

LABANOTATION “SHORT HAND” FOR CLARIFICATION IN THE TAP DANCE CLASS

by

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A presentation was made on how to use the basic concepts of Labanotation for clarification of rhythmic sounds in the tap dance class. For years I have used arrows on action strokes in the support and leg gesture columns to clarify differences. Once it is realized: “You are doing this ...” . This is what is wanted -”, the proper results are achieved.

Often students of tap dance do not realize the subtle differences in timing when doing a shuffle step, i.e.: 8 & 1, 2 & 3, 4 & 5, vs. 8 (a) da 1, 2 (a) da 3, 4 (a) da 5, which produces more of a “swing” to the step, where the first version is what we might call “square”. Many years ago, Labanotation specialists realized that the dance community misused the “&” in counting, calling it both for eighth notes and the second beat of a triplet. Ann Hutchinson clarified this in the 1972 text book *Labanotation*, breaking down verbalized counts as follows:

Eighth notes: 1 &, 2 & ;
Sixteenth: 1 y & u, 2 y & u ;
Triplets: 1 a da, 2 a da.

It is important that the “&” falls consistently on the same part of the beat, no matter how it may be broken down.

Simplifying the basic symbols and concepts of the movement notation system of Labanotation, we are able to clarify timing of tap steps for the tap dance student. The center line of the three line staff divides right and left supports, which are indicated in the immediate columns on either side of the center line. A simple straight line indicates a step directly under the center of weight. An added arrow shows the direction of a step, forward or backward. These same indications when placed near the outer columns indicate non-supported leg gestures, or brushes forward and backward.

Single rhythm time step:

- Ex. a) shows a basic timing of the shuffle on the pick-up beat. i.e. ct. 8 &.
- Ex. b) gives the timing, 8, (a), da, with a slight delay before the backward brush of the shuffle, producing a “swing” beat rather than the “square” straight eighth note beats.

Double rhythm time step:

- Ex. c) & d) show the same clarification as above with adding another sound before count 2.

Triple rhythm time step:

Ex. e) shows a drill for the triplet in the triple time step: hop shuffle step in an even timing.

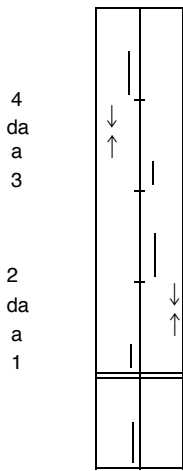
Ex. f) & g) are again the two versions of the triple time step, with j) being the preferred.

Ex. h) shows running triplets with the shuffle being turned out, as is done in the triple time step break, Ex. i).

EXAMPLES

The diagrams illustrate four examples of rhythm time steps:

- a) Single Rhythm Time Step:** A vertical grid with two columns. The left column has timing cues: &, 4, &, 3, &, 2, 1, &, 8. The right column has footwork arrows: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up.
- b) Single Rhythm Time Step:** A vertical grid with two columns. The left column has timing cues: da, 4, &, 3, da, 2, 1, da, 8. The right column has footwork arrows: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up. A musical triplet symbol is shown to the right of the 8th row.
- c) Double Rhythm Time Step:** A vertical grid with two columns. The left column has timing cues: &, 4, &, 3, &, 2, 1, &, 8. The right column has footwork arrows: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up.
- d) Double Rhythm Time Step:** A vertical grid with two columns. The left column has timing cues: da, 4, &, 3, da, 2, da, 1, da, 8. The right column has footwork arrows: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up. A musical triplet symbol is shown to the right of the 8th row.

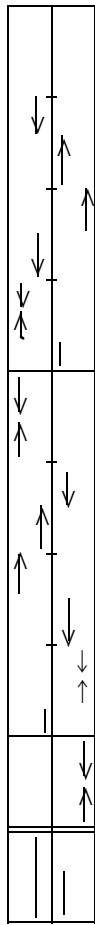


e)
Triplet Drill

4
da
a
3

2
da
a
1

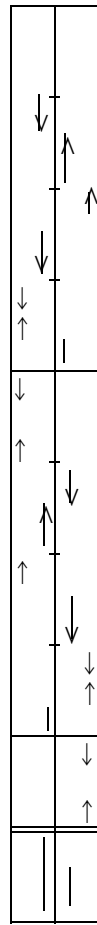
&
4
&
3
&
2
da
a
1
&
8



f)
Triple Rhythm Time Step



da
4
&
3
da
2
da
a
1
da
8



g)



7
da
a
6
da
a
5
&
4
&
3
&
2
da
a
1
da
8



h)
Running Triplets

i) Break for Triple Time Step