Dance for Television

a production handbook

written by
Larry Jordan

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Dance for Television

A Production Handbook

Larry Jordan

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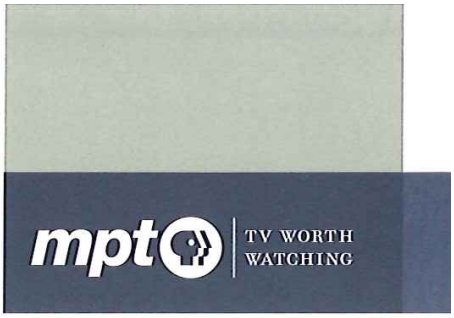


August 2018

Foreword

In 2019, Maryland Public Television (née Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting) observes its 50th anniversary. So it's very timely that our alumnus Larry Jordan is publishing a revised edition of his 1978 work *Dance for Television.* His book – then and now – celebrates one aspect of the programming for which public TV is known: a celebration of arts in all manifestations. He generously is passing along what he has learned about directing dance for the small screen (and, in fact, screens have grown increasingly small as mobile devices offer viewing possibilities, too!) so that the art and craft of dance broadcasts can be kept alive.

As this network thinks about anniversaries, we think about the legacy of the men and women who built our operation into the production powerhouse it is today. Kudos to Larry Jordan for keeping that legacy alive and well!

Larry D. Unger
President & CEO
Maryland Public Television

PREFACE TO THE 2018 REVISED EDITION

It was a letter that would change my life. I had won, along with seven others, a fellowship to the 1978 Dance/Television Workshop, held at Duke University. It was a national competition and I was selected, not as a dancer, goodness knows, but as a television director. It was a workshop on how to direct dance for TV.

At the time, I was a staff director at the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting, which is now called MPT (Maryland Public Television). A lot of my directing focused on culture: orchestras, music and drama. This month-long workshop was an opportunity to intensively study how to direct dance, led by people who were re-defining dance for television.

Merrill Brockway

It is impossible to overstate the impact Merrill Brockway, Judy Kinberg and Emile Ardolino had on the popularization of culture in America through their dance telecasts on PBS in the 1970s.

What I learned is that almost everything we know about directing drama does *not* apply to directing dance. The rules are different and to make dance on television successful, we need to learn the rules.

I wrote this book, my first, based on my experiences at the Workshop. Thanks to the generous help of the Maryland Center, copies were sent to many PBS stations at the time. After these were sent out, I put the book on my shelf and, over the years, I lost it.

This summer, I found the camera-ready masters lurking in box of old files stored in my garage. In re-reading it, while the budgets and technology I write about are hopelessly old — though fascinating to

rediscover all these years later — the production techniques are as timely today as they were when I first learned them. (In fact, after watching yet another badly cut music/dance video where the director has no clue what they are doing, this book is needed more today than when I first wrote it.)

Jim DeVinney

Today's editing technology is far better and MUCH easier to use! Yes, the cameras we used then were large and primitive, we used tungsten lights — not LEDs, recorded on video tape — not chips and hard disks; but it wasn't about the technology, it was about how we used it: How we worked with the dancers, where we placed the cameras and how we covered the action. The craft of producing, staging, and directing dance for television remains the same, as I explain here.

To the best of my knowledge, this was the first book written about creating dance for television; written from a video director's point-of-view. Dancers think differently from actors, collaboration is critical, even lighting and camera techniques are the polar opposite of drama. As I tell my students, when creating dance for television, you need to know what you don't know.

Jan Getz

In preparing this edition, I cleaned up typos, improved the formatting, made the text searchable, added an appendix and photos from the workshop — which I also recently found. But the content is identical; still relevant and useful today. Though I was very young when I wrote it, I'd probably be a bit less assertive today.

Producing and directing dance requires a new way of thinking. And, with today's emphasis on music videos and YouTube, it's important to learn. So, here's the deal: **This book is free**. Share it, post it, give it away. I have only three rules:

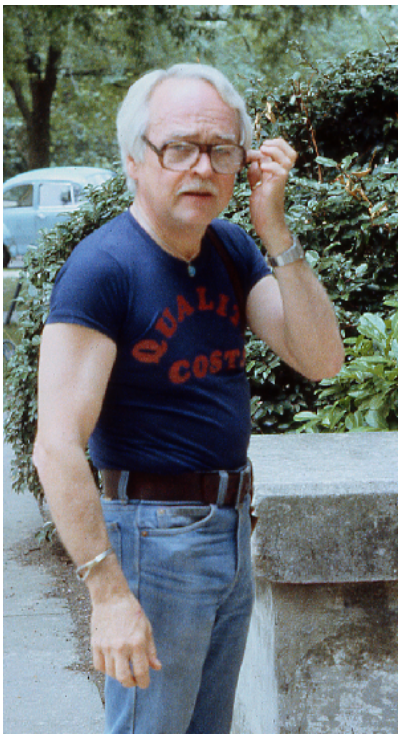
1. You may not change the content
2. You may not remove my name as author
3. You may not sell this book

The Workshop was an amazing month — I have remembered it fondly all my life. I'm pleased to share what I learned forty years ago with you, again, today.

Larry Jordan
Larry@LarryJordan.com
Los Angeles, CA
August 2018

Workshop members from left: Eric Wallace, Jan Getz, Greg ?, Linda Baldwin Elliot, Maxine Wishner, Larry Jordan, and Jim DeVinney. (Linda Higgenbotham is missing. I'm sorry that I don't remember Greg's name.)

PREFACE TO THE 1978 EDITION



Merrill Brockway

"What I'm trying to do is to proselytize dance." With those words, Merrill Brockway began the 1978 Dance/ Television Workshop at Duke University's American Dance Festival. This report is a direct outgrowth of that workshop and is based upon my notes.

It is not the purpose of this report to lecture about what dance is, or its value, or even how to better appreciate it. Reading about dance is not the same as seeing it performed and this booklet is not designed to take the place of watching dance.

Instead, this is a set of guides to aid in producing and directing dance for television — either modem dance or ballet; written from a television director's point-of-view.

This is about the translation of a stage work into a television production and the collaboration where the creative integrity of each art is respected.

Translation

In the dance world the money and creative talent is in dance for stage and not dance for television. Granted there is a lot of televised dance, but the majority of the dance world supports itself through live performance and not from TV. Thus we have a problem, most of the great works of dance are designed (or choreo-graphed) for the stage — how do we take a stage work and make it work (translate) for TV? Because many of these stage works are not translatable to television — they deal with too much space, too diffuse a movement, or too many people. Some of today's finest choreography can not be done for television without making it boring, or ruining the work.

Then, why not choreograph works for TV? Two reasons: economics and ignorance. Economically, it can take years to properly score, choreograph, rehearse,

polish and be ready to perform a work. And money is necessary to support the company while all of this is going on. How many production houses have that kind of support? Secondly, television is a very alien world to most choreographers, many are afraid of it — fearing that it will ultimately eliminate the need for new choreography, or live performances. So they ignore us and hope we will go away. Another difficulty is that the demands of television are very different, and not apparent, to a choreographer working in his rehearsal hall — because they deal with limitations imposed by the TV equipment and not the physical limitations of the body that the choreographer is used to.

Dancers watching a video playback.

Dance is a highly ephemeral medium — there exists no written language as sophisticated as that for music, or drama. Dance lives in the minds and bodies of the dancers. The choreographer, unlike the composer, can not create his works in the quiet of his study, but instead, as George Ballanchine said: "you create on union time," with dancers standing in a rehearsal hall, the clock ticking, and each minute the choreographer spends thinking costs money.

Ideally as choreographers learn more about television, through working with it, they can begin to study it and they will begin to develop new works for television. But until that time begins, translation from the proscenium stage to the television screen will be required.

Collaboration

But how is this process of translation to be accomplished? In television, energy increases as the camera moves closer to the talent — on stage, that energy increases through the combined emotional response of the audience present in the theater. Thus for TV to be successfully wedded to dance, the energy of the first should help balance the lost energy of the latter. And this balancing springs from the collaboration between the television director and the dance choreographer.

What is important is getting the message or feelings, or emotions, or whatever is the choreographer's reason for the dance, across to an audience. The methods of television are different from those of the stage — but simply because they are different does not make them either suspect, or unsatisfactory, merely different.

The basic question is: "What is the dance about and how can it best be presented?" And this requires collaboration.

Why? Because each dance is the creation of the choreographer, not the TV director. The choreographer was the one that first had the inspiration for the movements of a dance — it is not the prerogative of the TV director to arbitrarily change those movements, or the audience's perception of those movements, any more than it would be the choreographer's right to tell a cameraman to truck his camera to change the shot. There needs to be a mutual respect for each person's creative rights.

Neither the director nor the choreographer assume autocratic powers in the making of a dance program — instead each shares their knowledge with the other. This sharing is a two-way street.

Purpose

This book is designed to present a basic approach to television production. Much of what it says will be obvious and known to all; some, I hope, will be new.

This presents a series of guidelines that have been found to work, not specific hard and fast rules.

Linda Higgenbotham and Larry Jordan calling a show.

Also, this is not intended to imply that we know know nothing of production or that we are not doing our jobs correctly. Instead, this seeks to provide thoughts and questions that we each need to solve in order to create the most effective programming. It should help to bridge the barriers between the TV and dance worlds and help us focus on what it is we are trying to do.

The *key* is that we need to *do dance*, we need to work with dancers, tackle these problems — and not be afraid to discover new solutions for ourselves. We need to allow ourselves the opportunity to grow both creatively and personally — to create programs that will enable our audience and ourselves to discover the hidden worlds within ourselves.

This is the excitement and the challenge of directing dance for video.

Acknowledgements

This Handbook is based upon my notes and recollections of what I learned at the American Dance Festival's Dance/Television Workshop in July, 1978, at Duke University.

Thus, any errors that this contains are undoubtably due to a lack of comprehension on my part. However, it was my pleasure to meet and talk with some truly expert people in this field. First among them is Merrill Brockway, the

series producer and director of "Dance In America" for PBS and CBS's "Camera Three." He provided more than just knowledge — he was the one that gave us the inspiration to "Go and Do Likewise."

Thanks also go to Dennis Diamond (production techniques), Judy Kinberg (producing), Tobi Tobias (writing and criticism), Ralph Holmes (lighting and set design), Girish Bhargava (tape editing), Beverly Brown, Roger Tolle, Billy Seigenfeld (dancing and choreography), Emile Ardolino (producing and live directing), Phillip Gay (assistant directing and live directing) and the seven members of the Dance/ Television Workshop.

Thanks also to the American Dance Festival for their Fellowship and the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting for the time and support which made it possible to attend.

To all I am most grateful.

Larry Jordan
Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting
Owings Mills, MD
August 1978

Disclaimer

As I re-read this in 2018, I realize that I'm using the word "he" too much. Choreographers, dancers and media personnel can be of any gender.

THE DANCER

Dancers are not ordinary people. Since they were about 8 years old they have dedicated their lives to dance — to taking class several hours a day, grueling rehearsals, spending all their waking hours immersed in a highly specialized form of non-verbal communication. And this dedication and training needs to be understood when working with dancers.

Dancers are not actors, because dancers can only use movement to communicate. Using only the face becomes a signal for bad choreography. And when they act, the effect is unseen in the back rows of the audience. But, like actors, dancers are very insecure, they need a lot of support. Not that dancer's make unreasonable demands, rather, dancers are some of the most generous people you can find. They are underpaid and overworked. They will give you everything they have in a rehearsal or a performance — but in return we need to remember that they are people, too.

A ballet dancer since childhood has lived a life of physical pain, hard work, exhaustion, and a very narrow perception of life in order to train for the dance. By the time they turn 35, their career is effectively over — the body can no longer move as it could when it was younger. And in the intensity of the training process, dancers almost never obtain the necessary skills to start a second career when they stop dancing. There are no pensions in the dance world. So, they live a precarious existence where thinking of the "long-term future" is a rarity.

Television people, by and large, tend to be a verbal lot. We communicate with each other by talking — discussing problems and verbalizing to others what is in our heads. Dancers, on the other hand, tend to have much more difficulty with this process. Dancers have been trained to communicate non-verbally — visually. So, they become frustrated when we ask them: “Tell me what this means?" or "Why did you do that?" They can only look helpless and say: "My work is upon the stage, you

can see its meaning simply by looking at it." Then, if we are not careful, everyone becomes frustrated and feels like the one-eyed man in the land of the blind.

Don't rely on precise verbal communication. Take the time to *show* the dancers, and the choreographer, what it is you mean. Show the camera angles, show why a specific entrance is necessary, show what a camera can do. They can grasp the significance of something far faster when they see it, than when it's explained to them.

As a director, invite yourself to a dance class to watch how steps are rehearsed, see how the teacher works and how the students react — try to discover for yourself a little of the dance world.

Finally, even though there are two principle forms of dance: modern and ballet, don't trap yourself into categorizing dance. Just watch it, don't force it to fit preconceived ideas or meanings. Don't try and put into words something that was not meant for words in the first place.

Modern Dance

Modern dance has done a great deal to muddy the waters about the meaning of dance. And in general, has appeared so dense that it confuses people.

In answering the questions of: "What does it mean?" and "where do I look?" in modem dance, realize that these questions are essentially unanswerable. Generally, meaning cannot he reduced to words. The best way to watch is to relax and realize that you will not see everything; many performances are going to be necessary. Which is good, because that means if you choose that work for TV, it won't become stale if it is aired several times.

Similar to an actor, a dancer projects an image, or stage presence. And this presence varies — ballet projects to the back of the house and so does a work by Martha Graham (a modem choreographer); Paul Taylor projects his work so that it seems to get just past the orchestra pit, so that both the dancers and the audience can look as it as though it were an entity in and of itself. And some modern dance

seems so introspective that it barely gets off the stage. As directors, we need to be aware of just where and how big the focus is.

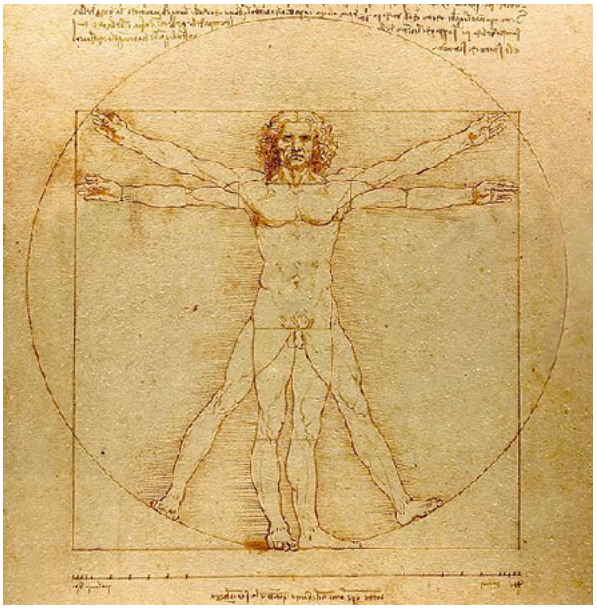
Most of the basic movement in modem dance was developed by Martha Graham. And, for those interested in history, it was basically a reaction to the light airiness of ballet — a rediscovery of the importance of gravity and the body. Most modern dance bases its movements out of the pelvis and seeks to achieve balance in a non-vertical way; while ballet centers around the waist and the creation of symmetrical lines. Modern dance is fascinated by gravity, while ballet ignores it.

Ballet

Ballet is about perfection — not choreography. Television needs to show the attainment of that perfection.

The real subject in a ballet is not the plot, but the dancing. As a viewer, involve yourself in the movement. Don't try and pigeonhole the ballet (romantic, modernistic, or whatever), or think about it; instead, simply let the dance wash over you without attempting to analyze each step.

Classical ballet is geometry around a central line (similar to Da Vinci's drawing of *The Vitruvian Man* bounded by circles and squares). There are only 16 different positions in ballet — the challenge for the choreographer is not in the invention of new movement, but in the creative recombinations of traditional forms. Ballet is designed to show these forms and patterns through the creation of shapes; both with individual bodies and with the corps de ballet (the "corps").



The Vitruvian Man, courtesy of LeonardoDaVinci.net

The three dimensional sculptural effect is very important in ballet — to show shapes effortlessly moving through space.

This effortlessness is important. Ballet is not designed to be seen close-up, to show the strain, effort or hard breathing of the dancers creating these movements. By watching the “corps" as a whole, a wide shot will provide a feeling of massive symmetry, weight, and graceful movement which is completely different from seeing one person perform the same movement on a closer shot. For example, the "corps” will take a move made by a principal dancer and repeat it with less intensity, but on a much larger scale, reinforcing the move, but making it low-key.

In ballet, always remember the symmetry. It is bad form to only show one side of a corps making a unison move. Either show everyone moving, or go so tight that you see no one.

In ballet, it is a convention to assume that dancers have no backs and especially no butts. It is absolutely incorrect to show any ballet position from the back. Above all, though it seems virtually impossible, avoid crotch shots. Also, when doing a lift, the man becomes very self-effacing, due in large part to the awkward positions they often must be in. So the person to watch in close-up, if a close-up is demanded by the dance, is the person being lifted.

For viewing, and in determining initial camera placement, the best position is downstage center; the traditional fourth row back in the middle. Also keep in mind that the exact same movement (for example: the dancer leaning forward, with one leg extended back — an arabesque) is a different balletic position when seem from different angles. So if you shoot an arabesque from the side, when the arabesque is facing front, you have materially altered the choreography. This is simply to sensitize us to the fact that it is exceedingly dangerous to put cameras off to the side unless you are very careful in how the dance is shot. Changing camera angle changes the *content* of the dance — an alteration that we may not want.

Another example: diagonals are often employed on the stage — but those diagonals are designed, generally, to face front and center. So placing a camera to

the side, even though it makes for a better shot, damages the choreography. So, again, be very, very careful in camera placement and camera angle selections.

Another ballet convention is that ballet plots are not logical or even literal. They are pure style. So in shooting, concentrate on the dance, don't get overly concerned with the story. A romantic ballet is climaxed by, but does not necessarily end with, a pas de deux, treat this as the dramatic highlight of the program.

In ballet, audience applause after certain dance passages is another convention. However, the performers would prefer no applause because it breaks the flow of the piece. Still, these applause conventions need to be kept in mind when doing a ballet before a live audience. It can safely be ignored if you are taping (recording) a dance without an audience.

Finally, ballet is played to huge opera houses (4,000+ seats) with vast stage space. Drama, by comparison, plays to much smaller houses (1,500+ seats), and modem dance is even smaller yet. But of the three, the dance forms need the most stage space in which to move.

Dancers and Television

Stage presence, that emotional magic in a live performance, is what transfers the least to television. This is also what we need to work the hardest to recapture. Never tell a dancer that the television performance will be just like the stage version. It will not, nor can it ever be — the two are so completely different. What we do want to convince them of, however, is that while these are different, they can each in their own way be good.

Dancers are professionals. They tend to give you too much too soon, waste all their energy in rehearsal, and then not have anything left for the performance or taping. Keep reminding them during a rehearsal that they are only "marking," hold most of their energy back, save most of it for the performance. For example, at *most*, jumps and lifts can only be performed twice before the dancers become

physically exhausted. If both those lifts are done during rehearsal while cameras are being blocked, you will never get a good take on tape.

Never make decisions based on how good a dancer thinks any particular take was that they danced in. They judged it from how it felt to them and this is never a sound basis for determining quality. Dancers tend to lack the objectivity necessary for adequately critiquing their own performance.

Keep the psychology of dancers in mind — they are very sensitive to anything that might adversely affect their performance. Don't let the illusions created by the set, or lighting, for instance, fool them into thinking that the floor is unsafe to dance on. Let them test the floor before the lights are turned on, then show them the effect to help convince them that everything is still OK.

Also, keep the studio warm for the dancers — injuries are far more likely when dancers bodies have gotten cold and muscles have stiffened up. Turn the air conditioning off unless it is absolutely necessary for the equipment, then be sure that there are adequate coverings for the dancers.

The attitude of the director toward the dancers is vital to a good program or performance. A feeling of "we're doing this together" helps. Even more so when it becomes apparent that the director is taking the dancers seriously.

Dancers are very paranoid about many things we would tend not to notice: still photos or anything that deals with their body image. If a photographer is coming to the studio, be sure that the company knows about it in advance. Inform the photographer that they are is not to begin taking pictures casually, because the dancers will then concentrate on performing for the photographer and no longer listen to the rehearsal. A photo session will be far more disruptive than you would expect, so as a courtesy to the dancers, the photographer, and yourself, keep everyone informed.

One last, but important, point: A TV program will outlast the dancers in it. So the director *must* protect the dancers. In television, unison dancing is very difficult to achieve, because imperfections are magnified and "corps" work seems

much more ragged than it would ever appear on stage. Directors need to work hard to make unison sections truly unison. Be sure that the moves are performed correctly, that a ballerina doesn't fall off pointe, that the dancers look as good as they can. Because how that program looks will permanently represent the work of those dancers and that choreographer. Make it something of which they can be proud.

THE CHOREOGRAPHER

Choreographer and Workshop dance instructor.

What is a choreographer? Simply, he or she is the creator of all the movements, staging, and expression that makes up a dance. A choreographer is to dance what the director is to film: The creative heart.

As such, we as television people cannot simply shunt him to one side when we make our program. The reason we have decided to make the program in the first place is because we saw something in the dance that we found appealing. That appeal is there because of the work of the choreographer.

Since we want to translate this work to the TV screen, we can affect that translation best, and retain more of the appeal, if we work *with* the choreographer, not without him.

What makes for a good choreographer? Generally, a good choreographer will use space and not just provide movement in one spot. Also, gestures and movements will all seem connected, everything will relate. But there is no precise definition of what is ”good” in dance. The best thing for me is to watch it and decide for myself if I find it interesting. Then I seek the opinion of a friend who enjoys dance. Finally, I'll talk with a choreographer about it, and learn his opinion. After doing this several times,

I can establish some basic parameters to help me judge the quality in a performance.

A good choreographer is also a dancer. Though it is not necessary for them to have danced full-time before becoming a choreographer, it is necessary for them to have an understanding of the vocabulary of dance for them to be able to teach to others the movement they see in their imagination.

A key to a good program will be whether you as a director can be sympathetic to the aesthetics of the choreographer — if not, you will have difficulty in doing justice to his work. In this case, it would be best for both of you to request that you not direct the program. But this works both ways, because TV will poke huge holes in mediocre or bad choreography; holes that tend to be hidden when the work is performed on stage. To prevent this, the producer and the director need to be very critical of the dances selected to be taped before they move into the studio for taping.

Here's the **key rule**: If you can't present the dance well, then don't do it.

Dance is a collaboration. You are working with, not against, the choreographer. Collaboration is saying: "I, as a director, am trying to make my program of *your* intentions. We did not ask you here to have you make your program of your intentions."

A good question for the producer or director to ask in the beginning of a collaboration with a choreographer is: "Why are you doing this program?" To help publicize his company? For the money to continue paying the dancers? To immortalize the work? Each of these reasons is valid and all have been used in the past. The answer will help guide how television and dance can best work together.

The term "collaboration" may seem to suggest that the director is only a lackey to the choreographer. Such is not the case. The director has every right to ask the choreographer to change the blocking and staging of the dancers for the camera, because the TV director knows far better than the choreographer how to best utilize television to make the dance look good. A dance is not inviolate, it is not

a "take it, or leave it" proposition. It is a cooperative effort. Just let any modifications that need to be done to the dance, suggested by the director, be done by the choreographer.

Dance terminology can be another stumbling block, so what the Dance Workshop did was simply invent their own terms. Ballet terminology is incomprehensible except to a very small number of people. So when talking with dancers and choreographers, we called different moves by our own pet names. (Examples: “your turn,” “this torpedo,” “lift,” “giant lift,” “super lift,” “fall,” “rolling around on the floor;” you get the idea.) Knowing its precise technical name isn't important. What *is* important is for both you and the choreographer to agree on what it is you are talking about; then call it anything you want.

There are two exceptions to the collaboration between the choreographer and the director. That collaboration is important whenever you are doing a dance for television. This implies that some re-staging of the dance is going to be important. But, when television is covering a live dance performance (as on "Live From Lincoln Center”) that collaboration is less important, because no re-staging is going to be possible. In fact, “Dance In America” is about choreography and collaboration, while “Live From Lincoln Center” is about performance. Don't feel obligated to hold long meetings with the choreographer when you are televising a live performance — they won't have the time to talk. Second, outside of a courtesy call, there isn't that much for the two of you to talk about. As a TV person, your prime function is to cover the dance effectively, without damaging either the audience's enjoyment at home or in the theater. So with a live program, the director is more on his own.

What about when the choreographer is dead or not available? Traditional ballets have the former problem and companies dancing the work of a choreographer who has moved elsewhere have the latter. The best thing is to get someone from the company that is familiar with the work to act as an advisor to reassure the director that any re-staging that is being done is not damaging the work. A good

contact person is the ballet master, or rehearsal mistress. There will always be someone in the company that can serve as an advisor, just ask.

One last problem. What about the choreographer that dances with his company? This causes a number of problems, as one choreographer explained: "A choreographer that dances can't watch a tape immediately after performing and view it with objectivity. Instead they view it with the eye of a dancer. ('Did I put that foot right, was my arm too high?') It takes until the third or fourth viewing and preferably the next day, till that objectivity can be achieved."

So, when a taping situation demands a faster objective response, insist on having the choreographer delegate someone whom they trust to make the kind of objective decisions that assure the choreographer's interests are being looked after. Again, this could be the ballet master, or rehearsal mistress.

When the program is finally complete, the choreographer expects that it will look different than it does on the stage, but he still wants to be respected for the work that is represented in the program. Keep this respect in mind during the taping process.

THE PRODUCER

On Doing Dance

The cardinal rule is: It is better to have no dance, than to present bad dance on TV.

In doing dance programs, avoid pretentiousness. Avoid presenting the arts as a high-brow, isolationist, elitist event. Don't put "The Arts" on a pedestal. Don't "Do Culture." Be watchful of introductions, costumes, sets, inflections, all the elements that go into the program. Avoid making the audience feel like they are visiting the Temple of High Art. Don't make people feel guilty if they don't know something.

Remember that even today, with all of our sophistication about the arts, many people still go to the theater, or watch television, to be entertained. When in doubt, keep it simple.

Merrill Brockway has assembled what he calls his thoughts on the audience:

1. The audience is intelligent.
2. They may be from Tucson and not be informed. Don't talk down to them, but provide them the opportunity to learn.
3. I am my own best audience. I watch TV actively to see how I can improve what I do.
4. TV viewing is often distracting when watched at home, so be wary of a strong narrative requiring strict attention to the screen.
5. I base my programs on my own curiosity and hope to present them in such a way as to interest the curiosity of the audience as well.

It has been discovered that any arts program, in the United States or Europe, can only expect to get 5% of the television audience. None has gotten significantly more than that. In numbers, that roughly translates to eleven million people in the United States.

As a producer, there are a number of considerations that can help in deciding to do a particular dance:

1. Is the dance contained?
    a. Does the dance deal with vast numbers of people?
    b. Does the dance deal with vast amounts of space?
2. Does it require a continuous wide shot in order to see everything?
3. Is it possible to take tight shots?
4. Is it a narrative dance? (This style works best for TV.)

In programming, there is a strong need for a good series on dance lecture/ demonstrations. Not only what is dance, but what is a dance phrase, how do different choreographers move their dancers, in what way is dance similar in structure to music (canons, retardes, retrogrades), how can the audience better appreciate dance, is it possible to laugh during a dance concert? There is a need for a series to serve to introduce people to dance.

In addition, consider also a series of 60-second dance spots aimed at a larger audience than might time in for a 60-minute program.

One of the difficulties in doing dance is the lack of knowledge about TV on the part of dance companies and choreographers; and the lack of understanding on the part of TV personnel about dance and how choreographers work with their companies. To help solve this problem, hold an open house for dancers and choreographers, inviting them to look around, without making any commitments.

There are currently two production centers doing dance on a national level — WNET and the Lincoln Center. There exists a great opportunity for a production house to build a reputation for doing dance on either a regional, or a national level. To the best of my knowledge, dance is currently in production at only three other centers: Lincoln ETV, WOSU (Columbus, Ohio), and South Carolina ETV. The field remains wide open with opportunities for a producer with good ideas.

Funding sources currently *very* interested in funding dance include the National Endowment for the Arts, the Liggett Foundation, and the Ford Foundation;

though there are other major corporate funders. Also, "Dance In America" has only one more season to run.

A sidelight on production staff:

1. Keep your staff small, but hire the best people possible.
2. Give them the reins to do the job, then leave them alone to do it.
3. Don't be afraid to write notes of apology.

Negotiations and Costs

In negotiations with a dance company, involve the production staff in the first negotiation (that is, the executive producer, producer, and assistant producer). This shows a united front and a concern on the part of all the TV people in the end result of these negotiations.

The important thing to remember is to deal with all dancers fairly. Not necessarily equally, but definitely fairly. Don't set out to screw anybody because the dance world is very small, it takes virtually no time for the word to spread that you are tight-fisted and thus a bad production company to deal with.

In negotiations, stick with a formula for costs — that is, talk percentages of current salaries, and so forth. Going into open negotiation (for example, asking: "What do you want?") is very dangerous, because prices tend to sky-rocket and this allows little flexibility to return them to earth.

The following discussion on costs assumes that the dancers are union. For non-union dancers, the prices will probably be lower, but the principles are the same. The following discussion is based in large part on information supplied from the "Dance In America" series.

Generally, you "buy" a dancer for a full week; even if you only plan on using them for a day or two. There are additional hassles in buying only part of a company. If that's what you need, it might be easier to contact each dancer individually, rather than go through the company administrator. For all other negotiations, however, go through the administrator.

Anytime there is government money involved in a dance production (whether it is through a grant, or through the operating fees of the production company), you cannot pay dancers less than union rates. In short, the government cannot be in a position to underbid the union.

In negotiations, determine when the company is rehearsing for itself and when it is rehearsing for television. Many times, TV can piggyback on a dance

company's rehearsal time, provided its for observation and doesn't involve TV equipment.

Dancers belong to AGMA, which is their union. Most TV studios are AFTRA. It is important to get these two unions to sit down in advance of a production to discuss how they will allow working in each other's shops. AFTRA will give each dancer one free appearance on television, then it requires that the dancer join AFTRA for all future performances. However, AFTRA's initiation dues are so high that they are beyond the means of most dancers. So "Dance In America" has negotiated a partial payment, step-system for the initiation fee so that dancers won't go broke in paying for a union they will rarely need.

"Dance In America" has found that the fairest way to determine payments for dancers is to base it on their weekly salary for the dance company. Generally this is between $250 and $1,000 per dancer depending upon the company. This way, each dancer knows where they stand and knows that there are no special favors being granted by the TV people. For dancers paid by the performance (generally the superstars) you will need to see their agent.

The production company pays all dancers directly, unless the dance company specifically requests that the money be channeled through them to help them meet the requirements of a federal challenge grant.

Dancers are paid based upon a thirty-hour week, spread over either a five, or six-day week, based as well upon the pay rate for either a rehearsal week, or a performance week, whichever is greater.

As a rough guide, when doing a taped (recorded) show, allow yourself one week in studio for each one hour of dance programming.

Don't incur overtime on an out-of-studio rehearsal, follow AGMA's schedule to prevent some truly mind-boggling computations. Overtime during a studio session is paid on AFTRA's scale.

For "Dance In America," the usual taping time is from 11 am till 6 pm, with make-up and crew call set for 10 am.

When bringing dancers into a studio situation, even for a rehearsal, shift them to the engineer's schedule to prevent the problems inherent in trying to juggle the conflicting union's break schedules into the taping day.

When in doubt about current AGMA rates and requirements, call the national office of AGMA. However, current experience tells us that due to lack of precedents, they will probably defer the decision back to you and the dance company to negotiate.

The initial negotiations provide you the right to bring the dancers to the studio, tape a program, and air it once. Next, you will need to consider negotiating three other rights:

1. Limited United States and Canadian rights
2. Foreign Rights
3. Non-broadcast (what's called "Audio-Visual") distribution rights

The production company must specifically be given these rights by the dance company. However, currently, the National Endowment for the Arts strongly supports the concept of the artist owning his own program.

Limited United States and Canadian rights permit your program four releases in a three year period (the standard PBS program run). A release is defined as a multiple number of broadcasts within a seven day period. For this right, dancers are paid a flat fee of $65 in addition to their salaries.

With foreign and AV rights, the negotiations are not so clear-cut. These used to be a fixed fee sort of thing, but both these two areas are turning into large money-makers for the production house, so the dance companies want more money to compensate. Negotiations now seem to be indicating a trend toward pegging foreign rights fees as a percentage of the base salary, rather than the traditional flat fee. But this trend is still hazy.

As of now, similar to limited United States and Canadian rights, when foreign rights are purchased, the production company holds exclusivity for all foreign distribution. Generally, this exclusivity runs from three to seven years. The

past practice has been for dancers to be paid a flat fee for this right (based on AFTRA's scale this ran less than $100); but as I mentioned, this is changing.

If you thought foreign rights were confused, A.V. rights are worse. Basically, there is an expectation that non-broadcast uses of the program are a vast, untapped market just brimming with riches. But this has not materialized. Again, like domestic and foreign rights, this used to be an area covered by a flat fee and negotiated rather perfunctorily. But now, there is thought toward taking the total monies received from non-broadcast sales, subtract all mandated union residual payments, subtract all duplication and distribution costs incurred by the production house and the remaining lump of money is divided in half. Half goes to the dancers, half to the production house.

Now, in addition to paying salaries while taping, and in addition to purchasing limited United States and Canadian, foreign, and A.V. rights; there is still another fee: a per diem of $35 for expenses (like food and lodging). The production company is expected to pick up the tab for transportation.

So, let us summarize the fee structure:

1. $35 per day per dancer for expenses
2. $250 — $1,000 for single performance rights in the United States and Canada per dancer per week
3. A flat fee for United States and Canadian rights per dancer for four releases in three years
4. Foreign rights — costs vary
5. A.V. distribution rights — costs vary

(Note: "Dance In America" recently set a precedent in paying for ballet pointe shoes for programs that use a lot of pointe work.)

Now, difficult as this may seem, it is still important that as a producer you make sure that every dollar in your budget shows up on screen and doesn't get frittered away in some hidden corner.

One other thought about miscellaneous expenses for dancers. Just as you may provide the engineers with a few morning amenities like coffee and donuts, the dancers appreciate such things too.

So consider providing a cooler of yogurt and a basket of fresh fruit. And for efficient operations during taping, possibly cater lunch so that the dancers don't need to change clothes, go out, eat, return, change clothes again and warm up — all in an hour. (And, as a reassuring sidelight: dancers like junk food as much as the rest of us.)

Let us now turn to the costs of the choreographer. As a general rule, the more collaboration you demand from him, the more it is going to cost. The current rates for a choreographer's performance rights are about $100 per performance minute. This includes limited United States and Canadian rights. Foreign rights are a percentage of this. The average is about $5,000 per show. Since there is no choreographer's union, the dollar amount is really whatever you can both agree on. However these are only fees for broadcast rights. In addition, you need to pay for his time which is about $150 per day. Again, these are New York rates for major companies and choreographers. Costs can all be negotiated depending upon budget.

Finally, don't spend thousands in production and then fail to tell the world what is happening. EVERY PRODUCTION NEEDS AN ADVERTISING BUDGET!!! Be sure and plan for one!

Research/Writing

The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, in New York City, provides a tremendous resource both in research and on-camera visuals. Xeroxes cost 30¢ a page, books, films and tapes are also available. This library has two departments for each art form: circulation and collections. A catalog is available listing all their holdings, but costs $700. Most major East Coast libraries have a copy. A good contact in the research area of the Dance Collection is Virginia Brooks.

In doing research, it helps to review still photos of a particular dance, or dancer, to get a better understanding about it. The Lincoln Center library has a very large collection of classical ballet pictures that can be photographed, providing the Dance Collection is presented with written permission for the person who owns the rights to the picture. The Dance Collection is not set up, however, as a photo distributor; it is primarily a research library.

In determining who holds rights to a photograph, it is accepted practice that the photographer that took the shot owns the rights unless he was working under contract for a dance company, or unless he has assigned the rights to some other organization.

Obtaining clearance to broadcast a picture is a very simple legal form; however, problems often arise in locating who holds the rights. As a standard practice, "Dance In America" will provide credit at the end of the program for people providing photographs for use in the program. Minimal fees are paid for historical films and photos. As well, dance companies can sometimes provide photos of their own current productions for broadcast without a fee.

Intermission

When doing a live program, it is often the tendency to write off the intermissions as something to be suffered through. Which isn't right. These can provide an excellent opportunity for setting the scene for the dancing to come, or for inquiring about things that have happened. It is often good to have a separate staff or staff person working on just these segments; and give them time to properly prepare them.

The "Live From Lincoln Center" programs have shown that a lot more attention needs be given to filler material. It needs to be:

1. More natural
2. Better in content
3. Better in flow

4. Less likely to talk down to the audience or filled with "inside" gossip.

In doing fillers, try using more pre-taped material, more roll-ins, or visual examples. Try and use more pre-packaging to spice it up. Don't feel locked into doing the intermission "Live" simply because the dancing is. Remember, the prime job of the intermission is to be able to hang on to the audience. Also, they found that presenting literate dancers on camera is more effective than using celebrities, because dancers have more credibility.

In writing for an intermission they found that the host is a critical factor. And with the people to be interviewed, several days prior to the event, a researcher will pre-interview all guests in hopes that suitable questions can be found; but this system is not highly reliable.

A writer for a dance show is different than for most other shows. They are really only a small cog in the process. Their function is to save the director, or producer, time by providing:

1. Research
2. An expert opinion when asked
3. The words for the script — which is their craft
4. The type of person the director can stand being around
5. Someone with a sense of the situation (someone who is comfortable with the particular pressures and requirements of television}.

NOTE: The reason this list is skewed toward a director's point of view is that the person relating these was talking to a group of directors.

Criticism

You will ALWAYS be criticized when you do dance on TV — especially by the purists who view dance as a religion; which is holy only in the theater. The trick is not in avoiding criticism, but in expecting it.

Be careful in all your dealings with critics to avoid setting up the problem of conflict of interest. Don't make any gestures that might seem as if you are trying to "buy" their opinion.

Critics don't want to be kissed or pampered when they are called upon to attend a screening. Just treat them as folks. They won't want to talk about a program right after they've seen it and especially not with the people that made it.

Dance criticism suffers currently from a lack of dance critics versed in television, or television production. As a remedy, consider inviting critics to a one-day workshop on how TV works. Let them watch a studio production, meet some of the "behind-the-scenes" people. Provide an informed guide to supply helpful commentary on what they are seeing and to keep them out of mischief. And do it far enough in advance of any reviewable productions to make it seem as though you are actually interested in their welfare.

• • •

Well, the program has now been selected, the dancers and the choreographers are ready, the money has been negotiated and spent. The critics and writers are standing by. All that's left is the actual production.

THE DIRECTOR

On Doing Dance

"I think it is important that the TV director take a position saying: 'This is the perspective from which I will present this program.'" (Tobi Tobias) A director needs to have his own story of the dance — an idea that will effectively, and simply, describe what the dance is about. He needs to know the theme and focus of the dance in order to properly present it to an audience.

Take the time to really study and learn the dance, sit in on rehearsals, talk with the choreographer and the dancers. Granted it will take time, but the key is to allow time to discover the meaning in the dance and not just suddenly try to do something at the last minute.

When South Carolina ETV produced "Petrouchka" recently, the director and the assistant director were attending rehearsals for a month, and the camera operators were there for five days; all to tape one performance live and spend the next day doing pick-up shots.

In watching rehearsals, learn how the choreographer works, find out what he feels is important for the viewer to see. Keep trying to break through the barriers between the choreographer and the director. The key to effective collaboration is communication; in trying to understand what the other person is doing.

There is a very definite language barrier between the TV world and the dance world. Television is comfortable in dealing with things verbally, in seeking explanations and asking questions. Dance, on the other hand, is very non-verbal. Unless we as TV people are sensitive to this, a lot of tensions and frustrations are going to occur needlessly.

Dance needs to be more perfect on TV than it does on stage, because TV tends to magnify mistakes and make them far more obvious. In the theater, these errors tend to be overlooked, or forgiven, by the audience because of the emotional response of the audience with the dancers performing live. So, as directors, take

the initiative. Don't accept bad dancing, or bad choreography, or bad working conditions. Negotiate with the companies involved and make things better. Avoid being timid. You know as much about television as they know about dance. Dancing before a live audience is different from dancing in a television studio.

In the studio situation, dancers have difficulty in perceiving the studio taping as a performance and instead tend to hold back and not dance their best.

Please remember that as directors, we need to protect dancers and choreographers from their own mistakes.

For every large scale production, it is helpful to put a production book together, including:

1. Production schedules
2. Theater or remote schedules (if it is a remote location)
3. Contact sheet — names, addresses, and phone numbers of *everyone* involved in the performance and production
4. Script
5. Master shot sheet
6. If desired, include floor plans, scenic and lighting designs.

In doing dance for TV, aim for economy, efficiency, and clarity. Part of the advice the director needs to provide the producer is knowing what dances are untranslatable to television. The audience watching the program at home must not feel that they are missing something important in the dance, regardless of which shot is being taken. Get the audience to trust the program; convey the feeling that they will see all of the dance.

In deciding how to shoot a dance, consider if the material's "got it." If so, leave it alone and keep the production simple.

If the material's lacking, then add whatever life you can — rapid cutting, special effects, fancy sets, lighting, and all the other tricks that are available.

In general, though, you should be able to trust the dancing, without relying on effects or gimmicks. Don't select something for television that is going to be a

waste of time. Let simplicity be the key. Emphasize the choreography. Use visual effects only to hide a "hole" in the dance (a spot where nothing interesting seems to be happening). Try and make the technical aspects of television become transparent and let the dancing be seen.

NOTE: It is worth restating: Fast cutting, extreme closeups, or excessive visual effects are generally hallmarks of poor choreography and/or dancing.

Take advantage of humor — surprise people with the unexpected. If a big build-up is followed by a small move, use a tight shot for surprise and effect. But be careful of telegraphing surprises.

Keep the audience in suspense until the punch line.

When confronted with an ethnic dance, remember that this is not about choreography, but about steps and patterns. Probably the best way to shoot these is from a high camera and then fill out the rest of it with visual effects and tricks.

Here are some questions to answer when preparing to direct a dance:

1. What is the piece about?
2. What are the dancers doing?
3. Are we highlighting the dance or the dancers? (There is a difference.)
4. How do we handle telling the storyline to the audience? (In television the current trend is to present program notes as a roll before the start of the work, with the writing on screen reduced to bare essentials and a voiceover reading what appears on the screen.)
5. What do you do for the TV audience during the intermission of a live performance to give them a break from the exhausting business of watching dance?
6. How much emphasis should be put on production values for TV?
7. How much “show-biz” (special effects) should be put into the dance?

In the rest of this section, we will be examining the various technical production elements which can be used for dance. For this discussion, we will assume that the dance is to be taped and edited. While almost all of these

guidelines also hold for live productions, a short segment has been added at the end with specific thoughts on doing dance live.

Record-taping Rehearsals

In addition to collaborating with the choreographer, two other distinguishing production tools for dance are the record tape and the script.

The record tape (pronounced as in phonograph "record") is a 1/2" videotape, generally black and white, which is a continuous wide shot of the dance. The purpose of the record tape is to show the entire stage area, all the dancers upon it and how they are moving. It should show all entrances and exists. It should include the audio the dance will be performed to and should be taped in a performance situation. That is, the dancers should be dancing as they would like the audience to see it and not just walking through, or marking, their parts.

This record tape is critical to directing a dance. It is from this tape that the director will draw the script, lighting and sets will be designed, cameras will learn shots and the dance company will be saved from innumerable performances to acquaint the television people with the dance. This record tape is the direct equivalent of a phonograph record of a symphony that a director would use to become familiar with both the score and the music of an orchestral concert to be broadcast for television.

Because a record tape is so important to a dance program, it is very helpful to have access to a black and white Porta-Pack (a portable camera) and a monitor for as long as you will be doing the dance.

After the record tape is made, and the director has met with the choreographer to talk about the dance, it is now time to make the script. In scripting, take down the general movements of the dancers. Don’t be concerned with how each individual specifically moves, unless that person is a soloist.

Scripting a Dance

Initially, draw as best as possible diagrams for all moves made by all dancers, then re-write the pictures into *short* word descriptions and, if helpful, counts. (Take a look at the three examples starting on the next page.) Scripting simply puts shots and movements into ordinary words and simple pictures. Recall the discussion earlier about not getting involved with dance terminology. Call the movements anything you like, then explain your term to the choreographer so that there's no confusion. After completing the script, block cameras and shots to best highlight the movement.

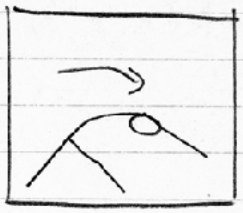
In doing scripting and camera blocking, avoid being too literal. Don't show tight close-ups if they conceal the dancing, or if they show the effort a dancer is expending to create a particularly "effortless" look. Show the dance itself, not all the stress and strain that is being generated.

Also, in the beginning stages of the planning, avoid setting rigid patterns of cutting when scripting. Put in all the shots that are possible, then begin to simplify and condense, removing unnecessary shots until the final package begins to emerge. In other words, don't limit your thinking at the beginning.

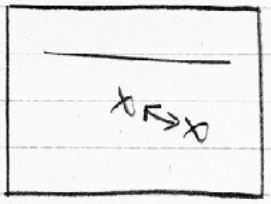
Remember, as well, that the record tape is not completely accurate — there are always discrepancies between the best of record tapes and the actual performance. Allow yourself the flexibility to be surprised by something new. For example, when the San Francisco Ballet's "Romeo and Juliet" was moved from San Francisco to Nashville for taping, the first thing that the director did was make a new record tape to compare with the one he'd been using for his planning to see what the changes were and to correct for them in the script.

SAMPLE DANCE SCRIPT
Soloist

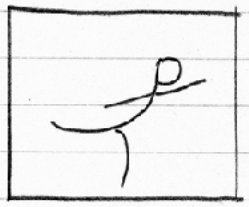
5:07



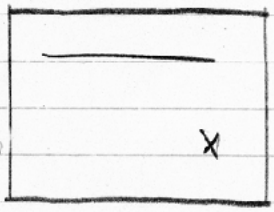
FALLS FORWARD THEN BACK 2 TIMES



5:15

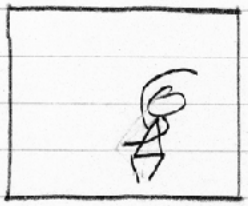


1-LEG STRETCH TURNS 360°

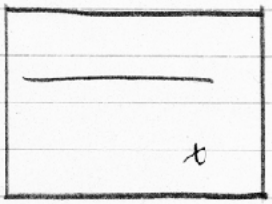


CLOSE FF (END MUSIC PHRASE)

CZ
* 5:40
(9)

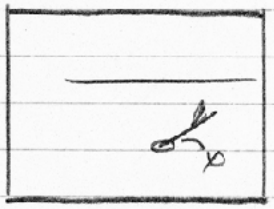


COLLAPSES MOVE LFT

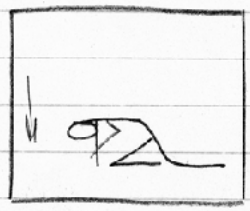


5:55

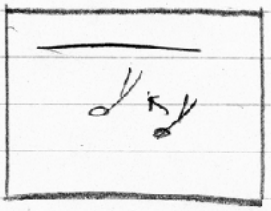
ROLLS ON BACK THEN UP



6:10

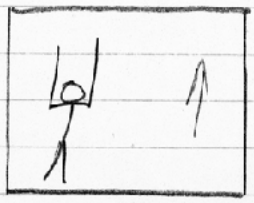


ROLLS OVER TWICE KNEELS

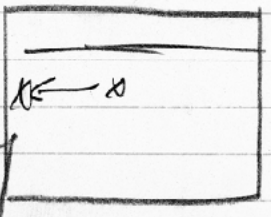


TIMM

CH
* 6:40
(10)



STANDS + SPINS

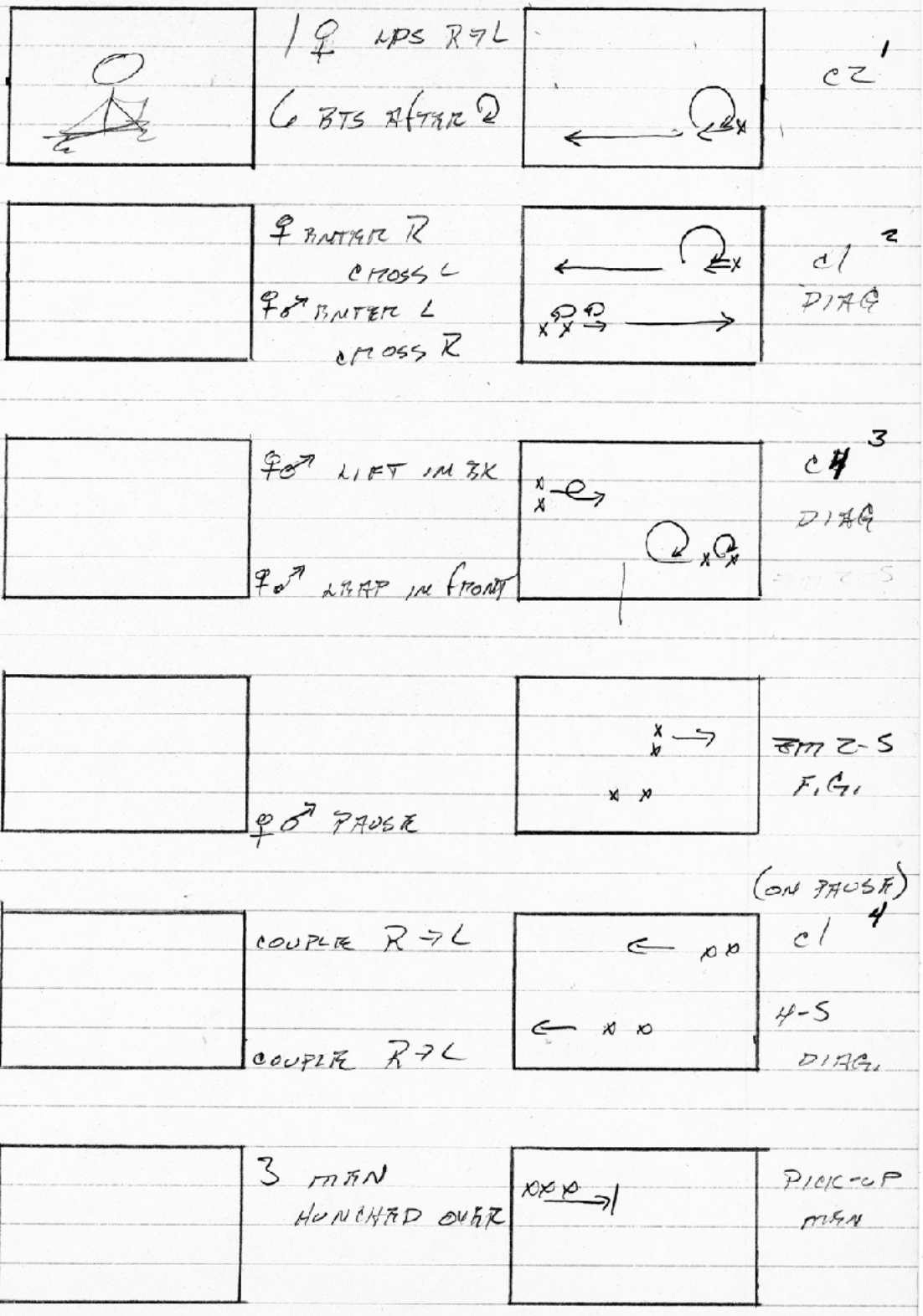


MOVES LFT

FF

SAMPLE DANCE SCRIPT

Group

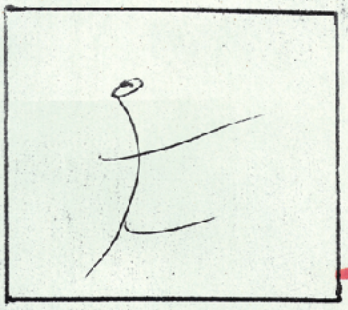


G-5

BKGND

SLIDE

CAM



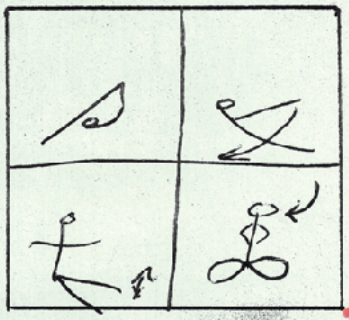
READY TO DISS. LEFT PAN TO BLACK EDGE AS SHE SITS DOWN

RDY 3

G-9 G-6A

3 STRETCH

- DISS - #3



ON BACK ROLL

FILL FRAME + BODY

PAN LEFT

G-8

GRAIN WAVES

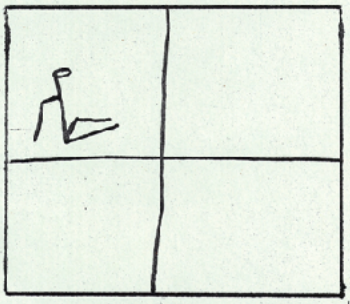
CHG 4

BACK ROLL

REACH + SWEEP

ROCKING LEGS

SIT CROSS-LEGGED + SPIN



PAN LEFT

RDY 2

G-8

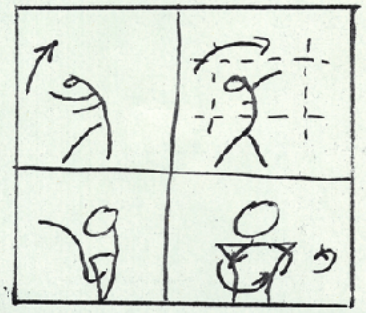
OPEN LEGS + FLUTTER KICK

- DISS - #2

ON RISE

PAN RANDOMLY — SLO TILT

FOLLOW UP FOR WAIST SHOT



G-9

LITE PAINTING

RISES

TURNS

FOLLOW HAND

ARMS CIRCLE

Staff and Crew

Dance is the hardest television there is to do and you can't expect new camera operators, or other technical people, to shoot dance well the first time they try it. New people need to be given time to be trained, then keep them on the production. Avoid rotating crew.

As a general rule, try and involve the entire technical crew in the production in advance of moving into the studio to provide everyone with an opportunity to solve problems before they occur as well as to offer their input and suggestions.

Director and AD

Probably the most confusing relationship is between the director and the assistant director. Because both are individuals, the exact relationship needs to be worked out between the two of them, but here are some suggestions.

Ideally, the director and the assistant director are a co-production. The assistant director needs to be forceful, since he is more in control of the cameras than the director.

The relationship between the director and the assistant director needs a lot of work to keep going, because they step on each other's toes a lot. In doing live productions, much more precision is needed in each role than when you are taping with isolated cameras feeding different tape machines.

In preparation for a dance, the assistant director should sit through a lot of early rehearsals to get a sense of what the piece is about and how the choreographer likes to work, then watch a record tape of the rehearsal.

As a director, when you have an assistant director, let him do the work during the production. The director needs only to call cameras that are going on the air and make framing corrections.

As a director, keep quiet. Let the assistant director talk, while you pay attention to the program.

As an assistant director, call the dancer's moves in advance for the camera (for example: "Next, he's going to move camera right, jump, spin left, and fall to the ground.") The assistant director should provide a running commentary for the cameramen. Also, the assistant director should count the movements for the director (for example: "She's going to do seven spins then move camera left. One… Two … ") However, be sure that the assistant director doesn't over-talk a production.

There are different styles of assistant directing. An assistant director can either tell the cameras what the *dancers* are going to do next, or he can tell the cameras what the *cameras* are going to do next. For example, the same move could be: "The soloist is going to run and leap downstage left" or "Camera one you are going to loosen slightly and pan right with the soloist." However, to prevent problems, don't mix calling styles in the same production.

Camera Operators

Camera operators should attend a couple of rehearsals with the dance company in their rehearsal hall and try and watch a performance on stage if possible. When watching a performance, have them sit in the camera position they'll be shooting from to get used to seeing the dance from that particular angle, then have them watch the record tape with the director.

Unlike drama, cameras for a dance are given specific tasks to perform, rather than specific shots. For example, camera 1 follows Romeo in a full-figure shot (that is, a full body shot with the feet almost touching the bottom of the frame and a little less headroom than usual). Camera 2 is a wide shot and camera 3 is a full-figure of Juliet. This way, there are three air-able shots at all times and the director is not trapped into not having a shot available.

Production Assistant

The production assistant will type up shot sheets for the cameras which contain the minimum possible information. Little Christmas tree lights are taped to

the back of the cameras to provide enough light to read by without blinding the audience. The shot sheet contains only the beginning of the shot, the cameras can fill in additional information as necessary during rehearsal. Notes are given, or taken, from the master script held by the assistant director.

Floor Managers

The floor manager is critical during a taping situation. He is the buffer between the control room and the dancers. ALWAYS keep dancers informed as to what is happening, why there is a delay. Keep dancers from becoming bored, or worried, or tense, because any of these will damage their performance. ABOVE ALL — KEEP DANCERS FROM BECOMING COLD!!

Dance Floor

The construction of the floor has now become critical for dance. Dancers will no longer risk ruining their careers by dancing on concrete for television. However, the floor provides more than its share of aesthetic problems. Minimize its appearance whenever possible. Ideally, make it disappear in the mind of the audience.

There are a variety of ways of constructing a floor for dance. No one floor is perfect, each depends upon budget, space, and frequency of use to determine what is the best. But with that caveat, each of these have been found to be successful to some degree.

Construction #1 (cross-section top to bottom):

Upside-down linoleum (primed, painted, and sealed)

1/2" to 3/4" plywood

Foam core

All sitting on top of the concrete studio floor

Construction #2:

G.A.F. vinyl tiles with built-in padding (3" square sheets)

All sitting on top of the concrete studio floor

Construction #3 (cross-section top to bottom):

Upside-down linoleum

Masonite

Foam core

Plywood (3/4")

8 - 16" riser

All sitting on top of the concrete studio floor

Construction #4 (cross-section top to bottom):

Upside-down linoleum

1" corrugated cardboard

1" corrugated cardboard (second layer)

All sitting on top of the concrete studio floor

Construction #5 (cross-section top to bottom):

Upside-down linoleum

1/2" chipboard

Foam core

1/2" chipboard

Rubber grommets

All sitting on top of the concrete studio floor

The floor sits on rubber grommets to provide spring for the dancers. Be sure that in all constructions, seams over-lap, Pittsburgh has had trouble when using Marley floors, so be careful.

Address for corrugated cardboard: (samples are available)

Celadyn

Division of Lancaster Research and Development Corp.

P. 0. Box 264

Michigan City, Indiana 46360

(219) 879-5361

The linoleum mentioned is the cheapest stuff you can find and used upside down to facilitate painting. The seams are perpendicular to the camera's point of view, and sealed with cloth, not vinyl, gaffer's tape. When using linoleum, prime it, then seal it (with one part polyurethane sealer and one part alcohol), then prime it again. Then seal it again. Now it's ready to be laid on the studio floor.

After installation in studio, paint it with its final pattern and seal it. Sealing the floor provides a slipperier surface for the dancers than pure paint, which is like sandpaper. Thus, by adjusting the amount of sealer in the final coat, the final slipperiness can be adjusted to suit each particular dance company.

Modern dance needs a slightly slicker floor than ballet.

When painting the floor, shade it darker in the center and lighter at the edges to compensate for the extra light that is hitting the center. This makes it easier for the floor to look evenly lit and avoids hot spots and dark corners. But shade the floor so the painting is unnoticeable.

When choosing floor colors, don't use any color lighter than a medium gray. When using linoleum. prepare everything except for the last coat of paint and sealer in the scene shop before moving it to the studio. This minimizes tying up the studio and provides greater control over the priming and sealing. Be sure to have plenty of paint left over for touching up because, with dancers, the floor is going to need it.

As an example, the San Francisco Ballet had the linoleum primed and sealed three times in the scene shop, then moved to the studio and painted and sealed two more times (the floor was scheduled for heavy toe work). If the floor became slippery during the production, it was painted with Coke (as in soft drink), DON'T USE RESIN to eliminate slipperiness — it leaves huge white marks when dry, and the only way to remove resin is to strip the entire floor and begin the painting and sealing process from the beginning.

Some other floor thoughts:

1. Use gray — it doesn't show marks.
2. Try browns and dark mahogany.

3. Avoid whites — it shows marks too well)
4. Avoid blacks — it, too, shows marks too well)
5. Toe work in ballet eats up a soft floor — the floor needs constant patching.
6. If the floor is slippery, paint it with coke, which will dry to a very sticky finish.
7. The resin from toe shoes leaves a lot of white marks — keep this in mind when designing a floor pattern.
8. A wood floor is ideal because of resiliency.
9. Cement floors are absolutely out for dancers because dancing on cement can destroy muscles and risk ruining a career.

Finally, one note about ground rows: They should be painted the same sort of dirty yellow as the cyc so that the same light hitting both makes the ground row invisible.

Set Design

Avoid simply painting flats — use your sets to reinforce the three-dimensional character of the dance and let the set have dimensions of its own.

A good set will fill both the high verticals left when a wide shot is used, yet still provide something for the lower and closer full-figure shots and the close-ups. Set designs need to be specifically designed for television, because stage sets tend to be too big and too high off the ground for television.

In set design, use scale, that is large verticals, to help dominate the cyc and head space, which is large due to the low angle from which cameras shoot dance (see the section on camera placement). For example, consider large drapes, columns, flying pieces, cyc patterns and so on.

Place the set between 2-5 feet from the cyc and let the dancers work in front of the set. Rarely do they "occupy it" but instead exist apart from the set.

Keep the sets sparse, as this forces viewers to concentrate on the dancing. However, if the dancing is weak, design an opulent set, which then gives the audience such a quantity of things to look at that their attention is divided, which minimizes the effect of bad dancing or bad choreography.

In dance, use a colored cyc to provide flexibility in background moods and fly-in set pieces. Don't build a "real room" — provide the hint, not the reality.

Due to the low camera angle, a high cyc is necessary. If a higher cyc line is needed than is available, instead of hanging teasers from the grid, consider a piece of medium gray cardboard in front of the lens lit with the same color light as the cyc (see diagram). Because the cardboard is close to the camera, it will be defocused and impossible to see clearly. The only problem is that this minimizes camera movement (tilts, trucks, and pedestals are all out). Similarly, if the cardboard trick doesn't work, try a horizontal wipe inserting a camera that is only shooting the cyc into a camera that is shooting off the top of the cyc. (See diagram) Adjust the cyc camera to match the dance camera.

When designing sets, use open construction as much as possible to allow the lighting designer the opportunity to shine lights through the set to create patterns on the floor, dancers, and cyc. Avoid solid walls, or heavy, flat shapes; try to create sets which can be incorporated into the lighting design as well.

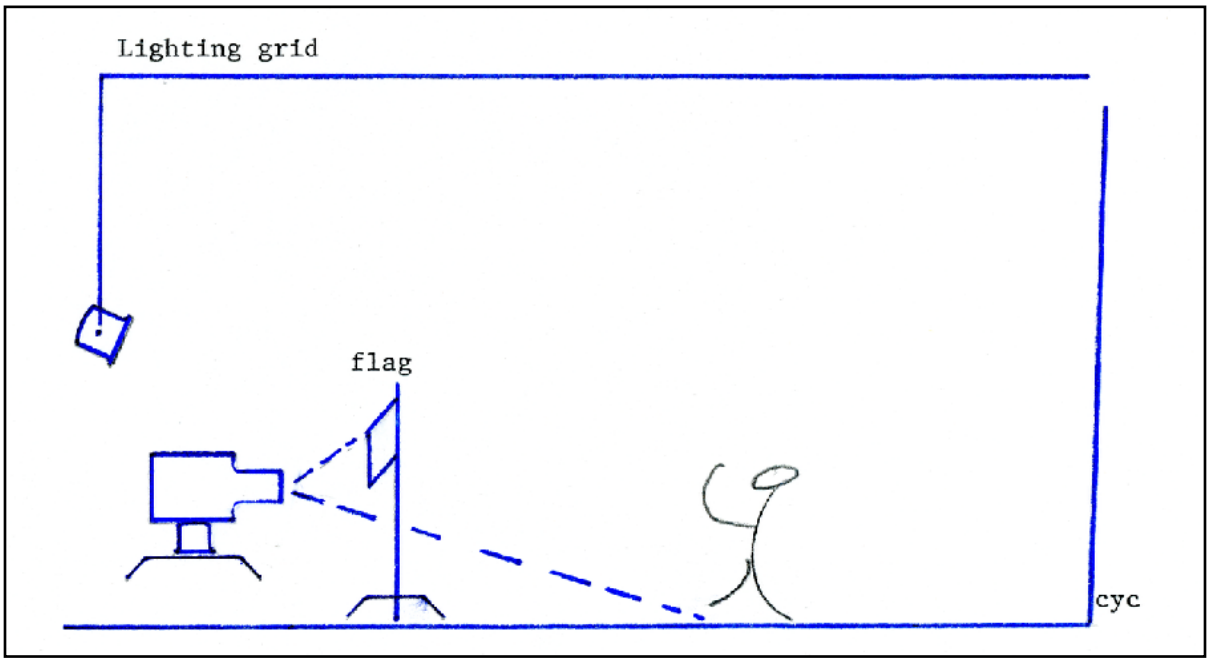
Lighting

It is more effective to use hundreds of light cues instead of follow spots to enhance the subjective nature of the dance. Note that this requires the specific placement of dancers and their positions. However, this is generally not a problem, for dancers are able to hit their marks with remarkable accuracy during an actual performance.

Light cues work best when they are seen on camera, instead of occurring off-camera, because the continuity of "place" is maintained and the effect doesn't surprise the audience.

When the cyc height is too low, and the camera is shooting lights, put a cardboard flag, suspended on a small boom or light stand, as a foreground piece between the camera and the top of the cyc; as close as possible to the camera.

Hang an instrument that is the same color as the cyc lighting to separately light the cardboard. Be careful of spill light onto the set. Due to depth of field making the flag very soft in focus, it should blend into the cyc, become invisible and thus make low wide shots of the dance area possible.

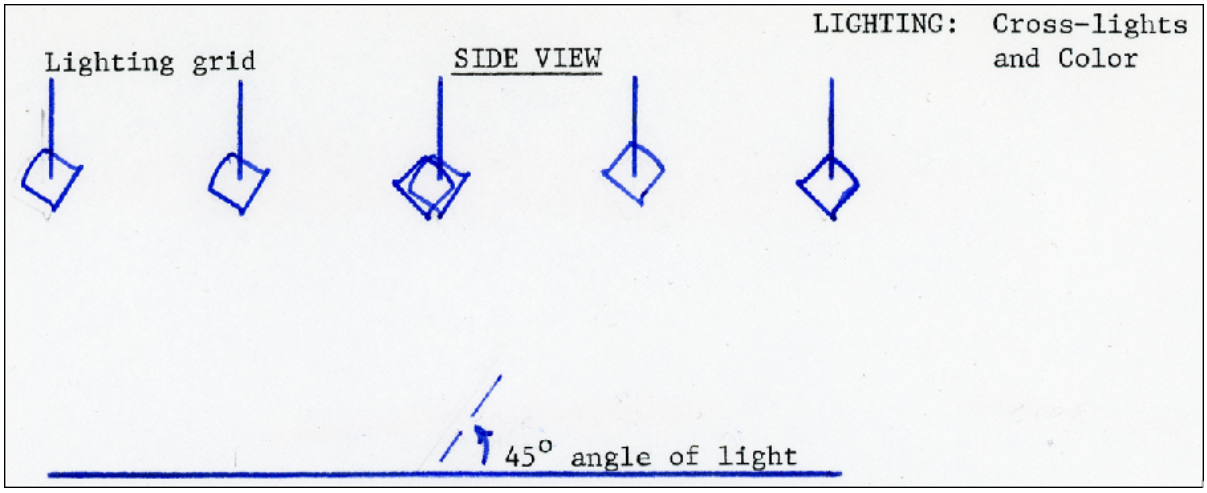


Use a flag to mask the top of a shot to prevent shooting off the top of a cyc. Keep it close to lens and lit to match cyc.

In dance, try and provide 150 - 200 foot-candles of light to provide a good depth of field to minimize focus problems during production.

While using floor stands to provide low-angle modeling of dancers' bodies is acceptable, it will be more satisfactory to use high cross-lighting instead. (see the diagram on page 48).

First, this allows for camera movement and multi-camera cross-shooting and, second, when the lights are focused at about a 45° angle, the lighting on the dancers is much more even. To get good modeling, minimize the number of



Cross-lights (lights hung above and from the side, rather than the front) provide the principle illumination for the dance area. They are hung on 4-foot or 6-foot centers to assure the lighting stays even. All patterns, cyc lights, and special effects instruments are in addition to these cross-lights.

Note, also, that this system provides no light next to the cyc.

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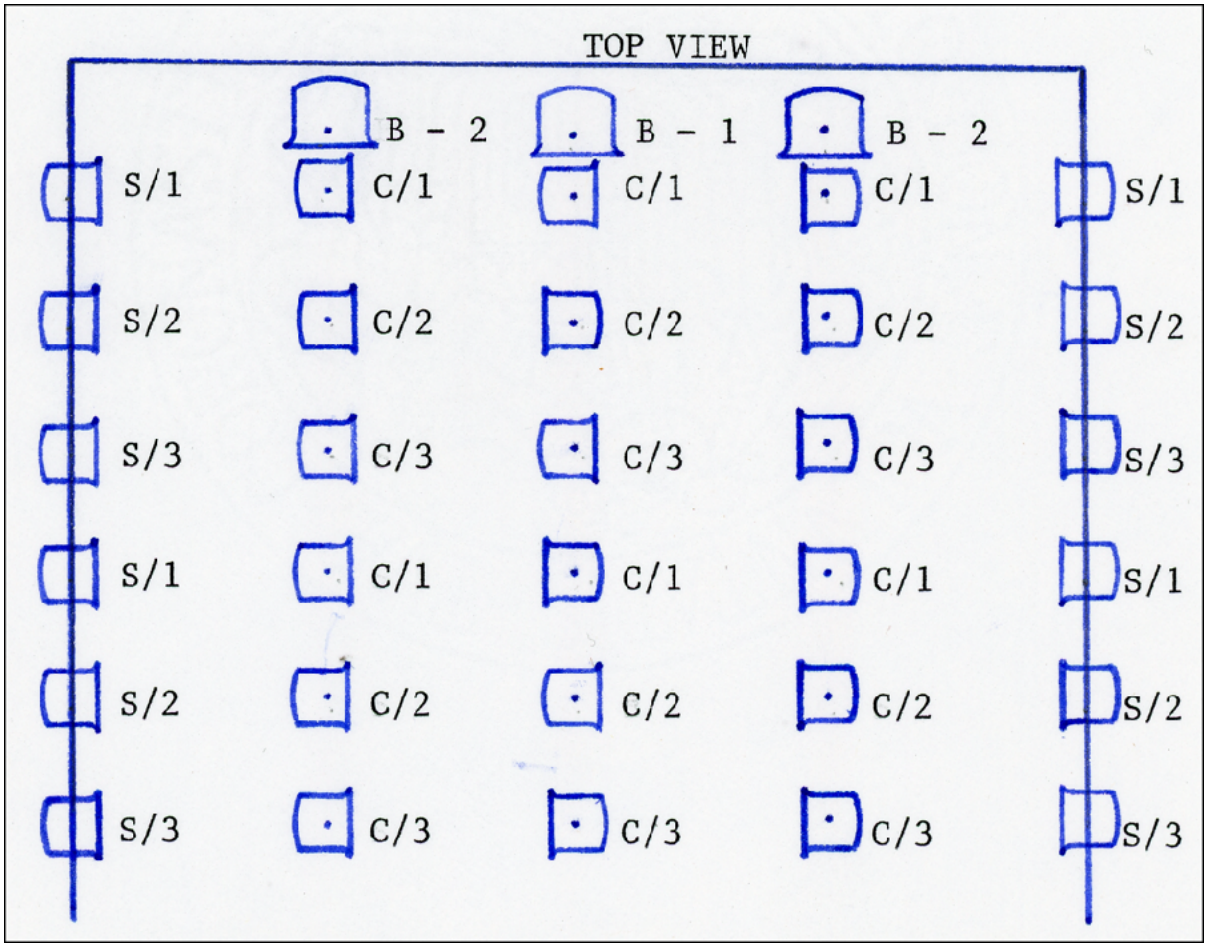
backlight instruments and use a higher wattage. Reducing the number of backlights minimizes the number of unwanted shadows on the dancers or floor.

As well, front lights (not shown in this diagram), are usually a bank of scoops across the front of the stage and kept at a low intensity and a low angle.

While “shinbusters” (lighting instruments placed to the side of the stage and within inches of the floor) provide side-light without it hitting the floor, and thus, no shadows, they are very difficult to control for intensity as the dancers move toward and away from the instrument; contrast ratios go completely out of control. It is better to accept a few shadows from side-lights hung from the ceiling grid and, in return, get a more even light. (See the illustration on page 48.)

When trying to create modeling, when front light levels equal back and side-light levels, modeling disappears. (The terms: side-lights and cross-lights are synonymous.) So, keep the front light dim.

In "Dance in America," the dancers would go to within five feet of the cyc, but then they would also go into silhouette. This can be a very nice effect, but may not always be desirable. However, dancers have a hard time understanding that



This illustrates both light centers and color alternation. Back-lights use a higher wattage than the cross-lights to minimize the number of backlights and shadows. The center row is double hung with instruments in both directions — minimized here to prevent confusion. Notice the lack of front-lights.

Letter codes: B = Back — S = Side — C = Cross-light

Numbers indicate which lights contain the same color.

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they can't dance in the space that seems to be available, so a demonstration is helpful to explain the limitations of the lighting and the cameras.

Feel free to use color in lighting, just remember to chip out (white balance) the cameras in white light so that the effects of the color won't be lost. In "Dance in America," Ralph Holmes used three dominant colors loaded into back and side-lights.

In choosing instruments, use fixtures that can be controlled. Fresnels are good because they can be barn-doored. With cyc effects use pattern projectors.

In creating pool lighting effects, use top lights spotted up. Then use flooded-out cross-lights for the dancers. Add color to the cross-lights and keep the front light relatively low in intensity to keep from washing everything out. Front lights are usually a bank of scrimmed scoops. When a pattern is projected on the floor and also hits the dancers, a greater illusion of depth, dimension, and mood is created as the dancers move in and out of the light. (For example, floor patterns in “Romeo and Juliet” were created by one 10K (10,000 watt) instrument shining through a gate). Take advantage of the open design of the set to create patterns of shadows projected upon the floor.

If in need of cut-outs for gobos (shapes placed in front of a light to create a pattern) try using foam core.

Down lighting will provide a strong dominant effect.

When comparing fresnels to PAR lights, fresnels will have greater control over the light and both provide a clean and crisp light. But the PAR’s are more efficient and easier to hang, because you can use fewer PAR’s than fresnels for the same amount of light.

In selecting gels, Rosco gels have good colors, but they don't last very long in the larger instruments. Instead, "Dance in America” uses Lee gels, which have the color layered on.

The gels last about 20 times longer, but cost twice as much as Rosco. Because the gel is a tougher material, they use it in a color frame to use less of the gel and make it easier to change color in a light, with less chance of defocusing the instrument.

The address for Lee gels is:

Lee Filters, Ltd.
Center Way
Walworth
Andover, Hampshire, England

Lee gels are distributed in the United States by:

Belden Communications, Inc.

P. 0. Box 92

Radio City Station

New York, New York 10019

Note: Blue and lavender cross-lights look good on black skin.

Let the cyc colors reflect the moods of the dance, try to avoid having black costumes against a black cyc.

A two-color cyc gives a much more spacious feeling than a one-color cyc (which tends to look more like a wall). When you use a single color cyc, vary the intensity: for example, brighter at the bottom and darker at the top.

To keep a cyc evenly lit, be sure the corners are as far from the lights as the sides are. When a cyc is stretched, the corners tend to billow in toward the center of the studio and thus create hot spots.

Note: A yellow cyc is terrible because it messes up skin tones,

and the floor looks grungy, dirty, and seems to "stand out."

Clouds projected on the cyc tend to tie sets together, justify the use of a two-color cyc and add a great illusion of depth.

Let the ground rows have flat sides rather than curved sides because a flat edge is easier to light.

If you want to create a "stars out at night" effect behind the cyc, use several strings of Christmas tree lights pinned to the back of the cyc. To avoid seeing the string effect, turn some of the lights out. If the stars are to appear slightly out of focus, move them farther back from the back of the cyc — the sharper the focus, the closer they are to the cyc.

With set pieces, light them unevenly, and fly them as close as possible to the cyc. Dancers rarely dance around them, so they need not take up any dancing

space at all. With flown set pieces light them predominantly with top light to keep spill light from hitting the cyc.

Try to keep the front edge of the floor dark so that if the cameras shoot off slightly, it won't be immediately seen by the viewers.

When using half-wall sets, light the cyc so that it looks like an extension of the wall. Avoid using it as a contrasting color.

When in need of a lot of dulling finish, try using a mixture of buttermilk and green industrial soap. It tends to smell, but does the job. It is excellent (and has been used often) for toning down the chrome in new car commercials. And it can be mixed in a quantity for any size job.

Rehearsal and Blocking

For "Romeo and Juliet," after the record tape was made and scripted, and the camera blocking was complete, the director took a Porta-Pack (portable) camera and a large monitor to the dancer's rehearsal hall to test all the different camera angles and shots while the dancers marked through the action. This lets the choreographer see and discuss what the director wants to do before spending time and money during the studio session. Each camera angle was recorded during this process for later viewing by the director to study and re-block any camera work that needed help. Plus, it gave the choreographer time to work on any weak areas with his dance company before the actual taping process itself.

They found that the more time that is spent making camera angle tapes, and working with the company, the less time will be necessary in the studio. When shooting these tapes, be efficient; shoot out of sequence and keep the dancers from getting cold, or just standing around watching. This saves money through not wasting the dancer's time.

There are several advantages to making camera angle tapes:

1. The dance company gets used to seeing themselves on camera, so the novelty can begin to wear off.

2. They can get used to seeing unfamiliar faces (like the TV production crew) so that when the dancers move to the strange surroundings of the studio they will have some friends amidst the new environment.
3. The dancers get used to stopping and starting for technical reasons, which helps them to learn that it is important not to dance full-out during a rehearsal and blocking situation.
4. The dancers see the changes that a camera makes on their work and can begin to alter their dancing to suit the lens.

As a director, don't let the studio situation trap you into using pre-thought out shots that are not working. Continue to test your shots to see if they are working. Don't just railroad your ideas through, but give yourself the flexibility to change your mind if you see that what you are getting is not what you want.

Studio Rehearsals

When beginning studio rehearsals, allow the dancers enough time each morning to warm-up properly, keep the air-conditioning off, and make sure they have brought enough clothing to keep themselves warm throughout the day. As soon as the dancers are warm, tape the first segment scheduled for production. Don't worry about the rough-cutting and the awkward camera shots. Show the tape to the choreographer, dancers and studio crew and let everyone critique it. This way everyone will have a much clearer idea of what needs to be done and how everything fits together, which will substantially speed the taping process. (This dancer/crew critique is ignored when doing a live performance.)

Keep reminding the dancers that it is the performance you are after, not the rehearsal. Keep telling them to restrain themselves. Dancers tend to have no conception of how much time it takes to properly rehearse for TV and so will almost always burn themselves out too soon. Still, try and avoid lengthy blocking and marking for the dancers at the beginning of a studio session. Try to keep things short and moving briskly to keep spirits moving. Taping a segment right at the

beginning helps this, because it prevents having the dance broken into small pieces too soon. As much as possible, try to maintain a sense of continuity during the rehearsal.

Where possible, let the dancers either see the rough-cut of the take or the take itself upon completing it. While blocking the dancers, it is helpful to use a monitor on the floor so that the choreographer can see what is going on and make changes without dashing between the control room and the studio.

For the camera operators, on the day of shooting, play just that part of the record tape that you plan on taping that day.

Let them see it to get the overall view, then go back and re-play it showing specific task assignments; then once again, calling the shots as they will be called during the taping. This, coupled with the early run/thru and taping of the dance, will give them a good grasp of what is happening,

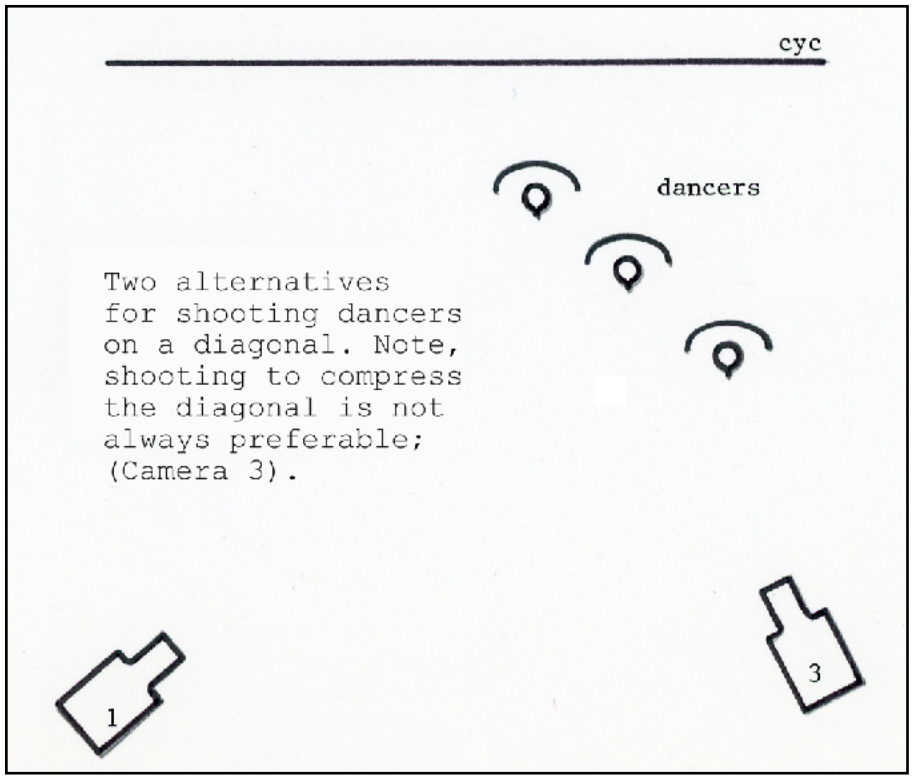
Camera Blocking

In blocking for the camera, be aware that a dancer is choreographed to enter on a certain part of the beat. So, they need to appear on camera at this particular time, not earlier or later. This becomes especially important when dealing with simultaneous upstage and downstage entrances; though the down-stage people need to move a smaller distance than the upstage people due to the camera's angle of view. Dancers need help in visualizing the "V" of the camera's angle of view. Again, the trick is don't talk about it, show it! Mark it out on the floor, let them see it through a monitor.

Similar to drama, mark out positions (spike marks) for the dancers on the floor. Then, just before taping, pull the marks up, so the floor is not covered with tape. The dancers will still be able to hit their marks during taping, even without the tape.

The entrance of a dancer is important. Be careful not to minimize it on a wide shot. Try experimenting with re-staging entrances to occur on a diagonal,

instead of laterally across the floor; to avoid a flat shot. Try to emphasize entrances through using full-figure shots.



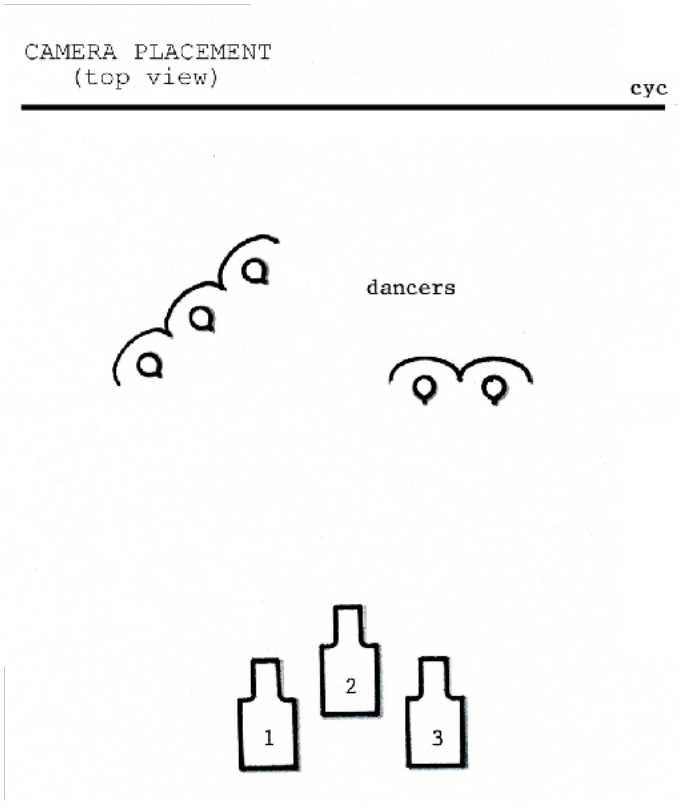
As a director, to prevent hurt feelings, talk to the choreographer when suggesting changes, then let the choreographer talk to the dancers. Just as when the choreographer has a suggestion for a camera op, let him tell it to the director. Treat it as a matter of respect for the other's relationship with his crew or cast.

Make it clear to the dancers and the crew that during a taping situation, ONLY the director can call stop — not the producer or the choreographer. This prevents confusion and false starts.

Finally, and most importantly, KEEP DANCERS LOOSE!! Don't let them grow cold. Give them a five-minute break just before taping to warm-up and psych themselves into a performance mood.

If a take needs to be re-done, do so immediately, don't let anyone sit around and grow cold again. Keep the dancers moving until you can afford to let them cool down again.

Camera Placement



Grouping all the cameras in the downstage center area is a good technique to use in translating dance from stage to TV. The proscenium in theater forces the choreographer to stage his dancers facing front and the audience. By having all the cameras at the center of that "front," we can obtain a multitude of differently sized shots, without materially altering the look (or angle) of the dance when we cut from one camera to another. Granted, there will be times that a camera on the side will be essential, but in the initial planning stages try to keep cameras centered until you need to pull one of them off to the side. "Dance in America" follows this technique.

Using a high camera (mounted on a crane) is good for showing floor patterns formed by the dancers, but in return, a high shot tends to foreshorten the talent. It diminishes the height of leaps or stretches. You needn't go overboard with height. In "Dance in America" the crane camera is only 13' off the floor.

For camera placement, keep the cameras as low to the floor as possible. This will exaggerate the height of leaps and lifts. It will make the dancers seem to tower over their material and maximize their total visual impact. The cameras we used in the workshop all had their lens about 16" off the floor and were mounted on low-boys, or hand-held. For larger moves, a crab dolly could be considered.

The only times to consider raising the height of the camera are to compensate for a cyc which is too low, or to show off the patterns formed in the choreography.

Finally, if there are a lot of diagonals in a dance, consider shooting against the diagonal if the dance group is small enough.

Camera Framing

Rule #1: Keep the floor line at the bottom of the frame. Lowering the camera will aid this. The only problem is that a low camera height requires a high cyc to avoid shooting into the lighting grid. If the cyc isn't high enough, sets and teasers can help (see also the section on set design). If the cameras can't be lowered any further, consider raising the height of the stage.

Note how low the cameras are to the floor. This emphasizes the moves of each dancer and the height of their jumps.

In framing:

1. There are three principle shots in dance:
    a. Wide shot
    b. Full-figure, which is the main work-horse in dance shooting. This is where the dancer's feet are almost touching the bottom edge of the frame and there is enough head room so that if there is a slight, sudden jump his head doesn't disappear out the top. This shot does not crop any part of the dancer's body on any movement.
    c. Close-up, generally from the waist up. With dance you don't need to get as tight as in drama; because the dancer is not acting with just the face, but is using the whole body. Be careful to avoid the dancer "bobbing" in the frame due to the shot being too tight.
2. Don't pan with every movement of the dancer. Following every move perfectly makes the dance become mime. It seems to be moving strenuously, but never getting anywhere. Let a move travel from one side

of the camera to the other to provide the illusion of apparent movement; even for Full-Figure and Close-Up shots. (As a side note, there's no harm in letting a dancer push the frame, rather than having the pan lead the dancer.)

3. Let the dancer's body movement be the justification for expanding the size of the frame — try to avoid non- justified loosening in anticipation of a move.
4. Be aware of how much space a dancer is going to need for a move. Avoid having wide shots too tight and suddenly be forced into panning at the end of the move. If panning is necessary, do it subtly during the entire move of the dancer.
5. Don't be afraid to frame a dancer to one side of the frame. Let the balance in the frame work for you — don't feel you need to keep everything centered.
6. When doing ballet, remember, if you can't see the floor, you can't see the ballet.
7. When dealing with large dance moves, the director is confronted with two choices:
    a. Use a wide shot to show the movement through space,
    b. Or, stay tight to emphasize the dancer and the movement itself.

A wide shot needs to be justified either by the space being used, or the space about to be used, by the dancers. When using a wide shot, minimize panning; allow the dancers to move from one side of the frame to the other to better show that large movement is occurring.

8. High angle shots are good for patterns formed by a group, but are rarely, if ever, good for solos. Still, high wide shots are better than high full-figures because the height is more perceptible in a wide shot.
9. When using close-ups, or accents, be aware of the energy contained within the frame created by the dancers.

10. When doing a narrative dance, if the legs or feet aren't moving, it is OK to cut them off and exclude them from the picture. In narrative dance, following the flow of energy within the dancer is more important than the lines they are creating.
11. To avoid jump cuts, note when a dancer is doing place work (that is, standing on one spot), and when they are moving through space. Cutting during place work is tricky at best.
12. Pay attention to the lighting and framing possibilities in using the dancer's head, or body, as a sculptural piece.

Camera Cutting

Somehow, a dance program consisting entirely of full-figures and wide shots is bloodless and antiseptic. What is needed are close-ups of the dancers; not just to showcase them, but as highlights or accents. You can not reduce people to the size of ants in a wide shot and then say the picture is full of life. TV needs to fight against being joyless, bloodless, and removed; yet without destroying the dance in the process.

Don't cut dance to the rhythm of the music (unless it is a live program). Let the movement, not the music, determine the transitions. Stick to dance phrases to justify transitions.

Every movement has a beginning, middle, and end. Transitions should begin just before the beginning of the move. However, don't be afraid to stay with one camera for a long time, if that is the camera that shows the move the best.

When covering a lyrical passage in a dance, consider using a moving, as opposed to stationary, camera. For example, to fill time between movements, let the camera pan to the start of the new movement. But when there is a neutral background, like a one-color cyc, avoid doing camera moves that don't provide visual perspective For example, don't create unnecessary camera movements which

could potentially disorient the audience by not being justified by the movement of the dance itself.

When two movements overlap, go with the newer of the two. For example, once an exit has been established, we don't need to follow it to conclusion. Instead, concentrate on the new entrance that is beginning at the same time.

Once you've seen a movement on a wide shot, cut in to a full-figure on a repeat of the same movement. For example, with a ballet, use a wide shot to establish the general floor movements and patterns, then cut in tighter to show more of the dancers themselves. But remember, don't confuse the audience; if the audience gets lost, the choreography gets lost with them.

When dealing with sharp movements, like two-person leaps, or collisions, you might consider cutting it like this:

1. Full-figure on the girl about to jump.
2. Wide-shot on her run with both people in the shot — the camera doesn't move with the dancers.
3. Full-figure two-shot, cut on the start of the leap to a tighter shot which will emphasize the height of the leap.
4. Close-up of the girl at the top of the leap.
5. Full-figure two-shot as she is lowered and the couple separates.

Remember that cutting from a low-angle wide-shot to a high- angle wide shot doesn't work — it becomes too much like a jump cut The only thing that apparently changes is the angle of the floor.

To emphasize the height of a jump, keep the camera low.

When doing a short dance segment cut it a little quicker (that is, use more shots) than you would normally — keep the pace fast.

Use close-ups to punctuate the movement, that is, let the close-ups set the personality of the piece. Very few close-ups means a very cold/aloof feeling, very many creates drama. Be sensitive to the effect your cutting is having on the emotional mood. As well, begin using close-ups early in the dance to condition the

audience to seeing them, so that when you really need them, they won't appear as a shock.

In dissolving, don't begin in the middle of a dance phrase. Begin at the start of the phrase, hold the dissolve through the phrase and end the dissolve at the end of the phrase; this makes for the smoothest transitions. Be sure that the dissolve is justified and not an arbitrary thing on the director's part. Also, be sure that the floor lines match during a dissolve — don't have the floor suddenly change height.

If you are dealing with weak choreography, or something that looks like its been transplanted from Las Vegas, then throw in every effect you can. Moderation in this situation is no virtue. Go crazy on cutting, don't let the cameras or the pictures stay still.

NOTE: Fast cutting hides poor dancing and/or choreography.

Don't cut quickly when the dancing is good.

Taping/Recording

When taping (recording) dance, if it is an economical or efficient use of the dance company, shoot it out of sequence. Begin with group scenes then move to the trios, duets and solos. This avoids unnecessarily tying up the entire company when not everyone is dancing and keeps people from growing cold or impatient.

When taping, try to break dance segments into about five- minute sections, with each section at a natural break point in the dance (a major new entrance, start of a new theme or phrase, or some other convenient edit point). This makes it a lot easier to block and rehearse the dance for both crew and cast. For example, "Dance in America" tries to put between 8-10 minutes of dance on tape in a ten-hour production day.

"Dance in America" uses three cameras, each of which is isolated into its own quad video-tape machine and each scene is performed two or three times; effectively providing six to nine different camera angles to work with later in editing. (The term "quad" means a videotape recorder which uses four video heads to record

to two-inch wide magnetic tape; it was the broadcast-standard for high-quality video recording in use as of when this was written.)

During the taping process, a rough-cut cassette is made with the director switching the cameras to provide the choreographer with a general idea of what the dance will look like. But this cassette is for discussion only, because every shot on "Dance in America" will be edited in later. Remember that dancers can only physically perform some scenes two or at most three times, so it is imperative that you get the necessary required shots on the first take, then go in for close-ups and "drama" on later takes, when a slip of the foot wouldn't be seen on a tighter shot.

If it is possible to only isolate ("iso") one camera during the taping, try iso-ing the close-up camera. This way, you can edit in the close-ups much more easily than you can edit in a wide-shot. In cutting the show, you can then exclude any close-ups and concentrate on making sure that all the basic moves are on tape, without worrying about the precise location of each close-up.

When doing multiple takes, with editing used between takes, be sure that the dancers stay in sync with the music — that is, that both the movement and music begin and end at the same time. If not, editing will be exceedingly difficult. Let the company help you watch out for this.

Audio

Before we begin editing, we need to discuss audio. When doing a production, use natural sounds (like feet hitting the floor or hands clapping) whenever it is rhythmically relevant to the dance, or when we see the dancers making the sound. This convention doesn't hold for ballet. In ballet, instead of hearing the clumping of toe-shoes hitting the floor, don't use any natural sound which will destroy the illusion of airy weightlessness created by the ballet.

The "Live from Lincoln Center" program has found that Schoeps (needle-sized) mikes flown from the ceiling provide an excellent sound for their production.

In addition, they have their own sound consulting firm to do their production mixes.

(The discussion on multi-track audio that follows presupposes some equipment that we don't yet have at the Maryland Center. But it is within our capability to get it and the advantages it provides will be evident, so I include it to provide ideas.)

The supervising engineer for the Lincoln Center is Mark Shubin who has been described as a "technical wizard."

At WNET, only video is edited on quad video tape, all audio is recorded and edited on a time-code slaved four, or eight-track, audio recorder. Because audio is time-coded, and separate from video, once the final video has been edited, it is possible to take the completed audio tape and add sound effects, or music, without passing the video through any more playbacks on the quad machine (which subjects the video to possible deterioration or destruction).

Then, with the audio track completely built, the audio is re-mixed back onto the quad master, thus maintaining second-generation audio on the master and on any subsequent dubs that need to be made; because these dubs will take video from the quad master and audio from the four-track audio master. Thus, in both editing and dubbing, a higher degree of quality can be maintained.

There are additional benefits that this dual system provides. In older model quad machines, whenever a video-only edit is done, there is the possibility of inserting a medium frequency buzz into the audio channel. By being able to re-lay all audio in sync with the video any buzz that may be on the tape is erased and replaced with clean audio.

This dual system is only used for editing. When a program is broadcast, the audio and video both play off the same quad machine to prevent mistakes.

When getting ready to do a dance program, "Dance in America" will record the orchestra, using standard studio recording techniques, on an eight-track audio

recorder. This eight-track is then mixed down to a four-track master, with the tracks designated:

Track 1: Music (mixed monaurally)

Track 2: Blank

Track 3: Guard band to prevent timecode leaking into audio

Track 4: Time-code

During production, track two is used to record natural sounds made by the dancers. Track three remains blank because time-code is a very strong audio signal and has a tendency to leak across from its track onto any adjoining tracks. To minimize time-code interference with program audio, time-code is recorded on one of the two outside tracks (either track one or four) with a blank track between it and any other audio (track two for track one time-code, or track three for track four time-code).

In post-production, this four-track is dubbed back again to an eight-track machine (for example):

Track 1: Music to which the dancer's danced

Track 2: Natural sounds of the dancing in performance

Track 3: Background effects (for example, swords clashing in a fight which is added later in post-production)

Track 4: Off-camera voice-overs (intros, bridges, or outtros)

Track 5: On-camera narration

Track 6: Additional music (for example, opening theme)

Track 7: Guard band

Track 8: Time-code

Obviously, these are examples and would change from program to program, but this serves to illustrate the potential for greater flexibility coupled with higher accuracy and control that multitrack editing provides.

One other note, when using a multi-track audio machine slaved to time-code for editing, cuts are made by simply butting adjoining audio pieces together —

similar to the way quad video tape is edited now. However, for dissolves, audio for adjoining sections is placed on different tracks (the equivalent of "A" and “B” rolls in film) to make it possible to mix them later.

Editing

Great editing requires both the patience to take pains and the time with which to do it. In dance, to a greater degree than anything else, accuracy to the frame is critical, because you can destroy a move by being only one or two frames off. For example, a pirouette (thatTs a fast spin) takes only 12 frames to complete.

(Again, a caveat: as in the audio section, this, too, pre-supposes a level of equipment that we don’t yet have. But as this describes procedures in working with a CMX or CDL editing computer, and because various principles can be applied in non-computer situations, I am including it.)

Because audio is on a separate machine, with its own distinct time-code, a means of referencing between the audio playback and the video record is necessary during production. One way is to record a cassette with both the audio and the video time-codes burned into the cassette video. This provides constant frame accurate information with both referenced to each other. In case the cassette gets destroyed, a burst of time-code from the audio playback machine is recorded on the audio channel of the quad video recorder so that audio time-code could, if necessary, be reconstructed using the time-code generator on the quad machine.

At the end of production there is a cassette, with double time-codes, for every reel of quad tape recorded. These quad reels are called "Masters" and are carefully stored away until the final step in the editing process. In the case of “Dance in America,” with each camera isolated into its own VTR, each cassette will then contain only the shots from that one camera; so that when three cameras are used, a minimum of three reels and three cassettes are involved.

Editing is now done on 3/4" cassette, through an editing computer. When the program is completely edited on cassette, a paper punch tape (EDL) is made

from the computer's memory which gives instructions on all edit points (that is the location on the master tape where a shot is to be changed). Then the quad reels and the paper tape are taken to a "conforming house" and the 2" quad master is edited, A conforming house is simply a place that has both an editing computer and sufficient quad VTR's (usually three) to perform the necessary editing.

It takes "Dance in America" about 20 days to edit a program on cassette and another four to conform it. Thus, the advantage in cassette editing is that it does not tie up exceedingly expensive quad time while initial decisions are being made about exactly which shot to use, at precisely what point — which really eats up editing time. By the time a program is taken to quad for master editing, those decisions have already been made on cassette and all that is necessary is to carry those decisions out. In addition, this reduces the amount of handling the quad masters go through, which minimizes possible damage or deterioration.

An editing computer makes a very linear dissolve — it travels at the same speed from beginning to end. However, for dance, it is often preferable to have the speed of the dissolve vary during the length of the dissolve. So, for that reason, most dissolves are performed manually (that is, an operator moves the fader bars on a switcher) rather than by computer.

Banding and multi-generational error are often caused by playing a videotape on a different tape head than it was recorded on, Girish believes that seven or eight generations are possible without banding if the heads are the same on each playback as they were for the recording. For "Dance in America," they flew the VTR heads from New York to Nashville, where production was done, to maintain image quality.

Two other products that are a benefit in videotape editing:

- "Image-Plus" aligns chroma with luminance when working with cassettes and prevents the video looking like a mis-aligned video monitor with all figures having separate red, blue and green edges.

- Thompson's "Noise Reducer" which removes video noise at the expense of sharpness. It is normally wired to provide 10 db of noise reduction, but this tends to de-focus the picture too much. Better results have been obtained by re-wiring it to provide only a 2-3 dB gain, which in addition, minimizes video lag.

When editing anything out-of-house, take an engineer that you trust to help keep an eye on things. He probably won't be permitted to do any work, or touch anything, but he can prevent careless mistakes from destroying the program.

Other helpful procedures to use when conforming quads are:

1. Lay the music track (less any effects) first on the master.
2. Edit the video to the audio, lay down the master shot (generally a wide-shot) for the entire dance all at the same time.
3. Insert, video only, all the shots from different cameras and takes that are required. Since the master shot is already laid down, this minimizes the amount of tape handling necessary.
4. Return to the eight-track audio master and add any sound effects, music or additional sweetening, at the appropriate points as required during the video editing in the audio master.
5. Re-mix the audio from eight-track back to a four-track audio program master.
6. Re-mix the completed four-track onto the quad to remove any unwanted noise or buzz to finish the program.

Special Effects

Dance is remarkably flexible in syncing to music different from that to which it was danced. Thus, for program opens, it may be helpful to build the open video first to emphasize the movement, then lay down the audio; rather than to lay down an audio track and then struggle to get the dance to fit.

Slow-motion can really enhance dance because it permits the audience to really see how a move was done, provided it is used judicially. However, slow-motion (or slo-mo) needs to be planned before going into editing.

When using slo-mo, during the taping process play the music at twice normal speed so that the dancers can dance twice as fast. Thus, when the dance is slowed down to one-half normal speed, everything will time out properly. For speeds different than one-half normal, use a corresponding speed for audio playback during taping. This guarantees maintaining sync between dancers and music. This is a trick that Dwight Hemion uses a lot.

In editing a slo-mo shot, ideally, the edit should occur at a scene change, with the disc (slo-mo machine) running at normal speed. When the freeze is required, hit the freeze button on the disc. This makes for a technically smoother transition from normal to freeze than is possible when editing to an already frozen shot. If editing on a scene change is impossible, then do a 30-frame dissolve from regular video to slo-mo video moving at normal speed, to hide the transition, just before the freeze is to commence.

Slo-mo video will never match the quality of video direct from the quad master, so sneak it in through a dissolve so the viewer is fooled into not seeing it.

Stutter-zoom: Take a normal zoom and delete frames from portions of it to get a "strobe" effect. For example, a zoom takes 75 frames to complete. Remove three frames out of every six so that the zoom is now discontinuous (that is, it now contains frames 1-6, 10-15, 19-24 . . .).

Try shooting through a cut-glass bowl placed on a slowly rotating turntable, defocused and colorized.

To obtain a gauze effect, try saran wrap, or hair spray, or vaseline as close to the camera lens as possible. DON'T put these ON the lens itself!

Directing Live Dance

Directing live dance is similar in most respects to directing for tape, in terms of scripting, framing, placement and such things. There are a few unique problem areas however.

First, directing live is not about collaboration, instead it is about how to televise a performance. Consequently, virtually no re-staging for television will be possible. And with no opportunity for re-staging, then the need for collaboration also decreases. It is nice to pay a courtesy visit to the choreographer, but the two of you won't need to be working together to the degree you would in a taping situation.

Along with not needing to worry about collaboration, the next problem is in how to best present the dance, without making the audience feel cheated of their view of the stage. Along with that goes the entire problem of dealing with low-light levels, excessive colors in stage lighting, and the whole raft of differences between stage and video lighting; which we are not going to get into here.

There are a few tricks that do deserve mention: when a performance is done live for television, it is TV that determines the timing of the show — that is, how long intermissions will run and when the next act starts. Television, due to its time requirements, *must* cue the action. Dress rehearsals are recorded on cassette in the afternoon and watched by the production crew for a critique. This is probably the only time they will get to shoot the dance prior to actual live conditions, so this critique is important for everyone. Since it is live, if a dancer's foot is cropped and the people at home don't see it, you run the risk of ruining the entire evening's program. To prevent this, there is a home TV set in the control room to show just what is going home so that framing can be adjusted before switchboards start lighting up.

To keep from getting lost during a dance, the score is used to determine where transitions will occur, unlike taping where cutting is based on the movement

itself. That way the score reader gives ready cues off the score and the director can continue to concentrate on the program.

Control room duties are shared as follows:

- Production Assistant: Handles timings and is not on headset.
- Score-reader: Follows musical scores, calls ready cues based upon markings the director has made in the score.
- Technical Director: Back-up pair of eyes for the director and the AD.
- Assistant Director: The cornerstone of the production. Sets all shots previously determined by the director, is on headset with all production people, cues the conductor and all stage people through the stage manager.
- Director: Does all the pre-production work and calls all on-air cues.

A SYNOPSIS IN TWELVE BULLETS

Everything we know about drama is the opposite for dance (well, except for the first two bullets). So, here's a synopsis of what we covered in this book.

1. Respect your dancers, treat them like people.
2. Pay people fairly.
3. Keep your dancers WARM!
4. Dancers only have two or three good performance takes, don't exhaust them in rehearsal.
5. The choreographer is to dance as the director is to film.
6. Live performance is about coverage, recorded performance is about collaboration.
7. With dance, the emotions are in the body, not the face.
8. Keep your cameras low and center.
9. Keep the floor in the frame to ground the dancers.
10. Use high angles to show patterns, use low angles to show emotion and movement.
11. Bring lights from the side, not the front, to emphasize body lines.
12. Slow down the cutting; cut on movement, not on music.

Finally, as both Judy Kinberg and Merrill Brockway stressed: "It is better to have no dance than to present bad dance on TV."

CONCLUSION

Movement has been on television since television was invented. But the translation of the great works in dance to television is still in its infancy. No one really knows the best way to go about it. Or, for that matter, if it is even possible, without either the dance or television suffering in the process. This is still very much a creative frontier. And it is with that in mind that this Handbook has been designed — not as a compendium of hard and fast rules — but as a series of guidelines discovered by others, that can be followed, or ignored, as each program warrants.

I believe that the energy of television lies in the close- up and that a wide shot is, at best, neutral. However, with dance, it is the whole body of the dancer that contains the movement and the energy. So we are caught — to maximize the energy of the one minimizes the energy of the other. Maybe this conflict can be resolved as technology permits larger and larger screens, or through increased funding to permit more choreography specifically for television. But for now, the challenge is in grappling with this dilemma and twisting it to our advantage.

During the closing days of the Workshop, Merrill Brockway shared his final thoughts that also serve to conclude this Handbook:

"Directors are manipulators, that is the nature of our craft. We walk a tightrope of helping dance and helping television, both of which are very strong forces. But the more we know, and the more we learn, the more we can bring to our craft and the more confident we become.

"Some directors are very strong on ego and very weak on self-restraint. I'd like to reverse that. I'd like to establish mutual respect and get everyone to feel that we are all working on the same team."

"Television has a tremendous impact, often in ways that we never expect. We need to ask ourselves: 'What have I done to take a stand, what have I done to improve television?'"

APPENDIX

american dance festival
at duke university

P.O. Box 6097
College Station
Durham, NC 27708
919/684-6402

Mr. Larry Jordan
1010 St. Paul St. Apt. 8J
Baltimore MD 21202

May 30, 1978

Dear Mr. Jordan,

Congratulations for being chosen to be a Fellow in the 1978 Dance/Television Workshop at the American Dance Festival, July 2 through July 29.

As a part of this Fellowship you will receive room and board, transportation to and from the Festival, plus tickets to Festival performances.

All Fellows will be housed in single rooms in Wilson Dorm on the East campus of Duke University. Linens are provided. You will be issued a meal card on arrival which will entitle you to three meals a day, seven days a week in the Gilbert-Addoms cafeteria.

You are requested to arrive on July 2. We will have travel vouchers for you to fill out when you get here for reinbursement of travel expenses. Please keep all receipts from your bus, plane, train, or car fare. If you are planning to drive you should be aware that we are only able to reimburse you up to the price of economy airfare. If you are arriving by plane, notify me of the date and time of your arrival so that we can help to get you from the Raleigh-Durham Airport to the campus. Also, please notify me if you have any problems getting here by July 2. All participants will depart on July 29.

Please bring the following things with you:

1. Any information, photos, or layouts of the interior of your studio. (The purpose is for the Workshop Director to understand you situation better.)
2. Samples of your dance programming (or arts programming if you don't have any dance works) on 1/2" or 3/4" videotape.
3. Information on any dance or arts programming that you are presently working on or will be working on in the near future.

You are requested to send information on special medical problems to:

Dr. John P. Hansen
University Health Services
P.O. Box 2914
Duke University Health Center
Durham NC 27710

If you have any questions, please call me at (919)-684-6402. Again, welcome. We are delighted to have you with us this summer.

Sincerely,

Lili A. Shiffman

Lili A. Shiffman
Workshop Coordinator

maryland
center
for public
broadcasting

August 26, 1978

Merrill Brockway
"Dance In America"
WNET - TV
356 West 58th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Merrill:

Enclosed is the booklet I wrote you about a couple of weeks ago. I'm sorry it took so long to arrive, but when I began it, I was only expecting it to run about 10 - 15 pages.

I am most anxious for your comments: first as to whether such a handbook can be at all helpful to television or dance people, second on how to improve the content, and third, on whether you think this might appeal to a larger audience. As of now, this is primarily designed as an in-house guide here at the Maryland Center.

There is no big rush for your comments since I know you are heading into production on the Ballanchine programs, but I would be grateful for any time and attention you could give this.

Finally, I want to thank you for the opportunity to attend the workshop last July. It has turned into one of the highlights in my life. I'd describe my excitement and pleasure more fully, but I suspect you'd think I was kidding. Anyhow, the workshop was fantastic -- and I'm doing everything I can think of to get the Center to let me apply some of what I learned.

This Handbook is the first step, the seminar I'm teaching is the next, and after that I have no idea, but I'm still pushing.

Best of luck in September.

Sincerely,

Larry Jordan
owings mills, maryland 21117
301-356-5600

22 annapolis 31 hagerstown
28 salisbury 67 baltimore

maryland
center
for public
broadcasting

August 26, 1978

Judy Kinberg
"Dance In America"
WNET - TV
356 West 58th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019

Dear Judy:

Thanks very much for your time and thought on the chapter on producing dance for television. Enclosed is the end result.

I was able to incorporate all your major criticisms, and have retained your notes on the minor points so that if this ever gets re-done these can be worked in too.

I wanted to send this to you since I am not only interested in your over-all reaction, but also I am proud of it, and wanted you to see the whole thing.

If, after reading this, you have any other comments please feel free to send them; I have tried very hard to be accurate and not lead people astray.

Thanks again for all your time and attention on the earlier section; I realize your time was tight and I am very grateful you could share as much of it with me as you did.

If there is anything I can do in return, please don't hesitate to call on me. Best of luck on the Ballanchine programs in September.

Sincerely,

Larry Jordan

owings mills, maryland 21117
301-356-5600

22 annapolis 31 hagerstown
28 salisbury 67 baltimore

MEMO

TO: All Producers, Directors and Production Staff

FROM: J. Paul Breeding

DATE: August 17, 1978

RE: DANCE FOR TELEVISION

There will be a seminar on the use of television and the artistry of dance. This will be held in -

Studio A
Monday, August 28
10 AM - Noon

The host will be Larry Jordan. Larry just completed a month long detailed seminar on "television and dance" with the following experts:

Merrill Brockway
Series producer and director - "Dance in America"

Emile Ardolino
Producer - "Live from Lincoln Center"
Director - "Live from Art Park" (8/23)

Ralph Holmes
Lighting Design (CBS)
Set Design
(did lights for "Dance in America")

Tobi Tobias
Editor - Dance Magazine

Judy Kinberg
Producer - "Dance in America"

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