

## CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL SHOW CHOREOGRAPHY

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From a pragmatic perspective, defining the competences of a student in terms of elaborating choreography means answering to the following question: What does the student know to do? Competence is a precise knowledge applying one or more capacities within a field of notions or disciplines. Defining the knowledge to acquire means answering to the following question: What does the student need to know, do or learn in order to progress? The management of choreography evolves according to a complex dynamic, which the teacher must stimulate and control at the same time. The nature of a teacher's interventions varies by the evolution phases of choreography.

**Keywords:** choreography, show, methodology, competences, communication conducts.

**Introduction.** *Choreography* represents the dynamic expression of composition; it provides meaning to its execution, by introducing a central part and a coherent conclusion; it is accomplished by dominating space in the space-time relationship [2, p. 14].

A choreography is a set of instructions for the organization and reconfiguration of one or several bodies in space and time [3, p. 1].

By analyzing the place of choreography, the following structural notions can be distinguished:

- *Space* – it refers to the immediate space surrounding the body, whose limits are terrestrial segments and the (peripheral) travelling area, comprising the following elements:

- *Directional axes* (vertical and horizontal);

- *Spatial orientation*: from the front, from the side, from the back, in relation to: an exterior point, with the dancers (between them), with the dancers and the spectators or with the dancers and the scenic elements;

- *Levels*: average, low, high (related to the position of the barycentre and to the subject's positioning from the floor);

- *Body stance* in relation to the basic position (e.g., lowering from an average level – to a low level: inclining the barycentre down to the use of floor as a contact point with other body parts; from an average level – to a high level: travelling by raising towards the aerial space through jumps, leaps, standing on tiptoes, hanging, etc);

- *Topographic drawing* represented by the limits drawn by moving the body or a body part in the air or on the floor following direct or indirect trajectories;

- *Geometric shapes* materialized by the following: body volume (round, square, triangular, sharp, curve lines, straight lines, broken lines, sinusoidal lines); group shapes (in a circle, on parallel or perpendicular lines, in a triangle); dimensions (starting from small to big);

- *Scenic space* is a symbolic, meaning-bearing place. The use of space – by combining its elements – refers to various images, namely: the circle refers to the idea of communication, the curves to the idea of femininity, the spiral to obsession, while the broken line to hesitation. Scenic space is the travelling space. It is characterized by its form and dimension and by elements composing it: decors, lights, wings, orientation in relation to the spectators' space.

- *Time* can correspond to a sound system from the outside; it can be transcribed by the dancer's

movement or it can be related to the structure of the motion preceding the music. Time perception is possible from two different standpoints: *the metrical aspect*, concerning rhythm (pulsations, time, accents, measures, pauses, syncope and counter-times) or in relation to the quotidian (the metrical aspect, the speed, the duration, the intervals between events, actions, sequence). Its constitutive elements are as follows: rhythm, tempo, accents, movement, execution speed, the duration of actions of a musical phrase, which corresponds to the relative value of notes.

- *Energy or intensity* provides quality, nuance and coloratura to movement. According to the writings of Rudolf Laban, mobilization is related to the combination of several factors, listed below:

- *flow* – associated with the emission of energy in the body; if the energy is outpoured, there is a feeling of fluidity (continuous movement); if the energy is controlled and even stopped, there is a feeling of retained, explosive, jerky movement;

- *weight* – associated with the amount of energy used; manifested by the sensation of weight or lightness;

- *time* – defined as duration of energy release; it may be: quick, when the movement is sudden, or long, when the movement is sustained and maintained;

- *space* – corresponding to the direction of movement; it may be direct (linear) or indirect (sinuous);

- *tone* – corresponding to the state of muscle tension or relaxation; its modelling allows the reduction of tensions damaging movement and the ability to contrast relaxation and contraction movements;

- *body mass* – representing the body parts engaged in the movement: global body (the body as a whole is used) or segmented body (body, arms, calves, bust, vision), joints (shoulders, knees, clavicle, hips); the mobilized body parts are coordinated, dissociated or isolated [6, p. 70].

The notion of choreography is defined by the art of organizing the movement within a composition that may be: a ballet show, a gymnastics group, exercises with various portable apparatuses, etc. [2, p. 59].

**Material and method.** *The purpose* of this paper is to inform the physical education teachers regarding the design of dance choreography for school shows.

The elaboration of a choreographic composition is a difficult and laborious work, requesting to the

same extent specialty knowledge, imagination and creation skills.

This activity comprises as follows: elaborating, based on an idea/theme, an expressive program (ensemble composition); designing it under a certain form for a choreographic creation; presenting it to the public, for a communication perspective.

The elaboration of a composition involves *three* participants, namely: the choreographer (*the teacher*), the dancer (*the student*) and the spectator.

This manner of dramatizing a learning activity constitutes a starting point, based on which teachers can elaborate the contents of instruction.

The teacher has the role of adapting the available intention and means, in order to provide in the end a show that spectators can understand. Depending on certain factors (level of the group's training, age, gender, etc), by stimulating students' imagination and creativity, the teachers composes an ensemble (different genres) that may be displayed on various occasions: celebrations, anniversaries, shows, interschool contests, etc.

In bodily expression activities and more, **composing** involves the following: choosing a choreographic idea and constructing a «discourse» with a beginning, middle and end; choosing certain methods for developing the idea and elaborating a script; determining solutions (motor contents), combining elements, making up formations and coordinating dancers between each other (synchronization, cascades, canon, exercises in contrast, types of formations, etc); consolidating the choreographic idea developed through composition; organizing the space of communication with the spectator, by adapting dance composition to the scene or to the location.

The student (dancer) makes the connection between the choreographer and the spectator; he/she is the interpreter of a choreographic intention. The role of the dancer is to convey the choreographic idea, by providing various forms and meaning to it. The dancer must learn how to transform regular motor expressiveness into aesthetic motor expressiveness.

Choreography is expressed equally through the *space – time* relationship; in other words, by the travelling of subjects, objects, and by the organization methods of the moving item.

**Travelling** may be performed in various modalities, under diverse forms and in many directions, as follows:

- *modalities*: running steps, leaps, jumps, turning steps, rhythmic steps, walkovers, rolls, rotations, walking with support on the soles, on the hand and on other body segments;

- *directions*: forward, backward, laterally, obliquely;

- *forms*: straight line, broken line, arc, circle, spiral;

- *dynamism*: amplitude – speed ratio and rhythm variations.

**The modality of organizing** the work may be:

- *individual* using *different movements* (of the same groups, of different groups and different muscle activities) or *identical movements* (series and combinations of the same group of elements, identical dance steps);

- *collective* using *identical movements*:

- *synchronized execution*: all movements are executed at the same time, using the same speed and rhythm;

- *execution in rapid succession – cascade*: each execution starts with a shorter or longer lag in relation to the preceding one; the elements may be organized individually or on subgroups;

- *execution in canon*: this execution normally addresses a small combination of movements; the starts of each performer of the group or subgroup are delayed by a full movement;

- *execution in contrast* of speed (rapid-slow), of intensity (strong-weak), of direction (forward-backward), of level (high-low);

- *collective* using *different movements*:

- *choral execution*, either individual or on subgroups: each component of the group or each subgroup has his/her role, independent from the others depending on a unitary result;

- *execution in collaboration* on subgroups or in a collective: each component of the group or each subgroup has his/her role in collaboration with the partner/s, depending on a common result, in a relatively unitary manner of the group. According to this type of organization, one must also consider the following versions: the use of the body, of apparatuses, of objects or partners viewed as support of reference point; the use of the body, of apparatuses, of objects or partners viewed as an obstacle to surpass, surround, jump over or cross.

To continue the aforementioned idea, Manos M. highlights that choreography is based on looking for and discovering a perfect harmony between two essential requirements, namely: executing a certain level of difficulty and creating a final product by using the body, the group, the objects, the apparatuses within a highly diverse scenography of forms and movements, without neglecting the importance of musical arrangement [2, p. 59].

Hence, choreography is an expression and communication project: with a certain connection to the created or pre-existing sound world; *on a certain theme*: the physical, social, cultural, animal world, the inner world of the choreographer; *according to duration*, to provide impressive effects to the spectator, a comprehensive history, to involve the spectator and to let him/her invest as much as he/she wants; *using stylized motricity*; *with a certain number of dancers*, mixed or not, by the relation type, *according to a distribution of roles*; *according to scenography*: costumes, make-up, colours, lights, objects and accessories, entries to and exits from the scene; *within a particular space* or in the gym, in the street, on a scene.

Choreography is a revealing domain to study creativity because the process often lasts over many weeks and requires both choreographer and dancer to generate countless candidate ideas, then select and refine them [4, p. 5].

#### **Student's knowledge**

The fundamental knowledge related to motor movement interrelates and is organized around three poles: the symbolizing function, the expressive motricity, the communication conduct between dancers and spectators. Such knowledge is common to three school cycles, with various levels of exigency.

#### **Fundamental knowledge**

### *Symbolizing function*

The student will have to learn how to mobilize his/her imagination in order to approach the real and to evoke it poetically using a significant motricity for the audience. The student will also learn to exploit creativity in order to convert mental images into legible images for the spectator. In order to attain this purpose, the student will have to use divergent thought to respond to an inductor (word, object, history and theme) by seeking multiple, unexpected and original responses; to transform daily gestures into dancing, stylized gestures, in order to make them significant and personal, to translate their intention [6, p. 11].

### *Expressive motricity*

Expressive motricity can be defined as the capacity to mobilize the body in order to produce and reproduce static or dynamic, singular or multiple bodily forms, with a certain intention. The student will have to discover and approach fundamental notions related to movements, by focusing on the following: his/her own sensations, in order to represent and memorize the movement; optimized perception of his/her own body, to adjust perceived sensation (internal image) to the one he/she wishes to display (external image); reduction of the gap between the representation and the performance of movement; the discovery of inner rhythm and its adaptation to space, to the partners and to the sound world, in symbiosis, complementarity or opposition.

The style and character of the movements reflect the character of the music; this character forms a guiding idea developed through a beginning, middle and end. Also, there has to be a harmony between movements and musical accents, phrases and tempo [1, p. 71].

In order to discover the motor possibilities of his/her own body, the student will explore the movement variables, the basic actions (travelling, jumps, pirouettes, etc) and their communication by alternating the support points of the body, the mobility and the direction. The student will also model the tone, intensity and dynamic; he/she will exploit proximal space in order to maintain or alternate the distance from the partners and the travelling space in order to adjust to volumes and dimensions and to control directions and trajectories. The student will also establish a connection with the sound world to translate the music rhythm and tempo, in order to produce a musicality with his/her body using various means: accents; durations; speeds; vocal emissions; noises that are proper, opposed or complementary to gestures. In addition, the student will maintain or modify the form and duration of contact with the partners (whom he/she has to lead, lift, push, catch or use as support).

### *Communication conducts*

They represent the capacity of communicating to the others your poetic relationship with the real, by using expressive motricity. In this respect, the student has to discover and experiment various modalities of communicating with the partners, e.g. glances, contacts, actions upon the body of others. Furthermore, in the spatial dimension, the student must learn how to insert himself/herself in various forms of regrouping (figures or formations), to respect distance and orientation; in the

temporal dimension, the student must learn how to work in lockstep, to react to question-answer, to respect the canon.

Concerning choreography as a whole, the performer (the student) must understand and respect role attribution and observe choreographic constraints, as a leader or a subordinate, in complementarity, opposition or in lockstep. The student must learn to make himself/herself heard, to adapt, to react, to manifest his/her won impulses, to imitate, to cooperate and to coordinate movements with those of the partners.

### *Relationship between dancers and spectators*

Communication with the spectator is obviously essential; this represents the aspect that distinguishes choreography from the others physical activities.

The student learns how to establish this communication by intentionally looking at the spectators, without being influenced by their gaze; by controlling movements; by anticipating anything that may affect the clarity of movements (uncontrolled gestures, faulty technique, voluntary stops); by using procedures for aesthetic effects: repetition, deepness of actions, changes in the rhythm, contrasts, immobilization or silence.

So, we have to show what is important in our choreography or put more simply asserts: Our dance clearly show for us what we have been paying attention to? [5, p. 156].

Such basic knowledge – organized on three dimensions – inter-relates because it is connected with the action of the dancer, who communicates using his/her own body, thus providing meaning to choreography and emotions to the viewers.

**Conclusions and recommendations.** Considering all the aforementioned aspects, we may draw several conclusions. With the teacher's help, students will become choreographers and they will learn to develop an idea and to structure it starting from composition models (scripts, reforms, variations on a certain theme); to use the elements of a choreography, either to provide spectators effects meant to surprise, stir emotions or make them laugh, or to trigger a way of «reading» the show. Thus, they will invite spectators to follow the chronological evolution of a story or they will appeal to their imagination for a free involvement. Students will also learn how to choose a sound world related to movements, how to solve dramatization issues such as orienting trajectories or choosing scenographic elements.

In this phase, they will use improvisation moments to test the ideas proposed and structural moments to improve execution, to settle and memorize movements. Group work increases the level of interpretation by eliminating superfluous gestures and by choosing the most correct and original forms meant to impress the spectator. Individual work allows any performer to assert his/her style and to put a personal touch to the performance within group choreography.

The teacher's role is to provide assistance, in order to regulate group function and participation and to find the most effective solutions. In this respect, he will favour role changes, by instituting assessment phases and by proposing more systematic approaches to corporal and choreographic

techniques, depending on the difficulties encountered along the way.

While designing the choreography, students will be more or less autonomous, depending on age and training level. It is obvious that in primary school, the teacher will guide students in their choices and concerning the structure of programs; in middle school and high school, students have increasing autonomy in the elaboration of choreography.

Challenging the student to elaborate choreography means allowing him/her to acquire a certain amount of knowledge related to body movements, to execute various modalities of expression and communication or to train certain artistic creation skills useful in the elaboration of choreographies.

Such knowledge is not structured linearly, in a predetermined manner, but in a spiralling pattern, at each educational level, thus allowing the student to access all the acts of choreographic creation; this involves facing new problem situations, thus determining the student to use several types of knowledge.

Hence, for students progressing means overcoming certain obstacles related to resources, maturity and previous experiences. Depending on education cycles, students will cover the same phases and they will be provided guidance throughout their academic years as the level of exigency increases; the purpose is for them to acquire higher autonomy in the process of creation.

Starting from the aspects outlined above, composition – actually, its contents and form of expression – can be successful only by a logical collaboration of certain components. These components are materialized in: the responsible behaviour of the personnel in charge of ensuring optimal training conditions; the level of technical, scientific, methodical-organizational training, the practical experience and psychopedagogical training of specialists; the somatic qualities, functional capacity, health status, technical and artistic, physical and motivational level of group members; medical and sports assistance.

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