

Choreography: the term used to describe the actual arrangements of steps, groupings and patterns of composition.

Michael Turner, Choreographer

There are 5 ways of going into the air. Some can travel more than others but trying to travel too much on a vertical air movement will distort the purity of the move.

- **Sauté:** hop, one foot to one foot. The gesture leg can be bent or straight, front, side or back. **HOP**
- **Soubresaut:** Jump, on 2 feet. Straight up and down or travel slightly front, side or back. **JUMP**
- **Jete:** Leap, one foot (leg) to the other foot (leg) this step travels! **LEAP**

The next 2 are a little more advanced but may occur in choreography. They can travel or can be done in place.

- **Sissone:** Take off with 2 feet as in a jump but land one foot and then the other
- **Assemble:** The take off is one foot and then the other but the landing is both feet at the same time. **ASSEMBLE**

Movements predominately in place (or on the move)

- **Port de bras:** Any movement or carriage of the arms (can use the equipment and instruments as well)

All movement is based on the concept of, **FRONT, SIDE or BACK. The orientation can change but the legs are still FRONT, SIDE or BACK.**

- **Lunges:** Weight taken over the gesture leg, knee over the middle toe. F, S or B. The torso can also be involved for a veritable look
- **Plies:** For a look of creating volume between the negative space between the legs. For marching use, 1st position, heels together, 2nd position, legs spread hip width apart, 4th position, a step size forward. **ALL TURNED OUT IN THE HIPS, KNEES AND ANKLES!**

While a plie can be used as a shape, the actual exercise is to render the muscles and joints soft and pliable and the tendons and ligaments long and elastic. This is why the exercise is usually done toward the beginning of class/warm up.

- **Tendu, or Battement tendu:** Stretching the leg and foot F, S or B. Knee straight with working foot FORCED well forward.
- **Balance:** On one leg with the gesture leg bend or straight (or whatever) F, S or B. **A balance with the torso off center can be very expressive.**
- **Degage' or Battement degage:** To DISENGAGE, the working leg and foot act like a tendu but stretch off the floor/turf
- **Releve':** to rise up! Can be done with both feet on the ground (Hips turned out) or on one foot with the gesture leg bent or straight, F, S or B. *Anytime "time" can be sustained vertically is a magical, technically challenging moment.*

Jazz Squares (4 steps that make a square...adds time and texture to travel) **USE OF TIME WHILE TRAVELING FORWARD**
Kick Ball Change (gesture leg kicks forward, then steps on the ball of the same foot, supporting leg steps in place) **RYTHUM**
Pas de bourre (3 steps that can be large or small, can travel and can turn)

- **Variety of turns in place:**

• **Rond de jambe':** Gesture leg makes a circular movement away from supporting leg (outside /en dehors or inside/en dedan) This movement can be done with the working leg on the turf/floor, a terre or off the ground, elair. F to S and close or F to S to B and close.

Side Travel, Front or Back Facing

- **Grapevine:** Step side, step front, step side, step back and repeat. **(Battery calls this "crab step." Not sure they go back and front?)**
- **Side Lift:** A compound move that consists of a balance while the gesture leg, side of torso and arm create an arch. This is a great way of sustaining time while creating a pull away from vertical. (A side lift can actually go into the ground)
- **Pull into Hip:** Pulling into one hip while elongating the other leg, perhaps with a flexed foot is another way to use time side ways.
- **Turns:** 2nd position half turns, walking or marching turns in route, pique turns on 1 foot) and very quick chaine' turns can all cover distance at a faster speed.

This is just a few examples as the sky is the limit. Graham said, "There are no knew steps, just knew arrangements of steps."

Traveling Steps

Besides traveling in form at a traditional 8 steps per 5 yards:

- **Chasse'**: means chasing step. One foot is literally chasing the other. **4 to 5, or 5 to 5**. Technically the thighs are pulled tightly together and the feet pointed downward.
- **Gallup**: much like a chasse but grounded. One foot chasing the other in plie, with no air movement. **THIS CHOICE MUST BE CLEAR**
- **Jazz or Theatrical Running**: Legs turned out, leading with the toes and running to cover distance. **4to5**.

A great tool for reference that I have found is to keep the sternum slightly forward of the belly button. This is actually a great reference to all marching and moving through space as it keeps the body aligned without hyperextension in the lower back.

• **Rhythmical travel and syncopation! The easiest example would be $\frac{3}{4}$, a triplet step.**

• **A lot of the movements already discussed can be used in forward travel.** IE: Sautés with various shaping of the gesture leg, $\frac{1}{2}$ turns, Sauté Basque, (turn in the air with the gesture leg slightly bent and turned out) Tour a lair...vertical turns in the air (not about height, just strong pencil turns in the air...somewhat advanced)

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- I would really like to stress long, straight lines with the legs, good articulation to the feet when leaving the ground.
 - Solid, intentional starts and stops. Arrivals are so very important as well as alignment and placement being reinforced.
 - Visual dynamics through the use of a variety of traveling steps both horizontal and vertical. (I often see the highs but not the lows of movement?)
 - As often as we can take the body away from vertical?

• **SHAPES...endless!**

This is just a start for us. As we continue to develop the show, we can develop the travel. It is crucial the marching team be 100% involved in teaching and stressing these concepts.

The daily warm up, when not a *full class* must stress alignment, i.e.: 2nd position plie--- Knees over toes and send the thighs backyard (you cannot anatomically send your thighs backward but the image is what I have worked on.)

Traveling across the floor, while not marching. Sternum in front of belly button. We need to travel on diagonals forward and backward.

Developing a strong back step is crucial. This is were "keeping the sternum forward" will help us from hyper-extending on the back step, creating un-necessary momentum.

Weight sharing if applicable (can be used in class for strengthening)

Hopefully the attached "ensemble class" sheet will help you see how we will approach the training.

"Dance exists at a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation it is gone. No other art is so hard to catch, so impossible to hold."
Marcia & Siegel

Suggestions for an Ensemble Dance/ Movement Class
Michael Turner

(I like to begin seated so balance and gravity are not engaged right away. Also, include the entire band, front ensemble as well and place the CG throughout the room.)

- Begin in a seated position soles of the feet together. Work shoulder, and neck isolations and then progress through side lifts and stretches. Empathize the use of the CORE when sitting and the straightness of the arms when in high 5th position and side lifts. Natural elbow bend is perfect.
- Extend legs in front and repeat your designed series. Add point and flex work with ankles/ feet. Add circular isolations with ankles as well. Again...sitting up straight, Core engaged and shoulders relaxed.
- Legs apart in 2nd positions. Repeat series. Make sure legs are rotated from hip sockets and do not be concerned right away with extension. Legs do not have to be in a split for training.

As with all of these exercises and the entire class, stress and make clear expressive effort qualities of movement through the use of Time, Weight, Path and Flow.

If time permits work out a clever way of moving for the seated 2nd position to standing.

- **Standing:** 1st position turned out and parallel and 2nd position turned out and parallel. You can repeat the seated sequence in these positions. HOWEVER.... begin to look at alignment and placement of knees over the 2nd toe. (Crossed positions might be worked with CG if used choreographically.)
- **Plies:** To render the muscles and joints soft and pliable and the tendons and ligaments long and elastic. Demi and Grand in 1st and 2nd, turned out, Demi only in parallel. It is very important here and through to stress the importance of developing the strength of the inside of the feet.

Add arm movements, port de bras. Make sure arms are connected to the spine and not working only from the shoulder. Musicians and CG alike will add greatly to the expressive sounds of the program through the carriage and use of the arms.

- **Relives':** Pressure, just a bit, half and full. Again stress the importance of the inside of the feet being rotated forward, heels forward which must come from the rotation in the hips and look for hyper-extension in the lower back. A strong core will help drummers a lot.

I like to give a reference to " keeping the sternum slightly forward of the belly button." Use this image when running, traveling and marching...It works!

- **Tendus: Front, side and back.** Brushing through the floor is the only way to develop strength and definition. Lifting the leg and placing the foot to a point, is just that. While you might use the pas de cheval step choreographically, nothing strengthens the feet for travel and clarity like tendu exercises.... be creative and challenge the mind as well. Begin and throughout the remainder of the class, to be aware of the standing leg. Balance is now being engaged, Careful of extreme leaning/tilting.
- **Rond de jambe:** I see this a lot on the field, especially from winds and battery. Work outside and inside. Look for stretch from hip, leg line and rotation in the standing leg. (Many things this exercise is only about the gesture leg. No, it is for working rotation in both legs.)

The tendus and gesture legs can disengage the floor (degage) but height is not to be stressed rather, long, low, clear lines with articulated feet. Height will come.

- **Balance and weight shift exercises,** (lunges will come from this ...keep the gesture leg slightly forward and release into that hip socket. Knees over toes!! Make this look and feel like a shape and not just a count. Space between legs creates volume.
- **Full body swings, front and side.** Be creative here, adding balance, change of facing (orientation is crucial)

SHAPES are important choreographically and as a tool in developing character. Perhaps between each set the performers are encouraged to make 3 shapes the 4th coming back to vertical? Just a thought...

- **Leg swings (not full grand battements)** stand in left leg, arms in 2nd and swing right leg in low attitude (straight after/later) 8 times, with a full step forward on the right leg count 8. Balance and repeat with left leg. A great " across the floor" travel exercise when ready.
- **Small jumps** in 1st and second, 2 feet to 2 feet and then sauté (hops) on 1 foot at a time. Keep these small and stress bending in hips, knees and ankles when landing.

I think this would prepare the band to begin to travel "across the floor. Depending on size, 4 to 8 people at a time. Watch from the side so you get that profile view.

- Running, Walking, Work on diagonals, backward travel and circular movement. **Concepts are the same!!!**
- Color Guard (and band) at some point will work on sauté posse, arabesque and attitude. You will be amazed at the change in confidence and tone quality, not to mention the camaraderie that stretching and moving together creates!