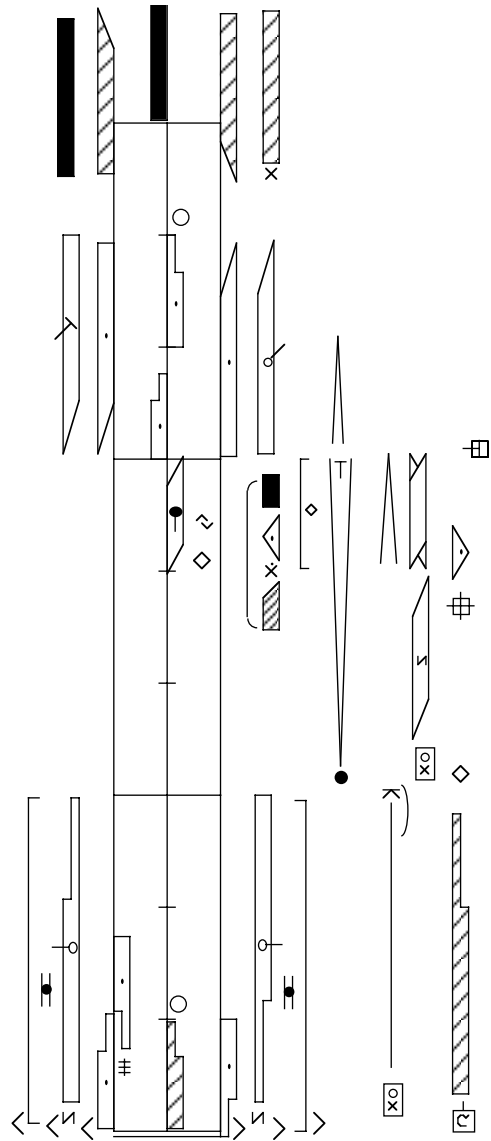


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Extract from Slavonic Dance

NOTATING FRANÇOIS MALKOVSKY'S BASIC MOVEMENTS & CHOREOGRAPHIES

Based on the remembrance and interpretations of
Suzanne Bodak

Notating Malkovsky's Free Dance

The process of analyzing movement was a challenge with respect to several aspects of Free Dance.

Understanding the directions for a Free Dance performer stems mainly from the qualities and energy of the movement rather than from spatial criteria.

The timing of the step patterns is very precise. However, movements of the arms and the upper body precede these transferences of weight. The duration of these movements is unspecified, but it is important for the style.

The codes of academic dance do not apply to Free Dance, which raises the question as to how much detail needed to be notated. We have opted to notate more details for the basic movements than for the choreographies, where the choreographic structure alone has been notated.

The specifics of the style must be learned through the basic movement exercises.

Breathing is essential to correct movement quality in Free Dance, but Malkovsky never explained how the dancer was supposed to use it. Based on Malkovsky's philosophy, we decided not to notate breathing, but to explain its importance by offering a number of suggestions in the glossaries that go with each dance.

Nor are the internalized paths of the movement shown in the notation. Exactly how far kinetography can provide this kind of information is an open question.

We encountered a similar problem with respect to emotions and energy. On this point we also chose to follow Malkovsky's teachings. He himself did not analyze the movement, but suggested images and metaphors. We have included quotes and phrases by Malkovsky in the scores, and leave dancers the responsibility and liberty to explore with their own bodies, to discover the organic movement that will bring the notated dances back to life.

Berne, November 1999

Karin Hermes-Sunke

STYLISTIC FEATURES

Formal perfection is achieved through a “free body” in the sense of freedom and fluidity allowing the energy to diffuse through space with presence and awareness.

“Free yourselves from your bonds.”

Breathing

The way you breathe is essential in this kind of dance. It provides the movement with its support.

For Malkovsky, breathing connects us to ourselves: *“everything expands and ebbs”*.

Breathing connects us to others, too: *“to give, you yourself must have something to give”*.

It connects us to the universe: *“everything inhales and exhales”*.

Despite this, Malkovsky never gave any precise breathing indications.

We shall consider it as a personal factor, related to a dancer’s individual research.

The notation offers some breathing suggestions in the introductions to some of the choreographies.

The gaze

The eyes should generally be focused in the distance, and only rarely on any parts of the body.

In solo dances, the eyes interact with space, evoking the absent partner.

The eyes initiate pivots. Changes in the orientation of the head are followed by the shoulder girdle, the upper body influences the pelvic girdle and triggers the turn. The spiral begins in the upper body.

Quality of supports

The beginning of the support is felt in the centre of the pelvis, and the slight tucking is transferred to the knees. The hip-knee segment is the first to move, followed by the lower leg.

The ball of the foot touches the ground before the whole foot is placed. The knees remain flexed.

The joint progression is consequently as follows: hip, knee, ankle, foot.

Leg movements

Movements of the legs come only as the result of a loss of balance – the response to the transference of weight. They do not carry any meaning, nor are they used in the search for form.

When the upper body is inclined, the free leg compensates for the angle by going in the direction opposing the angle of the upper body.

The free leg must be able to respond in a very relaxed manner if the “*bonds are freed.*”

Rather than being pillars supporting the body, the legs are suspended from the pelvis. The strength of the movement stems from the pelvis and the base of the diaphragm.

The flexibility of the knees

The knees are “*slightly tensed*”, the consequence of which is a slight rebound. This rebound is not echoed in the upper body.

Arm movements

The arms are moved by raising them on a suspension sustained by an intake of breath. The energy is not released at the lowest point of an arm movement (which is often the downbeat), but as they are lifted simultaneously with the suspension. When the arms are extended, unless otherwise stated, they are to be “*slightly tensed.*”

Pivots

For Malkovsky, pivots were almost always executed along a line. He asked the dancer to remain “between two walls.” His technique usually uses a pivot where the heel of the foot on the floor advances, in classical dance terminology, a *pivot en dedans*.

The downbeat in music

All the choreographies are structured in relation to the musical score. Upper body and arm movements follow the

melodic line, while transference of weight usually takes place in relation to the beat and the downbeats, rather than actually on the beat.

According to convention, we have written that the movement takes place on the downbeat, but it must also end on the downbeat.

See the example of the ball game: “returning the ball to the hand” in the chapter on *Basic Movements*: “*performing principles*.”

Directions

The written directions are no more than suggestions.

In the “Free Dance” style, it is essential to find what initiates the movement, the internal flow and the motivation behind the movement.

The directions may vary by about two intermediate degrees.

All the dances can be performed by either a man or a woman.

All expressions between “quotes” are the original expressions used by Malkovsky as remembered by Suzanne Bodak.