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WILSON, MARGARET ELIZABETH, "Alpha to Omega". A video tape of the dance is available for consultation at the Walter Clinton Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. (1976) Directed by: Dr. Lois Andreasen. Pp. 25.

The prediction of the future has always held a fascination for the choreographer, who has been particularly concerned with the growth and development of nuclear weapons. Investigation and thought on the subject led the choreographer to further study and to the development of the following personal hypothesis: the human race, from the beginning has been progressing to the point of self-destruction. This statement is the essence of "Alpha to Omega". Symbolism was the major device used by the choreographer to communicate her thoughts to the audience. The dance was organized into three sections; "Creation", "Evolution", and "Destruction".

During Section I, the choreographer wanted to create an atmosphere of sacredness and awe, while using movements to symbolize the creation of human life. No music was used so that the emphasized breath rhythms could be heard. The movements were motivated by these breath rhythms and were of a smooth quality at a slow, restrained tempo.

Section II was further divided into three parts: (1) people working together creatively; (2) people working together technically; and (3) people working together as a nation. These three parts together were intended to show a progression from a simple society to a complex society. Part One utilized movements that were abstracted from the movements of painting, sculpting and writing.

The movements in Part Two were angular and mechanized, giving the appearance of robots. The movement content of Part Three consisted of military drills and march-like movements to emphasize the theme of national awareness. The music used in this section was an unpublished composition by Joel Moffitt.

The choreographer's intent during Section III was to refocus the attention upon the fragility of life, while underscoring the aggressive behavior that had developed among the dancers. Movements were motivated by a rapid breath rhythm, which was used to project a sense of panic and confusion. As in Section I, there was no music used during Section III.

The dancers for all sections wore long-sleeve V-neck leotards of tan color with matching tights.

"ALPHA TO OMEGA"

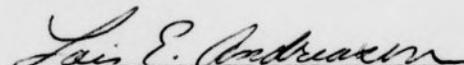
by

Margaret Elizabeth Wilson

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
1976

Approved by


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.

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June 8, 1976
Date of Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their help and encouragement during the development of my Thesis, and throughout my Master Degree program:

My Adviser - Dr. Lois Andreasen

My Classmates - Lynda Sawyer and Paula Dobbins

My Thesis Dancers - Karen Brown

Chris Hollowell

Sallie Mackie

Gretchen Morris

Robin Rundstedler

Lydia Schwartz

MUSICAL ANALYSIS

THE CREATION

by

Joel Moffitt

Arrangement of Music
for the Dance

Section I Sound Effect - Thunder and Lightning
 Mr. Emil W. Young
 WUNC Television and Radio
 University of North Carolina
 at Greensboro

Section II THE CREATION
 Edited by Mr. Joel Moffitt and
 Mr. Emil W. Young
 WUNC Television and Radio
 University of North Carolina
 at Greensboro

Section III Sound Effect - Atomic Weapon
 Mr. Emil W. Young
 WUNC Television and Radio
 University of North Carolina
 at Greensboro

THE CREATION is an unpublished composition by Mr. Joel Moffitt.
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro,
North Carolina (December 1975).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

 Background of the Study 1

 The Dance: "Alpha to Omega" 3

 Section I - "Creation" 6

 Section II - "Evolution" 7

 Section III - "Destruction" 8

FOOTNOTES 11

COSTUME DESIGN 12

STAGE AREA FOR LIGHTING 13

LIGHTING AREAS 14

LIGHTING AND CURTAIN CUES 16

CLARIFICATION OF MOVEMENT 18

PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY 25

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The prediction of the future has always held a fascination for the choreographer. In researching the topic, it was found that as early as primitive societies, certain designated people bore the responsibility of prophesying the future. From these societies, through those of contemporary times, there have been certain dances performed to insure such things as peace and fertility in the coming years. The 20th century has brought with it tremendous technical advances and many prophecies. Of particular concern to the choreographer, has been the growth and development of nuclear weapons. Investigation and thought on the subject led the choreographer to further study, as well as the development of the following hypothesis: the human race, from the beginning, has been progressing to a point of self-destruction.

Several futurists have presented their predictions in the form of science-fiction writings. Arthur C. Clarke and Ray Bradbury seem to share the concern of the choreographer that our technical advancements, specifically in nuclear weapon development, have surpassed our ability to cope with the social repercussions. However, it should be stated that there are those who see atomic power, not as the destruction of humankind, but as its salvation. In the words

of Boris Pregel:

We can look forward to cheap power and fuel, and indefinite supply of raw materials, comfort for all with the minimum of labor--those things that should remove the causes of poverty, envy and greed, make wars unthinkable and usher in a golden age for human beings.¹

Arthur C. Clarke, a British scientist, writer, and founding member in 1936 of the British Interplanetary Society, has shown more accuracy in his predictions than many of his fellow scientists and science-fiction writers. In the mid-forties, he explained how global television could be a possibility through the use of communication satellites, and forecast the probable date of the first moon rocket landing as 1959.²

In his book, Childhood's End, Clarke presents his philosophic projection that humankind is in the evolution of being something greater than itself. Clarke calls this being the "Overmind". However, it is only with the help of extraterrestrial beings sent from the "Overmind", that earth beings manage to keep from destroying themselves before they reach the ultimate for which they are meant.³

Ray Bradbury, in The Martian Chronicles, predicts our travel into our solar system, specifically to Mars. His work encompasses dates 1999 to 2026, and narrates the first Earth expedition to Mars, through the dying out of the Martian race. In the end, several families escape from atomic warfare to their new home, Mars.⁴

The Dance: "Alpha to Omega"

The choreographer sees the life of civilization as comparable to the life of a single organism. It is born, it grows and matures, and it dies. The philosophical statement of "Alpha to Omega" is that since its birth, humankind has been progressing to its own, self-inflicted death. The meaning of the title, "Alpha to Omega" is beginning to end. In selecting a title, the choreographer wanted a symbolic phrase which would be easily recognized and understood by the audience. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. The phrase "Alpha and Omega" is used in Christianity as the symbol of God being the beginning and end of all things.⁵ In "Alpha to Omega", the choreographer presented the beginning of human life in civilization, through the phrases of its maturity to its death.

In order to communicate to the audience through movement the essence of "Alpha to Omega", symbolism was the major device used. The choreographer accepted the definition and explanation of symbolism as stated by Fingesten in The Eclipse of Symbolism. Fingesten defines a symbol as "something that stands for, or denotes something else ..."⁶ He goes on to say that: "The evocative powers of a symbol transcend language, for its connotations may be infinite."⁷ As artists' tools, symbols have the instrumental value of expression and communication.⁸

Because the choreographer wanted to communicate her hypothesis clearly to the audience, she selected symbols that would be easily

recognized and understood. The candle, which is often used in religious ceremonies as a symbol of the fleetingness and hope of human life, was used by the choreographer as a symbol of life itself, and its fragility. To establish its meaning, the choreographer had no movement from any dancer until her candle had been lighted, and when her candle was extinguished, the dancer ceased to move. In the beginning of Section I, the dancers' candles were lighted one by one to symbolize human procreation and their populating of the earth. To emphasize the sacredness and delicacy of human life, the choreographer used breath rhythms in Section I and Section III. In Section I, the dancers' breathing was smooth and deep. The movements were motivated by this particular breath rhythm. In Section III, the dancers' breathing was rapid and shallow, portraying a sense of panic. The movements, too, were quick and frantic. The use of breath rhythms was incorporated by the choreographer as a symbol of life. In her book, The Art of Making Dances, Doris Humphrey emphasizes the importance of breath rhythms and their significance when she states: "... it is tied to the most vital instinct in man: the newborn child struggles to breathe and to live, and the dying cling to breathing as the connecting link with survival."⁹

Before any movement began in Section I, the sound effect of thunder and lightning was heard. This was symbolic of the very beginning of life, which according to one theory, began when the ocean was a "sea of chemicals" and the atmosphere was in a highly

electrical state. The electrical charge from lightning united with the ocean and acted as a catalyst causing certain chemicals to come together, and function together in the miracle we call life.

During Part One of Section II, the choreographer used abstracted movements from painting, sculpting and writing, to symbolize the time when people worked together in a simple society using their creative talents. The three dancers in Part Two of Section II performed mechanical movements and physically displaced the three dancers in Part One. This was done to symbolize mechanization, displacement of people, and growing complexity in society. In Part Three of Section II, the movements were march-like and were used to symbolize the growth of nationalism, and the threat of international war.

A progression in the complexity of the floor patterns to symbolize the growth in the complexity of societies was used. In Section I, the basic floor pattern was circular, which is the most primitive and least complicated of all patterns. A circle indicates that all of the participants are on an equal level; there is no specified leader. In Section II, lines and diagonals were added to the floor pattern vocabulary. In Section III, the floor patterns were highly complex and erratic, completing the development begun in Section I.

During Section III, the dancers became very aggressive to each other, symbolized by the extinguishing of each other's candles. To

assist the audience's understanding of the symbolism in this section, there was the sound effect of an atomic weapon when the last candle was extinguished. During the bow, one lighted candle was carefully passed from one dancer to the other, symbolizing hope.

The use of symbolism to communicate futuristic ideas is certainly not a new trend. The shaman in primitive societies used symbols to predict the future of his tribe, just as the astrologer of today watches the movements of the heavenly bodies for his predictions. For the choreographer, this seemed the most natural and communicative way to present her theory in "Alpha to Omega".

Section I - "Creation"

During this section, the choreographer wanted to create an atmosphere of sacredness and awe, while using movements to symbolize the creation of human life. The dance began with five dancers forming a circle on the stage in collapsed positions. An unlighted candle was on the floor in front of each dancer. Before any movement began, the sound and light effects of thunder and lightning were produced. After these effects, one dancer entered from stage left with a lighted candle. During the entrance of this dancer, and throughout the rest of this section, no music was used so that the emphasized breath rhythms could be heard. The entering dancer circled the collapsed dancers, and upon completing the circle, lighted the candle of another dancer. The first dancer went to another dancer, to light her candle, while the second dancer did the same. This continued until all of the dancers' candles were light-

ed. This was done to symbolize human procreation and the populating of the earth. At this point, the dancers returned to the circle formation and performed a ritualistic dance in celebration of life. At the end of this section, the dancers exited to different parts of the stage using the same movements that the entering dancer used in the beginning of this section to indicate continuance. The movements used in Section I were motivated by the breath rhythms and were of a smooth quality at a slow, restrained tempo.

Section II - "Evolution"

This section of the dance was divided into three parts:

(1) people working together creatively; (2) people working together technically; and (3) people working together as a nation. These three parts together were intended to show a progression from a simple society to a complex society. Three dancers performed in Part One, which began with the entrance of the first dancer whose movements were abstracted from the actions of a painter. The second dancer performed abstracted sculpting movements, while the third dancer's movements were abstracted from writing. After the three dancers had entered, they were drawn together in a circular moving "sculpture", indicative of accomplishment through their collective talents. From this, the dancers moved one by one to form a stationary "sculpture", which the three dancers in Part Two physically displaced. They were representative of technological growth, and performed movements that were angular and mechanized,

giving the appearance of robots. After all of the Part One dancers had been forced from the stage area, the dancers in Part Two re-entered and formed a "machine". After moving downstage and then to stage left, the "machine" began to break down as the dancers broke away and exited to different parts of the stage. Part Three included all six dancers, and the first portion was in the form of a military drill to emphasize the theme of national awareness. During the drill, the dancers were symbolic of one nation and its military force. One dancer tried to escape the regimen, but was forced to rejoin the group before the first exit. The second portion of Part Three showed the dancers performing individualized phrases of march-like movements. Here, each of the dancers was representative of one nation. Two dancers entered from opposite diagonals and stopped movement when they met at center stage. The other dancers entered and exited oblivious of each other. After all of the dancers had exited, the two stationary dancers stepped to the side and continued on their diagonal paths to exit. The six dancers then re-entered together to form a circle facing each other. By executing a military turn to exit, it was the intent of the choreographer not only to represent a confrontation within the group, but also one that expanded beyond their confines.

Section III - "Destruction"

The intent of the choreographer during this section was to refocus the attention upon the fragility of life, while underscoring

the aggressive behavior that had developed. The beginning of Section III was in fugal form with the dancers entering eight counts after each other, performing a locomotor pattern with a rapid breath rhythm. This was done to project a sense of panic and confusion. Rapid movements with the lighted candles gave increased tension through the fear that they might accidentally be extinguished. After all of the dancers had entered, they performed a phrase of movements emphasizing breath rhythms, alternating with movements without breath rhythms. The pattern of alternation was irregular to represent instability and non-predictability. Then, they moved with rapid breath rhythms to a specific position on stage, where they performed a movement phrase which resulted in the extinguishing of one of the candles. This was symbolic of the constant attempts made by society to organize chaos. When a dancer's candle was extinguished, she began to decrease the tempo of her movements and lower her level of movement until she took a collapsed position, as in the beginning of Section I. As the speed of extinguishing increased, the dancers became more reluctant to relight another's candle. Eventually, only one candle remained lighted, illuminated and sheltered by a single dancer symbolic of the remaining human life before total self-destruction. The other five dancers slowly came out of their collapsed positions, while focusing on the candle. Momentum was gradually increased as they converged upon the last dancer to extinguish her candle. A blackout immediately followed, during

which the dancers exited. For the bow, the dancers entered in a single line, and carefully passed one lighted candle from one to the other to symbolize hope.

FOOTNOTES

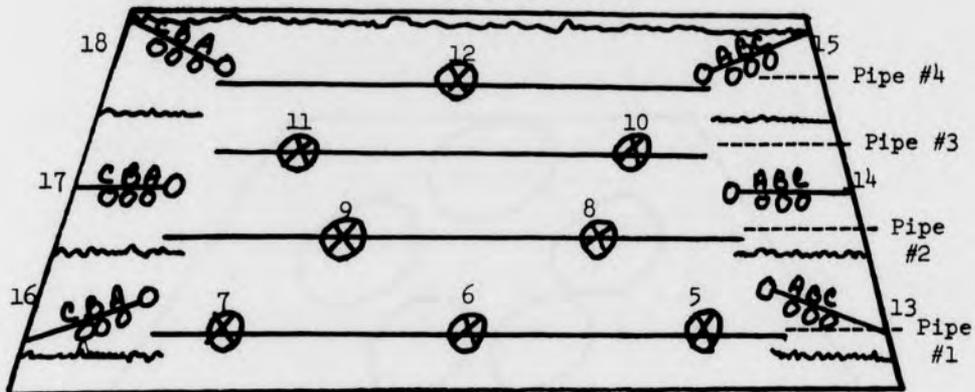
- ¹McHale, John, The Future of the Future, (New York, 1969) p. 244.
- ²Ibid., p. 245.
- ³Clarke, Arthur C., Childhood's End, (New York, 1953).
- ⁴Bradbury, Ray, The Martian Chronicles, (Garden City, New York, 1946).
- ⁵Hall, James, Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art, (New York, 1974).
- ⁶Fingesten, Peter, The Eclipse of Symbolism, (Columbia, S.C., 1970) p. 114.
- ⁷Ibid., pp. 113-114.
- ⁸Firth, Raymond, Symbols Public and Private, (Ithaca, New York, 1973) p. 77.
- ⁹Humphrey, Doris, The Art of Making Dances, 12th Ed., (New York, 1959) p. 107.

COSTUME DESIGN

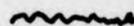
All dancers wore Danskin
long-sleeve V-neck Tan
leotards and Tan tights
with stirrup feet.



STAGE AREA FOR LIGHTING

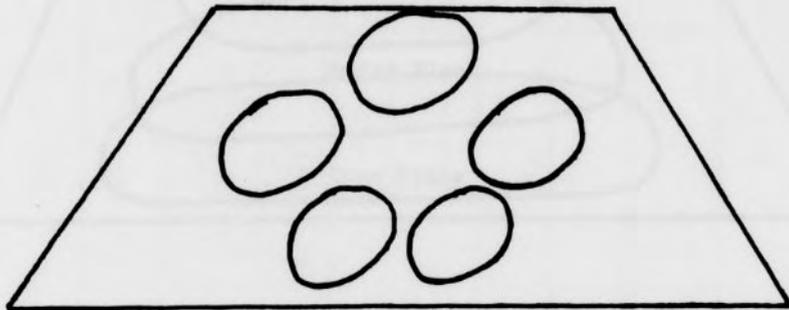


Beam or Rail

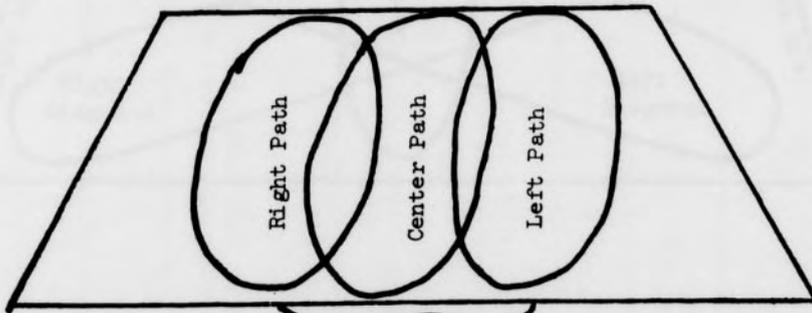
-  = leg or wing
 = side lighting on poles
 = overhead lighting

INSTRUMENT	GEL
1, 3, 5, 7, 13A & C, 14A & C, 15A & C, 16B, 17B, 18B	Roscolene No. 856 Light Blue
2, 4, 6, 13B, 14B, 15B, 16A & C, 17A & C, 18A & C	Roscolene No. 825 No Color Pink
8, 9, 10, 11, 12	Special Mini-spots

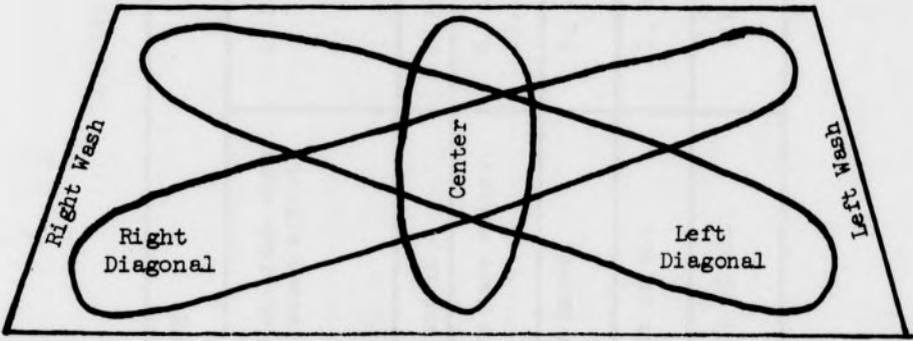
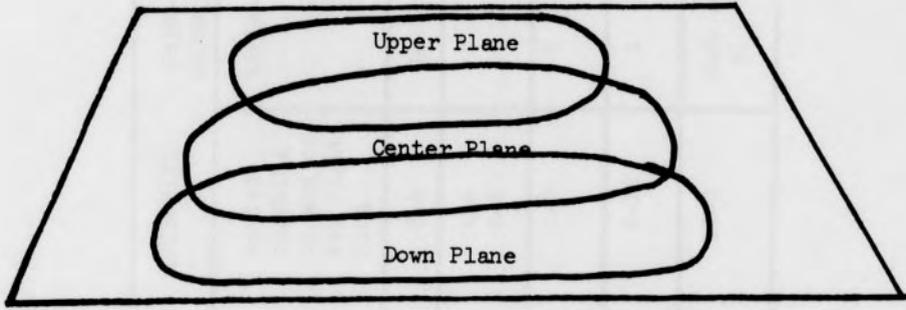
LIGHTING AREAS



Special Mini-spots



Front Wash



LIGHTING AND CURTAIN CUES

CUE #	CUE	LIGHTS	INTENSITY	TIME-- SECONDS
1	Five dancers are on stage when curtains open; sound effect on.	1, 2, 3, 4,	varied- flashing on and off for light- ning	varied
2	As first dancer enters	8, 9, 10, 11, 12,	0-4	10
1	After all dancers have exited. Music on.	8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,	4-6 0-6	5
2	As fourth dancer makes entrance	5, 6, 7,	0-8	5
3	After second exit of all dancers	1, 2, 3, 4,	0-10	5
4	During fifth exit of all dancers	all lights	10-0	fade out 30

SECTION I

Part I Part II Part III

SECTION II

CUE #	CUE	LIGHTS	INTENSITY	TIME-- SECONDS
1	As first dancer enters	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	0-4	10
2	After five dancers extinguish last dancer's candle. Sound effect on.	all lights	4-0	blackout

SECTION III

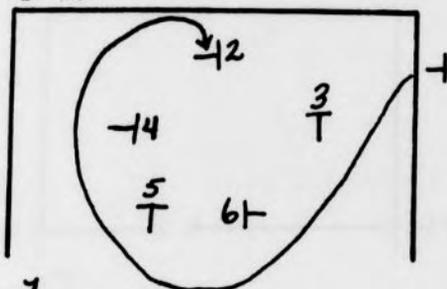
CLARIFICATION OF MOVEMENT

The six dancers are labelled 1 - 6.

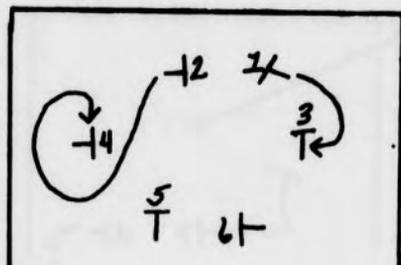
SECTION I

Six dancers are used.

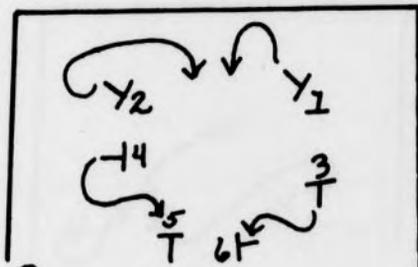
Upstage



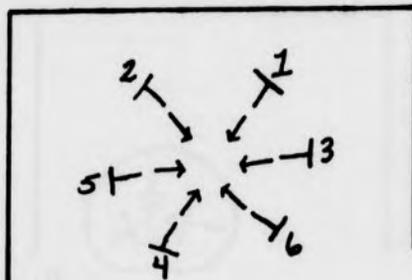
1
Downstage



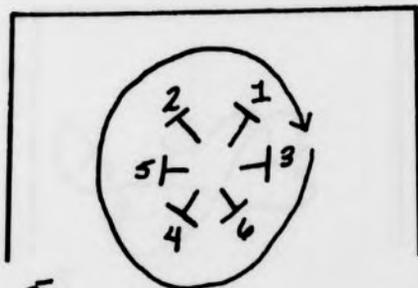
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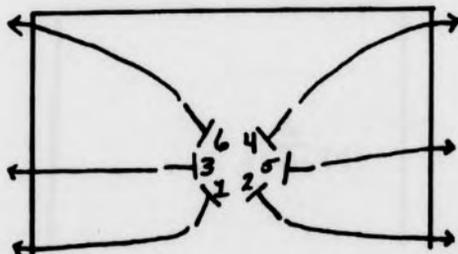
3



4



5

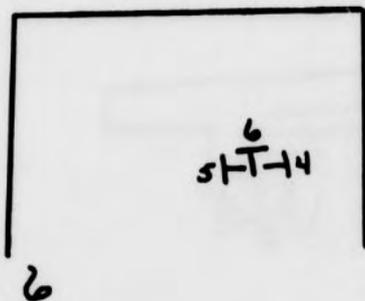
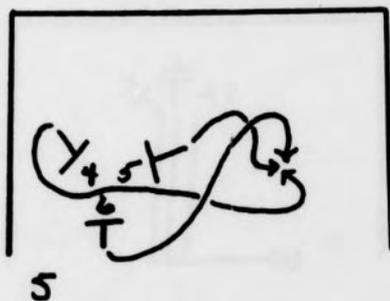
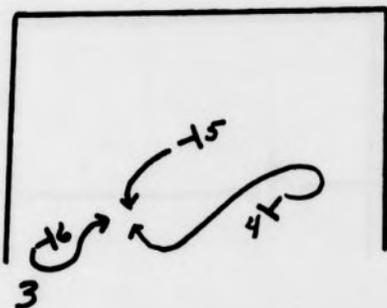
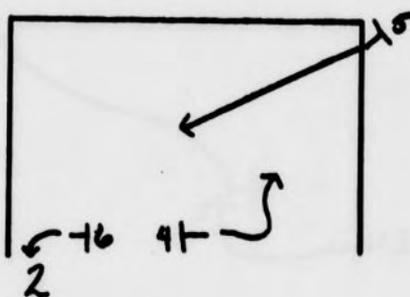
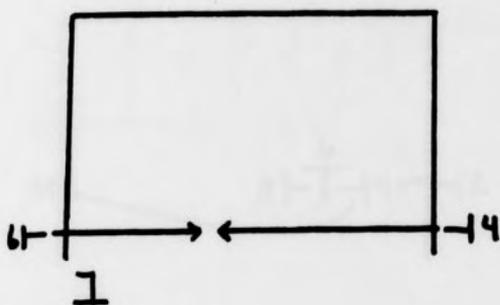


6

SECTION II

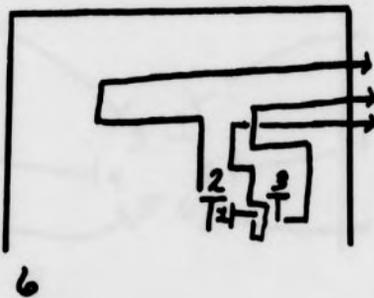
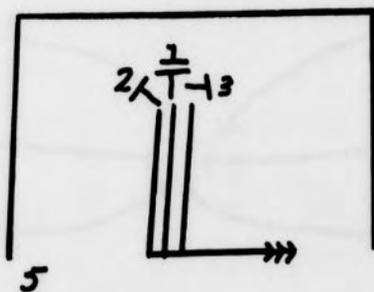
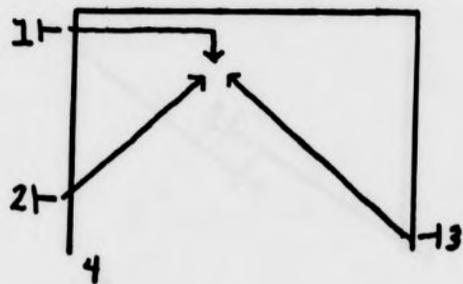
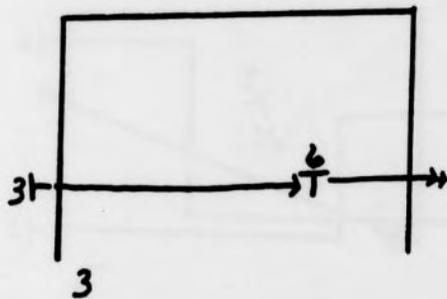
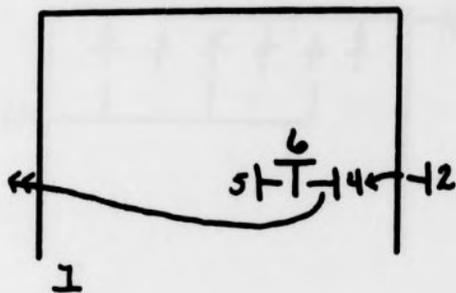
PART ONE

Three dancers are used.

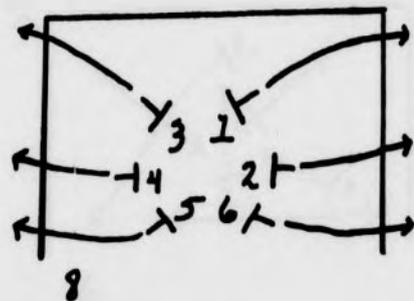
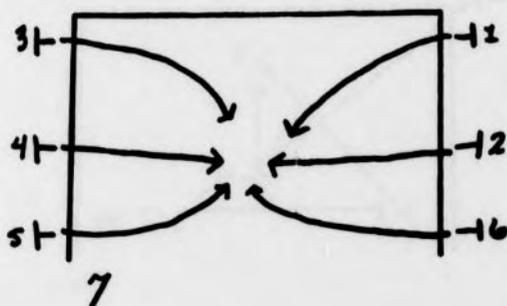
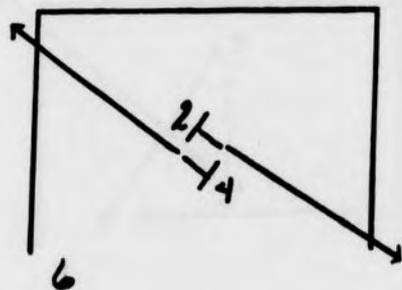
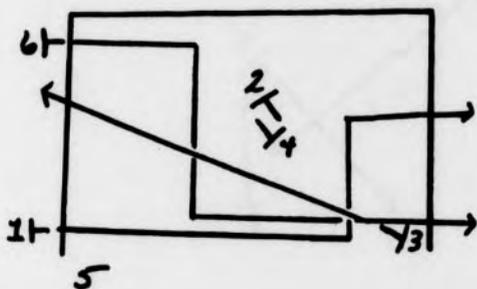
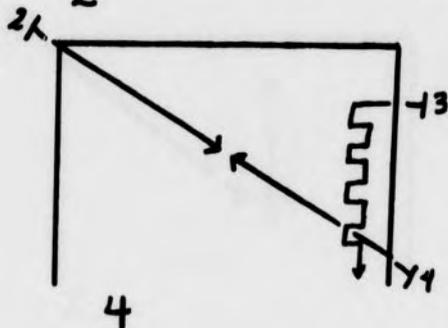
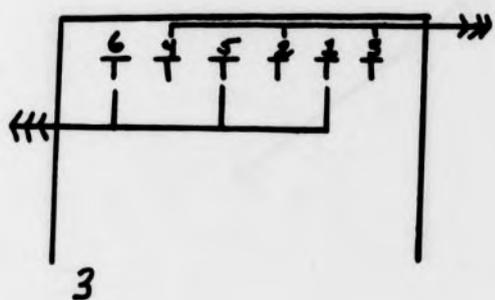
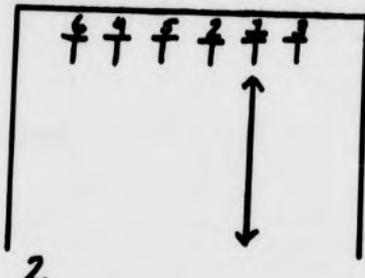
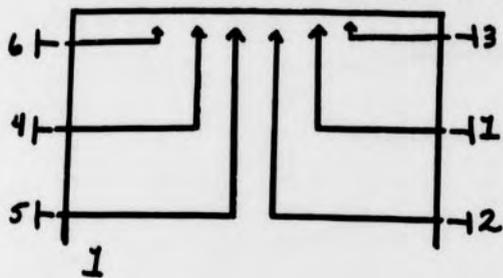


PART TWO

Six dancers are used.

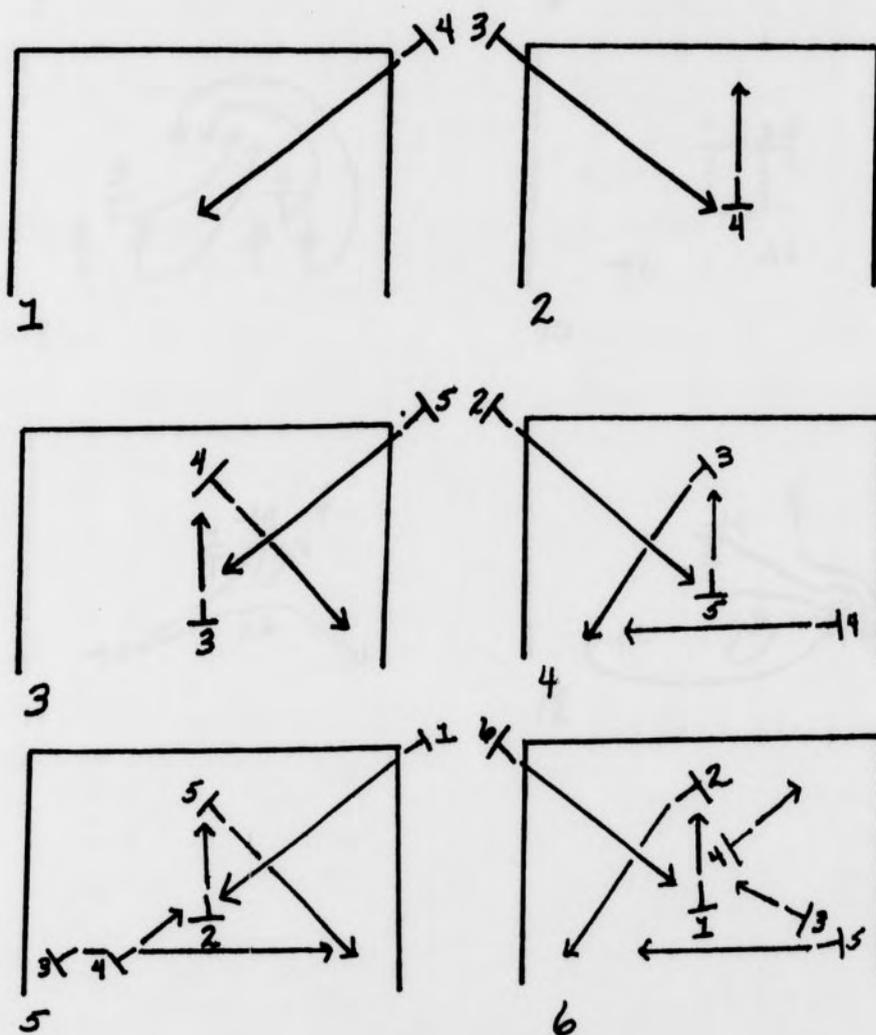


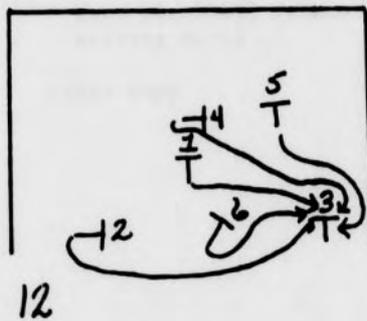
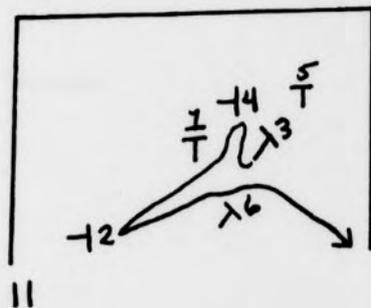
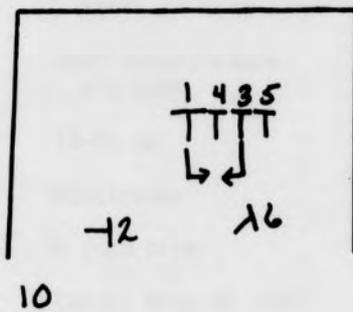
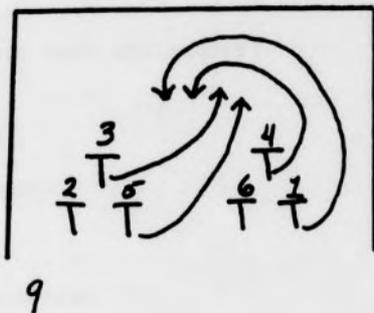
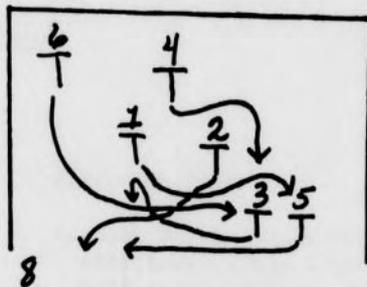
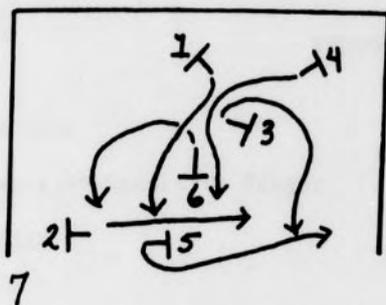
Six dancers are used.



SECTION III

Six dancers are used.





PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA

Video Tape

Distance of Camera to Stage:	Forty-Two Feet
Lighting:	Regular Studio Lighting with additional stage lights. Additional lights: PJ spots at each leg.
Camera make and number:	Sony Video Camera AVC 3200
Lens:	16-64 mm
Process:	Stationary
Tape:	½ inch tape
Videocorder:	(Deck) Sony AV 3650
Sound:	Microphone three feet from tape recorder, volume setting on 10
Copy Process:	Video Copy

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