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SCHWARTZ, LYDIA. Nonsense. A video tape of the dance is available at the Walter Clinton Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. (1975) Directed by: Dr. Lois Andreasen. Pp. 18.

The primary motivation for the dance, entitled "Nonsense", evolved mainly from the belief that happiness is better than sorrow. Often during periods of economic recession and political turmoil, sorrow comes to the forefront more often than the joys of life. It is the choreographer's intent to focus upon those aspects of life which bring the possibility of happiness to an audience. The goal of the choreographer is to allow the audience to have fun and escape through comedy.

A secondary motivation for the dance is that comedy in itself is a challenge to produce. Attempting to keep the dancers stimulated and the movements alive, as well as simply trying to make the material comical is a task the choreographer wished to undertake.

As a way of approaching the choreographic problem, the use of audio and visual properties and the ways in which they can relate to movement was selected. The audio properties include vocal sounds, percussion instruments, and the first movement of Lou Harrison's published music, entitled "Suite for Percussion". The visual properties will include chairs, the instruments carried or worn by the dancers and printed signs.

In Section I, using three dancers, the audio effects are produced by the vocal sounds of the dancers and the visual effects are produced by the dancers relationships with the chairs on stage. Section II is based primarily on rhythms and movements to those rhythms. The three dancers in this section are continuously playing one of six instruments: a bass drum, a Wigman drum, a tamborine, maracas, sticks, or finger cymbals. The audio effects are produced by the instruments and the visual effects are produced by the audience actually seeing the instruments and the dance movements. In Section III, the five dancers carry and use as properties, sandwich signs with nonsense words written on them and dance to the first movement of Lou Harrison's published music, "Suite for Percussion", and the visual effects are produced by the signs and the movement patterns.

All six dancers wear nude colored leotards and tights with multi-colored geometric shapes sewn onto them. These shapes are also put on different areas of the face. The lighting in all three sections is the same. The entire stage is illuminated with bright colors with a black-out between each section and at the end of the dance, the lights slowly fade out.

I hereby certify
the validity of the minutes of
the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in the year 1954
at the University for the year
ended at the date

Secretary

Approved by

L. E. Johnson
Chancellor

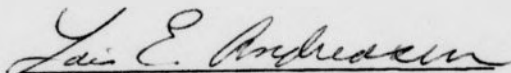
NONSENSE

by
Lydia Schwartz

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

Greensboro
1975

Approved by


Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

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

Thesis Adviser L. E. Anderson

Oral Examination
Committee Members Arthur B. Hunkins

Fritz Menger

11/14/75
Date of Examination

Musical Analysis

- Section I: Vocalization by the dancers.
- Section II: Percussion instruments played by the dancers.
- Section III: First movement of "Suite for Percussion" composed by Lou Harrison, published in 1940. Composers Recordings, Inc.; 170 West 74th Street, New York, New York 10023. Score unavailable.

The music has changing metric patterns with a structure of ABA. For the purpose of the dance, the music was counted in a series of time changes: 6/4, 3/4, 2/4, 5/4, 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 5/4, 2/4, 4/4, in part A. Part B was counted in 4/4 time.

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgements to Dr. Lois Andreasen for her continuous guidance, support, criticism, and interest in the preparation of this thesis. To Misses Polly Brandman, Robin Runstedler, Nancy Schroeder, Susan Smith, and Arlene Strom deep appreciation for patient and willing cooperation in the performance of this choreography. Special thanks to Linda Alvarez, Anne Cleveland and Jim Friesinger for all of their help. And to my parents for their undying moral and financial support.

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Introduction

The primary motivation for the dance, entitled "Nonsense," was the belief that happiness is better than sorrow. It is the choreographer's opinion that during periods of economic recession and political turmoil, sorrow comes to the forefront more often than the joys of life, not only in everyday existence, but also in the arts. Because of these turbulent times, the choreographer felt the need to provide the audience with a means of escape. To satisfy this need, comedy was chosen as the vehicle. In making the decision between a literal dance and a nonliteral dance, the choreographer once again took the audience into consideration. The choice was a nonliteral dance, because through this form of choreography, movement may exist for movement's sake. The choreographer wanted the audience to be able to observe the dance without trying to understand it or without trying to find any hidden meanings. Therefore, the two major elements of the dance, "Nonsense," were nonliteral choreography and comedy.

Margery Turner, author, associate professor and coordinator of dance at Douglass College of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, defines nonliteral dance as the art of motion and movement. She further states that as a nonverbal medium, dance concerns itself with attitudes, feelings, relationships, shapes, images, and forms that can be directly communicated through the senses, and not with ideas or thoughts.¹ This is what the choreographer intended to do in "Nonsense," by using different relationships with which the dancers were involved: the chairs, the instruments, the signs, and the other dancers. Each relationship was used for the purpose of heightening the visual and audio senses. By Turner's definition, "Nonsense" is a nonliteral dance.

In addition to comedy, the choreographer was equally concerned with the aesthetic development of the dance. According to Turner, "aesthetic effectiveness is strongly related to clarity and unity - a kind of organic unity in which the dance work is disciplined to its form and content."² Two major approaches were used by the choreographer to illustrate the unity in "Nonsense." First, all three sections are entities within themselves, and believing there is order in chaos, the choreographer also believes there is unity in diversity.

Secondly, unity can be observed through the different accompaniments. The choreographer wanted to illustrate how dancers could move to different types of sounds. In the first section, the sounds are a vocalization by the dancers; in the second section the dancers play percussion instruments; and in the third section, the dancers perform to Lou Harrison's published music, "Suite for Percussion." Once again, there is unity in diversity.

Turner believes that in nonliteral dance, special treatment is given to theatrical devices such as unusual costumes, lighting, properties, and special effects.³ In "Nonsense" the choreographer gave special attention to these devices in regard to comedy. The nude colored costumes worn by the dancers gave the illusion of nudity and permitted the audience to focus upon the layers of multi-colored pieces of felt cut into different geometrical shapes. These shapes and colors were further transposed onto the faces of the dancers with grease paint which produced a comic atmosphere as well as the visual impact of color. Because of the choreographer's belief that comedy connotes gaiety and happiness, "Nonsense" required a brightly illuminated stage. Cool colors on one side of the stage and warm colors on the other side, gave the stage a general wash of light. Properties were used in all sections of the dance. In Section I three wooden straight-backed chairs were used by the dancers because the chairs had the great capacity to become a variety of different things - something to hide behind, something on which to stand, or something to use as a gun. In Section II the properties were percussion instruments. Sandwich signs were used in the third section with the dancers handling them in a variety of ways. They are pulled, dancers go under them, around them, and through them. The choreographer felt that the movement would be more stimulating with the aid of properties that had a visual impact. Written on the signs were the following nonsense words: "brillig" and "uffish," from Lewis Carroll's jabberwocky in Through the Looking Glass; "ecnad," which is dance spelled backwards; and "frash" and "snurtle," which were words created by the choreographer. At the beginning of each section, a dancer carried across the stage a sign indicating the beginning of that section. Written on the signs were the title of respective sections: "Nonsense I," "Nonsense II," "Nonsense III." In the third section, three signs are carried across at various pauses in the music stating "The End," "Finally, The End," and "Applause." Through the use of signs the

choreographer intended to provide the audience with the atmosphere of vaudeville or "slapstick" comedy. Contrary to literal choreographers, the nonliteral artist does not use the devices as conveyors of meaning or as a substitute for movement, but rather as extensions of motion and movement.⁵

In creating successful comedy, the major difficulty lies in the fact that "humor is unique with each individual, so personal, indeed, that it is often inexplicable."⁶ Walter Sorell, author of The Dancer's Image and Facets of Comedy, states that everyone has a threshold of humor just as everyone has a threshold of pain. He also believes that there is a very thin line between humor and pain, because humor which escapes us can often be painful.⁷

In creating "Nonsense" the choreographer encountered numerous problems. Keeping the dancers stimulated and the movements alive were the two problems that were most easily resolved. One of the most difficult to resolve was finding the "right" dancers. The success of this particular dance relied upon the abilities of the performers. The dancers had to extend their personalities to meet the demands of their roles without inhibitions. They also had to be continually aware of communicating with the audience. Another difficult problem was trying to make the movements comical. The choreographer had to remember that what one thinks is comical another may not. Also, there are different types of comedy: one form may cause a pleasing feeling or mood, another evoke a smile, while a third form may induce laughter. The choreographer tried to elicit all these responses.

"Nonsense" was a major attempt upon the part of the choreographer to provide a pleasurable artistic experience to varied audiences. As comedy differs, so do audiences depending upon experiences and backgrounds. With a few adjustments, children could enjoy viewing "Nonsense", both for pleasurable and educational purposes. "Nonsense" deals with different visual and auditory stimuli giving special attention to the senses. The choreographer had the opportunity to present "Nonsense" to an audience of deaf children. The results obtained were positive and supported the rationale upon which the dance was based.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Section I:

As the curtain opens, three chairs are visible on the stage. Three dancers enter at various times making short quick runs across the stage. The sounds heard are a vocalization by the dancers which consists of the noises "ping", "pah", "bah", and a swirling sound like the wind. As the sounds are being made, the dancers will make these sounds visible through movements of different body parts. As the section continues, the movement changes tempo many times from very short quick runs across the stage into a collapse and suspend sequence and a slow "oozing" motion across the stage. Although there are many different movement qualities in this section, the dancers return many times to making the sounds visible through different parts of the body. Section I ends as all dancers have exited with their chairs and suddenly a hand appears from behind the curtain. As the hand emerges into view of the audience, the sound "ping" can be heard. At this point, there is a five second blackout. The audio effects of this section will be produced by the vocal sounds of the dancers and the visual effects will be produced by the dancers' relationships with the chairs on the stage.

Section II:

Section II is based primarily on rhythms and movements to those rhythms. The three dancers in this section make continuous entrances and exits while dancing and playing their percussion instruments. The instruments include a bass drum, a Wigman drum, a tamborine, maracas, finger cymbals and sticks. Throughout the section there are many time signature changes. The dancers often have to change from 3/4 time to 5/4 time to 6/8 time. The structural idea for the section is ABA; the movement idea is as follows: round instruments will be used against straight floor patterns in part A, and in part B straight instruments will be used against circular floor patterns. The section ends as a dancer executes a side leap and strikes the Wigman drum. The audio effects will be produced by the instruments and the visual effects will be produced by the audience actually seeing the instruments on the stage and the movements that relate to the instruments.

Section III:

After a blackout held five seconds, five dancers will carry and use as properties sandwich signs and dance to the first movement of Lou Harrison's "Suite for Percussion". Written on the signs will be nonsense words, such as, "snurtle", "ecnad", "frash", "brillig", and "uffish". "Brillig" and "uffish" are words from Lewis Carroll's jabberwocky in Through the Looking Glass; "ecnad" is dance spelled backwards; "snurtle" and "frash" are nonsense words. Throughout the section the dancers will be using the signs in a variety of ways; for example, the dancers will go around and under the signs, carry and pull the signs. After many false endings, the dancers begin to exit through the audience and out the side door as the lights start to dim and finally end in a blackout. The choreographer chose to use signs to enhance the setting on stage and as a visual support of the movements. The audio effects will be produced by Harrison's "Suite for Percussion", and the visual effects will be produced by the signs and movement patterns.

Footnotes

- 1 Turner, Margery J., New Dance, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press), 1971, p. 3.
- 2 Ibid., p. 6.
- 3 Ibid., p. 31.
- 4 Carroll, Lewis, Through the Looking Glass, (New York: Random House, Inc.), 1956, p. 18.
- 5 Turner, p. 31.
- 6 Sorell, Walter, Facets of Comedy, (New York: Grosset and Dunlap), 1972, p. 4.
- 7 Sorell, Walter, The Dancer's Image, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1971, p. 80.

Photographic Data

Video Tape

Distance of camera to stage: Forty-six feet ten inches.

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: f=16-64 mm 1:2

Process: Stationary

Tape: 1/2 inch tape

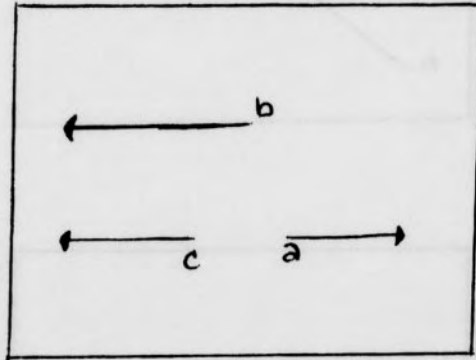
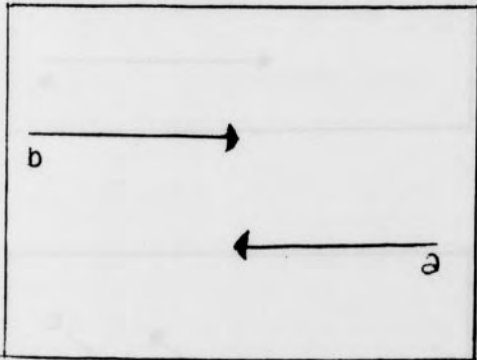
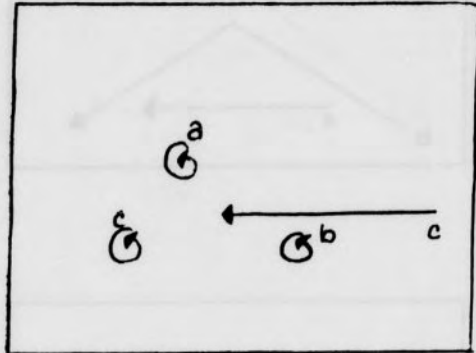
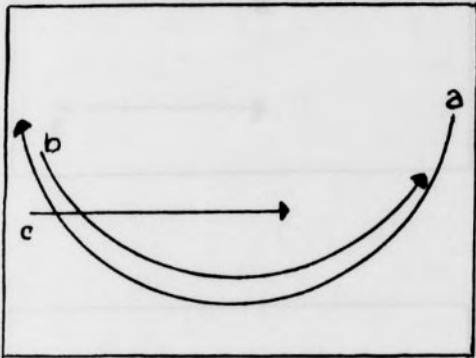
Videocorder: (Deck) Sony AV-3650/AVC-3200

Sound: Microphone was thirty inches from tape recorder with the volume number set at five.

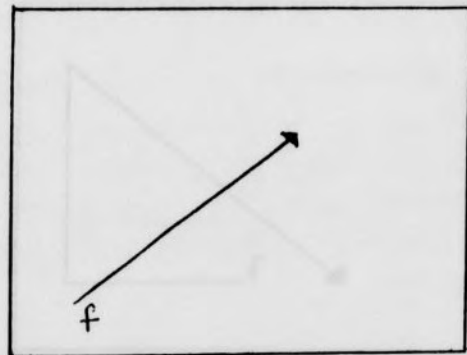
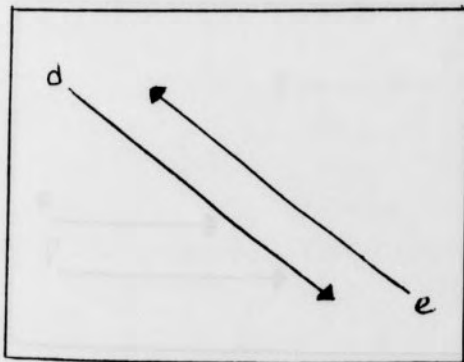
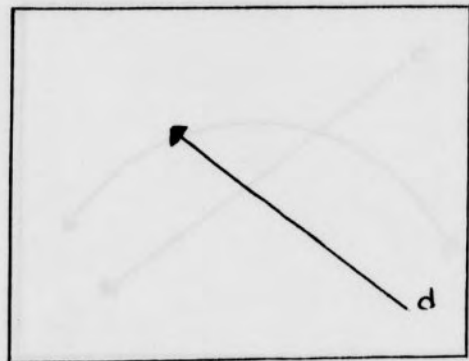
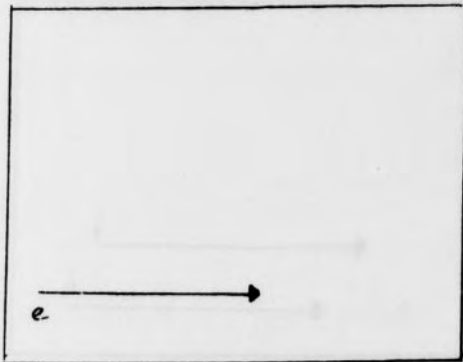
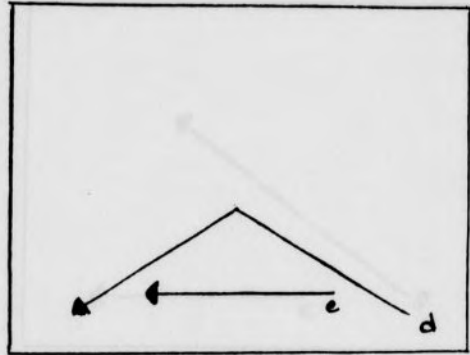
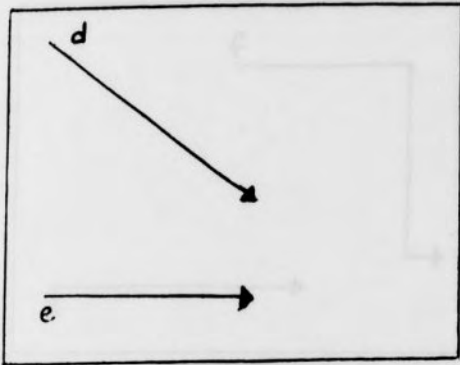
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Movement Clarification

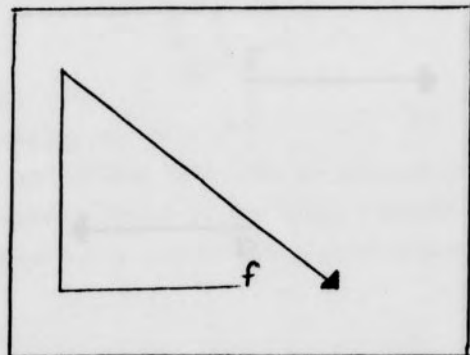
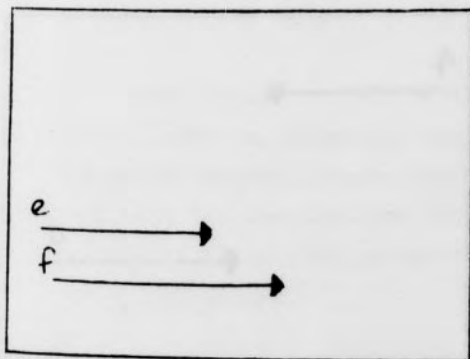
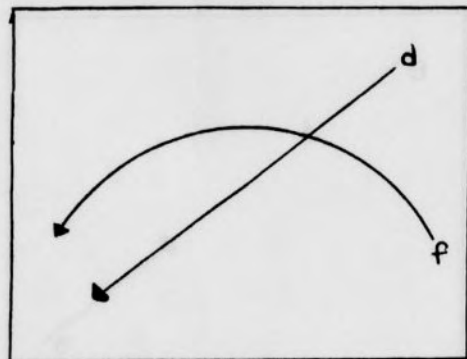
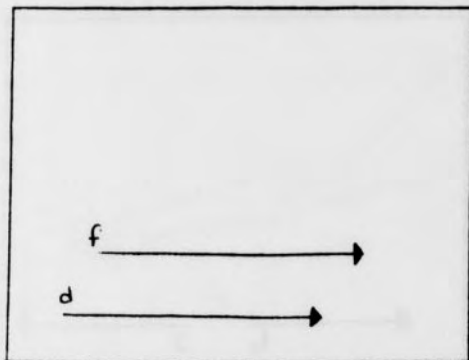
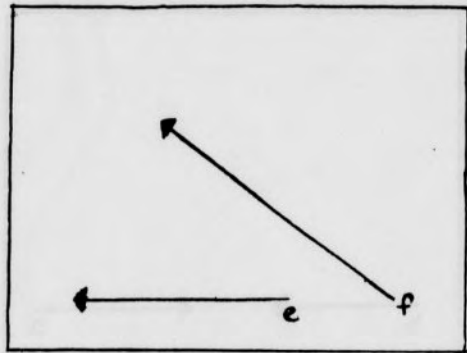
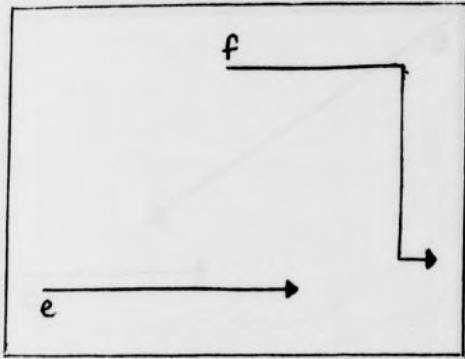
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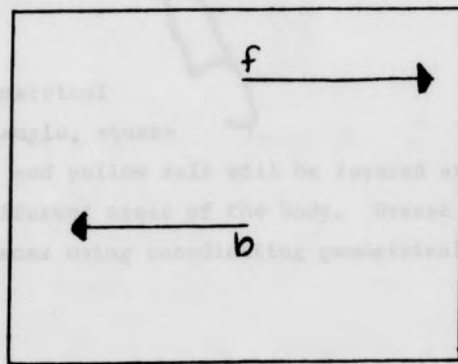
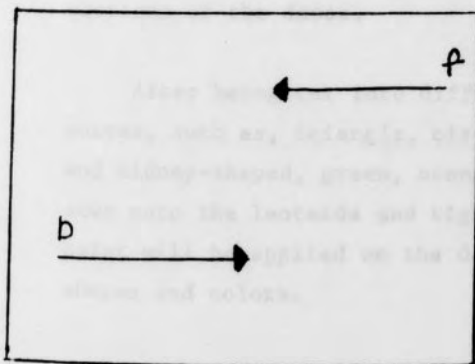
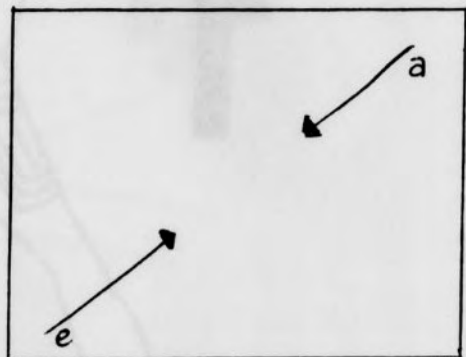
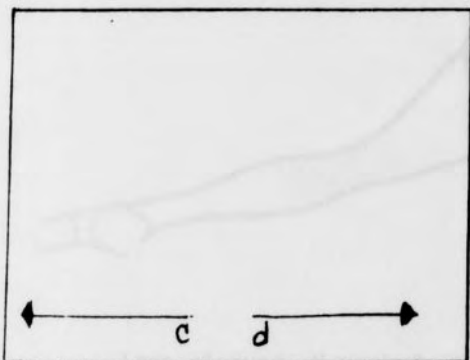
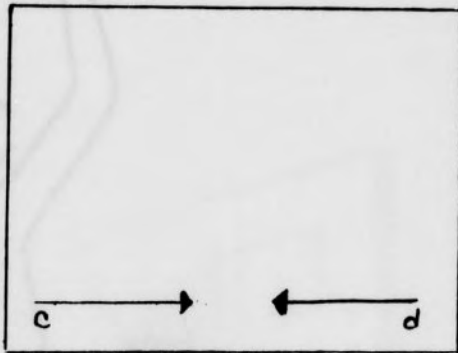
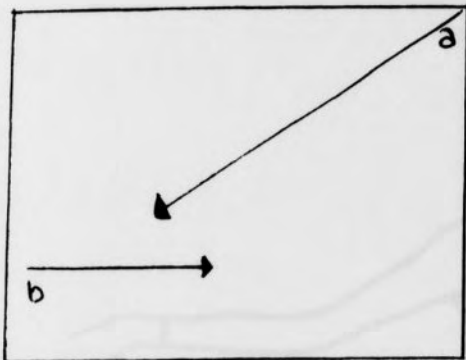
Section II



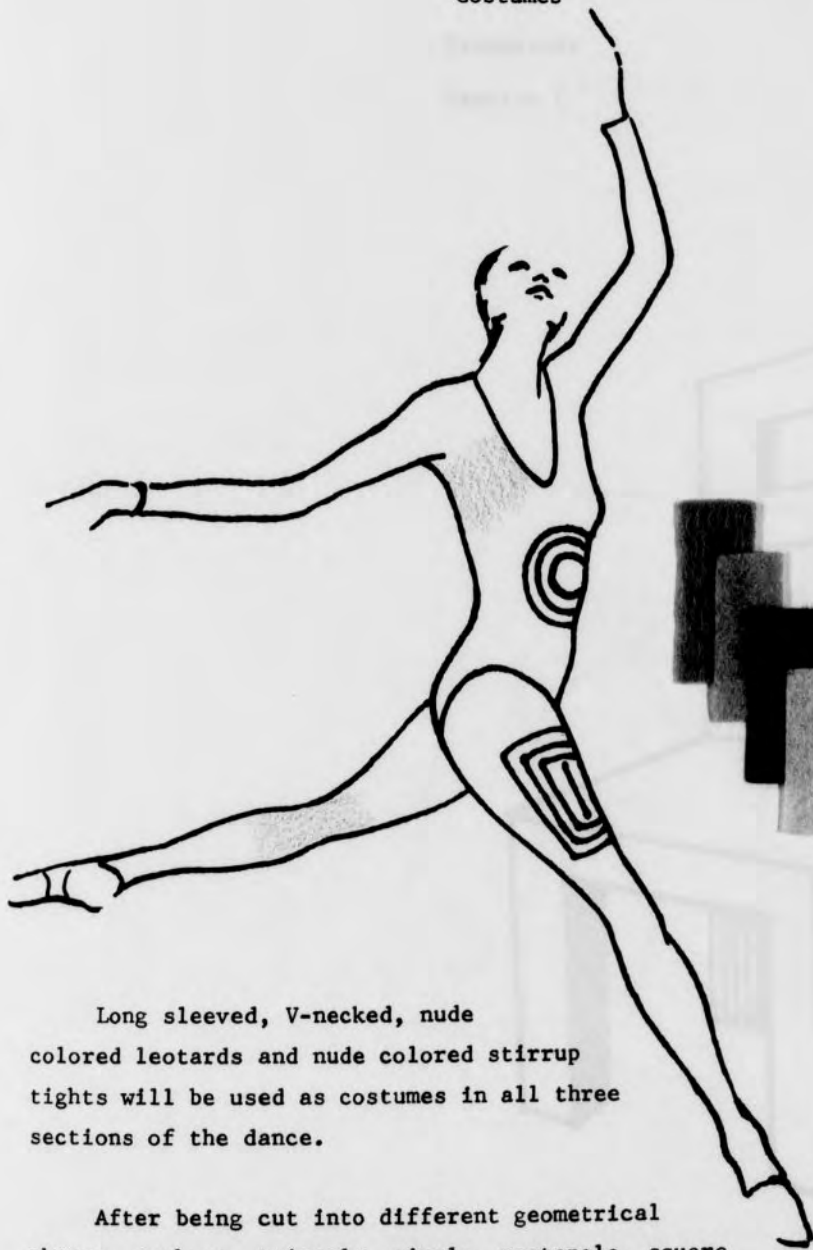
Section II



Section III



Costumes

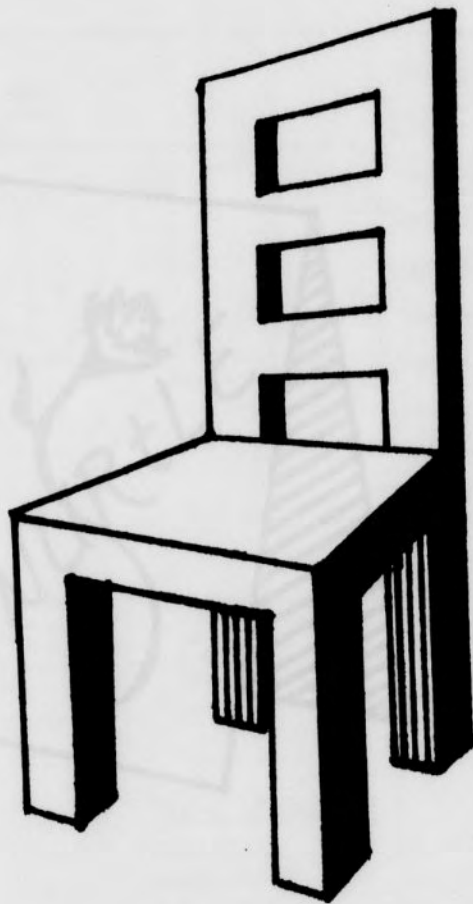


Long sleeved, V-necked, nude colored leotards and nude colored stirrup tights will be used as costumes in all three sections of the dance.

After being cut into different geometrical shapes, such as, triangle, circle, rectangle, square and kidney-shaped, green, orange, blue, and yellow felt will be layered and sewn onto the leotards and tights on different areas of the body. Grease paint will be applied on the dancers' faces using coordinating geometrical shapes and colors.

Properties

Section I



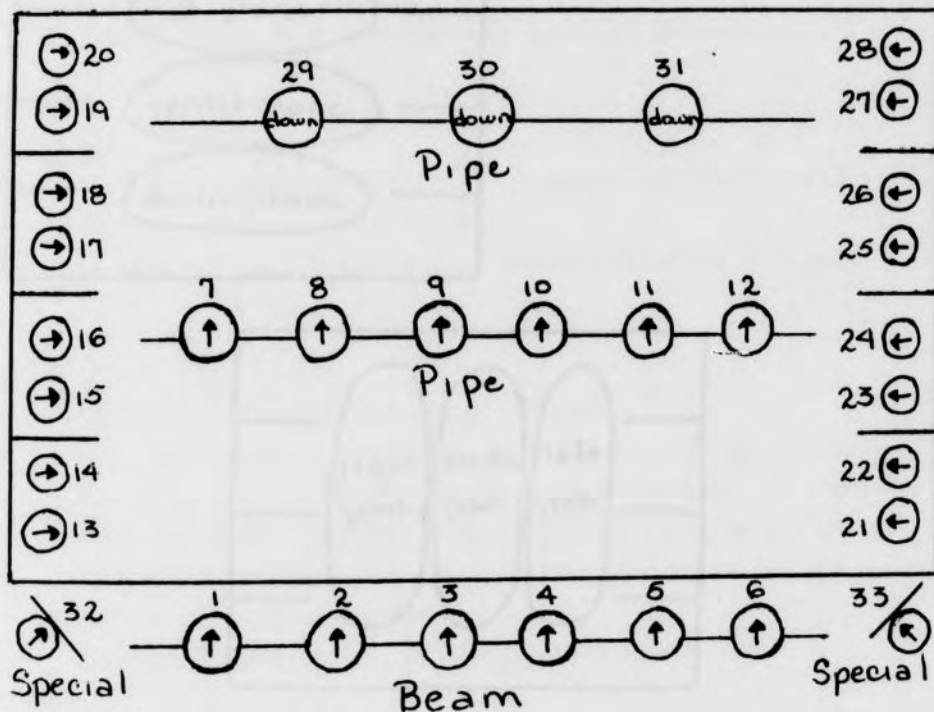
Three wooden straight backed chairs will be used as properties in Section I.

Section III



Sandwich signs with nonsense words written on them will be used in Section III.

Stage Area for Lighting

Light Number

21-28

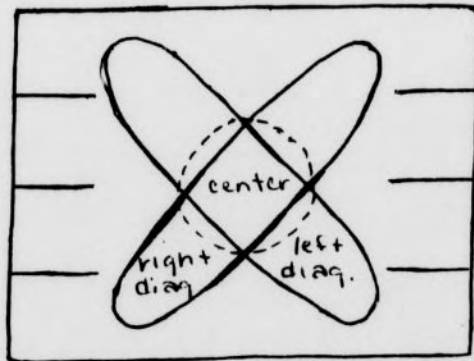
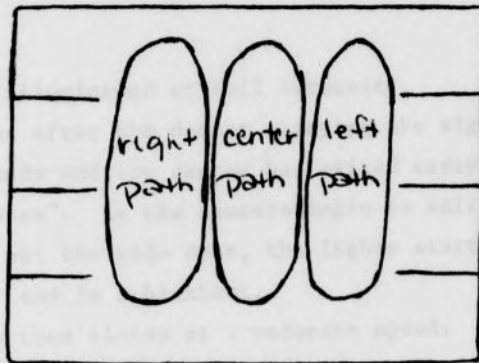
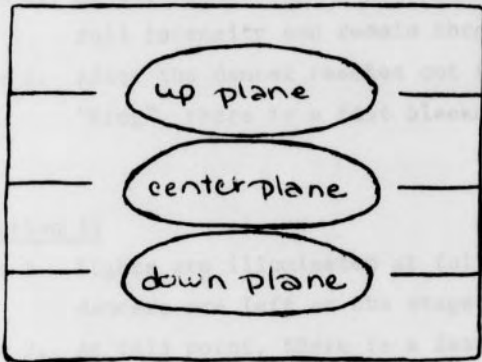
13-20

1-12, 29-31

Specials 32, 33

Color of GelsPale Blue
Roscolene No. 849Salmon Pink
Roscolene No. 834Bastard Amber
Roscolene No. 802Bastard Amber
Roscolene No. 802

Lighting Design



Curtain, Light and Music Cues

Section I

- Cue 1. As the curtain opens at a moderate speed, all lights are at full intensity and remain throughout the entire section.
- Cue 2. After the dancer reaches out from behind the curtain and says "Ping", there is a fast blackout held for five seconds.

Section II

- Cue 1. Lights are illuminated at full intensity and remain until two dancers are left on the stage.
- Cue 2. At this point, there is a fast blackout held for five seconds.

Section III

- Cue 1. Lights are illuminated at full intensity.
- Cue 2. Music begins after the dancer carrying the sign has exited.
- Cue 3. The music ends and the dancer has exited carrying the sign that says "Applause". As the dancers begin to exit through the audience and out the side door, the lights start to dim (20 seconds) and finally end in a blackout.
- Cue 4. The curtain then closes at a moderate speed.

Bibliography

- I. Carroll, Lewis. Through the Looking Glass. New York: Random House, Inc. 1956.
- II. Sorell, Walter. Facets of Comedy. New York: Grosset and Dunlap. 1972.
- III. Sorell, Walter. The Dancer's Image. New York: Columbia University Press. 1971. pp. 80-82.
- IV. Turner, Margery J. New Dance. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1971.