

# Creative Dance in Kindergarten

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PRICE \_\_\_\_\_

## CREATIVE DANCE IN KINDERGARTEN

report of experimental teaching of creative dance in kindergarten  
at the Tucson Community School in Tucson, Arizona  
November 1961 through March 1962

BARBARA METTLER

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## THE CHILDREN, THE TIME, THE PLACE

### Children

two groups of children, one in the morning and one in the afternoon  
about twenty-five children in each group

in this booklet initials are substituted for the child's actual name  
the last initial indicates the sex of the child

### Time

two periods weekly for each group  
duration of period: fifteen minutes to half an hour  
exact starting time dependent on other activities

children not required to take part

### Place

class held in kindergarten room where other activities were going on  
shown in photograph on pages 17 and 18

## THE GOAL

### LETTER TO KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Dear K,

Here is an attempt to answer your question, "What is the goal?"

- ... to provide movement experiences which will develop the child's natural creative feeling for body movement
- ... to develop freedom, awareness and control in the use of the body as an instrument of expression and movement as an expressive medium
- ... to cultivate individuality of expression and group movement feeling
- ... to develop movement imagination
- ... to cultivate rhythm as an inner creative force
- ... to develop feeling for the basic force, time and space elements of movement
- ... to develop feeling for the creative relationship of movement to sound (music, speech) and sight (design)

I believe there are no short cuts to these goals and that we must be content to advance slowly.

The only problem at present seems to me to be my lack of experience in handling such a large group of five year olds.

Barbara Mettler  
November 27, 1961

## REPORT OF FIRST TWO WEEKS

### GENERAL

Children obviously enjoy pure movement experiences and show ability to shape their body movements into forms which are an expression of themselves. Every child shows some movement imagination.

The language of movement is entirely natural to the child. He is used to expressing himself in movement and readily understands movement terminology (stretch, bend, twist, jump, fall, walk, run, etc.).

The teacher's only difficulty is with group discipline: keeping every member of the group attentive at all times so that the group as a whole can make progress.

## SPECIFIC

the following experiences appeared to be meaningful in developing a feeling for body movement as a medium of creative expression

### SPACE

#### Position

relative to the room and to other bodies (people, furniture, walls, etc.)

"Find a place for yourself where you will have plenty of room to move without touching anyone or anything - when you have found your place, sit down."

"Stay in your place and make all kinds of big movements to see if you have plenty of room to move without touching anyone or anything."

relative to body structure

sit down  
lie down  
lie on your back  
on your front  
on your side  
on the other side  
on your back again

sit up  
kneel  
stand up

kneeling was a new concept  
for some

relative to other bodies

all sit in place except one who moves around the room without touching anyone or anything

all move around the room simultaneously without touching anyone or anything



## TIME

Pace: slow and fast movement

in place

sit down - slowly  
stand up - slowly  
lie down - slowly  
stand up - fast  
sit down - fast  
etc.

the teacher made the mistake  
of saying "very, very slowly"  
with the result that the children  
began to compete with one  
another to see who could move  
the most slowly: competition  
destroys the feeling for  
movement expression

place to place (all moving simultaneously, or one at a time)

walking  
slowly  
fast

running  
slowly  
fast

change pace when teacher says "slow" or "fast"

free movement  
in place  
place to place

walking

running

## FORCE

difference between moving and not moving

(this experience has not yet been adequately explored - "not moving" may be experienced either as relaxation or as tension)

complete relaxation on floor      relaxation was a new word  
learned

lying on back: quiet, soft, loose  
eyes closed: lightly, not tightly

## FREE MOVEMENT EXPRESSION

move in any way you want to - try out different ways of moving

lying  
sitting  
standing  
moving around the room

one makes up a movement, shows it, then all do it

## SEPARATE BODY PARTS

move only

fingers  
hands  
arms  
head  
toes  
feet  
legs  
trunk

trunk was a new word learned

move the whole body

movements of separate body  
parts may be done in any  
position: lying, sitting or  
standing

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF MOVEMENT

in place,

stretching  
bouncing  
twisting  
shaking  
swinging  
falling

(the work "collapsing" was used but was not understood, so "falling" was substituted)

place to place

walking  
skipping  
running

these two arrangements seem best at present for place-to-place movements:

all move simultaneously around the room in circular motion

all sit in middle of floor in close group, except one who moves around the group in circular motion

## SOUND ACCOMPANIMENT

accompanying self

all say "skip" while skipping

all stand in place, clapping and saying "skip", with teacher leading - correct pace is essential - the wrong pace (too fast or too slow for child's natural movement) destroys feeling for the movement - this is an area in which the teacher needs thorough training

accompanying one another

one skips while others clap and say "skip" - teacher must establish pace and lead the clapping so that sound and movement are perfectly united - lack of unity destroys feeling for the creative relationship of sound and movement - this is an area in which the teacher needs thorough training

## ADDITIONAL LEARNINGS

meanings, reasons

when we are dancing, we are moving

when we move, we need room: space

there are different kinds of dancing - this is creative dancing -  
in creative dancing, we make up our own movements

we take off our shoes so that our feet can move

sometimes we close our eyes, so that we can't see anyone else

observing and criticizing

one skips while all observe - is he skipping? what is he doing?  
(children recognize at once the difference between skipping,  
running, walking)

showing and sharing

one makes up a movement, shows it, then all do it

REPORT OF THIRD THROUGH SEVENTH WEEK  
concluding at Christmas

GENERAL

Some of the little boys resist the idea of dancing. They refuse to participate or, while participating, ridicule one another and the girls. I believe that this is the result of outside influence. I have not yet found a way to keep them all interested or to counteract the negative influence of those who resist.

Some children are obviously more interested in this activity than others. Nevertheless, I believe that, if suitable approaches can be found, all will enjoy it.

One handicap is limited space. There is not enough room for free, vigorous movement all together.

I believe that we introduced instruments too soon. More time should have been given to pure movement expression.

Since some mothers do not want their children to remove socks, we are all keeping shoes and socks on until warmer weather.

## SPECIFIC

new experiences enjoyed during this five-week period

FOOT EXERCISE: picking up a piece of facial tissue with toes

this should be done frequently for the health of the foot, but we had to discontinue it because not all children are allowed to take off their socks

## STRETCHING AND RELAXING

lying on the floor (on back): stretching freely, then relaxing and lying quietly - alternately stretching and relaxing

## EXPLORING DIFFERENT KINDS OF MOVEMENT

stretching  
  lying  
  sitting  
  standing

bouncing  
  standing  
  sitting

large and small movements

noisy and quiet movements

crawling

## PROBLEMS OF DIRECTION

walking  
  forward  
  backward  
  sideward  
  change direction at teacher's word

galloping sideward  
  left side leading  
  right side leading  
  change direction (left or right) at teacher's word

## LEADING AND FOLLOWING (activity and passivity)

teacher directs group movement through her own movement  
rise and sink  
walk forward, backward, sideward  
turn around

one boy (SCM) wanted to lead and did very well

## NEW SPATIAL PATTERNS

moving from one end of room to the other

continuous circular motion

forming circle around teacher (or instrument)

## FREE MOVEMENT EXPRESSION WITH CHANTED ACCOMPANIMENT

each child creates a movement, then shows it - teacher clarifies pattern by leading the group in chanted accompaniment

examples: up - down up - down

turn a - round turn a - round

a - round and down a - round and down

skip - and skip - and skip

## USE OF INSTRUMENTS

### DANCING TO DRUM MUSIC

teacher plays (regular beat or simple pattern), all dance  
sitting  
standing  
moving freely in room  
using one part of body  
arms  
head  
legs  
whole body

each child has turn playing drum freely, all dance

teacher plays a variety of patterns, all dance  
regular beat: slow, fast  
2-beat, 3-beat measure, etc.

## SHAKER

all sit in circle around shaker - one child after another takes turn dancing with shaker in center of circle, handing shaker to next one when finished

teacher plays shaker freely while all dance

## CHRISTMAS THEMES

- children name something Christmasy, then all show how it moves

reindeer  
bell  
Christmas tree  
falling snow  
fire

word accompaniment

Merry Christ - mas

all clap while saying it  
one after another dances while saying it  
all together dance while saying it

fire dance

all move as one fire - first the fire is not burning - it must be lighted - teacher lights fire - fire burns slowly at first - then flames jump higher and higher - then finally die down and fire goes out

bell dance

when asked to move like a bell ringing, all except one (KIF) did side-to-side swing. KIF did a beautiful, slow, forward and backward swing - we then all stood around KIF and danced, first swinging side to side, then forward and backward, chanting "swing - swing"

two-by-two reindeer

one child created reindeer movement - another was chosen to do it with him, side by side

there was variety in the movements: some galloped, some went on all fours, etc.



## IMPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S WORK

MHM - won't dance unless he is going to have a chance to play the drum - he shows much feeling for drum music - we must try to get him to express this in movement

NAF - says that she is going to be a dancer when she grows up - nevertheless she often appears to be indifferent to what we are doing

SHM - seems to enjoy dance but is quick to follow others who do not want to participate

CAM - took part for the first time when we said we were not going to take off our shoes

SUF - seems to have tremendous dammed-up inner force which comes out explosively

CAF - is shy but eager

MIM - seems to be sure of himself

CEF - shows imagination in movement and sound

LEF - seems not to be interested in dance - perhaps she has more interest in the visual arts

KAF - seems well organized and responsible - I believe she could do better with an older or more responsive group

SCM - shows a delicate quality in his movement expression - this causes some of the other boys to laugh at him

BEF - shows movement imagination and enjoyment of dance

ROF - tends to watch others instead of dance

SHF - has good feeling for movement rhythm

BRM - seems intelligent and cooperative but does not always participate

PHM - is very active, needs plenty of movement - he appears to enjoy dance but is a leader in ridiculing others - he showed great embarrassment and refused to do it, when children were asked to lie down on their backs and lift their legs in the air

CMM - participates enthusiastically and is not at all influenced by other boys' negative attitudes

KIF - has a deep warm feeling for rhythmic movement expression but is not always attentive

RIM - does well when firmly directed

impressions of the other children's work are not distinct enough for comment







## REPORT OF CLASSES IN JANUARY

### GENERAL

Now that I am learning what kind of movement experiences are valuable for children of this age and how to present them, the following facts become increasingly clear:

These children are quite capable of enjoying creative movement experiences together in a group. However, they need gradually to learn how to apply themselves to the given problems. This learning is greatly handicapped by the distracting influence of other activities going on in the same room. (This would be true of any age group.)

It is my recommendation that, if a period is to be set aside for creative dance, the children be given a room for dancing where nothing else is going on.

It is obviously bad training to allow children to drift in and out of the dance class, leaving problems unsolved and unfinished, disturbing each other. Yet this cannot be avoided as long as other activities are offered at the same time in the same room. If there were no competition from other activities, I believe that all could be drawn into the dance group (with various degrees of enthusiasm, of course).

It may be suggested that the answer is to eliminate the special period of creative dancing in favor of weaving creative movement experiences in and out of the general fabric of their other learnings. This too is a valuable way of work but it can never be a substitute for creative dance experience any more than cultivating auditory experiences throughout the day can be a substitute for music.

If all children are expected to take part (as I believe they should be), the help of an assistant would be necessary to keep the negative elements from disrupting the flow of the class. I believe that, if the positive forces were allowed to move ahead, the negative ones would wither away. K has acted as an assistant occasionally, with good results.

We are now working longer: approximately twenty minutes. The morning group shows considerable growth in ability to work with the material given them. The afternoon group has accomplished very little.

## SPECIFIC

new experiences enjoyed during January

### USE OF ORDINARY OBJECTS IN DANCING

(gifts which children had made and given to teacher at Christmas)

#### PLACE MAT

what shape is it? rectangle

draw a rectangle in the air

sitting

with one hand

with other hand

lying

with one foot

with other foot

standing

with arm, using whole body

large rectangle

small rectangle

lie down on the floor and make yourself into the shape  
of a rectangle

stand up, holding a chair for balance: draw a rectangle  
on floor with one foot, then with other foot

draw rectangle with hand on floor

walk around the rectangle you have drawn

make it larger

make it smaller

walk around it backward

walk around it sideward

it has a fringe - how would you show the fringe in movement?  
(some children expressed well in movement the feeling of texture)

it has a picture on it - what do you see?

a tree - show it in movement

a house - show it in movement

smoke coming out of the chimney - show it in movement

a person - how is he moving?

we can all together make one place mat

some will stand side by side to make the edges...one is the tree...one the house...one the smoke coming out of the chimney...one the person...the ones on the edges can show the fringe...(this was not done well, but the children must have enjoyed it because they mentioned it several weeks later)

the place mat can make a sound

teacher uses the place mat as an instrument  
children dance to the sound

snapping sound  
fluttering sound

we can wave it in the air

children stood in circle - one after another ran around outside of circle, waving place mat like banner, then passed it on to next child

we can jump over it

place mat was put on floor - each child in turn could jump over it in any way he wished

we can wear it on our bodies \*

each child was given turn moving with mat placed by teacher in some way on body:

on head  
on shoulder  
on arm  
on hand  
on finger  
on both hands  
fastened to hair  
fastened to belt  
etc.

\* we did not do this but it is included here because children would have enjoyed it

## METAL ASH TRAY

what shape is it? round

draw a round circle in the air

sitting

with one hand

with the other hand

lying

with one foot

with the other foot

standing

with arm, using whole body

make the circle larger and larger, then

smaller and smaller, chanting the

accompaniment:

larger - larger - larger - larger

slow 4-beat  
measure

smaller - smaller - smaller - smaller

lie down on the floor and make yourself into the shape  
of a circle

stand up, holding a chair for balance - draw a circle on  
floor with one foot, then with other foot

draw circle on floor with hand

walk around the circle you have drawn

make it larger

make it smaller

walk around it backward

run around it

it has marks on it (hammer marks)

show them in movement

(children jumped up and down)

how did you make them? "We hammered them"

show in movement how you hammered them

use your arms

use your whole body

say "pound! ...pound! ...pound! ..."

it's flat

make flat movements

(children expressed well feeling of horizontal plane -  
some made arm movements, some used whole body lying  
down on floor)

it can make a sound

teacher uses ash tray as instrument, children dance

ringing sound

dull pounding sound

we can move with it on our bodies

each child has turn moving with ashtray placed by teacher  
in some way on body

on head

on shoulder

on elbow, arm raised

on back of hand

on palm turned up

on both palms turned up

between palms held together

etc.

all stood in circle - each child had turn walking around  
inside of circle balancing ashtray on head, then passing  
it on to next one

we can dance around it and over it

all at one end of room - ashtray placed on floor in center  
of room - one child after another:

runs to ashtray, around it, and on to other end of  
room

runs to ashtray and jumps over it



## DIFFERENT WAYS OF GETTING FROM ONE END OF ROOM TO THE OTHER

walking, running, skipping, jumping, crawling, rolling  
(could have included galloping, hopping, leaping, tip-toeing)

## DIFFERENT WAYS OF WALKING

bouncy - smooth  
tight - loose  
slow - fast  
high - low  
large steps - small steps

forward, backward, sideward

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

circle

one child in center of circle creates movements in place, all do same movements with him

line

one child leads line around the room (3 or 4 children), creating movements which others follow

loose group

entire group moves from one end of room to other, with one child leading and creating movements which all follow

## TIME PROBLEMS, using drum

teacher beats drum, children first listen, then clap, then dance  
(with just one part of the body or with the whole body, lying or sitting or standing or moving around the room)

regular pulse  
moderate, fast, slow

regular measure  
2-beat, 3-beat, 4-beat

## VISUAL DESIGN: Line

drawing lines in the air with our bodies

sitting down

- with one arm and hand
- with the other arm and hand
- with both arms and hands

lying on back

- with one leg and foot
- with the other leg and foot
- with both legs and feet

standing

- with arm and whole body
- straight lines
- curved lines
- long lines
- short lines

from one end of room to the other

- long, straight line
- wavy, curved line

children were asked to draw  
these on paper

movements expressed in drawing

- child walks pattern on floor, then draws it
- each shows movement and drawing to others

drawings expressed in movement

- child creates free line drawing, then dances it

children drew with large black  
crayon and sheet of newsprint  
on floor

## IMPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S WORK

ROF - gives every indication of wanting to dance, but drops out before she has started - why?

KIF - has a need to touch things, very strong tactile feeling

JEF - shows love of dance and movement imagination - she could do extremely well but has some bad behavior patterns: does not sustain attention, is unreliable, annoys others - shows fear of rejection

PHM - shows interest but always refuses to be first when asked - seems to show fear of failure

KAF - loves the work when group cooperates, but she sits down and does not want to participate when others get unruly

SCM - has strong feeling for time patterns in movement and sound - his mother says that the work has freed him - he dances at home now, whereas he had always shown much reserve

SHF - loves to dance and does very well - her mother says that she practises at home

MRM - dances with great gusto and strong movement feeling to regular drum beat

RIM - tries to apply "steps" he has learned elsewhere (square dancing, tap dancing?) - he is not yet free in creating his own movements

KEM - has good feeling for movement and sound, does well except when distracted by others

SUF - shows independence and love of free expression

MHM - tries to talk his way through dance class (if and when he participates, which is seldom)

CMM - shows great eagerness to follow directions and do well

GAM - does very well but does not want to do it if it appears hard

PCM - is hesitant and unsure about participating

Are LEF and NAF afraid of dancing?

SHM - does very well when not distracted

EIF, LIF, DEF, CEF, PAF, ANF - all do well

CLM - did well and seemed interested but has followed the lead of others in dropping out

BEF - started out well but has not made progress

other children: no comment

## REPORT OF CLASSES IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

### GENERAL

Brisk pace is good: moving quickly from one theme to another, not dwelling too long on any one theme.

We do not expect perfect performance. As long as they try, that is all right.

There is a constant tendency for some children to pay attention to each other rather than to the problem at hand.

Our way of work is problem-solving. Sometimes we are solving several problems at once.

Example:

- moving with just one part of the body or with the whole body
- dancing to drum beat
- dancing in place or from place to place

Children did not show as much enjoyment of design problems as anticipated. Why? Not vigorous enough movement? Some not interested in design?

Children tended to see letters, numbers in free line drawings.

In two ways, this activity is quite different from other kindergarten activities:

- body movement
- group element

It cannot be approached purely mentally, requires feeling.

## SPECIFIC

new experiences enjoyed during this period

### MOVEMENT DRAWINGS

"Today we are going to make up some movements and then we are going to draw them."

Each child was given a large piece of newsprint and a thick black crayon.

"Put your paper and crayon on the floor"...

"Let's do some bouncing movements...now let's draw the feeling of bouncing."

children bounced the crayon on the paper - some produced dots

others produced up-and-down lines

"Let's do some swinging movements...now let's draw the feeling of swinging."

some children's drawings had good feeling of swinging  
all had a back-and-forth quality

Several children's work was selected and shown, first the movement, then the drawing.

### MOVEMENT QUALITIES DERIVED FROM FAMILIAR THINGS

"Can you think of anything that moves?...I am going to name many things that move, then you are going to show me how they move."

fire

children tended to make the sound of the things while moving

water

some beautiful flowing movements

rain

some delicate hand, finger and arm movements - also some plopping down on the floor like great drops

wind

lightning

movements were sudden and sharp

cloud  
    slow, soft movements  
cat  
    children had played at being cat, so their movement  
    expression was not fresh or imaginative  
fish  
bird  
horse  
    wild racing - not good  
beetle

children suggested:

sheep  
dinosaur  
turtle

"Now I am going to name something which does not move, but how  
would it move if it could?"

cactus  
    children made fine, prickly movements

children suggested:

tree  
tractor  
volcano  
    wonderful explosive movement

every child had turn choosing something, then showing how it moves

## FREE VOCAL SOUNDS AS MOVEMENT ACCOMPANIMENT

"We are going to make all different kinds of movement, and while  
we make the movements we are going to use our voices to make  
the sounds which go with the movements."

stretching movements and stretchy sounds...

flopping movements and floppy sounds...

shaking movements and shaky sounds...

bouncing movements and bouncy sounds...

swinging movements and swingy sounds...

    children's swinging sounds were smooth, light, continuous,  
    melodic - swinging movements were varied: running forward  
    and backward, horizontal swings, sideward-downward swings

    "Let's show our swings" - everyone had a turn

pushing movements and sounds

pulling movements and sounds

pounding movements and sounds

## WORDS AS MOVEMENT ACCOMPANIMENT

children are given a movement which they do freely at first - then the teacher leads the movement while all do it together, naming it as they do it and repeating it over and over - the words are a sound accompaniment - the quality of the sound and the movement is the same - timing is very important

"stretch...and relax!" (gradual, then sudden)

"flop...flop...flop..."

"shake...shake...shake..." (fast)

"bounce...bounce...bounce..."

"swing...swing...swing..."

"pull...pull..."

"push...push..."

"pound...pound..."

"hop...hop...hop..." (first on one foot, then on the other)

"skip...skip...skip..."

first, standing in place, clap while saying skip (teacher leads) - then skip while saying "skip"

## LEADING AND FOLLOWING (activity and passivity)

"Today I am not going to tell you what to do. I am going to show you with my movements. I am going to lead and you are going to follow."

children are sitting on floor in close group in front of teacher  
teacher's movements direct the group movement

swaying

side to side

backward and forward

lying down and sitting up

slowly

fast

standing up and lying down

slowly

fast

group opening out and closing in

group circling around teacher

group moving forward, backward, sideward (teacher using pushing and pulling movements)

group drawn down to the floor and led forward and backward while crawling

children should not imitate teacher's movements -  
teacher must really dance

"This was group dancing because we did it all together."

leader with one follower

teacher leads one child - then that child leads another - every child has turn leading - last child leads teacher

leader (teacher) with entire group

same as before, with this addition: leader sometimes separates one or two from the rest of the group, leading them separately

every child had turn leading entire group

## ORDINARY OBJECTS USED AS INSTRUMENTS

"This morning I looked all around my house to see if I could find something which makes a nice sound. I found many things and I have brought them all. I shall show you how they sound and then you will show me how the sound makes you want to move."

keys

"what kind of sound is it?" "jingling"

clothespin

"snapping"

pan struck with spoon

"ringing"

cardboard box struck with hand

two glass jars

struck with metal spoon

two tones

children were asked to sing tones

vibratory sound: spoon swung back and forth

elastic stretched across mouth of glass jar and plucked

whisk broom

"sweeping sound"

two pencils struck together

piece of cloth

snapped

shaken

newspaper

crumpled slowly

torn suddenly

each child was given piece of newspaper to dance

with, showing crumpling movement with whole body

"I see something in the room which makes a nice sound."

children rushed in all directions to find things

"See if you can find something at home to bring to class for us to dance with."

several children showed great interest by bringing many things -

the child who brought the object first played it while others

danced, then danced alone while teacher played

SNF brought rings and bracelet which she dropped on

floor in succession. As each ring dropped, one of the

children dropped to the ground ("a falling down dance")



## INSTRUMENTS

teacher placed on table these instruments, giving each its name  
(instruments chosen because they can be carried while dancing)

- drum
- shaker
- pair of cymbals (to be struck together)
- claves (pair)
- triangle
- finger cymbals
- tambourine
- wrist bells
- stringed instrument

teacher played each instrument in turn while children showed in movement the feeling of the sound - sometimes an individual child was asked to show movement - if movement expressed good feeling for the sound, all were asked to join

each child was given an instrument to dance with and play - there must be enough instruments to go around, so that all can dance at once (disregard din) - each had turn showing dance

shaker-drum dance

- all, including teacher, sit on floor in circle - teacher plays steady beat on drum (moderately fast) - each child in turn dances with shaker in center of circle, passing instrument on to next child when finished

CMM brought a flute - he was asked to create a repeated pattern which he did very well while all danced freely in circle around him

self-accompaniment with small drum while walking

- all sit on floor in circle - each child has turn walking around outside of circle, beating small drum held under arm - step and drum-beat must occur at same time - child may choose own pace - others clap, following pace of dancer
- children showed that, with practice, all can do this - when all have learned to do it at own pace, the pace can be speeded up or slowed down - this is a very valuable basic exercise in timing

## EXERCISES TAUGHT BY TEACHER

for feet (sitting on floor)

arch-building position:

ankles back, toes curled under, soles of feet facing  
each other

for back (sitting on floor or chair)

make back alternately long and short

relaxation (lying on back on floor)

## THEORETICAL NOTES

from introduction to Barbara Mettler's book CREATIVE DANCE FOR CHILDREN, published 1954, now out of print

In order to help the reader understand this approach to dance, I am going to mention here some of its most important characteristics.

It is an approach which affirms dance as pure movement expression rather than as interpretation of drama or music. Every effort is made to stimulate the child's pure motor imagination, with auditory and visual experience subordinate. Contrary to much current opinion, children love pure movement.

It is an approach which cultivates dance as creative activity rather than as gymnastic technique or theatrical display.

Craftsmanship in the use of movement as an expressive medium and in the use of the body as an expressive instrument is one of the goals of the work.

In the beginning, the major emphasis is on freedom of expression: freedom from arbitrary rules and fixed patterns, freedom to find one's own natural forms of expression according to one's individual nature. After freedom can come awareness, and after awareness, control.

The counterpart of free individual expression is creative group expression. A person who feels at home with himself can find his natural place in the group.

Improvisation, the most creative form of dance experience, constitutes the core of the study program.

Relaxation, the counterpart of tension, is essential to creative movement experience and is practised continuously throughout every lesson.

The same basic material, with slight alterations, is used for all age groups, children and adults.

A student's honest effort receives only encouragement, never adverse criticism. The teacher does not try to improve the student's dance by changing its movements; rather, a new problem is given, designed to correct the inherent weakness.

The circle is used constantly as the most basic of all group positions.

Enjoyment of movement experience is the minimum requirement for the success of a creative dance class.

When the word feeling is used, it means movement feeling: feeling for the abstract quality of the movement enriched by generalized and diffuse emotional overtones. (It rarely means the experience of a specific emotion.)

The rhythm of the class as a whole and of each exercise is derived from movement. It may be underlined by sounds of the voice, hand-clapping, drum, etc., but background music is never used.

In trying to evoke a movement experience for the students, the teacher uses various methods: describing the movement in words, demonstrating, doing it with the group, etc. In these lessons the drum was used a few times to intensify feeling for the beat.

In conclusion, let me give my definition of "creative": To create means to make something new on earth that is unique and has never appeared before. How do we know that what we make is unique? It is unique if it is an honest expression of ourselves, because each one of us is unique and there is no one else like us. To achieve a truly creative work, we must imbue that work with our individuality - our own unique pattern of action, feeling and thought. The more of ourselves we put into our work, the more creative is the result. This is just as true of dishwashing and repairing an automobile as it is of making music and dance.

Barbara Mettler

