

EUROPEAN SEMINAR FOR KINETOGRAPHY

Paper No.2.

Analytical Approaches

by Jacqueline Challet-Haas, 1986.

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When recording a movement sequence, a dance of some kind, a piece of theatrical work, or a ballet, the notator has the difficult task of analysing adequately what he sees, as well as grasping the motivation behind the performed actions, before writing anything down. In this way he will be able to select the most appropriate means of translating the observed movement into signs. Furthermore it is his task to offer a clear guidance to the prospective "reader" in understanding, and then to reproduce the notated sequence, as near to the original as is possible.

The notator has the difficult task of mediating between the "doer" and the "reproducer", compressed by demands from both sides (being himself rarely one of these two). He has to record and submit in a comprehensible way a sum of actions to be performed by somebody else. This involves a certain amount of relativity, which is, as we know, well contained in our system of notation (See Principles' paper p. 10-15). However, the notator has to decide how far he can go in leaving the interpretation open.

Our system of movement notation is based on universal traits of human condition: the vertical stance, the concept of "front", the symmetrical build of the body (see Principles' paper p. 10-15). The notion of spatial dimensions is one of the essential issues conditioning this system, and it is based on motoric principles.

The visuality of this system of notation is fostered by the lay-out of the staff, the shape of the main signs, and the ingenious way of representing the time element by the length of the signs. It provides a manifold tool to be used to full advantage.

This system could be compared to a large tree, whose roots are well anchored in the ground (thanks to the universal elements), and whose trunk, with its spreading branches, is represented by the main signs (direction, rotation and path signs). This is sufficient for a general approach in recording, allowing a compact set of information to be conveyed for notating basic structures of any movement. From these main branches of the system, many smaller ones spread out, represented by an additional set of signs (space measurement signs, body signs, orientation and relation signs etc.), which make possible a more detailed recording.

Following this, a recording may adhere to the descriptive approach (registering the movement sequence as it is actually performed), or to the prescriptive approach (supplying a generalised instruction for performing and interpreting a movement sequence). (See Principles paper p.11).

The more detailed recording is indeed at the base of our problem: to what extent have details to be notated? What is the aim of the recording? For whom is it being prepared?

Any action can be perceived, observed and analysed from different viewpoints. If a particular approach is necessary, there are various means readily available within the system. These possibilities have to be explored in a discerning way. Very often the movement context dictates the choice of analysis: directional indications versus flexion/extension indications, facing indications versus rotational indications, to name only the most obvious ones. It is often tempting to add details taken from different approaches in order to ensure that the intentions of the choreographer, or of the performers, are not omitted. At times one comes across recordings where indications of two different analytical categories are placed side by side; in fact the same result could be achieved by restricting oneself to one category. Too many indications may hide the core of the movement. The appropriate selection will guide the reader most assuredly to the motivation behind the action. Of course, the attributes of a particular style have to be described adequately, in order to portray the vital characteristics and the dynamic content inherent in the movement. However, these attributes have to be carefully identified and selected.

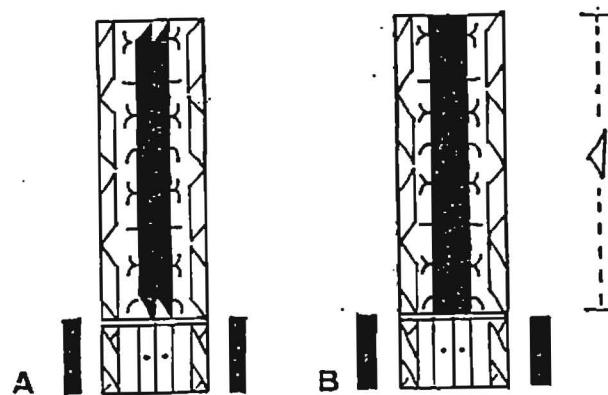
The notator must keep in mind that it is not only the relativity of recording which has to be observed. It is very often the dynamic content, which emerges from the movement context, without any additional means (See

ICKL Conference Report 1985 p. 63). The fear of being "inaccurate", or being "misunderstood", has to be tempered by a certain amount of confidence in the logic of movement within a particular style. Of course, a style has first to be understood and its characteristics determined.

To illustrate the comments above, some examples have been selected. They were provided by colleagues and students, and purposefully chosen in various styles, to offer a wider range for this survey.

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1st Example: Progressions with leg rotations (classroom combinations)



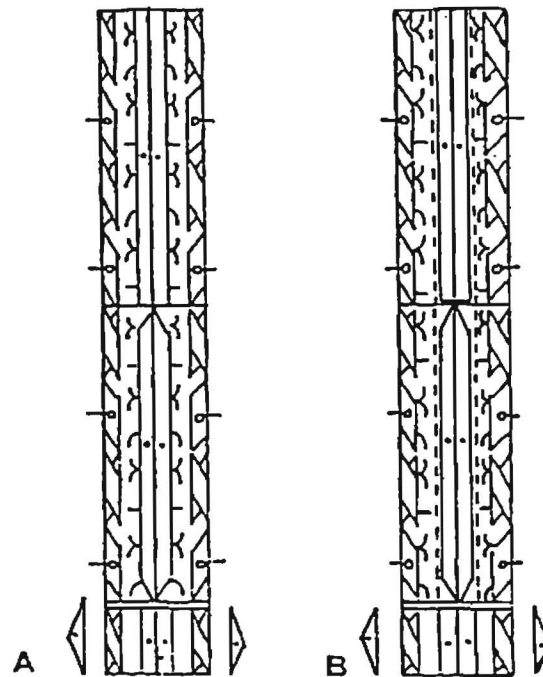
Usually these kind of examples are written with the help of path signs, and signs for sections of the foot placed either in the support or leg gesture columns, attached to the rotation indications.

The student proposed solution A, which seemed, at first glance, quite convincing.

But then, it was argued that the weight does not need 4 counts to be transferred sideways, from one point to another; the weight is already on the feet. The legs are only flexing during the changes of leg rotations, and the path to the left is the result.

The solution B was finally adopted.

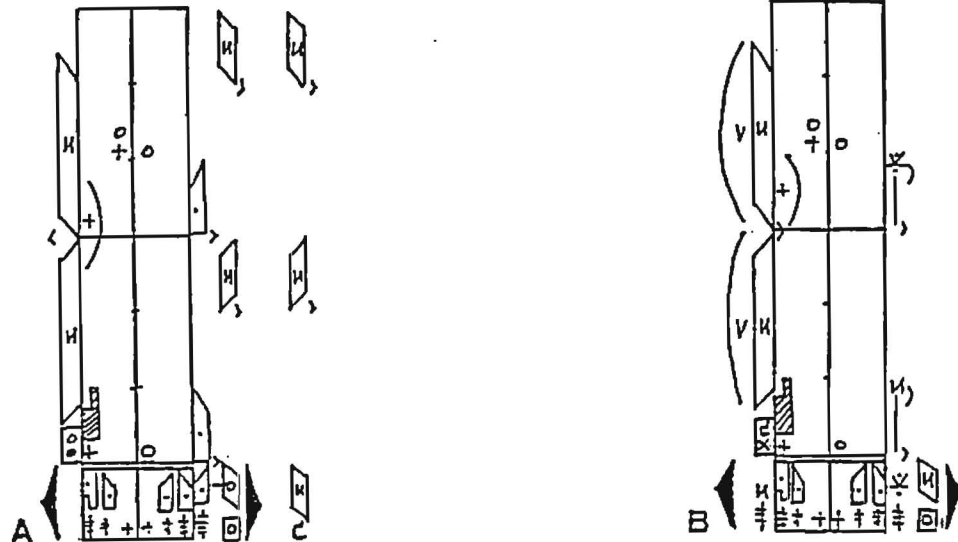
2nd Example: Opening and closing of the feet through leg rotations



The opening and closing actions of the feet are the result of the changes of sections of the supporting feet, plus the leg rotations: therefore, path signs are inadequate, because the travelling is not properly registered. However the instructor insisted on the opening of the feet in a 2nd position and then a closing into the 1st position.

Solution A was proposed, but the gliding actions of the feet were not represented.

Solution B was then suggested and adopted: The opening and closing of the feet is recorded by respective rotation signs. The gliding action is indicated with signs for the parts of the feet, attached to the rotation signs. The passive character of the whole action is indicated by the "passive" direction signs.

3rd Example: Modern Dance Technique**Solution A:**

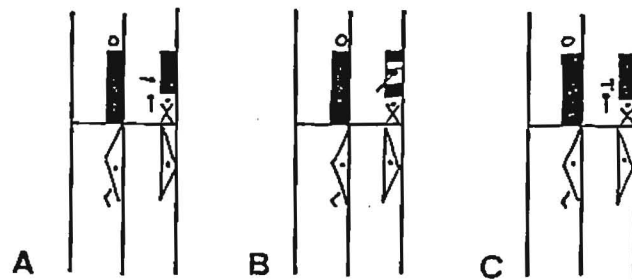
Twists of part of the body were written separately by the student to emphasise these rotations.

Movements of the ankle were written as directions of the foot.

**Solution B:**

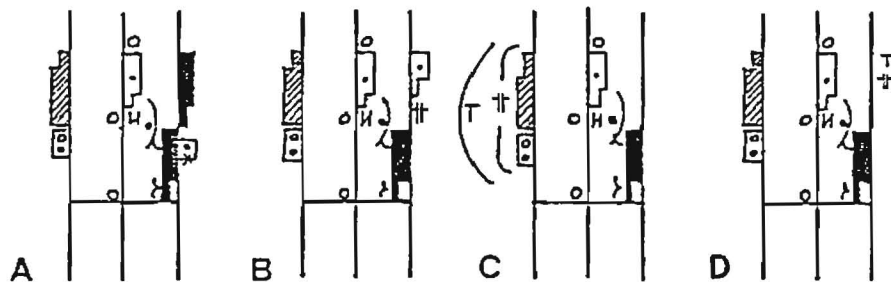
A more compact notation was then suggested with the help of "augmented torso signs" which include its different parts; the pelvis was left out of the sign to allow the specific hip movement to remain flexible. As a precise direction of the foot is questionable in such situations, due to anatomical limits, the indication of flexion was preferred, as a better representation of the required action. The sequential actions of these rotations were stressed by the "succession sign".

4th Example: "Antiquité I". chor. G. Appaix, not. M. Bastien, 1986



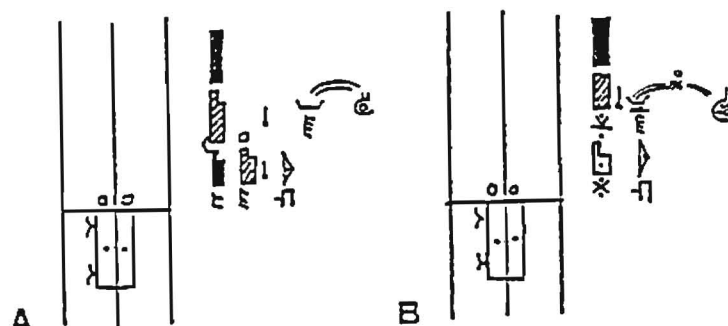
Solutions A + B show very definite positioning; this was not in fact the purpose of this movement; the action was indicated as if the leg were going "downwards and under"; the solution C was then preferred.

5th Example: "Antiquité I", chor. G. Appaix, not. M. Bastien, 1986



The hips were going backwards because of the extension of the 4th position and because of the tilt of the torso. Various solutions were tried: A was rejected because the pelvis analysis seemed superfluous, as it is the "normal" position of the pelvis when the torso is tilting forward-high. B. was not satisfactory either because this solution gave too much importance to the hips, which are not so active. C seemed at first satisfactory, as far as the displacement of the hips was concerned. However, it was also rejected because it gave the notion of "leading", while the hip movement appears to be a "termination" rather, than an "initiation". D was finally adopted. It shows the displacement of the hips, but defined as a minor movement, and written at the end of the torso movement, within the appropriate timing.

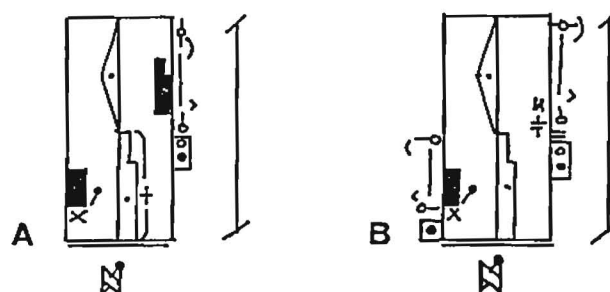
6th Example: "Antiquité I", chor. G. Appaix, not. M. Bastien 1986



Solution A was found too specific for a quite simple, ordinary action: to pass the hand through the hair. Solution B was tried, as it was more of an arm movement on its own, than movements of parts of the arm. Solution B was preferred because it shows that the arm is curving when approaching the head.

7th Example: Motif from the dance "Karikazo" (Hungary); not. J. Ph. Van Aelbrouck

From a record n° 45210 11 "Danses autour du Monde" by Cl. and L. Flagel, Bruxelles, Belgique F.M.

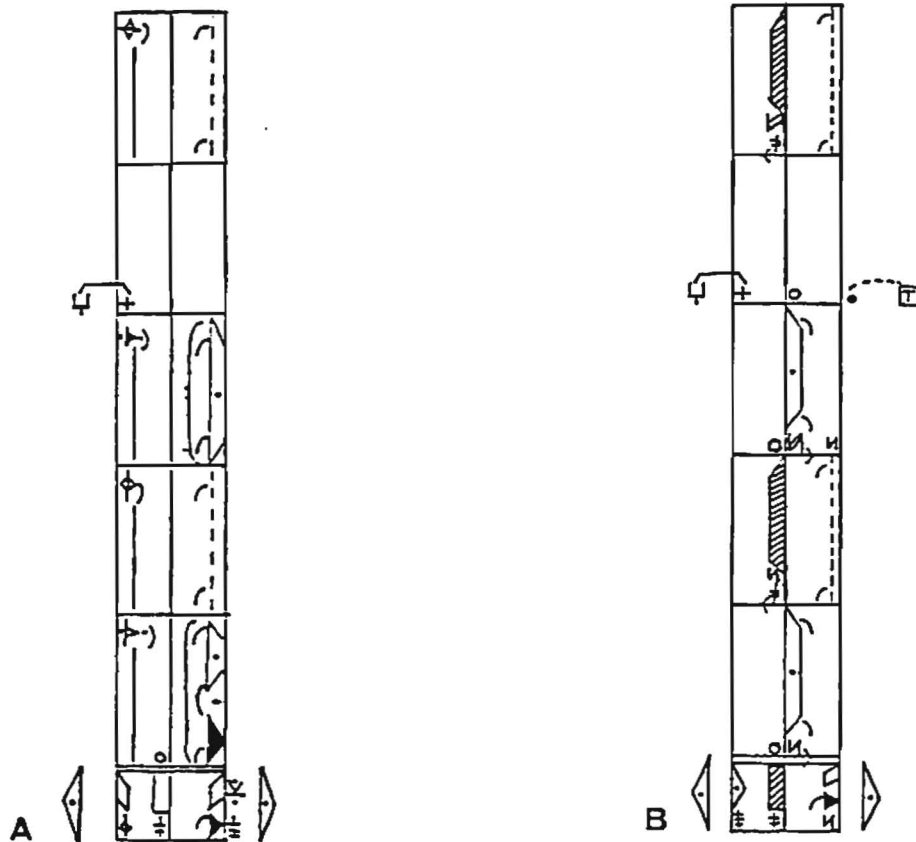


The motif is a swaying movement with a straightened leg; this occurs repeatedly.

Solution A: The first step of the right foot could be led by the hip; then a "simple" direction sign for the right leg would suffice to straighten the leg.

Solution B: Dissatisfied with the result above, the pelvic movement was emphasised during the first step and the fixing of the knee joint was stressed during the second step.

8th Example: "Floor Exercise" from "La Danse, les principes de son Enseignement aux enfants" by J. Challet-Haas;  
Ed. Amphora, Paris 1983, p. 148 ex. N° 45



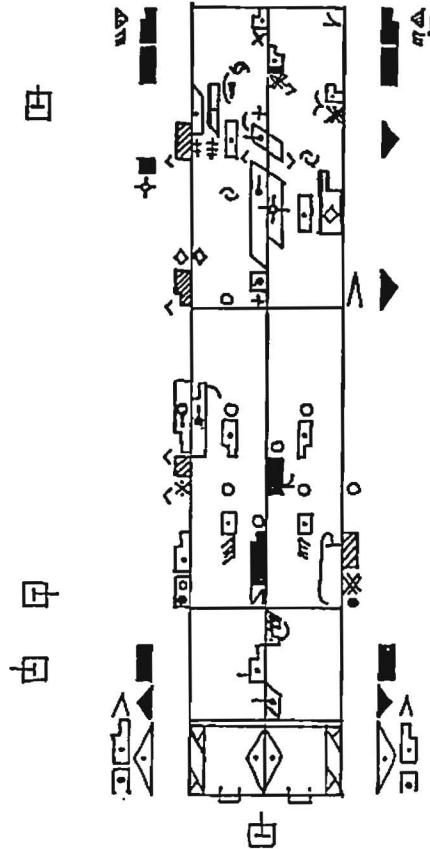
This example could have been written with the help of the new approach; the "angling" analysis. It would have given the exact angle of placement, and perhaps its more exact direction (solution A).

However, the displacement of weight is not stated in example A. This is, though, clearly evident in example B, where the direction signs in the support columns indicate the shifts according to the standard method of kinetography.

Additionally the exercise itself is geared to stress the shift of weight. Therefore example B seems to convey the right sort of instruction.



9th Example: "Father's shout" Chor. M. Makhandar, not. Cl. Stoltz 1986



So as to draw more clearly the interwoven actions of the feet, hands, and hips, the doubled support columns were employed.

The Body Cross of Axes was put inside the turn sign as a reminder (see beginning of 2nd bar), to stress the turn of the tilted body around the longitudinal axis.

It was felt that the introduction of the DBP analysis was not relevant in this instance. The sole use of the direction signs for supports conveys sufficiently clearly the intended content.