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**SAMPLE WORKSHEETS**

**TO**

**ACCOMPANY the FREE DEMO**

*Graham Technique – analysis of 10 basic exercises*

## FLOOR EXERCISES: WORKSHEET 1

- **VIEW** the **DETAILS** and identify the three **movement concepts**:

CONTRACTION

RELEASE

SPIRAL

- **VIEW** the demonstrations of each exercise as you read and study the **movement concepts** on screen.
- **TASK READ** the following quotations and notes to deepen your understanding of these movement concepts.

### Movement Concepts and associated Actions

Movement concepts are an agreed theory for movement in a dance technique. Movement concepts prescribe how a person should move to achieve a particular action given the gesture, dynamic, rhythm, and/or intention involved in movement performance. Movement concepts with associated actions are easily described by words like tilt, shift, propel, gather to scatter, contraction, run and slide. Occasionally the word for a movement concept, like contraction, release and spiral, is also the word for its action. Describing actions provides additional information about what and how movement is performed. This information can then be used to determine the connection to a specific kind of dance technique.

Contraction, release, and spiral are movement concepts related to exhalation and inhalation in several different dance techniques. In Graham technique the application of these movement concepts results in movement that originates and is controlled from the body centre. It is also believed that with the support of breath the resultant movement has more an emotional rather than peripheral impact. Also in Graham technique, the use of breath varies the dynamics for transitions between singular and multiple movements.

The exercises on the CD ROM show a synthesis of Graham's movement concepts related to the use of the torso, particularly the spine combined with breath. It requires flexibility and strength and a specific articulation in use of the torso with arms that must find their power from the centre of the back. The position of the head also adds an emotional dimension to movement. The head position being forward, back, on a diagonal, with or against the line of contraction, release and spiral adds an emotional dimension that is not

usually present in other forms of dance technique. Even though these exercises occur on the floor, the legs stabilise or assist in shifting the torso, arms and head through space. The use of contraction in Graham technique is described in the following quotes:

*Graham was in the process of trying to discover what was most basic in the expression of human feeling; that is what postures what positions, what changes of position occur in the body in different states of emotion. We actually had exercises in the class that were called the 'cry' or the 'laugh'.*

(Bird, 1994)

*A simple visual image for contraction and release would be observing what a cat does as it prepares to jump at a higher level. The cat actually condenses, gathers its muscles, brings it all in, that's your contraction, then as it springs to go to the higher level, that's its release. That's a very, very simple visual image. The contraction and release is about initiating movement. It's about propelling the body through space.*

(Barnes, 1994)

*it is a very human movement that has always been used in all kinds of dance. As a dramatic gesture, not only can it be extremely expressive of pain and sorrow, but also of joy and laughter.*

(Cohan, 1986)

Release and spiral, like contraction initiate movement and with inhalation and exhalation can fulfil specified intentions in movements.

### Elements that describe movement

The exercises offered for analysis are a synthesis of the movement practiced in Graham technique. They are direct extrapolations of movements given in Graham technique to develop flexibility and articulated use of the torso, feet, and legs. The bodily design is the result of the torso with head, arms and legs expressing varied use of dynamics, rhythm, effort, spatial features, and imagery.

### Bodily Design

For sitting on the floor the soles of the feet are together, the hands are resting or moving freely but attached to the ankles. The length of the spine is used with effort to make it round or stretched as is possible given the capabilities of the dancer. It can be noticed that the dancer's shoulders are not lifted but round or stretch as she performs contraction, release, or spiral. The arms are in a place that aids this action.

The use of the spine explored while sitting with the feet together is now explored in spiral with the legs in 4<sup>th</sup> position. Instead of a curve of the spine in the sagittal plane, the curve of the spine also twists around itself. The release also is now in spiral as opposed to the

vertical release explored in the 1<sup>st</sup> exercise. The legs are arranged to allow shifting of the pelvis on the floor to aide contraction, release, and spiral of the torso in 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **Dynamics, rhythm & effort**

Accents vary within each phrase of music which indicates how the 'and' count is used. Watch as the movement is being demonstrated in the video and note the **accents** and the different **phrasing**. The dynamics can be described as alternating between an explosive and percussive dynamic, to one that has a pendulum, suspended or dropping sensation.

Effort is very individual to each dancer but it is safe to describe this movement as being bound and compact. There seems no laxity but the dancer also seems quite flexible. One can conclude that the movement requires a great deal of control to perform these varied qualities.

### **Spatial Features**

Although the dancers are sitting on the floor their torsos seem to move in several directions. The torso surges forward as well as to both sides and diagonally to sides and front. Even the end movement has a lift in the chest that although reaches up give the illusion that the torso stretches down and could reach backward. Reaching in several directions as much as it returns to the centre of origination makes this movement 3 dimensional.

### **Imagery and intention**

- In many dance classes, imagery aids the practice of movement. Imagery can assist the expression of specific intentions or assist in the development of movement skill. The imagery chosen is also very individual to each dancer and each dance technique.
- In Graham technique, the contraction has several kinds of emotional, dramatic imagery like a sharp guttural laugh or the sob of sorrow; for spiral the barber's pole is a usual reference, and for release the image of a taut rubber band that with the use of breath facilitates lengthening of the torso.
- In Graham technique, use of the head can indicate intention in movement. The head can be adjusted forward, back, and diagonal, with or against the line of contraction, release and spiral depending on motivation/imagery being practice. The head tilting to the side can indicate anguish while a lifted head can signify rapture.
- As the observer can you describe what the movement suggest to you? Metaphors are a usual way of talking about what you see in dance. Being able to describe dance in a metaphorical way will inform your dancing and how you perceive someone else's dancing.

## **FLOOR EXERCISES: WORKSHEET 2**

**VIEW** closely the **CONTRACTION**

**TASK** - WRITE an overall description of the *contraction* using WORDS and PHRASES listed below and some additional language of your own. Your description should integrate the ACTIONS, QUALITIES, RHYTHMIC and SPATIAL features of the *contraction*.

### **BODILY DESIGN**

Sitting positions – feet together or legs in 2<sup>nd</sup> position.

### **MOVEMENT CONCEPTS with actions**

Contraction - lengthening of a curve, stretching of the spine, tightening, pulling inwards and backwards, tilting of the pelvis, preparation for propulsion, tension of muscles, caving and scooping out of the torso.

- Bending over in contraction – deepen and dive, drop.
- Twisting in contraction – pull in opposition, contort, rotate.

### **QUALITIES and RHYTHMIC features**

Explosive, attacking, impact, taut, strong, accented, held, sharp, powerful, sudden, percussive, forceful, like the pull on a bow, punched, blown out, fierce, high tension.

### **SPATIAL features**

Sitting on low level - body pulled upward and backward into a concave curved shape, head looking straight upwards, downward drop, and emphasis on retention of centre line through body from head to sitting bones.

### **IMAGERY**

What does this movement suggest to you? The dancer has specific intentions that she is seeking to fulfil. The observer may suggest what the movement seems to intend to them. Describe what the dancer's movement suggest to you.

## FLOOR EXERCISES: WORKSHEET 4

**VIEW** closely the **SPIRAL**

**TASK** - WRITE an overall description of the *spiral* using WORDS and PHRASES listed below and some additional language of your own. Your description should integrate the ACTIONS, QUALITIES, RHYTHMIC and SPATIAL features of the *spiral*.

### **BODILY DESIGN**

Sitting in 4<sup>th</sup> position.

### **MOVEMENT CONCEPTS**

Spiral, release, pitch, tilt, contraction, shift, alignment

**IDENTIFY** the following actions and progressions in the exercise:

- Vertical alignment of the torso with the arms lengthened at the sides of the torso. Spiralling occurs with legs bent at hip and knee around the hips. Upright spiral is initiated by pushing the working hip to head in succession. First arm traces the furthest reach of the dancer's kinesphere, travelling up then lowering to 2<sup>nd</sup> position.
- Second arm joins with a high release in the torso with head lifted. A pitch over the supporting hip follows this. The pitch is followed by spiral that further develops the twist around to back on a diagonal. The resultant tilt to the back with the forearm as support recoils because of the use of contraction in centre of torso that affects the arms and hands.
- Release in torso shifts the hips through the legs into another pitch that repeats tilt supported by the forearm, recoil to contraction again to release that shifts the hips to support an elongated upright spiral in torso that seems to reach beyond the dancer's kinesphere.
- Hips shift back to start position returning to original alignment of the torso between the legs to allow arms to travel in alternating path tracing 180 degree of the dancer's kinesphere from floor to above the head and side to side from 2<sup>nd</sup> position

### **QUALITIES and RHYTHMIC features**

Stillness that is not arrested, impulse, continuous, held, smooth, flowing, soft, accented, accelerating, decelerating, strong, gentle, ongoing, pausing, sense of phrasing having commas and full stops.

### **SPATIAL features**

Sitting on low level – interplay between front and diagonal directions, up, back and down, circular paths, linear stretch, around, focus changes.

### **IMAGERY**

The dancer seeks to explore her space in 3 dimensions: front, back, sides and diagonals. This is accomplished not just in how she twist her spine but also how she shifts her hips to accomplish pitch and recoils for contractions. This exploration of space is also accomplished by how she reaches her arms and where she looks. From the smallest possible roundness she can achieve to the most stretched surge of energy from base of spine to tips of fingers, the dancer winds up to propel self into space. Can you describe/imagine something different?