

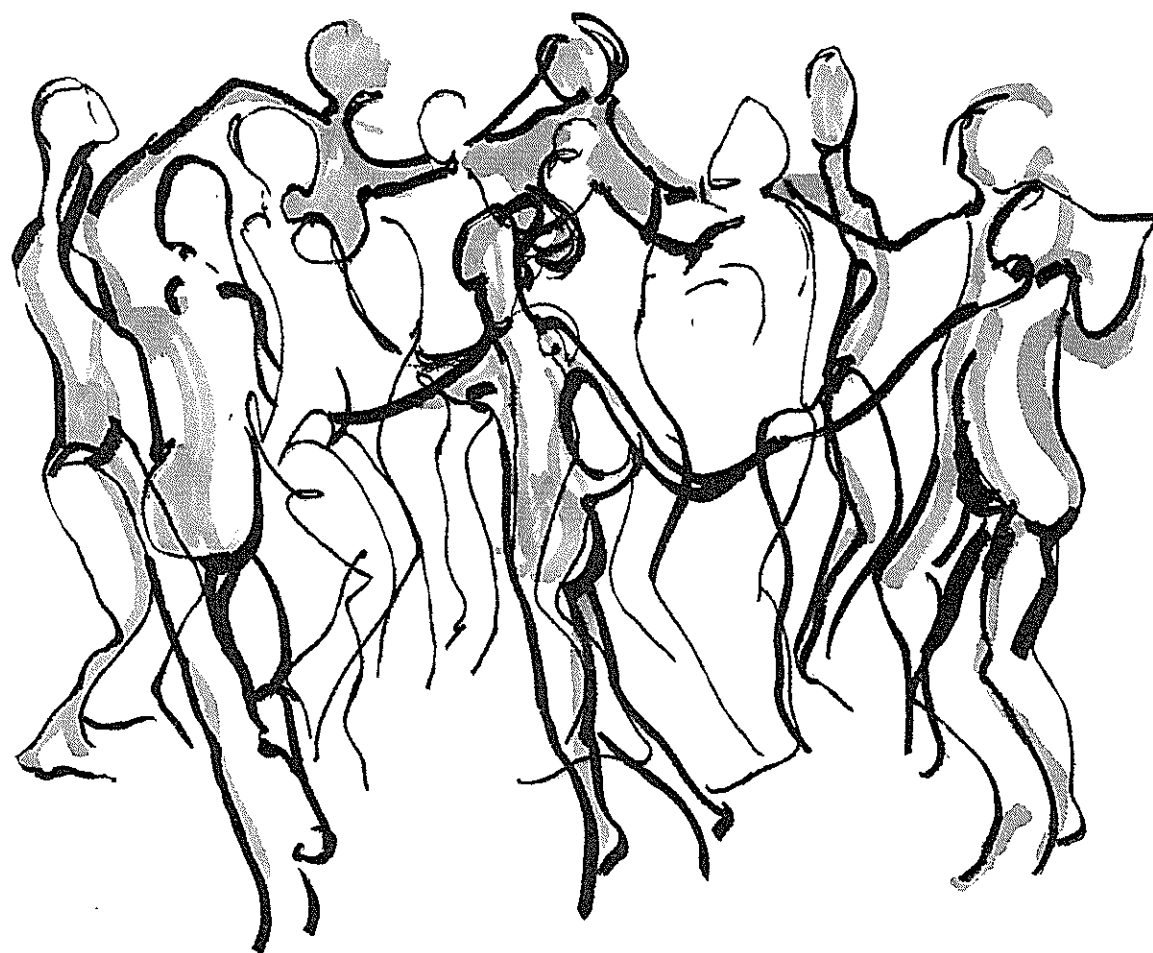
# *Group Dance Improvisations*

*Barbara Mettler*

*drawings  
by Judith Grunbaum*

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PRICE \_\_\_\_\_



BARBARA METTLER

GROUP DANCE

IMPROVISATIONS

with drawings  
by Judith Grunbaum

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Tucson, Arizona

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Barbara Mettler

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The drawings in this book were made by Judith Grunbaum  
when she was a student of mine  
at the Tucson Creative Dance Center  
in the summer of 1974.

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## FOREWORD

When I was enjoying my first bold experiments in group dance improvisation with a small group in 1952 (a time when such things were unheard of) I began to dream of dances being improvised by very large groups, and I longed to discover ways of making this possible.

These dreams were forgotten in the day-by-day effort to keep a dance school going in a direction which sometimes seemed contrary to everyone else's, so it was with surprise that one day recently, when I was reporting some of the current work of my studio, I realized that my dream was being fulfilled.

Throughout a long dance life I have been seeking uninterruptedly ever better ways of liberating and cultivating the natural creative movement resources which I find in everyone, and to offer to ordinary people authentic dance experiences which depend neither on rehearsed techniques, a fixed number of trained dancers, a special show place, or spectator approval.

My students and I have found improvisation to be the most creative kind of dancing and group improvisation the most satisfying of all dance experiences. Group dance improvisation offers every individual dancer opportunity to express himself freely in movement while relating his movements to the movements of others, and to be a contributing part of a dance work which is greater than any he could create alone.

It seems to me that group dance improvisation meets urgent contemporary needs: the need for joy in free movement expression, the need for membership in a meaningfully functioning group, the need for the kind of nourishment of inner individual life which only creative art activity can provide. There is also the need for people to move together in large groups, because there are many people in the world today.

As my students have become more and more numerous, my groups have grown larger and larger, demanding of me many themes for large group dance improvisation. It is these themes which I am sharing now, in this book, with other dancers and teachers. I offer it as the fulfillment of a dream.

*Barbara Mettler*

Tucson, Arizona  
September, 1974

## THE WAY OF WORK

### Preparation

This book is a continuation of my book *Materials of Dance as a Creative Art Activity*, to which it frequently refers and which provides the necessary creative foundation for the dance work described here.

To improvise means to make up the movements of the dance while you are dancing. In group improvisation, members of the group make up the movements together.

A group is dependent on its individual members and the more experience in individual improvisation its members have, the more satisfying the group improvisation will be. *Materials of Dance* describes in detail themes for individual improvisation covering all basic elements of dance.

### Practice

Improvisation must be practiced, both by individuals and by groups.

While many dance groups spend their time practicing routine exercises to develop techniques of body movement, we find it more rewarding to practice improvisation.

In improvisation the dancer is required to use all his creative resources uninterruptedly to further the satisfactory progress of the dance. He is not preparing for some dance experience to be enjoyed in the future. He is creating and performing the dance as well as he can right now. He is wholly involved - body, emotions, mind - and his skill grows accordingly in every way.

It is possible for anyone, with or without experience, to enjoy dance improvisation and to take part in improvised group dances, but serious dancers will want to spend much time practicing improvisation, individually and in groups, to develop the kind of ripe craftsmanship which will enable them to create more and more satisfying dances.

## Group Body

Just as the movements of an individual are determined by the nature of the individual body, the movements of a group are determined by the nature of the group body.

The group body, like the individual body, consists of separate members. Members of the individual body are arms, legs, feet, hands, head, etc. Members of the group body are people, varying in body structure and temperament. In the group body, as in the individual body, different members move in different ways, yet all are capable of moving together as an integrated whole.

A group body may be large or small. The dance improvisations in this book, unless otherwise specified, are for groups of any size. In my classes some of them have been danced by groups of two hundred or more.

A group body may consist of men, women or children, or a combination of all of these. Most of the dances described here can be enjoyed by people of any age and either sex.

The members of a group body may be experienced or inexperienced dancers or a mixture of both. Our dance themes are basic enough to be enjoyed by anyone on any level, even by handicapped persons, but the more experienced in group dance improvisation the members are, the more developed will be the dance form.

## Group Movement

Group-body movements are quite different from individual-body movements. An individual body can stretch, bend, twist, tense, relax, sit down, stand up, walk, run, etc. A group body can contract, expand, scatter, divide. Its members can move toward, away from, around, over and under each other. They can form circles, lines, blocks, or any shape at all. They can move separately or in unison, with or without a leader. Large group bodies can break up into smaller ones moving in relation to one another.

It is our movement sense which enables us to feel not only our own individual body movements but also the movements of the group body. Feeling for group movement is a primitive faculty shared by human beings with other living things. A little child tends to join a group of people who are moving together in some

compelling way, and a flock of birds rises from the ground, circles in the air and comes down again in an impressive demonstration of instinctive group movement feeling.

In group dance improvisation the movements of individual bodies are subordinate to the movements of the group body. Every member of the group must at all times try to sense the nature of the group movement as it occurs and to move his own body in ways which will help it develop.

### Dance Form

An improvised dance is a one-time thing, fascinating as a flower in its passing beauty. It is free, natural, alive - a living expression of live beings. No two dances are alike. The form of each depends on the persons and the time and the place.

A group dance improvisation may be long or short. If possible, no arbitrary time limit should be set. The group itself usually feels when it is time to end the dance. Some themes require more time for development than others. Beginners do well with short dances. Experienced dancers prefer longer ones.

Some dances are simple, some are complex. Some are easy, some are hard. Some require much space, others very little. Some are danced in a fixed group position, while in others the position changes.

The beginning and ending of a group dance improvisation should be as natural, easy and unpretentious as the beginning and ending of any other ordinary life experience. All conventional rules of dance-making should be forgotten.

Throughout this book only general directions are given. Every group should feel free to discover its own forms.

### Craftsmanship

The art of body movement, like every art, requires craftsmanship: the skilled use of instrument and material in the creation of expressive forms. The craftsmanship of the dancer is never put to more complete use than

in group dance improvisation.

Throughout a group dance improvisation every member of the group is required to exercise his maximum skill in the use of his own body, as part of the group body, to help create group movement forms which express the feeling of the whole group. He must be sensitive to the force, time and space elements of movement and to the motor, auditory, visual and action elements of dance, so that when a group movement begins to form he is aware of its essential quality and can help it take shape.

In any dance group there are members who are more experienced, more sensitive and more imaginative in movement than others. The artistic maturity of the individual dancer can reach fulfillment in group dance improvisation as, supported by all the others, it functions for the benefit of the whole group.

### Leaderless Group

Although many of our group dances require a leader, the goal of group dance improvisation is the leaderless group. In the leaderless group no one leads and no one follows or, rather, everyone leads and follows at the same time. This means that every member of the group is passive enough to follow whatever movement is occurring, yet active enough to contribute to the development of the movement.

Every member of a dance group should have experience in both leading and following. This establishes a creative foundation for the leaderless group.

### Spectators

Spectators are a welcome addition to a group dance improvisation. They are in no way necessary because, with or without them, the dancers are creating as ripe a dance work as they can, but they increase the number of persons sharing the experience and enlarge the group body. Sometimes they may be invited to join the movement, or clap or use their voices in accompaniment. When it is over, spectators should feel that they have been a part of the dance.

Every idea in this book is meaningful only in relation to every other, so students and teachers are advised to read it all from cover to cover before trying to make creative use of its material.

INDIVIDUAL-TO-GROUP DANCE

Chapter 1





## INDIVIDUAL-TO-GROUP DANCE

This dance may be considered an introduction to group movement improvisation. It can help members of an inexperienced dance group shift their attention from awareness of their individual body movements to awareness of the movements of the group body.

The dance begins as follows: every individual dancer moves freely in his own way, creating whatever movements satisfy him, without making any effort to relate his movements to those of the rest of the group...

Gradually everyone tries to sense the movements which are going on around him and to move in the same way that the others are moving...

The goal of the group is to join together eventually in unison movement, all making the same movement at the same time... this should come about gradually and should not be forced... yet it should not take too long...

The unison group movement may take any form at all. It is impossible to foresee what it will be. Every group will express itself in its own unique way, creating its own form.

When unison movement has been achieved, it should be continued as long as group feeling dictates. The nature of the movement will determine when and how the dance ends.

### Variations

- 1 Dancers accompany themselves freely in movement with sounds of voice, hands and feet.
- 2 Every dancer dances with a piece of cloth, or a rope or a rod or some other material thing, in his hands (everyone has the same kind of thing), emphasizing the visual design of the movement.

- 3 Every dancer dances with a drum or shaker or some other instrument in his hands (everyone has the same kind); accompanying his movement with sound.
- 4 If the group is very large and if there is enough space and time, the transition from individual to group unison movement may be extended by having the dancers dance first alone, then in twos changing partners freely, then in groups of three or more, and finally the whole group together.
- 5 An experienced group may use this dance as the beginning of a longer one in which the unison movement evolves into freer forms.

SKIP SOCIAL

Chapter 2



## SKIP SOCIAL

This dance is easy and has great social value in making the members of a new group acquainted with one another.

It needs sound accompaniment provided by someone other than the dancers themselves. In a large group, half the group may clap accompaniment while the other half dances. With a small group, the director may accompany with his voice saying "skip" on every beat, or with hand-clapping, or with a drum. If there are spectators they may clap the accompaniment, led by the director. The clap should be a regular beat at a comfortable pace, not too slow for children and not too fast for adults.

Starting in a scattered position, members of the group skip freely around wherever they want to go, sometimes individually and sometimes together... whenever anyone meets anyone else, the two skip together for a moment, holding hands or not, side by side, forward and backward, around each other, or in any way at all... after only a moment's dancing together, they separate and move on, each one finding someone else to dance with... there is a continuous meeting and parting, dancing alone and together, in twos and threes and even larger groups... if possible the whole group should eventually get together in a united skipping movement...

This dance tends to develop considerable momentum, but it should not be allowed to go on too long because

it can be strenuous. A good way to end it is to have the accompaniment gradually quiet down to a stop.

Although the Skip Social requires no preparation, the following studies, if used as individual preparation, can further variety of movement:

- skipping forward... backward... sideward...
- skipping in place... from place to place...
- turning around while skipping in place... first in one direction then in the other...
- skipping freely at one's own pace while accompanying oneself saying "skip" on every beat...
- skipping at a moderate pace... fast... slowly...
- adjusting one's pace to a given beat, clapped by the group or by the director...

Skipping as a basic body movement is studied in our book Basic Movement Exercises.

CLAP DANCE

Chapter 3





## CLAP DANCE

Scattered in the available space, members of the group begin to move freely while making clapping sounds to accompany their movements... as soon as possible they should find a common pulse, all clapping together at the same time with a continuous regular beat... there is no leader: feeling for the regular beat is achieved spontaneously from within the group as everyone hears and adjusts to everyone else (with a group of small children it may be necessary for the director to provide the beat and keep it steady by clapping himself)...

Once the beat has been established, everyone is free to vary it as he wishes, as long as the variations strengthen and do not weaken feeling for the basic pulse...

As they dance, individuals move around freely wherever they want to go, in whatever way they want to move, while remaining united to the whole group by adherence to the common beat... not only clapping but also stamping and body slapping and even voice sounds (shouting, chanting, humming, etc.) may be added to intensify expression of feeling...

This may be quite a long dance... members of the group should be sensitive to the moment when the group creative energy begins to diminish... from then on they should let the sound and movement quiet down and stop.

TOUCH DANCE

Chapter 4



## TOUCH DANCE

If possible, this dance should be preceded by individual studies in the expressive use of separate body parts, as in Materials of Dance, Chapter 2.

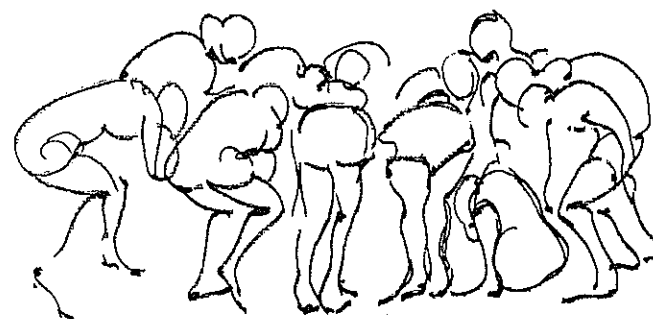
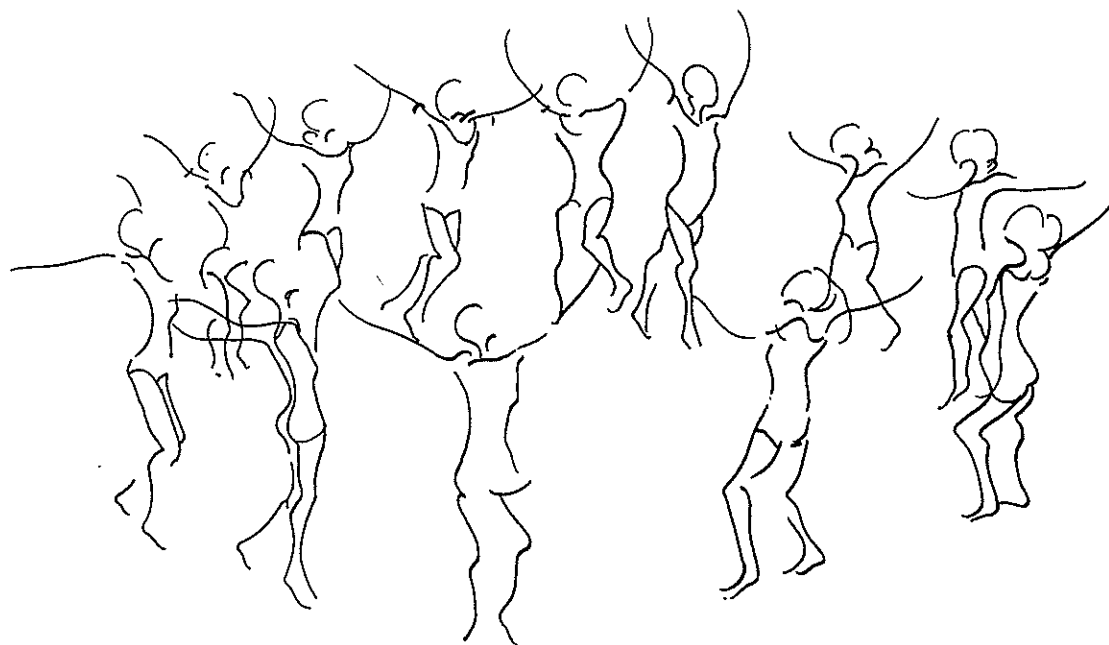
Starting in a freely scattered position, members of the group move around, each in his own way, with the aim of touching one another lightly with some part of the body whenever they pass... they should make an effort to touch with different body parts such as head, elbow, knee, shoulder, foot, hand... it is a continual touching and passing on, varying the movement and the use of the body as much as possible...

In mixed groups of children and adults we have seen this dance evolve charmingly with little children expressing wonder and trust as they reached out to touch an adult with a small hand and adults unconsciously expressing tenderness as they put their hand on a child's head.

How does this dance end? If the group is large it may continue for quite a long time because the possibilities for variation are many. More often than not, throughout the dance, group members tend to draw closer and closer together until, if enough time is given, all members are finally united in the closest possible physical contact.

## OPENING AND CLOSING

### Chapter 5



## OPENING AND CLOSING

This is a short dance, especially good for children and adult beginners. With a group of very little children, the director should do the dance with them, assuming a leadership role.

Scattered and standing, with slightly raised arms, members of the group open their hands wide, with fingers outstretched... then they close their hands, making fists...

Continuing to alternate the opening and closing of hands, while at the same time saying "open... close...", the dancers gradually bring their arms into the movement and, finally, their whole bodies, expressing more and more completely the feeling of opening and closing with hands, arms, trunk and head, and even legs and feet... the pace should be comfortably slow, becoming still slower as the movement gets bigger...

Gradually the opening and closing becomes a group movement: as the individual body opens wide, the group body expands and, as the individual body closes, the group body contracts...

The group movement, like the individual movement, should become more expressive with each repetition until the group is closed into a tightly knit unit... this is the end of the dance.

Opening and closing as a hand exercise is found in our book Basic Movement Exercises.



RUNNING DANCE

Chapter 6



## RUNNING DANCE

Throughout this dance the dancers run continuously, not to get some place as quickly as possible or to win a race but to experience running as an expression of feeling. The feeling to be expressed is one of lightness, ease, regularity of beat and flowing forward motion. The pace is important. It should be moderate, not fast. A sound accompaniment should be provided by someone other than the dancers themselves: either by non-dancing members of the group or spectators led by the director, saying "run" and clapping on every step, or by the director himself beating a drum.

Starting in a scattered position, the entire group runs freely, every member shaping his own path in relation to the paths of the others and expressing in body movement his feeling for this path...

The creative interweaving of the individual paths of many runners can be a beautiful experience for dancers and spectators.

The dance is ended by the accompanists who gradually quiet down and, together with the dancers, come to a stop.

A helpful preparation for a beginners' Running Dance is this progression (pace established by the director):

- run in place, saying "run" on every step
- slow pace...
- fast pace...
- moderate pace...

run freely wherever you want to go without bumping into anyone or even touching anyone...

now do the same, expressing the feeling of the shape of your path in relation to the paths of the others...

A more gradually built-up progression for a children's Running Dance is this:

a single dancer runs freely in the room, creating whatever path he wishes...

two dancers run freely, each making an effort to relate his individual path to the path of the other...

three or more dancers do the same...

Running as a basic body movement is studied in our book *Basic Movement Exercises*.

BODIES-ATTACHED DANCES

- Chapter 7



## BODIES - ATTACHED DANCES

In these dances individual bodies are bound together by physical contact to form a single group body.

When dancers are attached in this way, feeling for the group body and for group body movement is greatly strengthened. The individual dancers together make one body and must move as a unit. Together they create movement forms which are expressive of their unity. The movements are not movements of separate individuals fastened together. They are movements of a single body having separate parts.

Although the sense of touch is very much involved here, its role is entirely subordinate to the sense of movement. The dancers should make a continuous effort to create interesting movement forms.

These are dances for small groups. Bodies-Attached dances for larger groups will be found in Circle and Line Dances, Chapters 10 and 11.

### Constant Contact

Two or three dancers attach themselves together by holding hands (one hand or both) or by keeping their heads touching or their backs together or their feet (one or both) in unbroken contact throughout the dance. Improvising freely, they explore the movement possibilities of this particular group body form.

### Changing Contact

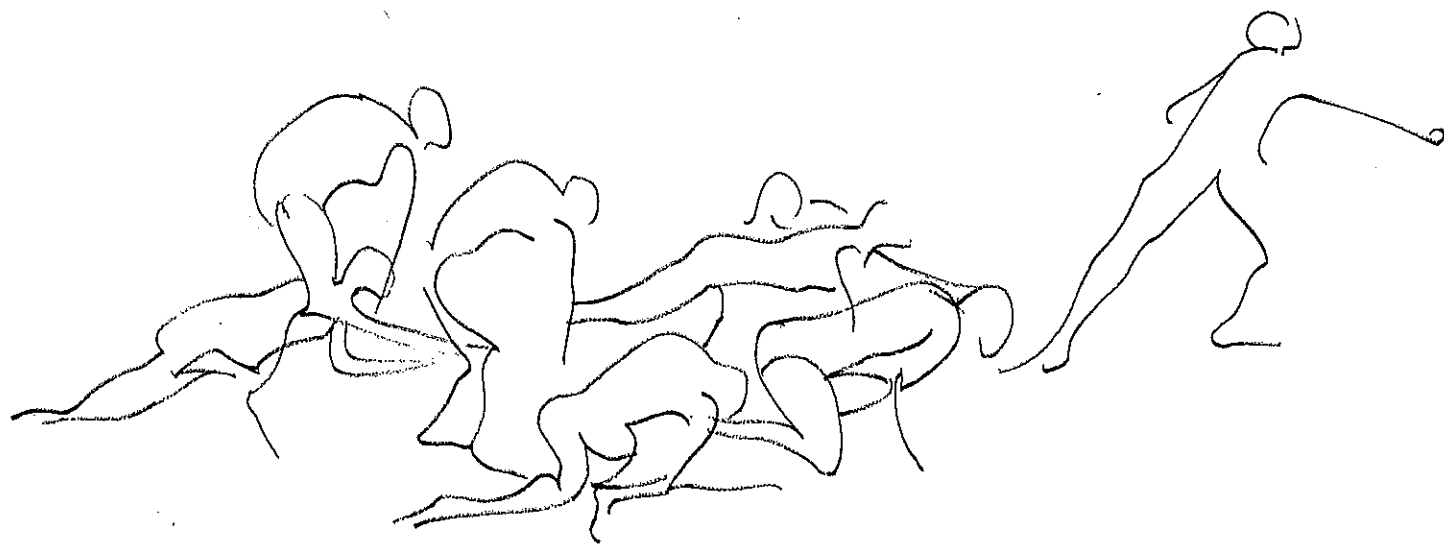
Throughout this dance every dancer is at all times attached to one or more members of the group, but the kinds of attachment are freely varied. It is easiest if the group is no larger than five.

These and other Bodies-Attached dances are described in Materials of Dance, Chapter 2.

ACTIVITY-PASSIVITY DANCES

Chapter 8





## ACTIVITY-PASSIVITY DANCES

All creative dance depends on rhythmic feeling: feeling for the pulsation of force in time and space which is inherent in all living movement. In the individual body this feeling is rooted in the natural alternation and balance of tension and relaxation in muscles and nerves which characterize human movement. In the group body, rhythmic feeling is expressed through alternation and balance of activity and passivity, every member of the group assuming whichever role is required of him by the creative needs of the group movement.

By activity we mean the experience and expression of the feeling of being a moving force, having inner force which makes us capable of moving ourselves and of moving others.

By passivity we mean the experience and expression of the feeling of having no inner force and so being capable of being moved by any outer force which may act upon us.

### Preparation

Group studies in activity and passivity should be preceded by individual studies in tension and relaxation. Relaxation is our most basic expression of passivity because it is the act of giving in to (being passive in relation to) that force which is always acting upon us: the force of gravity. Tension enables us to resist this force.

Controlling our muscular tension and relaxation in the expression of activity and passivity requires practice. Dancers should improvise individually on these themes:

relaxed (loose) movement... tense (tight) movement...  
forceless (weak) movement... forceful (strong) movement...  
passivity (feeling of being moved by an outer force)... activity (feeling of being a moving force)...

## Group Dances

These dances are suitable for adults and teen-agers, and some can be adapted to children. They are all described in more detail in *Materials of Dance*, Chapter 7.

### Constant Roles

#### Dance for Two

One dancer expresses activity in relation to the other who expresses passivity throughout the entire dance.

#### Dance for Three

One dancer expresses activity in relation to the other two who express passivity throughout the entire dance.

#### Dance for Larger Group

One dancer expresses activity in relation to all other members of the group who express passivity throughout the entire dance.

This dance is suitable for a group of any size. With a group of fifty or more it can be an impressive experience.

## Changing Roles

### Dance for Two

One dancer expresses activity in relation to the other who expresses passivity (as in Dance for Two - above) but the roles are exchanged at the end of every movement.

There must always be a creative pause at the end of every movement before the beginning of the next (see Materials of Dance, Chapter 6).

### Dance for Three

One dancer expresses activity in relation to the other two who express passivity (as in Dance for Three - above) but the active role is passed from one dancer to another at the end of every movement in regular rotation according to a pre-determined plan.

### Dance for Larger Group

One dancer expresses activity in relation to all other members of the group who express passivity (as in Dance for Larger Group - above) but the active role is passed from one dancer to another at the end of every movement without a pre-determined plan. Whoever feels that it is the right time for him to assume the active role will do so. Everyone should have a turn being active, but when this turn is to be taken will depend on individual feeling for the creative needs of the group movement.

This dance can be danced by a group of any size, but in a very large group not everyone will have a turn being the active one.

### Variations on Activity-Passivity theme

- 1 One member of the group is passive while all others are active in relation to him.
- 2 The entire group is passive... one member, then another and another, becomes active in relation to the others, resulting either in mutual conflict or in harmoniously united action.
- 3 The entire group moves passively until one member becomes active, assuming a leadership role... now another member becomes active, either challenging the leadership of the first or moving in harmony with him... the group now has two leaders and, as individual members follow passively one or the other, the group is divided into two parts... from here on the dance may develop in any number of ways: for example, the two active leaders may move their passive groups in relation to one another, or individual members of each group may one after another become active in support of their leader until all are active, resulting either in conflict between the two groups or in concordant action.

The general course of action in this dance should be planned in advance but the movements are improvised.

As in all dances in which the force element is dominant, these dances have dramatic quality.

FIGHTING AND FRIENDLY DANCES

Chapter 9



## FIGHTING AND FRIENDLY DANCES

These dances give men and boys ample opportunity for vigorous movement expression, but they are equally good for women and girls. Because the force element is dominant, they have dramatic quality.

### Preparation

Dancers improvise individually on these themes:

- strong (forceful) movement (exhale and use voice freely with every movement)...
- weak (forceless) movement...
- specific strong movements
  - pulling... pounding... punching... slapping... whipping... kicking...

## FIGHTING DANCES

### 1 Entire Group

Scattered in the available space, members of the group stand far enough apart so that no one can touch anyone else. Throughout the dance every dancer remains in the same place without getting any nearer to any other.

All dancers make vigorous, aggressive fighting movements with the feeling of fighting everybody everywhere... free use of voice sounds can intensify expression.



## 2 Dances for Two

In couples, with the two standing far enough apart so that they cannot touch one another and each remaining in his own place, both dancers make strong, aggressive fighting movements, relating to each other freely with maximum expression of hostility... the dance ends when one or the other has had enough and collapses, or when both stop moving in fixed fighting positions.

## 3 Ring Dance

The entire group sits on the floor in a ring... two dancers go into the ring and fight (as in the preceding dance) while all others participate on the sidelines in sound and movement.

If possible, every member of the group should have a turn fighting with a partner in the ring.

## FRIENDLY DANCES

### 1 Dances for Two

With the same partners as in Fighting Dance 2 (above) and moving freely in the room, dancers make movements which express a friendly feeling.

### 2 Entire Group

Scattered in the room, as in Fighting Dance 1 (preceding page) with everyone remaining in place, all members of the group make movements which have a friendly feeling, expressing friendliness toward everyone everywhere.

With an experienced dance group it is not necessary for members to remain in place. They may move around freely in relation to one another.

### Variations on Fighting and Friendly theme

In couples, or in groups large or small, an action may be planned in advance, then improvised freely. Here are some examples:

#### Couples

- 1 One dancer improvises fighting movements, the other friendly movements.
- 2 Both begin the dance with fighting movements and end it with friendly movements.
- 3 Both begin with friendly movements... then change to fighting movements... and, finally, end the dance with friendly movements again.

#### Entire Group

All members of the group make friendly movements... one begins to make fighting movements... one after another joins him until all are making fighting movements... one member begins to make friendly movements... one after another joins him until all are making friendly movements again.

CIRCLE DANCES

Chapter 10



## CIRCLE DANCES

The circle is one of the most basic group forms. In daily life any group of people coming together for purposes of communication tends to form a circle. In creative group dance improvisation, circles evolve inevitably.

We have many circle dances. Some of them are suitable for any group, including children and inexperienced adults. Others are more difficult. Whoever uses this book must decide for himself which dances his group will enjoy.

### 1 Holding Hands

When a group holds hands in a circle, feeling for the unity of the group body is greatly strengthened. Holding hands limits freedom of movement, but limitations of this sort can stimulate movement imagination and deepen dance experience.

In this dance one member of the group leads the others in unison movement, all making the same movement at the same time. The leader tries to sense what movements a circle can make and to let these movements evolve naturally.

A circle can contract and expand. It can revolve. It can rise and sink. Movements of separate body parts, characteristic of the individual body, are subordinate in this dance. It is the structure of the group body, the circle itself, which determines the group movement.

Followers should not watch the leader. They should try to sense the movement of the circle which is developing and let themselves be drawn into it. Their eyes may be lowered. It is the movement sense which guides them.

This dance and the next one could be included in Bodies-Attached themes (Chapter 7).

## 2 Arms around Waists

This dance is the same as the preceding one except that the dancers' arms are around each others' waists, uniting them still more closely. In this restricted position members of the group cannot help feeling their own movements as part of the movements of the group body, and the shift from individual to group movement is inevitable. There are very few movements which can be made by a group in this position but, with feeling, the leader can lead the group through a beautiful dance.

## 3 Free Circle Dance

In this dance, as in the two preceding dances, a leader leads the group through unison movements but individual bodies are not attached to one another in any way so there can be more freedom of individual body movement and greater variation in the movements of the circle.

The larger the group, the more care must be used by the leader in sensing the needs of the group body, and the more gradually the transitions should be made from one movement to another.

It is possible to use sounds of voice, hands and feet in this dance if they come naturally out of the group movement.

## 4 Successive Leadership

After a group has had the experience of dancing the Free Circle Dance (above) with many different leaders, a very satisfying group dance can be created by passing the leadership around the circle from person to person, with every individual leading the group through just one movement of the circle.

## 5 Concentric Circles

If a group is large enough, the Free Circle Dance (3 - above) can be danced in two or more concentric circles. Here are three variations on this theme:

### A One Leader

All circles move in unison, following a leader who is a member of the inmost circle.

### B Two (or more) Leaders

Every circle has a leader who leads his circle through unison circle movements which contrast with, or otherwise enhance, the movements of the other circle (or circles).

### C One in the Center

An individual dancer improvises in the center of a single circle or several concentric circles, each of which has a leader who leads his group in unison movement.

## 6 Leaderless Circle Dance

The goal of all our creative group work is the leaderless group dance. Learning both to lead and to follow is a prerequisite for creative group dance on an advanced level. In a leaderless group every member must lead and follow at the same time. He is continually passive in his sensing of the nature of the group movement which is forming, and he is continually active in his effort to help it form.

A leaderless group circle dance is for experienced dancers, and it is easier for a small group than for a large one.

Other circle dances will be found in Chapters 13, 18, 24 and 26.

LINE DANCES

Chapter 11





## LINE DANCES

The line, like the circle, is a basic group form. Wherever groups of people move together in daily life, lines develop naturally.

There are two kinds of line movement: one in which group members follow one another behind a leader, and the other in which their position is side by side. Experienced dancers in small groups may enjoy experimenting with side-by-side line dances, but our basic line dance has a one-behind-the-other form.

### 1 Basic Line Dance

One behind the other, group members follow in unison a leader who leads the line around the room. As in circle dances (preceding chapter) the form of the group body determines the form of the movement. The leader draws lines with his group body. He cannot see his line but he must sense its movement with his movement sense and with his inner eye. He must let his feeling for the line behind him tell him what to do rather than superimpose on the group his individual movement patterns. He must be the voice of the group body, sensing its needs and helping it to find expression.

Members of the group too must sense the dictates of the line, adjusting their movements to the movement of the whole without trying to relate individually to the leader. It is not necessary to see the leader. If his movements grow organically one out of another, group members can sense in advance what movement is coming. Sometimes there is a domino-like succession as a movement is passed back from the leader to one group member after another.

The path of the leader as he leads the line around the room is most important. He must at all times be aware of where he is and where he is going so that the movement of the line relates to the surrounding space.

The line may be short or long, depending on the number of people in the line. The longer it is, the harder

it is for the leader. Transitions from one movement to another may take time.

The success of a line dance depends not only on the leader but on the group movement awareness of every dancer in the line. To develop this awareness, every member of the group should, if possible, have a turn as leader.

## 2 Holding Hands

This is the same as the preceding dance except that group members hold hands. Just as in Circle Dance 1 (page 61) this limits the movement of individual bodies but strengthens the unity of the group body.

This dance and the following one could be included in Bodies-Attached themes (Chapter 7).

## 3 Hands on Shoulders

This is the same as the two preceding dances except that every dancer has his hands on the shoulders of the one ahead of him. This further restricts individual movement but it can deepen feeling for the line.

## 4 Multiple-Line Dance

If the group is large enough and if there is sufficient space, two lines, each with its own leader, can move in relation to one another, creating beautiful designs.

An experienced dance group can do the same with three, or even more, lines.

## 5 Line Dance with Objects

Various objects may be carried by the dancers and used to enhance the movements of a line dance, every member carrying the same kind of object. Here are some suggestions:

shakers

hand drums

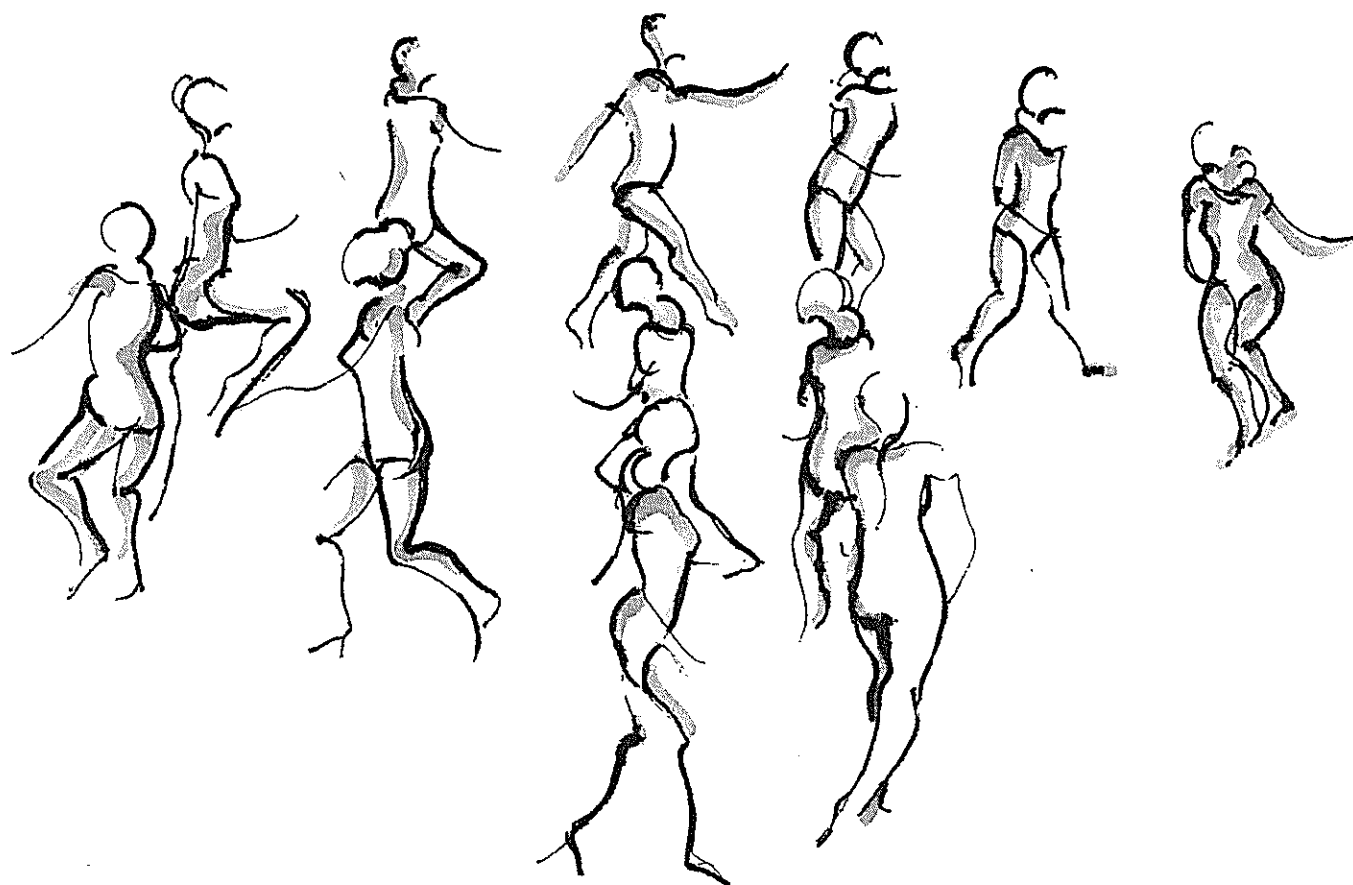
pieces of cloth

pieces of newspaper

rods of wood or metal

CIRCLE-AND-LINE SKIP DANCE

Chapter 12



## CIRCLE - AND - LINE SKIP DANCE

This is a dance primarily for children or adult beginners, but the form is so basic that experienced dancers enjoy it too.

Sound accompaniment is needed. If the group is large enough to be divided, some may dance while others accompany, saying "skip" and clapping on every beat. If not, the director may accompany, saying "skip" and clapping, or beating a drum.

The group is scattered in the room...

All skip around freely, each creating his own path while relating his path to the paths of the others...

Gradually the group forms a circle, all creating it together with no one leading...

Dancers skip for a while in the circle, making sure that spaces between individuals are even and that the circle is round...

Now one member (may be selected in advance) leads the group out of the circle in a line which moves in big curves, eventually creating a figure eight path...

Finally the leader leads the group out of the figure eight into a circle again, this second circle moving in the direction opposite to the direction of the movement of the first circle...

The dance ends as the accompaniment and group movement quiet down and come to a stop.