9 6,10	7 8		SECTION II

CUE #	CUE	LIGHTS	INTENSITY	TIME-SECONDS
1	As the dancer goes under upstage cyclorama and as dancer emerges from upstage left wing	6,10	8 - 9	5
2	As second dancer enters from middle wing	5,9	7 - 9	5
3	When third dancer reaches downstage right position	5,6,9,10	9 - 6	5
4	As trio begins to meander	5,6,9,10	6 - 8	10
5	As first dancer begins to move to final position	6,10 1,2,3,4,7,8 5,9	8 - 0 7 - 0 8 - 0	30 40 35
6	As dancers lift their heads Music off	All lights out except for special spot (Lights ABC on pole #1)	0 - 10	3

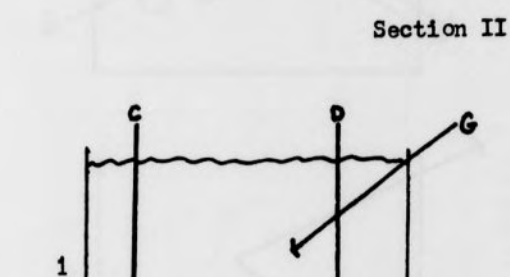
CLARIFICATION OF MOVEMENT

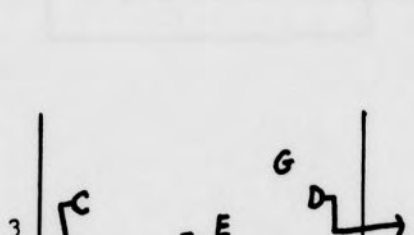
Section I

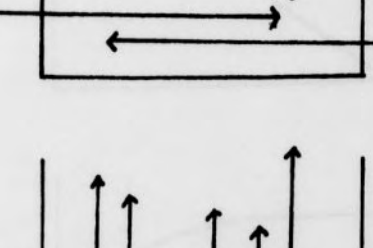


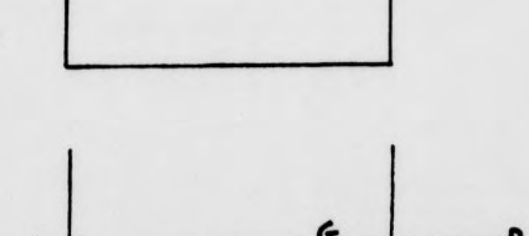


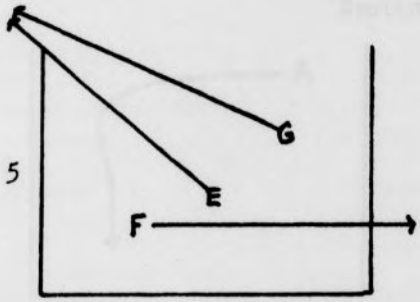
Section II

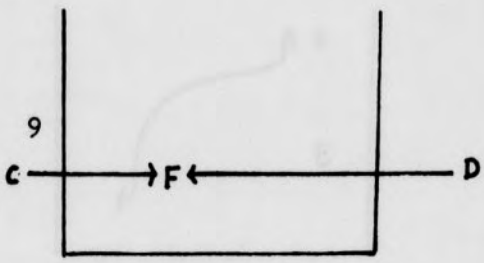


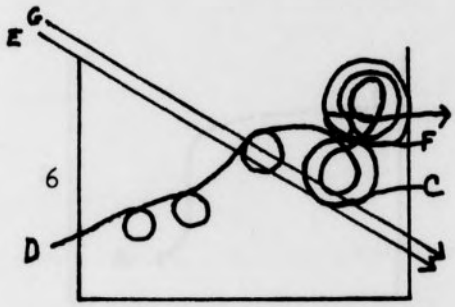


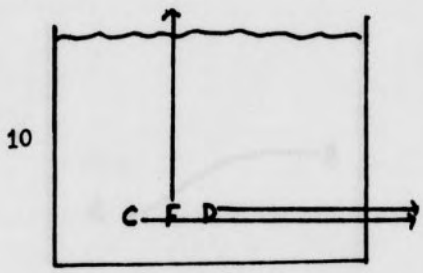


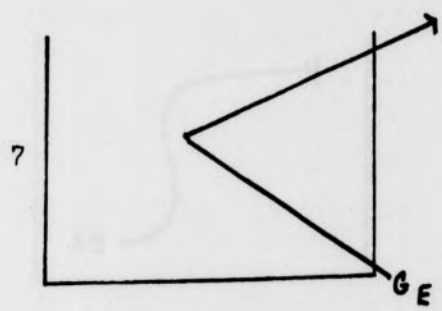


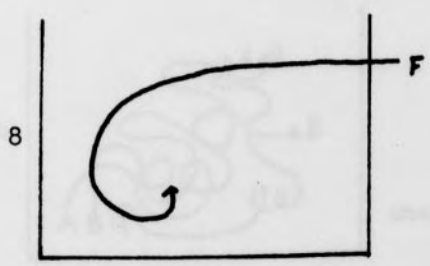

5
G
E
F


9
C
F
D

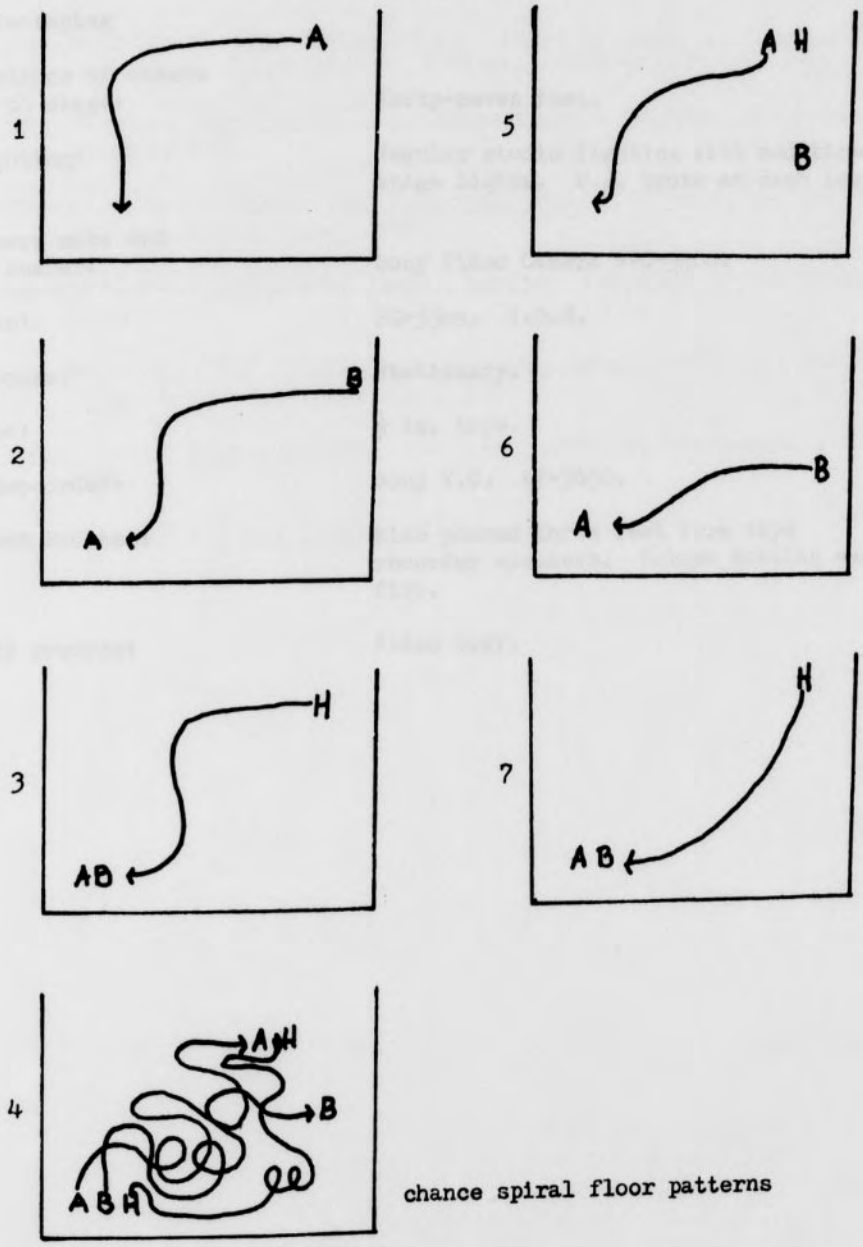

E
G
6
F
C
D


10
C
F
D


7
G
E


8
F

Section III



chance spiral floor patterns

PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA

Videotaping

Distance of camera to stage:	Forty-seven feet.
Lighting:	Regular studio lighting with additional stage lights. P.J. spots at each leg.
Camera make and number:	Sony Video Camera AVC-3200.
Lens:	20-55mm. 1:2.8.
Process:	Stationary.
Tape:	½ in. tape.
Videocorder:	Sony V.C. AV-3650.
Sound Process:	Mike placed three feet from tape recorder speakers. Volume setting was five.
Copy process:	Video copy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cohen, Selma Jean. The Modern Dance - Seven Statements of Belief. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1965, 1966.

Dickie, George. Aesthetics. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Publishers, 1971.

Ellfeldt, Lois. A Primer for Choreographers. Palo Alto, California: National Press Books, 1967.

Humphrey, Doris. The Art of Making Dances. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959.

Lloyd, Margaret. The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance. Brooklyn, New York: Dance Horizons, Inc., 1949.

McDonagh, Don. Martha Graham. New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Turner, Margery J. New Dance. Pittsburgh Press, 1971.