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SPATIO-LINGUISTIC CONTEXTS
OF BALLET DANCING

"... without the capacity for space perception, spatial orientation and the manipulation of spatial concepts, the human being would be incapable of effective locomotion to say nothing of being unable to coordinate other aspects of his behavior with that of his fellows in a common social life".

Irving Hallowell (1977:131)

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how, in the idiom of dance known as ballet, specific kinds of relationships between a dancer and the space in which he/she moves combine to generate the structure of the idiom. An examination of the relationship of the body to the audience, the usage of the eight Cecchetti positions of the body, and specific qualifying terms which establish the relationship of the legs to each other will serve to illuminate these relationships.

What follows is an analysis of the conceptual spatial framework of the ballet dancer and I suggest that this conceptual space is paradigmatic to everything that the ballet dancer does whether on stage or in the studio. The ways in which specific relationships of body parts to one another are based on the fixed axes of the performing space and the moving axes of the body instrument will be explored. I will refer to three different levels of spatial orientation which are peculiar to ballet dancing:

- 1) the axes and walls of the conceptual space
- 2) the axes of the body instrument
- 3) the idea of spatial deixis which links the two.

This research is meant to challenge the positions of those who assume that only physical aspects of body movement can be measured. To hold that only the physical body is 'real' and everything else is subjective is to deny any shared cultural level of meaning. Members of the ballet dance community like to believe that actions which appear to look alike, do in fact mean the same thing to all people, rather than acknowledging that various cultures endow specific actions with values relative to their conceptual schemes.¹ They also prefer to view movement as a fleeting and evasive phenomenon. This latter stance perpetuates the idea that dancing, and in particular ballet dancing, is a mystical and illusionary form of art whose existence is momentary, i.e. a dance exists only during the moments of an actual performance. Many ballet dancers, choreographers, directors and writers subscribe to this view. A prevailing justification for this position

is put forth by dance scholars who view dance movement as illusionary, subjective and a private expression of meaning.

Williams asserts that it is not useful to think of movement itself as a 'thing', rather the entities with which we are concerned are concepts and events and they 'mean' relationships (Williams, 1976:157). What is seen in ballet dancing is a dynamic image of forces that are visible in the intricate movement patterns and multi-leveled, complex spatial and body relationships of the dancers. These specialized movements and relationships are not just symbols that 'stand for' something else, neither are they inaccessible to public knowledge or understanding. They are seen as generative in nature as they "... bring things into meaning" (Schieffelin, 1976:2).

In the extant literature on ballet, the structural principles of the idiom itself, i.e. the rules which generate the structure of ballet and contribute to the ethnic identity of the members of this sub-culture have been largely ignored. Relatively few dancers of this body language know very much about its historical development; and yet, learning the body language 'naturally' as young dancers, they come to dance it according to certain systematic principles, or 'rules', immanent in the movement sequences they see about them (after Lyons, 1968:48). In this study, semasiological theory has provided an analytical framework for the identification of certain generative structures which can be said to constitute the 'guts' of the idiom of ballet.²

Space

Space to a ballet dancer is multi-leveled and complex. Within ballet dancing, there is both the physical space in which the danced actions are performed and the 'form' space of the dance, i.e. space that is internal to the dance. The latter "... may be thought of as a pattern of relationships among the dancers. That is, as a dynamic moving pattern of 'forces', that, if the pattern could be seen all at once instead of unfolding through time, could constitute the total shape of 'form' of the dance" (Williams, 1980:1).

There is in addition what we might call a conceptual space in which a ballet dancer trains and performs which is separate from any particular physical space. This conceptual space is conceived of as being bounded by four walls and contains three fixed axes: front/back, right/left and up/down (hereafter referred to as F/B, R/L and U/D).³

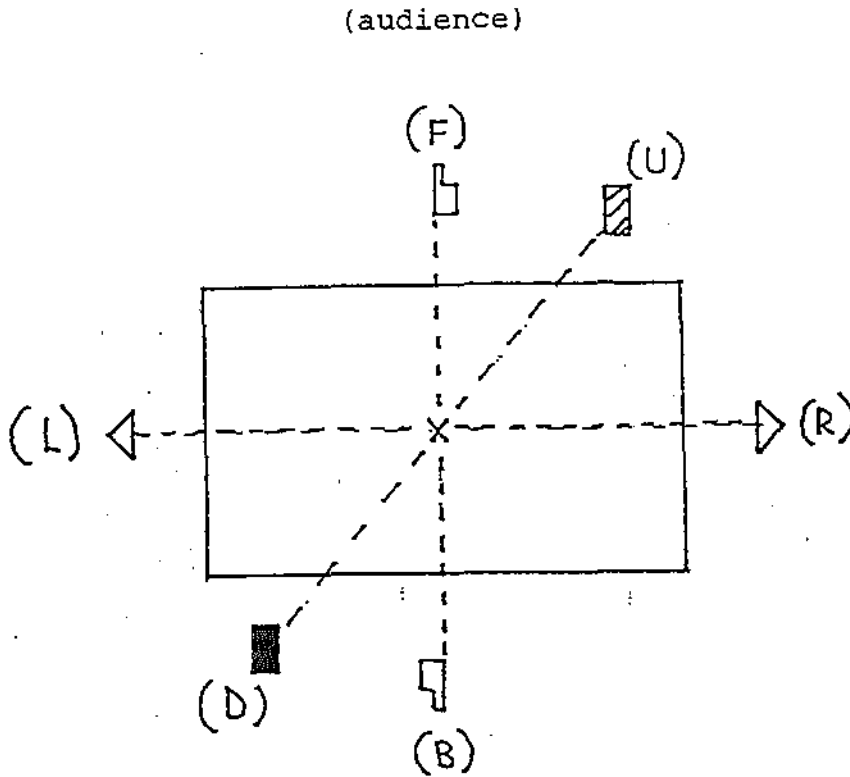


Fig. 1

A dancer thinks of these four walls or fixed axes as being in the shape of a square even though most studios and stages are rarely ever shaped so. As Figure 1 indicates, one wall is designated as 'front', and it is from this referential point that the other directions are established. In a dance studio, the 'front' wall is usually the wall that is mirrored, and on stage, the 'front' wall is synonymous with the audience. If a dance studio is without mirrors, there will always be one wall with the designation, 'front'. The organizational elements of all movements in ballet are directly related to the concept of 'front' and it will be shown that the steps and positions of the body instrument are arranged and executed with the sole purpose of being viewed by an audience.

The concept of 'front' is introduced early in the training of a dancer. For example, in a ballet class, even at a beginning level, once the mandatory exercises are finished at the barre, it is common for a dance teacher to position his or her body in relation to the 'front' wall, i.e. the mirror. An outside observer who does not know

why the students are facing one particular direction may think the students are simply dancing for the teacher when instead the teacher's physical presence in the direction of the 'front' wall is to view the dancers from the point of view of the audience 'beyond the mirror'.

Throughout a dance class, a teacher constantly reminds ballet students of the presence of an imaginary audience. Dancers are instructed to move toward or away from an audience; to place the arm in relation to the head so that it does not block an audience's view of their face and when facing a diagonal path, to keep the upstage line of the body in view to an audience. The position of a dancer's body in space or the direction in which a step may be performed are directly related to the presence of an audience whether that audience is real or imagined. To a ballet dancer, the imagined audience, represented by the concept of 'front' is very real. Thus, the concept of 'front' is constituent to the performance of ballet dancing and every ballet dancer orients his or her body within an abstract schema of referential spatial points which defines the dancing space.

Cecchetti⁴ (Beaumont & Idzikowski, 1975) labeled the ballet dancing space as follows:

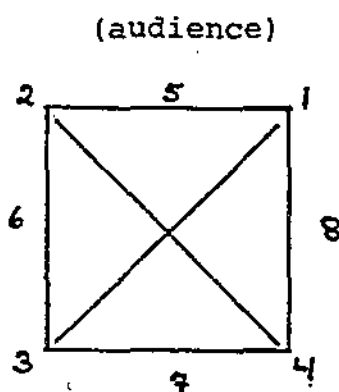


Fig. 2

According to Cecchetti, wall 5 (the mirrored wall) is the same as the invisible wall on a proscenium stage. Before a dance class begins, a dancer may utilize the mirror to check hair style or make-up in much the same way that a mirror is used in everyday life. However, once a dance class begins, a dancer uses the mirror to gain visible feedback concerning alignment and technical proficiency. Later, during a performance on stage, it is the role of an audience to supply feedback (either approval or disapproval) as to the technical proficiency and artistry of a dancer.

Unlike other body languages or dance idioms which do not order their space in quite the same way, a ballet dancer's audience, real or imagined, is always located in the same place. This is quite different from a Luo dancer from Kenya, for example, who when performing Nyatiti, focuses not on an audience, but on a head drummer, who moves about freely (Durr, 1981). The concept of a 'front' wall as a fixed place

designating an 'audience' would be foreign to a Luo dancer's spatial orientation. The reverse would also be true; a ballet dancer would have a great deal of difficulty performing an enchainement⁵ of steps if told to focus on a moving actor such as a head drummer or two singer-dancers. Indeed, it would be almost impossible to recognize ballet steps or positions if the concept of 'front' became a variable spatial element. At issue, too, is the fact that ballet dancing is performed for the purpose of entertainment. Many non-Western forms of dance are performed for the purpose of attainment and are therefore not guided by a viewing audience even though observers may be present.

According to Cecchetti's system of labeling the directions of a ballet dance space, the names or numbers of the bounded dance space follow a counterclockwise direction (see Figure 2). If a dancer is facing wall 5, wall 6 is to an individual's left side; wall 7, to the back of the body and wall 8 to the right side of an individual. The corners of the square are also given numbers and are important to the ordering of spatial referents as well as the walls. Corner 1 is diagonal to the right and in front of a dancer; corner 2 is diagonally to the front and the left of a dancer; corner 3 is diagonally opposite corner 1 and corner 4 is diagonally opposite corner 2. The numbers of this imagined square do not change even though the dancing space may change in size or location. The imaginary square with its prescribed numbers and directions is the bounded space of a ballet dancer and a dancer constantly implements and employs this frame of referents.

On stage it is customary that a dancer applies a different set of terms to the numbered referents. These terms are shared with other performers in Western theatrical settings and are as fixed in the spatial realm of a dancer as is the Cecchetti numbering system. On stage the fixed points appear as follows:

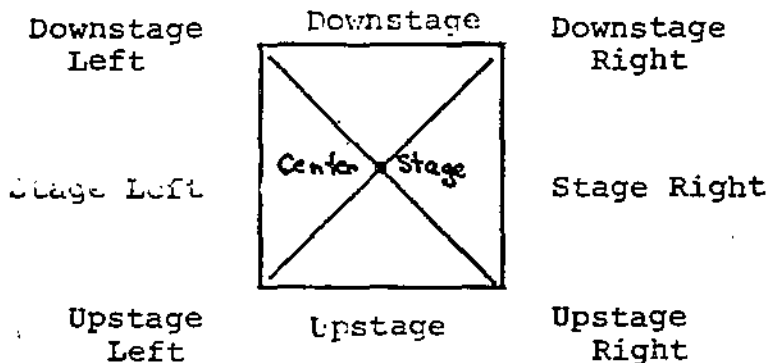


Fig. 3

The designations of right and left are determined from a performer's point of view. For example, an audience may view a dancer who enters at the back of the stage on the audience's right side who then travels diagonally towards the front corner of the left side. To a performer, this stage path would be identified as traveling from 'upstage left to downstage right' rather than from right to left. Downstage is considered toward the audience and upstage, away from the audience. These terms are derived from their association with earlier theatres in which the

stage floor was raked or slanted. The lower end was nearest the audience (i.e. downstage) and upstage was farthest away from the audience. In a dance studio, a dancer would think of performing such a diagonal path from corner 3 to corner 1.

A change in terminology does not signify a new direction, it is simply another way of thinking about that same direction. The concept of 'front' remains the same whether it has the label 'wall 5', or 'downstage'. These are two arbitrary linguistic signs which relate to the same concept. Following Saussure we can say that what is united is "... not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image" (1966:66) (infra, Figure 12). This is further illustrated in the Russian method of identifying the dancing space. According to Vaganova (1969) a floor diagram would appear as follows in Figure 4:

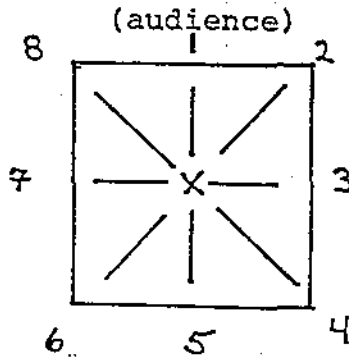


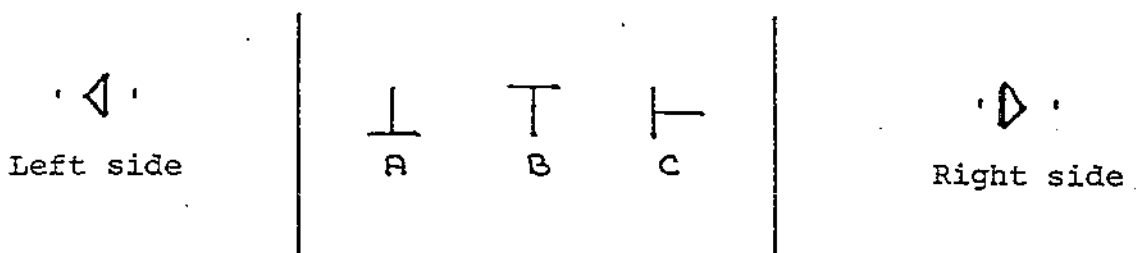
Fig. 4

A dancer is located at point 'x' and is facing number 1, the direction of the audience or spectators. The basic idea of 'fixed points' is established. Even though different numbers are assigned to the various corners and walls of the square, their arbitrary labels apply to the same spatial referents within the idiom of ballet.

A performer not only moves within a spatial system of fixed points, (i.e. the sides and corners of the performing space and the position of the audience do not change), but within that system, a performer uses his own body to establish a second system of spatial referents. A ballet dancer may orient the location of his or her body 'toward' the audience, 'away' from the audience or to the right side of the stage, for example. If ' ' represents the body instrument of a ballet

dancer in Figure 5, dancer A is facing the audience or 'front'; dancer B dances 'away' from the audience and dancer C faces the right side of the stage.

Front 'G' (audience)



Back 'Q'

Fig. 5

This second spatial system of reference used by a ballet dancer has a body reference and can be called the body instrument space. In this system a 'cross of axes' internal to the body instrument establishes the spatial positions of the head, arms, legs and torso.

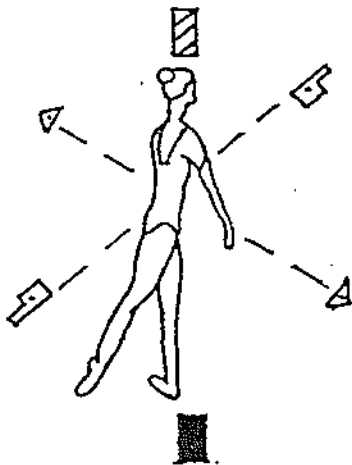


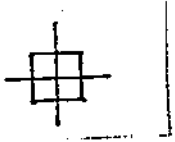
Fig. 6

In figure 6, / / / and / correspond respectively to the F/B, R/L and U/D axes of the body.

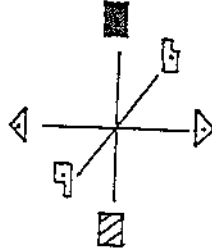
The F/B axis relates to the facing of a performer; the R/L axis is judged according to the right and left sides of the body instrument and the U/D axis relates to headward and footward directions of the body. For example, the arms may be positioned in space 'over' the head, in 'front' of the body or to the 'right' and 'left' sides of the body. These arm positions retain their relationship to the body instrument no matter where a dancer faces in the performing space.

Positions of the legs are determined by the relationship of the right and left legs to each other. The right leg may be positioned 'in front', 'in back', 'over' or 'under' the left leg. Exact usage of these qualifiers defines the specific steps in the movement lexicon of ballet. More will be said about these later in this paper. While this may seem confusing and very complex to the non-dancer, a ballet dancer thinks in these two systems of reference all the time (see Figure 7).

Spatial Relationships



In Labanotation,⁶ the 'constant cross of axes' represents a system of fixed points in the room that do not change. An observer views these axes as F/B, R/L and U/D.



The size and shape of the dancing space do not influence these fixed axes.

The cross of body axes refers to the cross of axes that relate to the body. U/D correspond with headward and footward directions; F/B correspond to forward of the chest or where the performer is facing and backward of the body; and R/L comply with the right and left sides of the body. Thus, this cross of axes moves in space along with a dancer.

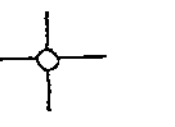


Fig. 7

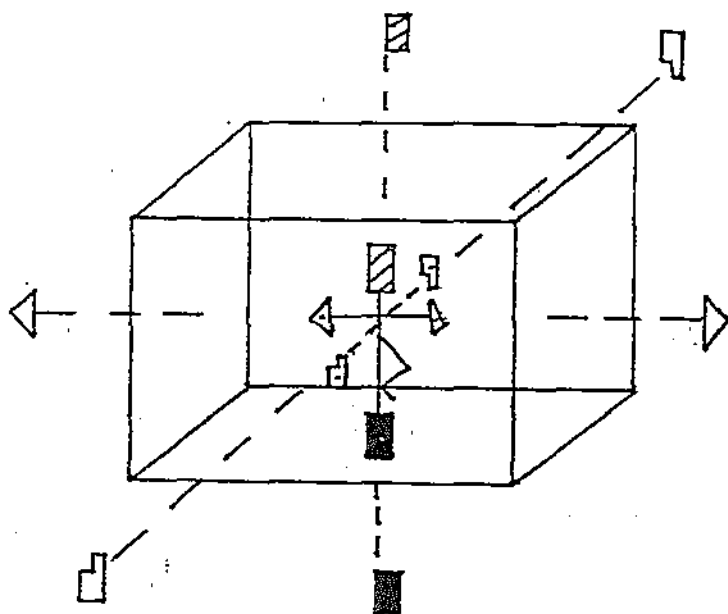
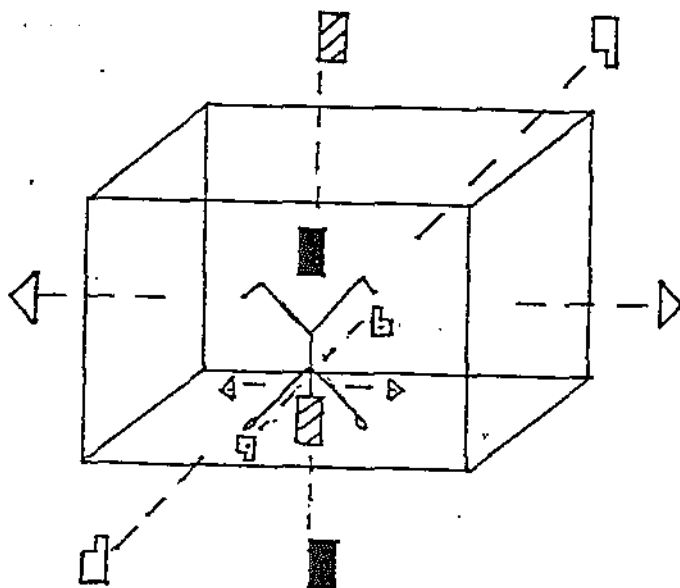


Fig. 7a

If viewed from an audience's point of view, the body cross of axes of a dancer are seen as moving axes within a fixed stage space. In Figure 7a, the dancer is in an upright position while in Figure 7b, the body axes change as they move with the dancer.



In Figure 8, viewed from above, the body reference system of dancer 'x' is operating within the fixed axes of the physical performing space. The dark line represents the F/B axis of dancer 'x' and the circle represents the 360 degrees in which it is possible for dancer 'x' to face.

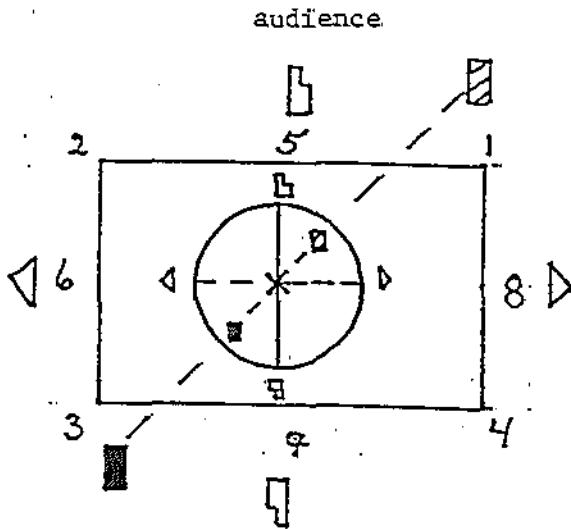


Fig. 8

In Figure 9, if the F/B axis of dancer 'x' turns, the ' — 'front' for the body has changed. The fixed points of the stage remain constant.

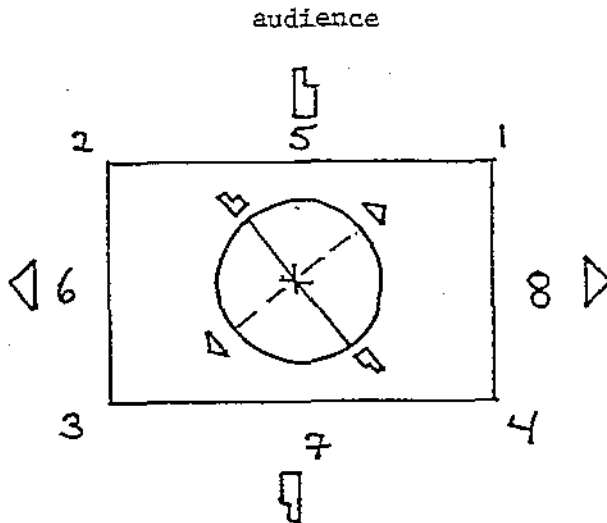


Fig. 9

It is of historical interest to note the elements of social organization and social change within Western culture that have influenced the spatial organization of ballet dancing. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Weaver (1706/1971) indicated that the physical performing space or dancing room was represented by an oblong figure to which he assigned letters A, B, C, D (see Figure 10).

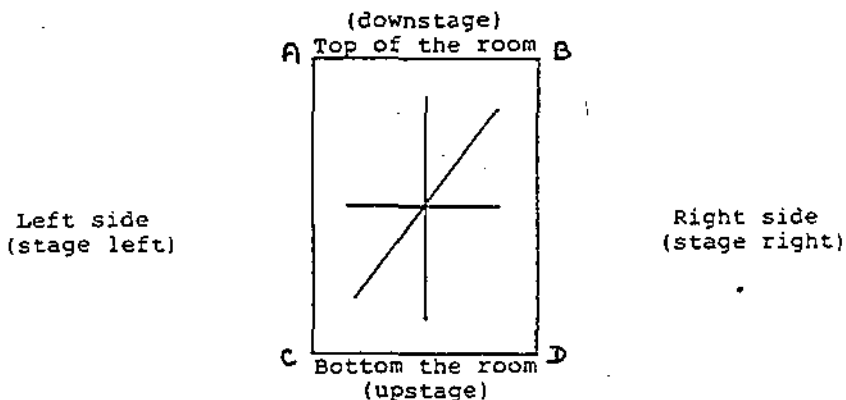


Fig. 10

Line A-B indicated the upper end of the room, also known as the top of the room, and line C-D, the lower end or bottom of the room. A-B was the area in which the dignitaries or those of rank witnessed the danced figures. Hilton (1981:85) labels 'The Presence' at the top of the room and states that "... all ballroom dances were oriented toward the Presence ...". Line B-D indicated the right side of the room and line A-C corresponded to the left side. Weaver further divided the room into a forward-backward path, a path from side to side and a diagonal path from corner to corner which he labeled an oblique line.

The fixity of the dancing space was marked in the notation system of Beauchamps-Feuillet⁷ whereby each page was designed to correspond with the top and bottom of the dancing space; a side of a page related to a specific wall. The relationship of the notated page to the dancing room is illustrated in Figure 11.

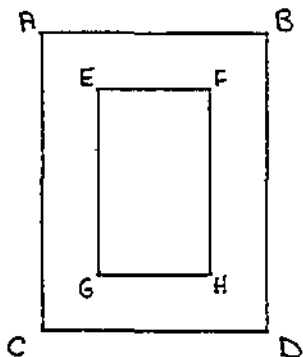


Fig. 11

The top of the notational sheet E-F corresponded to the top of the room A-B. Side right of the room, B-D, was the same as side right of the instructional notation page F-H. The dancers were instructed how to hold a sheet of notation correctly while learning the figures. A turn of the body or a curved path in space required a different grasp of the paper. It was important that the book or notation not change its relationship to the room for "... if the Book moves out of its Scituation, it will be impossible to comprehend the Steps therein describ'd ..." (Weaver, 1706/1971:35). If one became disoriented and lost the awareness of front, "... the dancers [could] find themselves not only finishing at the wrong end of the room, but with their backs to the Presence, an embarrassing breach of ettiquette" (Hilton, 1981:87).

The terms 'the Presence', 'mirror' or 'audience' all refer to the same spatial concept and it is this concept that establishes the significance of front in the idiom of ballet. It is arbitrary whether the established front is indicated by a line A-B or a number 5 or a number 1. The concept of front, however, is not arbitrary; it is an established element in ballet dancing. Figure 12 follows Saussure (1966) as it illustrates the relation between the concept and its various labels.

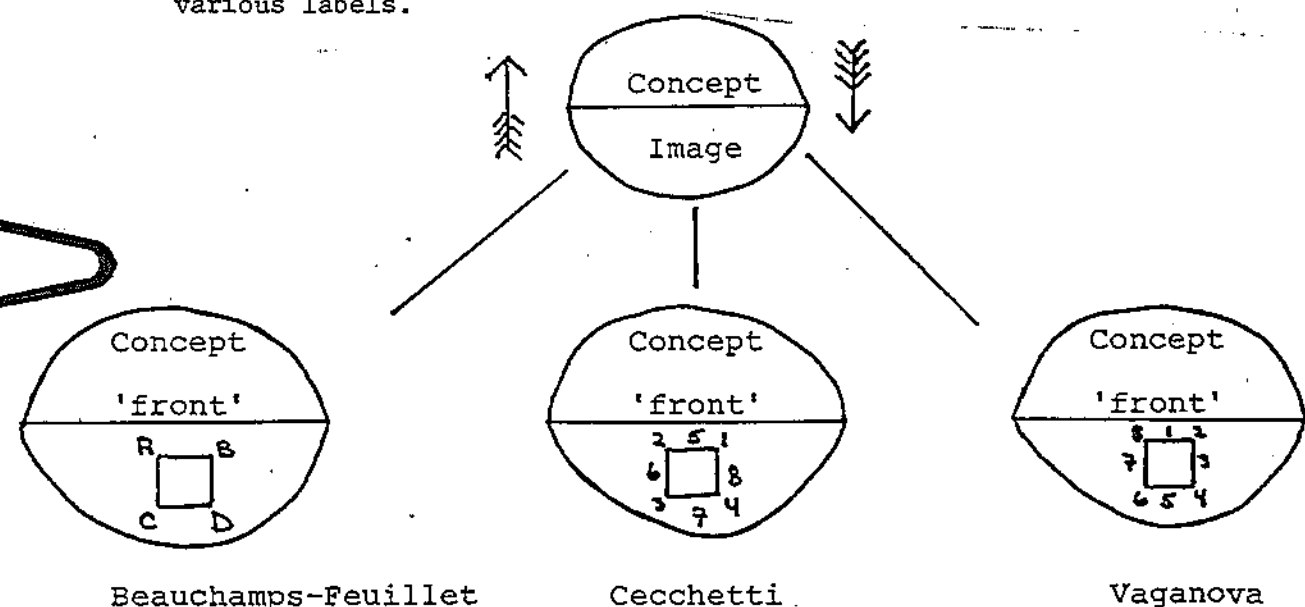
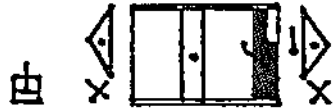
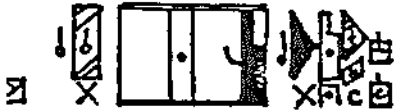
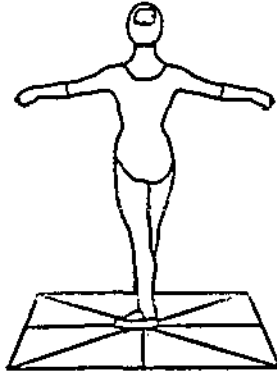
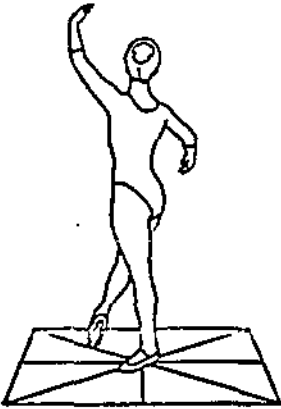


Fig. 12

Eight Cecchetti Directions

The specificity and complexity of these spatial elements are also encoded in the eight directions of the body as established by Cecchetti (Beaumont & Idzikowski, 1975).⁸ Each of the eight positions (croisé devant, à la quatrième devant, écarté devant, effacé devant, à la seconde, épaulé devant, à la quatrième derrière and croisé derrière appears in notated form in Figure 13 accompanied by a drawing of a dancer as viewed from the back.⁹

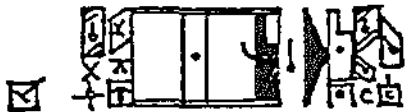
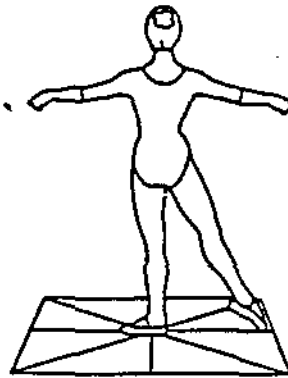
Eight Cecchetti Directions



Croisé devant

à la quatrième devant

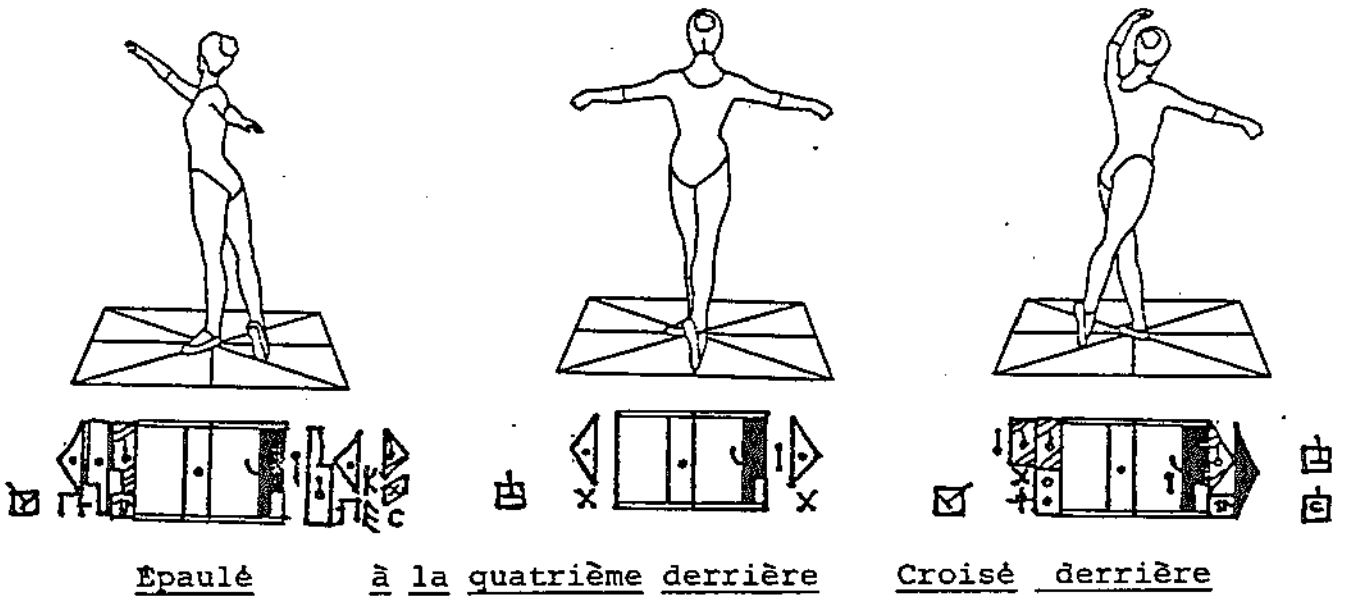
Écarté



Effacé devant

à la seconde

Fig. 13



Epaulé

à la quatrième derrière

Croisé derrière

Fig. 13 (continued)

(Figures: Hammond, 1984:94)

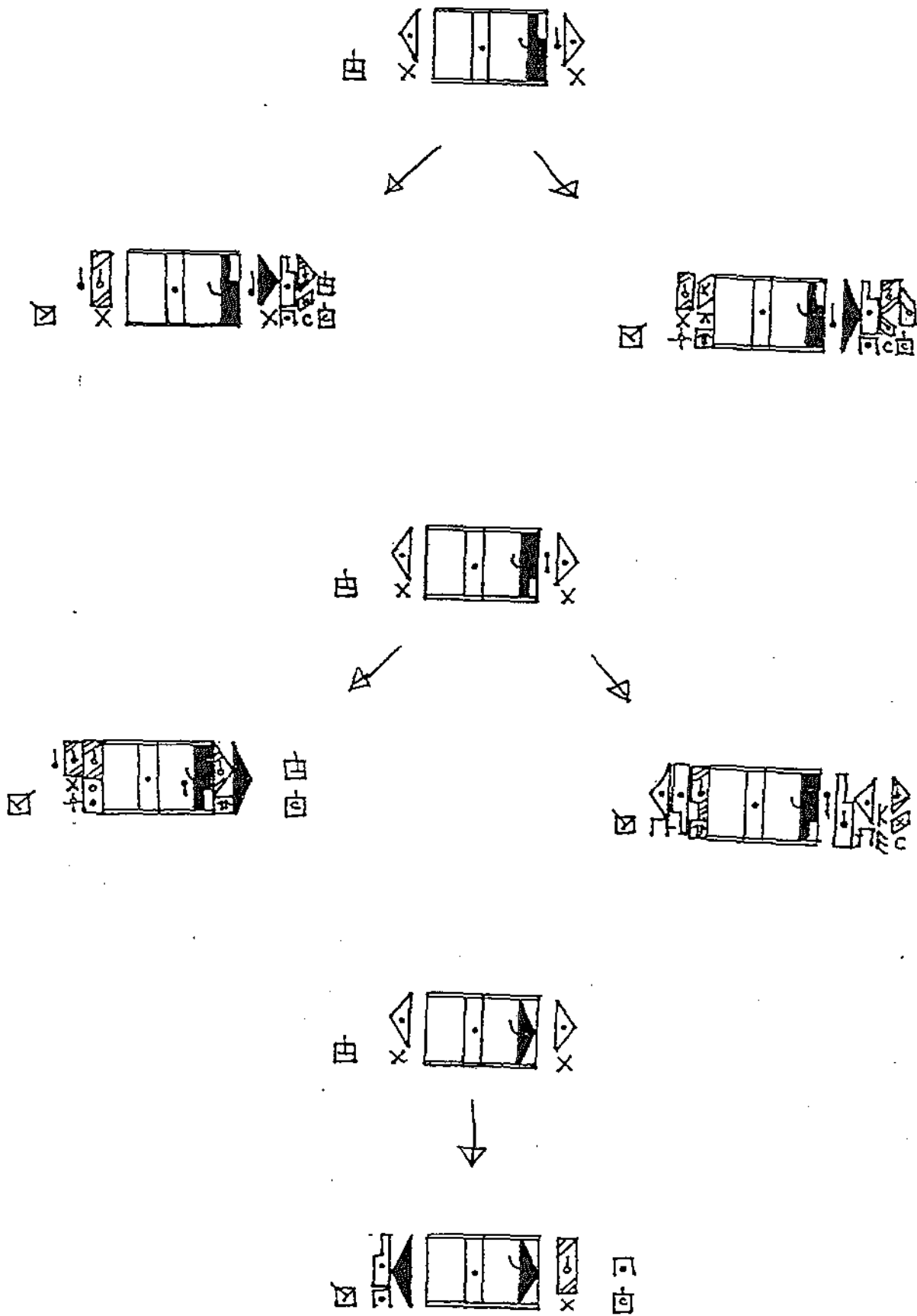


Fig. 14

An examination of the notation reveals that three of the positions are constituent to all the others: à la quatrième devant, à la seconde and à la quatrième derrière (see Figure 14). In à la quatrième devant, the front of a dancer's body faces the audience, the right foot is pointed in batttement tendu¹⁰ to the fourth position front or in line with the front of the hip of the gesture leg.¹¹ The arms are held to the sides of the body in second position. The dark line in Figure 15 represents the gesture leg pointing on the front/back axis of the body as it would be place in à la quatrième devant.

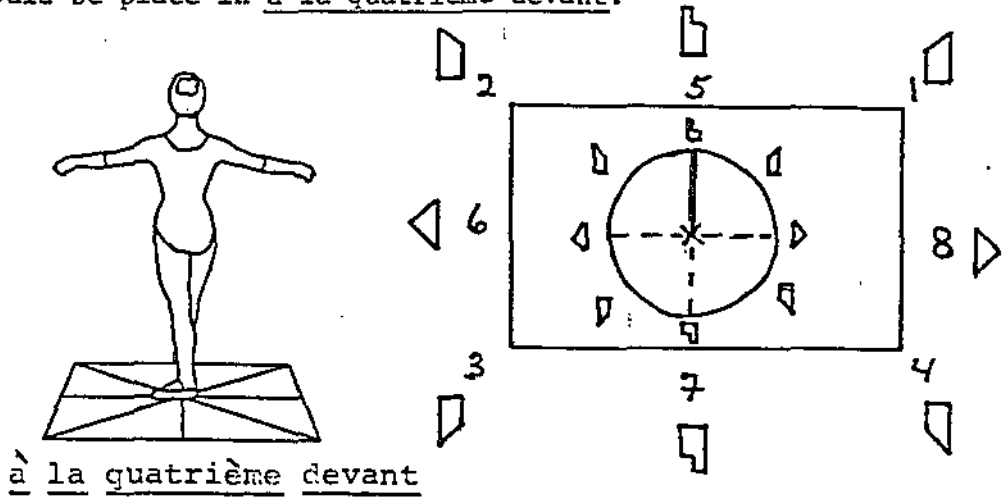
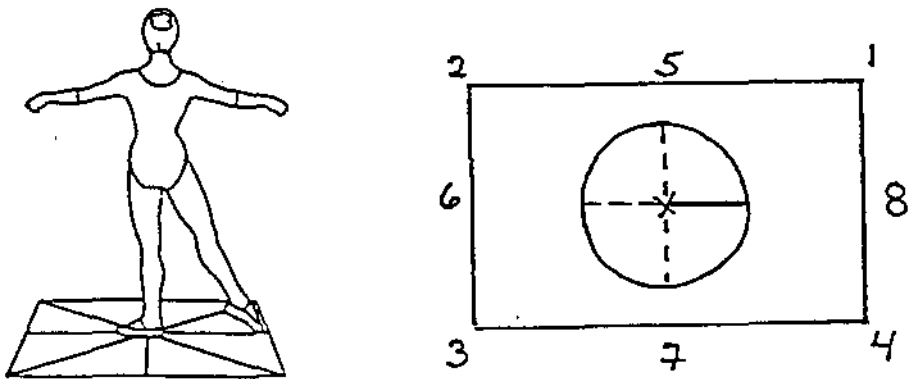


Fig. 15

In à la seconde, the facing of a dancer is still front toward the audience with the arms in second position, that is, held out to the sides. The gesture leg is now pointed to the second position or to the side of the body (see Figure 16).



à la seconde

Fig. 16

In à la quatrième derrière, the gesture leg is pointed in battement tendu to the fourth position back or in line with the gesture hip (see Figure 17).

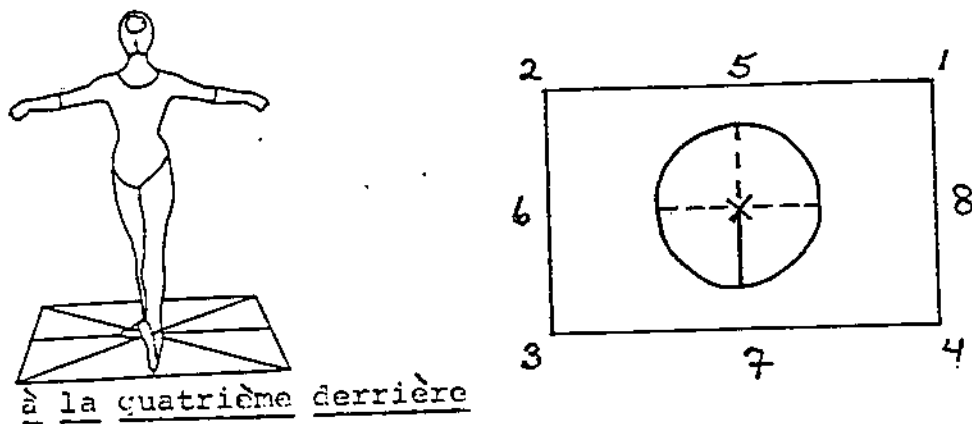
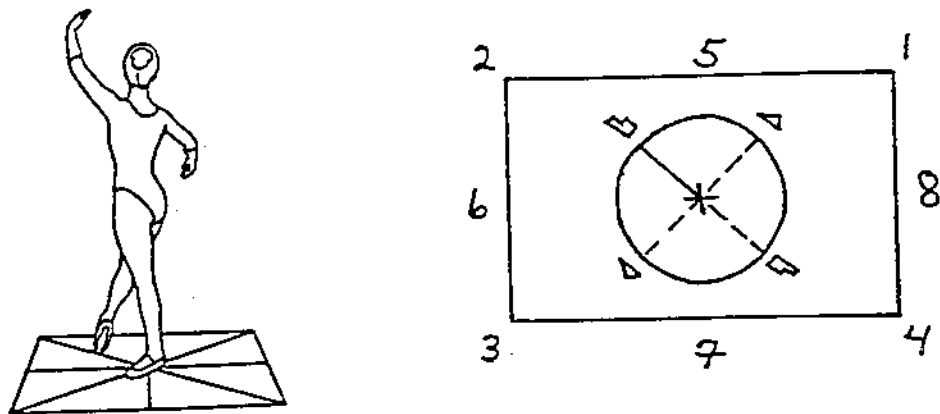




Fig. 17

If any of these three positions is rotated 45° around an up/down (/) axis, the position appears to be different to the audience. For example, if a dancer in à la quatrième devant position moves 45° to the dancer's left (stage left), the relationship of the right leg to the left leg is the same for the dancer, but from the audience's viewpoint the relation has changed; the right leg now appears to be crossed in front of the left leg (see Figure 18). The dancer simply established a new room/stage direction using the elements or kinemes that constitute the à la quatrième devant position. This turning from wall 5 to facing corner 2 creates croisé devant.



Croisé devant

In Figure 19, the notation indicates that a change from  to  establishes a new direction even though the kinemic elements of the two positions are alike.¹²

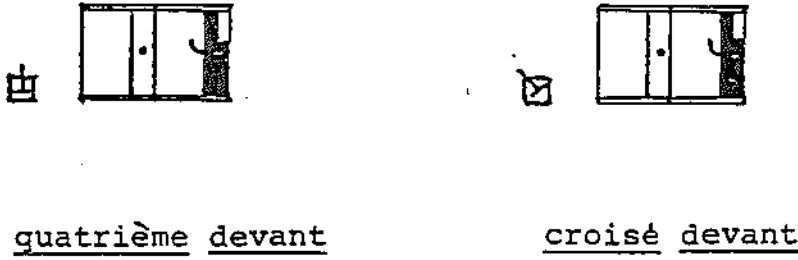

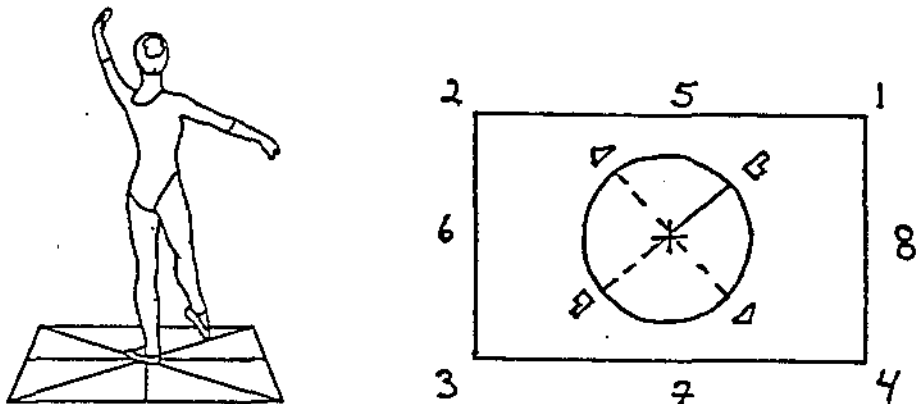


Fig. 19

The supporting leg in both cases, the left leg, is in middle level (that is neither bent nor up on the toes); the right leg is pointed in battement tendu in front of the hip of the gesture leg. The use of the symbol,



, to indicate a directional facing, provides the element of differentiation needed to explain the difference between à la quatrième devant and croisé devant. The 'fixed point' of front is still constant, but the front/back axis of the dancer no longer agrees with the F/B axis of the physical stage space.

If, in contrast to the above, the front/back axis of the à la quatrième devant position is moved to a forty-five degree change clockwise, the right gesture leg does not appear 'crossed' from an audience's perspective as in the croisé devant position, but 'open' and is called effacé devant (see Figure 20).

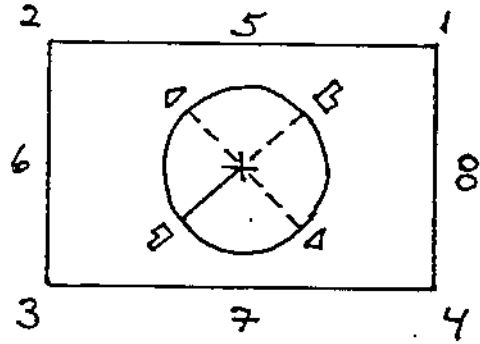
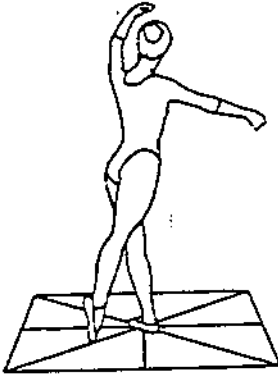


Effacé devant

Fig. 20

Effacé devant is known as a 'shaded' position. Supposedly, a shadow is cast on the supporting leg by the extended leg. Once again, the established 'front' of the audience determines the appearance of this new position. In the notation too, the kinemic elements in the position à la quatrième devant have not changed. A change in direction from  to  notes the appearance of a new position from the point of view of the audience.

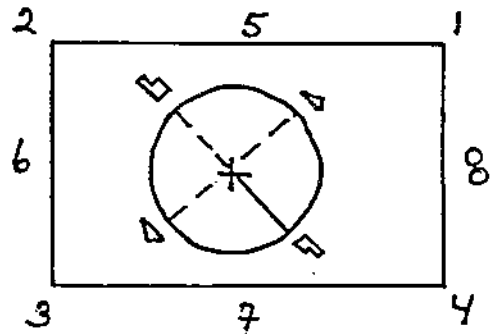
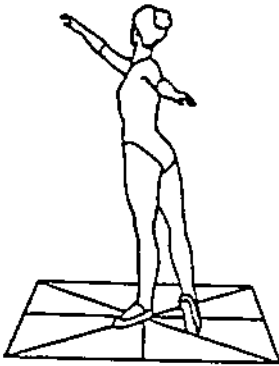
Similarly, when the front/back axis of à la quatrième derrière is rotated 45 degrees clockwise, the gesture leg appears crossed in back (i.e. croisé derrière -- see Figure 21).



croisé derrière

Fig. 21

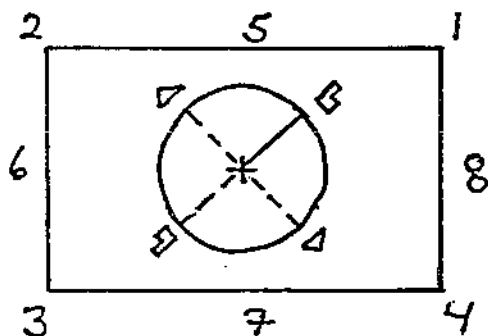
If à la quatrième derrière is rotated forty-five degrees counter-clockwise, the gesture leg appears open and this position is known as effacé derrière (see Figure 22).



Effacé derrière

Fig. 22

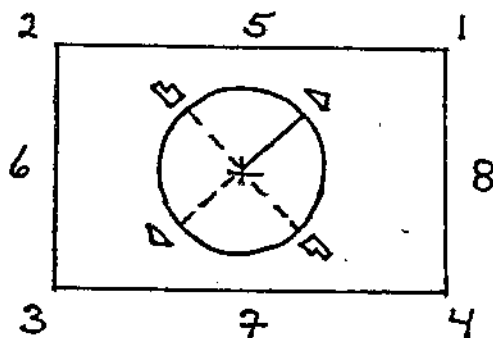
In the Cecchetti method, the downstage arm or the arm nearest the audience in this position can extend to the front of the body in line with the downstage shoulder and thus the position is given the name of épaulé (shouldered). More specifically, it is known as épaulé devant since the arm extended from the shoulder is nearest to the audience. Épaulé derrière, shouldered away from the audience, is created when the front/back axis of épaulé devant is moved 90 degrees counterclockwise. The F/B axis of a dancer is facing corner 3 (see Figure 23).



Épaulé derrière

Fig. 23

If the position of à la seconde is moved 45 degrees counterclockwise, as in Figure 24, the audience views a dancer on a diagonal dimension and consequently, from a view which gives the widest perspective of breadth to a dancer's body. The definition of 'separated' or 'thrown apart' is applied to écarté devant. The foot nearest to the audience is in battement tendu.



Écarté devant

Fig. 24



The kinemic elements of à la seconde and écarté devant appear to be the same. It is the change in direction from  to  that constitutes the differentiation between the two positions (see Figure 25).



Fig. 25

If the à la seconde position is turned 45 degrees clockwise, the position is known as écarté derrière. The battement tendu is farthest from the view of the audience (see Figure 26).

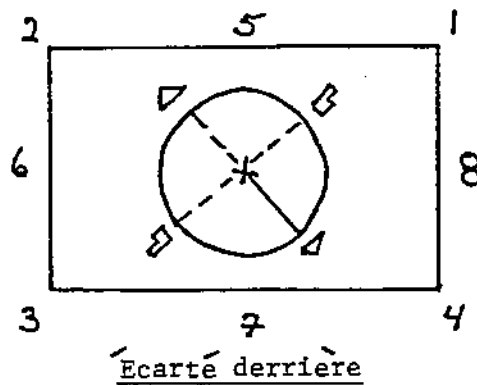


Fig. 26

Again the kinemic elements of à la seconde and écarté derrière appear to be the same (see Figure 27).



Fig. 27

In Figure 27, the directional facing pins indicate a different front for a dancer. Consequently, an audience will view a dancer's position as being different.

In summary, we have seen that although the kinemic elements within the various Cecchetti positions appear to be the same in the notation because written from the dancer's perspective, the F/B axis of the body instrument changes and a different perception of these positions is made by an audience. A dancer's perception of the body instrument in space while performing an en face (the front of the body in full view to an audience) is different from the performance of the same kinemic elements in the position, croisé devant. This strong reliance on the established front in ballet dancing gives meaning and significance to a 'body' reference system operant within a 'fixed point' referent system.

Spatial Deixis

Following Lyons (1968) the notion of deixis is understood to orient the user of a body language like ballet dancing in time and in space. This notion agrees with Hallowell's statement that "There is no such thing as space independent of objects" (1977:132). A ballet dancer creates links between his or her body and the outside space. An individual dancer, in other words, does not exist in a vacuum any more than the non-dancer moving about in so-called everyday activities.

Although we do not usually think about it, we tend to relate in specific ways to objects as well as to fellow human beings. We think in terms of going 'up' the stairs; walking 'around' the corner; placing a book 'on' the table; removing the dust from 'under' the bed; moving to the 'front' of the line; sitting in the 'back' of the theatre; walking 'along side' of a friend or kneeling 'down' to pick a flower. The prepositions 'up', 'around', 'on', 'under', 'front', 'back', 'along' and 'down' provide the means by which English speakers organize their perception of space.

Six qualifying terms -- over (dessus), under (dessous), in front (devant), in back (derrière), toward (en avant) or away from (en arrière) an audience -- establish the number of ways a ballet dancer can execute a specific step. These qualifiers are the prepositional elements in the body language of ballet and serve as elements of deitic coordinates which provide a system of referents specific to ballet dancing.¹³ According to Williams, "... what is natural to human beings is not moving per se, but the faculty of constructing systems of distinct action signs and symbols corresponding to distinct ideas" (1979:43). It would be impossible for a dancer to knowingly execute any step in ballet without an understanding of these deitic referents. For example, a glissade, which is described as a gliding

step, can be performed glissade devant, glissade derrière, glissade dessous, glissade dessus, glissade en avant and glissade en arrière. What distinguishes one glissade from another is the relationship of the feet to each other in fifth position. It is important to know which foot begins and ends in front or back fifth position, and the direction into which a dancer travels.¹⁴ If the gesture leg begins in back and ends in front fifth position, the leg is said to have passed 'over' the fifth. 'Over' does not denote a spatial placement of one foot above the other. The 'over' is a change in position of the feet relative to the F/B axis of the body. Likewise, 'under' does not refer to a spatial placement of one foot below the other foot, but to a passing of the gesture leg from fifth position front to fifth position in back.

In a glissade devant, the glide travels to the side as the step begins with the foot that is in front. Upon completion of the step this same foot ends in front. Thus, if the right foot began in front, fifth position, the glissade devant would travel to the right and finish with the right foot in front (see Figure 28).



Glissade devant

Fig. 28

The glissade derrière travels on a sideward path as well, but the back foot begins the step and at the end of the step the same foot ends in the back fifth position. If the right foot begins in the back, the glissade derrière travels to the right side. It is not possible to begin with the right foot in back fifth position and perform glissade derrière to the left (see Figure 29).



Glissade derrière

Fig. 29

The terms devant, derrière, dessous and dessus are also based on the body reference system. In glissade dessous, if the right foot begins in front fifth position, the glissade will travel to the right and the right foot will end in back fifth position. In other words, the leg that initiates the step, the leg that is first to open, passes 'under' the fifth position during the execution of the step (see Figure 30).



Glissade dessous

Fig. 30

In glissade dessus, if the right leg begins in back fifth position, the glissade travels to the right and the right foot ends 'over' the fifth position or in fifth position front (see Figure 31).

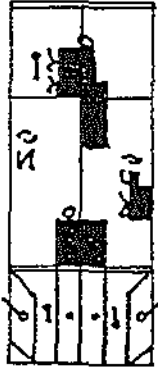


Glissade dessus

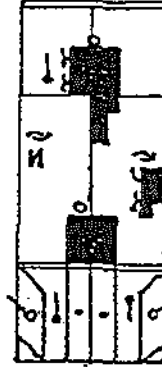
Fig. 31

Thus, when the fifth position relationship of the right foot to the left foot changes within a step, i.e. the right foot does not remain in front, an 'under'/'over' distinction is made. When the feet maintain their same relationship, i.e. the right foot begins in front and ends in front, a 'front'/'back' distinction is made.

Glissade en avant and glissade en arrière are determined according to the 'fixed point' spatial referents. In glissade en avant, the front foot begins the step and ends in front fifth position as the step travels toward an audience. In glissade en arrière, the step travels in the direction away from the audience beginning with the back foot and ending with that same foot in back fifth position (see Figures 32 and 33).



Glissade en avant
Fig. 32



Glissade en arrière
Fig. 33

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have presented three different levels of spatial orientation peculiar to ballet dancers; the axes and walls of the conceptual space, the axes of the body instrument, and the idea of spatial deixis which links the two. These relationships not only structure but generate the identity of the idiom of ballet dancing. To stress the ephemerality of dancing in an idiom of dance, like ballet, at the expense of investigating and identifying its multi-leveled and complex spatial and body relationships is to deny much of the articulated meaning of this dance form.

Semantically laden spatial concepts structure individual orientation in space. Without an understanding of the conceptual constructs, one could neither adequately describe an event in space, nor participate in it: "... semantics and not observation determine the nature and boundaries of events, so we should remember that a rule can create a phenomenon" (Crick, 1976:95). Whether going about everyday activities

or dancing, we can never avoid the omnipresent features of space, direction and spatial orientation. Knowing where we are is essential to human thought and function.

Dixie Durr

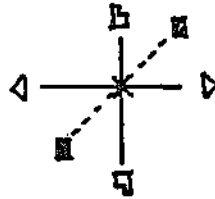
NOTES

1. Although the issue of universality goes beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that various cultures endow specific actions with values relative to their conceptual schemas. Within the field of dance studies in the Western world, the tangibility of movement is as large an issue as that of universality. See Williams, 1982:162 with specific reference to the fact that "... human movement is not itself a material phenomenon". Also see Durr (1985) for a detailed discussion regarding the issue of universality.
2. See Williams (1976) and (1982) for a detailed explanation regarding the theory of semasiology.
3. In semasiology these constant oppositions of U/D, R/L and F/B are considered to be interacting dualisms, i.e. in order to have an understanding of 'front' an individual must have a notion of 'back'. 'Up' makes sense in relation to 'down'. These axes orient an individual in space and are considered in semasiology to be intransitive structures, i.e. they constitute the theoretical concept of P structures. These structures are "... not produced by humankind -- they just 'are', so that the structure of interacting dualisms, like 'gravity' or 'rays of light' are accepted as 'givens'" (Durr and Farnell, 1981:233). Williams (1976) refers to these particular axes as the canonical coordinates of space.
4. Enrico Cecchetti (1850-1928), an Italian dancer and ballet master, established a fine teaching reputation in Russia and throughout the world. His method of training, known as the Cecchetti method, is prevalent today. Cecchetti assigned fixed numerical points to the studio/physical stage space designating wall 5 as 'front'.
5. The word enchaînement in ballet dancing implies a linking of steps. Usually, two or more steps are combined to form patterns of movement that can be danced to prescribed phrases of music. An enchaînement of fast movement in ballet (petite allegro) may consist of a series of eight measures which is meant to be repeated. An enchaînement of adagio (slow) movement, may be thirty-two measures in length.
6. Labanotation is a system for the recording of movement which was initially developed by Rudolph Laban. His book on the subject was first published in 1928. Although it is not the only system



that can record movement (others include Benesh, Eshkol-Wachman and Sutton), it appears to be the one writing device that has the potential to record movement concepts which are culture specific. It is presently being used by a number of anthropologists of human movement to record rather varied ethnographic information (see Williams, 1978; Puri, 1983; Farnell, 1984; Hart-Johnson, 1984). See Hutchinson-Guest (1977 and 1984) for further understanding of Labanotation.

7. Raoul-Auger Feuillet (1675-1710), a French dancer and choreographer, is often given credit for a system of notation known as the Feuillet system. In 1700, he published it as Chorégraphie ou L'art d'écrire La Dance par Caractères. Some dance scholars believe that Pierre Beauchamps (1631-1719) was the actual inventor of the notation system since in the late 1670's he had been asked by Louis XIV to notate dance steps. Beauchamps, the director of the Academie Royale de Danse, which Louis XIV created, challenged the authenticity of the Feuillet publication as did many others. Today, credit is often given to both men and subsequently it is known as the Beauchamps-Feuillet notation system.
8. In this paper, the Cecchetti directions of the body have been selected to indicate how two referential spatial systems operate concurrently within ballet dancing. Other styles of ballet could be used as well. For example, the Russian style (after Legat) emphasizes a rotary action around the vertical axis of the body creating a spiraling effect within the various positions of the body. This method is different from the Cecchetti preference which established a new front for the whole body including the support. Even though the Legat and the Cecchetti methods differ, the Legat method does not negate the importance of 'front' as established outside the body.
9. Three directions which are often added to this list are écarté derrière, effacé derrière and épaulé derrière. These complete the possibilities out of which all ballet steps begin, end and pass through.
10. In a battement tendu, the foot of the gesture leg slides along the floor until the ankle is fully extended and the toe is still touching the floor. The foot slides to the fourth position front or back and to the second position, side.
11. The gesture leg refers to the leg which is non-weight-bearing. To label this leg the 'working leg', as sometimes occurs, is confusing since the weight-bearing leg, i.e. the support, is also 'working'.

12. The term, kinemic, is to movement what the term 'phonemic' is to linguistics. In movement, a kineme is equivalent to a single gesture or action. The various columns within Labanotation make visible the kinemic elements, i.e. symbols placed within the support, leg gesture, body, arm and head columns reveal the elements of one kineseme. See Williams (1979a) for further discussion.
13. See Lyons (1968) and Williams (1976).
14. The five positions of the feet are described in relation to the body axes. These five positions are constituent to ballet since all steps begin, end or pass through them. The following diagram uses an 'X' to indicate that a dancer stands at the point where the two lines F/B and R/L intersect.



This 'X' marks the point at which the F/B and L/R axes cross at ground level and coincide with the U/D axis. The placement of the feet are relational to this 'X'. The vertical axis U/D

or  /  forms a longitudinal central axis in the body. The legs are turned out at the hip joint to allow for a broad base of support in each of the five positions. The weight is equally distributed between the two feet in each of the five positions.

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