A unit in developing a basis for appreciation and understanding of modern dance through the use of films and discussions

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A UNIT IN DEVELOPING A BASIS FOR APPRECIATION, AND
UNDERSTANDING OF MODERN DANCE THROUGH THE USE
OF FILMS AND DISCUSSIONS

By
Luellen Bowles

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts, in the Department
of Physical Education, in the Graduate
College of the State University of Iowa

August, 1939
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I wish to express my deep appreciation for the helpful guidance and constructive criticisms received in the direction of this study from Miss Ellen Mosbek, State University of Iowa.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Dance, among the other arts, has revolted, experimented, and emerged in the past quarter of a century, until it is now necessary to stand aside temporarily to gain a perspective over its accomplishments. It has, literally, attempted to lift itself by its bootstraps from the field of applied arts to the field of fine arts. It has been necessary to return to the fundamentals of movement, which had been submerged by the allied arts, much as painting returned to the fundamentals of form after the advent of such revolutionaries as Cezanne. The majority of onlookers have found it difficult to establish a basis for judgment due to the fact that the experimentation has taken place within the confines of the artist's studio, and has been presented, for the most part, without knowledge of the transition that took place. It has been the individual artist who has spoken, until the most recent years, and, as is always the case when revolt occurs, its tenets will not be understood until they become the cumulative effort of the group. There has been such a wide breach between the consumer and the artist that one has been led to think that popular taste is to be disparaged and that the artist creator is infallible when once he has spoken. The public does not change its habits of taste rapidly and hence, does not make the transition com-
pletely or easily. When it is realized that the constant association with symphony concerts through the radio and phonograph, with paintings through exhibits and reproductions, with drama, which can be read, and seen on the screen as well as on the stage, are the means employed by the sister arts, then the modern dancer’s dilemma becomes more understandable.

It has been the practice of the dance profession to claim, justifiably, that dance is the mother of the arts, but this claim has little value in establishing a place of prestige in the art world of today. Then, too, dance has been so removed from life as an art form, and so close as a more frivolous social form, that most investigators have been frightened by the diversity of functions of the dance. There have been few analyses made which would help illuminate or fortify the position of dance in the art world.

All of these explanations for the unstable situation of modern dance today are important causes, but are overshadowed by the attitudes built up by the average receiver of the art. He has learned to expect the imitative art expressions of a less dynamic and changing period, and has been verbally minded in his acquaintance with the arts. He asks, "What is modern dance? What is it like? What is it supposed to mean?" The dancer and dance enthusiast find it most difficult to explain their purposes in words, which
inadequacy is due in part, to the nature of dance art.

Only the standards, principles and the historic background can be summarized adequately in words.

For development of true sensitivity to movement, and understanding of its meanings, only continued association and experience will suffice.
CHAPTER II

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Aim:

In this thesis there has been an attempt to establish a basis for the development of an understanding and critical appreciation of modern dance as an art form.

Objectives:

1. To establish a philosophy of art in which the purpose or content of art is analyzed and discussed briefly in lecture form and specifically applied to dance.

2. To analyze dance technique and discover basic fundamental movements, whereby familiarity with the movement vocabulary may be established, through films.

3. To analyze and discuss elements of composition on the basis of art principles and to illustrate these through the use of films.

4. To discuss the emotional content intrinsic to dance art and various means of conveying it.

5. To provide a basis for guidance for the spectator in outline form.
CHAPTER III
RELATED INVESTIGATIONS OF DANCE FILMS AND PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING APPRECIATION

The sources which were most valuable in analyzing the components of art, and the elements of appreciation were:


Interviews and conferences with Miss Janet Cumming, Miss Ellen Mosbek, and Mrs. Julia Sanford, of the Department of Physical Education, provided valuable aid in determining the elements of dance and in analyzing the contributions of the professional dance artists. Dr. Philip Greeley Clapp of the Department of Music and Dr. Lester D. Longman of the Department of Art at the State University of Iowa described the appreciation courses set up in their respective departments and suggested various avenues of approach to understanding of art.

In searching for written material on the filming of dance, it was found that very little had been attempted in either the educational or professional dance field. In
many recent articles on the contemporary dance, the need for dance films has been emphasized, but it has been only this year that any constructive attempt has been made to make motion picture studies available for general use. A recent article by Mary Jane Hungerford and William Duke of the University of Southern California has appeared in the Cinema Progress Magazine, June, July, 1939, which recounts the problems encountered in producing "Design for Modern Dance." It contains most valuable information for the photographer of dance, and will save much experimenting and waste of film. "How to Make Good Movies" by Eastman Kodak Company, "Shooting Script" from the Educational Screen, May, 1938, were of value in determining the possibilities of film making and in naming the terms applied to the various techniques. Lewis Jacobs has pointed out the possibilities and aims of filming dance in the article, "Toward Dance Films" in the Dance Observer, June, July, 1934. Some information has been obtained through correspondence with:

G. E. Chamberlain, Assistant Librarian, Circulation Department, New York Public Library
Grant Code, Brooklyn Museum, New York
Barbara Page Beiswanger, Monticello College, Godfrey, Illinois
Mary Jane Hungerford, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

The following films are available, and may prove helpful in a further study of the production of dance films.
Baker, Gertrude  
Department of Physical Education  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  

Dance Techniques, two reels, synchronized  
accompanyment  

Dodson, Thelma  
Northeast State Teachers College  
Kirksville, Missouri  
Films in General Library at the State University of Iowa  

"Midwestern Dance Suite"  
"Cornhuskers Dance," "Dances for Sunday,"  
and "County Fair"  

Hungerford, Mary Jane  
Department of Physical Education  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, California  

"Design for Modern Dance"  
Rental $10.00  

Knight, Helen  
Department of Physical Education  
Purdue University  
Lafayette, Indiana  

High School Modern Dance Films  
Morton High School, Cicero, Illinois  
One and one-half reels, thirty minutes for  
projection  
Rent, $5.00 per week  
Techniques, Tools of Composition, Completed  
Composition  

Thompson, Betty Lynd  
Department of Physical Education  
Oregon State College  
Corvallis, Oregon  

One thousand feet. Rental $10.00 complete  
Four hundred feet Compositions  
"Episodes from a Trial"  
"Campus Moods"  

Four hundred feet Compositions  
"Percussion Study"  
"Two Sports Studies"
One hundred feet each in color
"Fireworks"
"Solos" Sarabande, Obsession, Waltz

University of California
Los Angeles, California

"Rhythmic Action" Rent $2.00
Elementary School creative work
Four reels

Wilson, E.W.
Polyrhythmic Exercises

Four hundred and twenty-five feet. Rental $2.50
Titles and analysis follow specific lessons in
Teachers Guide in Secondary Education
Some slow motion

Y.M.C.A.

"Modern Rhythm" One reel rent $1.00
Ballet, Charleston, Fox Trot, Hula Hula

There have been other films produced about which
information was not available.
CHAPTER IV
PROCEDURE

1. Discussion Procedure

In this thesis there has been an attempt to clarify the wide range of possibilities in dance forms by discussion of the content, techniques, compositional form and emotional elements in dance and the related arts. No attempt was made to limit those components of art, but rather to help the beginning dancer or onlooker to find a starting place, which will open pathways to experience and guide over the rough places in choice and discrimination, so that the ultimate purposes of art will not be lost. The four discussions have been combined into one brief summary which may be presented to student and lay groups if time does not permit a more complete development. An understanding of the more all-inclusive aesthetic behavior was sought by showing relationships and contributions of the other art forms and the many phases of dance through the discussions. An outline was prepared in which salient points of the discussion and film were listed. It was based upon general philosophy or functions of art listed by authorities in the field, by discussions of technique and compositional form compiled from articles, books, and correspondence with authorities in modern dance. The outline may be used by the student or layman as a guide to better understanding of dance in general and may be
applied to the specific dances included in the films. Moving pictures have been produced which will provide a means of making dance more easily available and subject to study. There has been suggested a measure of the validity of this approach through a questionnaire which is based upon the main points brought out in the discussions and film, although lack of time has not permitted its immediate use.

2. Film Procedure

An outline of the fundamental movements and their variations in time and space was prepared first as a basis for the films. Due to a lack of virtuosity of most of the dancers, who were high school and university students, the greatest contribution through films could be made in illustrating the use of compositional form. The uses of subject, technique, and of emotional content are not stressed in the films because, necessarily, the lack of skill limits the possibilities of the dancers in these directions. However, there has been an attempt to bring out all four components of the dances in more detail in the discussions, and to point out by use of outline before and during the running of the film, the aspects of dance that are best illustrated in these specific dances.

The dance compositions used in the films were selected largely for their illustrative qualities in the
use of content, technique, compositional form, and emotional content. They provide a broad sampling of the elements and criteria considered in the outline and discussions.

The first dance was composed by three high school girls with the help of the writer. It was primarily a dance study called "Problem in Traffic." A quiet, monotonous mood was established, in which the pedestrian patterns of locomotion were interwoven with occasional elements of confusion and rebellion. The underlined elements of the art form of dance that were best illustrated in this composition were as follows:

The subject was concerned with highly abstract patterns of locomotion. Straight lines and circles were most evident in the use of space, and counterpoint was illustrated in the use of temporal form. The dominance of a single figure served as an illustration of one of the principles of unity. Technique, quality, and emotional content were brought out by sustained and percussive locomotor and swinging axial movements. There was a background of monotonous back and forth movement and a dominance of one figure who clarified and expanded the movement into a statement of the theme.

The film procedure was intended to produce photographic effect rather than an accurate record of the dance. It was taken on the ordinary 16mm film from a fairly close range in daylight. The camera followed the dominant figure
until group action was built up to a circle. It followed the single figure in a closeup when an extreme contrast in level at the end of the statement of the theme occurred. To illustrate the range of further possibilities in the fundamental movement employed, turning techniques have been added, ranging from low levels to standing and locomotor turns. They were taken on colored film from a height of fifteen feet.

The second group of dances was selected from films which recorded the "Midwestern Dance Suite" composed by Miss Thelma Dodson at the State University of Iowa, May, 1939, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for her Master of Arts degree in Physical Education.

The "Cornhusker's Dance" most clearly illustrated in subject, a folk type expression of communal effort and gaiety. It was based on the cornhusking contests of the middle west. In compositional form the space pattern is found to be especially interesting in its complicated use of line-and-circles and partner formations. In temporal form a simple folk rhythm was established. It illustrated the use of symmetrical balance and unity with variety. The quality, technique, and emotional content were exemplified in the runs, jumps, hops, and modified polka, in which there were gaiety and simplicity of expression, and a use of the strong dynamic movements of work.

"Advance Publicity" from "County Fair" illustrated
in subject the mass movement of crowds from one attraction to another. There was an adept use of pantomime in the more humorous situations. The compositional form employs in its use of space a contrast in levels and a dramatic intent in focus. The temporal form was the simple A-B sequential form, accentuating the alternate action and rest. The evolution of idea was evident through the constantly increasing size of the group and the growing intensity of their movement. The technique, quality, and emotional content depended upon the smaller axial, pantomimic movements to produce a humorous effect.

The "Dance of Youth and Age" illustrated a more serious use of content. In subject, there was a conflict between the religious expression of youth and age. The meaning was suggested by the decided contrasts in the movement itself and in its variations in form. The compositional form made use of a contrast in level and tempo. There was a gradual evolution of thought, through expanding and growing movement. The quality, technique, and emotional content showed through slow restrained movement, the static contentment of age, and through large locomotor movements, the dynamic unrest of youth. Falls were employed frequently to denote the struggle involved in making a radical change from the established ways of thinking.

These three dances were taken on 16mm film at night with three Eastman Number Four Photo Flood Lamps placed
on either side and near the front of the dance space. The dancers had to crowd their floor pattern to a slightly smaller area than they ordinarily used. However, the space was still too large for the amount of light that was available and in view of the fact that the camera had to be placed at a distance of about eighty feet the photographic result was not good. The camera was placed at an angle of thirty degrees with the middle of the stage and at a height of ten feet.

As a means of recording the dances, the film was satisfactory, several parts of the pattern were missed when the dancers moved out of range of the lights and the camera. Particular techniques were demonstrated at the end of this section of the film, to make the statement of the theme and the techniques involved available for closer study. The locomotor movements from the "Cornhuskers Dance" and the axial movements from "Youth and Age" were performed by Miss Thelma Dodson. The faster locomotor movement was recorded by a twenty-four frame film in daylight and the slower axial movements were recorded by the regular sixteen frame film.

The third group of dances consisted of two dances based upon historic pre-classic forms, which were performed for the Orchesis recital in May, 1939, choreography by Miss Miriam Raphael.

The "Gigue" best illustrated the adaptation of an historic pre-classic form to a contemporary technique.
It was a greeting dance which is lively and quite gay in spirit. It employed a contrast in levels and a use of counterpoint, canon, and unison in its temporal and special form. The tempo was quite fast, although there was alternately slow movement when the two groups of dancers moved in counterpoint. In technique, the simple runs, leaps, swinging movements and falls were quick, bright and percussive in quality. The dance was stimulating and lively in spirit.

The "Allemãnde" was an historic form of pre-classic period, which offered a decided contrast in spirit to the "Gigue." It was restrained, quiet and extremely sentimental. There was a two dimensional use of space, which makes the dance strong in design quality and in its use of line. In temporal form, there is little contrast to the slow even rhythm. There is a fine observance of the principles of unity and balance through the line systems employed.

The "Gigue" was first taken in slow motion at night, lighted by three Photo Flood Lamps, with the camera at a thirty degree angle, twenty feet from the front of the stage space. The quick propulsive movements seemed much clearer in the slower film, and errors were much more obvious. The movements appeared to be slightly distorted, the leaps and jumps prolonged and the impulse of the movement less sharp. The "Gigue" was taken with the regular sixteen frame film for contrast, and although the movements were more clear cut, much of the fast movement was decidedly jerky in
The "Allemande" was taken on colored 16mm film, with the same lighting, but from a closer range. The slow sustained movements were better adapted to the small space and greater unity of the composition was retained. The camera was moved as close as fifteen feet for most of the dance.

Had sufficient funds been available, this study would have included a much more elaborate film. The possibilities of its use are of great interest to the writer. Motion pictures can be used as a means of recording dance, for purposes of analysis of technique and composition.

It would be great advantage to the dance teacher to have reproductions of the finest compositions which may be retained from year to year, as an aid to teaching.

As generally used for purposes of recording, the pictures are taken from the most advantageous place from the standpoint of the spectator. In the ordinary theatre, this is generally agreed to be the middle seat in the first row in the balcony. However, in order to include a larger area, the photographer must take the pictures from an angle of about thirty degrees from the center of the stage. The large space used for group dances makes a difficult problem in filming, in that with ordinary lighting facilities, the pictures must be taken fairly close to the subject. This narrows the range of the film, and necessitates crowding the
figures together into a small space. The colored film needs more light than the black and white, and pictures taken at night must be taken from a closer range than those taken in bright daylight. The twenty-four frame film was found to be much better for recording, for analyzing, and also for photographic effect when the movements of the dancers are fast and propulsive. The sixteen frame film which was used for most of the dances seemed to cut out a lot of the movement and made it appear jerky and faster than it really was. The photographer suggested that films taken in bright daylight, either indoors or out-of-doors would prove more effective and clearer than those taken at night.

For purposes of analysis, the slow motion film (twenty-four or thirty-six frames per second) is invaluable. Flaws in technique and space pattern are much more obvious in the slower film. The leaps, jumps, etc., are given a prolonged appearance which distorts them to a slight degree even in the twenty-four frame film. Shots from above, from a low level, and from various angles give one an opportunity to see how the movement looks from various spots from the floor, and balcony, in addition to giving the dancer new slants on his mannerisms or his style. The "bird's eye view" film is probably best for the recording and study of floor pattern, and we have seen it used many times in the professional motion

---

1 Mr. Lee Cochrane, University Photographer, State University of Iowa.
pictures where floor pattern seems to be the only element of composition used with any dexterity.

Photography, when used to show dance composition, may make it impossible to reproduce a dance accurately due to eliminating the background for the sake of emphasizing a particular point. However, one valuable purpose it can serve, is to show those unfamiliar with dance the instance of emergence of a dominant figure, repetition of a theme, a variation upon that theme, or any other intricate part of a composition which might not be clear unless emphasized. This use of film can be employed extensively in education to help those who need guidance in learning to detect the compositional, technical and emotional elements of a dance.
CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF THESIS

1. Methods of Approach to Understanding and Appreciation of Dance

"Appreciation is as different from sheer enjoyment as perception is from sensation. A guiding intelligence should, through knowledge, give meaning to experience."²

Realizing that appreciation is not an inner aesthetic heritage that only the fortunate may enjoy, one finds it advisable to set up factors as aids for guidance toward greater understanding and appreciation of an art. Sheer enjoyment of the arts is a welcome adjunct, but for most persons it is a resultant, not a starting point. The modern dance enthusiast has been convinced that art through dance has something of vital importance to contribute to contemporary living, and has so rapidly spread enthusiasm that, unexpectedly, numerous adherents have been acquired. How much of that interest is due to the never failing attraction to the striking and novel is yet to be revealed. In spite of widespread interest, however, there is a marked credulity and a corresponding collection of blithely superficial criticism, which always marks an unestablished art. In view of the fact that hundreds of potential dance enthusiasts come away from concerts with confusion and perplexity that are

left unsolved by the aesthetic theories presented, one may well question the dancer's effectiveness of conveying meaning. But since "the proof of a superior art lies only in the intensity of the conviction with which it is held" and not in an external or objective proof, one can only judge introspectively its effectiveness in conveying meaning. So if the place of dance is to be verified among the arts, in the writer's opinion there must first be an idea to be conveyed; and secondly, there must be a clear, candid, means of expressing it. The artist, then, has a direction which he must take, but he cannot profitably go alone. There must be a generous cooperation between the artist and consumer before dance will assume its rightful place in a society. One cannot assume then, that the artist must adjust his expression to the level of the consumer's understanding or that every consumer must become a dancer and accept the artist's opinion as infallible. If the approach to dance appreciation can be organized and simplified for the casually interested, perhaps dance can come to have the universal appeal that is claimed for it.

Dance appreciation may be arrived at through several channels; knowledge of technical and historical aspects, and by extending actual experience with the modern expression of the art. One can extend knowledge by a study

of dance history, its development from primitive to modern times, the contributions of early historic forms to modern forms, and the relationships with the other arts. Experience with dance can be extended through an analysis of movement, study of the techniques, through creative experience in composition, and through familiarity with dance concerts and film recordings. John Martin says, "The minimum equipment of the spectator is a kinesthetic sense in good working condition," which can be developed by enlarging the scope of experience in movement. It is in this respect that the spectators are most limited. Needless to say, the more extended the scope of experience, the wider the range of appreciations that are possible. The Kinneys have said, "Appreciation of an art requires no faculties not included in the normal human equipment; more than anything else, it is a matter of knowing what to look for. The ability to grasp the theme of a composition and then to follow its elaborations through a vocabulary of already familiar steps is, in effect, to quicken the vision. Instead of being harassed by a sensation of scrambling to keep up with the argument, the experienced dancer has time to luxuriate in every movement." It seems logical to assume that a film recording of a dance would be an invaluable aid to analysis and experience with movement patterns, in that it can be

4Martin, John. America Dancing.
5Kinney, Troy and Margaret. The Dance.
viewed again and again, and slowed down until the eye and
kinesthetic sense become thoroughly familiar with the move-
ment.

These knowledges and experiences can develop a
concept of what part a particular skill plays in the general
scheme of life and of what is its special province. Then,
the "work of art should open our eyes so that we may see
that quality in objects and situations which has the power
to move us aesthetically, and which we could not find with­
out the artist's help."  

Since there are innumerable sources available
for enlarging knowledge of dance history, which are products
of extensive research, this aid to appreciation has not been
developed in this thesis except as it has been necessary to
the study of the interrelations of various dance forms.

Since creative experience and familiarity with
dance concerts is purely a personal matter and beyond the
writer's control, it shall only be suggested that these are
of the utmost importance. But since the analysis of move­
ment and dance forms is a direct approach to the under­
standing of dance, this thesis will be concerned largely with
these aspects. The discussions of the components of art
will include a brief study of the interrelations of dance

---

6 Bock, Thor Methven. "The Relation of Dance to the Other
and art forms and an analysis of the main points for considera-
tion in the more complete understanding of dance art.

It will be advisable to establish a philosophy of art and to be acquainted with its functions. The treat-
ment of subject will be determined by the philosophy and function of art, and a consideration of subject will be of first importance. This study is intended for adults and college students who have an interest and the other art forms and who wish to further their acquaintance with it for better understanding and appreciation. The outline may be used by them and is planned for their level of under-
standing.
OUTLINE OF CRITERIA FOR GUIDANCE IN CRITICISM AND UNDERSTANDING OF MODERN DANCE

I. Can one establish his own philosophy of art?
   One's philosophy will depend upon his choice of the functions of art, and the function in turn, will determine the content.

   A. Should art function as an escape device?
      If escape from the realities of life is to be the main function of art, then it will be concerned with the unreal and will make no attempt to prophesy.

   B. Should art function as a means of self-expression?
      If individual expression is the main purpose of art, then content will be based upon the individual insight and imagination of the artist.

   C. Should art supply a cultural record of how men aspire to live and how they live in the artist's eyes?
      If such is the aim of art, the content will be based upon reality, and will be an accumulation of the popular expressions of the society.

   D. Should art help man make adjustment to life and establish a harmony between man and his world?
      If art is to be a fulfillment of life, then the artist will be concerned with the problems of life as he sees them in relation to the society.

      An art may fulfill any one or several of the functions listed, in addition to its utilitarian and recreational contributions. The contemporary dance with the arts of painting, drama and poetry tends to emphasize an art expression that is concerned with problems of society, and attempts to make an adjustment and establish a harmony between man and his world.

II. What choices in technique will be made?

   A. Should the range of movement be unlimited?
      Movement may be limited to a natural, imitative technique, abstract design, an arbitrary style, or symbolic patterns.

   B. Should the techniques reflect the outstanding characteristics of a society?
      The technique may be realistic, primitive, romantic,
sensual, or scientific in style.

The technique of contemporary dance tends to be limited chiefly by the styles of the individual artists, which in turn have been expressive of tendencies toward freedom, dynamism, and realism in present day society.

III Upon what basis will the compositional form of a dance be judged?

A Does it state a theme and establish unity? The purpose is clearly stated by a repetition of the theme and variations upon it into a complete whole.

B Does it balance without becoming monotonous? The statement of the theme and its variations should be so arranged that they allow for alternate interest and rest.

C Does it grow in an evolutionary manner? There should be an increasing interest in the development of the pattern.

D Does it have a dominating figure or idea? There should be a center of interest that can be recognized easily.

E How does the composition observe these principles of unity specifically in the fundamental movements and their variations in time and space?

1. Types of movement

   a. Flexion, extension, and rotation. Basic movements in space are made up of the three movements possible by the segments of the body.

   b. Axial movements (stationary base)
      - Bending and stretch (flexion and extension in the trunk and body segments)
      - Turn or twist (rotation in trunk and segments)
      - Pendular swing (flexion and extension with continuous movement possible in any joint and the segments)
      - Combination of the above in purposeful axial movements, i.e., push, pull, strike, dodge, shake, beat, etc.
c. **Locomotor movements (moving base)**
Run, walk, leap, hop, jump (flexion, extension and rotation in body segments)
Combinations of fundamental locomotor movements which involve variations in rhythm, i.e., skip, slide, gallop, polka, two step, mazurka, waltz, etc.

3. Variations of movements

a. **Quality**
Percussive
Sustained
Oscillative

b. **Temporal Form**
Grouping of beats (metric pattern in duple, triple, quadruple rhythms)
Variations in accent and combinations for syncopated, accumulative, rhythms)
Phrasing of metric patterns
Tempo (fast, slow, medium)
Use of voices (round, canon, counterpoint, theme and variation)
Sequential forms (ABA, ABC, ABACAD forms)

c. **Spatial Form**
Dimension (large and small)
Contour (mass, block, wedge, pyramid, etc.)
Levels (high, low, normal)
Direction (up, down, back, forward, etc.)
Focus (toward, away, from movement or audience)
Floor pattern (circle, line, square, triangle)

The compositional form has been least limited in contemporary dance, and has assimilated from the wide range of historic forms its many possibilities in spatial and temporal pattern. It tends to use large spatial areas and temporal elements which produce stimulating and dynamic effects.

IV Does the dance clearly and definitely arouse a sympathy with the feeling the dancer wishes to convey? Emotional response is an outcome of treatment of compositional form, subject and technique.

These are suggested responses which the following
dances may arouse.

A  Joy
"To the Dance" Humphrey, Weidman Group
"Barn Dance" Philadelphia Ballet
"Cornhuskers Dance" included in films*
"Gigue" included in films*

B  Rebellion
"Heretic" Martha Graham Group
"Traditions" Charles Weidman
"Youth and Age" included in films*

C  Reverence
"Shakers" Humphrey, Weidman Group
"Primitive Mysteries" Martha Graham Group
"Youth and Age" included in films*

D  Sorrow
"Lamentation" Martha Graham Group

E  Fantasy
"The Snow Queen" Philadelphia Ballet
"Dreams" American Ballet
"Allemande" included in films*

F  Humor
"The Race of Life" Humphrey, Weidman Group
"Americans in Paris" Ruth Page Ballet
"The Card Party" American Ballet
"Advance Publicity" included in films*

Contemporary dance tends to be concerned with content and form which produces a defiant, rebellious, or humorous response.

*Films used in this study.
2. The Importance of Subject in the Arts

"Misunderstanding between the artist and the public in regard to the dance is due primarily to the lack of a basic philosophy. The value of a philosophy lies in its ability to aid one to enter more easily into a new experience and to discern what is good and what is bad. A mere knowledge of principles upon which we base our philosophy will not ensure appreciation; the latter depends upon sympathy with the imagination of the artist and is not a matter of intellect alone. It is influenced by a multitude of individual and environmental differences. But at least, a good philosophy removes the clouds of prejudice which so often obscure true appreciation. Our philosophy of the arts involves a choice in its function or a recognition of its various purposes. Its reason for being is reflected in the subject or content communicated, so that a study of content will be of value in determining first of all, the artist's philosophy, and will enable us to understand his expression though one may not be in full agreement. A study of the historic development of dance and its function in society will provide a background for the purposes of dance in our contemporary life.

Man first expressed himself through movement, and primitive dance resulted from his desire to move rhythmically.

As those movements took on form, they served as a means of recounting experiences and of commemorating important events. At this point they became utilitarian in purpose and included dances of religious significance and of importance in the ceremonies of war, work, and the growth stages of man. As man developed a language, there was no longer a necessity for many of his dances. Modern medicine, meteorology, military drill, and scientific knowledge now perform the functions that dance once had in the primitive culture.

The Greeks developed dance purely as an art form, the utilitarian purposes of art having largely disappeared in their advanced civilization. They employed highly complicated theatre forms, and choral dancing was used to transmit moments of high emotion which could not be presented through words.

The Medieval period contributed folk patterns of music and dance. For them, dance functioned as a social expression and was concerned chiefly with the work and play life of the peasants.

During the Renaissance, dance became an important aspect of court life and assumed definite form. It soon became an art dance rather than a play dance; professional dance instructors began to appear, and books were written upon the art of dancing. Both music and dance developed in complexity, and the pre-classic forms which included the
pavane, minuet, galliard, and courante became the basis for a later development of music.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, dance types evolved parallel with nationalistic music. The folk and pre-classic forms arose in all the European countries and were transformed by them into characteristic social expressions, indicating the temperament and movement qualities of the people. They were usually concerned with mating, mimetic pursuit, rejection of love making, or the work and play life of the people.

The 19th and 20th centuries employed dance as a social expression and as entertainment. It was a period in which great attention was given to dance as a social art, with no thought to be conveyed to an audience other than the group communication. In the United States there was an adoption of European dances and a continuation of the social dance forms up to the present time. Content was of little importance in the social dance, and its eclectic nature reflected the influences of the diverse elements of the society, and the confusion and instability brought about in a new country where there was a continuous shifting and change of influences.

The art form of dance branched off from the pre-classic period during the Renaissance, and followed the general direction of romantic music, which emerged with the sonata form. The ballet became an art form whose prime purpose was
projection to an audience as it left the court and employed a stage and technically trained performers. It concerned itself with stories of the classic gods, court life, fantasy, fairy tales, and depiction of nature. As is often the case when an art reaches its maturity, subject was neglected, and technique was emphasized until it became self-purposed. Fokine, Diaghilev, and Nijinski made many innovations in their approach to movement, but only in recent years has there been a change in repertoire.

Subject has been of great importance in the new dance form. Its very revolutionary nature makes it a plastic medium for the expression of contemporary life. Much of the credit must be given to Isadora Duncan, who, dissatisfied with the trite subject matter of the ballet, attempted to show that dance could deal with the great tragedies of life as well as the frivolous and entertaining. For this purpose she went back to Greek inspiration and in subject regained the greatness of the old Greek drama, but her dance lost much in technique and form.

Our contemporary dance has been close to the people's problems, which without doubt has been a wholesome trend and has made our modern art a vital and necessary expression of our lives. It is the most promising aspect of our modern art world and is constantly brought to our attention by, for example, murals of Thomas Benton; the poetry
of Carl Sandburg; and by such dance compositions as "Trend" by Hanya Holm, "Frontier" by Martha Graham, "The Green Table" by the Jooss Ballet, and "Filling Station" by the American Ballet. There is danger in the treatment of everyday subject matter, and there is a constant temptation "to show actual segments of life that are emotionally compelling but not transformed by the artist's informing light." It tends to become "intimatively introspective, turning full light into dark corners of the individual and social life, and of choosing the subject just because it is dark."  

Mr. Beiswanger believes that the question is not to dispense with subject matter but to see how extensive and rich the meanings which it finds to present can be made. The writer would add that consideration should also be given the fine balance between subject and form, insisting upon the sacrifice of neither for the sake of the other. Such expression must necessarily demand that both artists and receivers of the art participate in the activity as intelligently social-minded persons who possess values and beliefs which will enable them to be selective in their art.

The relative importance of subject has been a matter of fiery dispute in all of the arts. Art can be an escape device, in which case the content will take the form of a dream and fulfill man's wishes by escape from reality, or

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8 Cheney, Sheldon. The New Movement in the Theatre.
it can be a means of self-expression in which the individual artist presents his personal desires before the receiver, to be accepted upon the artist's own terms. One of the great services which art can render a civilization is in transforming into permanent form, the popular modes of expression of the period. The content of an art of this kind will be closer to the people and, consequently, more intelligible to them than the expression of an abstraction. If art is employed as a means of establishing harmony between man and his environment, then its content will treat of the problems of life and man's adjustment to them. Here the conflict with the world is overcome by man's mastery of himself in art.

"There is a relation between the motives to creation and appreciation. This relation is that of the particular to the general. The particularity of the creative wish is lost through artistic expression and only its generalized form is transmitted from the artist to the spectator." 10 All but one of the purposes of art are lost if the idea cannot be successfully conveyed to the spectator. It is in this respect that modern dance has been greatly criticized as "too abstract." The artist neither strives for nor attains reality, but rather attempts to get at the core or basic meanings of his material to achieve a fundamental channel

10 Parker, DeWitt. The Analysis of Art.
for communication. If, however, the artist goes too far in
simplifying or if his slant upon a specific idea is too un-
related to what the audience already knows, then he loses
contact with them, and the result is lack of understanding.

The dance will need a title if specific meanings
are to be called to mind; it will need to make those meanings
clear through symbolic movement, pantomime, or embellishing
music, costume, or words. It is annoying to the spectator
when attempting to understand the artist's slant upon a
subject if a specific subject is suggested by the title but
expressed in a vague manner. An analogy may be made to
symphonic or chamber music, where a title is unnecessary,
since only general emotional responses are called for; but;
in the case of program and operatic music, the title suggests
a theme or story which should be easily associated with the
music.

Much of the cause for lack of understanding lies
with the receivers of the art and with their association
with the theatre and graphic arts of the past fifty years,
where imitation and embellishment of real life has led them
to expect a reiteration of what they see around them. "During
a static age where the core concepts are satisfactory, then
an embellishment of those concepts is found." People, who
deal so frequently with abstractions and symbols in highly
organized games, in business, and in science, should not be

11 Bloomer, Ruth, "Abstractions and the Modern Dance,"
Dance Observer, August, September, 1936.
afraid of abstractions of human ways of moving and thinking.
"The arts use a sign language, and those signs may bear only
as much resemblance to things they signify as is necessary
to convey the desired idea." 12

Connections with the more complex theatre arts
has been another factor in confusion among the dance artists
and receivers. The ballet has employed the more complex
means of conveying story or idea; and the essential material
of the theatre, which is motion, has been in some instances
aided and in others, hindered by the use of setting, music,
and costume. The contemporary dance found it necessary to
reject the theatre dance as it existed in ballet and to dis-
associate movement from story, music, and painting, regarding
these latter as competitive arts rather than accessory ones.
The modern dancers were "not purists demanding the dance to
be inviolate, but artists who wanted to enrich dance by get-
ting back to the core of movement and meaning and strip it
of its tinsel and trappings." 13 It is now advisable to em-
ploy those other elements of the theatre to the best ad-
vantage and to fuse the contributions of music, lighting,
and costume into a single eloquent art. But if motion is
to remain the essential medium of the dance art, then the

12Parkers, DeWitt. The Analysis of Art.
Arts Monthly, January, 1939.
more complex aids to expression must be chosen carefully so that the effect will not be gained at the expense of more meaningful movement.

3. The Use of Technique in Dance

Content has always been subject to the limitations of freedom in range of the technique employed. Technique is merely an aspect of form, but we shall consider it as the use of the medium of the dancer's body in conveying meaning. In tracing the development of technique, we find that primitive dances made use of a wide range of fundamental movements which historians have given special significance in expression. Little is known about the techniques employed by the Greek dancers, except what can be gathered from sculpture and vase decorations. Folk dances were recorded by written descriptions, but only the floor patterns and step patterns could be described accurately on paper. The technique, or movement itself was described as vigorous fundamental locomotor and axial movements and as characteristic of nationality in movement quality. The oriental dances employed smaller movements of gesture which became symbolic and detailed. The ballet expanded range of movement through many technical innovations and developed an elaborate technique as it moved away from court participation and became a theatre art. Its technique became self-purposed, the main function being in
display of technical brilliance. Although the range was extended, arbitrary forms were set up which again limited the technique employed. Ballet, without doubt, has evolved the most elaborate and most complete technical training of any dance form. It has excellent training for leg agility, control, poise, endurance, and lightness of movement. The whole purpose in the ballet technique is to develop movement which defies gravity and cloaks the mechanical and muscular work of movement.

It produces an artificial and ethereal quality in movement which lends a romantic quality to its technique and makes it difficult to portray tragic or serious content. Ballet's limitations in the attempt to create two dimensional movement patterns have caused an overemphasis upon static design and floor pattern. The five fundamental positions were selected arbitrarily and should, in the writer's estimation, have been considered as possibilities in style rather than limitations of movement. The greatest contributions of the ballet to the basic movement principles have been in the turning out of the leg and hip for wider range of movement and design, in their control over turns, and speed of movement in travel through space. Nijinski attempted to separate these five arbitrary positions from the basic fundamentals. "He showed that what might first be accepted as ugliness and primitiveness in movement, can be as perfect a form of
expression as the far too easily accepted beauty and charm. We have found this change in concept of technical use of the body paralleled by the desire to expand the range of meaning or content. Isadora Duncan, again must be given credit for her attempt to broaden the limits of the established technique to make way for a new beginning. The "naturalness" of the movement evolved was not its chief contribution, but rather the shaking off of a set style and making allowance for extended range in possibilities of expression through movement. To the writer, this seems to be the extent of the "liberation." The claim that ballet is "artificial" is one that ignores the privileges of art; and, if the analogy to poetry or music is valid, we must admit that their technical limitations have been stilted and "artificial" but the advantages gained in form and effect have made those limitations valid artistically. True, those limitations have been discarded, but we do not decry the old master works as outmoded and unsuited to our enjoyment. The dance art is the one art form that has never had basic laws applicable to all of its forms. Its techniques have common characteristics which are flexible enough to allow for individual or regional differences in expression. All of the movements have a basis in the "natural" locomotor and axial movements of the body, originating from a center or balance. This use of "centered" con-

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control calls for exercises which give control to the spinal and shoulder girdle movements, which were practically ignored in ballet training, where the spine was held rigid. In training for contemporary dance, one uses exercises for "fluid control" or a flow of movement from one part to another. Such control gives attention to the development of leg muscles to give wider span to movement. It stresses the development of thigh muscles for lowering the body to the floor, development of a lift and stretch to the abdomen and rib cage. Most typical have been those movements which show the existence of dynamic strength and power. Many purely American characteristics of moving, influenced by the fast tempo of city life, the undirected discharge of energy, the sentimentality, the cockiness, and yet lack of poise, and love of the land, may all show through movement and unconsciously limit the style to contemporary expression. Now that we have this enormous breadth of material to work with technically we are ready to eliminate the unnecessary and separate the elements of style from those basic to all dancers of all times. We need to explain our present day characteristic movements in the light of a critical analysis of their meanings. Many people question the violent movement, stiffness of neck, lack of facial expression, and the strain and effort apparent in modern dance. They have been explained in many ways, but whether there is a legitimate basis for those generalizations, is yet to be proved. Many of our modern
stylizations are subject to the same criticisms as the arbitrarily selected forms in ballet. The violent movement which is so often questioned in modern dance is a result of increased range of movement and the concomitant increase in range of expression of the tragic and dissonant features of contemporary life. The larger movements have been conditioned by the dynamic changes in modern life, its characteristic vitality, waste of energy, and love of activity. The stiffness of neck is not universally a characteristic of modern dance movement, but probably has been necessitated, in many groups, by increased use of the spine and reactionary stiffness in the neck to check the loose trunk movement. It may also be a matter of imitation of regional artists who have been influenced by the directness and dignity of the puritan carriage. The lack of facial expression has been characteristic of ballet, as well as of the modern dance, and is due to the fact that large movements communicate more general meanings to the audiences in large theatres better than small facial movements which convey better more specific meanings, they are difficult to make abstract enough to suit the generalized expressions of the body. The professional dancers have attempted to use pantomine recently, but it is a dangerous adjunct if not used carefully. The strain and effort apparent in the movement is explained by the desire to use honest movement,
in revolt from the veiled mechanics of the ballet. All of these and similar characteristics are being modified and used as the content calls for particular effects.

In addition, there is the realization that each of the historic and popular dance forms has something to contribute to the technical language of the dance art. Eventually, the dance art will probably evolve a basic and fundamental technique, which will be plastic enough to allow adequate expression of all of the range of content of idea and emotion, while only the regional and individual differences will be evidenced in the style. When that coordination is made, then specific styles will be the element of choice and discrimination to be made by the artist and his audience.

4. The Elements of Compositional Form

The compositional form of dance has been its most mechanical and technical aspect, and it may be for this reason that it has been the least criticized. "Form may be defined as the unifying of diverse elements whereby they achieve collectively an aesthetic vitality, which except by this association they would not possess. The whole thus becomes greater than the sum of its parts. This unifying process by which form is attained is known as composition."

In composition of the dance, use can be made of both time and space. The dancer begins with an idea, subjects it to his methods of technique, and in turn modifies the movement by his use of it in time and space. In the use of space, the choreographer must consider the elements of dimension, direction, and level. In using dimension, we must realize first that the body is a three dimensional form and can increase or decrease its scope in movement by large open or small, closed movements. Dimension involves not only the single individual in space, but also the grouping of the mass in floor pattern and in level. In three dimensional form, it involves a combination of the two. These elements of space have been utilized to full advantage in the historic dance forms, while the ballet limited itself to a two dimensional pattern which we have discussed in its influence upon the technique. The modern dancer has returned to the use of many folk and primitive forms in his use of space, a device which has given his art a wider range in movement pattern. The use of direction and focus are interdependent in their employment of line to create effect. The elements of direction, or line may be used by the body itself, or by the direction it takes upon the stage space. The direction may be implied by the focus, which may heighten the effect of the movement or diminish it and, in addition, may create an emotional effect.
All of these space elements are in turn interwoven with and dependent upon the element of time. The temporal form of a composition compares with the elements of form involved in music, as the elements of space compare with the forms of the graphic and plastic arts. The grouping of beats is a primary factor in the use of time. We have long superimposed musical rhythm upon movement rhythms, and movement has been limited accordingly. In a fusion of any of the arts, we usually find that one loses by its association with the other and necessarily becomes dependent. The modern dancer found that primitive, simple folk, and pre-classic forms and modern jazz, having been based upon dance rhythms, amplify movement. He discovered on the other hand, that lyric forms, where rhythm is highly elaborated, compete with the dance itself. Consequently his trend today is to compose the movement pattern first and build the music around it. There is, however, ample store of music, already composed, which is danceable. Many dance forms employ the arrangement of beat, accent, phrasing, and variations already worked out in musical forms, making them applicable to dance movement. None of these rhythmic elements is new with the modern dance, but all have been quite thoroughly explored and used in recent years. These rhythms fall into larger patterns of sequential form which came into existence with the early Greek dances and
were extensively employed in the folk dance. The A B A forms, theme and variations, and the suite developed into complicated sequential forms in the court dances of the pre-classic period. Tempo is another inherent element of time which possesses dramatic implications for movement.

These elements of time and space, as here discussed, may be applied specifically to dance. They are, however, merely units which are subject to larger art principles dominating all art forms. Parker has classified them into six principles of unity which he selected as standards for the analysis or criticism of any art form. They are those principles of organic unity which consist of the principle of theme and its variation, of balance, of dominance, and of evolution. In each art, the form is characteristically different, depending upon the medium; but despite the varieties of form, there is a common structure, law, or pattern determined by the wants of man.

The principle of organic unity is the master principle of aesthetic form, all others serving it. The elements of a work of art should be so related to one another that each needs and responds to the demands of the other. Hence, the isolated elements which have been discussed are not important in themselves, but only as they

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are combined into a unified whole do they assume artistic qualities. All else is extrinsic. All knowledge of history, origin, artist's personality, and so on, are immensely important; but at the moment of appreciation, all such knowledge becomes focused in the rightness of the work of art. The dancer attempts to satisfy himself immediately as an artist, and the spectator participates vicariously.

First among the principles of organic unity must be considered that of statement of the theme and variation upon it. The theme is the dominating character of a work; and in art, in contrast to real life, one knows what to expect in this regard and know that everything else will be composed with reference to the theme. That theme may be stated with a fundamental movement, by the use of time pattern or by the use of space pattern; and it may be varied by any one of the three elements. It is not sufficient merely to state the theme, but the artist must elaborate upon it by inverting it, augmenting it, or by differing its tempo or levels.

Another principle of aesthetic form is balance, which is the equality of opposing or contrasting elements. The total emotional life of man is constructed upon this principle of polarity, of stimulation and repose, of joy and sadness. In the dance one needs to balance the elements of time and space by bringing opposing elements into play,
in addition to varying a single theme. Part of the explanation of the crude or ugly in art may be explained by that principle of balance. Just as man ultimately prefers a world which has its dark as well as bright sides, so does the spectator prefer a form which has a balance allowing for alternate rest and then refreshed and enhanced activity.

Third in the principles of unity is that of evolution of pattern and idea. That evolutionary process is evidenced in music and drama more clearly than in the pure space arts; and its manifestations arise in sequence of expectations built up rhythmically. Unless that rhythm is a part of an evolution, there is no climax or hierarchy established, and interest may be lost. Parallel, again, to life situations, the artist must work slowly and build gradually in order that interest may increase as he reaches the peak of the task.

The principle of hierarchy or dominance, too, has its basis in human nature. Matters of high interest are most salient against a background of less moment. Life is most satisfactory when there is a balance between moments of intense significance and moments of rest and repose. "When life is so lived that those moments of repose or preparation are not merely means to an end, but possess charm of their own as well, then life becomes an art, and
is an image of life at its best. 17

Aesthetic design then, is the perfect realization of that pattern which gives value to experience. The fulfillment of desires through perfect design based upon the very nature of man may explain the satisfaction man derives from the pure pattern or design elements of dance. We can see through such an analysis of composition that artistic form always has meaning for man, ranging from the most general and basic to the more particular meanings of an individual or a society. We can also find in this analysis an inherent emotional content in any design, in its balance of the intense and reposeful moments, in its evolutionary growth of an emotion, and in the emergence and dominance of a single strong feeling. Art somehow thus becomes a necessary part of our lives and gives us an insight into the dreams, beliefs and emotions of all humanity.

All of these principles of unity are observed in the use of the elements of movement in time and space. In the use of space we are dealing with forms that inherently imply emotion or thought content. It is upon this basis that the modern dancer attempts to convey meaning directly through movement. Dimension, may be large or small, large movements imply freedom and usually joy, while smaller movements convey more specific, more 17Parker, DeWitt. The Analysis of Art.
restricted meaning. Dimension may concern the floor pattern, grouping of the mass, and level-elevation implying a defiance and a triumph, and low levels, close to earth, depicting a struggle against gravity or a contentment with the earth. Both floor pattern and direction are uses of space which involve line, circular lines implying a continuity and softness, perpendicular lines a dignity, and horizontal lines a repose. The cross may be used to depict a mechanical resistance, radii to bring out the dominant center, and converging and jagged lines to emphasize opposition and action. The use of focus may add emotional emphasis to the direction of the movement, an upward gaze showing an aloofness; a downward, concentration; sideward, an escape or perhaps fear. These elements of space were used to full advantage in the earlier dance forms, while the ballet limited its use of space to a two dimensional pattern. The modern dancer has returned to the use of many of the primitive and folk forms in space, and these materials have given it a wide range in movement patterns.

5. The Emotions as a Measure of the Effectiveness of an Art

After considering the more objective elements of dance, one must be cognizant of the fact that "there is no absolute test of an art, except the capacity of the artist to make us believe," and to create an image, a feel-
ing, and a thought which the spectator too can experience. Both the dancer and the receiver secure the fulfillment of a wish through an activity that is entirely within one's body and mind. When one sees the pattern, there is awakened within the spectator, various moods and emotions which may be in common with those of the dancer if the receiver is well acquainted with the purposes of the dance, the technique employed and the form which governs it. When the spectator acquires a sympathy and understanding with the artist, he will realize how his knowledge and experiences have contributed to his more complete enjoyment.

If one looks first for the visual effectiveness of the pattern, the sensual enjoyment of its form and technical brilliance, and allows the image to bring out the thought and feeling inherent in it, then he will have started on the path toward true appreciation. Dance communicates its own meanings and since one cannot carry an aesthetic dictionary, he must allow it to mean what he is able to bring to it in background and experience.

If one has learned in some measure to look at the dance for the expression of a generalized wish, clarified by movement that may bring to mind many more particular images within one's experiences, he will find the essence of a thought, a newer and clearer comment, not just an imitational reiteration of something he already knows. One
will, ideally, be stimulated to a general curiosity about mankind, rather than be willingly driven into an escape from reality. If one comes with a renewed experience in dance movement, without prejudice against styles his kinesthetic sense will be free to respond to the joy, the defiance, and the sorrow that overflows from the thought and the image through expressive movement into his own feeling. If one follows a pattern in time and space and feels that it has a rightness, an organic unity that cannot be changed and remain at once so perfect or so clear, then one will secure an emotional satisfaction that can hardly be found in real life. If one tries to anticipate the growing idea and watch it emerge successfully, when a theme is stated clearly and restated frequently, he will participate emotionally in the hopes, frustrations, joys, and sorrows inherent in the pattern. Then emotional response to the dance will be an outgrowth of a wholehearted participation in the image and the thought, and feeling will come naturally.

The components of dance have been discussed in relation to one phase of the art form of dance which has been called modern contemporary dance. One may have discovered that the historic forms have had many of the same purposes, the same techniques, compositional form and the same consequent emotional content. Modern dance then seems to be distinguished only by its emphasis in content
and in form.

Modern dance in the larger sense, will include the contributions of ballet, tap, folk, and the social forms of dance. It will make use of a training in all of the phases of dance, and will go beyond their limitations. Ballet has been limited in style and content, tap dancing in content and use of space, social and folk dancing in the use of content and technique. Their common elements are more evident than their differences, and one profits little by separation of the various forms of dance into limited categories. One may be better able to analyze each dance form by subjecting it to the criteria suggested in the study of the particular compositions included in this thesis.

Modern dance is that phase of contemporary dancing which emphasizes in purpose the projection of a thought or an idea, based upon reality and influenced by the characteristics of a contemporary society. It emphasizes in technique, the use of a wide range of movement limited only in style, which has turned to the dynamic, the primitive and the realistic in the recent period of revolt. It makes full use of historic contributions of compositional forms, and most frequently employs large three dimensional patterns in space with groups. It has made full use of the emotional content inherent in movement; and if any emphasis is evident, it has perhaps been concerned largely with the tragic and the defiant. Modern dance is a rapidly
growing art, and what are its characteristics this year may be supplanted by different emphases the next. If it is to remain vital, it will need to make those changes continuously and to assimilate the best as it emerges from experiment rather than to discard each effort as a new contribution appears.

6. A Brief Discussion of the Components of Art as a Basis For Analysis and Appreciation of Modern Dance

The average adult has had little experience with dance as an art form. If his interest has been aroused, he is inclined to search for some basis for judgment and understanding, and ordinarily he will not be willing or able to start with the elements of dance as he has in his acquaintance with drama, music or painting. Ideally, his appreciation and understanding of dance should be an outgrowth of experiences from childhood, but since that opportunity has not been provided in the school program until very recently, he must approach dance through short-cut procedures. The arrangement which has been suggested here, would be most effective if the four components of art were presented as separate, one hour, discussions. They may be compared to the reviews given in advance of symphony concerts or art exhibits. If, however, time does not permit a complete development of these discussions, the following one hour discussion may be substituted.
The following script may be presented in connection with the showing of the dance films included in this thesis. The outline should be referred to as indicated in footnotes during the presentation of this discussion and during the showing of the films. The script is written in a conversational form and it includes comments which may be made during the showing of the films. *

** We have heard many comments in recent years about a new art form called modern dance. Those of us who have become interested in its growth find it necessary to establish a basis for judging its accomplishments. As a general rule, the dance has been presented to us by the artist. There has been little opportunity to watch his experimentation or to discover the needs and reasons for his changes from the established ballet form. We, as spectators, have been used to the imitative expressions of a period when the whole art world was in less turmoil. We have expected dance to tell us a story and have depended upon the costume, music setting and words to convey its meanings. Modern dance depends upon movement to convey subject and emotional content, and unless we become aware of the meanings inherent in dance movement, appreciation and understanding will not result. We will need to recognize that modern dance has expanded the possibilities of expression of subject and emotional content through a widening of the range in technique and compositional form. The discarding of previous limitations in form, technique, and content

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*Running comments are indented in the script and the key words are underlined.
**This discussion accompanied films presented at colloquy.
of ballet, folk, and social dance forms has made the newer movement patterns seem strange and confusing.

The real differences lie in the revolt from these limitations. An analysis of the four elements of any art, which are, subject, technique, compositional form, and emotional content should help make the contemporary art in general and modern dance in particular better understood. We cannot assume that appreciation of modern dance is something we either have or do not have. Active and continuous association are necessary. It will be helpful to set up a logical approach which will guide us toward better understanding of dance. There is no absolute or definite way of measuring the worth of an art. We have only our subjective opinions and our belief in the superiority of an art. The opinions of the artist and consumer may not always agree, and neither should accept the others taste as final. However, there should be a cooperation between the artist and the receivers of his art if it is to assume a vital and important place in society. We are concerned here with the approach that is to be made by us as spectators. True and lasting appreciation will require a long association with and knowledge of dance, but if we can organize and simplify that approach, perhaps dance will attain the universal appeal that is claimed for it.

We may approach dance by increasing knowledge and background and by extending our experience and familiarity with meaningful movement. These knowledges and experiences should help us understand the place of dance as a phase of
art and life. They should open our eyes to new glimpses into situations we could not find without the artist's help.

Since there are available sources for extending knowledge of dance history which are products of extensive research, this aid to appreciation will not be developed except as it is necessary to the study of the interrelations of the various dance forms. Since creative experience and familiarity with dance concerts is purely a personal matter and beyond my control, it is only suggested that these aids to appreciation are of the utmost importance. We shall be concerned here with an analysis of movement as it is developed by the subject, technique, compositional form and the emotional content.

We will find in the study of the historical developments of dance many interesting functions disclosed. These changing purposes have been the source of fiery dispute in the dance world. We will find that the artist has a wide range of purposes to choose from and that his subject matter and its development will be governed by the purpose he has in mind. If the artist is concerned with subjects that are remote from his everyday life, then the art product is likely to be in the realm of fancy. He may express his ideas with great freedom if the spectator is aware of his flight from reality. On the other hand if communication of a view of the real life problems is desired, then his subject will be colored by the views of his society and must remain close to the group for

19 Outline, Section I.
which it is intended. We must recognize the difference between the social or play form of dance, where subject has only a remote significance and the art form of dance which emphasizes the projection of a thought through a perfected technique and an intricate compositional form, for the enjoyment of the beholder. The purpose of the art form of dance is lost if the thought and the feeling cannot be conveyed successfully. Care must be taken that neither content nor technique is sacrificed, one for the sake of the other. The superior art establishes a fine balance between the two.

The technical means of conveying the thought in dance is through movement. The artist does not strive to attain reality or an exact representation of a situation, rather he attempts to simplify or clarify his view of that situation so that communication may be more direct. We find that abstraction and distortion of movement are the means employed. The artist uses a sign language which may closely resemble or merely suggest the desired idea. If the artist goes too far in simplifying or if his slant upon a specific idea is unrelated to what the audience already knows, then he loses contact and there is a lack of understanding. We need to see our present day characteristic dance movements in the light of critical analysis of their meanings. Many of the elements of style should be separated from the movement techniques which are basic to dances of all times and all forms. For example, many people question the violent movement, the stiffness of neck, lack of facial expression, and the strain

20 Outline, Section I.
21 Outline, Section II.
and effort apparent in modern dance which are sometimes used indiscriminately. These modern stylizations may be subject to the same criticism as the arbitrarily selected positions in ballet. The style should be governed by the thought to be expressed and the regional and individual differences of the artists. But the basic and fundamental technique should be plastic enough to allow for these differences in the use of movement. The compositional form of the dance is least subject to criticism; it is a more objective element than the subject, technique, and emotional content, being based upon the art principles of unity. The outline shows that the uses made of time and space are governed by the principle which implies a statement of the theme, balance, dominance, and evolution. The uses of time and space and their observance of art principles will be discussed more in detail as we see them illustrated in the films.

After we have considered the more objective elements of art which are the prerequisites for the fullest enjoyment of dance, we will recognize the fact that there is no absolute test of an art, except the capacity of the artist to make us believe in and to create an image, a thought, and a feeling which we too can experience. If we look first for a pattern that we can enjoy for its beauty, and its effectiveness brought out by brilliance in technique, and allow this image to bring out the thought and feeling inherent in it, we will have started on the path to true appreciation. Dance carries its own meaning, and as we cannot carry an aesthetic dictionary, we can only allow it to mean to us what we are able to

22 Outline, Section III.
bring to it in background and experience. If we are familiar with the purpose the artist has in mind, his means of conveying it through technique and compositional form, then we will be free to follow the dance as though we were experiencing the movement ourselves, and the feeling the artist wishes to establish will be projected into our own experience.

An analogy may be drawn, viewing a painting. If we are familiar with the artist's wish to convey a particular love for the quiet scenic beauty and patterned life of the rural Iowan as in Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" and if we can see a relation to and suitability of his simple sculptured technique to his subject, and in compositional form, the smooth flowing theme in line and the sparkle in his balance of contrasting color, then his view of Iowa will find a response in our own experiences.

As we look at the dance compositions included in these films we shall need to keep in mind the points listed in the outline. If we remember that the dancers are not highly skilled and that only the simplest elements of composition and technique have been illustrated, we will recognize that the treatment of subject and emotional content will be limited. It has been possible to include music in only two of the dances, and having been accustomed to sound pictures, the first section of the films may be surprising and a little annoying.

The first dance was worked out by three high school girls with my help. It is primarily a dance problem. We called it "Problem in Traffic" and attempted to establish a quiet, monotonous mood in which pedestrian patterns of locomotion are interwoven with elements of confusion and rebellion
as they appear in the constant shifting and turning of the stream of traffic. The traffic pattern is merely suggested by the balance of monotonous line in movement and the contrasting turns.

In compositional form, we find the space pattern is quite simple and is easily followed. Parallel lines and circles suggest the monotonous and continuous movement. One extreme fall in level occurs as a contrasting element to the serenity of the traffic pattern. Turns are used frequently in contrast to the directness of the back and forth locomotor movements. Swinging axial movements indicate direction, and hops, jumps and leaps provide a more dynamic element. A modern syncopated rhythm is established and a playing of one sustained voice against a faster more propulsive voice in the movement illustrates the use of counterpoint in dance form. Although other art principles are in evidence, the emergence of a dominant figure to the center of interest is the most obvious. The theme is stated by the single figure and elaborated upon by the rest of the group.

The following comments are to accompany "Problem in Traffic":

The dance opens with a statement of the theme and all movement patterns which are developed later may be found in this statement. The theme includes: slow turning, to establish a continuous, monotonous movement; walking back and forth to indicate direction and continuity; swinging movement to indicate direction; a fall

23 Outline, Section III.
extreme contrast in level marks the end of theme. The central figure emerges from the circular pattern to elaborate upon the theme. The group takes the dynamic movement into the foreground and the single figure makes a re-restatement of the theme.

To illustrate the range of further possibilities in the fundamental movements employed, turning techniques have been added, ranging from low levels to standing locomotor turns.

The following comments may accompany "Turning Techniques":

Stiffness of neck is an advantage in these turns. Closed turns are expanded into larger swinging turns.

The second group of dances was selected from films which recorded the "Midwestern Dance Suite" composed by Miss Thelma Dodson this spring in partial fulfillment of her Master of Arts Degree in Physical Education.

The "Cornhuskers Dance" was based on the cornhusking contests of the middle west. This dance illustrates an art function in portraying characteristics of a folk type. The dance expresses the communal effort and gaiety observed in work and play life of the rural communities in Iowa. Its compositional form is based upon folk patterns, floor pattern being an outstanding feature. It uses an intricate system of line, involving circles and partner formations which may symbolize the cooperation and

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24 Outline, Section I.
25 Outline, Section II.
social life of a group. A simple folk rhythm pervades the
dance, in which jumps, leaps, hops, and polkas illustrate
the dynamic and vigorous movements of work. Most typical
of the folk pattern is symmetrical balance which is ex-
emplified in this dance.

The following comments may accompany the "Corn-
huskers Dance":

The two lines greet each other in the opening of the dance. The theme is introduced by the men. It is a stylized expression of actual cornhusking movements. There is a beckoning of friends to a frolic. A country dance motif is introduced. Cornhusking between the rows is suggested by the floor pattern and stylized movements. There is a return to the frolic by the entire group.

The dance of "Youth and Age" best illustrates the conflict between the religious expression of the older and younger generation. The conflict is suggested through the decided contrasts in the movement itself and the variations in compositional form. It employs the ABAC sequential form in which there is first stated the set religious pattern which age expects youth to follow. In B youth gradually breaks away from the set form indicating dissatisfaction. In the repetition of A, there is a return to the first pattern which remains meaningless to youth, and

Outline, Section I.
Outline, Section III.
requires a final breaking away in C, where youth and age attempt to incorporate the desirable characteristics of both religious expressions. The contrasts are effected through the movements themselves, which are slow and restricted in age and become merely the "mass group worshipping according to form" for youth. The dynamic unrest of youth is expressed through impatient, less restrained large locomotor movements. The discontent is made more obvious by use of syncopated rhythms and extreme contrasts in level. Falls were employed frequently to denote the struggle involved in making radical changes from the established ways of thinking. The evolution of an idea through growing movement and balanced contrasts in the process of that growth illustrate the uses that can be made of the principles of unity in creating emotional effect.

The following comments may accompany "Youth and Age":

Part A is the theme of the pattern set by age for youth to follow. The upward line may be an indication of reverence and worship. An individual figure breaks away from the group. Part B shows the complete breaking away of the group from the restricted movements of age. Part A shows a return to the restrained movement. There is another attempt at conformity through repetition of movement in the first of the dance. The only difference is in space pattern. There is a transition from A, a closed group, when elements of both movements of age and youth are employed. Part C shows the adjustment
made by youth to the religious views of age. Out of the revolt evolved an expression which was typically their own.

"Advanced Publicity" from "County Fair" supports a thread of a plot with pantomimic action. Mass movement of crowds from one attraction to another provides the theme for a slant upon a county fair that reaches the experiences of any one who has attended a similar entertainment, and supplies a record of human events that catches the humor of the occasion. Contrast in levels has been exaggerated by the use of stage sets. The temporal form in sequence is the simple A B, which is similar to the verse and chorus arrangements we find in all popular songs. It is repeated again and again to accentuate the varying stages of action and rest. This picture illustrates the evolution of an idea through the increasing of intensity of movement and the shifting of the group from one attraction to another. The movements themselves are small; the only locomotor movements being simple walks and runs. The stylized pantomime concerns itself with the detail and, to keep from falling into the purely imitative, makes use of distortion, exaggeration, and repetition.

These comments may accompany "Advance Publicity":

There are early arrivals at the fair.

28Outline, Section III.
The crowd gathers. The first attraction is the Barker or announcer. He shows his power over the crowd by wrapping them around his little finger. The second attraction holds the crowd spellbound until the next diversion. The third attraction, the believe-it-or-not man, induces the crowd to fall in with everything he suggests. All three attractions vie each with the other for the attention of the crowd.

Movement techniques have been selected from the "Cornhusker Dance" and from "Youth and Age" to better illustrate the themes of the dances.

The following comments may accompany "Movement Techniques":

The stylized movement of comhusking is based upon the actual work movements. The restrained movement of age in worship is illustrated.

The third group of dances consists of adapted pre-classic forms from the "Partita" which were performed for the Orchesis recital, with choreography by Miss Miriam Raphael. They best illustrate use which can be made of the historic pre-classic forms as a basis for modern developments. The "Gigue" is a greeting dance of liveliness and gaiety. The form of greeting is stylized and quite different from that in "Cornhusker Dance." No specific meanings are implied, only very generalized emotional content is brought out by the form itself. It makes use of two groups whose statement
and repetition of the theme are in cannon, one following the other, then in unison, and in counterpoint. These voices contrast in level, tempo, and direction. The bright percussive movements predominate; they are chiefly the simple runs, swinging movements, falls, and leaps.

The "Allemende" provides a decided contrast in mood. It is more restrained, slow and graceful, and extremely sentimental. This was also true of the historic "Allemande" of the 15th and 16th centuries. It is strong in design quality; its use of space being limited in this case largely to two dimensional form. The arms are used throughout the dance to emphasize line and indicate direction. In the historic form, the hands were kept joined throughout the dance. There is little contrast in movement, but rather a monotonous walking and turning, relieved by the contrasts in line and level.

These two compositions well illustrate the more abstract pattern-dance in which emotional content is inherent to the balance of the intense and reposeful moments, in its evolutionary growth, and in the emergence and dominance of a single strong feeling, image, or thought.

If we have in some measure learned to look for the artist's conception of things, clarified by movement that may bring to mind more particular images within our own experiences; or if we have learned to look for the essence

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Outline, Section III.
of a thought and a new and clearer comment; or if we have been stimulated to a general curiosity about mankind; if we have come without prejudice and our kinesthetic sense is free to respond to the joy, defiance, or sorrow that has overflowed into movement; if we can better follow a pattern in time and space, feeling that it has a rightness, an organic unity that could not be changed and remain as perfect and enjoyable — then our response to dance has been an outgrowth of a wholehearted participation in the "image, the thought, and the feeling."
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this study was to develop a basis for better understanding and appreciation of dance through a study of the components of art, by means of films and discussions. It was prepared for the layman and the beginning student of dance. In subjective measure of the accomplishments of this approach, the limitations of the study are evident. It is not claimed to be exhaustive. This abbreviated approach would be unnecessary if the average spectator were educated from childhood in the dance knowledges and experiences that the school program might include. The educational procedure employed by the arts of music and painting have made elementary appreciation courses unnecessary for adults who have had such prerequisite training. It cannot be assumed, however, that discussions and outlines of the nature presented here will reach all levels of adult understanding; rather it has been directed to gain interest. It has been suggested that the outline be simplified and that technical terms be omitted. In further development of this thesis, the writer will make every attempt to adapt the material to the level of the group to which it is presented. Many more examples, such as a list of the specific meanings of certain movements and suggested ways of clarifying them would give the spectator a more definite
vocabulary from which to work.

In addition to the outline and discussion, films of dance compositions were employed to develop better understanding of dance. Many technical aspects of film procedure became an outgrowth of the study that could well be considered as a separate problem. It would first be suggested that the use of highly skilled dancers as subjects for photography would increase the possibilities of illustrating the components of dance. In actual film procedure, it should be found of great advantage to write a dance script which would include the suggestions for lighting, for range of shots, for timing, and general effects which could or might be brought out by different angles of photography. It is desirable to use either daylight or at least ten photoflood lamps for night photography if the space pattern is large. Color photography requires still more light, and the groups should be kept as compact as possible to retain the unity in composition. A twenty-four frame picture is more desirable when fast propulsive movement is to be photographed, while the regular sixteen frame picture is satisfactory for slow, sustained movement. A very thorough study of the dances should be made before the filming, and preferably, still pictures should be taken of various points in the dance where certain experimental effects are desired.

In the writer's estimation, the study covered a
very broad field, and the writer suggests further that it should be narrowed down to one aspect, which should be subjected to experimentation and attempts should be made to measure the results objectively. The study will be of value as a beginning in this field, and will serve to motivate interest, if not to accomplish immediate results in developing appreciation and understanding of dance.
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