



Composition & Visual Repertoire

Written by Laurel McAfee, Presented at JA Workshop 2009

PART 1 - JUDGING COMPOSITION AND VISUAL REPERTOIRE

#1 DESIGN AND EFFECT

- A. It is the goal that both Content and Overall Effect judges be able to identify the various design elements of dance composition before evaluating the depth of the design vocabulary (content analysis) or the effect of that vocabulary (effect impression).
- B. To judge the composition and visual repertoire is to analyze and respond to the elements of design and their effect to create the chosen impression. Choices made in the construction of a program determine the level of impact of that program. The two are the 'what' and the 'why' of the judges' evaluation, the analysis and impression of the judging process.
- C. The OE judge uses both impression and analysis in responding to the effects of a performance. The judge goes through the process of being involved in the show's entertainment aspects and responding with impressions of feeling, fascination, intrigue, or appeal. Then the judge goes through the process of acknowledging the design elements of choreography and staging that creates those effects. It is the **result** of the design, not the design itself that is the overall effect of a show.

#2 COMPOSITION

- A. Composition is the arrangement and relationship of design elements. These elements are inherent to many forms of design, such as painting, photography, architecture, merchandise display, interior decorating, as well as the performing arts of dance and music.
 - 1. Each aspect of the content of a show must be valued within the context of the whole show. The combination and the relationship between choreography, forms/staging, and maneuvering are what constitute the significance of the composition. The contribution of each choreographic and design element creates the total package. Taken out of context, each may lose impact. In theory, the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. It is when using the score sheet that listed sub-captions will aid the judge in breaking down a total score into more specific numbers.
- B. When judging composition, emphasis must be placed on reacting to the whole show and not to single isolated effects - being aware of the planning, pacing, and coordination. The judge needs to notice changes in focus, logical coordination of motion around the court, repetition of design, and strength of planned effects within the whole show's construction.

#3 VISUAL REPERTOIRE

- A. Visual repertoire is the range of visual elements chosen by the choreographer to develop the program's concept. The development of theme and/or mood is supported by creative coordination of vocabulary, staging, pacing, color, and props/set. It is the planned presentation of all the visual opportunities to capture the eye, showcase the choreography, and communicate with the audience.

- B. Visual repertoire is most extensive sub-caption of the entire OE score sheet because it covers the *Content* and *Effect* of design and impact. It requires the judge to provide both an expressive (subjective) response and an (objective) reason for the response. It is not enough for the OE judge to just respond to the effectiveness of the moment, or communicate involvement. Technical reasons of why it is effective or provokes a response are necessary.

PART 2 - CRITERIA

#1 ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION

- A. **Vocabulary** - The variety of design skills, the extent of choreography, the range of staging and maneuvering concepts are considered the design vocabulary of a program.
- B. **Line & Form** - Line and form are the *geometrics* of the design elements. They can determine the space, balance, weight and focus of the show's structure. How they are used can influence the staging and effect of a presentation. Line is an important factor in how individual and ensemble choreography is presented within a form.
- C. **Space** - Manipulation of space is a component of both choreography and design. Individual choreography can demonstrate the use of various planes around the body's center ("Kinesphere"). The use of lines and forms will create shapes of positive (active) or negative space (inactive) on the floor.
- D. **Balance** - Balance is another component of both choreography and design. Balance is a muscular skill within the movement vocabulary. It is also a consideration in the arrangement of lines and forms. Balance is a factor in the use of symmetry, bisymmetry and even asymmetry.
- E. **Weight** - Weight is created by density of performers in an area, the movement quality of choreography, the tempo of motion, the size of a form, the intensity of color, etc. It may be a factor in determining the balance of a picture.
- F. **Focus** - A focal point is created by the manipulation of line, motion, direction, space, contrast, balance and weight to carry the eye to an intended area. Focus may on a broad scale, on smaller groups, down to individuals or even smaller spaces. (In Overall Effect it is a consideration of Staging.)
- G. **Contrast** - The comparison of different levels, directions, tempos, forms, etc. can help to create focus, intensity, motion, etc. Within a contrasting moment there is usually a correlation between ideas, like those just listed, that ties together the effect.
- H. **Flow** - Flow is the progression of one idea to the next. It encompasses the timing and rhythm of the visual moments of the individual sections and entire show. (It is measured in Overall Effect in terms of the Tension and Relief of patterns.) Flow can pertain to the phrasing of choreographic ideas as well as design concepts.
- I. **Texture** - As it used in other mediums, texture is the roughness, smoothness, weave, pattern, intermix of elements; the visual feel and/or combination of the

elements of choreography, patterns, and maneuvers. Not only do qualities such as sharp or flowing movement give texture to choreography; they also provide texture to design. Single elements or the combination of multiple elements can demonstrate texture.

#2 ELEMENTS OF VISUAL REPERTOIRE

A. Program Concept - (Projection, Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. The concept for a program is the foundation from which follows the progression of ideas, the continuity/through line, the communication of theme/plot, the reason and understanding of repertoire choices. Concept should provide understanding on the choice of music, type of entertainment, the choice of costumes/set/props, and intent of design. Theme/concept usually matures gradually during the season with the growing contribution of visual elements and performer achievement.

B. Interpretation - (Projection, Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. Interpretation is a version or rendering of an idea. Today's shows are exploring concepts in literal and abstract interpretations of themes and music. To be literal is obvious or apparent in representing the theme or music. Abstract interpretation will be less evident, deviate from the expected, or provide a different outlook. Any type of interpretation should be evaluated for its consistency, depth, and clarity without judgment of its validity.

C. Focus & Staging - (Visual Repertoire)

1. Focus is created by use of the design elements of form, line, space, motion, color, weight, etc. While these may be elements of the Content caption, their impact is interpreted in Overall Effect. Forms provide the 'staging' of the choreography, manipulate focus and space to develop show ideas and emphasize musical dynamics. Effect is the result of the design and not the design itself.

D. Pacing - (Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. Planned progression and momentum of a program is pacing. It entails the sequence of highs and lows of visual energy and music, the progression of story line, the placement of planned responses, and the continuance of variety. Tension and relief is a pacing concept in program and design planning.

E. Tension & Relief - (Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. Tension and relief are catchwords for the concept that the music, drill, and repertoire of a show can create subliminal messages of intensity and relaxation. While more commonly identified with the dynamics of music and pacing, colors and shapes also provide impressions of moods and emotions.
2. Appropriate use of the design elements of lines and forms will aid the show in communicating musicality, interpretation, focus, emotion, and flow. In general, repetition of form and/or the use of large mass forms create tension. Relief is the response to the change in form, such as going from mass to line. Linear forms also tend to have lesser impact in comparison to mass forms.

F. **Planned Responses** - (Projection, Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. There are moments that are created by the coordination of visual and audio repertoire and performer contribution to invoke an audience reaction or highlights of entertainment. These effects or responses often refer to:
 - a. Intrigue, fascination
 - b. Surprise, impact
 - c. Comedy, sadness
 - d. Suspense, relief
 - e. Impression, clever
 - f. Creativity, originality
 - g. Appeal, beauty, repulsion

G. **Communication** - (Projection, Visual and Audio Repertoire)

1. Communication is effectively conveying emotion, mood, personality, and/or plot to the audience. The information conveyed by the performers can be as varied as the multitude of personalities, characters, and emotions available. The performer's level of concentration, commitment and understanding of their responsibilities will determine the effectiveness of the communication. It is expressed through effectual choices of posture, body and facial language, and effort changes, as well as through choreography, staging, and music.

PART 3 - QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE JUDGING

#1 CONTENT

- A. The Content judge, is evaluating creativity, artistry, originality, depth of thought, inventiveness of design construction, should be asking :
1. Is there a logical construction of the show?
 2. What ideas are being presented?
 3. What skills are being displayed?
 4. What visual concepts bind the ideas together?
 5. What elements are being use to create progression?
 6. What use of motion, rhythm, tempo, shape, texture, line, and space communicates the ideas of the show?
 7. Are there a variety of logical and patterned transitions?
 8. Is there attention to transitional choreography?
 9. Are there key moments of form and ensemble choreography?
 10. Is there a balance between individual and ensemble choreography?
 11. How well is space and form used to stage ideas?
 12. How is creativity displayed?
 13. *Does style contribute to the show?*
- B. CREATIVITY – the ARTISTRY, ORIGINALITY, DEPTH of thought, INVENTIVENESS of design.
1. Who displayed the better depth and variety of ensemble choreography?
 2. Who displayed the better use of space and forms?
 3. Who displayed the better integration of form and ensemble choreography?
 4. Who displayed the better logical and patterned transition?
 5. Who displayed the better transitional choreography?
 6. Who displayed the better integration of transition and choreography?
 7. *Who displayed the better range of movement skills?*
 8. *Who displayed the better creativity of movement?*
 9. *Who displayed the better adherence of style?*

#2 VISUAL EFFECT

- A. Judging Overall Effect is evaluating the level of influence, the weight of impact, the degree of control by a performance over the audience. Visual and audio effect is created by excellence in performance and artistry in design. The OE judge will be questioning:
1. How successfully is communication of mood being convey?
 2. Is there complete development of theme/concept?
 3. Is there imagination and creativity?
 4. Is there variety and planning of effects?
 5. How does color, costume, props/set contribute to the program?

6. What design elements are used to create staging?
 7. How much attention is given to detailing, nuance, and artistic qualities?
 8. Is there a visual musicality?
 9. Is there continuity and pacing between effects?
 10. *Do the performers display commitment, concentration, recovery?*
 11. *How much does the soundtrack enhance the repertoire?*
- B. IMPRESSION – creating an IMPACT and INFLUENCE over the audience with excellence and artistry.
1. Who displayed the better communication of mood?
 2. Who displayed the better imagination and creativity?
 3. Who displayed the better commitment, concentration, recovery?
 4. Who displayed the better development of theme/concept?
 5. Who displayed the better variety and planning of effects?
 6. Who displayed the better color, costume, props/set contribution?
 7. Who displayed the better quality of design?
 8. Who displayed the better detailing, nuance, artistic qualities?
 9. Who displayed the better visual musicality?
 10. Who displayed the better continuity and pacing between effects?
 11. Who displayed the better audio contribution?