

RIGHT ANGLED CURVES

PREFACE

The work presented in this publication is a suite of eight dances composed by me for the *Chamber Dance Group*. This performing group is one among a number of overlapping working groups which exist for the purposes of the development and application of *EW Movement Notation*. The activities of these groups, working within the framework of the *Movement Notation Society* and of the Research Centre for Movement Notation at Tel-Aviv University, extend to areas such as folklore, dance education, kinesiology, zoology and kinetic art.

Since 1954 the *Chamber Dance Group* has performed for audiences interested in the nature of movement. Since the entire focus is upon movement, there is no musical accompaniment, scenery, special costumes or lighting effects - none of the usual adjuncts of theatrical dance. It is not accidental that the name of the group implies that its work is intended (like the original chamber music) for small audiences and first and foremost for the performers themselves. The works are designed for comparatively intimate surroundings and not for presentation in large theatres.

This is the first of my compositions to be published as a complete score, and the delay was deliberate. The notation examples given in the first textbook of *EW Movement Notation*, published in 1958, were mainly taken from my own compositions. But it was clear that a properly objective test of the method as a universal movement notation would entail the observation and recording of areas and styles of movement created by others who had not themselves had the advantage of being able to write down their own works. Over the period which has elapsed, the method has therefore been applied in fields as different as animal behaviour, physical education, classical ballet, the language of the deaf, etcetera. Accordingly most of the ten *Movement Notation* publications which have appeared in this period represent the results of these trials of the notation method in the context of areas of movement which came into being independently of any pre-existing notation method and certainly without any connection with *EW Movement Notation*. It can thus be stated that *Movement Notation* has been shown capable of recording

movement. It now seems to me that the time is ripe to demonstrate its use as a compositional tool, that is as an instrument of thought

It is a significant fact that despite the great number of names associated with attempts to formulate methods of notation for movement and dance, to this day there exists no serious literature of the dance. That is to say, no body of work composed in notation and generally available. I say this in full consciousness of the existence of methods such as Labanotation, the Benesh system and others. I know of no dance which has hitherto been composed in a notation. *Nijinsky* undoubtedly had new concepts of movement which alas can only now be guessed at through the little that has been preserved of his compositions. But, in the light of my current occupation with his work, it appears very doubtful whether even he composed his masterpieces in notation, although he certainly recorded "*L'après Midi d'un Faun*" (1912) in his notation system. (The score, dated 1915, is in the British Museum.)

In contemporary dance, composition is still largely the result of ad hoc decisions, continuity being ensured by a heavy reliance upon musical accompaniment and literary theme. In order to reach the mature stature of an art such as music, the composition of dance will have to enter a phase in which the material itself is explored. The focus of this exploration should be upon the search for structures rather than the 'expression of emotion' so often demanded of and claimed for artistic composition. Emotion is most probably the inner drive from which a composition stems, and also a result of the impression received by an observer, but a link - a communication - can only be created if there is structure, the ordering of a recognisable material. Emotion belongs to life and accompanies every activity; it does not follow that it is the material for an art of movement.

The person who makes no order in anything does nothing for others and nothing for himself. Order is commonly conceived as something rigid - 'rules'. But the relation is not symmetrical; rules do not necessarily generate order. Order makes possible agreement and understanding, by exposing relations and connections. When connections are

revealed, communication is possible. When the spectator is relied upon to supply the connections by means of emotional interpretations, communication is largely a matter of chance and almost surely faulty. (This situation is encountered in most art criticism.) The relations revealed within the material - the structure -- constitute a firm basis, objectively and demonstrably 'there'. Interpretations are always present; but they neither add to nor detract from the structure.

In my view dance composition is essentially concerned with the connection between movements, through the organisation of what is actually seen, quite independently of extraneous factors. Such organisation cannot be achieved so long as the elements of movement remain unnamed and undefined, which is as much as to say unknown. Because of this essential requirement for defining the field, a conceptual tool is needed so that it is possible to think in the material, to search for ways of observing and thereafter controlling the relations within that material.

The purpose of composing in Movement Notation is not to describe what the movements are for, but to state what they are. Humans usually mean something by their movements; Movement Notation enables us to free ourselves of the interpretation of movement in terms of the attainment of goals; and by removing all interpretations, to discover the visual phenomena of movement. This seems to me the only way of reaching the source -- what we call the 'material'. So long as we insist upon seeing the material as a set of signals to be understood in one way and one way only (as is usually the case in any given closed style), we remain blind and impotent, prisoners of our conditioned interpretations and unable to change them.

The structure of the suite presented in this book is discussed in the notes which precede the score. Specific aspects of the structure and movement character of the individual dances are commented upon in the notes before each.

Since we are still alive and working, EW Movement Notation is a living system; its conceptual basis allows - even requires - that usages should be developed which are

especially appropriate to specific applications. For this reason modifications have from time to time been introduced and made known through publications. We have pointed this out before, and hope to have occasion to do so again.

Like other EW Movement Notation publications this volume includes an introduction to the principles of the notation method; it has now been entirely rewritten so as to bring it up to date in respect of developments made in the light of experience accumulated over the 17 years since the publication of the first textbook. It will be clear that nothing has been changed from the conceptual point of view. Modifications have always been in the direction of greater economy and not in that of the multiplication of symbols. The usage of the symbols has become more concise and reflects more lucidly the analysis of movement which is embodied in the notation method.

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Yom Kippur - September 1975