

TRAINING FOR DENISHAWN

by

Jack Clark

This presentation brought together two manuscripts by Ted Shawn to show how they can be used to help coach the stylistic detail needed to bring the Denishawn movement style back to life. These books are Ted Shawn's *Every Little Movement*, and his *Fundamental of Dance Training*. *Every Little Movement* is Shawn's discourse about the Delsarte method of movement analysis and training. His *Fundamental of Dance Training* is a collection of training and teaching exercises, accompanied with the notation by Ann Hutchenson Guest. The exercises and principles of movement analysis found in these books create the earliest explorations in American Modern dance, foreshadowing the technique and style developed by Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham after leaving the company. Shawn's documents present possible truths useful in the interpretation of the Denishawn style, taking the principles of Delsarte training and aesthetics and forming them into a cohesive method of movement training. Delsarte was the basis of the aesthetic training of both Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and was filtered into the technique/style of training of the disciples of the Denishawn School and Company. The Delsarte movement philosophy presented in the Ted Shawn texts informs us of the choreographic decision making process inside the Denishawn repertory. Shawn's series of exercises in his training Fundamentals supplies the mover w/ ways of exploring and informing the body of the technical approach in training used by Denishawn in creating a dancer capable of performing the repertory.

This presentation lead the participants through exercises from the training fundamentals, highlighted the Delsarte principle to be expressed in the movement, related the exercises as preparation material for the dancer, and applied the practice directly to the sections of the choreography of both *Soaring* and *Incense*

The following Delsarte principles highlighted were the following:

Delsarte Principles "Art is feeling, passed through thought and fixed in form"

Tension & Relaxation

Opposition - action accompanied by opposite direction

Parallelism – action includes movements in same direction

Succession – thought and feeling, reflected in expression, then in action

Opposition = vital force

Parallelism = design emphasis, weakness, gentle

Succession = true (outward) or false (inward)

Forearm is the cradle of emotion
Elbow indicates vitality
Hands relate to the mental

Ted Shawn's FUNDAMENTALS OF DANCE TRAINING offers a tool to grasp these principles.

These are the exercises pulled from the book, which were used to explore the choreography of *Soaring* and *Incense*. The following headings relate to the named sections of the text, *FUNDAMENTALS OF DANCE TRAINING*, and the letter of the exercise that follows relates to the letter of the exercise found in the text. These exercises are suggested that would be useful in preparing the dancer for these works.

SOARING

General Stretching Set: Variation on B , Tension & Relaxation
E - Lateral Stretch , Succession
F – Sagital Circle, Succession
K – Gnessienne Movement

Tension and Relaxation Set I
C, D, F, G, H

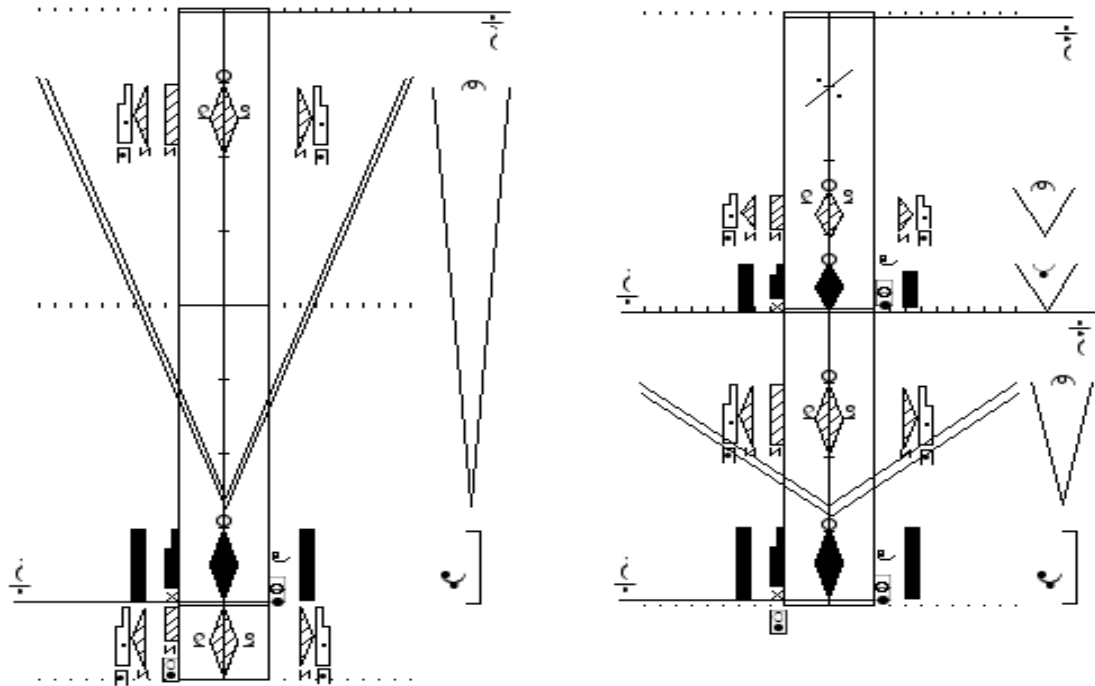
INCENSE

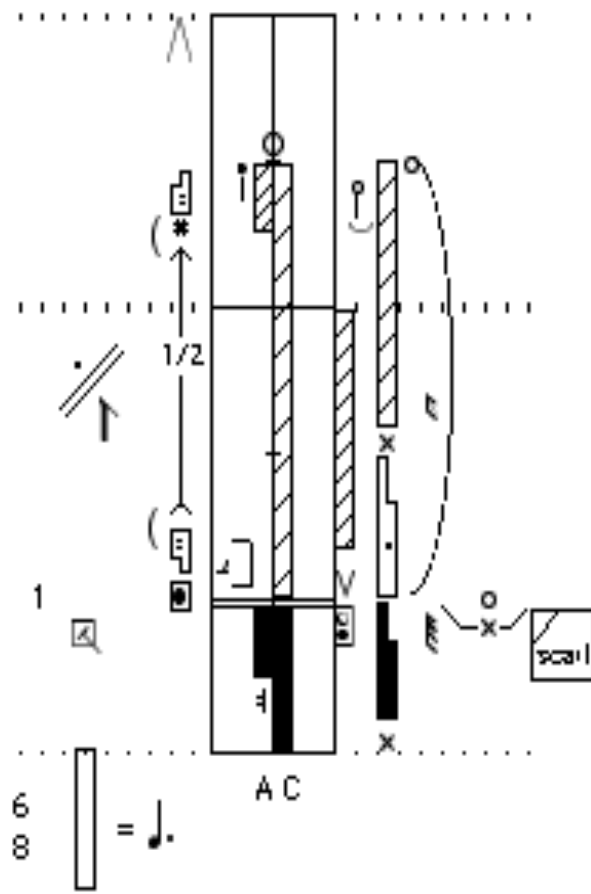
Series of Successions
F - Opposition in Oblique
G- Lateral Plane

Tension and Relaxation Set I
J - Hip relaxation

After leading the participants in these exercises, a detailed analysis of sections of the repertory followed, relating the movement principles discovered in the exercises to the performance of the score. The following notation is the detail of analysis used to train the participants at the session in the Denishawn style.

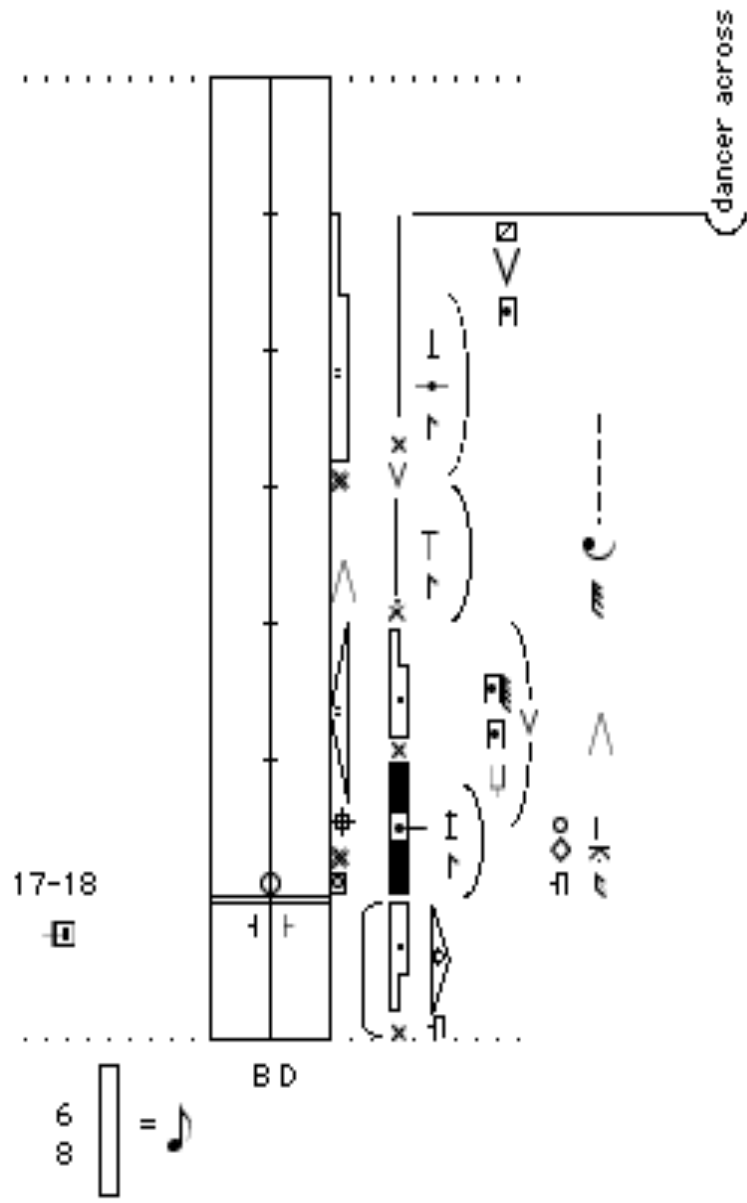
VARIATION ON GENERAL STRETCH SET I B -
Collapse and Sequential Lift





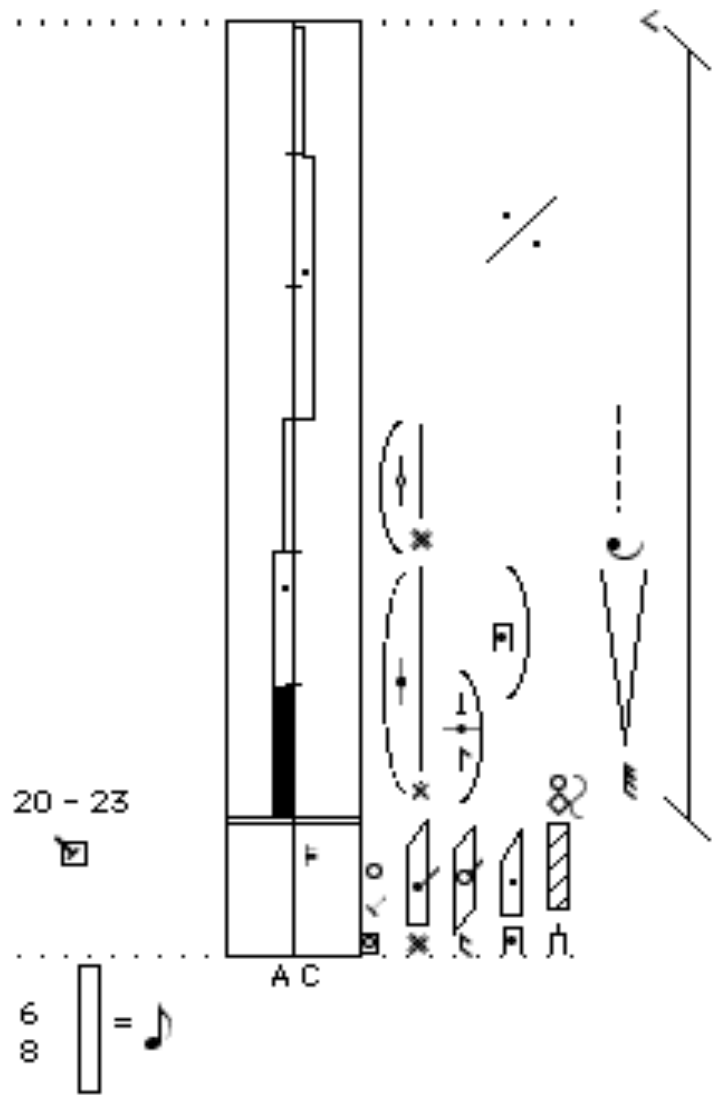
Sagittal Circle w/ Opposition

From *SOARING*, meas. 1.



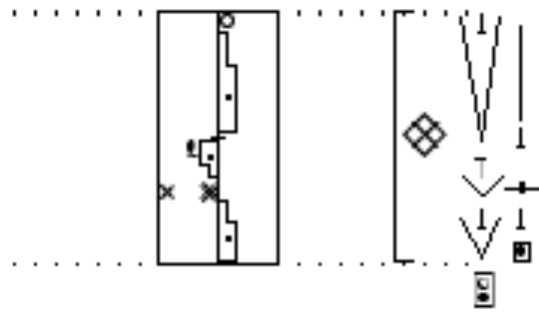
Arm Succession & Parallelism in Torso

SOARING, meas. 17 - 18



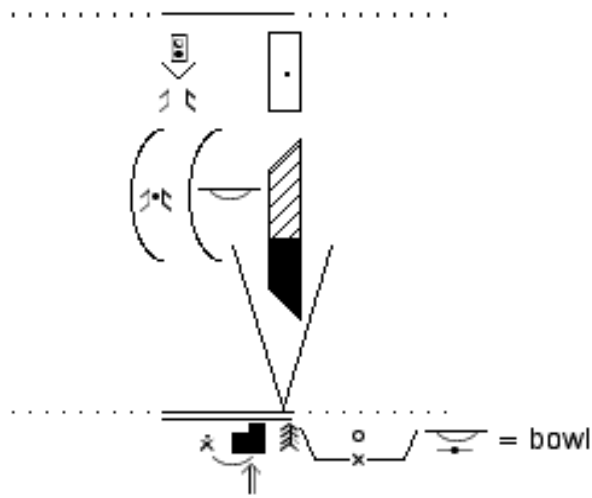
Arm Succession & Parallelism in Torso

SOARING, meas. 20 - 23



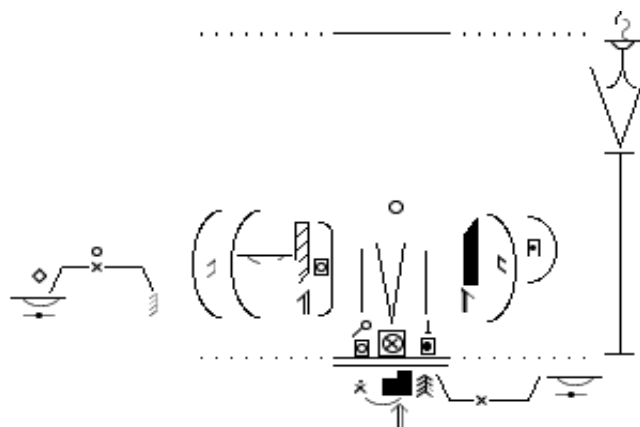
Subtle Rocking Succession

INCENSE, basic walk;



Offering - Succession and Parellelism

Offering the bowl to the Heavens – MOTIF demonstrates the intention;



Opposition and Succession produce Power

Crossing to the incense burners, bowl carried overhead: