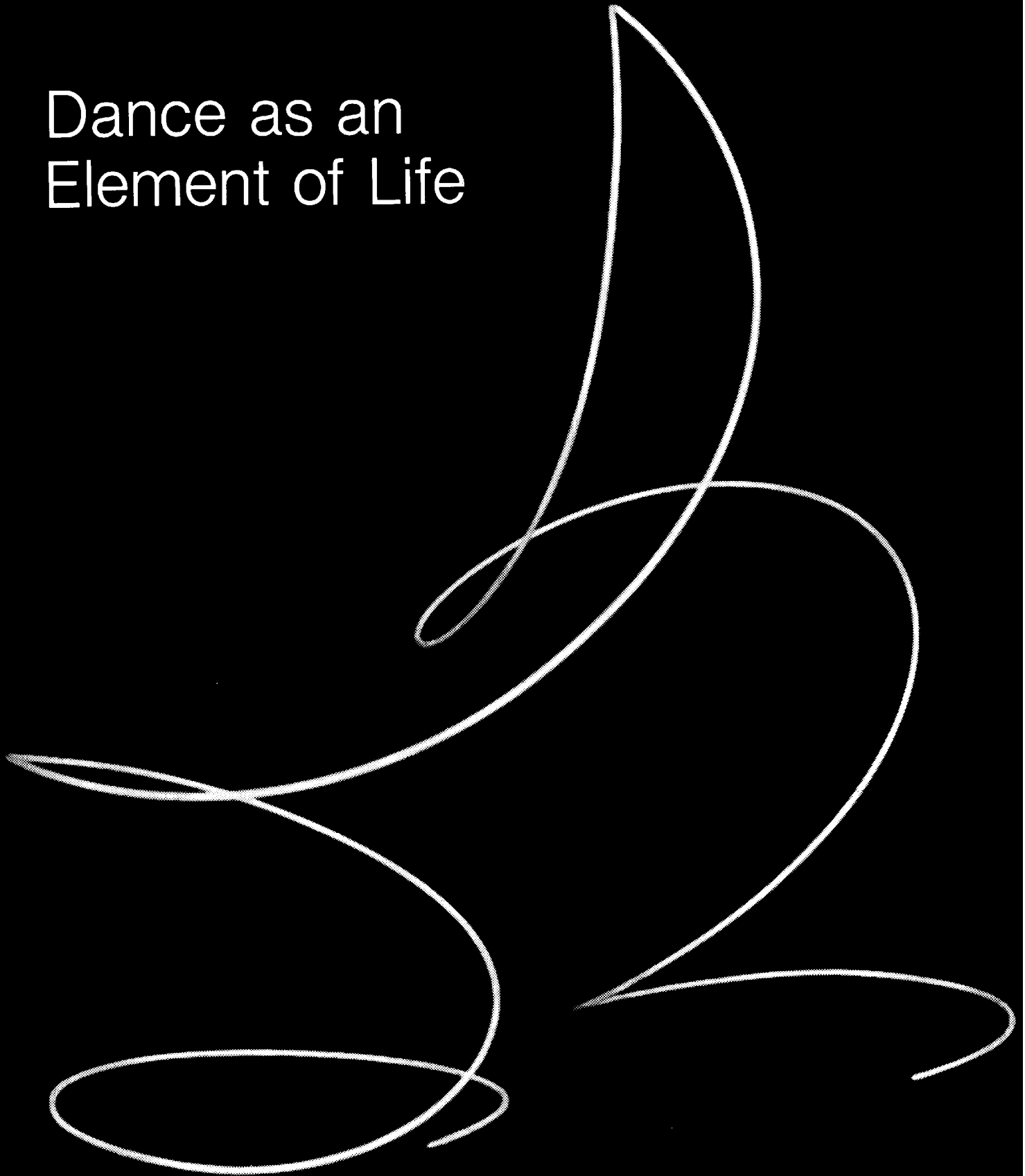


Dance as an
Element of Life



Barbara Mettler

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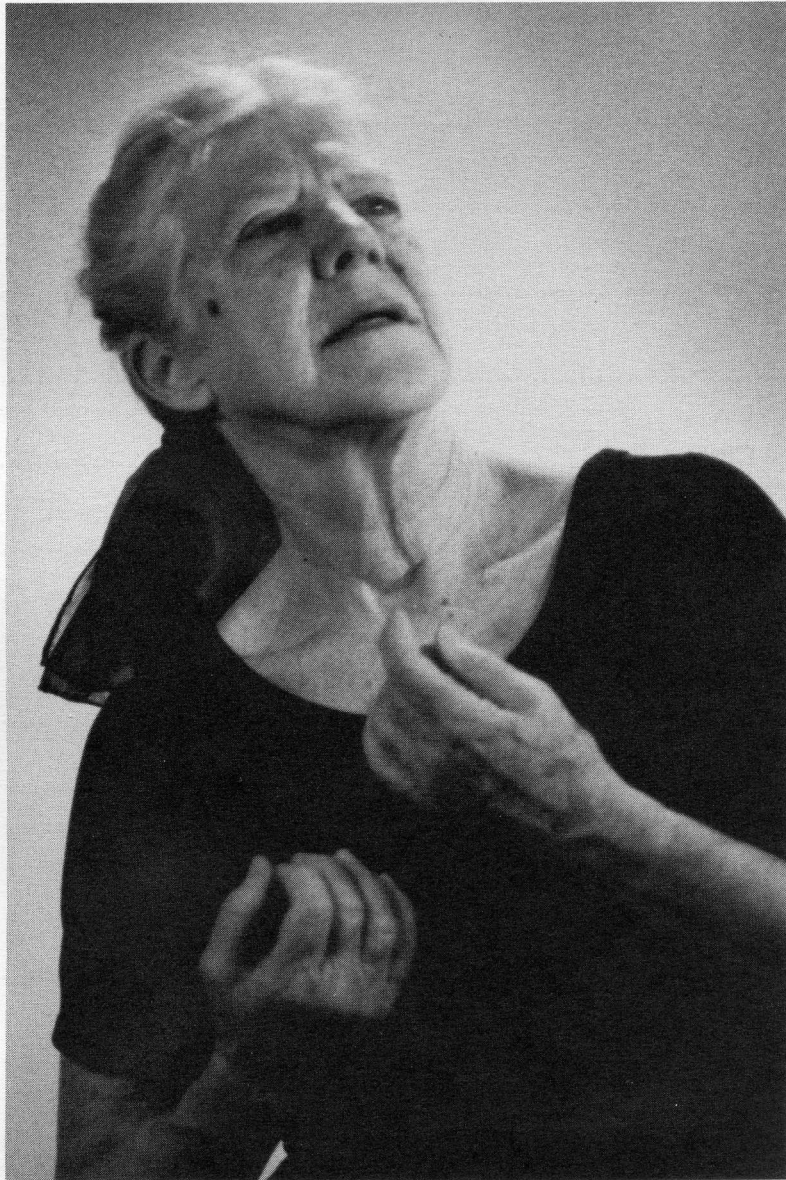
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PART 1

THE PURPOSE AND THE PATH

This is the story of a dancer's life and the development of a kind of dancing which offers everyone opportunity to enjoy dance as free creative movement expression.

This dancer believes that dancing is a basic human need and she has spent her life searching for materials and methods which would make authentic dance experience available to all.

She has developed a way of work which can liberate and cultivate the natural creativity which is in every human being. She has created movement studies and dance themes which can be adapted to persons of all ages, both sexes, on all levels of experience, including persons with handicaps.

This kind of dancing needs a name but it is difficult to find one because words mean different things to different people. It could be called PURE DANCE because it is dance for its own sake, undiluted, unmixed with non-dance elements, underived and unapplied . . . it could be called FREE DANCE because the dancer is free to make up his or her own movements . . . NATURAL DANCE because it aims to reveal the beauty of natural human movement . . . BASIC DANCE because it can open the doors to all forms of creative activity . . . LIVING DANCE because it grows organically out of itself.

It has sometimes been called CREATIVE DANCE to distinguish it from those kinds of dancing which stress learned movements rather than free creative expression . . . one of the best names for it may be ART DANCE or the ART OF BODY MOVEMENT because, using the body as instrument and movement as material, it approaches dance as the primary art and as the art which is central to all others.

All human beings have a sense of movement, technically called the kinesthetic sense. It consists of nerve endings in the muscles and joints which send messages to the brain telling us exactly how we are moving. Other senses such as sight, sound and touch give us information about the world around us. The kinesthetic sense tells us what is going on within ourselves.

Try this: close your eyes, then raise one arm slowly forward. How do you know that you are raising an

arm instead of a leg? How do you know that you are raising one arm and not two . . . that you are raising the arm and not lowering it . . . that you are raising it forward, not sideward . . . slowly, not fast? You cannot see your movement. It is your kinesthetic sense that is telling you. We make use of this sense unconsciously whenever we move. Learning to use it with awareness and control can enrich our movement experiences in daily life and lead us into the art of body movement.

Art is a supremely human activity. It is the attempt to embody in some perceptible form an inner vision of perfection. At their source within us all arts are one, differentiated only by the sense to which they appeal and by the materials and instruments which they use. The art of music appeals to the sense of hearing. The musician's material is sound, and the instrument is a sound-maker such as a piano or a drum. The art of painting appeals to the sense of sight. The painter's material is color, and the instrument is a brush or some other tool with which the color can be worked. Dance, the art of body movement, appeals to the kinesthetic sense. The dancer's material is movement, and the instrument is the body.

There is considerable confusion about the art of body movement. Dance is often mistakenly approached as a visual rather than a kinesthetic art, and the body is mistaken for the material rather than the instrument of dance. These misunderstandings tend to alienate the average person from the joy of dancing himself or herself and relegate him or her to the role of spectator.

The dancer whose story is told here has persevered in a life-long effort to remove this alienation. There was no guide to show her the way, no other dancer she wanted to follow, no esthetician whose philosophy of dance satisfied her. Her life has been a continuous search for common denominators of dance which can unite all people in free movement expression.

Her discoveries and a determination to make them known have brought her into conflict with more conventional dance. Her work has sometimes been called "radical" because it challenges existing norms, or "primitive" because of its earthiness and concentration on the roots of dance. Her path has been far from easy and only a great love could have sustained her. The following pages tell the story of this love.

ANGELS IN THE SNOW

I can Fly

My first dance associates were the birds and wildflowers in the woods on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan where my family lived. Mother was a child of nature and taught me about these things. I felt myself one with the seagulls soaring and the budding flowers taking shape.

There came a time when I was perfectly sure that I could fly so, in a neighbor's hammock, I would swing and swing as high as I could, then jump off into the air expecting to continue up into the sky. The fact that I always crashed did not deter me. I kept on trying. Then at last I decided that I needed wings and my dear mother, who always encouraged independent activity, said that she would make me some. I searched the sands for seagull feathers, which were numerous then on the lake shore, and Mother began sewing them together. But it was a big undertaking and by the time she was nearly finished I realized that, with or without wings, I was not made to fly.

Outdoor games with neighbor boys and girls always involved movement. In the winter snows we carved out paths and chased each other around playing "Fox and Geese." In warm weather we ran all over the bluff playing games like "Run my good Sheeple run" or "Kick the Can." Indoors it was "Murder," a frightening game in which we all roamed through a completely darkened house trying to escape a drawn-by-lot "murderer" without knowing where or when someone would clasp his or her hands around your throat. There were four of us who liked to lie on the floor with pen and ink and a big piece of paper, creating an imaginary country on Mars with cities and railways and swamps and canals and inhabitants doing strange and wonderful things. Mother loved free expression and never complained when we brought snow and mud into the house on our clothes or when we tipped over a bottle of ink on the carpet.

My Family

We had a lively home which was always filled with friends and where the arts were practiced as ordinary everyday activities. My father played the piano, my mother acted, my sister painted and wrote poetry, while I danced.

My father, who commuted to Chicago for his work as doctor and teacher of medicine, spent much of his time at home making music on the piano. Some of my earliest memories are going to sleep at night and waking up in the morning to the rich tones of Chopin or Litz, or a Schubert song sung by anyone whom Father could persuade to sing while he ac-

companied. Occasionally the whole family would gather around the piano and sing, even the airedale Rex whom we encouraged to join us and for whose benefit we included in our repertoire a song about "Old Dog Tray."

Father taught us all to play the piano and we practiced together four-hand and even six-hand piano pieces until eventually we acquired a second piano. Then Father would bring home two-piano pieces, one adapted to each member of the family's proficiency. I was the youngest, so I was given the easiest. In retrospect I can see that my father was part dancer because he was so much concerned with the movement element of music. As I fumbled through my part in a two-piano piece, he cared less about my accuracy in playing the right notes than he did about my "keeping time." What a triumph it was when on the final note I would come out on the right beat and Father would fling up his hands in satisfaction!

I danced all the time but no-one thought of my dancing as "dance." It was considered just part of the fun and games. For me it was joy in pure movement expression. I skipped and hopped and swung and turned and rolled and rocked for no other purpose than to create enjoyable movement experiences. I danced indoors and out, sometimes inspired by my father's music, sometimes making up my own songs. On summer evenings I danced on the lawn with the fireflies, and on fourth of July nights with sparklers in my hands. Only when I hurt myself stumbling over a croquet wicket would family members be at all concerned. They had their own creative activities.

My mother's gift for acting permeated her home life as well as giving her opportunity to perform in amateur theatricals. She loved a show of any kind. This love she shared with us, teaching us to play "Charades" and sometimes reciting for us dramatic poetry.

People liked to hear me play the piano and watch me dance but, when Mother would ask me to entertain her friends, I would refuse and run away. This was not shyness. It was an intuitive realization that Mother was more interested in the show than in the art experience. A child knows nothing about theories of art but I could sense an over-emphasis on performance, whereas to me — then as now — dance and music were creative art activities, valid whether or not they were performed for others.

There was no radio or television in our home, not even a record-player because my father objected to "canned music." We rarely attended performances of any kind, with the exception of those at Ravinia Park.

Ravinia Park was a pavilion for outdoor music (and mosquitoes!) only fifteen miles from our home. On summer afternoons women would bring their sewing and sit on benches listening to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra while their small children (I was one of them) played on the grass at their feet. The husbands, some of whom commuted to Chicago as my father did, would come out of the city on the train to have a picnic supper with their families at Ravinia and attend the opera that night. So I became familiar with Aida, Lohengrin, Carmen and many others, through parts of which I sometimes slept. Once we attended a performance by a ballet dancer. I found it intensely boring.

There was a game which my sister and I played together. It might have been called "Clap the Beat." One of us would clap the rhythm of a familiar song or piece of music which we both knew, and the other would guess what it was. My sister, six years older than I, was just as sensitive to rhythm as I was but her creative imagination led her into the visual arts and poetry rather than into music and dance. As we grew older she taught me the current ballroom dance steps and I remember being crushed when a young man told me that she was a better dancer than I.

Snow and Stars

My earliest discovery that visual designs could be created through body movement came in drawing lines with my bare feet in wet sand on the beach, and in making angels in the snow. By lying on our backs in deep snow and moving our arms and legs horizontally back and forth, we could create the effect of figures with wings and skirts.

My mother loved drama in all its forms, including the violent thunderstorms which roared off the lake. When the dark clouds gathered and lightning flashed she would take us out on the porch and delight in the beauty of it. She also loved starry nights and made us acquainted with such constellations as Orion and the Pleiades. It puzzled me that other mothers would complain when it rained. My mother's gay comment in all seasons was "I like weather!"

I was a happy child because I was given all possible freedom for creative expression and my independent nature had every opportunity to develop. There were of course conflicts and, rarely, punishments for misbehaving. I remember once being spanked by my father for refusing to wear a red sweater which I hated, and once being marched by my mother back to the village store to return a button which I had lifted (stolen) from the counter. But

there was much love in the family and I, being the youngest, received a big part of it.

A GREEN FROG COSTUME

Disappointment with "Dance"

Then came a change, gradually but relentlessly, from a joyously free childhood to a confused effort to adjust to other people's way of life. My eight years in high school and college were lost years because they offered me no opportunity to grow as a dancer or musician beyond the level which I had achieved in childhood.

My father was a well educated man and my mother, a prairie flower from the cornfields of Central Illinois, was somewhat awed by academia. Both daughters were sent to a conservative private girls' school, then to an eastern women's college where we were supposed to receive the best possible education.

In high school the only opportunity for movement came through highly competitive team sports. Basketball was my favorite because it involved much jumping. For a short time we had dance classes taught by a student of Margaret H'Doubler. I was one of only two girls who loved the classes and we were ridiculed by our classmates who contemptuously called it "flitting."

The only other dance experiences at that time which I remember were the miseries of trying to dance at parties with young men whose dancing had no movement, no rhythm, no relationship to the music. The girl was supposed to follow her partner who, holding her at a discreet distance, tried to walk around without bumping into other couples who were doing the same. The partners were expected to talk while they danced, but I wanted only to move — freely, in union with the music.

In college, dance had just been introduced as an extra-curricular activity. I joined a class but, when I was put in a green frog costume and directed to jump around on all fours under a tree to Tchaikowsky's music, I felt humiliated and gave up college dancing. If this was dance, I wanted none of it. My love of dance has always been love of pure movement expression and I have never been interested in theatrical uses of dance to interpret music or drama.

At home there was still the free creative life, but my home was so unlike the homes of my schoolmates that I felt like a fish out of water.

I had no way of knowing that dance could be a serious study. My early dreams about studying dance and the possibility of making it a life work were discouraged by my parents whose puritanical background led them to associate dance with the theater and the theater with dissolute women. Dancing at home with the family was all right, but stage dancing — no.

I thought that music might be my field but I received no support in this direction in either high school or college. In college only one student from my class was accepted as a music major. I was not the one, so I majored in English, believing that this might be of some value somehow. So little interested was I in my English studies that I almost failed to graduate, although I received high grades in my music courses.

Sand under my Feet

When college was over I was so utterly lost that when someone asked me "What are you going to do now?" I burst into tears. Thinking that maybe I could learn to write professionally I found a job on a magazine. My wish was to write about music and my most satisfying piece of work was an interview with an orchestra conductor.

My social life at this time was disorderly and defiant. The only meaningful activities for me were skating on the Des Plaines River and swimming in Lake Michigan. One exquisitely beautiful experience which I shall always remember came to me in the water one peaceful, sunny, summer morning. I had climbed down our high bluff to go swimming alone and I stood in water up to my knees about a hundred feet from shore in sand which was soft but firm under my feet. The water was calm and crystal clear, as the Great Lakes were in those days. The sky was blue. There were no clouds. The quiet air was slightly hazy and seemed to bathe the body in shimmering light. The only sounds were far away, filtered through the distance. I was completely one with the sights and sounds and touch of the sand, the water and the air. Never again have I felt such union with everything within and around me. It was an experience of a kind of earthly perfection which, of all human works, only the art work approximates.

Break-away

One evening an elderly friend of mine, a musician who was sensitive to my love of music and dance, took me to a performance by Irma Duncan's dance group. It was a bombshell for me. I knew that dance was my field, and I was ready to follow the Duncan dancers back to their school in Moscow. My friend told me that I was too old, that one must begin

dance training at the age of nine. I believed him and the door was closed on the one thing I really wanted.

I continued my work on the magazine. In the summer I vacationed with a friend in Europe. This friend was interested in ballet dancing and took me to visit several dance schools. We visited the Mary Wigman School in Berlin which she found not at all to her liking but which was another bombshell for me. This time all the walls fell down. I knew that I could and must study dance and that, if I could just have one year at this school, my life would have some meaning.

I came back to the United States and with great difficulty rearranged my affairs, gathering together enough money for one year at the Mary Wigman Central Institute of Dance in Dresden, Germany. As it turned out, I stayed more than two years, completing the professional course and receiving a diploma.

NEVER TOO OLD

Dresden

I arrived in Dresden speaking no German but feeling completely at home in the environment of the Wigman School. It was a turning point, the beginning of a new life.

This was pre-Hitler Germany, a time when the arts and education were flowering in new democratic ways. Outmoded conventions were being replaced with bold new works and there was a popular demand for a return to nature and creative activity. The Wigman School was only one of many art schools reflecting this atmosphere.

As a student I must have shown some facility because I was promoted rather quickly from the beginning to the intermediate class. This had its disadvantages. Outwardly I seemed to be doing well but inwardly I was wholly unripe both as a dancer and as a person and I had to struggle hard to grow as fast as was necessary.

A Missed Cue

I had not been there very long when I was asked to take part in a city radio program. This was because I had shown ability to handle percussion instruments and the program called for someone to sound a cymbal. It was a miserable experience for me. A drama was presented during which I was supposed to strike the cymbal with a loud crash at the exact moment when the male speaker roared "Das bist

Du!" We practiced a few times but the language was so unfamiliar to me that I could not understand a word of it and I was never prepared for the sudden "Das bist Du!" When we were on the air I missed my cue — after which I hid in the bathroom crying.

First Experiences as a Dance Student

It was a time of revelation for me. Dance was revealing itself, within and around me, in wondrous new ways all the time. I remember becoming suddenly aware of the kinesthetic sensation of rotating my upper arm in its socket and becoming completely involved in the experience. I remember walking to school one fall day and seeing a ripe chestnut on the ground glistening in the sun. I wanted nothing more than to express the beauty of its brown glow in movement.

Our daily dance studies consisted of an exercise class and a class during which we improvised dances sometimes to music and sometimes to dramatic themes. Improvisation was always approached as preparation for composition. I do not remember anyone ever helping us to learn to compose, yet we were expected to show finished



dances occasionally for Mary Wigman's criticism. I would sign up to work alone in one of the small studios and sit on the floor for an hour trying to figure out how to make a dance. Finally I tried dancing with a drum in my hands. That enabled me to fix the time patterns and to compose a dance. Eventually I got to the point where I could make dances with someone providing musical accompaniment at the piano or using percussion instruments.

In the exercise class we practiced whatever exercises the teacher wanted to give us. Sometimes they were exercises derived from gymnastics, or from ballet, or from the work of Rudolf von Laban. Sometimes they were movements invented by the teacher during class. All teachers improvised their lessons. It was considered very pedantic to prepare a class.

There came a time when I would sometimes be waked up in the morning by someone delivering a message that I was to teach the beginners class as a substitute for their regular teacher who was sick. I had no idea how to teach anything, having been totally unprepared for the Pedagogy class which, during our last year, was part of our study. Trying to improvise my way through these classes, without having any idea what I was doing, was frustrating.

Never Again!

The American consul once wanted a dancer to dance at one of his parties, and I seemed to be the logical choice. I performed for them one of my favorite dances called "Kampftruf" ("Battle Cry") with percussion accompaniment created by myself and played by one of my fellow students. It was a failure. They had expected an entertainer. I had to perform on a small stage in a social hall where people were sitting at tables, talking and laughing, smoking and drinking beer. I poured my whole self into my dance, trying to attract their attention, but it was hopeless. Few could see through the smoke or hear through the noise, and those who could see me found nothing worth looking at. This was a new experience for me, which I decided never to repeat.

Music was very much a part of my work at the Wigman School. I would sometimes be asked to accompany children's classes at the piano if their pianist was not available. Other students would often beg me to create accompaniments for their dances, either at the piano or with percussion instruments. Then, as I do now, I loved to accompany any kind of movement with sound.

Hitler becomes Chancellor

Five months before my graduation Hitler was made chancellor. Being wholly non-political, none of us at the school knew what was happening. But soon there were changes. In a performance outside the school I had to alter my costume to cover the bare midriff and I would not have been able to take part in the performance at all if my hair had been dark or if the name Mettler had not sounded German.

One day the principal teacher of our graduating class, whom we all loved, disappeared. We were given no explanation of any kind and an instructor, whom many of us disliked, was put in his place. My nature is to act in defiance of what seems to me wrong, so I led a student strike. We refused to attend one of the rare classes taught personally by Mary Wigman. Today I regret this precipitous action because I am a teacher myself and I know that a teacher cannot always explain everything to the students' satisfaction. I believe now that our teacher was removed by the Nazis because he had Dutch, Javanese and Jewish blood in him. I also believe that Mary Wigman understood what was going on as little as the rest of us.

Final Examination

Our last six months at the Wigman School were spent preparing for final examinations. We made solo dances, composed and directed group

dances, created musical accompaniments, designed costumes, taught classes, and wrote long papers on dance. I was still struggling to keep up, trying to meet requirements that were beyond my level of development, but the faculty decided to give me a diploma anyway, saying afterward "We thought you were more advanced than you are."

Soon afterward I left Germany to return home, weeping because this first phase of my rich dance life had come to an end.

What did I learn in Dresden?

I learned something that I had always instinctively felt . . . that dancing is a natural activity and that everyone should have the opportunity to do it.

I learned that improvisation opens the doors of dancing to everyone because you make up your own movements and no two people are expected to move in exactly the same way.

I learned the importance of relaxation and the value of relaxed swinging movements which provide a harmonious balance of inner and outer forces.

I learned that at their source within us dance and music are one . . . that dance can be accompanied by sounds of any kind . . . that any instrument can be used in dance accompaniment . . . that dancers can accompany themselves and one another . . . that the dance can lead the music or the music can lead the dance.

These truths were to me self-evident. They seemed merely an affirmation of facts which I had always known. There were some truths which I did not learn at the Wigman School and which I had to find out for myself later.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY

Beginnings in America

Back in the United States I was on fire to share my love of dance with everyone. Like Isadora Duncan I could "see America dancing."

First, I needed to know what other American dancers were doing, so I took a few lessons with each of the two leading modern dance teachers in New York. Martha Graham's classes I did not like because they consisted of a system of learned exercises, giving no opportunity for free creative expression. Doris Humphrey's work was musical and I hoped to learn something from her but, after she had put me in her understudy group and drilled us in movements from her repertoire, I withdrew, deciding that I must have a studio of my own.

I found a small one-room apartment back of Washington Square which was empty until I furnished it with a borrowed mattress. There I started my first dance classes, eagerly trying to pass on to a few friends and acquaintances some of the movement experiences I had enjoyed in Dresden.

My enthusiasm was contagious and soon the room was too small for the number of people who wanted me to teach them. I looked everywhere for a studio but, as soon as a landlord heard that I would use drums, he refused to accept me, afraid that my sounds would be incompatible with Mayor La Guardia's recently instituted anti-noise campaign.

In desperation I turned to Carnegie Hall. There a sympathetic rental agent said that I could have a whole story in a little old building which they owned on 56th Street. They laid a wooden floor and painted the walls light blue. Here I opened the Barbara Mettler School of Dance.

Work

I thought that I needed a pianist to accompany my dance classes, but I could not afford one, so I explored every possibility of making movement interesting to my students without piano music. I spent long hours preparing every lesson, discovering a way of work that I had never known before. I found that there could be excitement in pure movement qualities such as slow and fast, strong and weak, large and small, if the whole person were involved in the experience.

It was not until much later that I freed myself completely from dependence on music. In the meantime I sometimes accompanied my classes with a drum, and I taught my students to use with musical feeling all kinds of percussion instruments. In New

York I became known for my percussion work, with the result that another dancer once hired me to provide instruments and players for one of her stage performances.

This was during the Great Depression. Americans were suffering from lack of jobs, lack of money, lack of material possessions. Deprived of things they thought they needed, people were thrown back on their own creative resources. Experimentation flourished. There has never been more vitality in American dance than there was during this period. Dancers found new ways to move, new forms of expression. Framework was simplified, technique subordinated to meaning.

Like the legendary outlaw, Robin Hood, I decided to "rob the rich to feed the poor." During the daytime I charged high prices for my lessons to women who could afford them, while at night I charged nothing to those who could not pay. "To feed the poor" meant to me feeding the inner creative life which I believed to be in most people pitifully undernourished.



On my Way

My democratic philosophy of dance was beginning to show itself. I could not bear to hear anyone say "I can't dance." When I would ask "Why not?" the answer was usually "I am not graceful" or "I don't have a good body" or "I am not creative" or "I am too old." These answers did not make any sense to me. My thinking was that you do not have to be graceful, all bodies are good, everyone is creative and no-one is ever too old to dance.

I did everything I could to make authentic dance experience available to all who attended my classes. They were college students, office workers, teachers, housewives, men and women, employed and unemployed.

I was wholly undeveloped as artist and teacher. My study period at the Wigman School had been too short to provide me with understanding of what I had been taught or the means of passing it on to others. I believe now that this was an advantage. I had to begin at the beginning to find out for myself the fundamentals of the art.

I experimented with variations on the exercises I had been taught, selecting and revising them to meet specific student needs. I found themes for improvisation which would be easy and could liberate individual creativeness. Conventionalities from my Wigman studies still clung to me and handicapped me in my efforts. I still approached improvisation as preparation for composition, composition as preparation for performance, and performance as dependent on audience appeal. These attitudes were obstacles to complete freedom, and freedom was what I wanted for everyone.

My own dancing was far from free. I was still dependent on music. Even when I danced without music, my dance forms were derived from musical forms. Not for a long time did I learn to create what I now call *organic dance form*: living dance, growing out of itself like any living thing, dependent only on the natural laws of movement expression.

I taught not only in my own studio, day and night, but wherever I could find opportunity to teach. With my drum under my arm I traveled by subway up to Harlem, over to Brooklyn, and to downtown Manhattan where I was guest teacher at the Workers' Dance League School. I never taught two classes alike, always seeking better ways to stimulate my students' appetite for movement. I taught young men whose physical exuberance seemed to have no limits, and I taught white-haired ladies who were amazed to find out what their bodies could do. With my students I gave demon-

stration programs whenever and wherever I had the chance. My aim was always to show how easy and delightful it is to dance, and to attract people to my classes. At that time I had no children's classes. I believe that few modern dance studios did. "Modern dance" was a term applied to all new directions in dance. Since Isadora Duncan, the dance world had been split into two distinct groups, one adhering to the centuries-old tradition of ballet and the other searching for more contemporary forms.

Marriage

During this period I married a German, Allan Hammer, journalist, photographer, and student of psychology. He had great interest and considerable experience in the recreational and therapeutic aspects of body movement as they had been developed in Germany during the Weimar Republic. To him I owe much help and encouragement in my search for ways "to feed the poor."

This was the McCarthy Era in America, when fear of communism had reached fantastic proportions. My work has always had a social dimension, which is to say that it is concerned with society as a whole as well as with every individual in it. On my studio wall there was then — as there is now — a saying of the Zuni Indians: WE DANCE BOTH FOR PLEASURE AND FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY. It was no surprise to me to learn that it was rumored in New York that I belonged to some subversive underground movement which was trying to revolutionize the world.

Following the Rules

Modern dancers sought freedom, but they had not freed themselves from theatrical conventions or from dependence on audience. I was competing, so I tried to follow the rules. With a group of specially trained students I gave a few conventionally staged performances, including one in New Jersey, one in Boston, and one at the Heckscher Theater in New York. They were received well but the need to emphasize theatrical effects, the drilling of students in learned movement patterns, the superimposing of my personal movement preferences on others — these things were all distasteful to me. They were certainly not what I was looking for.

In many ways I tried to do what the other modern dancers were doing, but in one way my work was quite different. Others' classes stressed routine exercises and preparation for performance. Mine stressed joy in creative activity. I offered more and more dance improvisation.

In the Country

After six years in New York, the atmosphere of the big city became oppressive and I longed for a more natural environment. Persuading a farmer in New Hope, Pennsylvania, to house a small group of my students, I conducted a summer course on his farm. Space was so limited that some of us slept in an old chicken coop and, since there was no indoor area available, we had to do all our dancing out of doors. When it rained we were perfectly happy to sit in the barn and talk about dance. The only unpleasantness came one morning when bullets whistled past us as we danced in the fields. We never did find out who was shooting, where they were, or what they were shooting at.

The outdoor environment had a tremendous impact on our dancing. Without our realizing it, all our movements and all our sounds became greatly expanded and intensified. We found this out when we returned to New York and, without indoor rehearsal, performed our outdoor program indoors, in our small top-floor studio which was crowded with people. The effect was unbearable. It nearly blew the roof off the building and the spectators out the windows.

I have experienced many failures in my dance work, and my reaction is always the same. At first I am flattened, convinced that this is the end of everything. But despair does not last long. Soon I am up on my feet, determined never to make the same mistake again.

After the summer of outdoor dancing I knew that my studio needed to be in the country. My husband set out in search of a farm which we could afford, and he found one in the foothills of the White Mountains of New Hampshire. This was to be my studio home for the next thirteen years.

FEET ON THE EARTH

Migration

With a group of three dancers and a musician who had been dancing and making music with us for several years, we moved to New Hampshire where we took possession of an old farm house, a huge old barn and eighty acres of fields and forest. Throughout the fall and winter, with the help of a few friends from New York and a local plumber and electrician, we worked as carpenters, painters and masons, turning the old barn into a dance studio and the house into living quarters for students. We planned to open our summer school of dance the following year.

Having begun the remodeling in August, by Christmas we had heat, running water, and a maple floor ready for dancing which we used with the glorious feeling of being fully repaid for all the hard non-dance work we had done. We continued to explore new directions in dance as we had been doing in the city, and we began to work on materials and methods for teaching dance creatively.

A Calamity

In April the barn, containing all our instruments, burned to the ground. We managed to save the house and the automobile. No explanation was ever found for the cause of the fire. There was nothing to do but send the group back to New York. My husband and I remained on the farm.

Summer School at Last

It was a year before we could offer a summer school. In the meantime some of our New York students came up to the farm for Thanksgiving. New Hampshire is wintry at that time of year. Having no indoor area for dancing we danced outdoors, bundled up in warm coats, boots and mittens.

Up the hill and across the road from our farm was a small empty carriage barn which we were fortunately able to acquire and turn into a dance studio. Undaunted by the limited space, I decided that it would do for a summer school. We sent out announcements to everyone we knew, and to schools and colleges where we thought there might be an interest. There was not much competition because at that time there were only two other summer schools of dance in the United States, so we managed to gather a small group of students. It was a resident school, planned for out-of-towners. With the help of a cook and a housekeeper we housed and fed as well as taught students from far-away places, in addition to a few from neighboring towns.

Discoveries

My thirteen years in New Hampshire were years of discovery. It seems to me that much of what I have learned about dance has come to me as a result of being deprived of something I thought I could not do without. Our carriage barn was much too small for free movement, so most of our dancing had to be outdoors. We learned to dance in the fields, up and down the hills and among the trees, as we never would have done if our big barn studio had not burned down. We learned to use sounds of voice, hands, and feet and ordinary objects because we had lost all our instruments in the fire. New York dancers were saying that dancers should not dance outdoors because they should not have the sun on their heads. I could not have cared less. Away from Broadway, close to nature, I was experiencing a new dimension of freedom.

For a while my husband and I faced an unpleasant problem. The United States was at war with Germany, and New England is notorious for its dislike of foreigners. We were "foreigners," not only because we were not Yankees (in New Hampshire "Yankee" means native New Englander) but also because my husband had a German accent and my name, Mettler, sounded like Hitler. The fact that we had many Jewish students only made matters worse. We were labeled both "a Jew camp" and spies for Nazi Germany.

As time went on, the ugly rumors were replaced with interest and good will, even pride, in the dance activities at "Mettler Farm." We were not the only curiosities in the neighborhood. Several Harvard science professors had summer homes there, including Robert M. Yerkes with his world-famous laboratory apes. Apes, dancers and other strange





phenomena were gradually accepted as part of the community. We once heard a native introducing us to a friend, as the two walked past some of our students who were dancing near the road. His comment, proudly proprietary, was, "Real weird, isn't it?" After we had become well established, *Yankee Magazine* sent a reporter out from Boston to write about us. He was at first shocked, but he stayed two days and toward the end could not resist joining the dance.

Performing Outdoors

The outdoor environment became a part of our dancing, and so did the spectators who attended our weekly performances. Every Saturday afternoon we presented the results of our week's work to neighbors, people from nearby towns, friends from Boston and New York and anyone who wanted to watch.

Our performances were outdoors, and the spectators followed the dancers wherever they went. When the dancers were on the hill, spectators stood in the valley. When the dancers were in the valley, spectators went up on the hill. If a dancer climbed a tree, spectators would circle the trunk, watching the movements from below. Sometimes we arranged to have the spectators take part in the dance, making simple movements with the dancers, clapping an accompaniment, or following the

dancers in a procession. This was a new direction in dance performance which came to be known as "audience participation."

When it rained, if it were at all possible, we would dance in the rain, improvising a special dance for the occasion, with the audience standing under their umbrellas. If we had to go indoors, the audience would be seated on benches around the dancing area, making it so small that the dancers' movements were very restricted. Nobody minded. Our audiences, as well as we ourselves, were learning to be creative regardless of the circumstances.

Throughout the program I gave explanations to help the audience understand what we were doing and to draw them into the feeling of the movement. Some of the dances were improvised, some were not. It was not until later that I turned completely away from creating fixed forms in order to work only on improvisation.

A New Task

A townswoman begged me to teach her nine-year-old daughter. The child was much too young for my summer school but, because it is hard for me to say "no" when I am asked to fill a definite need, I agreed to give her private lessons. I had no experience in teaching children and I had never taught a

private lesson. This child taught me a lot. I hope that she learned something from me. In my adult classes I was wholly involved with abstract dance form, and the studies I had developed had not yet been adapted to children. I took a leap into the unknown, saying to the child, "I will name something that moves and you will show me how it moves. Move the way fire moves . . . water . . . wind . . . rain . . . lightning . . . thunder (the child hesitated) . . . I said, "You can't see thunder but you can hear it moving. Show the movement of thunder." The child understood. Then I said, "Think of a mountain . . . a mountain can't move . . . but how would it move if it could?" The child's movements were large, slow, strong, heavy. I had found a way to enable not only a child but all of us to express in movement the feeling of anything we see, hear or touch.

The mother of the little girl, like so many mothers, was trying to satisfy her own need for expression by giving her child the dance experiences which she herself wanted. It was not long before she asked me to teach a group of women. I was happy to do it, giving these hard-working down-to-earth country people creative experiences which they very much needed and appreciated.

The Farm School Grows

My summer student groups grew larger and the work more intense. We danced six or more hours a day, six days a week, six to eight weeks. I began to analyze movement as objective material and the body as instrument of expression, devising ever more varied movement problems for solution by individual or group. Movement ideas poured through me, over me, under me and around me, and I became intoxicated with the wealth of beauty which I was experiencing.

My work has always aimed to reveal the beauty of natural human movement. I have never understood how people can enjoy the beauty of the movement of other natural things such as ocean waves, clouds, birds and animals without recognizing the beauty of natural human movement. Why is a cat's movement beautiful? Because it is wholly cat-like, expressing the nature of the cat. A human movement is beautiful if it is wholly human. When it expresses the whole human being it expresses the inner life and is far more beautiful than the movement of a cat. A cat's movement is instinctive. A human being's is not. Our instinctive drives have been replaced by freedom of choice. As human beings we need to cultivate consciously the beauty of naturalness.

Costumes and Accompaniment

I have always felt that body coverings should not

detract from the form and feeling of pure body movement. My students usually wear dance clothing which leaves arms, legs and feet bare, except when we are studying the influence of body covering on movement expression. Then we use anything we can find such as pieces of cloth, rope or newspaper to clothe ourselves, creating strange designs which can evoke entirely new movement feelings. When we are in the country we use leaves, grass, sticks, tree bark, mushrooms, and flowers.

It was characteristic of Mettler Farm that we found much of what we needed for our dance work in the fields and woods. In addition to materials for making costumes, we found objects for music-making such as leafy branches, pebbles in hollowed-out gourds, granite rocks to strike together. Our new kinds of movement required new kinds of sound. Inevitably some students became interested in constructing new kinds of musical instruments, with the result that many remarkable inventions appeared, and new kinds of orchestra.

Another Move

As time went on our little studio became too small and we had to move to a larger place some miles away where living quarters were more spacious and there was an enormous barn. We continued to give performances once a week, but most of them were indoors with the audience seated in concentric circles around a large dancing area. This circular arrangement was at that time an innovation which came to be known as "arena staging." It seems to me the only reasonable setting for dance, which is a three-dimensional art not belonging in the picture-frame setting of a conventional theater.

Close to Nature

A few experiences in the new location are worth recording because they show our closeness to nature and our unity with all living things.

A little field mouse enjoyed our dancing, at least the dancing of one member of our group. The dancer created a dance in which she carried, and used for sound accompaniment, two slender African shakers, beautiful both in tone and in visual form. She practiced this dance frequently. Whenever she did, the little field mouse would appear on a high rafter of the barn, always in the same place, looking down and remaining motionless as long as the dance continued, then immediately disappearing.

We had an experience with a butterfly. One morning I had told the students each to find some natural thing with which to dance and to show the dance





that afternoon. When the group had assembled and it was a young man's turn to dance with his object, he said, "I can't. It was a butterfly and it has flown away." At exactly that moment the butterfly appeared, apparently from nowhere. It flew directly toward him and the dance was performed.

One summer I received an urgent call from a nearby children's camp, begging me to teach the children who had been promised dance lessons but whose teacher had withdrawn. I still had no experience in teaching children but I saw this as an opportunity for me and my students to learn something. We decided that I would teach two children's groups at the camp for four weeks, taking with me five of my most advanced students who would watch and record in writing everything that occurred. This turned out to be a worthwhile project resulting in my first publication, *Creative Dance for Children*. It also showed me how natural it is for children to express movement feelings. On the first day that I was to teach the younger group I was very uneasy, not being at all sure how to proceed. As the group came toward me, one child presented me with a daisy. This gave me an idea. I said "Let's dance the daisy. Show in movement the beauty of this little flower." Without hesitation the children began to move and the feeling of flowers filled the air. There were exquisitely delicate movements shaped like petals. There were movements showing the feeling of the wide-open daisy face. There were blossoms and leaves and stems, swaying gently. I do not forget such revelations of the inner beauty of human beings, matching and being one with all of nature.

A turtle shell makes a desirable musical instrument, having two clear tones like an African log drum. It was a great loss to us when two large shells, which a friend had sent us from Florida, were destroyed in the fire. There were many land turtles in New Hampshire and, whenever we would see one, in spite of our love of all living things, our greed for interesting sound-makers would get the best of us and we decided to capture a turtle. We found one and, not wanting it to suffer, we decided on death by carbon monoxide. Putting the turtle in a paper bag, we fastened the bag to the exhaust pipe of our Ford stationwagon, then turned on the engine and let it run. After a long time we stopped the engine and opened the bag, expecting to find a very dead turtle. To our amazement (and satisfaction because we really did not want to kill it), the turtle appeared livelier than ever and started off in a bee-line for home. We laughed to think of the story he would have to tell his family.

We had many animal friends: a red fox who sat at a distance and grinned at us, knowing that we would never harm him; a porcupine who looked down on

us from a tree uttering an occasional friendly scream, woodchucks who ate our garden vegetables, deer who browsed in the fields, and all kinds of birds who sang melodiously and sometimes nested on our windowsills. The most striking movements of nature which I remember were the wind and the snowstorms, and the northern lights whose unpredictably changing movements are always so mysteriously silent.

A Big Step Forward

This was a time of creative growth for me both as dancer and as teacher. Two composed dances of mine which I remember with satisfaction were "Creature" and "Sounds of Hands and Feet." In "Creature" I poured forth all my love for creatures of water, earth and sky, identifying my movements with those of fish, insects, quadrupeds and birds. In "Sounds of Hands and Feet" I accompanied myself with clapping, stamping and beating the floor, completely liberated at last from any dependence on music.

A final step in creative freedom was still to be taken. One day, in a burst of artistic insight, I realized that my groups and I should no longer practice composed dances. Rather, we should practice only improvisation. Until then I had approached improvisation as preparation for composition. From that moment on, I have put my major effort into developing improvisation as a craft. All our performances have been improvised. It was then generally believed among dancers that improvising before an audience was indecent because it so freely revealed inner emotions. Fortunately I have never been influenced by others' opinion of my work. For me the decision to improvise in performance was a giant step forward.

TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES

My summer school did not occupy me during the whole year so at other times I found opportunities to work elsewhere, always with the aim of learning as much as I could about creative principles of dance.

With the Deaf

I spent a month living and teaching at Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., which was at that time the only college for the deaf in the world. I had solicited this engagement in order to demonstrate conclusively that the art of body movement is not dependent on music. I felt very much at home with the deaf because they are used to the language of body movement, and because their feeling for group movement was more developed than in any group I had ever taught.

While I was at Gallaudet I was asked to teach a group of young deaf children from the laboratory school. When I showed them in movement that they were to remove their shoes, they were at first incredulous but, when they realized that I meant it, there were screams of delight as shoes came flying off. I was later told that the children's name for me in sign language was "Miss Take-off-your-shoes."

At a College

I received many invitations to be guest teacher at colleges and community centers in different parts of the country. One of them came from a small women's college in the Lakes Region of Upper New York State. I committed myself to teach there for six weeks but, just before I arrived, the physical education director resigned and there was no one to direct the physical education department. The president of the college begged me to take the position. I told him that I knew nothing about physical education. He said he had no choice because it was war-time and it would be impossible to find a new department head at this late date. I said that I could only do it on these terms: all sports would be extra-curricular, freshmen would be required to take for a full year a course called Fundamentals of Body Movement, and I would establish a Department of Expressive Movement offering a major and a minor degree in creative dance. These conditions were accepted and one of my students was hired as my assistant.

For three years I commuted between New Hampshire and upper New York State, during which time one major and one minor student graduated in my department. These years were turbulent. There was violent opposition to my work among the

athletes, and by some members of the faculty who resorted to obscenities in condemning body movement as a subject of serious study. The teachers of music and visual art, and the head of the school of nursing, were on my side. The poor president, caught in the middle, supported my work and begged me to stay. I had originally intended to remain only long enough to set up a department which someone else could continue, but my assistant as well as I felt that this was not the best place for us to pioneer in a free approach to dance, so we resigned.

A Community Center

When I was asked by a large community center in Boston to recommend someone to direct their well-established dance department, I referred them to one of my summer school students whom I considered qualified. The young woman took the job, but soon afterward telephoned me to say that the challenge was too great for her. There were large numbers of people to teach, all quite unprepared for dance as free creative movement expression. She urged me to take the position myself. I seem to thrive on difficult problems, so for the next four years I commuted from New Hampshire to Boston, introducing to a very conservative city a very free kind of dance.

Revolution in Boston

With a few exceptions, my many Boston students were at first shocked by the new dance experiences which I offered them but, since they had registered for the courses and I was the teacher, they did their best to follow my instructions. They had always danced to music, never improvised freely, never danced with bare arms and legs, and always performed on a conventional stage.

I did everything I could to relieve them of their inhibitions, give them confidence in their own creativeness, and make this new direction attractive to them. If they said they needed music, I said, "Sing while you dance . . . make up your own song." If they said they needed a story or poem I said, "Make up one and speak while you dance." If they wanted costumes I said, "Let's each bring a piece of cloth to class and clothe ourself with it, then see how it makes us want to move." They were amazed at the beauty of their own creations. A young mother was so deeply moved that she tells me to this day that it was a turning point in her life when she created her own dance poem.

Dancing Spectators and Unfriendly Critics

Our performances were quite unlike any they had ever known. Instead of being presented by a small

selected group, every program gave all my students (there were hundreds of them) opportunity to perform. Each class showed something that they had done during the preceding months. The program was richly varied with individual and group dances with and without sound accompaniment,

original poems and instrumental pieces. Members of the audience (there were many of them too) sat all around the dancers and were sometimes led through an "Audience Dance." I spent many hours preparing audience dances because I was determined to break down the average person's fear of



dance as creative activity. Boston dance teachers were very antagonistic to my work. They would attend all our performances, sit stony-faced while taking copious notes, then make a point of telling my students how impossible were my ideas of dance.

My students could hold their own in the face of such criticism. They loved the work more and more, and some of them were eager to teach it themselves. I started a teacher-training course open to any of my students who wanted to learn more about the theory and practice of this kind of dance. It attracted a group of serious people eager to explore with me the broad, deep, rich material which we were discovering. It was my Boston teacher-training group that collected for me many of the movement words listed in my book "Materials of Dance," which list is, I believe, partly responsible for the success of the book. The group included a beautiful black grandmother who was a group leader at a neighborhood center, a physically handicapped young woman who wanted to teach the handicapped, a lonely young man whose life became meaningful when I was able to place him in a dance teaching position, and many others whose love of dance and love of people combined to make them want to teach.

Modern Dance — Creative Dance?

My work had always been considered part of the modern dance movement, but my students and I now began to call it "modern creative dance." Eventually it came to be known as "creative dance" and, although I am not at all satisfied with this designation, I have not yet been able to find a better one.

In Boston my teaching and my own dancing grew to new creative levels because of the large number of people with whom I worked. There were many classes for adults, for teen-agers and for children. One day a mother brought to me her eleven-year-old daughter, a beautiful girl who, she said, would sit in the bathtub and say, "I hate my body." This girl took to our dance classes like a duck to water and danced with me for many years, eventually becoming one of my assistants.

I learned how to teach children. They taught me how to teach them. A group dance which I now give to all my classes, adults as well as children, was created by a children's class whose members named it Open-Close (see page 44).

I formed a small demonstration group with which I gave programs in college gymnasiums, recreation centers and town halls in the vicinity of Boston. In one gymnasium we had to compete with runners

training on the balcony and a basketball game in the other half of the room. In one town hall, while we danced on a very dirty floor, little boys whistled and threw spitballs at us.

To my surprise one day a Boston bank on a busy corner asked if I would provide a collection of our student-made instruments to be exhibited in their window as promotion for the bank. I was pleased and I worked extremely hard with one of my students to prepare not only the instruments but also a loop of tape which would make their sounds continuously audible in the street. Included in the collection were some strange-sounding instruments: a xylophone made of copper tubes, a rubber horn, a board with eleven strings, hanging bamboo poles, hand-made wooden bells, and a large plate of aluminum which, when bent back and forth produced unearthly metallic sounds. The bank installed the sound tape and had it running before the instruments were in the window. The sound, for the benefit of everyone passing in the street, accompanied a previous display of scientific machinery. While two men were walking by, one of them was heard to say, "Isn't this a wonderful bank? Listen! Sounds from outer space!"

Amateurs

My Boston students attended my classes for no other reason than that they loved the work. They were amateurs and I gave them all I had. It distressed me when other professionals would say, "Why do you work so hard for these people? They are only amateurs." Only amateurs? The word amateur is derived from the Latin word "amator" which means lover. Amateurs love their work and sometimes create more pure beauty than professionals whose love may be diluted by desire for money or acclaim. I believed then, and I still believe, that the life of a dance culture depends on the amateur. And who is to teach the amateurs? If a professional's work is too good for them, it is not good enough for anyone.

Tour Group

My New Hampshire summer school was attracting more and more serious students, with whom I could work on an advanced level, and I was beginning to dream of taking a dance group on tour. Our group dance improvisations were becoming vitally interesting in both form and content. No one could believe that our dances were improvised. I was beginning to see how to approach the force, time and space elements of dance, each of which could be studied separately, and I was finding that, because movement can be audible, visible and representational, dance opens the doors to all the arts. Many students told me that, until they had



worked with me in sound and movement, they had never had any relationship to music, and one college girl, who came to me to study dance, went home with a new realization that visual art was her field.

Among my students were four young people whose devotion to the work and whose pioneer spirit, as well as their dance accomplishments, made me decide to take them on tour. One young man was from Oregon, another from Louisiana, while one young woman was from West Virginia and the other from Wisconsin. At the conclusion of my summer school the five of us began to dance intensively as a group, and to send out announcements of a tour which would begin in New England and go down the East Coast to the South, returning through the Middle West. We offered improvised group performances and workshops of long or short duration for adults and for children.

Although improvised performances were new to modern dance, we received encouragement from John Martin, foremost dance critic in the United States who wrote of us in the *New York Times*, "What she and her associates are seeking is what the entire modern dance movement would do well to seek at this period — a truly creative approach to dance."

On the Road with "The Pachyderm"

Preparation for the trip included the purchase of a decrepit old school bus which we transformed into living quarters for the five of us. When we were finished with the reconstruction, we called it "The

Pachyderm." It was the first and last of its kind. In those days there were few travel trailers and no motor homes but I think that even today our bus would cause consternation at toll-gates as it did then when officials, not knowing how to classify us, would ask in desperation, "*What is it?*" It was obviously a school bus but it had some remarkable features. On the roof was a neat wooden box filled with two handsomely designed tents which could be opened at night for the accommodation of the two men. Inside, within cubicles of intricately arranged curtains, seats could be folded back to form three beds for the women, then quickly transformed into a table for group meals or desk-work. We had a bottled gas stove, a sink, and countless cabinets for dance garments, instruments, writing material, household equipment and personal necessities. One of our men was a skilled designer, whose expertise in creating space, where there seemed to be none, made it possible for us to survive the trip.

The announcement of our tour, prepared and mailed by the dance group without any help of any kind, provided us with enough engagements to enable us to chart our route. We started out in November and were on the road for six months, returning to New Hampshire in April.

Anyone who has toured with a performing group will agree that it is difficult. For us the difficulties were extraordinary. Five dancers did all their own business, housekeeping and transportation throughout the entire time, in addition to keeping themselves prepared to dance and teach in ever



changing situations. One member of the group cooked, one drove and maintained the bus, one took care of business and correspondence, one was in charge of cleaning and washing. The young man who took all our wash to the laundry one day was accosted by a woman who exclaimed, "For a young man, you have a very large family!"

Arriving at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill we expected to park our bus in an area reserved for families. The authorities, on hearing that we were not married, refused to admit us, saying that we would be housed in the men's and women's dormitories. We said this would be impossible. We had to stay together to conduct our business and professional work. Finally a higher authority was sent out to investigate. After looking us over and hearing our plea, he told us we could stay, saying, "Why, to separate you would be like breaking up a family!"

We had very little money. Our sponsors paid us well but our number of engagements was limited and living expenses for five people for six months was costly. Every group member was provided with food and shelter during the entire time, plus fifty dollars a month for personal needs. We laughed about the fifty dollars because, even at that time, it could not buy much, but nobody complained. We

were in it all together, loving our work, believing that we had a mission and willing to suffer for it.

A New Direction in Dance

Our performances were a new departure in dance not only because they were improvised but because they presented the art of body movement in a new way. We created dances emphasizing force patterns of movement which were characterized by dramatic action, dances which stressed space patterns and visual design, dances stressing time patterns in which we accompanied ourselves with vocal or instrumental sound. We had brought with us whatever instruments we needed including a beautiful old German lute which had to be carried throughout the entire trip in the lap of the dancer who danced with it. We improvised in relation to whatever environment we found ourselves. In a gymnasium we might dance with some piece of athletic equipment or shape our movements in relation to the lines on the floor. If there was nothing else available we would search for a ladder or chairs or something else to use as a setting. We always had the spectators sit in a circle and sometimes we encouraged them to move. I remember once how an audience helped shape one of our dances. Thinking it was over, they clapped enthusiastically so, although we had intended to continue, we managed to bring the dance to a conclusion.

When we started out on our tour we expected our audiences to enjoy our improvising but we were a little afraid that they might criticize us for lack of conventional dance technique. "Dance technique" usually means skilled use of the body in executing prescribed movements. To our surprise a comment which we often heard was, "You have such excellent technique!" I believe this meant that our unity of feeling and form, unity of individual and group expression, unity of dancers and environment, impressed the spectator as "technique." We like to call it "craftsmanship" in the art of body movement.

Our teaching was so warmly welcomed that one of our sponsors, a college dance teacher, told us when we left that we had done more harm than good by awakening an enthusiasm for a kind of dance which she could not continue. It was this that made me realize that when the tour was over the next step in my work would be to prepare written material for teachers.

In Jacksonville Beach, Florida, we were confronted with an unusual kind of segregation. A trailer park where we wanted to stay did not want us because

we were a bus. The manager tried to be tactful about it, saying that he himself had nothing against buses but he was afraid that people in trailers might not want a bus for a neighbor. We felt discriminated against and parked our Pachyderm on a bluff by the beach where the winds off the Atlantic Ocean rocked it like a ship at sea, threatening to blow away the roof tents with their occupants. Living on the beach had its advantages. Tired though we were, in our free time we created new experiences for ourselves by dancing on the sand with the wind, sun and water.

Film Making and End of Tour

We stayed in Jacksonville Beach for three weeks giving only one performance because it was Christmas and we had no other engagements. Realizing that when the tour was over the group would be disbanded I decided to make a film. We found a film maker and an empty store which could be used as a studio although it was so small that we had almost no room in which to move. It was to be a sound film in color and every foot of it was so expensive that we had to plan our improvisations carefully, practicing them until they became almost



fixed. The film maker wanted to make the picture first, then add the sound, but I said no, the sound was a part of the movement and had to be recorded at the same time. This was done but, when we returned home and started to edit the film, we found that the sound and movement were not synchronized. The tour group had been disbanded so I gathered together a group of students whom I trained to add sound to the picture. Except for the lute music and some singing which the tour dancer who had created them was able to recreate, all the sound including sounds of breath, voice, hands and feet, was dubbed in by dancers other than those who had created them.

The difficulties of the tour included a bus breakdown in Kentucky (which almost cost us our engagement at Southern Illinois University) and near nervous breakdowns of the bus occupants toward the end of the trip, but we arrived home safely, leaving behind a trail of converts to dance as free creative movement expression. Three of the group members went on to college dance teaching positions and one stayed with me to edit the film.

Between Past and Future

It was a time for making decisions about the future. I was convinced that people everywhere were hungry for free expression in dance, that there was a growing need for teachers, and that I should have a year-around school. I was alone. My husband had been very sick and had died before the tour began. I

decided to sell my New Hampshire home and farm school, make Boston my headquarters long enough to publish some written material and get the film into production, then head west in search of a permanent location.

The writing and film work took longer than I had expected and it was six years before I was ready to leave. In the meantime, in addition to finishing four books and five short films, I taught dance classes in a rented studio, provided the city with a course for teachers, acquired some valuable experience in a mental hospital, and worked intensively at a rehabilitation center for newly blinded adults. I had always wanted to work with the blind to demonstrate conclusively that dance is not a visual but a motor art. I did not accomplish very much with my blind groups but I learned a lot about how to work with people whose movement in relation to spatial environment is severely limited.

Heading West

I am a country girl from Illinois who never belonged in the big cities of the East. Feeling myself to be on a cultural frontier, I decided that I should be on a geographical frontier where I could grow and help others grow in a healthful artistic direction. Arizona was attractive to me because it is desert. To me the desert has always meant emptiness and stillness conducive to contemplation and creativity. I closed up all my eastern activities and, alone in my Ford car, started out for the West.





THE DESERT

Arizona

A young architect once told me that he had visited Arizona to see if he wanted to settle there and that he had decided against it because the desert made him feel so small. That is why I like it. In the desert there is space to move and feel and think and be yourself. The fact that a human being's work cannot compete with the grandeur of nature makes one humble, conscious of a creative force greater than one's own.

To create has always meant to me tuning in to the ultimate beauty within and around us which is waiting to be revealed. Even as a child, when I would find myself initiating some compelling rhythmic form in sound or movement, I would wonder where it came from, knowing that it had not come from me. This mystery is the most meaningful dimension of my work. I feel myself to be the instrument, never the creator, of rhythmic realities. I try to teach my students to be good instruments, having the openness and courage to let natural truth and beauty reveal itself in the movements of their dancing.

I had never been farther west than the Mississippi River and my first impression of New Mexico and Arizona made me think that I was on another planet. The landscape had nothing in common with anything I had ever known. It seems to be a human weakness that, when confronted with an unfamiliar situation, we do not see what is there but only what is not there. I saw no trees, no houses, no streets, no people, no water, only a great emptiness with earth-colored rocks and sparse, low gray-green vegetation. The sky was very blue and there was an occasional dusky jackrabbit or roadrunner, but it was a vast arid land and I wondered what I was doing there.

Nevertheless, I kept going. After a long, slow, gradual ascent, I came into Flagstaff on a high plateau covered with ponderosa pine at the foot of a snow-covered mountain peak sacred to the Indians. Here I felt more at home and when, heading south, I dropped suddenly three thousand feet into Oak Creek Canyon and the copper cliffs of Sedona, I decided that Arizona was for me.

I needed assurance that I could find work here so, with reckless abandon, I walked into Arizona State Teachers College in Flagstaff (it has since become

Northern Arizona University) and boldly asked them if they would not like to have me offer a summer workshop in creative dance. They had never heard of creative dance or thought of such a thing, but I am a good salesman and Arizona was wide open territory. They engaged me to teach a two-week summer workshop.

First Activities in a New Land

At the same time I met quite by accident the head of the Visual Art Department of Arizona State University in Tempe. He happened to be looking for someone to teach dance at his five-week summer school in Sedona. Sometimes I marvel at my good fortune. These two engagements were just what I needed to enable me to put down roots in Arizona.

A few anecdotes will show the kind of problems I face in teaching an unconventional kind of dance.

Participants in my Flagstaff workshop were college students, townspeople and summer visitors. The study program concluded with a public demonstration in which all of my students took part. When we assembled in the gymnasium half an hour before the program was to begin I was horrified to see that one young woman had completely altered her appearance. With her hair piled high on top of her head and her face covered with exotic make-up, she was unrecognizable. We delayed the start of the program so that she could go home and restore her natural beauty. I had apparently not made it clear that our performances require no such special effects.

In Sedona a local dance teacher had registered for my workshop, assuming that I, coming from the East, would bring to the West *New York Modern Dance*. During our first weekly demonstration it was her lot to dance with a partner who was somewhat handicapped and needed to be led. Their dance was beautiful in its expression of a true feeling of leading and following. Afterward I told the teacher so, and I praised her for the help she had given her partner. She said, "I am not here to help anyone else. I want help myself." She withdrew from the course. I was sorry because it seemed to me that both as a dancer and as a teacher she would have been greatly helped by just this kind of movement experience.

The head of the art school, of which my Sedona workshop was a part, suggested that the dancers give their final demonstration in the hall where the art students' paintings were exhibited. It was a good idea. My students improvised dances in relation to the paintings, creating expressive visual designs in movement. The spectators' favorite was

a dance relating to a painting of the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon does not need a painting and a painting does not need a dance but when all three are united in feeling and form, it can be a meaningful experience.

I taught the two workshops in northern Arizona without having any idea where I would locate my school. When they were over I went south to explore Phoenix and Tucson. For myself I would have liked to be in the country but my work is with people and the city is where people are. Flagstaff was too small to support a dance school like mine. Phoenix was to me unattractively large. I decided to settle in Tucson.

Tucson

Tucson is in southern Arizona, only sixty miles from the Mexican border. It was then a very small city with the desert permeating all aspects of life. It was cosmopolitan in nature because its warm, dry climate, pure air and altitude had made it internationally known as a health resort. Its residents included Indians, Mexicans and many artists who had chosen it for its relaxed, natural way of life. I immediately felt at home there and knew that I was in the right place.

A Warm Welcome

To my pleasant surprise I was welcomed in Tucson by two people who were already using my books, a dance teacher and the director of a private school for young children. They both gave me opportunity to teach for them. So did the Tucson Art Center and the Workshop Center for the Arts.

Looking for a Home

I looked everywhere for a building which I could transform into a dance studio but I found nothing suitable, so I decided to build my own. I bought a piece of desert on the edge of the city and, because the Frank Lloyd Wright Group's western headquarters was not far away, I visited them to discuss my plans for a dance studio. They were extremely enthusiastic about working with a dancer and it was decided that one of their members, John H. Howe, would be the architect.

I needed a circular hardwood dance floor with steps around the perimeter to be used either by dancers or by spectators, and I needed an area for outdoor dancing. There were other requirements but these two were the basics which determined the design of the building.

In Spite of Difficulties — a Start

Then came the difficulties. It was such an unusual building that no bank wanted to lend me the money

and no builder wanted to build it. Finally one bank relented and one builder was convinced by his son, who was a musician, that my school would be a good thing for Tucson. So the building was built of earth-colored concrete blocks with a turquoise roof, in a circular shape which caused passers-by to ask, as they had asked of our bus, *"What is it?"* But Arizona is a territory where you can do as you please. No one cares as long as you are independent and know what you are doing. In the Fall of 1963 I opened the Tucson Creative Dance Center.

On the studio property was a very small, very old house which I used as a residence. While the studio was being constructed I taught classes there in an empty fifteen-by-twenty foot room. It is amazing what people can do under the most unfavorable circumstances if there is no alternative. In this almost impossibly limited space, as many as eight adult students learned to move freely, sometimes in couples or as a group, sometimes carrying instruments or other objects. When the studio was finished and ready for use, some of them said, "We'd rather stay here. It's so cozy."

Building the Study Program

The Tucson Creative Dance Center was a place for the study and practice of dance as free creative art

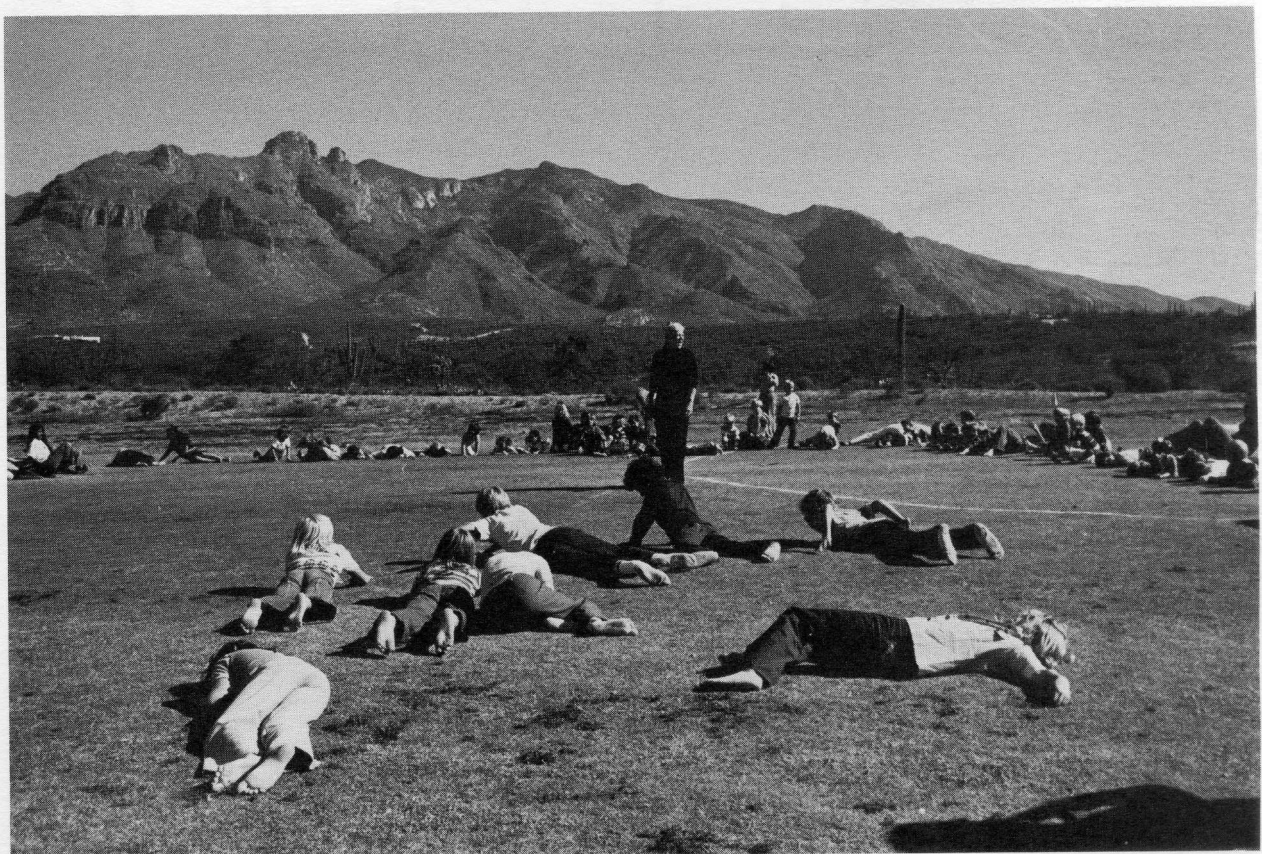
activity. Everyone was welcome to our recreational classes which were offered during the fall, winter and spring months. During the summer I conducted intensive courses for serious students and teachers, many of whom came from other states, some from other countries.

"You are just a Piano"

In order to awaken interest and understanding of the work we were doing, I gave frequent demonstrations by children or adults. Children have no difficulty understanding the meaning of pure movement expression. One day, in preparation for a demonstration, I was explaining to a group of young children that the visitors were not coming to see them but to receive a dance experience which we were going to give them. I said, "You are an instrument for making dance, just as a piano is an instrument for making music." They understood. When one of them asked if I were going to tell their names, I said, "No." Another child said, "Of course not. You are just a piano."

Children

Children are unpredictable. They loved a dance which we called the Talk Around in which one after another says whatever he or she wants, expressing in movement the feeling of what he or she is saying.





During one of our demonstrations the children did not want to stop this dance, so they went on and on until I had to say that it was enough. In another demonstration they were doing a "Newspaper Dance" in which everyone had a piece of newspaper and took a turn leading the group in creating movements and sounds. To my consternation, the first child led the others in tearing the newspaper to bits, creating interesting movements and sounds but leaving no newspaper with which to continue the dance. Undismayed the second child led the group in picking-up movements, dancing all the time, until the newspaper was all picked up and everyone had a handful of pieces. Led by the third child, the group danced with the pieces, rolling them into balls and throwing them up in the air. So the dance went on uninterruptedly with the creation of ever new movement experiences.

I once asked a group of young children, who were with me for the first time, if they knew what it means to create. A little boy gave me the best definition I have ever heard. "It means to make up something all by yourself." How many adults are so knowledgeable? One of my definitions, which means exactly the same thing, is that to create means to make something out of nothing — except yourself.

An annual event which came to be known as a creative dance "Free for All" was held every spring on our dance lawn. All friends of the studio were invited, and whole families took part including babies in the arms of father or mother. I would lead the group, numbering more than a hundred, in a variety of movement experiences which all ages could enjoy. The only requirement for participants was that they leave all their learned dance movements at home and be ready to create something new out of themselves. Among the themes which I sometimes gave them were such non-human movements as exploding, melting or bubbling. I will never forget a tiny child continuing to bubble persistently in sound and movement right at my feet looking up at me ecstatically, while I tried in vain to introduce the next theme!

"To see America Dancing"

I began to feel that if we were to "see America dancing" it would have to begin in the home and in the school. It seemed to me artificial to take a child to a dance school for one hour a week so, when a mother would telephone to register her child, I would sometimes say, "Why don't you join one of my adult classes? I would rather teach the parent than the child."

Through the University of Arizona I taught teacher-training courses with the aim of introducing creative

dance in the city schools. Many teachers loved the work but not all had the courage to teach it. I have never been able to teach a "methods course." For me, introducing teachers to the art of body movement is like introducing them to any other art. They must do it themselves and they must have sufficient time to awaken and develop their own creative movement resources. Creative dance requires creative teaching. It is not easy. Only those who love it very much will want to take the time to develop themselves as teachers.

Improvisation

My work began to mature. I had learned that skill in the use of the body as instrument of expression can grow out of systematically pursued improvisational studies. Themes for improvisation may be given according to the needs of the students. If they are heavy on their feet, they should improvise on the theme of lightness. If they are always up in the air, let them improvise close to the ground. Perhaps their head movements are limited or their hands inexpressive, then they should improvise with that part of the body only. If their movements are too tight, let them try to express feelings of looseness. If they are too loose, they should make movements which are tight. Basic body movements such as stretching, bending, twisting, turning, swinging, leg lifting, knee bending, jumping, falling, and so on, are more fruitful artistically if practiced on the basis of movement forms discovered in improvisation than if limited to prescribed exercises. This kind of study requires interest on the part of the student. It is the teacher's job to awaken this interest.

Group Body

As my student groups grew larger I found myself becoming more and more involved in large group improvisation. I began to use the word "group body" and to make a distinction between individual body movement and group body movement. An individual body can stretch, bend, twist, etc. A group body can scatter or divide into parts. It can form circles or lines or clumps. Its members can make the same movement or different movements, simultaneously or at different times. It can proceed with or without a leader. Every member of an improvising group body is irreplaceable because his or her contribution is unique, but no one is indispensable because the group movement is created by the members who are taking part.

Principles of creative group movement began to absorb me and I decided that I must explore them with an advanced group. I formed a professional dance company of twenty men and women with whom I worked intensively for four months. The group learned to improvise freely for an hour or

more without any predetermined theme, discovering continuously while they danced new forms of movement expression.

Praise and Criticism

We gave performances at our studio and out of town. This was a language which not everyone was prepared to understand. It was a new kind of dancing. In Tucson a leading modern dancer criticized it for being "too unusual." In Sedona half of the audience walked out, although in San Diego we received a standing ovation. Perhaps those who understood us best were the one hundred and fifty teen-agers at Ft. Apache in a resident school for Indian young people from many different tribes. We were told that they had never sat so quietly for so long. The greatest compliment I ever received came from a young Apache boy who, with shining black eyes, said to me, "I like your kind of dancing!"

Dancers who focus their attention on theatrical techniques and audience appeal may find this approach to dance primitive. I believe that it is primitive in the sense of primary, basic, radical (which means "of the roots"). Perhaps this is why anthropologists show an interest in it, and why babies sometimes escape from their parents and crawl into the performance area to do what we are doing.

Every year for several years I gathered together a professional dance company, sometimes large and sometimes small, with which I worked intensively for four winter months, giving programs in and out of Tucson. Among our Tucson engagements was a series of performances in a city park, relating our movements to the surroundings which included people sitting on benches eating lunch. Another was a program at the Museum of Art in which the group improvised up and down the ramps of the new building, creating silent visual designs in movement. We danced on the nearby Papago Reservation, and we gave many performances in our own studio.

The Sound of Movement

In a studio performance called "The Sound of Movement," five dances were improvised by a company of five women and two men. The dancers produced all their own sounds while dancing, creating a perfect unity of sound and movement. In the first dance, they used sounds of breath, voice, hands and feet, even making creative use of the sound of bodies falling to the floor. In the second dance, each dancer carried and played a drum, while their movements expressed many of the feelings which drum music can evoke. In the third dance, gongs and cymbals were softly passive and

contemplative in feeling until they were made to crash loudly, filling the air with almost overwhelming vibrations. In the fourth dance, each dancer carried a pair of shakers, creating lively dry sounds in vivid contrast to the ringing of gongs and cymbals. In the fifth and last dance, each dancer carried a different kind of instrument, finding opportunity at some time during the group improvisation to feature the unique sound of his or her instrument by dancing alone while the others were still. Instruments used in this dance were a drum, bells, claves, strings, a rasp, a slide whistle and an aluminum plate (the same that had been exhibited in "Sounds from Outer Space.") This program was the most difficult of all our improvised group performances, but it was exquisite and it was my favorite.

Money

My dance school has been supported by teaching, performing, the sale of books and videotapes, film rentals and sales, and by private donations. It was finally recognized by the United States government as a non-profit organization and granted tax exemption. For two years we received money from the Tucson Commission of the Arts and Culture, and from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, to give performances, teachers' workshops, and classes for children in the public schools. One year we were engaged by Pima County to provide creative dance classes for teachers and children in eighteen county schools.

Working for Peace

I travel a good deal, giving workshops all over the United States and in other countries. I have spent considerable time in Costa Rica, a truly democratic little country able to understand my democratic approach to dance. It was like a benediction to me when, as I said goodbye to my colleagues at the Escuela Ciencias del Deporte, one of them spoke for the group saying, "We understand what you are doing. You are working for peace."

I have taught in Canada, Switzerland, West Germany, Austria and Italy, as well as in Central America, and I am frequently asked, "Do the people in these different countries react differently to your work?" No, they do not. People do not differ in their initial timidity toward free movement expression or in their joy of discovering that they too can create. Movement is the universal language of feeling. Cultural differences are as superficial as the clothes we wear. Underneath, human needs are the same, and creative art activity is one of them.

The only difference in my teaching in different countries is the language and relation to the environment. I do not ask Swiss students to ex-



press the feeling of a cactus, and I do not ask Costa Ricans to dance a snow storm. In my desert studio in Tucson I have never seen a satisfying group expression of ocean waves but, when I was recently giving a workshop in Boston, a group of over one

hundred students, who had never done this kind of dancing before, improvised a stunning dance on this theme.

A Desert Flower

There has always been misunderstanding of my work. It is neither show business nor therapy. Then "*What is it?*" Its friends call it "Improvisation," but for me improvisation is only a means to an end. The substance of my work is a free approach to dance as a creative art activity. Improvisation is the best way I know of liberating and cultivating the unique dance artist which is in everyone.

I have enemies as well as friends. My unconcern for theatrical techniques in the interest of pure movement expression, and my relegation of the spectator to a subordinate role, have always been and continue to be offensive to more conventional dancers. My presentations of large group dance improvisation have been criticized as "anonymous" — which means, I suppose, that there is no choreographer, no premiere danseuse and no names on printed programs. Opposition has never deterred me from continuing on the path of seeking ever bet-





ter ways of making authentic dance experience available to anyone who wants it. I have worked hard with great joy through good and bad times. There are, of course, many people who find that this kind of dancing is just what they are looking for.

I like to compare my work to a desert plant which can survive long periods of aridity ready to burst into bloom when the rains come, and I like to compare our dance improvisations to the flower of the

night-blooming cereus, which appears unexpectedly and lives for only a few hours, uniquely beautiful whether or not anyone sees it.

If dance as a creative art activity is to be made available to anyone who wants it, it must be understood. The rest of this book attempts to analyze basic elements of dance and to present creative movement studies for practice by individuals and groups.

PART 2

PURE DANCE

There are many different kinds of dance but at their source within us they are one. They all exist for the purpose of filling a basic human need, the need to create forms of body movement which are satisfying. Some kinds of dance serve additional needs such as social pastime, physical education, theatrical entertainment, therapy. Pure dance, the art of body movement, serves no other purpose than to provide joy in the act of creating satisfying movement forms.

To create means to make something yourself in your own way, expressing your own unique insights, feelings, thoughts. It means making something new because you are new. There never has been, and never will be, anyone exactly like you. One person may create movement forms for another to dance but, unless the dancer can become as much involved in the movement expression as if he (she) had created the forms himself (herself), the experience is not wholly creative.

Pure dance is an activity, primarily something to do and only secondarily something to watch others do. Spectators can share in the dancer's experience if they understand the language of movement. This language is natural to children and to adults who have not become too inhibited to use it. Like other forms of expression, it can be practiced as a creative art.

What is art? Art means creating something beautiful. What is beauty? Beauty is order, wholeness, truth, expression of an inner vision of perfection which all of us have but which none of us can achieve in our daily life activities. The attempt to create perfection in art is not an escape from the realities of daily life but a dimension of experience without which human life is incomplete. We all have a need for creative art activity. There is something of the artist in everyone.

In my studio, in order to liberate the dance artist which is in all of us, we each improvise our own body movements. Improvisation is the most accessible and freest of all dance experiences. It means making up the movements of the dance while you are dancing. Anyone can do it, because we adjust our movements to our individual capabilities. At the same time it is the greatest challenge for even the

most experienced dancer because, while improvising, we use all available skill in both the creation and execution of meaningful movement forms. With one or two exceptions, all the studies in this book are intended for improvisation.

Instead of practicing learned exercises, we practice improvisation. Every movement study can be improvised over and over again. It will never take the same form twice because each time we do it we grow. During the first attempt we hardly know what we are doing so it cannot possibly be a completely satisfying dance experience but with each repetition our craftsmanship develops. By craftsmanship I mean the skilled use of the body as instrument of expression and movement as expressive material. Beginning with emphasis on freedom, we proceed to awareness and control. There is no limit to the possibilities of developing craftsmanship through improvisation.

A movement is dance when our feeling for the form dominates our experience. For example, our walk to the store can become dance if we forget that we are going to buy a loaf of bread and become wholly involved in the form of the walk: the regular beat of our step, the forward direction, the spring in the knees and swing of the arms. Dance is relative to the person having the experience. My walk may not be dance for me but it may be dance for someone watching me.

Movement feeling begins in the muscles where the kinesthetic sense provides us with sensations. These sensations are referred to the nervous system as a whole, affecting not only the muscles but all the organs of the body. This activates the emotions and, finally, the mind. When the whole person, including body, emotions and mind, is involved in a movement, we can experience "movement feeling." This feeling cannot be named. It is not specific like fear, hunger, pain, rage. It can be identified only by its qualities. For example, a dance called "Slow Dance" can express all the emotions associated with slowness without being limited to any single one. It is an abstraction. Abstract form is universal. Different people have different daily life experiences of slowness, but all can understand the meaning of "slow."

In free dance improvisation, the form is organic, growing out of itself like any living thing and taking shape according to inner and outer needs. The form of a tree grows out of itself in accord with the nature of the tree and the forces acting upon it. The form of a free dance improvisation takes shape according to the inner needs of the dancer in relation to outer circumstances.



Let us take a few minutes now to study organic dance form. This introduction will be predominantly analytical but, once understood, the principles can be applied to all dance improvisation.

Standing or lying, as completely relaxed as possible, remain quiet for a moment, sensing in your muscles the pregnancy of the pause out of which a movement will be born. Now create, with your whole body, a single movement, any movement at all. When your movement is finished, remain quiet for a moment in the final position. Then let another movement grow out of the first. Do not plan it in your mind. Let your muscles and your movement feeling tell you what to do. Every single natural body movement has a life of its own, growing out of the preceding one and giving birth to another. At the beginning and at the end of the movement there is a "creative pause" which must be felt if the life of the movement is to be maintained. Continue to make one movement at a time, letting each one end in a creative pause. In this study we exaggerate the duration of the pause. In most body movements, it is imperceptibly short.

In our study of dance, our progression is from moving (body) to feeling (emotions) to thinking (mind). The very first experience we can offer, either to children or adults, is this:

- make stretching movements (moving) . . .
- feel your movements (feeling) . . .
- find different ways of stretching (thinking) . . .

The meaning of pure dance is movement feeling. It cannot be put into words. It must be sensed. The more the whole person is involved in the movement experience, the more meaningful is the expression. This is why children's dancing is so satisfying. The whole child is expressed in the movement. As adults we must try to recapture the wholeness of childhood in our dance expression.

The language of movement is the same for children and adults. In teaching different age groups the only difference is the verbal explanation. Any movement theme is suitable for children if it is explained in words which they can understand. A child's understanding of the meaning of movement is sometimes more profound than that of an adult, although his (her) understanding of words may be limited. I regret that in my teaching I must use many words, but it is the only way I know of explaining movement themes. Sometimes a student who has not understood my verbal explanation (or who is seeking an escape from independent creative activity) says to me, "Show us how to do it." I say, "No" because the students would then imitate me, and imitation is not the best way to inspire an individual solution to a creative problem. There is nothing for me to do but to try to find better words to evoke the feeling which I am trying to describe.

A movement theme is a movement idea. The words "theme" and "idea" are usually associated with intellectual activity, but we use them to identify a kind

of sensory experience. People who observe my teaching sometimes say, "Don't you ever use themes?" They are thinking of literary or dramatic themes. Ours are pure movement themes. Every study in this book presents one or more movement themes to be worked on in any number of different ways.

Our themes are presented in the form of movement problems to be solved in different ways by individuals or groups. I am sometimes asked, "What do you mean by a movement problem?" The most primary one I can give you is this: See if you can move your head (it is surprising how difficult this problem is for many intellectually oriented adults). All solutions to a movement problem are acceptable if the problem has been understood and a sincere effort made. We do not evaluate comparatively the solutions of different individuals who are on the same level of experience, because each is uniquely interesting if it is an honest expression of true feeling.

There is however, one comparison which can and should be made. The solution of a movement problem by an experienced dancer or group should be riper than that of an inexperienced one. Ripeness in pure dance means total involvement in the movement expression, free flow of feeling, ease in hand-

ing the body-instrument, control of the form, awareness of all the elements of dance. These attributes can only be developed through practice. Ripening in any art takes time. Nevertheless, just as the root of a tree, an unfurled leaf, the bud of a flower are beautiful, so are the movements of a beginner's dance.

How do we find a teacher to show us the way? We may not be able to find one, so we must not be dependent on a teacher. The studies in this book are intended to open doors for anyone who wants to dance freely and help others develop their own free expression. Do not feel confined to the themes which I offer. Anything at all can be used as a theme for dance. Follow your feeling. Have self-confidence. Don't be afraid. It is a time for new beginnings. We cannot wait for a leader. There may be no one to follow. Perhaps the best way to grow is to get together in groups and work cooperatively with the common goal of freely developing our creative powers. On the next pages you will find many avenues to explore. Try them all because they are interrelated and complement one another.

I urge you to work not only on the studies which attract you but also on those which seem difficult. It is a rhythmic principle that opposites create whole-



ness (movement and no movement, sound and silence, activity and rest, etc.). Toward the end of a course I sometimes give my students the problem of selecting two opposite movement qualities, one which is easy for them and one which is hard. They are to work on both of these themes, then show me what they have accomplished. Without exception, the work on the difficulty quality produces far more satisfying results than the work on the quality which is easy. I do not know why this is true, but perhaps the easy path permits superficiality whereas the difficult path forces us into depth.

THE INSTRUMENT OF DANCE

When we dance we use our bodies to create movements just as a musician uses a piano or some other instrument to create sounds. The body is the instrument of dance, and we must find out what it can do.

Basic Body Movements

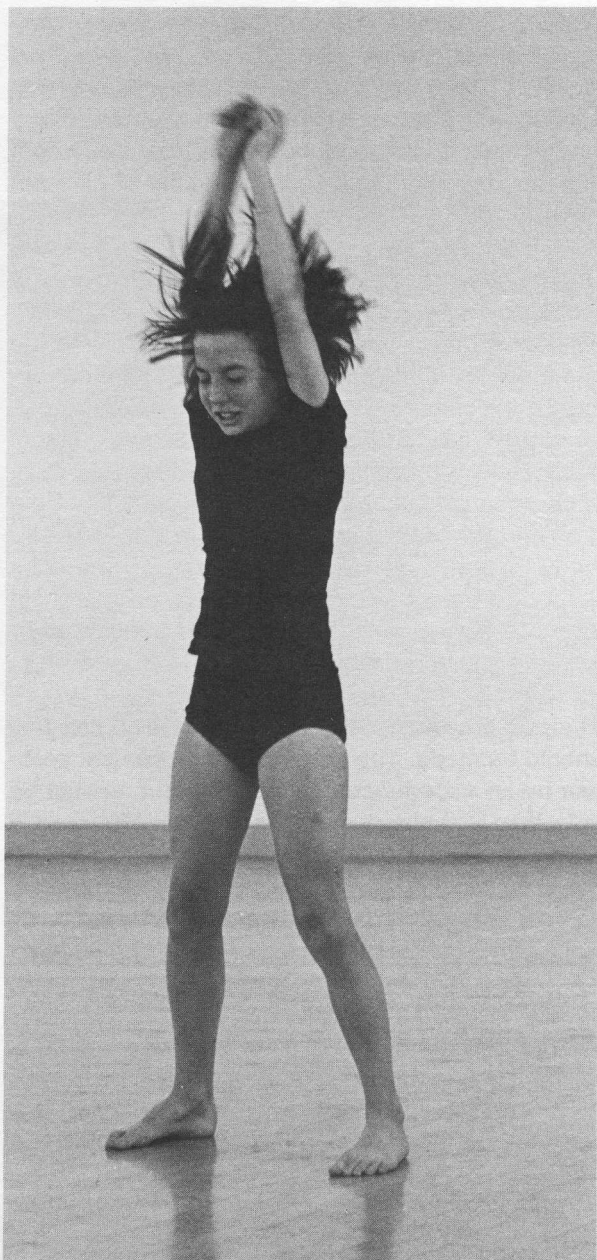
No two bodies are exactly alike and no two move in exactly the same way, but there are certain kinds of movement which are natural to all human beings and each has its own special kind of feeling. Let us explore some of these now, each of us in our own way.

Let's make *stretching* movements . . . movements that have the feeling of stretching . . . just as we do when we get up in the morning or before we go to bed at night . . . use your whole body . . . stretch in as many different ways as you can . . . you may stand or sit or lie . . . close your eyes if you are lying or sitting. It is always best to close the eyes when you are trying to awaken feeling in the muscles (although it may interfere with balance when you are standing).

A stretched muscle wants to relax so, after stretching, we should make some *relaxing* movements. We can drop and flop our arms, our trunk and head, and our legs one at a time if we are standing, or both together if we are lying on the floor.

Other movements which all human beings can make include *bending, twisting, springing, swinging, turning, jumping, falling, crawling, rolling, walking, running, skipping, galloping, hopping, leaping*. These can be done in any number of ways, if we experiment freely while following our feelings.

Sometimes we discover a particularly interesting form, for example: a strange new kind of walk. If we



are in a group we can share this with the others, showing them how to do it with us. Sometimes there is a sound inherent in the movement, such as the exhaled breath or the sound of the feet on the floor. This can be stressed as part of the movement, intensifying the feeling and helping unify the group.

All basic body movements can be adapted in some way to people of all ages. For the child, movement is the native language and children understand better than adults when you say "Make movements that have the feeling of stretching." Those who teach this free approach to movement and dance must be free themselves to find ways of liberating others. The studies in this book are intended only to indicate the direction and to encourage teachers,

as well as students, to follow their feelings as I have always done in finding materials and methods which meet the needs of all. No two individuals and no two groups are alike so, when I am asked by some young person how to teach a class, I can only say "Try to feel what your students need and find a way of giving it to them." It is my students who have taught me all that I know about how to teach a dance class.

Separate Body Parts

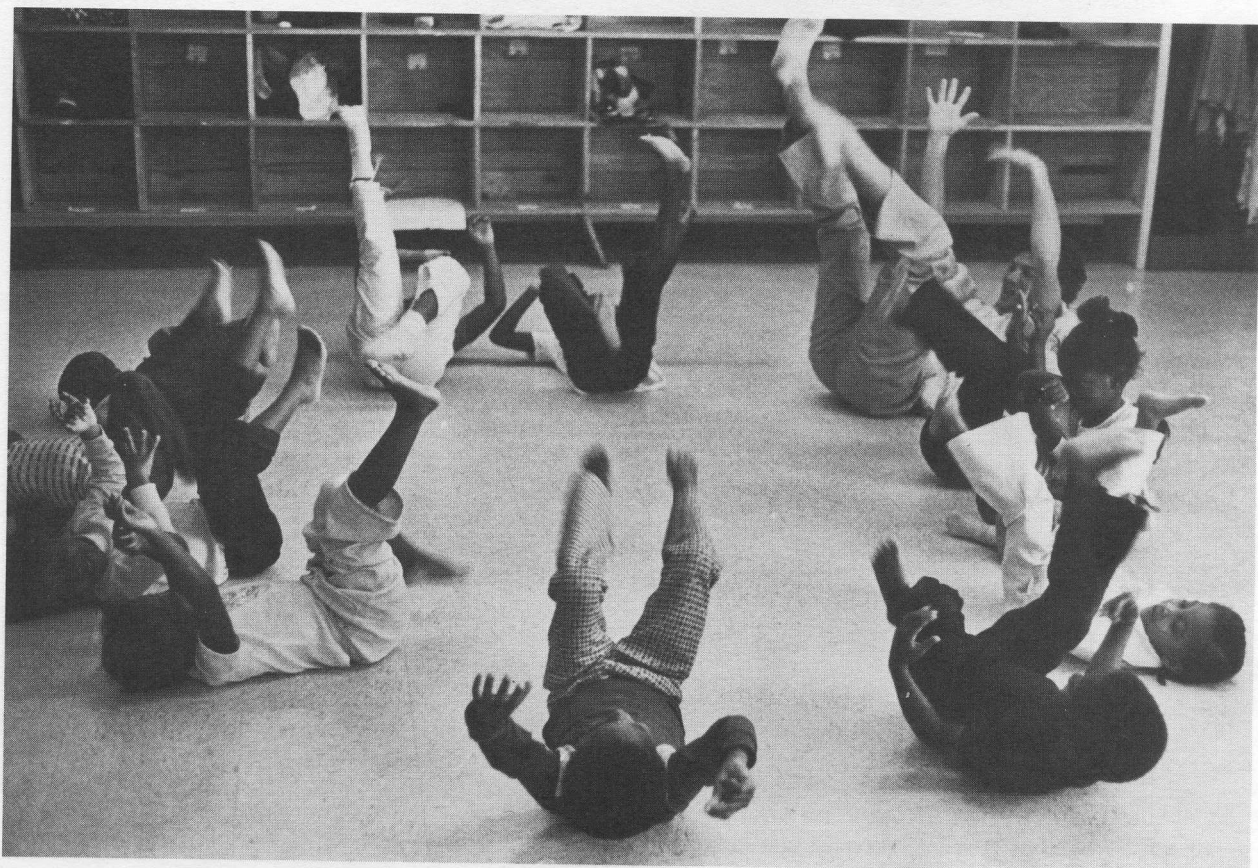
A first experience in discovering how one's body can move might come in moving one part at a time. Children might be asked "Can you move your head? . . . see how your head can move . . . move it in different ways . . . can you move your head with closed eyes? . . . make movements that feel good . . . it's a head dance . . . who would like to show us a head movement? . . . let's all make the movement together . . ."

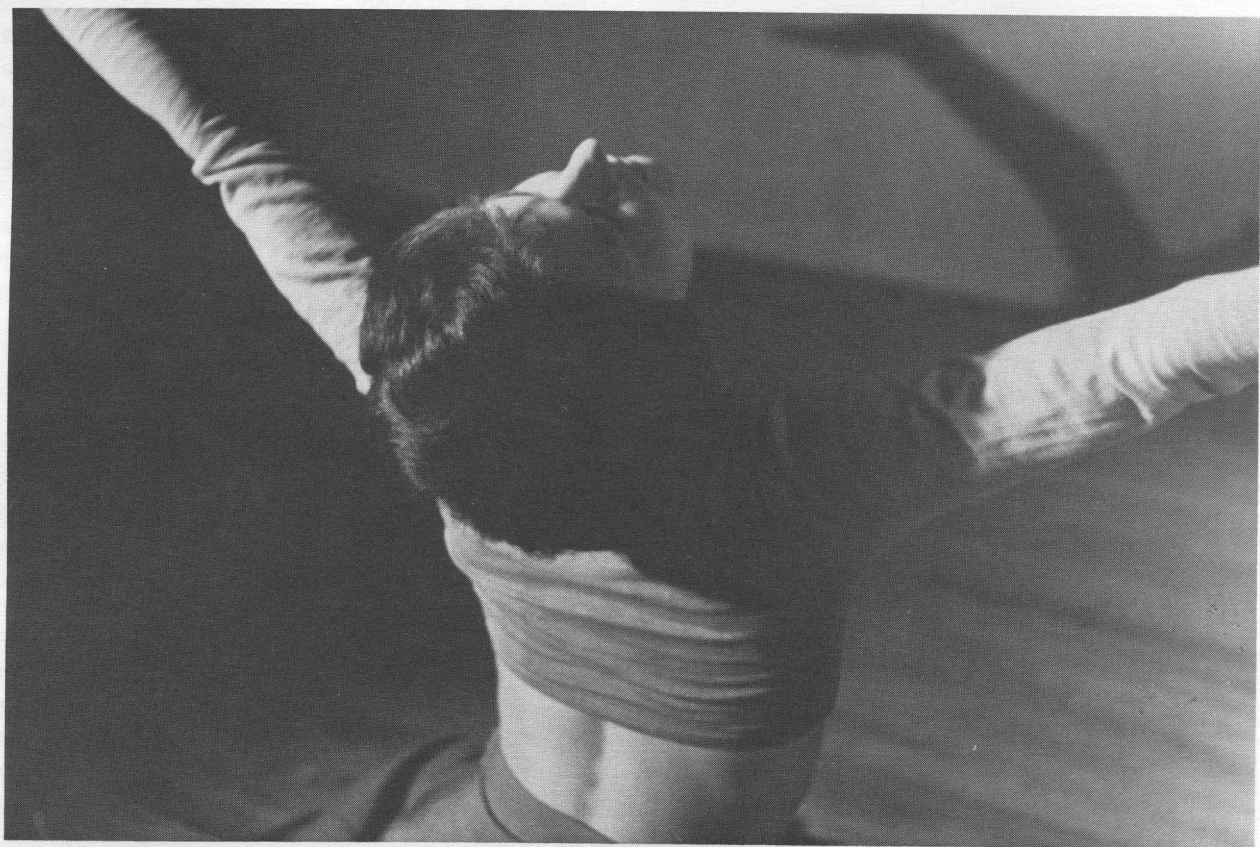
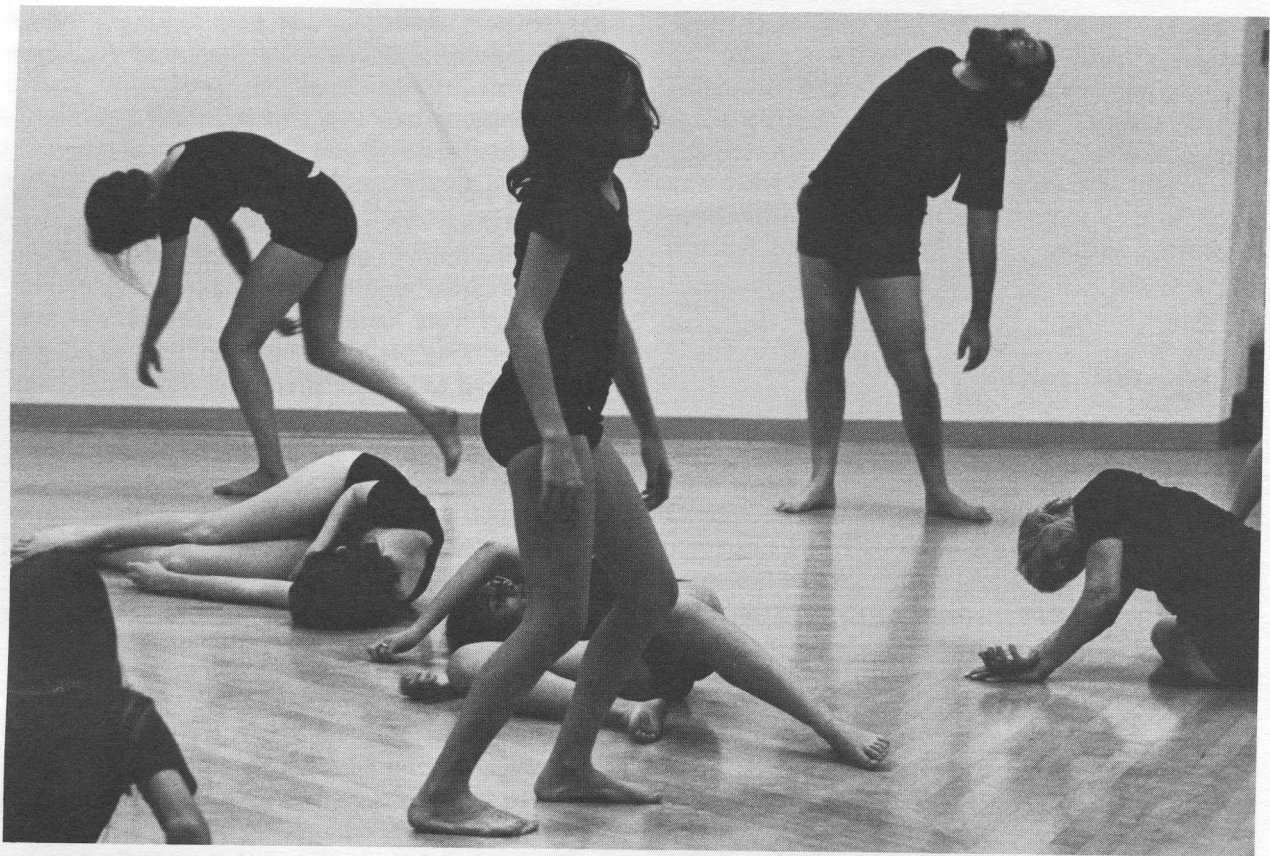
Other parts of the body can be moved separately: shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, toes, feet, legs, trunk, etc. Or in combination: elbows and knees; arms and legs; head, hands and feet; etc.

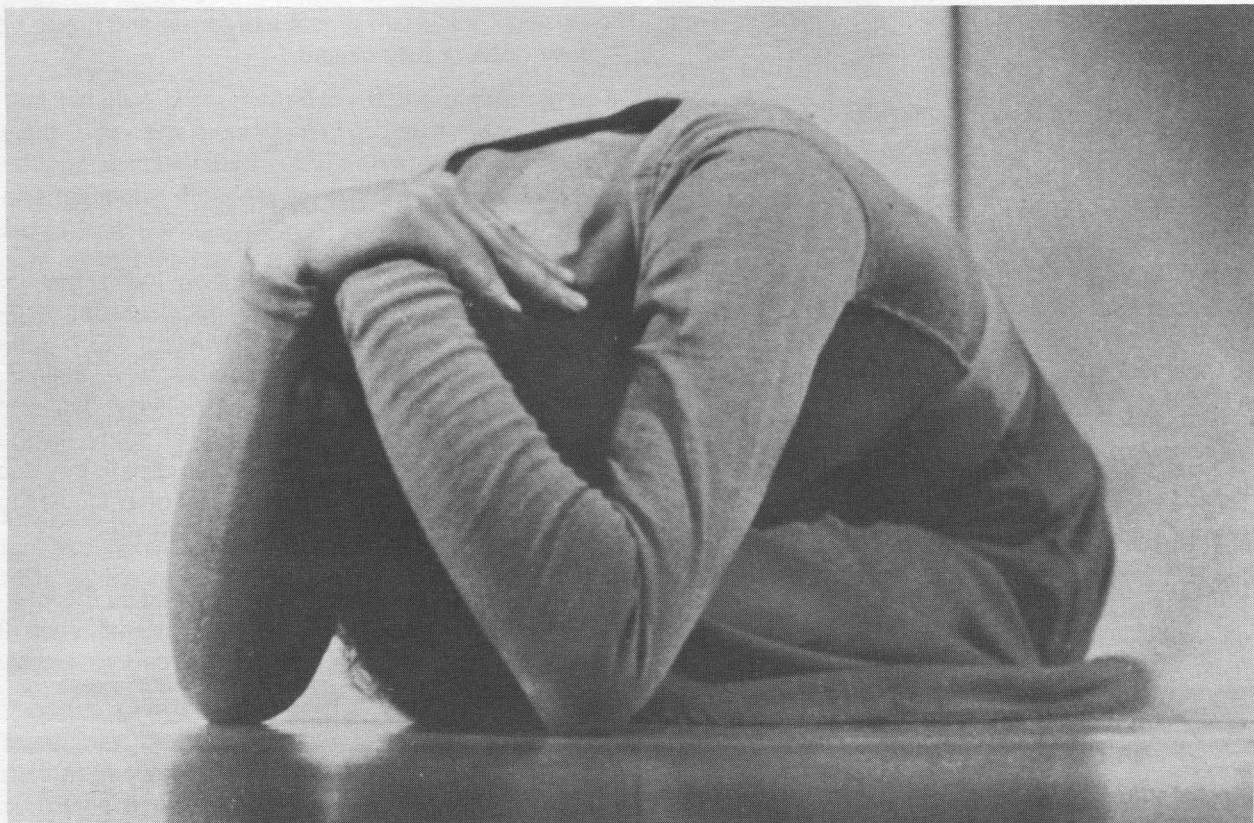
Moving separate parts of the body is just as important for adults as it is for children. Both children and adults can learn to become wholly involved in creat-

ing movements for only one part, making a "head dance," a "hand dance" or a "dance for legs and feet," etc.

A group study using separate body parts might be called Group Touch Dance. Everyone moves around the room freely, not too fast. Whenever you pass someone, you touch that person lightly with your head, your hand, a foot, a knee, an elbow or any other body part. The important thing is not just to touch but to find some unusual way of touching. For example, you might touch someone's shoulder with your elbow, someone's back with your head, someone's knee with your foot. This is not a study to develop tactile sensation. Its purpose is to develop feeling for the movement of your own body in relation to the body movement of others. This is a dance for adults or for a mixed group of adults and children. When little children are included, it might be better to use only the hand for touching, because choosing which part to use might be overwhelming. It is beautiful to see a little one moving tentatively among adults, trustfully reaching out a hand to touch someone who may be a complete stranger, and it is beautiful to see an adult gently putting a hand on the head of any child who happens to pass. The concentration on one part of the body at a time, and on the specific act of touching, makes this an easy dance for almost any group.







Tension and Relaxation

Tension and relaxation are conditions of muscles and nerves in the human body. Every movement we make involves tension in some muscles and relaxation in others. For example, bend your elbow. In this movement the muscles on the inside of the arm are tense while, to permit these muscles to contract, the muscles on the outside of the arm must relax. In learning to use the body as an instrument of creative expression, we study both tension and relaxation.

The first step is to practice relaxation, which means giving in to the force of gravity which is acting on us all the time. If we permit it to do so, gravity pulls us down to the ground, so it is in the lying position that we can experience the most complete relaxation. Try it. Lie down on your back with eyes closed. No motion. No extraneous thoughts. Try to let go all tension in the muscles . . . in the feet . . . legs . . . arms . . . trunk, front and back . . . face . . . neck . . . mouth . . . eyes. Try to feel loose . . . soft . . . heavy . . . still . . . all over. This practice of all-over relaxation should be done in different positions, lying on your front or side as well as on your back, or sitting or standing. It can be very refreshing because relaxation washes away needless muscular activity, giving us a chance to start all over again.

After experiencing the stillness of complete relaxation in various positions, we can explore relaxed movement. Try moving parts of the body, then the whole body, with as little tension as possible, almost completely relaxed. Move continuously, first on the floor, then gradually rising and moving from place to place. Most of my adult students love this study. No matter how much time I give them for it, they always want more.

There are certain kinds of movement which can further relaxation of body parts such as dropping, flopping, shaking and throwing away. Children, while sitting on the floor, think it is great fun to take one foot in their hands and shake it vigorously. When teaching adults I sometimes say, "Throw away arms . . . legs . . . everything!"

Testing for relaxation in couples is something which is equally satisfying for children and adults. One lies on the floor on his or her back while the other stands. The one who stands lifts gently the partner's arm or leg, or rolls the head back and forth, testing to see if there is a feeling of complete relaxation.

The opposite of relaxation is tension. Opposites clarify one another, so we need to practice both tension and relaxation. For little children the every-

day words "tight" and "loose," although less exact, may be better than "tension" and "relaxation."

We can alternate tension and relaxation by making ourselves tight all over, then loose all over . . . then tight again . . . then loose. At the completion of every movement there is a stillness in the all-over tight or the all-over loose position. This study may be done lying, sitting or standing. Body positions should be varied as much as possible. The movement quality should be sometimes gradual and sometimes sudden (see *stopped* and *sustained movement*, next page).

We can move continuously with a feeling of all-over tightness, as we did with all-over looseness (see preceding page) but the feeling of tightness should not be maintained long because it can become strained.

A more advanced study is to improvise freely, exploring in various ways the difference between tense and relaxed movement.

Opening and Closing

The alternation of opening and closing movements can be a valuable experience for young and old because it requires us to reach out and draw in, to expand and contract, to express feelings of extending ourselves outward into the world around and of drawing the outer world in toward ourselves.

We can make opening and closing movements with our hands. Open the hands fully, stretching the fingers wide apart, then close them completely, making fists. Repeat this many times slowly, saying "open . . . close . . ." Let there be a moment's pause at the end of every movement. Now we can let the arms open and close with the hands, over and over again, gradually letting the whole body be drawn into the movement. Explore all possible ways of using the body in opening and closing movements. This can be done sitting, lying or standing. If we are standing it can become a group movement with the whole group opening and closing.

We can create an Open-Close dance. The group stands in a scattered position, all facing toward the center. Everyone opens and closes the hands repeatedly, saying together slowly "open . . . close . . ." Gradually arms are included in the opening and closing, then finally the whole body. Now, with individuals continuing their opening and closing movements, the group begins gradually to open and close, more and more until it is as open as possible . . . then as completely closed as it can be. The dance may end in either the open or closed

position. Important is that individuals and group be fully open or fully closed.

THE MATERIAL OF DANCE

In dance as in no other art it is easy to confuse the instrument with the material because the body which is the instrument, and movement which is the material, are completely inseparable. Nevertheless, if we approach them both objectively, we find ourselves in two different areas of study. In the preceding chapter we described studies to develop *instrumental skill*. In this chapter we offer studies to develop skill in creating *movement forms*.

The form of a movement is determined by the interaction of its force, time and space patterns, each of which we can learn to create with freedom, awareness and control.

FORCE

Moving and Not Moving

First we can experience the difference between moving and not moving. Move freely . . . stop moving, remaining still . . . move . . . stop moving . . . move . . . stop moving . . .

This experience is meaningful for little children who at home and in school are often required to stop moving against their will.

Adults can learn to feel stillness as a creative experience, improvising freely on the theme of stillness and motion.

Moving and Being Moved

Our body movements can result from the action of our own inner force, or from some outer force acting upon us. For example: raise your arm, then let it drop. Raising the arm was the action of your own force. Dropping it was letting the force of gravity act upon you.

In analyzing movement for the purpose of creative expression, we call these two kinds of movement *active* and *passive*. Relax your arm and let someone else raise it for you. Your movement is passive because it is not your own force, but the force of the other person, which causes your arm to rise.

In our study of dance we learn to express with our whole self feelings of activity and passivity, creating movements which express the feeling of our being

a moving force, or the feeling of letting oneself be moved.

The first step, well adapted to a group of children or adult beginners, or to a mixed group of children and adults, might be Leading and Following. In couples, one takes the other by the hand and leads him or her around the room. The leader tries to lead with care so that the follower can feel secure and enjoy being led. The follower tries to make it easy for the leader, relinquishing all will except the will to be led. Both partners try not only to fulfill their own roles but to help their partner fulfill his or hers. In this way the movement experience is created by both people working together. It is a first study in group dance improvisation. Every member of the group should have the experience both of leading and of following. In a family group it is very good for a child to have an opportunity to lead the parent, creatively reversing the usual roles.

The next step, also in couples, is Testing for Passivity. One is the tester, the other is tested. The tester may use his or her hands freely to move the partner in various ways. With gentle pressure the partner can be lowered to the floor, rolled over, raised up again and moved from place to place. This develops sensitivity and skill in movement relationship to others. Both partners must be aware of the problems which the other faces. They must feel each others' movements. If the tester wants to raise the partner from the floor he (she) cannot actually do this, but his (her) movements can express the feeling of doing it. The one whose passivity is being tested does not expect to be actually lifted, but he (she) can express in movement the feeling of being lifted in response to the other's lifting movements. This is a real life situation. There is no pretense of any kind. The tester either expresses clearly in movement and touch what he or she wants the other to do, or he (she) does not. This study can be done by the blind and the deaf as well as by those with sight and hearing.

Now we can do exactly the same thing without touching. Expression of movement feeling is even more important than before. The active partner must communicate clearly how, when and where he or she wants the other to move.

After we have worked on this theme in couples, giving everyone a chance to be both the mover (active) and the one who is moved (passive) we are ready to try it in groups of three or more. One is active, the others are passive. It can be practiced in groups of any size.

I sometimes start a kindergarten class by saying "I

am not going to tell you in words, but I am going to show you in movement what to do." Then, using my hands and arms and whole body to express the direction and feeling of the movement, I indicate that they should sway from side to side, stand up, move toward me then away from me, turn around, sit down, etc. Of course every child wants to have a turn doing what I did. Later they can do it in couples, and one can lead the teacher.

Forceful and Forceless Movement

Forcefulness and forcelessness are basic qualities of movement. Not only a human being but an animal or a machine, or almost any moving body, can make movements which are more or less forceful.

Try making very forceful movements, using the whole body freely in various ways. Use arms and hands, legs and feet, and trunk, exhaling on every movement. Exhaling is important because forceful movements involve contraction of the abdominal muscles, which causes the diaphragm to rise, expelling air from the lungs.

Now the opposite. Make movements which require very little force. Complete forcelessness would mean no movement at all, but it is possible to move freely while exerting only a minimum of force. Try not to confuse the feeling of forcelessness with the feeling of relaxation. Although they have much in common, they are not the same. Expression of feelings of forcefulness and forcelessness involve attention on the quality of movement, while tension and relaxation require attention on the instrument (see page 43). Both depend on the kinesthetic sense, but the emphasis is different.

"Strong" and "weak" are perhaps better words than "forceful" and "forceless" because they are more frequently used in everyday life, but they may suggest a value judgment, which is to be avoided when we are trying to express the feeling of pure movement qualities.

Stopped and Sustained Movement

Two other qualities of movement in which the force element is dominant are stopped and sustained. A stopped movement is one in which the force is expended all at once so that the movement seems to stop as soon as it starts. (I sometimes call this quality "sudden," although this has the disadvantage of suggesting surprise.) A sustained movement is one in which the force is expended gradually from the beginning of one movement until the beginning of the next. (I sometimes call this quality "gradual.")

Let us make some stopped movements . . . now

some sustained ones . . . moving freely, contrast stopped and sustained movements . . .

Stopped and sustained should not be confused with slow and fast, which are qualities in which the time element is dominant (see page 49).

Interacting Forces

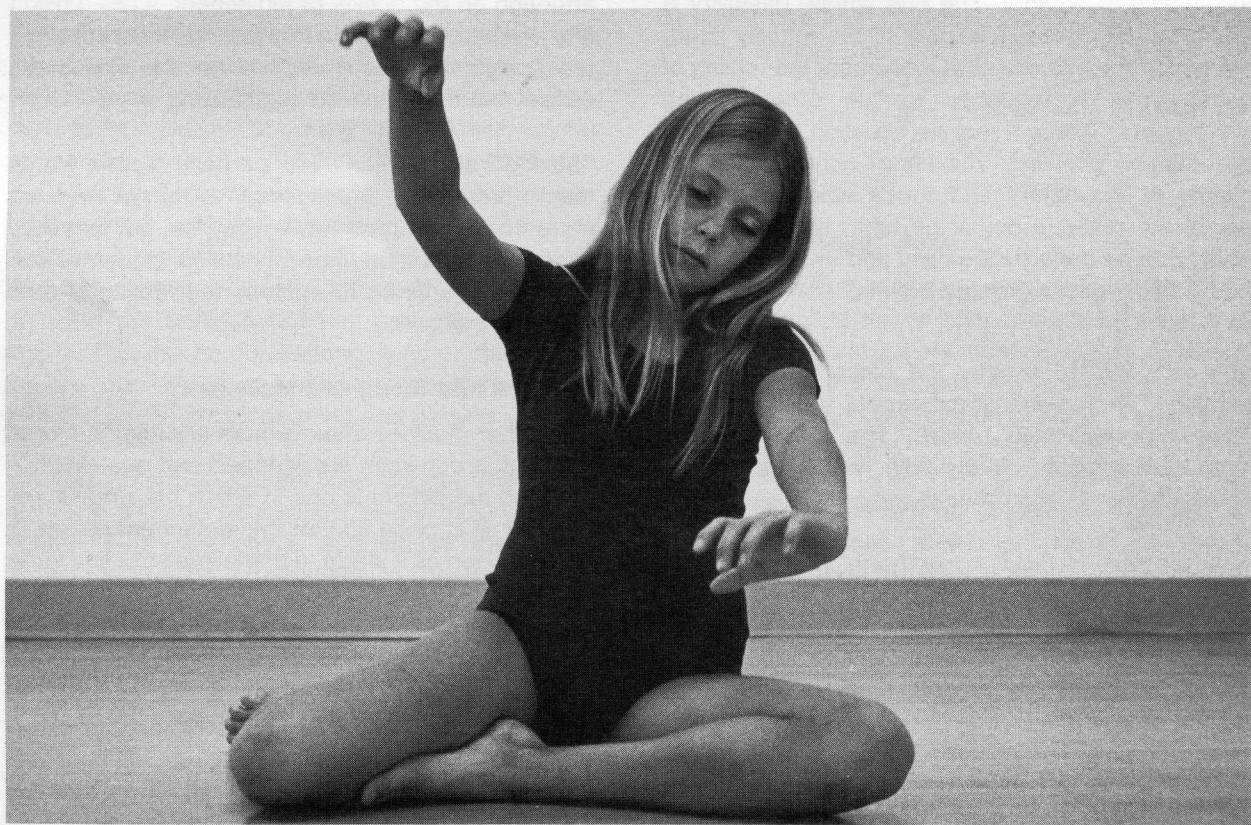
Tension and relaxation are conditions of muscles and nerves. Forcefulness and forcelessness are qualities of movement. Activity and passivity are a relationship between two or more moving bodies. It is the most important of all movement relationships, whether in daily life or in dance. As a member of a creatively functioning group you cannot be active all the time, directing others to move as you want them to. Nor can you be always passive, waiting for someone else to move you. You must sometimes act and sometimes let yourself be acted upon. This is the theme of our study now.

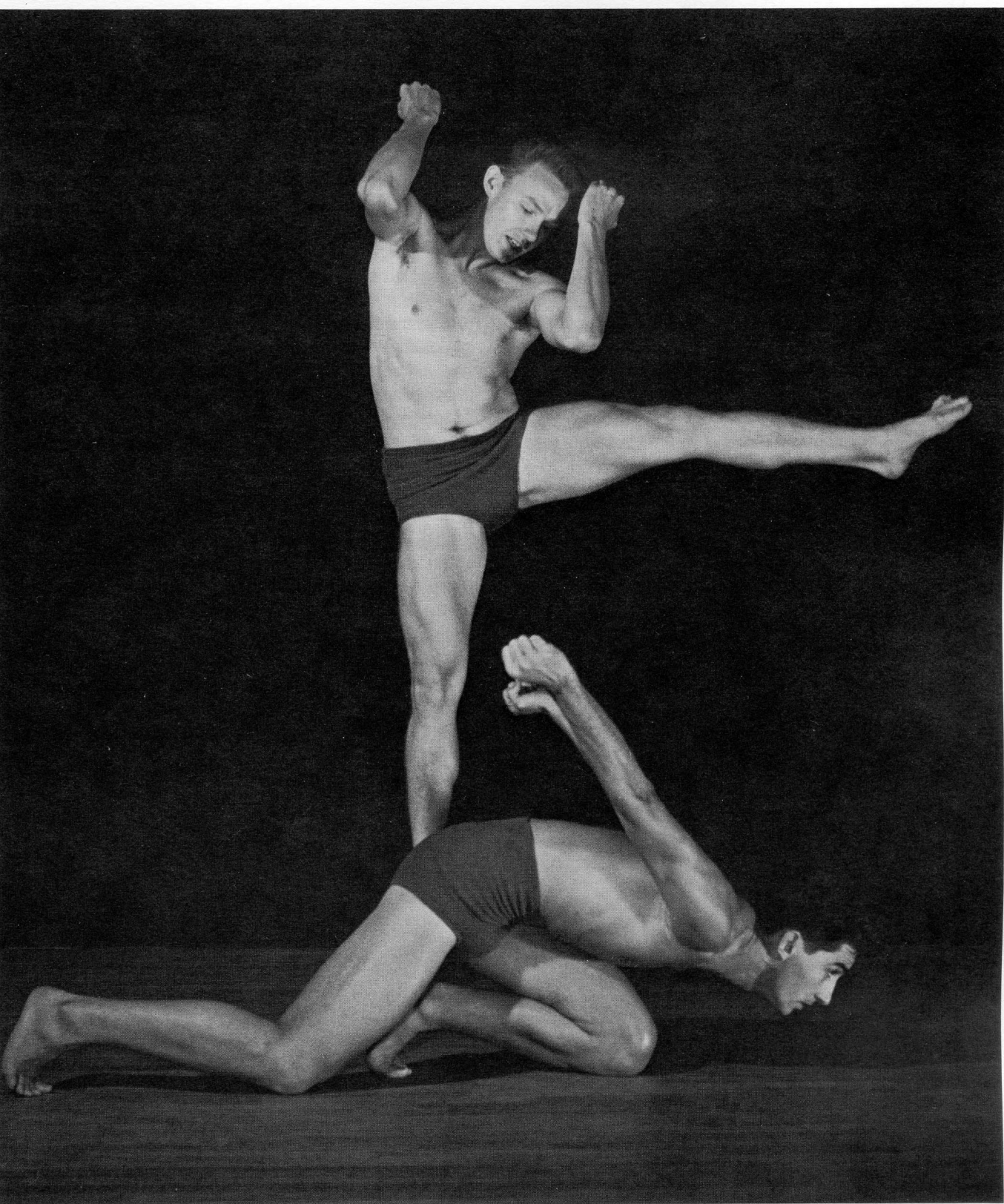
Improvise freely, making movements so forceful that they express the fact that you are a moving force, able to move not only yourself but even the most immovable object. Now express in movement the feeling that you are able to be moved by any outer force, however slight. Be so loose and light that a mere breath of air can blow you away.

In couples, one is the moving force (*active*) while the other allows himself or herself to be moved (*passive*). The active partner's movement should be so forceful and clearly directed that it is easy to sense and to do what he or she wants. The passive partner should be forceless and so responsive to the slightest movement of an outer force, that the active one finds him or her easy to move.

Both partners should express freely the feeling of their roles in movement of the whole body. The active partner can make movements of pulling, pushing, lifting up, pressing down, etc., either gradually or suddenly, in place or from place to place. (There may be a tendency to rely too much on hands and arms, so it is sometimes an interesting challenge to fulfill this role with arms behind the back.) The passive partner makes movements of sinking, rising, gliding, etc. If necessary, the active partner may touch the passive one but, when both are skillful enough, communication can proceed without touching.

After everyone has had the experience of being both the active and the passive partner, we can do the same thing again with this difference: after every movement, we exchange roles. During the first movement, Partner 1 is active while Partner 2 is passive. At the end of the movement, Partner 1 relinquishes the active role to Partner 2, becoming





himself (herself) passive while Partner 2 is active. This alternation continues throughout the study.

A few questions need to be answered. What is a *movement*? How do we know when it is ended? How is the exchange of roles accomplished? A single movement is the result of a single impulse, a single unit of force. It may contain many inner impulses but it is felt as a single self-contained act. At the end of every movement there is a pause, long enough to make it clear that the movement has come to an end (see *creative pause*, page 38). Then the passive partner takes the force from the active one, who relinquishes it accordingly. The dance goes on without interruption, the force flowing back and forth between the two.

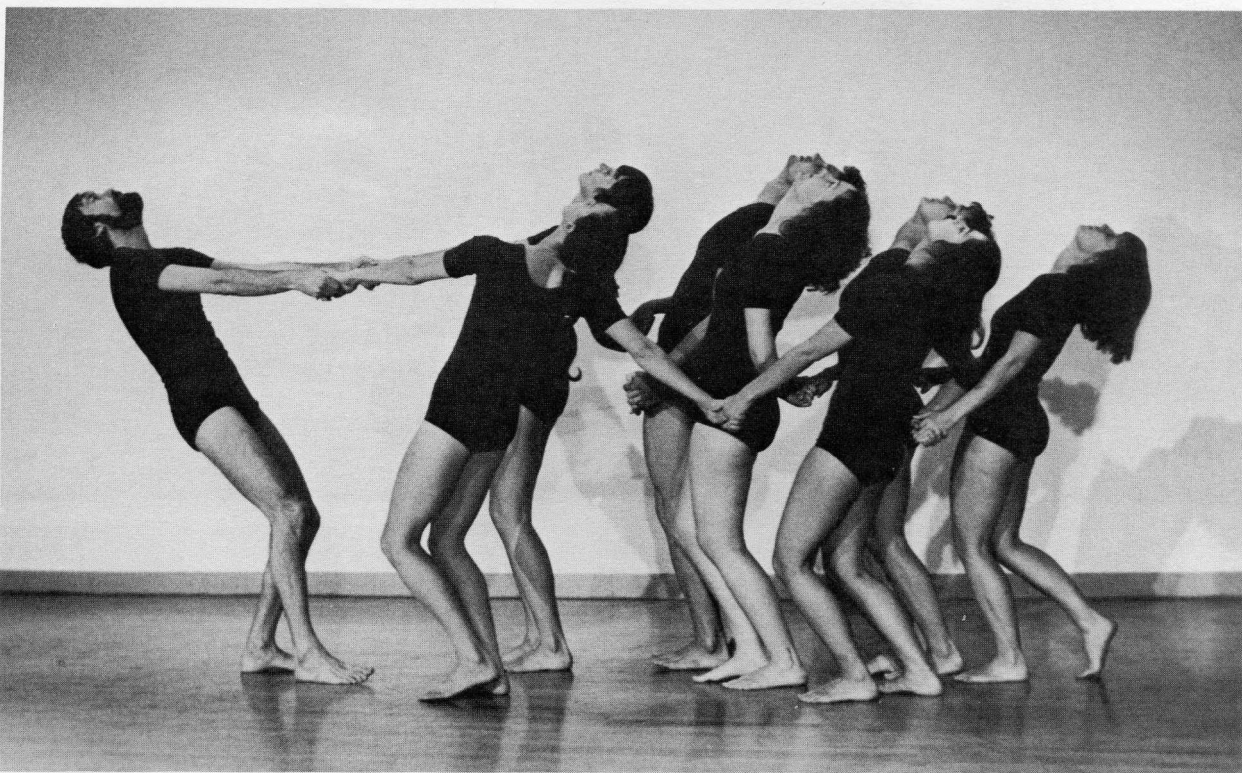
In groups of three, four or five, one member after another can assume the active role, following a pre-determined order of succession. When the group is larger, there can be a free exchange, leaving it up to each individual to decide when it is the right time to be active. This is a richly meaningful group dance. The decision whether or not to take over the active role depends on the need of the group. A certain member might not want to be active, but the fact that the group needs him or her determines his (her) decision to act. He or she knows that he (she) is needed either because his (her) position is right for leadership (front, center, etc.) or because everyone else has taken a turn. It is the will of the group that everyone has a chance to be the moving force.

There are many variations on this theme. Instead of one active with two or more passive, there can be one passive with two or more active. Or all can be active, or all passive, in which case the result is either conflicting or harmonious action. The larger the group the more difficult it is for members to move with a unified feeling. That is why our group studies usually begin with the smallest possible group (two) then gradually proceed to larger and larger groups.

There comes a time when the group's experience warrants a free group improvisation. The larger the group, the better. Every member assumes an active or passive role according to the nature of the situation, changing from one to the other as the action proceeds. All move freely in the room, acting upon others or letting themselves be acted upon, sometimes in couples or small groups, sometimes in large groups or the whole group together. There should be plenty of time available for this dance.

Studies in which the force patterns of movement are dominant, have a dramatic quality and lead us toward the art of action, drama.

I cannot conclude this study of activity and passivity without describing in detail a remarkable experience I had as a teacher for one day at a school on the White River Apache Indian reservation. I was confronted with a wild group of boys, ten or eleven years old, about twenty-five of them. I did not see how I could possibly get their attention. Then the



idea came to me. I would use no words, only movement. In one sentence I challenged them, saying that we would use movement instead of words, and that we would see if they could understand the language of movement. They settled down. Using my whole body and expressing as strongly as I could the feeling of being a moving force, I made a slow pulling movement, drawing one single member of the group toward me. He came. I floored him with a quick downward movement. Leaving him there, I turned to another boy, drawing him toward me quickly, then slowly lowering him to the floor. The group was fascinated. With two boys on the floor, I acted on two others, causing them both at the same time to rise and sink, then rise and run around those who were down. By this time the group was wholly mine. I could do anything I wanted with them. I continued to move individuals and small groups, then finally the whole group together. When I was finished, some of the boys wanted to do what I had done, and they were given the chance. This prepared the way for couple dances, with one active and the other passive. By this time it was obvious that relaxation would help, so we proceeded to work on tension and relaxation. I believe that from that time on we could have explored many areas of creative dance.

TIME

In our study of time, we rely in no way on music. Quite the opposite. Whatever music we make is an integral part of the dance. According to physical laws, sound depends on movement. For example, the sound of clapping depends on the movement of arms and hands, and the sound of the voice on movements of breathing. In our study of dance we learn to create time patterns in movement, sometimes making them audible.

Pace

A first step in learning to create time patterns might be to change the movement's pace. We can say to little children "Let's walk slowly . . . let's walk fast . . . slowly . . . fast . . ." To adults we can say, "Improvise freely, making slow movements . . . slowness is a feeling . . . express the feeling of slowness . . . now make fast movements . . . show the feeling of fastness . . . now slow again . . . now make movements that are moderately paced . . ."

Duration

Slow and fast, which are time qualities of movement, should not be confused with stopped and sustained, which are force qualities (see page 45).

Duration is the time interval between the beginning of one movement and the beginning of the next. It can be long or short. A movement which lasts a long time is slow. A movement which lasts a short time is fast. This is true of all movements, including stopped and sustained.

Let us make some stopped movements which last a long time (slow) . . . Although every movement seems to stop as soon as it starts, the time interval from the beginning of one movement to the beginning of the next is long (slow). Now make some stopped movements which last a short time (fast) . . . contrast slow and fast stopped movements . . .

Let us make some sustained movements which last a short time (fast) . . . Now some sustained movements which last a long time (slow) . . . Contrast slow and fast sustained movements . . .

This study is too analytical for beginners, but it is important for advanced students and for those who want to teach.

Pulse

Every movement occurs at a certain moment of time. To intensify our feeling for this moment we can improvise freely in movement, saying "now" on every movement we make. We can create either a regular or an irregular pulse. A regular pulse means that the "now" moments of our movements occur at regular intervals. An irregular pulse means that they occur irregularly. A pulse, either regular or irregular, may be slow or fast.

Regularity and irregularity are two kinds of time pattern, equally natural and important. We should not think of irregularity as a deviation from the norm. The pulse of our walking step is regular or irregular according to the circumstance. The movements of our mouth in speaking are highly irregular.

Little children can create both a regular and an irregular pulse while walking or while clapping their hands, if the difference has been made clear to them by the teacher. A simple demonstration can communicate the meaning of these words without dictating specific movement forms.

Measure

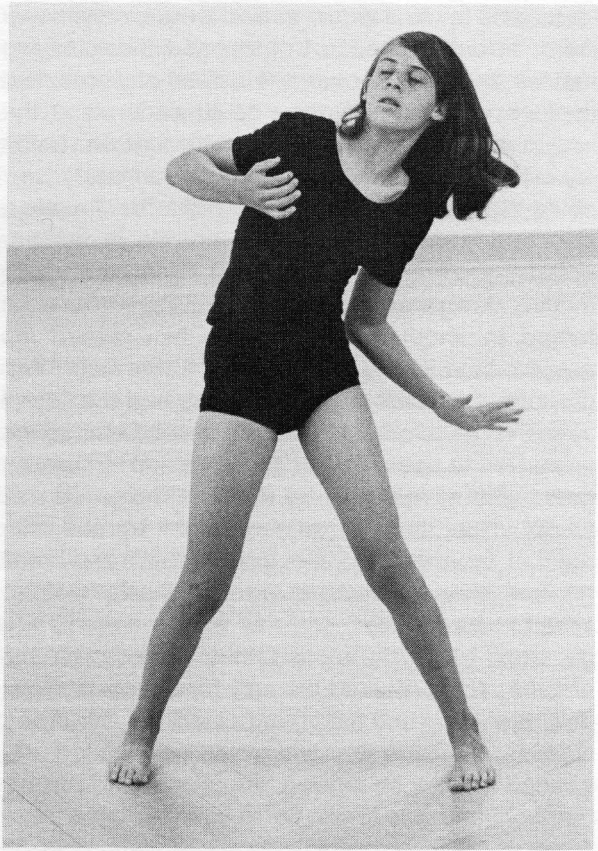
A regular pulse can be measured. Let's try it. Walk continuously (regular pulse) at a moderate pace . . . emphasize in some way the first of every two steps (by changing direction, adding an arm movement, or bending the knees, etc.) . . . you have created a regular two-beat measure (we use the word "beat" to indicate the "now" moment of the movement.)

Say "now" on every step
 nów . . . now/nów . . . now
 Instead of saying "now," let's count
 oñe . . . two/oñe . . . two

It is good to use the voice because it involves exhal- ing, which furthers coordination, and because it makes the movement audible, strengthening our feeling for the time pattern.

After we have created a two-beat measure while walking, we can do it while making movements with our whole body in place, then moving freely in the room. In the same way we can create a three-beat, four-beat, five-beat or longer measure. As the measure gets longer it may be advisable to make the basic pulse slightly faster, because the feeling of a long measure at a slow pace is hard to maintain.

In contrast to a regular measure, let us create an irregular measure in which the basic pulse of our walk (or free movement, if we prefer) is regular, but the measure is not. Let us start with a two-beat measure . . . then, without interrupting the regu- larity of our walk (or free movement), change it to a three-beat measure . . . then back to a two-beat measure . . . then to a four-beat or a five-beat measure (remaining with each for as long or as short a time as we wish) . . . We can change the measure freely while continuing to maintain a regular pulse.



Metric Patterns

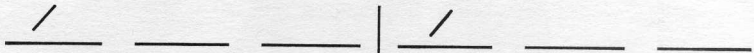
Once we have established a regular measure, we can create a variety of metric patterns.

For example:

First we create an unmeasured regular pulse



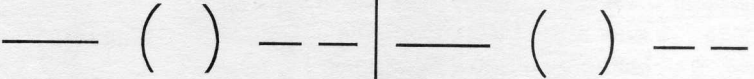
Then, by stressing the first of every three beats, we create a regular three-beat measure



Now we can vary the pattern by omitting the second beat



Then by dividing the third beat into two equal parts



This is just an example of the way in which we can create different time patterns in movement while maintaining the feeling of a regular pulse, pace and measure.

We can create a very interesting group dance by dividing the group into three parts. Part 1 creates an unmeasured regular pulse, moving on every beat. Part 2 creates a regular measure, moving only on the first of every two (or three, four, or more) beats. Part 3, with individuals dancing freely, creates a variety of metric patterns. This is a dance which can be done by three people, or by three small groups of any size, or by a large group in three concentric circles.

A particularly interesting kind of metric pattern is called "syncopation." It means that we put the emphasis not on the first beat (usually felt as the strongest) but on some other beat in the measure, creating a feeling of conflict between beats. For example, while maintaining a four-beat measure, we can emphasize the second beat instead of the first

measure		<u> / </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
pattern		<u> </u>	<u> / </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	

Or we can emphasize the second half of the first beat

measure		<u> / </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
pattern		<u> </u>	<u> / </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	

Studies in syncopation can be practiced alone, or in couples with both partners maintaining the feeling of a regular measure while one stresses the first beat and the other stresses some other beat of the measure.

The moment at which a movement occurs (the "now" moment, or the "beat") is so exact that some students may find it difficult to feel and to create time patterns. However, difficulties can usually be overcome with patient, repetitious practice. I have had students who, after long, continuous work in this area, have told me that for the first time in their lives they were able to feel the time beat.

The use of sound (the teacher's voice, hand-clapping or drum) can sometimes be helpful because sound, unlike movement, is intermittent and can identify the "now" moment more precisely.

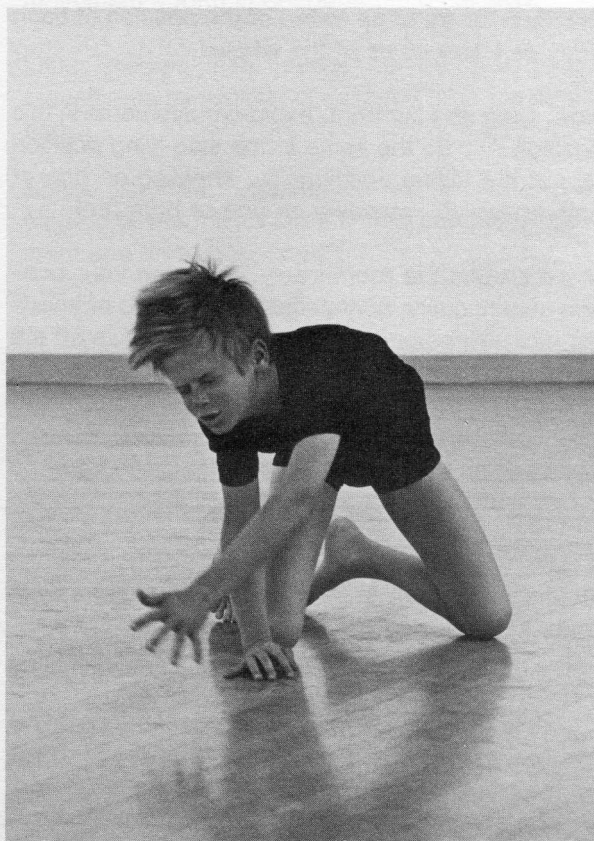
Rhythm

We must not confuse the term "metric pattern" with the word "rhythm." A metric pattern is the mind's attempt to measure a time pattern of movement. Rhythm is the very life of the movement. It can be perceived through the senses and felt intuitively, but never measured.

Rhythm is integration of impulse, the creative principle of movement. Every body movement represents a single impulse (single unit of force), containing minor impulses within the major one. If major and minor impulses are integrated in a unified whole, the movement can be felt as rhythmic, alive, and able to give birth to another as naturally as any living thing gives birth.

Rhythm is not the same as repetition or regularity. Repetition may help us become more aware of a movement's rhythm but it does not make the movement more rhythmic. A single movement can be as rhythmic as any number of repetitions, and an irregular pulse can be as rhythmic as a regular pulse.

Metric patterns can be experienced rhythmically if sensory awareness takes the place of analytical thought. There is no art of body movement without rhythmic experience. Rhythmic experience involves sensing of force, time and space patterns of movement. All the material in our study program is intended to help develop feeling for rhythm.



SPACE

A movement's *force pattern* answers the question, "How forceful is the movement and how is the force expended?" Its *time pattern* answers the question, "When does the movement occur and how long does it last?" Its *space pattern* answers the question, "Where does the movement occur and where is it going?" These questions cannot be answered in words, only in the language of movement.

A movement's space pattern is determined by its position, direction, size and shape. Let us explore the movement feelings which these elements provide.

Position

Lie down on your back . . . keeping your back on the floor, see what movements you can make in this position . . . using your arms and hands, legs and feet, and head, you can create many interesting movements in the back-lying position . . . you can move your whole body without taking your back off the floor . . . try to be aware of the position of each body part as well as of the whole.

Now, lying on your front, explore movements in this position . . . do the same in the side-lying position . . . in the sitting position . . . kneeling on one or both knees . . . standing on one or both feet . . .

Move around the room freely, changing your position continuously, sometimes lying, sitting or kneeling, sometimes on your feet and sometimes off the ground . . . have someone occasionally say "stop," at which moment you cease moving and hold whatever position you happen to be in . . . now, relaxing, dissolve the position . . . then recreate it, trying to remember the exact feeling and form . . .

Create for yourself an interesting position . . . let others see it and then create for themselves the same position . . .

Put one part of your body in a fixed position. For example: the head hanging forward on the chest, or the feet touching side by side, or the palms of the hands together . . . now try to express in movement of the whole body the movement feeling of this position . . .

After we have had experience in creating positions for our individual bodies, we are ready to create positions for the group body. The study described here is for a group of any size, although the larger the group the more difficult is the problem. Starting

not too far apart, gradually come together, assuming individual positions which, with bodies in physical contact, create one single interesting shape . . . now remain still, maintaining the group position without moving . . . until all members feel that it is long enough . . . then, all together, gradually change the group position, creating a new shape . . . in this way, continue to alternate stillness with motion, continually changing the group position . . .

Now we are ready for a beautiful Group Position Dance. It can be improvised by a group of any size up to about eight members. The group stands scattered in the room and each member is given a number (or the name of another member). The dance begins with everyone, except Number 1, assuming a fixed position and remaining still while Number 1 moves freely among the fixed forms, relating his or her movements to their shapes . . . when Number 1 returns to place, he or she calls Number 2 (or Number 2's name) and all dancers change their individual body positions, creating new shapes . . . now Number 2 moves among the others, returns to place and calls Number 3. In this way the dance continues until the last number has been called. When the last dancer returns to place he (she) calls Number 1, and the second part of the dance begins. The second part is exactly like the first except that individual improvisations are shorter and, when Number 1 returns to place, he or she puts himself (herself) in a compact position, becoming the core of a group shape. Every member in turn joins him (her), establishing close physical contact, so that the dance ends with the group closely united. This closed group position is a satisfying contrast to the open position in Part I.

In this work we are studying position as it relates to the structure of our body: standing, sitting, lying, etc. But there are other kinds of position. In relation to the surrounding space, our position may be central, peripheral, high, low, foreground, background, etc. Relative to other bodies it may be beside, behind, in front of, between, above, below, etc. These kinds of position offer movement experiences which can be explored freely by individuals or groups, but this area is too advanced for little children or beginning adults.

Direction

The direction of our movement (relative to the structure of our body) is forward if the front of the body is leading, backward if the back of the body is leading, and sideward if the side of the body leads. These differences are easy to create while moving from place to place. Little children enjoy walking (or crawling, or jumping) forward, backward and side-

ward, changing direction according to the teacher's word. Older children and adults can run, leap, skip and gallop in these basic directions, although it might take some practice. A more advanced study consists of improvising freely on the theme of forward and backward, or side-to-side movement, using your whole body to express the movement feelings which these directions provide.

Upward and downward are directions (relative to the earth) which can be explored creatively, either separately or in combination with others. For example: forward-upward contrasted with backward-downward movement.

These are pure movement studies, abstract in form but, when we learn to become wholly involved in movement as expression of feeling, they offer a richness of sensory-emotional experience which not only the participants but also spectators can enjoy.

Size

An easy way to start developing awareness of space is to explore the feeling of large and small movements.

With your whole body make movements which are large, using a lot of space . . . now the opposite: make movements which are small, using only a little space . . . freely contrast large and small movements . . .

Little children can create large and small movements by walking with big steps and then little steps.

Shape

A first experience in shape can be creating curved and straight movements. Improvising freely, create movements which are curved . . . now create movements which are straight and angular . . . freely contrast curved and straight movements . . .

Our studies in curved and straight movement can perhaps help clarify the difference between our instrument, which is the body, and our material, which is movement. The body is a unique instrument in that it can be altered to facilitate the creation of a particular kind of movement. For example: in making a curved movement we can make our body-instrument curved, while in making a straight movement we can make our body straight. It is possible to make a curved movement with a straight body or a straight movement with a curved body but, if the shape of the instrument corresponds to the shape of the movement, our feeling for the movement's form is deepened and clarified.

Little children can create curved and straight movements by walking in a curved then in a straight path.

Space patterns of movement are visible, and our studies of them lead directly into studies of movement and sight (see page 60).





MOVEMENT AND SOUND

Movement creates sound, so in our study of dance we learn to use sound creatively, uniting our sense of hearing with our kinesthetic sense.

Sound and Silence

It is almost impossible to move without making a sound. let's try it.

Move your whole body freely without making any sound at all . . . make as much movement as you can while maintaining complete silence . . .

Now the opposite. Make as much sound as you can while moving freely . . . use your voice, hands and feet . . . do not be afraid of this unaccustomed freedom. It can be refreshing to shout and stamp and beat the floor with our hands . . . now let's move silently again . . .

Sound is meaningful only in relation to silence.

Voice Sounds

The feeling of a movement is sometimes more easily expressed if we let the sound of the voice be a part of it.

Stretch freely with your whole body, letting your voice make stretchy sounds . . . make shaking movements and shaky sounds . . . bouncy movements and sounds . . . tight movements and sounds . . . loose movements and sounds. We can learn to express the feeling of any body movement with our voices.

Some of our everyday actions are dependent equally on sound and on movement, for example: yawning, sighing, sobbing, hiccoughing, laughing. Are they sounds or are they movements? They are both. It is fun to see how far we can go in exaggerating both the movement and the sound. In one of my classes three teen-age girls created a ridiculous hiccough dance.

A group dance which is both enlivening and relaxing for beginning adults is a Laugh Dance. The group stands in a scattered position. Whoever wants to start the dance begins to laugh, making laughing movements and sounds which have a particular quality such as exploding, shaking, or rocking, etc. The entire group joins, making the same kind of movements and sounds. When the first leader has finished, there is a pause, then someone else creates a contrasting kind of laughing, with the group doing the same. In this way the dance continues with one after another creating a different

kind of laugh. There should be plenty of movement such as jumping in the air, falling on the floor, or any other exaggerated form of expression. Our aim in this study is to be completely uninhibited in both movement and sound. With the entire group laughing unrestrainedly, it can be a hilarious dance.

Another way of using our voices as part of our movement is to choose a certain kind of sound and, while making it, show the feeling of the sound in movement. One of the easiest sounds for this is growling, because it is expressive of primitive emotion. We can growl alone or in a group. When we do it for the first time we may find that our body movements are not as expressive as our voice sounds because our attention is more on the sound than on the movement. We can correct this by trying to show the feeling of growling in movement without making any sound at all. Growling in sound and movement is a liberating experience for anyone.

Other sounds which can provide entirely different kinds of movement feeling are hissing, humming, shouting, whispering. After we have explored these, we are usually sufficiently uninhibited to speak or sing freely while improvising in movement.

Tactile qualities such as rough, smooth, oily, sticky, prickly, watery, etc. can be expressed in sound and movement, as well as qualities such as animal-like, insect-like, machine-like. On an advanced level, sound can be used with movement to express qualities derived from purely visual experience such as flower-like and star-like. Sensitivity and movement imagination can be developed with practice, and eventually we can express anything in movement and sound.

Studies like these can create self-confidence in the use of the voice. A little girl with a slightly husky voice, which her friends ridiculed, took part in my children's classes. She was very self-conscious about the use of her voice and managed to "have a headache" whenever she was expected to use it creatively. She danced with me for many years, completely overcoming her inhibition. She now teaches dance, helping others to use their voices freely.

Speech

Body movement can include voice sounds, and voice sounds can become speech. We can create our own language while we dance, using our voice and mouth to produce speech-like sounds expressing movement feelings.

Make up a word, at the same time moving your whole body to express the feeling of the word . . . make up another word . . . do it spontaneously without thinking about it . . . just let the word be part of your movement. Make up a sentence . . . continue to speak your own language, expressing in movement the feeling of what you are saying . . . your language cannot be translated into known words because it expresses your own pure movement feelings but anyone anywhere can understand the feeling you are expressing.

There are many themes on which we can improvise in movement while creating our own language. An individual can tell a story or recite a poem while the rest of the group listens. A story can be told by the group with one member after another contributing a section. Couples can have an argument, three or more can gossip, the whole group can have a social gathering. Additional themes for a large or small group include political rally, classroom, university lecture, television commercial. Although some of us find this area difficult at first, we can all learn to speak our own language and some of us prefer this above all other areas of study.

Song

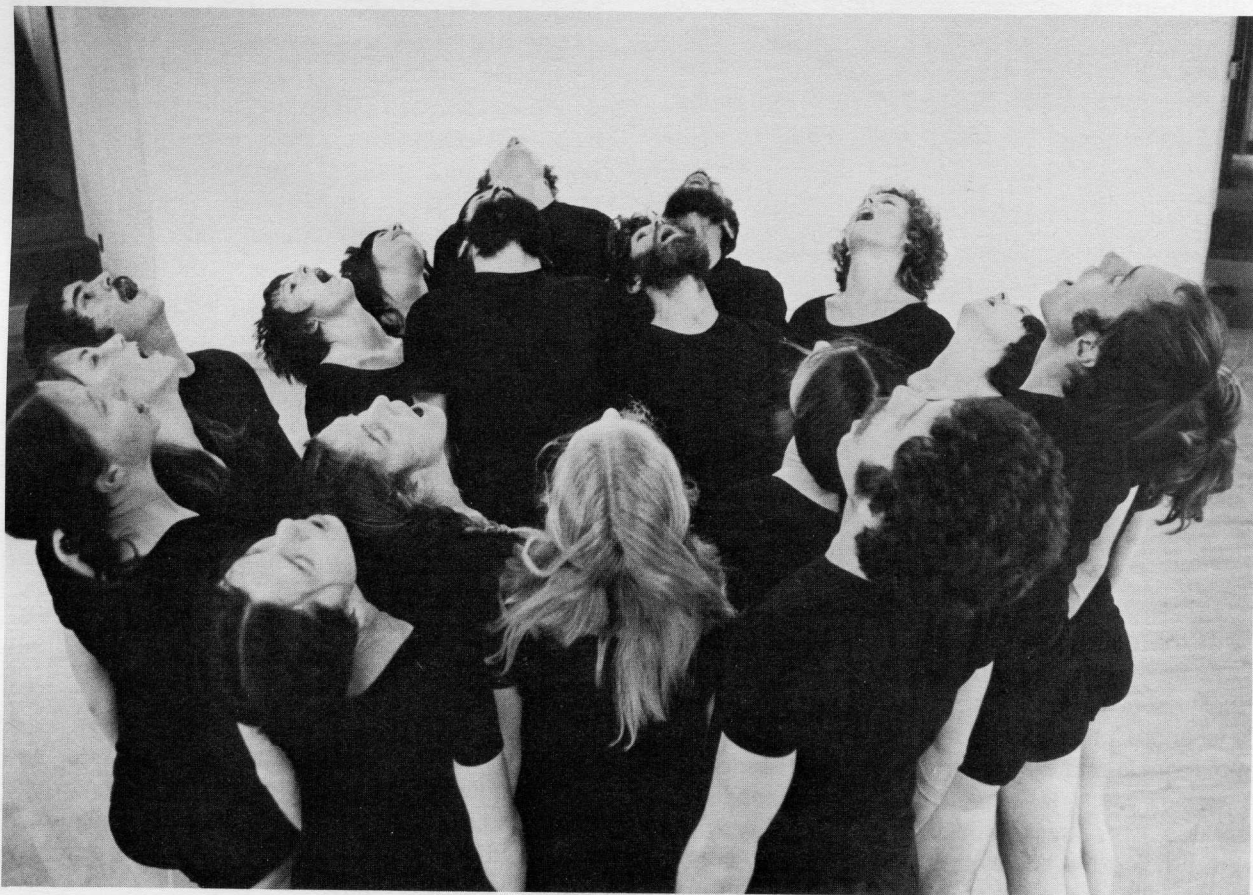
Singing, like dancing, is a natural human activity.

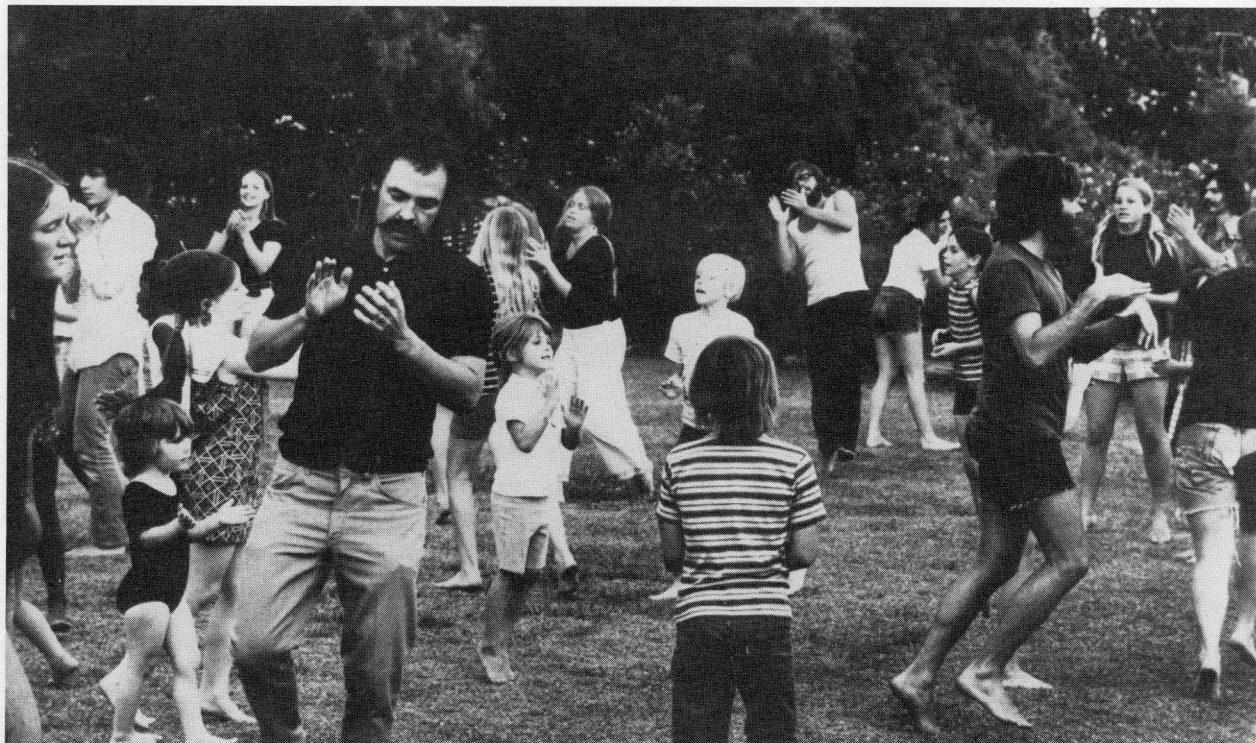
We can all make up our own dances and songs. Try it. Move freely in the room, singing while you dance. Sing your own song, improvising continuously or repeating a simple tone sequence (melody) over and over again, dancing the way you feel . . .

If you are in a group, one member can improvise in song while the others improvise in movement. It can be a song without words or a song with words. If it has words, the words are improvised in one's own language.

An advanced group can improvise freely together in movement and song. At first everyone moves in his or her own way, singing his or her own song. Gradually everyone tries to become aware of, and adjust to, others' singing until all are singing the same song. It can be a very simple melody repeated. It can even be just one tone. When all are singing in unison, it is natural for all to make the same kind of movement, expressing the same feeling. The dance may end with everyone moving, as well as singing, in unison.

These dance songs give great joy to the participants and make us realize that there is music as well as dance in all of us.





Sounds of Hands and Feet

Using our hands and feet as instruments, we can explore a wide variety of sounds, moving our whole body freely while we clap, slap, snap our fingers, stamp, etc. We can share our discoveries with one another by presenting a repeated pattern in sound and movement which all can do together at the same time.

We have two group dances on this theme. We call one the Clap Dance. Everyone moves freely from place to place, making sounds with hands and feet, gradually creating together the same regular pulse. Once the pulse has been established, individuals may vary it as they wish. Everyone creates different movements and sounds but all are united in the common pulse. Voice sounds may be added.

Another dance for a group is the Clap Orchestra Dance. All sit on the floor, freely scattered or leaving a large circular area free for dancing. The group claps, creating a regular pulse and keeping it steady without changing the pace. The pattern may be varied freely as long as the basic pulse is maintained. Voice sounds may be added. After the pulse has become firmly established, anyone at any time may get up and dance. After dancing a while, he or she should sit down again and help keep the music going. Any number may dance at the same time provided there are enough clappers left to make music. The dance may continue as long as there are dancers to dance.

Instruments (ordinary objects)

Look around and find something with which you can make a sound, such as a bunch of keys to shake, two shoes to beat together, a glass or metal container to strike with a nail or spoon, a piece of paper to crumple, tear, rustle, wave. Explore the particular kind of sound which your instrument can make. While making the sound, move your whole body to express in movement the quality of the sound. Extremely interesting sounds and movements can be created in this way. My students have performed whole programs using ordinary objects as musical instruments. At a performance concluding a two-week workshop at a university in Indiana, where we used ordinary objects because we had no other instruments, one of the students made an extraordinary dance using the sustained squeal of a revolving piano stool on which she whirled continuously.

A free approach to the art of body movement requires a free approach to the art of sound.

Instruments (traditional)

Any instrument which can be carried in the hands, or worn on the body, is suitable for these studies. Our collection includes drums, shakers, gongs, cymbals, claves, wood blocks, bells, triangles, tambourines, rasps, xylophones, whistles, pipes, and some stringed instruments which we have made ourselves.



These have been chosen because they present a minimum of technical difficulty and can be used creatively without much practice. If any student would like to play a violin, flute, accordion or any other melodic instrument, these are a welcome addition, but they must be played freely, expressing movement feeling, without reliance on traditional scales.

First we dance with these instruments individually, trying to express clearly in both movement and sound the unique quality of each. Then two or more individuals, each carrying an instrument, may improvise together relating their sounds and movements to each other.

We can form an orchestra. The group stands in a circle, everyone carrying a different kind of instrument. One member plays a repeated pattern. The group listens and, when a member feels that his (her) instrument can contribute a special quality to the pattern, he (she) adds a sound at regular inter-

vals. One after another does this until the orchestra is complete. All are united in the basic pulse but each plays only a part of the pattern. If care is taken to use sound economically, this can be a rich musical experience. While the orchestra repeats the same music continuously one member at a time puts down his (her) instrument and dances.

One of our favorite dances is the "Processional." In a line, with everyone playing a different instrument and the person at the head of the line leading, the group proceeds to dance and make music along a path which takes them slowly around the room and, if possible, through doors, up and down steps, indoors and out. The music is a repeated pattern, originated by the leader of the line, within which everyone can improvise. It can be a very long dance and spectators may be encouraged to join. One of our Processionals was led in and out of my studio by a member of the group playing the bagpipes. A student of mine, who directs a department of dance in an eastern college, sometimes leads her Processionals through the city streets.

Accompaniment

“Accompaniment” means going along with someone or something. Dancing may be accompanied by music. In the preceding dance studies we have each provided our own music accompaniment, but it is possible for one person (or group) to create the movements of a dance while at the same time another person (or group) creates the music.

After students have had opportunity to dance with a variety of instruments (see page 57), we play a guessing game. One member of the group thinks of an instrument and, without telling the others what it is, shows in movement the quality of its sound. The others guess the instrument, and the one who guesses right is given the role of accompanist. While the dancer expresses in movement the quality of the sound, the accompanist uses the chosen instrument to express in sound the quality of the movement — not only the quality but also the exact timing of every movement as it occurs. Practice makes the unity of movement and sound more perfect, but the challenge of trying to do it well the first time forces the accompanist to be wholly involved in the movement feeling of the dancer.

A group, using free voice sounds, can accompany an individual dancer. Sitting around the dancer on the floor (or in any other desired position), group

members use their voices, varying the quality and volume of the sound to express the feeling of the dancer's movement.

In couples, one partner can dance while the other provides accompaniment with free voice sounds, song, speech (own language), or an instrument.

In all these studies it is essential that the accompanists be wholly receptive to the movement impulses of the dancer. The musicians too must move. It would be impossible to create a unity of sound and movement if the one who creates the sound is motionless. The accompaniment should be like the voice of the dancer, a perfect expression of the dancer's movement feeling.

Just as music can accompany dance, so can dance accompany music. One or more persons can create the music while the others express the feeling of it in dance. The Clap Orchestra Dance (page 57) is an example of this.

In all music there is movement and our study of movement expression helps develop feeling for music. This fact is demonstrated in my children's classes. When I ask a child to choose an instrument and use it to make music for dancing, I am often amazed at the deep musical feeling expressed by children who have had no previous musical training.



MOVEMENT AND SIGHT

Movement is visible, so we can learn to use our sense of sight in union with our sense of movement. We do not have to look in a mirror. We can visualize, even with our eyes closed, the spatial forms of our body movements and shape them according to our visual imagination.

Line Drawing

Using your whole body and moving from place to place, draw lines and carve shapes in the space around you.

Lie down on your back. Close your eyes. With one hand and arm draw lines in the air. Explore different kinds of line. Let your hand and arm be a sensitive instrument, changing its shape in order to form the shape of the lines you are drawing. Continue with the other hand and arm. Continue with the palms of the hands together, making a single instrument with which you draw lines.

Standing in place, draw lines with one arm and hand, involving the whole body in the movement.

Moving from place to place, use your body in any way you want, drawing lines which have a single quality (or two contrasting qualities) such as:

curved / straight
long / short
wide / narrow
high / low
vertical / horizontal
rough / smooth
continuous / broken

Without any limitation of quality, experiment freely with line drawing.

Create in movement a clearly shaped linear design. Re-create the design graphically, using chalk on a blackboard or crayon on a large piece of paper (preferably spread out on the floor). The drawing should not be an analytical diagram. It should express the feeling of the movement's form. We can show our movement and our drawing to others, or we can show our movement to others and let them reproduce it graphically according to their feeling for the design. The order can be reversed. Instead of first creating the movement then the graphic design, we can first create a linear design on paper or blackboard then re-create it in movement.

A group can form a line, one behind the other, and follow the leader who draws lines through the sur-

rounding space. The floor path and body positions determine the shape of the line. Two or more groups can draw lines which relate to one another. (For additional line studies, see page 68).

Visual Designs

With our body movements we can create not only lines but also the feeling of other design elements such as plane, volume and mass. A plane is a flat surface. A volume is an empty enclosed space. A mass is a filled space having thickness and weight. Flatten your hand and move it in a way that creates the feeling of a flat surface (plane). Cup the hand and make movements which create a feeling of volume. Make a fist and create a feeling of mass. Using your whole body, instead of just the hand, create movements which have the feeling of plane, volume or mass. Contrast these qualities while improvising as individual or group.

Texture is a tactile sensation which can be expressed in movement. Let's try it. Starting with your hands, then involving the whole body, show in movement the feeling of smooth . . . rough . . . oily . . . sticky . . . prickly . . . soft . . . hard . . . and any other tactile sensations which you can think of. (We have already mentioned the possibility of expressing tactile qualities in movement with voice sounds on page 55).

Look around you for something which has a definite shape: a plant, a chair, a lamp shade, any ordinary thing. Look at it carefully. Observe the qualities of its unique spatial form. Now express it in movement. Do not just assume a position. Create movements which show the shape.

Make a movement that has a clear and interesting visual design, then re-create it in some material, or combination of materials, such as wire, string, paper, wood, screen, cotton, clay. Choose your materials carefully to bring out the particular qualities of your movement.

In couples we can create together visual designs in movement.

Step 1

The partners move in alternation. One creates a movement with a clear visual design. The other then reproduces it. This sequence is repeated a number of times, with the same partner leading.

Step 2

Same as Step 1 with the roles reversed.

Step 3

The partners move in alternation as in Steps 1 and 2, with this difference: after the first movement,

there is no leader. Each creates a new design which contrasts with that created by the partner.

Step 4

The partners move simultaneously, working together to create clear visual designs in movement.

An experienced group of any size can improvise freely in movement, creating continuously evolving visual designs.

Environment

Wherever we are we can dance in relation to our environment. The form of our environment influences the form of our body movements.

When children come to my studio for the first time, I sometimes start their dance class by saying, "With the movements of our body we can show anything. Can you show that the room is large? . . . the ceiling is high? . . . the floor is smooth and flat? . . . what can you see out the window? . . . a tree? . . . a bird? . . . a telephone pole? . . . show it in movement." Children find it quite natural to create movements which show the shape of things they see.

When I teach students in a university gymnasium and give them the problem of moving freely in rela-

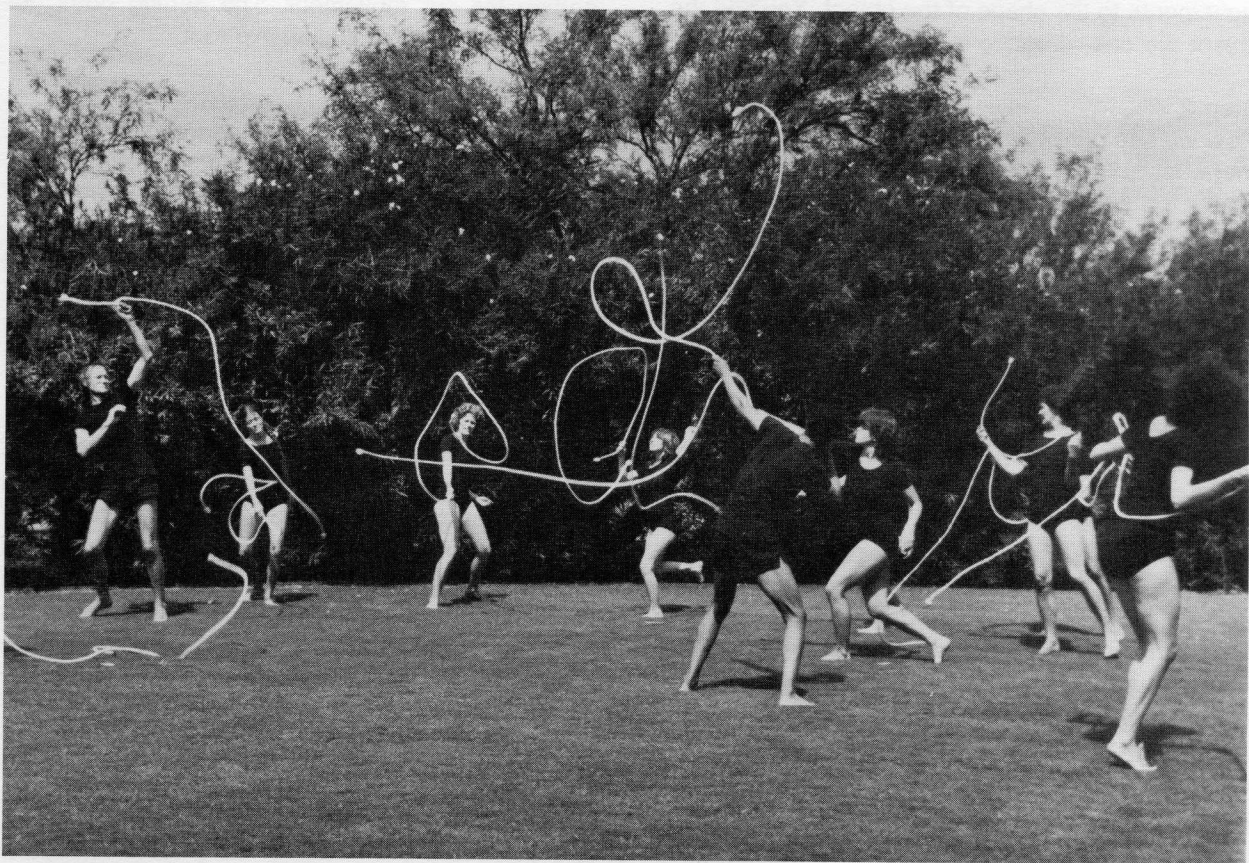
tion to their environment, the results are sometimes astonishing as men and women jump over, crawl through, climb up and swing on the apparatus, to the amazement of athletes who may be passing by.

Outdoors we can dance with the sky, the earth, the clouds, the sun or moon, plants and animals, man-made structures. We can dance with our shadow. My student groups have made beautiful outdoor dances with everyone carrying a flower in the hand or with just one flower passed from person to person. In Tucson we like to dance with cicada skins which are very plentiful in summer.

Our environment begins with our body coverings and extends to everything around us.

Students are sometimes asked to find an object which can be carried in the hands. It may be any ordinary thing like an article of clothing, a piece of household equipment, or something natural found outdoors. Members of the group have no idea what we are going to do with these things, so their objects have very little in common. In Arizona someone might bring a tumbleweed or a mesquite bean, in Costa Rica a basket for harvesting coffee. I am always pleased when some bold student selects a chair or a floor mop because these things are hard to handle and present an extraordinary challenge.

We now proceed to create our own environment.





Step 1

The first step is to carry the object in your hands and dance with it, adjusting the shape of your movements to the shape of the object. You and the object are one, creating together mobile designs.

Step 2

Now we use our object as a body covering or ornament, fastening it to us or carrying it in such a way that it becomes a part of our body shape. We design our movements accordingly. How do you wear a chair or a floor mop on your body? It can be done. Try it. We cannot move as we usually do because the attachment makes us different. We do not complain because it limits our movement. Rather we rejoice that it offers us entirely new movement experiences. I remember a small child creeping along the floor on her stomach with a piece of cloth on her back which seemed so much a part of her that it suggested the skin of an earth-bound creature. I have seen crowns and long trains of dry desert vegetation. Some objects can make sounds. A gray-haired man danced in one of our studio demonstrations, adorned with a saguaro skeleton which he rubbed with a stick, producing a rasp-like sound.

Step 3

After we have danced with our object as a body covering, we place it on the floor and use it as the setting for our movement. The setting does not move. We move in relationship to it.

Step 4

We are now ready for a group dance, suitable for a group of any size. Standing in a scattered position, we all place our objects on the floor, arranging them as we wish (a piece of cloth may be folded in some special way, a solid object may lie flat or stand upright). We each dance in relation to the shape of our object. After a while we begin to move from place to place, dancing for a few moments in relation to each of the other group members' objects. Finally we return to our own and, picking it up, move toward the center of the room where all of us together carefully construct, without speaking, a single shape made up of all the objects. Now we move slowly away from the central structure until we are all around it. Continuing to dance, we relate our individual movements to it. The dance ends in stillness with the dancers' human shapes complementing the sculptural shape of the inanimate things.

REPRESENTATIONAL MOVEMENT

The form of our dancing may be either abstract or representational. Abstract form *presents* qualities abstracted from many different kinds of life experience. Representational form *represents* qualities derived from specific life experiences.

Derived Qualities

I will name, one at a time, many familiar things, some of which move and some of which do not move. You will try to express in movement the feeling of each of the things which I name (you may use sound if you wish).

fire . . . water . . . wind . . . rain . . . lightning . . .
thunder . . . rainbow . . . sunset . . .
mountain . . . cactus . . . flower . . . fish . . .
bug . . . bird . . . egg-beater . . .
washing machine . . . typewriter . . .
bulldozer . . .

These are only a few suggestions. It is possible to express in movement the feeling of anything which we see, hear or touch.

A group can improvise in movement on any theme which appeals to them. In my studio I have seen beautiful group dances representing these familiar things:

forest fire
rain storm
clouds
ocean waves
fish bowl
swarm of bees
flock of birds
flower garden
starry sky

Two themes which can inspire delightful group dances for children or adults are described here.

Machine Dance

This is for a group of any size. One member is in the center while the others stand around at a distance. The central figure creates and repeats continuously a single machine-like movement accompanied by machine-like voice sounds. One member at a time moves toward the center, creating another machine-like movement and sound to complement that of the central dancer. When all have joined, there should exist a complex, mechanically moving structure with different parts united by a common pulse. The machine continues its movements until there is a gradual slow-down and stop, or a

mechanical breakdown with the whole machine falling apart.

Creature

For a small group of three, four or five this is an easy dance. For a larger group it may be difficult. It is not an improvisation. It must be discussed, planned and practiced cooperatively by the participants until the form becomes fixed. Group members attach themselves together, representing a new kind of living creature which has never existed before. The creature moves from place to place and creates sound. Possibilities for fantastic variations on this theme are almost limitless.

Specific Emotions

Our body movements can express a specific mood or emotion. They can also tell a story. When they represent the action of someone or something doing some specific thing we are acting. The following studies are in an area where pure dance (the art of movement) and drama (the art of action) overlap.

Improvise freely in movement, with voice sounds, expressing a specific mood or emotion such as these:

rage
sorrow
greed
loneliness
joy
bondage
freedom

A group can represent in movement a specific emotion, mood or action. The following themes are suitable for improvisation by an adult group of any size:

fear
mutual aid
lost
lament
parade
festival

Fighting and Friendly Dances

These dances offer a basic polarity of movement expression which has value for both children and adults.

Step 1

Standing far enough apart so that there is no danger of touching one another, all members of the group make forceful fighting movements, using their voices and expressing extreme hostility toward

everyone in the whole world. They may not move from place to place or touch anyone.

Step 2

Form couples. Remaining in place and without touching, the partners make forceful fighting movements, expressing aggressive hostility toward one another.

Step 3 (Ring Dance)

One couple fights, with the group sitting on the floor in a ring around them. The fighters may move freely in the available space but they may not touch. The group encourages them with movements and voice sounds. The fight may end in a draw or with one or both partners defeated.

Step 4

With the same partner as in Step 2, both make movements which have a friendly feeling. They may touch each other and move from place to place if they wish.

Step 5

Starting in a scattered position, and moving freely from place to place, the whole group makes friendly movements toward one another and toward the whole world.

It is touching to see two children (or two adults) try-

ing sincerely to make movements which express true friendliness. If they have been made to realize that there can be no pretense, and that the simplest movement is adequate if it expresses true feeling, the result is sometimes an exquisitely beautiful movement relationship.

Once, in a children's class, I chose a little boy to be one of the fighters in the ring dance then asked him with whom he would like to fight. He considered for a while, looking the group over, then he chose one of the girls. I asked him why he had chosen her and he said, "Because she would make a good fight dance." In this way children learn the objectivity of art work.

Hide and Seek

This dance has the same name as a children's game but it is not a game. It is a dance for two. One partner expresses the feeling of hiding, while the other expresses the feeling of seeking. Both move freely in the available space, using their whole bodies to create movement forms which clearly express hiding or seeking. Whether they are far apart or close together, neither expresses awareness of the other's presence. The movements of the one who hides can express concealment although he is plainly visible. The movements of the seeker can express the fact that he is looking for someone although he can obviously see the one whom he is



trying to find. The dance ends with the expression of finding and being found. No two couples will express this in exactly the same way. In my studio

we sometimes have many couples dancing this dance at the same time, which adds to the intensity of the experience.



Circle Dance

Our problem is not to discover what movements we can make while in a circle, but to discover what movements a circle can make. The smaller the group, the easier it is.

Step 1

Standing in a circle, facing the center, with hands on each others' shoulders, explore the movement possibilities of this closely united circular group body.

Step 2

Same as Step 1, holding hands.

Step 3

Same as Steps 1 and 2, without bodily contact, using arms and hands in any way you wish.

It is possible for individual members to take turns leading the group in circle movements (everyone should have a turn) before trying the above leaderless circle dances. If there is time, this is to be recommended, because the leader can learn much about group movement from the experience.

Line Dance

A line of not more than eight or nine dancers, one behind the other, follows a leader around the room making the same body movements that the leader makes. This is not a child's Follow-the-Leader game in which the leader tries to trick the followers by making movements which are as difficult as possible. It is a group dance, so the leader's movements must be comfortable for everyone. Children understand these things. A student of mine, a teacher of dance, tells me of a children's group of hers which included one handicapped child. In the Line Dance, whoever was leader made sure that no movements were too difficult for this group member. In fact, different leaders competed for the honor of making a good dance with movements which everyone could do easily.

Line dancers may hold hands, or put both hands on the shoulders of the person in front, or use arms and hands freely. A fixed bodily attachment in either a circle or a line, such as hands on shoulders, makes the dance more difficult but strengthens feeling for the group body.

Other line dances are described on page 60.

There are times in group dance improvisation when the group movement becomes a potential background for an individual dancer. If the group is

unified in feeling, everyone will sense this, and whoever feels that he or she can make an appropriate contribution to the whole assumes an individual role and dances in contrast to the group. To develop feeling for both individual and group movement, we offer studies such as the following.

Circle Background

While one dancer leads the group in circle movements, another dances freely within the circle (or outside, or in and out). To intensify the contrast between individual and group, either the group or the individual may use sounds of voice, hands or feet.

Line Background

With the group in a line, following the leader, an individual dancer creates movements which contrast with the movements of the line. For variation there may be one line and two or more individuals, or one individual and two or more lines.

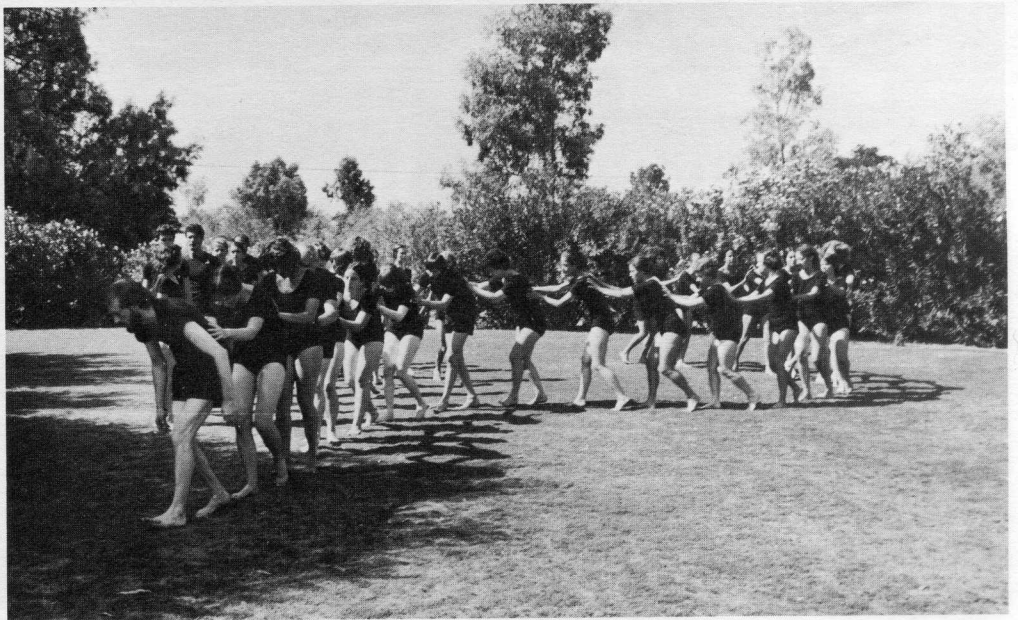
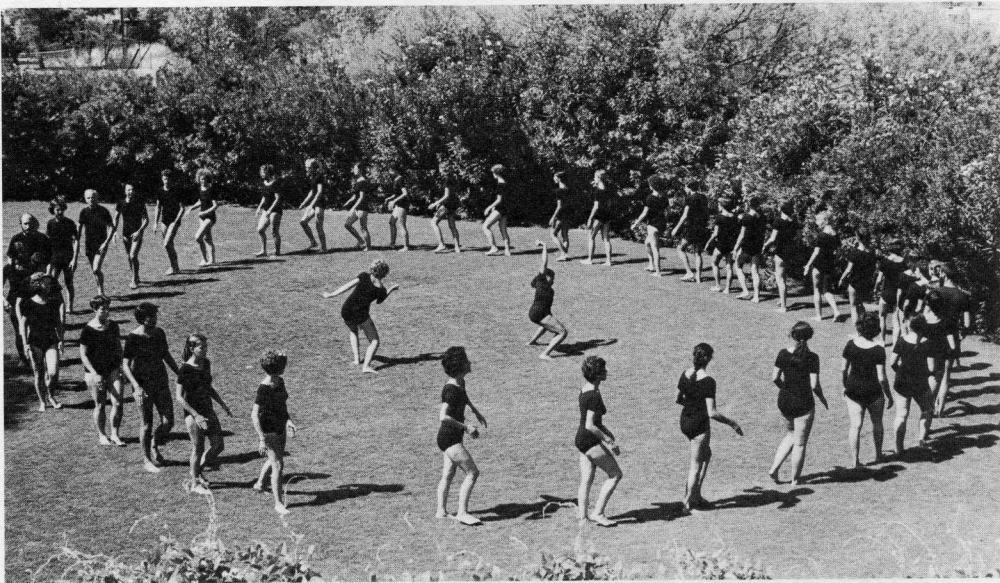
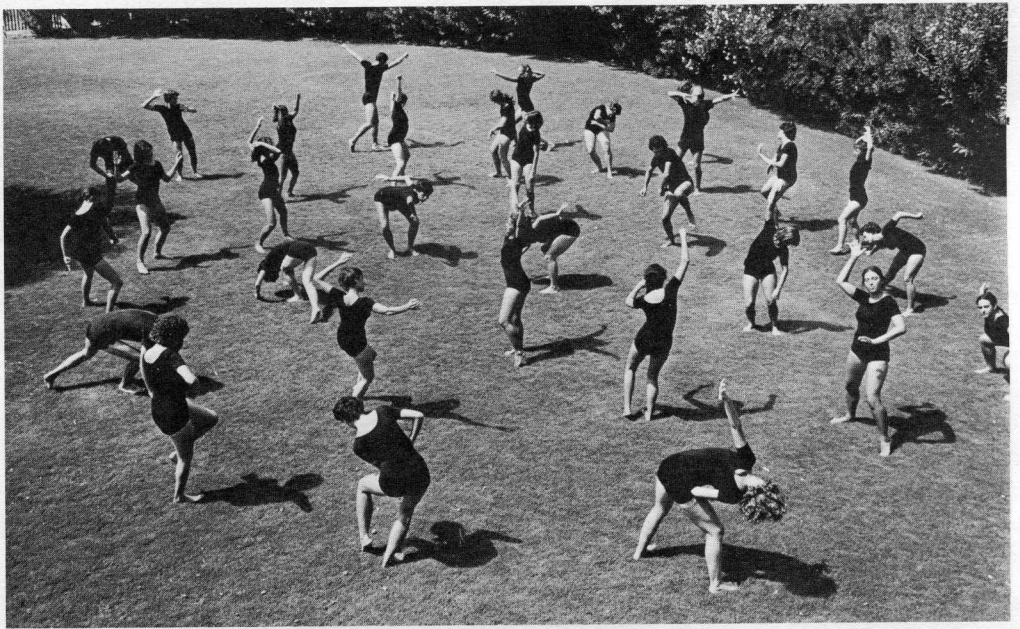
In both the Circle Background and the Line Background dances, every member of the student group should have a turn filling each of the two roles: leader of the group and individual dancer.

Freedom

Freedom is a word so often misunderstood that it may come as a surprise to some people to learn that free group dance improvisation requires great discipline. Every member of the group must concentrate, to the exclusion of all else, on the life of the movement within him and in those around him. Although his body movements are an expression of his own inner feelings, he must be objective toward them, forming them to meet the requirements of the dance. Sometimes he must lead, sometimes follow, sometimes he must dance in unison with the rest of the group, sometimes create movements which are different from the movements of others.

Every group member is equally responsible for the evolution of the group movement. There is no escape for anyone. Some members may be able to contribute more than others but everyone must contribute what he or she can. Sometimes a beginner will say that he (she) did not like the improvised group dance of which he (she) was a part. I say that it was his (her) responsibility to make it likeable. Inevitably some improvisations are more satisfying than others but every participant, if wholly involved, will find something to like about a dance which he or she has helped to create.

Concentration must be sustained by every group member without interruption as long as the dance



continues. A group improvisation may last for hours. This does not mean that exertion is forced. If a dance is an expression of true feeling it will proceed in a wave-like alternation of movements which are strenuous and movements which are restful. Polarities complement one another and are refreshing, like slow and fast movement, activity and passivity, movements in place and movements from place to place. At certain times, some members of the group will be still while others dance. The longer

a dance improvisation continues, the deeper grows the group feeling and the more new group movement experiences are created.

How do we know when to end a dance, and how do we end it? If there is no limitation of time, a dance may continue until the group as a whole feels that it has done enough. Perhaps the members are tired, or perhaps they have expressed themselves so fully that they have no desire to continue at this



time. This feeling must be shared by the majority and accepted by everyone. A single individual may prefer to go on, but he will sense when the others want to stop and will join the group in bringing the dance to a conclusion. A dance is ended as simply as any other life experience. It needs no stirring climax, no final fillip (which beginners sometimes think should mark the end of a dance). We start and end our dances when the need is there and when the time is right. We make them long or short according to the time available and the inclination of the dancers.

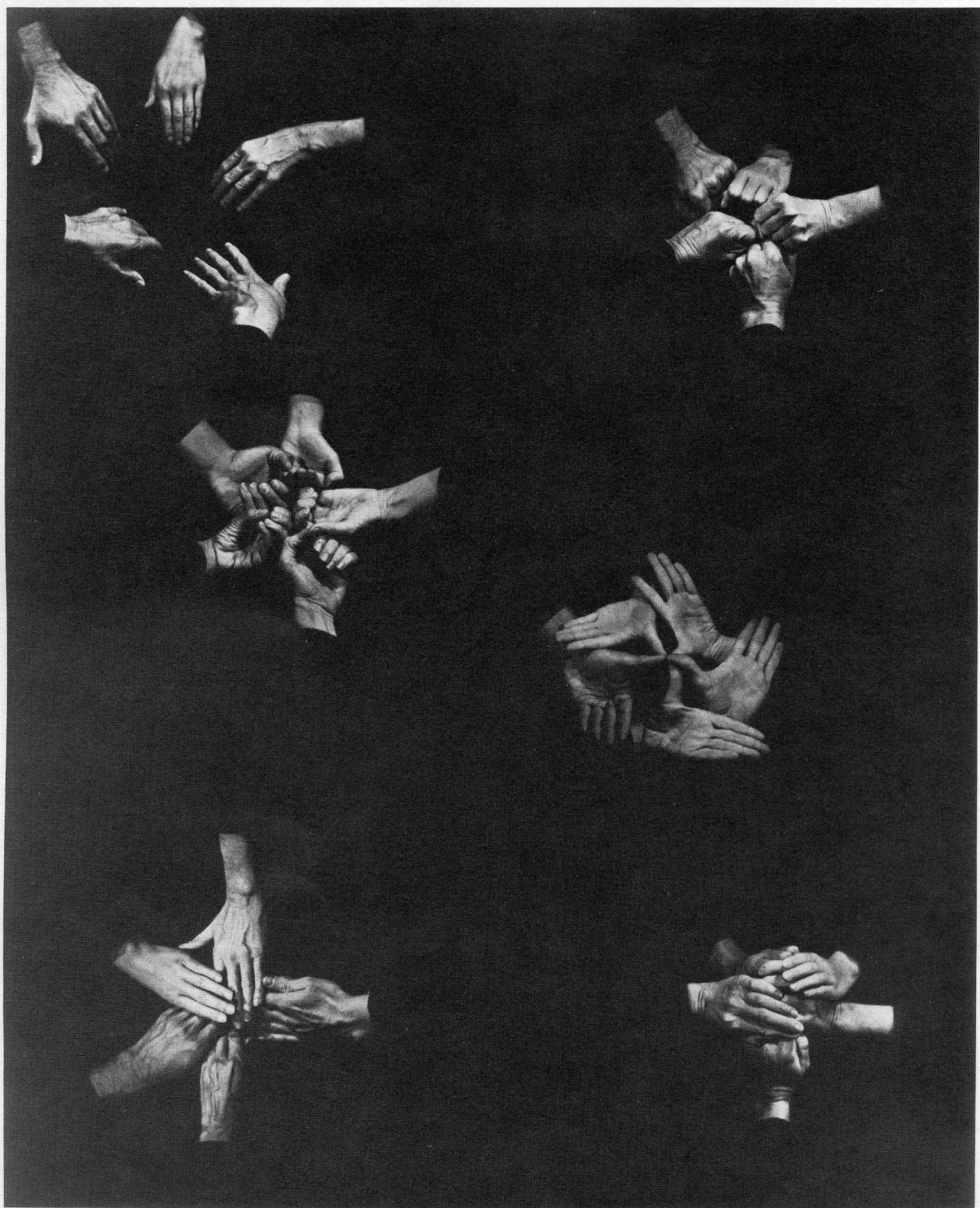
A New Folk Dance

In our culture today there are many different kinds of dance. It has not always been so. Dance was

once an expression of the whole of life, the whole person, the whole community. It was religion, art, science, education, entertainment, recreation, therapy, work and play all at the same time. It expressed and furthered integration of body, emotions and mind . . . individual and group . . . human beings and their environment.

Civilization has brought disintegration and dance has broken up into many different specialized forms, expressing disunity and separateness. A free approach to the art of body movement, as offered in this book, can bring dance back to the people as meaningful expression and communication, helping to counteract the disruptive influences in our daily lives, providing healthy wholeness, creativity and joy.





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Deo gratias

Barbara Mettler

