

Dance Glossary

AB. A two-part compositional form with an A theme and a B theme; the binary form consists of two distinct, self-contained sections that share either a character or quality (such as the same tempo, movement quality, or style).

ABA. A three-part compositional form in which the second section contrasts with the first section. The third section is a restatement of the first section in a condensed, abbreviated, or extended form.

Abstract. To remove movement from a particular or representative context and (by manipulating it with elements of space, time, and force) create a new sequence or dance that retains the essence of the original.

Action. A movement event.

Aesthetic criteria. Standards upon which judgements are made about the artistic merit of a work of art.

Alignment. The relationship of the skeleton to the line of gravity and the base of support.

Anatomy. Structural make-up of an organism/individual (skeleton, muscles).

Axial movement. Any movement that is anchored to one spot by a body part using only the available space in any direction without losing the initial body contact. Movement is organized around the axis of the body rather than designed for travel from one location to another; also known as nonlocomotor movement.

Call and response. A structure that is most often associated with African music and dance forms, although it is also used elsewhere. One soloist/group performs with the second soloist/group entering "in response" to the first.

Canon. Choreographic form that reflects the musical form of the same name, in which individuals and groups perform the same movement/phrase beginning at different times.

Chance. A choreographic process in which elements are specifically chosen and defined but randomly structured to create a dance or movement phrase. This process demands high levels of concentration in performance to deal effectively with free association and surprise structures that appear spontaneously.

Choreographic structure. The specific compositional forms in which movement is structured to create a dance.

Choreography. Describes a dance sequence that has been created with specific intent.

Classical. Dance that has been developed into highly stylized structures within a culture. Generally developed within the court or circle of power in a society.

Contemporary. Dance as it is being explored by current choreographers.

Dynamics. The expressive content of human movement, sometimes called qualities or efforts. Dynamics manifest the interrelationships among the elements of space, time, and force/energy. (See also movement quality).

Elements. The use of the body moving in space and time with force/energy.

Elevation. The body's propulsion into the air away from the floor, such as in a leap, hop, or jump.

Ethnic. Dances that have been created and used by a specific group within a culture, when they are performed outside the original culture.

Folk. Dances that are created and performed by a specific group within a specific culture. Generally these dances originated outside the courts or circle of power within a society.

Hop. Locomotor movement where weight is transferred from one foot to the same foot by elevation.

Improvisation. Movement that is created spontaneously, ranging from free-form to highly structured environments, but always with an element of chance. Provides the dancer with the opportunity to bring together elements quickly, and requires focus and concentration.

Initiation. Point at which a movement is said to originate. This particularly refers to specific body parts and is generally said to be either distal (from the limbs or head) or central (from the torso).

Jump. Locomotor movement where weight is transferred from two feet to two feet by elevation.

Kinesiology. The study of anatomy in relation to human movement.

Kinesphere. The movement space, or the space surrounding the body in stillness and in motion, which includes all directions and levels both close to the body and as far as the person can reach with limbs or torso. (See personal space).

Kinesthetic. Refers to the ability of the body's sensory organs in the muscles, tendons, and joints to respond to stimuli while dancing or viewing a dance.

Levels. The height of the dancer in relation to the floor. For example: sitting on the floor would be low level, kneeling could be middle level, and standing or jumping would be high level.

Locomotor movement. Movement that travels from place to place, usually identified by weight transference on the feet. Basic locomotor steps are the walk, run, hop, and jump and the irregular rhythmic combinations of the skip (walk and hop) and gallop (walk and run).

Movement quality. The identifying attributes created by the release, follow through, and termination of energy, which are key to making movement become dance. Typical terms denoting qualities include sustained, swing, percussive, collapse, and vibratory and effort combinations such as float, dab, punch, and glide. (See also dynamics).

Movement study. A short piece of choreography based on a specific idea.

Movement theme. A complete idea in movement that is manipulated and developed within a dance.

Musicality. The attention and sensitivity to the musical elements of dance while creating or performing.

Narrative. Choreographic structure that follows a specific story line and intends to convey specific information through that story.

Nonlocomotor movement. (See axial movement).

Palindrome. A choreographic structure used with a phrase or longer sequence of movement in which the phrase, for example, is first performed proceeding from movement 1 to movement 2, etc.; when the last movement of the phrase is complete, the phrase is retrograded from the penultimate movement to the first movement. (A commonly used example in prose is "Able was I ere I saw Elba." In this example, the letters are the same forward to the "r" in "ere" as they are backward to the "r.")

Performance. Execution of dance movement in class or on stage.

Personal space. The space or kinesphere that one occupies; it includes all levels, planes, and directions from the body's center. (See kinesphere).

Phrase. A brief sequence of related movements that has a sense of rhythmic completion.

Physiology. Physical and chemical processes that are required for life activities (cellular level).

Projection. A confident presentation of one's body and energy to vividly communicate movement and meaning to an audience; performance quality.

Reordering. A choreographic process in which known and defined elements (specific movements, movement phrases, etc.) are separated from their original relationship and restructured in a different pattern.

Rhythmic acuity. The physical, auditory recognition of various complex time elements.

Run. Locomotor movement where weight is transferred from one foot to the other foot by elevation.

Style. A distinctive manner of moving; the characteristic way dance is done, created, or performed that identifies the dance of a particular performer, choreographer, or period.

Technique. Proper execution of skills within a given dance form.

Technology. Electronic media (such as video, computers, or lasers) used as tools to create, learn, explain, document, analyze, or present dance.

Theatrical. Dance genres primarily developed for the stage (such as jazz and tap).

Traditional dance. The term "traditional" is used to denote those dances and dance forms that have arisen out of the tradition of a people, such as the dances of bharata natyam, noh, or the folk dances of indigenous peoples of Europe or other areas.

Walk. Locomotor movement where weight is transferred from one foot to the other foot with one or the other foot always in contact with the ground.

Warmup. Movements and/or movement phrases designed to raise the core body temperature, practice technical skills, and bring the mind into focus for the dance activities to follow.