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# Technical, Artistic, and Pedagogical Analysis of Mark Morris' L'allegro, Il Penseroso Ed Il Modertato

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TECHNICAL, ARTISTIC, AND PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS

OF MARK MORRIS'

*L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO ED IL MODERATO*

by

Mireille Radwan Dana

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in Dance

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2017

## ABSTRACT

### TECHNICAL, ARTISTIC, AND PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MARK MORRIS' *L'ALLEGRO, IL PENSEROSO ED IL MODERATO*

by

Mireille Radwan Dana

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 2017  
Under the Supervision of Professor Marcia R. Parsons

#### **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes Mark Morris' choreography for pedagogical purposes. It explores Morris' technique and style by investigating one of his most acclaimed works: *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*. Because this evening length piece offers a large selection of sections, a total of thirty-two, it provides many possibilities to investigate Morris' musicality, creative process, and style. The musical aspect of Morris' work is examined by focusing on how he often molds the dance to the musical score involving specific rhythms, canons and counterpoints. Analysis of his creative process investigates his use of individual and group work, with the implementation of complex choreographic systems. These contain intricate spatial and movement patterns and can reflect the musical structure of a specific composition or are created directly by Morris. Finally, the analysis of his style explores some of his characteristic forms utilized in *L'Allegro* with particular attention to detailed shapes and gestures, in addition to torso and foot work. For a greater insight, this thesis also includes interviews with Mark Morris, and some of his former company members who were part of the original production. These are Tina Fehlandt, June Omura, and Megan Williams. A second part of the thesis explores the pedagogical potential of *L'Allegro*'s material. The investigation is first conducted through the lens of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), and then through the lens of LMA adaptations for

younger student populations, as utilized in the dance education field, by the New York City based Dance Education Laboratory and Seattle based dance educator Anne Green Gilbert.

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Abstract .....   | ii   |
| List of Figures .....  | vii  |
| List of Tables .....   | viii |
| Acknowledgements .....   | ix   |
| I. Overview .....  | 1    |
| Introduction .....   | 1    |
| Background Information on Morris and Author .....                          | 3    |
| Author's dance training background .....                                   | 3    |
| Mark Morris' dance training background .....                               | 10   |
| II. L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed il Moderato .....                           | 15   |
| The History .....  | 15   |
| III. Technical and Artistic Analysis of Morris' Work in L'Allegro. ....    | 28   |
| Musical and Textual Elements .....   | 28   |
| Working with musical structures: canon, counterpoint and polyrhythms ..... | 28   |
| Technical and artistic textual interactions .....                          | 40   |
| Choreographic Systems .....  | 54   |
| Technical elements of spatial patterns .....                               | 54   |
| Technical elements of movement patterns .....                              | 61   |
| Technical Aspects of Morris' Style .....                                   | 66   |
| IV. Pedagogical Analysis of L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato .....   | 80   |
| Through the Lens of Laban Movement Analysis .....                          | 80   |
| Through the Lens of Dance Education Laboratory .....                       | 98   |
| and Anne Green Gilbert's Pedagogical .....                                 | 98   |
| Adaptations of Laban Movement Analysis .....                               | 98   |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Conclusion .....  | 107 |
| Work Cited.....   | 109 |
| Appendix A.....   | 114 |
| William Blake’s watercolor illustrations of “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso.” ..... | 114 |
| Appendix B.....   | 133 |
| Interview with Mark Morris.....   | 134 |
| Interview with Tina Fehlandt.....   | 146 |
| Interview with June Omura.....  | 160 |
| Interview with Megan Williams .....   | 169 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1. Obert, Mireille. "Spatial Path." 2016.....                              | 59  |
| Figure 2. Obert Mireille. "Choreographic System." 2016 .....                      | 60  |
| Figure 3. Wickes, Donna. "Running Tanagra Figure.".....                           | 67  |
| Figure 4. Loren, Teri. "Forward Stretch. Second Progression on Left Foot." .....  | 67  |
| Figure 5. Scattergood, C. Edward. "Upper-Body Circles." .....                     | 68  |
| Figure 6. Friedman, Ken. "Three Graces." .....                                    | 72  |
| Wickes, Donna. "Waltzing Step."   |     |
| Figure 7. Well, J. Christopher. "Mathematics-Geometry-The Platonic Solids." ..... | 90  |
| Figure 8. Thiriot Anne-Gaëlle. "Directions." .....                                | 91  |
| Figure 9. Fluty, Kristine instructor. "Octahedron." .....                         | 92  |
| Figure 10. Thiriot, Anne-Gaëlle. "Icosahedron." .....                             | 92  |
| Figure 11. Thiriot, Anne-Gaëlle. "Cube.".....                                     | 93  |
| Figure 12. Obert, Mireille. "Spatial formation" 2017.....                         | 102 |
| Figure 13. Obert, Mireille. "Spatial formation" 2017.....                         | 103 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Strict canon with regular intervals .....                                | 30 |
| Table 2. Strict canon with irregular intervals.....                               | 30 |
| Table 3. Strict canon in the <i>Come and Trip It</i> section .....                | 31 |
| Table 4. Strict canon in the <i>Populous Cities</i> section .....                 | 33 |
| Table 5. Strict canon in the <i>The Walking Duet</i> section.....                 | 35 |
| Table 6. Counterpoint in the <i>Day's Garish Eye</i> section .....                | 38 |
| Table 7. Strict canon and polyrhythm in the <i>Haste Thee Nymph</i> section ..... | 40 |
| Table 8. Movement pattern in the <i>Each Action</i> section .....                 | 63 |

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·  
Lastly, I dedicate this work to my family and in particular to my son Meelo.

# I. Overview

## Introduction

This thesis provides an exploration of Mark Morris' piece *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* from a technical and artistic perspective, and from a pedagogical viewpoint as a result of empirical knowledge. As in many previous publications, this work will often be referred to simply as *L'Allegro*, and to discuss the various sections, the titles that Morris gave them will be used rather than the titles in the original libretto. The opening discussion of this thesis focuses on relevant background information about the author, the choreographer and the work, proceeding to the analytical exploration and the pedagogical application.

The initial section will provide information on how the author's training background has served as a support in order to learn, integrate and eventually teach and analyze this work from technical and artistic perspectives not comparable to the majority of theoretical literature written about this work so far. Thereafter, the discourse shows how Mark Morris' training background and development culminated in the creation of *L'Allegro*, followed by a brief history of its elements, created by the poet John Milton, the composer George Frideric Handel, and the painter William Blake.

The next section will examine in detail the elements of Morris' choreography specific to *L'Allegro*, regarding his musicality, creative process, and style. The study will begin with the investigation of his implementation of musical structures and Morris' relationship to text. This will lead to the exploration of his choreographic systems based on spatial and movement patterns, followed by an analysis of his particular style preferences.

Thereafter, *L'Allegro* will be examined through the lens of dance education based on elements of movement as categorized in the work of Rudolf Laban, in his Laban Movement

Analysis (LMA). Finally, the work will also be investigated through a few examples of adaptations of LMA by various dance instructors working with younger student populations, as in the case of New York City based Dance Education Laboratory and Seattle based dance educator Anne Green Gilbert.

## Background Information on Morris and Author

### Author's dance training background

I began ballet training at the age of eleven, in a private dance school in Rome, Italy, called “Scuola di Danza Tersicore.” They offered ballet training, Martha Graham technique of modern dance, character dance, and rhythm practice. For the first three years, I focused on ballet alone and then added the modern and character techniques. The rhythm practice began a year later. These styles would prove essential for my experience with Mark Morris, including my music training that lasted six years, during which I studied violin as my main instrument, supplemented by piano, choir, and solfeggio while I attended the “Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia.” At “Tersicore,” the teachers gave me the foundation of anatomically correct movement, strengthened my use of the arms and hands, expanded my understanding of dance by including ethnic styles, and supported musicality by offering rhythm classes. Morris mentioned during his interview, when asked to specify the techniques that would be most helpful to prepare a dancer to perform *L'Allegro*, that ballet and folk dances are hugely important for his work and how music is intrinsic in his choreography (Morris personal intvw. 134, 142, 144).

My first ballet teacher was the School Director Gabriella Lodi, who spent hours analyzing the steps and their proper execution. It was very much like a Pilates approach, one of Morris' favorite methods (Morris personal intvw.143), to ballet technique. Once we worked on *demi-plié*, *battement tendu* and *battement tendu jeté* for one and a half hours. Lodi explained to me that ballet can be executed in an anatomically correct fashion that makes every step possible and supports a strong balance. She would encourage us to look at our bodies in the mirror because she believed dancers should know every inch of their instrument. Lodi would also take the time to make us feel the correct placement, according to the anatomical alignment in our

bodies, since any technique requires integration of the theory into the practice. Her anatomical approach to ballet is what makes this technique so efficient when it comes to dance in general. Morris shares the same opinion and calls ballet the *lingua franca* of dance, underlying its organizational properties as a great tool for anatomically correct movement practice (personal intvw. 142).

Knowing how to isolate and coordinate the different body parts is key for the execution of all dance steps. Of course, this process includes the upper-body, which was the specialty of my other ballet teacher, Laura Salvi. She insisted that a dancer's arms should be as tired as the legs at the end of class. She worked on *port de bras* and *épaulement* extensively, explaining in much detail how to accurately execute an arm movement. Under her guidance, even when not in class, I spent hours practicing *port de bras* because I understood that dancing begins in the core of the body, meaning the torso followed by the arms and head, which is essential for producing the esthetic, technical, and expressive aspects of the movement. My efforts were well directed since, when I started working with Morris, upper-body specificity was imperative in his choreography as he was not only very particular about the use of the torso, but utilized a lot of gestures, which he finds central to communication and therefore the art of dancing (Morris personal intvw. 136).

Even if not apparent to the untrained person, the upper-body is also very important in character dancing because it leads the transfers of weight from one leg to the other, and collaborates with gravity for the agile functioning of the lower-body. In other words, specific foot rhythms and speeds are achieved with a combination of leg work, allowing the body weight to ride the pull of gravity and fall. A dancer must learn to let the torso yield to gravity in order for the legs and feet to fall and rebound off the ground, and use that momentum to lead into the

next movement. Therefore, as different but not contrary to ballet, in popular dances the weight is permitted to release tension into the floor more frequently. Anna Gazdova was our character dance teacher from what was at that time Czechoslovakia and taught us traditional dances like the Mazurka and the Czardas, and, although different in structure, character and folklore style share the same weight work typical of popular dances. This part of my training was also central to my performance in Morris' *L'Allegro* because of the extensive, and as he mentioned "obvious," influence of the folklore dances in this piece (Morris personal intvw. 134).

After graduation from high school, I moved to Brussels, Belgium, to attend the Maurice Bejart international school of dance "Mudra," that offered a two-year intensive training program, which included classes of ballet, *pas de deux*, composition, Graham technique and Bejart style dance class, rhythm and theater. Bejart's neoclassic movement vocabulary utilized many modern dance elements, such as contractions and parallel positions, while maintaining a strong balletic base. The training at "Mudra" involved three to four classes a day and was geared to develop professional dancers. The first year ballet teacher, Marina Van Hoecke, worked on developing different movement dynamics, such as sudden and sustained qualities, and the second year teacher, Jan Nuyts, focused on structure, stressing the fact that good placement is the base of efficient technique. The modern dance teacher, Flora Cushman, used a mix of Graham and Bejart styles in her class and choreography, and the rhythm teacher, Fernand Schirren, created combinations that utilized the body to create different rhythms and sounds. Each year ended with a performance that toured in various Belgium cities. This experience not only intensified my training, but introduced me to the rigorous rhythms of a professional dancer's life. In addition, it laid the foundations for my capacity to work with Morris and for my ability to understand his work from a technical and artistic point of view, which is the main focus of this thesis. As

opposed to theory alone, only extended direct experience can provide such specialized technical and artistic insights and address the structural elements of a dance.

During my second year at “Mudra,” the school founder Maurice Bejart, who since 1960 had worked with the Ballet du Xxe Siècle as the Director of Dance at the Brussels National Theater, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, left Belgium and moved to Lausanne, Switzerland, with his entire company, due to a dispute with the Monnaie Director Gérard Mortier. Of course, his school “Mudra” would close its doors a year later, in 1988, when Mark Morris became the new director of dance. I remember seeing Morris for the first time at the *rue Bara* rehearsal space, walking down the hall toward the big studio where his audition for new company members was to take place, advancing with big assertive strides. The audition took three days and sorted out three hundred dancers from all over Europe in addition to the five hundred who had already auditioned in New York City. Ten dancers were recruited in the latter and three in the former (Acocella *M. Morris* 74). After auditioning, I got invited to join his company and it was thus that my long and still lasting relationship with Morris began, first as a performer and later as the teacher.

The first work Morris created in Belgium and on me was *L'Allegro*. It took about three months of continuous rehearsal to complete the thirty-two sections piece with twenty-four dancers. His company had gone from twelve to twenty-seven, including the understudies, and everyone in the original company was feeling the stress of this big transition, including Morris. (Acocella *M. Morris' L'All. Il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 20). One of the original company members, Ruth Davidson, commented that there was an uncertainty about the new work because it was very different from the physicality they were used to and dealt extensively with scenes and imagery, like the representation of a fireplace, or trees in the forest (Escoffier and Lore 144). Another

founding company member, Tina Fehlandt, spoke about Morris' use of gender specific roles and the many balletic forms, which were unusual in his work until then. She also mentioned the difficulty of living in a new place while transitioning from a small group to a "giant mob" of people calling her dear friend Mark "Mr. Morris" (personal intvw.155). Personally, I was very familiar with Brussels by then and I was excited to start working as a professional dancer. However, what was unfamiliar to me was Morris' heavily American style, encompassing Duncan, Humphrey, and folkloristic heritage.

Until then, my training had been Vaganova ballet, Bejart style of neoclassic, and Graham modern dance techniques. Aside from the ballet experience, Morris disliked Bejart's work, and made it clear with various comments during class, rehearsal, or to the public during interviews (Acocella *M.Morris' L'All. Il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 20; *M. Morris* 210). Also, although he respected her work, he did not feel particularly influenced by Graham's technique (Morris personal intvw.140). Luckily, I had the musical and the character dance training background, so Morris' work felt only partially foreign. I understood musical structures very clearly and was accustomed to the different use of body weight in popular dances. What I had to integrate into my repertoire were the Duncan and Humphrey forms, which include a particular use of the upper-torso. More specifically, in Graham technique when working in the forward-sagittal direction the torso bends often by contracting in the lumbar spine region, whereas in Duncan and Humphrey style it bends in the cervical-thoracic spine region. Furthermore, the use of a relaxed foot required a lot of focus on my part in order to let go of what had become almost a natural reflex, that of pointing my foot once off the ground, and of the many years of work spent trying to better my plantar flexion range.

I felt pretty comfortable integrating the folk steps into the contemporary choreography but I was sometimes unsure of what I needed to modify to please Morris' request. For example, occasionally the company members would discuss a step for a long time and I failed to understand the reason for said discussion since, to me, it appeared to be a very simple step. However, as typical of Morris' work, what appears to be simple is actually a complex and detailed movement and hence the long discussion. It can be compared to running, which is a pedestrian activity that everyone can do, but the professionals spend their lives recognizing and perfecting the different elements that are involved in this activity. In the same way, some of Morris' steps appear very natural but they are produced from very specific esthetic ideas, at times, down to the fingers' shapes. Apparently, I was not the only one baffled by this simplicity since, according to writer Joan Acocella, some Belgian reviewers "remarked on what seemed to them its simplicity, the fact that the dancers appeared to be not so much dancing as just moving around in a pleasant way" (Acocella *M. Morris' L'All. Il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 20).

So, to the Belgian audience, and myself as an ex-student of the Bejart school, the concept of dance was different. Being used to Bejart's neoclassical style, the contemporary forms of Morris were unusual, which is interesting considering that Isadora Duncan, from whom Morris seemed to derive much of his dancing language for *L'Allegro* (Macaulay *M. Morris: L'All., il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 128), found her audience in Europe. Despite my perceived foreignness of his style, I personally loved the way Morris danced and tried to absorb every nuance of his movement in my execution. As I learned more of Morris' repertory and kept working with him on new works, I was able to integrate his style into my body. Even though I was not lifting my leg really high, or turning multiple times, or bending my torso in two, which I was trained to do, I was working on details of a different nature, whether of ethnic or contemporary dance nature,

and was fully able to channel the expression of the dance and be artistically fulfilled. Throughout my time with the company, I performed *L'Allegro* almost every year and got to dance more featured roles, eventually becoming the rehearsal director and teacher of new cast members.

In addition, I taught various sections of *L'Allegro* in the company workshops and, after transitioning from performing to teaching at the newly opened Mark Morris Dance Center in 2001, in the school repertory courses. Also, once the center opened I became the founding member and principal teacher of a community outreach program called “Dance, Music and Literacy,” Mark Morris Dance Group's in-school residences that expose Brooklyn’s school children to the performing and visual arts using *L'Allegro* material. I have been teaching this program for now sixteen years and have learned much about dance education and the pedagogical opportunities that *L'Allegro* offers. Lastly, in 2011, I became the rehearsal director of the Mark Morris Dance Center Student Company II and have since set two sections from *L'Allegro* for their end of the year concert. It is noteworthy that the very first time I taught a section from *L'Allegro* was at a Jacob’s Pillow company workshop in 1989, which leads to the conclusion that I have been working with this material as a performer and a teacher for almost thirty years and have been studying dance for forty years. It is this extensive experience that provided me with the information that will formulate this thesis.

## **Mark Morris' dance training background**

Before beginning the analysis of *L'Allegro*, it is helpful to briefly review Morris' training background and to understand how it led to the creation of this work. Morris was raised in Seattle, Washington, in a family that loved music, theater and dance. He inherited the love of music from his father, who was a school teacher, but also passionate about music and frequently played the piano or organ (Acocella *M. Morris* 15). Morris also told Enrique Cerna, during his interview in "Conversations at KCTS 9," that one of his sisters sang, the other one danced, and he was in about every school choir (KCTS9). He learned how to read music from his father and how to play piano at home by himself. At age eight, he started studying flamenco at the Verla Flowers Dance Arts School, after seeing Jose Greco's flamenco troupe (Acocella *M. Morris* 20). Flowers had studied at the Seattle Cornish School of the Arts, training in ballet, jazz, acrobatic, tap, ballroom, Hawaiian, and Spanish dance and offered all of those at her own school, plus creative movement and Tahitian dance. Flower became Morris' teacher and commented on his unusual capacity to concentrate and to pick up Spanish dances' extremely complicated rhythms very quickly (Acocella *M. Morris* 21). Soon he started ballet as well as ethnic dance techniques such as Mexican, Russian, and Ukrainian Trepak. Flowers wanted to cultivate as much variety as possible to nurture him to become a versatile dancer (Acocella *M. Morris* 22).

One of the most relevant training areas for Morris was the folklore dance with the Koleda Folk Ensemble founded in 1967 by Dennis Boxell, who had learned the Balkan folk dances by personally traveling from village to village in Bulgaria and, what was at that time, Yugoslavia (Acocella *M. Morris* 26). Morris was only thirteen when he joined but was welcomed and included in the group with which he stayed and performed for three years. Meanwhile, he continued studying at Flowers and participated in many workshops offered by local and traveling

companies. During this time, Morris also had the opportunity to view many artists' work such as Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, George Balanchine, Robert Joffrey and even Maurice Bejart. For Morris, these viewings along with the training in different styles were laying down the multi-faceted fabric that would become the signature of his work.

In his interview with Cerna, Morris stated that he started working with the First Chamber Dance company, which went to Seattle in the seventies, and that this was a very important period for him, in which he learned how to perform and choreograph while making life long connections with other dancers and musicians (KCTS9). However, this was not the first time he choreographed because he had been creating work for years for the Flowers' school recitals, for his high school shows, and for local children's theater productions (Acocella *M. Morris* 33). After traveling to Europe and spending a few months in Spain, where he continued to study Flamenco, Morris returned to Seattle and, in 1976, decided it was time to move to New York and become a choreographer.

Once in New York, Morris worked with a few dance companies before forming his own in 1980. He first performed with the Elliot Feld Ballet (1976-77) and Lar Lubovitch (1977-78 and 1983) before working with Hannah Kahn (1979-82) and Laura Dean (1981-82). He also worked in a Twyla Tharp production and almost joined the Paul Taylor Company (Acocella *M. Morris* 45). Just as he had absorbed and internalized all of the different techniques he studied in Seattle, working with these artists left a wide range of material and methods that became part of Morris' creative process. In particular, working and becoming friends with Kahn provided him with multiple artistic and structural tools that are evident in his work.

In 1980, Morris staged his first concert at the Merce Cunningham company's studio with the newly formed Mark Morris Dance Group. The troupe included a number of his friends from

other companies and from the circle of dancers that would take class with the same teacher. For instance, founding member Tina Fehlandt, had met Morris through a common friend and saw him regularly in Marjorie Mussman's class (Fehlandt personal intvw.146). In 1981 and 1982, his group performed at the Dance Theater Workshop (DTW) and presented two works that included as many as ten dancers: *Gloria*, to Vivaldi's *Gloria in D*; and *New Love Song Waltzes*, to Brahms' *Neue Liebeslieder* (Acocella *M. Morris* 51). These two pieces revealed a lyricism in Morris' work that was a precursor of that in *L'Allegro* and clearly utilized a blend of ballet, modern, and folk dance influence, which would become its main recipe.

Finally, in 1983 the company had accumulated enough material to perform two different programs at DTW, and by 1984 their reputation had grown enough to be invited to Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival. As a result of the season, Morris was recognized as a promising and versatile choreographer; critic Arlene Croce of *The New Yorker* wrote: "each new master assimilates the past in all its variety and becomes our guide for the future" (qtd in Acocella *M. Morris* 56). Between 1984 and 87, the company work increased steadily. By 1986, they were touring extensively, playing at opera houses, and traveling to Europe. While in Stuttgart in 1987, Morris met Mortier who, impressed by his musicality and talent, asked him to become the new director of dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie.

By this time, Morris had been described as a musical choreographer, even compared to Balanchine (Luckman 10), but criticized for his simplicity. In fact, Acocella writes that some reviewers felt that his work was double-sided and his use of traditional music accompanied by a "vernacular look," was misleading and confusing (*M. Morris* 65). But Morris kept referring to himself not as an avant-garde choreographer, but a serious traditional one (Acocella *M. Morris* 64). Morris sees all dance traditions and styles primarily as dance and therefore, to him the

choice of vocabulary is secondary to the expressive intention underlying the choreography generated from the music. Hence, during our interview when I described his style in *L'Allegro* as a mix of ballet, modern, folk, and character dance, he replied: “Yes, but I would just use the word: dance” (personal intvw.137). It is this innovative use of a wide range of material that makes his style so particular and sometimes confuses his audience.

After eight years of working with his own company, Morris was ready for a larger production, that of *L'Allegro*, that would bring the Boston Ballet and the Mark Morris Dance Group on stage together. Morris had worked with Boston Ballet in 1986, creating a piece for the company titled *Mort Subite*, which was a big success and led the company's director, Bruce Marks, to propose a joint project to bring both companies on the same stage (Escoffier and Lore 140; Fehlandt personal intvw.151). However, after the project fell through and he met Mortier, Morris began preparing to create *L'Allegro* for his own company alone, once in Brussels.

If the audience in the United States was undecided about Morris, the one in Belgium was decisively guarded. This is because their all-time hero, Bejart, had left them feeling like they had lost a national treasure, plus they had never heard of Morris and did not have a modern dance tradition. The other problem with Morris' coming, was that he had brought most of his dancers from the United States, creating more of a separation between them and the Belgian people. After three months of rehearsal *L'Allegro* was premiered on November 23, 1988. The press was both positive and negative, and the difficult experience that would last three years had begun. Morris never won the Belgians' hearts completely and he was repeatedly and severely criticized by the dance critics. Nevertheless, because of the great resources offered by his position, along with *L'Allegro* Morris created two other large dances, *Dido and Aeneas* (1989) and *The Hard Nut* (1991), which he brought back to the United States and remain some of his best work to this

day. But no other piece has won the hearts of audiences all around the world as *L'Allegro* and, because of the period when it was created, it represents Morris' passage from an upcoming artist to an established choreographer, becoming a significant part of not only Morris' personal history but dance history as well.

## II. *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed il Moderato*

### The History.

Morris' *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* is the result of a collaboration between four artists who lived in different time periods: the renowned English poet John Milton; the greatly admired German composer George Frideric Handel, first to develop the "English *Oratorio*"; the visionary art of poet, painter and printmaker William Blake; and the innovative choreography of Morris. An interesting fact about *L'Allegro*'s history, is that its genesis began with Milton's poetry, a century before the actual musical *oratorio* was composed by Handel. It continued to develop with Blake's watercolor illustrations, which came approximately seventy-six years later, and was finally completed with Morris' choreography about three hundred fifty years after Milton first wrote the poems.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1608, Milton was born in London, England, from a middle-class family. He began his studies at home, then St. Paul's School, and was eventually sent to Christ's College, in Cambridge, by his father who hoped he would become a clergyman. However, Milton began to write poetry in college and it was there that in 1631, according to writer and professor William P. Trent, he wrote the twin poems *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso* (2). Trent explains that the exact date is not certain because the work was not published until 1645 and no manuscript exists. Nevertheless, a valid indication for such date is that Milton was about to graduate and was faced with the decision of following his father's wish and become a clergyman, or follow his own desire to become a poet. Trent deducts that: "it might naturally occur to him (Milton) to contrast in poetic form the pleasures of the more or less worldly (that of a poet) and the more or less secluded (that of a priest), studious, and devoted life" (2).

In addition, Trent brings to the attention of the reader that Milton was heavily influenced by Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a famous book published in 1621, prefaced by a poem entitled *The Author's Abstract of Melancholy*, in which Democritus Junior analyzes contrasting feelings in a manner that recalls that of Milton. However, differing from Burton, rather than oscillating between the pleasures of a meditative life and melancholic state within the same poem, Milton developed the idea of two opposing views in distinctly separate works (Trent 2). Yet, the descriptive words of "the cheerful man" and "the thoughtful man" did not represent the body of the works as well as their Italian counterparts and therefore Milton, who was proficient in French, Spanish and Italian ("John Milton"), decided to use the latter, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

Trent mentions that other artists of the time, such as Joshua Sylvester, and other works that contemplated melancholic states, certainly affected Milton's ideas, but also how much *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* influenced other writers such as William Collins, in *The Passions* (1746) ("*The Passions. An Ode for Music*") and John Dyer, in *Grongar Hill* (1726) ("*Grongar Hill*") both of whom borrowed heavily from Milton's poems. Surely, the best testimony for their success was the fact that Handel chose them for his *oratorio* nearly a century after their inception, certain that the English audience would have agreed with Trent's comment: "Lyrics of marvelous beauty and power, coming from the heart of the poet and going straight to the hearts of his readers" (5). However, it was not unusual for that time to rearrange a text in order to best serve the musical intent and, therefore, Handel had his librettist, Charles Jennens, rearrange the poems to counteract each other alternatively. It is this version that Morris would later embody in his choreography, where very few solos are found, a sense of duality is present throughout the

first act, but blends into more of a communal structure during the second. The matter in which he worked specifically with the verses will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

For his artistic vision, Handel needed the poems to be configured in a way most suitable to create a new form of music: the *oratorio*. Born in Halle, Germany, on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1685, Handel worked and studied in Italy, before settling in England in 1712. He had worked extensively with operas in Italian and mainly based on historic facts (Escoffier and Lore 12). He had composed his first *oratorio* that same year, titled *Esther*, which was recognized as the first work of its kind and was Handel's first composition in English. It would be another fourteen years before this new form completely won the hearts of the English audience and, since Italian had dominated musical works, established the English language as equally compatible with the musical form (Martini). It is not surprising then that Handel would be intrigued by Milton's poems as material for his compositions.

Largely unrecognized by history until 1997, originally Jennens had given Handel a first version of the poems that was already prepared by James Harris. Harris was the one to first propose Milton to Handel (Dunhill and Ridden 96) and who suggested choices of pitch, instrumentation and singers along with the text (Martini). Apparently, Harris' proposition originated from his friend John Upton, who was a great admirer of both Milton and composer Thomas Ame, who had set Milton's *Comus* in 1738 (Dunhill and Ridden 96). However, Jennens wrote Harris explaining that Handel was not completely satisfied with his sketch since it did not sufficiently divide the two poems and tended to have long sections of one or the other. Handel was concerned that, "too much grave music without interruption... would tire the audience," so he asked Jennens to create a more balanced version that would serve musical variations more

effectively (Dunhill and Ridden 96). In addition, Handel asked him to write a third part, which became *Il Moderato*, to resolve and reconcile the opposing views of the twin poems.

Once he received the completed text, Handel composed the music only in a few weeks, completing it on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1740 and performing its first concert shortly after, on February 27<sup>th</sup> (Lewis). Reputedly, it was not a well-attended concert due to the frigid weather even though it was advertised that the theater would be kept warm for the performance (Martini). Aside from the cold, in Lewis' opinion the next few concerts were not as successful also due to the addition of *Il Moderato*, because Jennens' text attracted criticism for not being equal to the high quality of Milton's poetry. Furthermore, contrary to the alternation between *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in the first and second part, the third part was given to *Il Moderato* alone, which resulted in sameness throughout (Lang 317). Lewis also argues that the two distinct modes of the poems are not in opposition, but representative of different life stages and therefore complementary of each other, hence not needing the resolution Handel sought in *Il Moderato*. Nevertheless, conductor Joachim Carlos Martini, writes that eventually the public came to appreciate the latter, contrary to Lewis, who quotes scholar Donald Burrows stating that Handel eventually omitted it at the end of his 1740-1741 season, and never restored it in his London performances.

Structurally, the piece contains forty-six sections divided into three parts, that each begin with an instrumental overture. Harris had asked Handel to write the overture for the piece but the latter refused to, and decided instead to perform "one of his 12 new concertos" (Martini). This resulted in twenty-three sections in the first part, seventeen in the second, and nine the third, for a total of forty-nine sections. The composition fluctuates between air, recitative, *accompagnato*, *arioso*, chorus, and solos (Lewis). The chorus has soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, and the soloists used to be three sopranos, a tenor and a bass, however, presently the sopranos are usually only

two (Jordan 187). Some of the arias can be sung by different voices and on several occasions Morris has chosen different versions according to his casts.

These musical variations are possible because, as for many scores of the time, Handel wrote the basic structure of it but the final individual decisions about instrumentation, vocalization, and a few partitions' details, are left to each conductor. Hence, when Morris first decided to work with this *oratorio*, he carefully chose and rearranged various sections with conductor Craig Smith, director of the Boston based Emmanuel Music and who would conduct the dance's premiere, in order to best create his desired flow throughout his piece. Together they decided to utilize only the overture of part one, plus thirty-eight of the sections as follows:

- Part One. Overture plus 22 sections.
- Part Two. 15 sections.
- Part Three. 2 sections. (Notice that they utilized only two sections from *Il Moderato* in part three).

These sections, Morris grouped into thirty-two dances, twenty in act one and twelve in act two.

All changes are as follows (libretto from Jordan 187-191 and Naxos Classical Music):

| <u>Handel original version</u>   | <u>Morris's version and section titles</u> |
|--|--|
| <u>Part One</u><br>1. Overture.<br>Concerto Grosso in G Major.<br>Op.6, No. 1. | <u>Act One</u><br>1. Same<br>No dancing    |
| 2. L' Allegro<br><i>Hence loathed Melancholy</i>                               | 2. Same.<br><i>Mad Crossing</i>            |
| 3. Il Penseroso<br><i>Hence, vain deluding joys</i>                            | 3. Same.<br><i>Mad Scene</i>               |
| 4. L' Allegro<br><i>Come, thou Goddess fair and free</i>                       | 4. Same.<br><i>Three Graces</i>            |
| 5. Il Penseroso<br><i>Come, rather, Goddess, sage and holy</i>                 | 5. Same.<br><i>Sage and Holy</i>           |
| 6. L' Allegro<br><i>Haste Thee Nymph</i>                                       | 6. Same<br><i>Haste Thee Nymph</i>         |
| 7. L' Allegro  | 7. Same                                    |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Come, and trip it as you go</i>                                      | <i>Come and Trip It</i>  |
| 8. Il Penseroso<br><i>Come pensive nun</i>                              | 8. Same<br><i>Pensive Nun</i>  |
| 9. Il Penseroso<br><i>Come but keep thy wonted state</i>                | 9. Same.<br><i>Come, Come</i>  |
| 10. Il Penseroso<br><i>There held in holy passion still</i>             | 10. Same.<br><i>The Diet Dances</i>  |
| 11. L' Allegro<br><i>Hence, loathed Melancholy</i>                      | 11. Same<br><i>Birding</i>   |
| 12. L' Allegro<br><i>Mirth, admit me on thy crew</i>                    | 12. Same<br><i>Male Bird Solo</i>  |
| 13. Il Penseroso<br><i>First, and chief, on golden wing</i>             | 13. Same<br><i>Bird Duet</i>   |
| 14. Il Penseroso<br><i>Sweet bird, that shun 'st the noise of folly</i> | 14. Same<br><i>Sweet Bird</i>  |
| 15. L' Allegro<br><i>If I give the honor due</i>                        | 15. Same<br><i>The Hunt</i>  |
| 16. L' Allegro<br><i>Mirth, admit me of thy crew</i>                    | 15. Section continues<br><i>The Hunt (continued)</i>   |
| 17. Il Penseroso<br><i>Oft, on a plat of rising ground</i>              | 16. Same<br><i>Fireplace</i>   |
| 18. Il Penseroso<br><i>Far from all resort of mirth</i>                 | 17. Same<br><i>Crickets</i>  |
| 19. L' Allegro<br><i>If I give the honor due</i>                        | 18. Same<br><i>Hansel and Gretel</i>   |
| 20. L' Allegro<br><i>Let me wonder not unseen</i>                       | 18. Section continues<br><i>Hansel and Gretel (continued)</i>                                  |
| 21. L' Allegro<br><i>Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures</i>    | n/a. Morris omitted this section   |
|   | 19. Morris placed Handel's section number 47, listed in part three. here<br><i>Each Action</i> |
| 22. L' Allegro<br><i>Mountain on whose barren breast</i>                | 20. Same.<br><i>Mountains</i>  |
| 23. L' Allegro<br><i>Or let the merry bells ring round</i>              | 21. Same<br><i>Merry Bells</i>   |
| <b>Part Two</b>   | <b>Act Two</b>   |
| 24. Overture.<br>Concerto Grosso in E minor,<br>Op. 6, No. 3.           | n/a. Morris omitted this overture  |
| 25. Il Penseroso<br><i>Hence, vain deluding joys</i>                    | 22. Same<br><i>Overture and intro to Gorgeous Tragedy</i>                                      |
| 26. Il Penseroso  | 23. Section continues  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy</i>   | <i>Gorgeous Tragedy</i>   |
| 27. II Penseroso<br><i>But oh, sad virgin, that thy pow'r</i>                     | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 28. II Penseroso<br><i>Thus night oft see me in thy pale career,</i>              | 24. Same<br><i>Populous Cities</i>  |
| 29. L' Allegro<br><i>Populous cities please me then</i>                           | 24. Section continues<br><i>Populous Cities (continued)</i>   |
| 30. L' Allegro<br><i>There let Hymen oft appear</i>                               | 25. Same<br><i>Hymen</i>  |
| 31. II Penseroso<br><i>Me when the sun begins to fling</i>                        | 26. Same<br><i>Day's Garish Eye</i>   |
| 32. II Penseroso<br><i>Hide me from day's garish eye</i>                          | 26. Section continues<br><i>Day's Garish Eye (continued)</i>  |
| 33. L' Allegro<br><i>I'll to the well-trod stage anon,</i>                        | 27. Same<br><i>The Stupid Men's dance</i>   |
| 34. L' Allegro<br><i>And ever against eating cares</i>                            | 28. Same<br><i>The Ladies' Dance</i>  |
| 35. L' Allegro<br><i>Orpheus' self may heave his head</i>                         | n/a. Morris moved this section to number 33<br><i>Orpheus</i>   |
|   | 29. Morris placed Handel's section number 48, listed in part three, here<br><i>The Walking Duet</i>                               |
| 36. L' Allegro<br><i>These delights if thou canst give,</i>                       | n/a. Morris moved this section to number 34<br>titled <i>Finale</i>   |
| 37. II Penseroso<br><i>But let my due feet never fail</i>                         | 30. Same<br><i>Basilica</i>   |
| 38. II Penseroso<br><i>There let the pealing organ blow</i>                       | 30. Section continues<br><i>Basilica (continued)</i>  |
| 39. II Penseroso<br><i>May at last my weary age</i>                               | 31. Same<br><i>Weary Age</i>  |
| 40. II Penseroso<br><i>These pleasures, Melancholy, give,</i>                     | 32. Same<br><i>Melancholic Octet</i>  |
|   | 33. Morris placed Handel's section number 35, listed in part two, here<br><i>Orpheus</i>  |
|   | 34. Morris placed Handel's section number 36, listed in part two, here<br><i>Finale</i><br><b>This section ends Morris' piece</b> |
| <b>Part Three</b>   | <b>No Act Three</b>   |
| 41. Overture<br>Concerto for organ and orchestra in B flat<br>Minor, Op. 7, No. 1 | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 42. II Moderato<br><i>Hence, boast not, ye profane,</i>                           | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 43. II Moderato   | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Come, with native lustre shine,</i>                             |   |
| 44. II Moderato<br><i>Sweet temp'rance in thy right hand bear,</i> | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 45. II Moderato<br><i>Come, with gentle hand restrain</i>          | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 46. II Moderato<br><i>No more short life they then will spend</i>  | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |
| 47. II Moderato<br><i>Each action will derive new grace</i>        | n/a. Morris utilized this section as number 21 in act one, titled <i>Each Action</i>      |
| 48. II Moderato<br><i>As steals the morn upon the night,</i>       | n/a. Morris utilized this section as number 34 in act two, titled <i>The Walking Duet</i> |
| 49. II Moderato<br><i>Thy pleasures, Moderation, give,</i>         | n/a. Morris omitted this section  |

In her book, *Mark Morris: Musician-Choreographer*, author Stephanie Jordan describes the melodic and rhythmic difference between *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, stating that the former has simpler melodies and harmonies, with a clearer rhythm, while the latter is associated with more dissonance and complexity. Consequently, Morris's choreography reflects this oscillation between opposites and reinforces duality in many occasions. As for Handel's music, Lewis adds: "Much like how Milton chooses words to paint the energetic and reflective man, Handel uses harmonies."

And so did Blake, closely relate to Milton's text in order to create a series of twelve watercolors bearing the same title, seventy-six years later, between 1816 and 1820. Born in London, on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1757, Blake was homeschooled because he was considered different from other children since at times he spoke about visions of angelic beings. Only at age ten was he sent to drawing school where he was exposed to Greek and Roman art, and two years later became an apprentice with an engraver, James Basire. There he was assigned to sketch tombs of Westminster Abby, which further reinforced his artistic training. Seven years later, after briefly studying at the Royal Academy, he opened his own print shop ("The William Blake Archive").

Described by Escoffier and Lore as celebrating the sensual body and passionately attacking social injustice, Blake lived his life largely unrecognized and viewed as a mentally unstable due to his visions (13). Nevertheless, his art earned him the respect of many who supported him and he continued being a prolific artist.

One of his visions included Milton's spirit, who, Blake stated, had come back to rectify an error in his poem *Paradise Lost*. Blake eventually wrote an epic poem titled *Milton* (1804-1818), divided in two parts and narrating a story about Milton's return to earth ("The William Blake Archive"). During the same period, Blake created a series of watercolors illustrating various Milton's poems: *Comus* (1801), *Paradise Lost* (1807), *Nativity Ode* (1809), *Paradise Regained* (1821), and *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1816-1820) ("The William Blake Archive"). Blake chose particular verses from the poems in order to inform his creations. Some of these personal handwritten notes are shown, along with their respective *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* watercolors, in the appendix (see Appendix A). The selection is limited to the illustrations addressed in the following discussion regarding Morris' implementation of the drawings during his creative process.

Just as Blake utilized Milton's text to inform his creative practice, Morris was heavily impacted by Blake's watercolors to create his choreography. He stated:

From a portrait of *Melancholy and Her Companions*, I directly stole several moves, for example, and Blake's image of the moon, which also happens several times in the dance... Then, there are other things, just positions like sitting curled up on the floor from a detail in one of the Blakes, of a little old guy. There is also a part in *Day's Garish Eye*, where one person's asleep and the other one is being frightened by this nightmare figure: There's a wing picture, it's almost like a peacock tail where there are different figures hidden in this wing and it is sort of like a horrible opium dream. (Escoffier and Lore 144)

By carefully viewing Blake's watercolors, it is possible to observe these references. As mentioned, each of the watercolors is the result of his interpretation of selected verses that are

associated with it. The analysis of the images and their verses, shows that Morris quoted the illustrations mostly in the sections containing the same text. For example, for *Melancholy and Her Companions*, the verses that Blake selected to illustrate are part of Morris' first act section titled *Pensive Nun*. In it, a dancer stands feet together, with his arms crossed over the chest and his focus directed upward, a position quoted directly from said illustration, from a figure standing to the left of Melancholy. The verses also include the text of the first act section *The Diet Dances*, in which Morris reproduced the kneeling position of the central figure above Melancholy, and *Come, Come*, in which he utilized Melancholy's hand position. Blake also depicted a flying and sleeping figure supported from underneath on the right of Melancholy's shoulder, which is reproduced, independent from text, in the second act section *Day's Garish Eye*. This sleeping figure is also repeated in the second act section *Orpheus* (visible in Escoffier and Lore 118-119). Another reference independent from text is visible on Melancholy's right, where a figure presses her hands together as if in prayer, a position quoted in the praying-like gesture (visible in Escoffier and Lore 110) included in two of Morris' sections, *Crickets* and *Melancholic Octet*, and discussed in the following chapter in the analysis of his use of gestures.

In his comments Morris also mentioned a "horrible opium dream" referring to Blake's *Milton's Mysterious Dream*. Again, there is a correlation between Blake's illustration, the dance and the verses, which are in the text of Morris' *Day's Garish Eye*. In this section, a monster figure flies over a sleeping person, as in the illustration, scaring her (visible in Escoffier and Lore 92). Furthermore, independent from text, the same section quotes the moon position in Blake's *The Wandering Moon*. But a similar moon shape is first performed in Morris' *Sweet Bird* section in the first act. This time relating to Blake's verse's selection, Morris visualized the wandering moon with two dancers in a similar shape, carried by four other dancers, who have their arms

fully extended upward and who slowly rotate around each other (visible in Escoffier and Lore 160). The soloist dancer (the sweet bird) gazes at them (the wandering moon) while trying to reach their height.

Also corresponding to Blake's image and verses' selection in *Mirth and her Companions*, Morris' first act sections *Haste Thee Nymph*, contains a position sitting on the floor with bent legs and both arms on the knees, executed during the laughing portion of the score and that recalls the laughing figure on the left side of Mirth's shoulder. Mirth's position itself is similar to the shapes that the bird soloists perform, as sort of *attitude derrière*, with the arms in a French third position *allongé*. Independent from text, the jumping person by Mirth's right shoulder is in the same shape performed by the side dancers in the first act section *Crickets*, with their fast *chaînés* entrances and exits. Finally, other references to image alone are found in: *Night Startled by the Lark*, where the lark is in the same shape of Morris' birds lifts during the *Sweet Bird* section; the figure sitting on the sun in Blake's *The Sun in His Wrath*, which is reproduced in Morris' first act section *Hansel and Gretel* by the ploughmen sitting on their partner's shoulders; and in the same illustration, Hansel and Gretel holding hands as the two figures standing under the sun.

The color palette in Blake's watercolor illustrations seemed to influence Morris' choice of tones and shapes of the costumes as well. Morris said that the costumes, designed by Belgium costume designer Christine Van Loon, attempt to look like the seemingly invisible gowns that Blake's figures wear and are therefore made for the most part of silk chiffon, a delicate and flowy material ("Mark Morris at 'On the Board'"). Each costume has two colors to reflect the theme of duality, and there are distinct male and female costumes, as there are roles, for the same

reason (Morris personal intvw.137). Furthermore, the costumes create a contrast during the performance by being of dark shades in the first act and light ones in the second.

Another colorful addition to *L'Allegro* is the set designed by Adrienne Lobel, who had previously worked with Morris in the Peter Sellars production of John Adams' opera *Nixon in China* (1987). Since Morris expressed the wish to have the stage broken into different sizes and areas, Lobel started working on drops and, after exploring the works of artists such as Mark Rothko and Josef Albers, eventually gravitated toward a more abstract approach than that of traditional theatrical drops (Escoffier and Lore 150-151). She framed the stage with five white, rigid portals, that serve as wings and get smaller the further they are upstage, plus a series of drops, twenty-one in total, that are utilized in different combinations for each of the sections, lowering at various heights and made of different thickness. Some are scrim and others are muslin, some are very thick, some have designs such as lines or squares. Because of the material, they can be lit to appear transparent, translucent, or opaque. Often the drops are completely lowered, creating the different size areas for which Morris had originally wished. After spending a week in the theater, Morris, Lobel, and the lighting designer Jim Ingalls, decided on the configurations for each section, the transitions, and the lighting. Only after, was Morris able to begin choreographing knowing the availability and dimensions of the various spaces.

Ingalls commented on the challenges that the drops created, cutting and limiting the stage areas which are usually fully available in most dance concerts. He added: "The references in the text to light and darkness were helpful 'clues' for Adrienne and me. The opening line is *Hence, loathed Melancholy, Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born. L'Allegro* starts in darkness...creation, from nothing. So we started in the dark. The whole thing fell together from there" (Escoffier and Lore 153). The darkness at the beginning of the piece was extremely

expressive for many viewers. Dance critic from *The New York Times*, Alastair Macaulay, wrote: “The work opens like a creation myth. Across a dark stage, dancers run at top speed like random atoms until suddenly, bang on the music, two of them collide and form a molecule” (“Still Ting. Sp., After 25 Y.” 8). Acocella wrote: “The effect is spooky, sepulchral... Then a dim, murky sort of swamp light goes up behind a black scrim, and dancers begin racing across the stage. Life!” (Escoffier and Lore 27). From Milton to Handel and Jennens, to Blake and finally to Morris and his team, Lobel, Ingalls, and Van Loon, *L’Allegro* is a culmination of innovative artistic collaboration that has been recognized worldwide.

### **III. Technical and Artistic Analysis of Morris' Work in *L'Allegro*.**

#### **Musical and Textual Elements**

##### **Working with musical structures: canon, counterpoint and polyrhythms**

To fully understand Morris' work, one must start from the music. In many interviews, he has stated: "Everything I do is based on music" (KCTS Morris), or, "Every dance starts directly from a piece of music." ("Mark Morris: The Hid. Soul of Har."). Also, during our interview he stated: "I say it all the time, about ninety-nine percent of dancing in the world is because of music" (personal intvw.144). So, to dance for Morris, a dancer must possess that intimate relationship with the music that permits her/him to blend movement and music seamlessly or purposely juxtapose them, as in the musical structure of counterpoint. The latter, along with canons and polyrhythms, are musical structures that Morris renders, directly or indirectly, from the score to his choreography. In fact, at times he has been criticized as, "Keeping too strictly to the beat of the music," as, for instance, Laura Shapiro of the *Newsweek* who wrote: "Too often his choreography shows nothing more than the notes printed on the paper" (qtd. in Jordan 77). Still, even though music visualization is a publicly understood concept, its manifestation is purely individual since it is a completely personal experience and everyone has a different neurological process when listening to the same piece of music. This is confirmed by the very different interpretations of Johannes Brahms' *Love Song Waltzes* by Balanchine and Morris (Jordan 78). Indeed, Morris stated: "It is not like there is a specific dance in the music and someone decodes it" ("Mark Morris at 'On the Board']"). Therefore, a dancer needs to comprehend the choreographer's individual vision before s/he can begin to integrate it with the

movement. Meaning, understanding how the movement fits with the music and in the choreographic structure of the system that the latter inspired.

Morris stated that to be musical, knowledge of music theory is helpful but not necessary (personal intvw.144); this is because he choreographs his steps with the music score in hand. Therefore, dancers can read the music score to help them understand the sequence and counts, but they can also just listen carefully as the choreography is created. Since dance is a visual art, this process is similar to what dance can provide for the visual learner in general educational settings. In creative dance classes, for example, the visual learner can understand the geometrical concept of a triangle by making a triangular shape with his/her body in the same way that, in rehearsal, a Morris' dancer can understand the nature of a musical canon by observing the dancing phrases unfold in the correct rhythmic relationship. Conversely, music critic Alex Ross stated that: "Morris and his crew tell you as much about the inner life of musical form as any panel of analysis...all conservatory students should be required to see Morris' work: they will learn to play more intelligently" (qtd. In Jordan 86).

In a dance sequence, to be able to execute a canon, a dancer must be able to isolate her/his movement from the adjacent person/group, which is/are executing the same sequence but on a different count. To clarify, in musical terms a strict canon is formed when the same melody, or rhythm, is played starting on different counts (Smith). This means that part *A* will start on count 1, while part *B* and *C* can start on any other sequential two counts following the first one. The musical distance between the different voices can vary according to the intention of the composer and can be as little as one count, two, or more counts. Thus, the second and third parts, *B* and *C*, can begin on equidistant counts such as 2 and 3, 3 and 5, and so on, or on counts with different intervals such as 2 and 5, as shown on table 1. To translate this concept to movement, it

is necessary to consider a movement phrase that unfolds as follows: movement *X* on count 1, *Y* on count 2, and *Z* on count 3. This means that, if the canon is an equidistant two counts apart, a dancer/s following part *A* will be executing step *Z*, the dancer/s following part *B* will be executing step *X*, while dancer/s following part *C* will wait two more counts before beginning, as shown in the following diagram:

Table 1 shows a strict canon with regular temporal intervals of 2 counts.

| COUNT    | 1        | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5        | 6        | 7        |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dancer A | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> | continue |          |          |          |
| Dancer B | Wait     | Wait     | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> | continue |          |
| Dancer C |          |          | Wait     | Wait     | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> |

Table 1.

Table 2 shows a strict canon with irregular temporal intervals of 1 and 3 counts.

| COUNT    | 1        | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5        | 6        | 7        |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Dancer A | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> | continue |          |          |          |
| Dancer B | Wait     | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> | continue |          |          |
| Dancer C |          | Wait     | Wait     | Wait     | <i>X</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>Z</i> |

Table 2.

Therefore, dancers must be constantly aware of others and the music to be able to correctly execute a canon.

Specifically regarding canons, in *L'Allegro*, Morris utilized multiple canons according to the score or implementing a “bigger structure that does not match the structure of the music but refers to it” (personal intvw.142). Naturally, it is easier for a performer to execute the former than the latter because s/he can utilize the musical melody as a guide rather than relying solely on counting the music and maintaining the correct rhythm. An example of the former is given in the

first act's section titled *Come and Trip It*, with time signature of 6/8 (Handel 20), where three lines of three men are following the musical structure of the voices in the chorus. This canon has regular intervals of three eighth-note (1/8) beats apart, where two lines follow the women's part and one line, the central one, follows the men's. This movement phrase has two components:

- The first is an action that brushes the floor laterally with both hands as the body is bent forward, the legs start in a *demi-plié* in second position, brushing one foot to the same side, then ending with a *coupé*.
- The second is three running steps in a circular pathway.

As one group is performing the running portion, the other is moving through the floor brush, as shown in the following table (3):

| Measure | 1-2-3 | 4-5-6 | 1-2-3 | 4-5-6 |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Line 1  | brush | run   | Brush | run   |
| Line 2  | run   | brush | Run   | brush |
| Line 3  | brush | run   | Brush | run   |

Table 3.

Therefore, to the viewer and the performer this canon is clearly visible and the dancer can easily maintain the correct movement, knowing that he needs to do the exact opposite one of the adjacent group, whether the run or the brush.

On the contrary, in another section in the second act titled *Populous Cities*, four groups of dancers, corresponding to the soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices, engage in a canon that is not only in regular intervals of one count apart, but juxtaposes a rhythm of 5/8 beats, within five measures of 4/4 (Handel 92). To better explain for those unfamiliar with music theory, a measure is a segment of time corresponding to a certain number of beats. Each measure follows the so

called “time signature” of a score, which is composed of two parts: the top number indicates how many beats are in each measure, and the bottom number indicates the time duration of each beat. A measure can be three beats of quarter notes ( $1/4$ ), which reads as  $3/4$ , four beats of eighth notes ( $1/8$ ), which reads as  $4/8$ , and so on (Surmani, Farnum Surmani, and Manus 12). The time signature of *Populous Cities* is  $4/4$ , meaning four beats of quarter notes. The movement that Morris choreographed is performed as such:

- Dancers take five steps while turning in place, preparing from a *demi-plié* on the left leg.
- Dancers end on a *demi-plié* on the right leg, which serves as the preparation for the following turn to the left.
- The arms also move from a twisted shape wrapped around the torso on the left side, through a second position during the turn, ending in the same twisted shape to the right side.

This is a difficult canon to begin with, because the melody and text do not match the rhythm of the step, in addition to only one beat interval between each group as they execute the phrase.

To explain this canon, only five measures of the score, those in which the canon takes place, will be discussed (see table 4).

- First. The first group, corresponding to the sopranos, performs its first *demi-plié* as a preparation to begin the turn, on count 2 of the first measure. The turn then begins on count 3, repeats six times, ending on the up-beat of count 1 of the fifth measure and reuniting with the group on count 2 of the fifth measure.

This happens because each turn’s duration is the sum of five eighth notes, same as two and a half quarter notes, for a total duration of fifteen quarter notes. Hence, as mentioned, beginning on the



correct beat by knowing exactly how many steps, forming complete or partial turns, to execute.

Thus:

- The first group executes six complete turns.
- The second group executes five complete turns plus three steps.
- The third group executes five complete turns plus one step.
- The fourth group executes four complete turns plus four steps.

This can also be divided as:

- A total of thirty steps for the first group.
- Twenty-eight for the second group.
- Twenty-six for the third group.
- Twenty-four for the fourth group.

Eventually, a sense of familiarity develops with the music and the movement, making it less arduous to perform.

Another interesting canon in *L'Allegro* is the section titled *The Walking Duet*, which is an example of working with a different system within the bigger structure of the music. Morris created a phrase of eight counts, performed by six groups, composed by four dancers, each entering from a different corner of the stage. What is interesting about this canon is that the interval between each group is decreased with each entrance (see table 5). Morris organized the canon so that each group would perform the full phrase, but spaced their entrances so that instead of a total of 48 counts, which is six times eight and would be the amount of time necessary for each group to perform the full phrase, the entire cycle takes 32 counts, which is only four times eight and amounts to eight measures of 4/4 (Handel 162). The way he organized it is by setting an 8 counts interval between the first and second group, decreasing it to 6, 4, 2, and 2 for each



Table 5 shows “C” indicating the total number of counts (beats) in the top column, which are also highlighted in groups of 8 to indicate the measures. “G” indicates the group number. The 8-counts sequence duration is highlighted in blue, and the canon’s irregular intervals highlighted in grey 8, 6, 4, 2, and 2. The 2 extra counts of the sixth group are highlighted in pink.

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During this phrase, dancers enter from one corner, and exit in a different one. They then perform two other phrases, one of which uses only three dancers from each corner, which means that when the canon repeats a second time, dancers are in a different place in line to enter. Consequently, they are also in a different part of the canon. This means that they perform this section from two different wings and in two different groups, having to adjust their relationship to one another in addition to rhythm and pathway. To analyze this system more precisely, it is helpful to know the pathway of the phrase, which unfolds as such:

- 2 counts (1-2) to enter from the corner and directly approach the center.
- 2 counts (3-4) to move to the next corner counter-clockwise.
- 2 count (5-6) to radiate outward to approach the new corner.
- 2 counts (7-8) to exit with a semi-circular pathway.

During the first time the canon unfolds, the dancer who enters from the upstage right corner with the second group, will have waited 8 counts before entering and been followed by the next person in the third group, 6 counts later. Therefore, only while exiting in the downstage right corner, the said dancer will encounter the following group’s member entering and need to adjust the pathway to accommodate her exit and his entrance. The next time the canon repeats, because her place is now different in the line, she will enter with the fifth group from the downstage right corner only 2 counts after the preceding fourth group. She will then be followed by the member of

the sixth group, 2 counts later. This means that instead of only crossing one other dancer during the exit, she will now need to adjust her pathway throughout the phrase to accommodate the dancers preceding and following her with a close interval of 2 counts. Thus, she crosses an exiting dancer while entering and, as she moves counter-clockwise in the center, she replaces the preceding dancer as she herself gets replaced by the following dancer. She then keeps this relationship with the two other performers all the way through the phrase.

It is then obvious that clarity of execution is essential when operating in such tight systems. This is also true with other musical elements that Morris translates into movement, such as counterpoint and polyrhythm. In musical terms, a counterpoint is composed by two melodies of equal importance, complementing each other, whether consonant or dissonant (Jackson), while polyrhythms are two or more rhythms played to complement or contrast each other (“Polyrhythm”). Jordan writes: “counterpoint between music and dance... music and dance are two simultaneous voices operating sometimes with, sometimes against, each other through matching or crossing accents or meters” (110). However, it is also possible to observe both the counterpoint and polyrhythm structures by considering different movements as melodies forming the counterpoint structure and the various rhythms his dancers make with their bodies as rhythms for the polyrhythm structure.

The section *Day's Garish Eye* provides a good example for Jordan's suggestion of movement and music creating a counterpoint, as well as for the concept of viewing different movements as melodies that form a counterpoint. The former can be observed by comparing the movement against the melody, and the latter by comparing one dancer's movement against that of the group. This segment contains five dancers, one of which is the protagonist of the tale that is manifested by the other four. The time signature of this aria is 3/4 (Handel 92). At one point,

the protagonist is standing at center stage, with the other dancers lined up behind her. She then proceeds to perform eight triplets: four triples to complete a circular pathway clockwise, stage right; she then returns to center to repeat another circle on the opposite side and direction. As the four lined-up dancers advance with four slow steps, each on the down beat of the measure, which means three counts for each step, the protagonist performs two triplets in each measure. This means that she performs two triplets in the time that the four dancers advance only one step. To be able to execute this rhythm correctly, the protagonist needs to count the eighth notes within the 3/4 measure, which amounts to six, and divide it by three, which amounts to two, the number of triplets needed. The counterpoint is then created between the melody and the solo dancer, as well as between her and the group's movements since the latter is following the melody.

The following table (6) shows the measures in the top line, the number of steps the group takes on the down beat of each measure in the second line, and the triplets on the protagonist in the third line:

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | 1 |   | 2 |   | 3 |   | 1 |   | 2 |   | 3 |   | 1 |   | 2 |   | 3 |   | 1 |   | 2 |   | 3 |   |
| G | 1 |   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| P | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Table 6.

Other examples of counterpoint are the previously discussed section *Populous Cities*, since the turning step's duration of 5/8 unfolds against the composition's meter of 4/4, or the section *Crickets*. Regarding the latter, Jordan points to a triplet series that three men, "bellman's drowsy charm," execute against the slower meter (209). This is the same relationship just described in *Day's Garish Eye* of two fast eighth notes triplets, against the slower 3/4-time signature (Handel 105). However, what she does not mention are the other dancers quickly entering and exiting, who are matching the rhythm of the melody. Therefore, the three men are a

counterpoint to the music as well as the other dancers. Furthermore, before said triplets, the “drowsy bellmen” enter with a 4/4 step against the 3/4 music (Handel 55), which means that they perform the 4/4 step three times, totaling 12 counts, within four measures of 3/4, also totaling 12 counts. Still, other dancers are following the 3/4 melody.

As far as observing polyrhythms, often Morris has choreographed steps that reflect this structure, but because of the lyricism and classicism of *L'Allegro*, there are not many stomping or loud rhythm steps in this dance. However, one section that might serve as an example is the section titled *Haste Thee Nymph*. During the women’s ensemble, there is a step that follows a 6/8 rhythm over the 4/4-time signature (Handel 15). The step comes from a *Wallachia*, which is a partly Romanian and partly Bulgarian dance and described by Morris as a heel-clicking dance designed for people who rode animals and therefore wore spurs (Escoffier and Lore 147; personal. intvw.135). The step has six movements, of a duration of an eighth note each, and is performed as such:

1. Stomp with both feet on the ground in a small parallel second position.
2. Hop clicking both heels in the air.
3. Land on one leg as the other bends in sort of a parallel *attitude derrière*.
4. The bent leg flips to *attitude front*.
5. Said leg returns to *attitude back*, keeping the knees next to each other with a slight change in body orientation to accommodate the leg action, while the standing leg's heel hits the ground twice.
6. One more click of both heels in a parallel sixth *relevé*. The arms are left to move freely to accompany the legs' motion.

The whole ensemble is composed of twelve women divided into four lines of three, who execute the sequence in a canon with a regular interval between each group of 2/4 beats, equal to four parts of the step. Since the step is in 6/8 and is executed over two measures of 4/4, it is repeated a total of two times plus four beats by the first group and gets shorter for each following group (see table 7). This can be calculated by dividing the rhythm of 8 counts of quarter notes, which is two times 4/4, into sixteen eighth notes and organizing it by six, for a total of 2 sixes plus 4 beats. Because the phrase has a stomping and clicking sounds the canon creates a polyrhythm structure. For example, as the first group is clicking the heels in *relevé* the second group is doing it in the air, then as the latter is landing in *attitude* back, the former is starting the sequence over with the two feet stomp.

The table (7) below shows the canon that creates the polyrhythm. The top line shows the two measures of 4/4. The clicks are in bold, on count 2, “**2cli**,” and italicized, on count 6, “*6cli*.” “1st” indicates the stomping on two feet on count 1:

| M  | 1   |             | 2 |   | 3   |             | 4   |             | 1   |             | 2   |             | 3   |             | 4   |             |
|----|-----|-------------|---|---|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|-----|-------------|
| G1 | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3 | 4 | 5   | <i>6cli</i> | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3   | 4           | 5   | <i>6cli</i> | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3   | 4           |
| G2 |     |             |   |   | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3   | 4           | 5   | <i>6cli</i> | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3   | 4           | 5   | <i>6cli</i> |
| G3 |     |             |   |   |     |             |     |             | 1st | <b>2cli</b> | 3   | 4           | 5   | <i>6cli</i> | 1st | <b>2cli</b> |
| G4 |     |             |   |   |     |             |     |             |     |             |     |             | 1st | <b>cli</b>  | 3   | 4           |

Table 7.

### Technical and artistic textual interactions

By analyzing the implementation of canon, counterpoint and polyrhythm structures in Morris’ choreography, is possible to observe how in his work, a dancer is closely relating to the two main aspects of a musical composition, which are rhythm and melody, and how the dance is

informed by both interchangeably. As noted, said structures can be constructed by music and movement, or within the movement itself. Furthermore, the musical composition influences the space and patterns within the section as well as the sectioning itself (Luckman 7). But there is yet another central aspect to *L'Allegro*'s score: the vocal element. Morris has described his interaction with the text as: "Sometimes I go exactly word by word with what is going on, sometimes is just the sense of it, sometimes just what is happening musically and not so much the text" (Escoffier and Lore 142; Jordan 203). In relationship to the music, his work has been described as "analytically musical choreography" (Acocella 180) and, in relationship to the text, Morris waves in and out of the actual score and ventures in various directions according to how he has interacted with the particular composition, "I work on designing things that are based on how I thought and lived with that piece of music" ("Mark Morris at 'On the Board.'").

In a sense, Morris works with the text the way he works with the music. From the scrutiny of note by note, as in "words by word," to the conception of the whole, as in "just the sense of it." Comparatively, he sets for himself a set of movements and rules early on in a work, and then proceeds to manipulate it, just as a musical composition works within a set scale and meter, or a story revolves around a set of characters. Because of his creative system, the few sections he created in Brockport, NY, before moving to Belgium, which are *Haste Thee Nymph, Come and Trip It*, and *Come, Come*, provided a template for the whole work (Fehlandt qtd. In Jordan 199). Certainly, all three of Morris' choreographic approaches, word by word, the sense of it, and the musical happening, can be found in *L'Allegro*, and evoke different interpretations by a performer. When the movements closely represent the text, it is as if the dance is an additional layer to the voice. However, as this relationship becomes increasingly abstract and the

movements become melody oriented, the performer has a wider range of possible interpretations that spring for her/his personal experience with the music and the movement.

The perfect example of choreographing to each word comes from the second act section titled *Melancholic Octet*. Jordan explains that this music has a fugue structure (211), which is a procedure characterized by the systematic imitation of a principal theme, called the subject, in simultaneously sounding melodic lines, called the counterpoints (DeVoto). A solo woman accompanies a solo singer and introduces the theme, with gestures associated with each word. These remain the same for the rest of the section performed by four couples representing the soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices of the chorus. The couples are respectively: a woman leading a woman, a woman leading a man, a man leading a woman, a man leading a man (Jordan 211). The leaders are positioned slightly ahead, while the followers hold on to their leaders' right shoulders with the left hand.

The movements and words are associated as such:

- On "These," dancer/s spreads both arms in a V shape, either kneeling as the arms spread downward, or leaning back as they spread upward;
- On "Pleasures," dancer/s join both hands together in a stirring motion that moves mostly from the left to the right side;
- On "Melancholic," dancer/s lift one knee forward in a parallel *attitude*, then execute a *rond de jambe en dehors*, finishing in a parallel *attitude derrière* in *relevé*. The opposite arm folds into the chest and the palm and head turn upward;
- On "Give," dancer/s kneel and press both hands together in front of the head;
- On "And we with thee," dancer/s walk;

- On “Will choose,” dancer/s *piqué* in *attitude* back, then *demi-plié* and *relevé* several times depending on the score. The leaders’ right arm is extended toward the floor, with widely spread fingers and their left hand, and the followers’ right hand, are holding the right wrist;
- On “To live,” leading dancers raise a fist vertically, with a punching motion while the followers hang from their shoulder, but when the word has a long duration they both waive the other arm up high while holding respectively the fist and the partners’ shoulder.

In addition to varying the gender and the lead according to the voice group, Morris also adjusted the choreography to be slightly individualized for each of the couples. For example, the soprano and bass couples perform the *attitude* on opposite sides, the former with the leg next to each other (inside leg) and the latter with the opposite one (outside leg), while the other couples and the soloist use the left leg. This also happens for the *piqué attitude* during “choose,” but this time the bass couple uses the inside leg, while the soprano couple uses the opposite, and all others use the right side. Lastly, aside from the soprano couple, which executes the stirring motion toward each other and punches with the left fist, all other stir from left to right and punch with the right fist.

Morris’ dancers are aware that these variations are directly related to the previously mentioned systems of material and rules that he establishes for himself during the creative phase. They know that the movement vocabulary in this section is created by the association between motions and words and therefore stays unchanged throughout the entire segment. Nevertheless, aside from gender, each couple’s dance is then differentiated by the few particularities discussed above. Other rules apply and each time the voices are silent in a rest measure, the dancers

embrace, plus as the chorus gets louder, through a slow and continuous *crescendo*, the dancers' movements also get bigger and the walk becomes a run. Lastly, the dancers also have a pattern for their pathways. The couples only travel along the sides of the stage from one corner to the other, or in a diagonal through center. They turn the corner alternating between a regular curve and adding an entire circle before proceeding in to the next direction. The female voices enter with the circular pathway at the corners, while the male voices enter from the corners in the diagonal. Only at the very end do they get out of this orderly pattern.

But aside from strict rules, which mostly influence the structure of the choreography, the difficulty of this section lies in the roles of the couples, which give each person a different set of responsibilities. The leaders must adjust their movement so that their followers can stay attached to their shoulders, especially while turning the corners since there are closer to the pivoting point and have less distance to travel. The leaders also take the weight of the followers in the punching position, they must therefore stand firmly on the ground and more so as the intensity of the dance augments and their partners proceed to almost throw their weight on to them. Contrary to that, their partners have to maintain the correct distance from their leaders and carry their own weight as they travel quickly, for example, without applying excessive pressure on their shoulders or pulling it, while keeping the arms flexible. In the punching shape, as they hang from the leaders' shoulders, they need to find the correct balance between giving and taking their own weight. Giving excessive weight makes their partners unstable and taking too much of their own weight does not render the intended image of a hanging person. Also, as mentioned the followers have a longer distance to travel during the circles, or the corners in general, and must therefore take bigger steps to stay close to their leaders in order not to lengthen the distance between them, which would result in pulling them back.

Still, the most difficult step is when the couples perform a *piqué* in *attitude derrière* and have to *plié* and *relevé* multiple times, while the followers are also holding onto the leaders' shoulders and arms. For the leaders this is already a difficult step due to the slow speed, which requires full control of the standing leg as it straightens and flexes. In addition, in order to bring the hand closer to the ground, the torso is flexed forward and it responds to the motions with a gentle flexing and strengthening action. Because normally is easier to perform a *relevé* with vertical spine and because the shape of the torso moves in response to the rising and sinking motion, this is a challenging step. This is augmented by the pressure added by their followers' hands on their shoulders and wrists. As for the latter, the challenge is presented by holding onto someone else and following their motion without losing control of their own balance. Again, they must hold strongly enough to render the intention behind the shape, but not too strongly or their partners can lose their balance.

Much simpler choreographic rules operate in *Come and Trip It*, where two women dance to the solo female voice and a group of men dances with the chorus. Conversely, pertinent to Morris' creative systems, this order is in opposition with the preceding section, *Haste Thee Nymph*, which starts with three men dancing with a solo male voice and continues with a group of women with the chorus (Wheeler 11). In *Come and Trip It*, each word has a movement correlation that remains unchanged throughout the section and the structure of the duet and ensemble is simple. The women perform the dance near center stage in opposition, while the men are in a formation of three lines of three and maintain the same spacing almost throughout. All dancers travel only on a rhombus pathway relative to the audience. Jordan describes it as repetitive (203) and it is so because of the score to which it abides. But she also states that what

makes it interesting, are the changes in direction and pathway (203). The movement and words are associated as such:

- On “Come,” dancers bring the arms in a balletic first position directed to a forward diagonal, circling them in a circular fashion in the sagittal plane. The legs are in a balletic second position *en face* in *demi-plié* (visible in Escoffier and Lore 43)
- On “And trip it,” dancers perform the step previously described in the canon description. This movement is an action that brushes the floor laterally with both hands as the body is bent forward. The legs start in a *demi-plié* in second position, brushing one foot to the same side, and ending with a *coupé*.
- On “As you go,” dancers hop three times on one leg as they revolve a whole turn, pivoting the torso at an angle.
- On “Go,” dancers step in *arabesque* either in *demi-plié*, or *relevé*, or *temps levé*, while the arms are extended in the forward-up diagonal, one more than the other, with pointed indexes (visible in Escoffier and Lore 43).
- On “On the light fantastic toe,” dancers execute a side *chassé*, with bent knees, and two *emboîtés* that turn 180°. The sequence is repeated twice.

Since the sequence is repetitive, the performer must know the music perfectly in order not to risk making a mistake and repeat the wrong step. Also, when dancing to poetry it is important to know the text in order to enliven the movement with the meaning of the word, but always considering that Morris likes authenticity. Therefore, in the particular case of the gestures for “come” and “go,” where the motion is so similar to the natural form that it becomes almost pedestrian, it is important to keep it so and not get overly ornate.

This is opposed to a more abstract connection when the dance interprets the story or just follows the melody. Concerning the former, in many sections of *L'Allegro* Morris chose to reflect the overall sense of the text and create a story around it. As he explained: "You are not saying it with the sign language, you are illustrating it, if you want, by the stage picture and not just by the action, but the visual" (personal intvw.137). These illustrative sections are *The Hunt*, *Fireplace*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Day's Garish Eye*, and *Orpheus*. In *Hansel and Gretel*, Milton's text describes walking among green valleys, observing a working plowman, milkmaid, and shepherd:

*Let me wander, not unseen  
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green;  
There the ploughman, near at hand,  
Whistles over the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.*

Morris envisioned this section with a man and a woman, hence the title *Hansel and Gretel*, while wandering in the forest, perhaps to find their way home. The rest of the dancers enter the stage in various groups and position themselves to create a forest that will soon come to life. Dance critic Sarah Kaufman commented on this section: "Some of the sequences look simple but are of mind-boggling complexity. How do the dancers group themselves so effortlessly to form a forest of trees?" (C 01). Upstage-center to upstage-right, there are two trios representing the elms that will become the ploughmen and a "huge oxen" (Wheeler 15). Each composed by a man sitting on another man's shoulders (the ploughmen), while both have raised arms to resemble tree branches and a third man (the oxen), with arms extended as well, standing close to them so as to be part of the tree trunk. On stage left, there are three women standing in a line, in

descending levels, parallel to the audience, that will become the milkmaids. There are also two trees, stage right and downstage left, formed by three dancers facing each other and standing really close to form a tree trunk with their bodies and extended arms as branches. The one on stage right becomes three men using a scythe, but the other stays a tree throughout. Finally, downstage right, a group of six women sitting in a semicircle, surrounds a man facing upstage with extended arms, also representing a tree, that will become the shepherd. Then, the leading couple, Hansel and Gretel, enters and begins observing the enchanted forest. One by one, the groups begin to move and become respectively the ploughmen, the milkmaids, the mowers, and the shepherd. As they come alive, the groups travel slowly across the stage and exit. The woman (Gretel) then decides that it is wiser to leave than to stay, grabs the man and they run away. All of the movement and gestures recall the text and another interesting detail in this section, is in the slow drifting motion that the groups employ while waiting to dance. This is because Morris wanted it to appear like a real forest that is not still but responsive to the wind and therefore asked his dancers to sway from side to side, gently and slowly while waiting to dance.

Different from dancing to singular words, when becoming part of a story, the movement correlation changes from one specific term to the sense of the whole section, and possibly the character involved, therefore becoming of broader significance. Namely, the movement does not belong to a word alone but to the whole story, acquiring a more comprehensive meaning. For example, in *Come and Trip It* even if each movement is associated to a word, there is no story told and therefore the expression of the move is in strict relationship to the word only and separated from the rest of the dance. But in *Hansel and Gretel*, the ploughman's movement relates to the entire description of a beautiful valley and all that is contained in said description. A great comparison is in the difference between acting in a short publicity or in an entire movie,

where in the former a few clips tell a simple message, while in the latter, multiple connecting scenes express a message within a complete storyline.

Yet another level of interpretation is in the third approach Morris mentioned: “sometimes (I go by) just what is happening musically and not so much the text” Escoffier and Lore 142: Jordan 203). Nevertheless, all of the movements relate to the textual content in some form or another because even if it is not directly addressed, it influences the overall essence of the music. To explain, Morris compares: “There is no reason to have a bird imitation in the flute if you are not talking about birds. It is not just nothing. It is all direct. So, that leaves it open for all kinds of interpretations” (personal intvw.136). In *The Walking Duet*, Morris did exactly that. The title is such because it is a beautiful aria sung by a duet, soprano and tenor, and because it is mainly constructed with a Bulgarian *Thrace*, based on walking, adapted to the meter of the score. The text of *The Walking Duet* states that just as the morning light casts the night's shadows away, so does truth restore the mind's intellect by casting away fear and doubts. Jordan describes it as “celebrating rationality and proportion over troubled emotions” (208). This group dance is composed of twenty-four dancers and has an *A-B-A* structure. *A* composed of two and then four lines walking in specific pathways before disappearing into the four corners of the stage, and *B* consists of group canons where dancers continually enter from and exit in each corner, as previously discussed. On first impression, Morris seems to have been inspired primarily by the musical composition, rather than its textual content. As the melody of the voices follows a steady and repetitive pattern during part *A*, and erupts into melodic ascending and descending arpeggio cascades during part *B*, so do the dancers transition from the orderly walking dance during section *A*, to a series of intertwining canons of passionately expressive movements and shapes in section *B*. However, according to the text Morris could have also intended to illustrate order

verses turmoil, even if the meticulous choreographic arrangements in *B* are far from chaotic, as analyzed in the discussion about canons. From a performing perspective, what Morris stated, applies, “open for all kind of interpretations” (personal intvw.136). This is because the conceptual distance from the text leaves ample room for personal input. Of course, one should think of the meaning of the text while dancing, but the fact that there is no immediate association with it means that the movement can be infused by whatever personal feelings the music or textual content evoke.

Morris’ different musical approaches are conceptually comparable to the four modes of representation that writer Susan L. Foster defines, that range from concrete to abstract and categorize how a choreographer makes a choice to simply imitate, or replicate a subject, or reflect his/her personal impressions to the audience. These modes are: *resemblance*, evoking “I am river”; *imitation*, stating “I am like the river”; *replication*, showing “I am riverness”; and *reflection*, signifying river, or whatever else the viewer sees (67). The latter mode is well explained by author Rachel Duerden, “We are not seeing any kind of ‘literal’ understanding of movement but, rather, an understanding of the choreographic idea or concept that is revealed through the constituent part of the dance” (202). In Morris’ work *resemblance* and *imitation* are similar to dancing to the text, word by word, while *replication* evokes the sense of the subject as in a story, and finally *reflection* compares to the more comprehensive and diffuse musical approach. When asked to comment, Morris replied:

I disagree from the concept of a direct translation from a corporeal representation of an idea because, as much as dancing is never abstract since it’s people doing it, it’s always an abstract translation of it and it’s possible to think that this looks like a mountain because I said so. You give yourself a peek, it’s like, “Oh that looks just like a mountain,” it’s like telling children to dance like a french-fry or a banana. That’s absolutely fantastical and has nothing to do with an eye-brain translation of a corporeal subject. You can’t do it. I mean an action can mean that, or any sort of gesture language

or expressive language reminds you of something, but it's not a one-to-one equal.  
(personal intvw.135)

Nonetheless, wherever the choreographer's concept, intention, and method guide the piece, so does the performer's experience change and refines according to his/her vision. In the specific case of Morris' work, his three choreographic approaches can influence the relationship his dancers have with their movement in this degree: the first approach, "word by word," is a specific and maybe limited correlation to one sound and the moment lasts as long as the word; the second approach, "the sense of it," builds a correlation to the story and, therefore, the movement has a deeper meaning that relates to the entirety of the section; and the third approach, "just what happens musically," gives more options to a performer who can then relate to the music through the personal experience the said composition evokes.

It is interesting to note that Morris never tells his dancers to act or interpret a role. Dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov comments: "He always hates it when you start to portray something...God forbid you should act!" (qtd. In Acocella *M. Morris* 147). Morris only addresses the issue if he does not like what someone is doing, often stating: "That looks fake, don't do it!" In Jordan's book Morris provided a description of *The Walking Duet*, commenting on the Thracian step, which is executed by walking up-down in the beginning part A and down-up in the concluding part A, suggesting the slight change in the execution of the step implies that, "The point of the *da capo* is that you've learned something in between" (208). But while he was choreographing this section, he never gave such suggestion to his dancers, as if leaving them to decide for themselves. In her interview, original cast member Megan Williams remembered how Morris would say: "If you are happy then smile, otherwise please don't," and how she had to find her own approach to interpreting her roles. She remarked that on stage, "Mark wants people to be natural and to connect with each other" (8). Morris coaching was primarily oriented to the step

execution and to the connection between his dancers so they would actively look and respond to each other. This is an obvious influence from the folk dances that left him the sense of communal effort and intention surrounding dance, often noticed by critics and audience members. Away from the text then, a performer needs to find that idiosyncratic connection with the dance, which is unique of their personality.

Nevertheless, in much of *L'Allegro*, Morris created the movement by shaping more distinct roles of feminine and masculine in an effort to capture the duality of the poetry (personal intvw.137). Fehlandt spoke about this gender specific assignment as a new aspect in *L'Allegro* related directly to the text along with the more lyrical style and specific ballet steps that were incorporated in the choreography (personal intvw.153). Since Morris had been choreographing for ballet companies and had originally thought of this dance as a joined project for his company and the Boston Ballet, it is not surprising that he utilized a lot of balletic vocabulary once he began to create it. Still, he did/does not want his dancers to interpret the movement as men or women but exclusively as themselves whatever that entails, "I want people to look like people when they're dancing" (Escoffier and Lore 147). This means that the gender specificity is in the dance and not the dancers. Finding one's true expression then is what will best contribute to his work. June Omura, also original cast member, explained how she found an avenue for her expression by responding directly to the live music beyond the connection she had formed with it during the rehearsal period and identifying purely with the ever-renewing expression that live performance involves, "I didn't have to think about what the steps were, I only had to open myself to the music" (telephone intvw.163).

What can also be valuable to enhance the artistic approach to performance, for Morris' dancers, is to explore the material that he researches in order to inform his creative process.

Williams commented on how Morris finds a lot of visual art, portraits, books and pictures when choreographing a piece and that he does not improvise per se, but processes all of the visual input into his own movement interpretation (personal intvw.174-175). As for *L'Allegro*, Morris mentioned that he chose the music not just because it was beautiful, but because he researched it and learned about it (personal intvw.143), in addition to general resourcing from old pictures, “I didn’t study with Isadora Duncan, or Doris Humphrey, or José Limón, but those have bled into my work because of the esthetic...there’s a tone and a look that appeals to me” (personal intvw.134). This was also noted by Macaulay as he stated that the language in *L'Allegro* is “largely Isadora’s” (*M. Morris: L'All., il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 128). Although, this is not only because of the esthetic, but also because of his “genius” use of hops, skips and twirls (Macaulay “Opposite Att., Ev. Joy and Mel.” C1). But Morris utilized a lot of folk dance references as well as any other step that interested him. Described as an eclectic by Luckman (39), Morris has stated: “I’ll use anything, a step that Mr. Balanchine made up...or something I saw a two-year-old do on a bus” (“Mark Morris: The Hid. Soul of Har.”; Luckman 38-39). Therefore, to view his research material and explore these diverse avenues of artistic expression, helps the performer understand a deeper layer of his creativity, which is the key for a richer performance experience.

## Choreographic Systems

### Technical elements of spatial patterns

As discussed, Morris starts creating mostly from the music and researches its origin and the surrounding artistic documentation, which consequently inform the structure and vocabulary of the choreography. Yet, he also stated: “When I am choreographing something, very often the first thing I’ll know about it, besides the music, is the basic geometry of it” (Escoffier and Lore 147). Morris is well known for his geometrical patterns. Critic Richard Fairman believes they are a welcome complementation to the score (15) and Fehlandt called him a “structure queen,” when describing his process for the geometrical arrangement of an earlier dance titled *Marble Halls* (1985) (personal intvw.154). At times, because of these geometrical ideas, Morris creates a choreographic system that exists on its own, as in *L’Allegro*’s last section titled the *Finale*.

When asked to describe the *Finale*, Morris said: “There is no canon in the music, of course...It starts like that and it just keeps getting bigger until it goes...until everybody is on the other side. It’s an attempt to get across and then it happens, so hooray for everyone!” (Escoffier and Lore 147). So, this is a section that does not directly reflect the score because the music does not contain a canon. The time signature is 4/4 (Handel 121). After a beginning segment, where dancers run from upstage to downstage in curves and perform simple steps in different combinations that vary according to the score, Morris choreographed a movement canon composed of three phrases that enter and exit straight in and out of the wings. Each phrase travels further toward center, until the last one leaps across it. They are:

- First phrase. 1-4 counts, dancers enter with two steps in *demi-plié* and *piqué* in *arabesque* for 2 counts, while the arms rise in an upward curved fifth position. 4-8 counts, dancers reverse and exit with four steps.

- Second phrase. 1-4 counts, dancers enter with three *chaînés* in *demi-plié* and *piqué* in an *attitude derrière* that turns half way. 4-8 counts, dancers run and exit. Arms are low during the *chaînés* and in a French third position *allongé* during the turn.
- Third phrase, 1-4 counts, dancers enter with five running steps and leap across center, with the front leg bent, the torso twisting in opposition, and the arms raised in a balletic second position with an upper-curve. The front arm is higher than the other. 4-8 counts, dancers run to exit on the opposite side of the stage.

Morris made use of these three simple phrases to create a very complex canon. The basic element to this choreographic system is relatively simple and becomes complex as it gets overlaid with other variations of itself. Acocella describes his choreographic process: “So he begins. He teaches the company a step that he has brought in...Once they have learned the step, he starts developing it” (*M. Morris* 172).

On analysis of the layers of this canon, it is possible to understand how Morris manipulated the three phrases to create a complex system of entrances, exits and crossings:

- There are twelve pairs of dancers performing the above sequence, entering, side by side, from each side of the stage; six pairs on each side.
- The pairs on stage left, enter in a canon with an interval of 4 counts between each group and so do the pairs on stage right. However, the first pair on stage right, enters 2 counts after the first pair on stage left, creating a 2-count canon between each opposite pair across the stage.
- The stage left pairs enter from upstage to downstage, the stage right ones do it from downstage to upstage, which means that the opposing stage right pairs are diagonally across the stage and not directly, besides being 2 counts delayed.

- Pairs one and two overlap, which means that, on stage left, the most upstage dancer is in group one, the one below is in group two, the next one below is in group one and the most downstage is in group two. This overlapping happens between the first and second pairs, the third and fourth pairs, and the fifth and sixth pairs on both sides on the stage.

The result of the system is that, the stage gets gradually populated from the sides in opposite directions and each pair of dancers, except for the last one, culminates with a leap across center. Each 2 counts, a pair jumps, first from stage left upstage, then stage right downstage, and this alternation descends on stage left and ascends on stage right, crossing at center stage.

To complicate the execution is the division of the six wings, created by the five portals, each shared by two dancers, making the space extremely tight.

Because of this, performers have to be of the utmost attentiveness to their direction and pathway. Each dancer must maintain the correct position with the partner, by aligning up and downstage, and with the overlapping pair in order to pass each other, besides keeping the correct tempo of the step and the canon, in addition to travel to center in order to leap with only five steps. Needless to say, there is a lot to manage. Omura remembers when Morris first choreographed it:

The phrases are each slightly longer than the previous one, but first he just did the steps and then realized looking at it that each one could take you further out from the wings, but that was secondary to what went to the music in his mind. He musically designed the cross where you have to leap and I think subsequently after he designed it he realized that the leap should take place across the center. Of course is very difficult to get there, cross in the air, land on the beat and get off stage. Making all of that fit is part of the challenge of every moment of that whole bit. You know there is a Busby Berkley canon and then leaping across and then magically, “Oh they seem to be leaping on this verse of the music.” Well, all that takes so much. You know what is like to be in it. It’s scary, you’re dealing with the wings, you’re dealing with your partner, you’re dealing with crossing someone with whom you could bash your head together. It’s so challenging but amazing when you achieve all of it. And then you get to do the last circle and that is so freeing after all that tight canon. (telephone intvw.167-168)

Obviously, to execute this canon, a heightened spatial awareness is required. The performer needs to be in control not only of the movement, but its direction as well. The fast turns are both an added difficulty and a welcome help because they destabilize the dancer, as is the nature of a turn, but offer an opportunity for a 360° view of his/her surroundings.

At times, even if a dancer does not have a complete view of its surroundings, s/he can still maintain the awareness of it by doing what Morris often tells his dancers, which is to “look around” and turn the head to do so if needed, not pretending to be able to see something that is behind them, but actively look. This behavior is encouraged along with not-acting and behaving as naturally as possible. This active awareness is useful in group work, as in the last section of the first act titled *Each Action*, where almost the entire dance is performed in four lines, aligned in the sagittal dimension, which will be analyzed in the movement patterns discussion. Spatial awareness is also imperative for ensemble traveling, as in the first act sections titled *Birding*, where a long sequence of running in curved pathways is executed by a scattered large group.

At the beginning of the *Birding*, a group of dancers runs on stage for sixteen measures of 12/8 (Handel 32), for a total of 192 eighth note counts, which the dancers divide by six and count as 32 slow counts in order to simplify the sequence. During these thirty-two counts, the group runs in a very specific pathway all over the stage, so as to recall the flight of birds in the flock. To illustrate this example, it is not necessary to mention the many directions involved since just the beginning few will suffice. The group enters from the downstage left corner and runs diagonally across toward the upstage right corner. On the upbeat of count 3, they turn to the left and descend directly downstage; on count 5 they turn left and run toward the upstage left corner, making a curve to the left on 7, before arriving in the corner and turning around, to the right, to face the downstage right corner by count 8. There are eighteen people in a scattered formation

operating exactly as a flock of birds, hence termed “flocking” in dance vocabulary and “birding” by Morris’ dancers.

Flocking can be explained by analyzing four of the dancers, forming a square shape, each representing a corner of the stage, and how they relate to each other during the run. When they enter, the dancer in the upstage right corner leads since s/he is the furthest in said direction, but when they turn to come directly downstage, the two downstage dancers become leaders, being in the downstage positions. When they turn a third time, the upstage left dancer leads even during the curve since s/he is still in the head position. In reality, during a turn, multiple dancers briefly lead because even a half turn involves three sides of the stage making three of them the temporary lead. It is then important to keep the same distance from all other dancers by traveling at the same speed and try to reproduce the same pathway every time so as to facilitate the spatial connection and avoid unexpected variations.

Morris also choreographs spatial patterns with fewer people and *L’Allegro* has many duets, trios and small groups. However, it contains few complete solos due to the nature of the text and the duality it explores. Duality is a very strong theme in act one, presenting itself in *Sweet Bird*, where two women birds perform a duet, in the *Fireplace*, where two identical scenes unfold symmetrically, in *Come and Trip it*, where two soloists mirror each other, and in *Come, Come*, where two center dancers dance facing each other through a see-through scrim. Macaulay noticed that this duality is very present in act one but fades in act two where, aside from a quintet in *Day’s Garish Eye* and a quartet in *Weary Age*, all others are group dances (“Opposite Att., Ev. Joy and Mel.” C1). In *Crickets*, previously analyzed for its counterpoint interaction between dancers and music (on p.38-39), there is a spatial pattern performed by a smaller group, that unfolds between the side dancers that continuously enter and exit, remaining close to the wings.

Toward the very end of the latter section, six of the side dancers are divided into two lines, aligned in the sagittal dimension, across each other on right and left center stage. The line on stage left is facing upstage, the other faces downstage. This means that even though they are performing the exact same sequence, the choreography produces opposite pathways. This is similar to the previously discussed *Finale* canon (on p.54-56), which develops upstage to downstage on stage left, opposite of downstage to upstage on stage right. In this case, the structure is reversed: there is a canon of regular intervals, one measure apart, that starts downstage on stage left and upstage on stage right. The triplets are executed at an eighth of a note value, which means that two triplets (6/8) fit into the 3/4 measure, so the canon is two triplets apart. To explain this system, only the stage right line will be analyzed (see figure 1). In said line, the upstage dancer, person one, starts to perform triplets in a circular pathway that passes the downstage partner, person two, on the left side. After person one executes two triplets, as she passes person two, the latter begins the same sequence, crossing path for a moment on the way to pass the third partner that will, in turn, execute the same triplets.

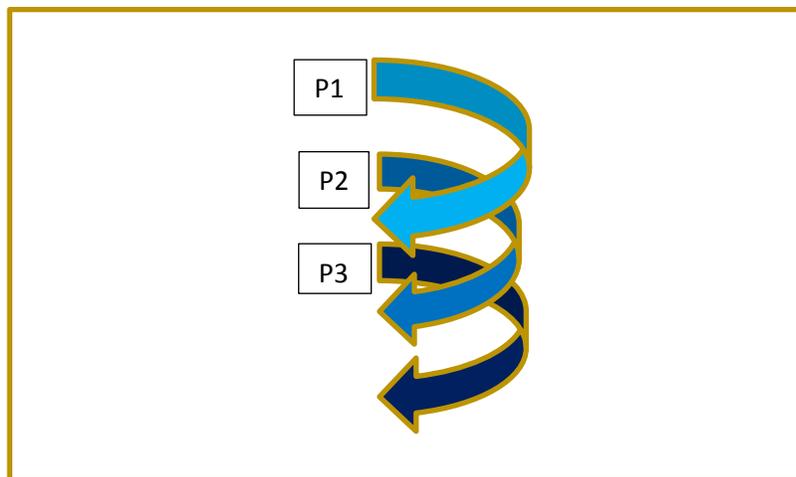


Figure 1.

As shown above (figure 1: pattern of stage right line), this creates three circular paths that intersect each other and indirectly mirror the stage left group, which is reversed in succession, from downstage to upstage.

Another segment this group performs in *Crickets*, is a combination of spatial and movement patterns. The dancers enter the stage, travel from one side to the other, in the horizontal dimension, and turn around to exit from where they entered. Once again, they perform fast triplets over the 3/4-time signature and enter one measure apart. As they execute the first *plié*, they perform a tapping gesture with the right hand's palm and wrist; the arm is extended upward then descends slowly. This choreographic system (figure 2) unfolds symmetrically from center to up and downstage, beginning with one person, dancer 1, entering at center stage level and each following couple aligning with the previous group up and downstage. This means that one person from group two will line up upstage of dancer 1, and the other downstage (see figure 2).

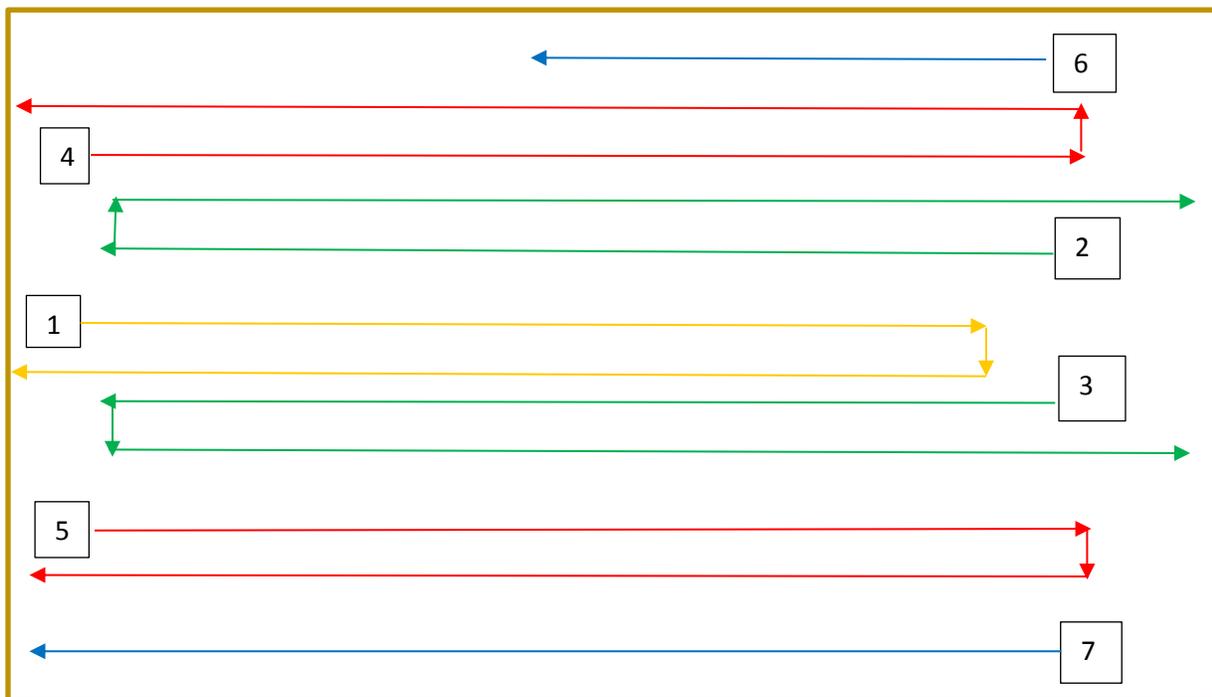


Figure 2.

The system shown above develops in the following phases:

- Dancer 1 enters from stage right, traveling to stage left.
- Dancers 2 and 3 enter from stage left and are joined by dancer 1, who turns around to travel with them back to stage right to exit.
- Dancers 4 and 5 enter from stage right, are passed by the exiting dancer 1 and joined by dancers 2 and 3, who turn around to travel with them back to stage left to exit.
- Dancers 6 and 7 enter from stage left, are passed by exiting dancers 2 and 3, and joined by dancers 4 and 5, who turn around to travel with them back to stage right to exit.
- Dancer 7 exits on stage right with dancers 4 and 5, while dancer 6 is left on stage.

Understanding these patterns and the way the systems are constructed is very helpful for group unity and facing any of the unexpected challenges that live performance can entail. For instance, a missed entrance can be remedied quickly, and almost unnoticed by the viewers, if the performer in question knows where s/he should be at any given moment.

### **Technical elements of movement patterns**

So far the discussion has focused on choreographic systems structured with both spatial and movement patterns, but referred to as spatial patterns because the spatial element is a necessary and main component of the design. However, there are also systems based on movement patterns that are independent from spatial locomotion and composed solely by formation and movement, referred to as movement patterns. Many of such patterns can be found in the *Each Action* section, performed by all twenty-four dancers, divided in four lines of six, aligned in the sagittal dimension, equally spaced across the stage.

The text is as follows:

*Each action will derive new grace  
From order, measure, time, and place;  
Till life the goodly structure rise  
In due proportion to the skies.*

Even though the first line of poetry does not mention them, Morris created gestures representing earth, water, fire and air danced to fit within the text and organized an “orderly transfer of gestures” (Jordan 207). These are:

- *Earth*. Preparation: dancers are kneeling on the right leg, with the left foot standing, the body flexed forward over the legs, and both hands touching the floor in front of the body. Gesture: dancers lift the torso and hands slightly upward, then return to the original position, in 3 counts (3/4).  
“A ripple passes through their spine, and arms, briefly lifting their hands off the ground” (Macaulay M. Morris: *L'All., il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 130).
- *Water*. Preparation: dancers stand on the left leg in *demi-plié* while the right leg is extended in a *battement tendu* side. Their torso is in a lateral flexion to the left side and their arms are extended as far as possible to the left. Gesture: the arms move from the left to the right side at shoulder level, while the hands perform a rippling movement representing water and the weight shifts to the right leg, in 4 counts (4/4).
- *Fire*. Preparation: dancers stand feet together with the hands on the left side of the torso, ready to touch and press together, with the fingers upward. Gesture: while moving upward, hands press together, open up, and join again at the top to trace a teardrop shape representing a flame, in 4 counts (4/4).
- *Air*. Preparation: dancers stand feet together, looking toward the right-forward-high diagonal, hands closed in a fist on each side of the mouth and the cheeks bloated with air.

Gesture: dancers blow the air out and hop briefly off the floor in doing so, in 2 counts (2/4). This gesture is described by Macaulay as “an adorable ‘blowing’ mime” (130).

The time signature is 6/4 (Handel 155) and the piece begins with a musical introduction that lasts eight measures. During this introduction, the lines execute the four gestures in a regular canon that is 3 counts apart, passing the gestures from stage left to stage right, one at a time in the order of description. Then, as the singing begins, each line performs one of the gestures, still in a canon. This sequence is shown in table 8. “M” indicates the measures, which are followed by “i” for introduction (e.g. 1i) and “s” for the singing (e.g. 1s). “L” indicates the lines. The earth gesture is indicated by “E,” water by “W,” fire by “F,” and air by “A.”

| M  | 1i |   | 2i |   | 3i |   | 4i |   | 5i |   | 6i |   | 7i |   | 8i |   | 1s |  | 2s |   |   |
|----|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|--|----|---|---|
| L1 | E  |   |    |   | W  |   |    |   | F  |   |    |   | A  |   |    |   | E  |  |    |   |   |
| L2 |    | E |    |   |    | W |    |   |    | F |    |   |    | A |    |   |    |  | W  |   |   |
| L3 |    |   | E  |   |    |   | W  |   |    |   | F  |   |    |   | A  |   |    |  |    | F |   |
| L4 |    |   |    | E |    |   |    | W |    |   |    | F |    |   |    | A |    |  |    |   | A |

Table 8.

It is then possible to observe the movement pattern, transferring gestures from one line to the other while maintaining a stationary formation. For this system to be successful, dancers must be aligned in the sagittal and horizontal dimension, while shadowing the downstage person so as to move in perfect unison.

In contrast, in the first act section titled *Fireplace*, each dancer functions as an independent part of the movement pattern in a motion that represents a water-wave, following the words: “*Over some wide-water’d shore.*” This is one of the illustrative sections previously mentioned, where Morris created a storyline within the text and where the concept of duality is present. The latter is reflected in the structure of the piece as two groups perform symmetrically

throughout its duration, but briefly come together to form the water-wave across the stage. The dancers are lying down on their sides, with the arm closer to the floor extended above the head, scattered along the horizontal dimension. They create the water-wave by lifting their torso and arm slightly off the floor and slowly lowering them back down, transferring this action from stage right to stage left in a sequential fashion, or what is known in biology as a metachronal rhythm, which consists of an action executed sequentially by stationary constituents, giving the visual of water waving over the surface (“Metachronal rhythm”). Therefore, each dancer is the center of the movement on a particular count of the music and, once again as in *Each Action*, maintaining a fixed position while transferring the motion from one individual to another.

The metachronal wave is typical in the choreography of Busby Berkeley, whom Morris truly admires calling him a “Great genius” and “The one” (personal intvw.140). In fact, Morris named these kinds of patterns “Busby Berkeley canons,” often using this term to communicate to his dancers what kind of sequencing he desires. One of such canons can be found in the movie *Gold Diggers* (1935) directed by Berkeley (Thames), in the musical number titled *Lullaby of Broadway*, where lines of men and women are separated by staircases, with the latter five steps higher than the former. The women fall backward in the men’s arms and are lifted back onto their feet in a metachronal wave (TheJudyRoomVideo). Another structure found in Berkeley’s choreography is what Morris calls a chrysanthemum (“M. Morris: The Hid. Soul of Har.”) formation, consisting of three concentric circles rotating in opposite directions. This formation is found in the *Finale* and conclusion of *L’Allegro*, and in the Berkeley’s musical number titled *By a Waterfall*, featured in the movie *Footlight Parade* (1933) directed by Lloyd Bacon (Miller).

However, these configurations and patterns discussed above can be found in folk dances as well. Morris’ eclecticism comprises a vast variety of sources, which is what makes his style so

diverse. Acocella underlines the “multiplicity of discourses,” in the postmodernism era from which Morris work originated (*M. Morris” L’all., il Pen. Ed il Mod.* 19), and Croce commented on his assimilation of the past, as previously quoted (on page 11). However, Morris himself considers the process of assimilation and integration as the normal formative and developmental stages of culture, “Of course, for me cultural appropriation is the same thing as culture. That’s it. There is no pure culture, there never has been...it’s like ‘May I please borrow those noodles so I can invent spaghetti when I am back home?’ Everybody thinks that they invent something and they own it, but nobody does” (personal intvw.139). When discussing past influences in his work, he also added: “People are watching my dancers spin and they think ‘Oh, that’s a Sufi, that’s Dervish,’ well, kind of, but so is this step taken directly from this style of dancing from Georgia or Armenia and you don’t know that, I do. So, if you want to say this is from here and here, I think very few artists do that” (personal intvw.141). Morris is correct in this assumption because, at this point in history, the origin of every movement a choreographer utilizes can be traced back to a particular heritage, whether acknowledged or not, and should therefore be considered part of the global cultural mosaic of movement.

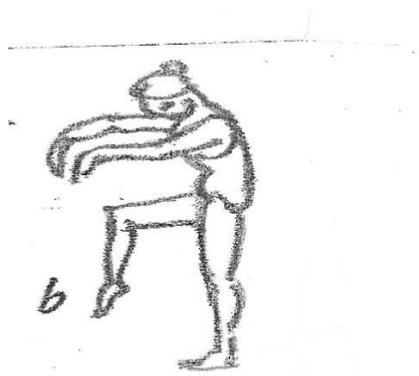
## Technical Aspects of Morris' Style

It is from this mosaic of movement styles that Morris draws his material. Dance critic Judith Mackrel from *The Independent*, commented on his cultural baggage when he first moved to Belgium:

Morris works with a much broader and subtle definition of dance (than Bejart). For instance, from Balanchine he is inherited this almost classical regard for form. He is interested in making people think and look, and listen as well as feel. He is also the heir of American choreographers like Paul Taylor and Merce Cunningham, who have given a new focus to the debate about what dance is. What the difference really is about dance and everyday movement. (“M. Morris: The Hid. Soul of Har.”)

Morris himself admitted not knowing where is the fine line between what is considered dancing and what is not: “All we really have to work with here is walking and running and turning and falling and stuff. You can do it a bunch of different ways and one of those ways is ballet. So if you are walking, and you are walking at the same time music is playing, maybe is dancing. All movement is dramatic” (“M. Morris: The Hid. Soul of Harm.”). His choices of movement in *L'Allegro* perfectly illustrate this ideology, providing, as mentioned, an integration of ballet, modern, folk dance and pedestrian movement.

From the modern dance past, Morris utilized some shapes resembling some of the Duncan and Humphrey forms. For instance, in the first act section *Mountains* and the second act section *Gorgeous Tragedy*, during the solo dancers' turn, it is possible to observe a shape that is very similar to Duncan's “Running Tanagra Figure” illustrated by Donna Wickes in Julia Levien's book *Duncan Dance: A Guide For Young People Ages Six To Sixteen* (10). (Figure 3)



### 1.8 Tanagra figures-

Figure 3.

This shape is produced by raising both arms to shoulder height, with the hands hanging toward the floor, while one knee is raised forward at 90°, with the foot hanging toward the floor. The only difference with Morris' shape is the arms positions, which is parallel in the Duncan's pose but crossed and higher in Morris'. There is also another similar shape in Ernestine Stodelle's book *The Dance Technique of Doris Humphrey And Its Creative Potential*, with drawings from Teri Loren, in a sequence of barre stretches that resolves in an arched position (181) (figure 4).

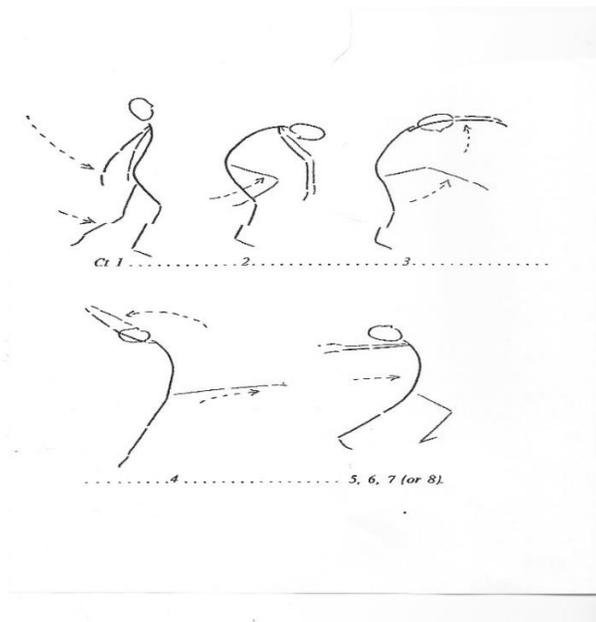


Figure 4.

The third shape of this sequence is similar to the one discussed above but is in *demi-plié*, with the lifted leg further extended, and the arms are higher as in Morris' version. Therefore, the latter might be considered as a *mélange* of both Duncan's and Humphrey's shapes. In addition, the very last shape in figure 4, where the spine is hyperextended, is often utilized in *L'Allegro* during the birds' sections or some of the running exits as in the section *The Diet Dances*.

Because of the association between Humphrey and Limón, Morris' use of the torso is also similar to that of the latter. Again, there is a preference in cervical-thoracic spine flexion and extension as opposed to the lumbar spine region. This manner of working the spine is described by one of Limón's dancers, Daniel Lewis, in his book *The Illustrated Dance Technique of José Limón*, illustrated by Edward C. Scattergood. In describing an exercise called "Rebounds in Threes," Lewis illustrates a circular motion of the upper-body while the hips are stable and unaffected by the spine flexion (92). In this drawing, it is possible to observe the cervical-thoracic spine flexing and rotating around a neutral pelvis position in *demi-plié* (figure 5).

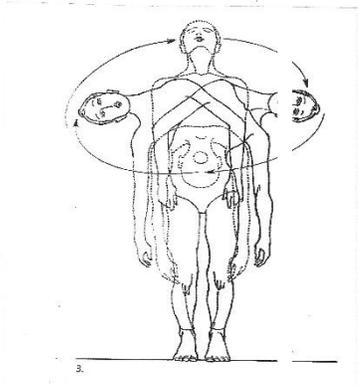


Figure 5.

This exact motion is utilized by Morris in the last section, the *Finale*, when all three concentric circles are established and the dancers prepare to locomote in opposite directions. In a strict canon of 1 count interval, each group rotates the torso, accompanied by one arm, in order to extend it and join hands.

Similar circular motions are also described by Stodelle as part of many of Humphrey's exercises such as the "Horizontal Torso Swings" (94) or the vertical version of "Swings with Vertical Circle Patterns" (75). These motions are meant to mobilize the spine on a stable base, that of the legs and pelvis, and utilize the momentum of rebound after riding the gravitational pull to its fullest extension. Hence, it results in an image of lightness and freedom, but in reality is a highly guided process. In this regard, Acocella describes Morris' work as highly artificial, "However natural the dancers' bodies may look, what they are doing is not natural" (*M. Morris* 87). Fehlandt described his work as "A lot of stable pelvis with an upper-back twist" (personal intvw.157), while Omura underlines another aspect of his movement signature: "You have to be able to curve your torso and understand that you are not effecting the base from the waist down...but the reason you don't fall over is not exactly the fall and recover from Doris Humphrey, but because you have this grounded base below the waist. That may come from folk dance..." (telephone intvw.164).

Folk dance is usually quite erect in the body and extremely articulate in the extremities, due to the natural tendencies of people, considering that the human body is designed to stand erect and, as Acocella points out, big torso articulations are not natural. However, Morris blends the torso work of folk and the modern dance into a particular fashion, which allows for full movement, as in Limón and Humphrey's range, but with pelvis stability, as in the folk dance tradition and as described by Omura. Especially in *L'Allegro*, due to the layer of balletic

material, this verticality is quite present and recalls Limón's words: "We have taken the ballet technique and gave it an American inflection" (*Limón: A Life Beyond Words*). In reality, even if ballet technique is viewed as vertical and working against gravity, it allows for ample flexibility of the upper-body, not as an accompaniment, but often integral part of the steps' execution. Morris agrees with this view and adds that ballet used to be quite adventurous (personal intvw.138).

There is yet another aspect of Morris' use of the torso: its classicism. As mentioned, he described himself as a traditional choreographer (Acocella *M. Morris* 64), which is validated by his work's similarities to Duncan and Humphrey's styles, that were modern and innovative, but still derived from a base of classical forms. In addition, it is the transitional quality of movement Morris utilizes between these forms that is also traditional or as Williams describes it, "lends itself so much more to ballet and modern dance architecture. Whereas Ohad (Naharin, her previous employer/choreographer) was all about sensation, feeling, and drama" (personal intvw.172). Because of this classicism, the movement is fluid and even though it ranges in intensity, it is still clearly delineated rather than blurred by a multitude of simultaneous actions, which is more often involved in other contemporary choreographic approaches such as Naharin's for example. The difference is comparable to other visual arts as for instance painting where a Caravaggio expresses emotions through linear detailed images as opposed to a Picasso painting, which utilizes cubism to superimpose a multitude of images as a way of expression.

The same observations can be made regarding Morris' use of the arms and head. In *L'Allegro*, he transitions seamlessly between modern, ballet and folk styles and utilizes a wide variety of gestures. The head sometimes moves with a pedestrian manner common to folk dance and is sometimes highly held as in the ballet tradition, or in a Duncan like pose. By carefully

guiding the head, Morris produces distinct expressions. For instance, by tilting the head backward, as the leaps and runs in the *Finale* (visible in Escoffier and Lore's book, p.123-125), a feeling of abandonment is suggested whether it is joy, or worship. By tilting the head sideways, the expression changes according to the orientation of the head. If the head is tilted side but still faces forward, as in the prancing step in the *Crickets*, then it inspires a friendly and nurturing emotion, but if it faces downward, as in *Orpheus* after sighting his beloved Eurydice, it gives an impression of refusal or shunning. Finally, if the head faces down toward the ground, it indicates a feeling of sorrow or defeat if it is done with a heavy passive weight, but if it is a binding action, then it functions as an honoring and bowing gesture. Both examples occur in the *Melancholic Octet* with the previously described "to live" and "give" gestures (on p.42-43) (visible in Escoffier and Lore's book, p. 110).

The arms' stylistic approach also falls under the classifications of ballet, modern and folk tones, with the addition of gestures. For instance, a very balletic shape, observable in *The Ladies' Dance* and the *Finale* section of Escoffier and Lore's book (97 and 122), accompanies the *piqués* or *temps levés* in a parallel *attitude derrière* that occur also in the *Three Graces* and *Sweet Bird* sections. The arms are in a balletic French third position *allongé* and rise with the leg. A Duncan like shape can be observed during the leap in the *Finale*, or the *temps levé* in the *B* section of *The Walking Duet*, where the arms are performing a balletic second position but the palms are faced either upward or downward as the torso twists to bring the arms anteriorly and posteriorly relative to the body's orientation. This shape can be observed in Levien's book, in the illustration of Duncan's "Long Skip" exercise, accompanied by this description: "Swing arms...in opposition to legs...Swing arms deeply, elbows bent forward" (49). Another similarity with Duncan, shown in a picture from Escoffier and Lore's book photographed by Ken Friedman, is

observable during the first act's *Three Graces* section, when the dancers are linked together holding their hands while their arms are held high in a V position (figure 6). This same configuration is illustrated in Levien's book (57), for a group practice of one of Duncan's waltzing step (see figure 6).

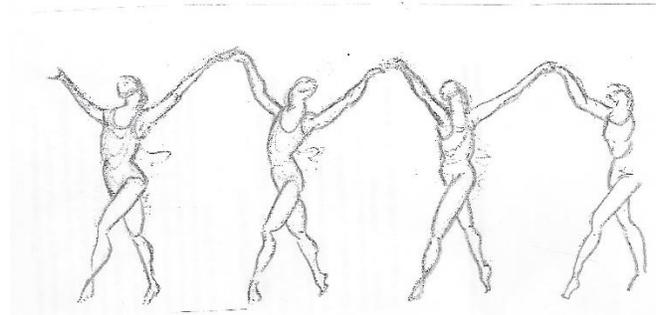


Figure 6.

Top. by Ken Friedman. from left: June Omura, Julie Worden and Mireille Radwan Dana.

Bottom. Donna Wickes design in Levien's book. p.57.

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However, holding hands is also common in folk dance formations as Morris mentions: "I have gotten a lot of information from different ethnic dance forms that has changed my work...I do line dances and circle dances because I love them...I use a circle that's closed and we are allowed to watch it...just like ...a dance from another culture" (Escoffier and Lore 146-147).

Morris utilized big circles holding hands in the two closing sections of act one and two,

respectively *Merry Bells* and the *Finale*. In *Merry Bells*, while performing a running step (three runs and one hop) six quartets become four circles of six dancers each, then two circles of twelve, and end in a big circle with all twenty-four dancers. This is the only time it happens in the whole dance since in the *Finale*, there are three concentric circles traveling in opposite directions.

Folk dance has influenced Morris' tendency toward gestures as well. When asked about the implementation of gestures, Morris replied that it is part of human expression, "That's how people on earth communicate. Nobody cares about what your legs are doing... You don't have to use words at all to get a message across. I am interested in communication, so obviously that's facial and gestural everywhere in the world" (personal intvw.136). As previously discussed in the discourse on Morris' different music interpretations, much of the text in *L'Allegro* is synchronized to specific gestures that repeat each time the words are pronounced or repeat out of textual content, paired with a different significance. One of such instances is the praying-like "give" gesture in *Melancholic Octet* that is first introduced in *Crickets* representing both begging and crickets' wings rubbing. Escoffier and Lore observe: "*L'Allegro's* gestural language is permeated by a vast and subtle network of metaphorical transformations: Two clasped hands in a gesture of supplication are transformed into the wings of crickets rubbing together to make the sound of chirping. Later in the dance (in *Melancholic Octet* with the "give" gesture) that gesture is transposed back again into two hands in melancholic prayer" (144).

Additional examples are the gestures for earth, water, fire, and air in *Each Action*, which get repeated in the second act section *Weary Age*. Due to the textual content regarding old age, the gestures are performed at a slow tempo and backward, as if reflecting on one's past and reliving life's events in reversed order. Jordan writes: "In the quartet *Weary Age*...often what

you see are dance words from the past (from previous sections of *L'Allegro*), recycled within a new verbal and affective context. As well as carrying memories and multiple resonances, the dance words are a metaphor for the wealth of knowledge that comes with age” (206).

In connection with Williams’ previous observation about how Morris’ creative process is largely informed by visual art viewings (40), a motion with an interesting association is the St. Lucy’s gesture. Omura recalls when it was first choreographed:

In *Sage and Holy*, *Hymen*, and *Day’s Garish Eye* there is sort of a blindness or sight gesture. When Morris was choreographing this...I happened to know this because my sister studied early Flemish painting...St. Lucy is the saint you always see pictured with a plate that looks like she has two fried eggs on it. But they are actually her eyeballs. She was martyred by having her eyes plucked out. So Mark did this gesture, and he said: “It’s like your holding your eyeballs on two stalks. Who’s that saint?” and I said: “St. Lucy.” (Escoffier and Lore 146)

The three sections that contain this gesture are actually *Sage and Holy*, *Come, Come* and *Day’s Garish Eye*. The gesture is produced by bringing the dorsal surfaces of both hands in front of the eyes, with elbows extended laterally and the fingers clumped together as if holding the eyeballs on the fingertips, while arching and standing in a balletic parallel sixth position. In *Sage and Holy*, the gesture is performed on the word “sight,” alternatively between the men and women. In *Come, Come*, the two central figures dancing on the melodic sections of the partition, perform the gesture on the word “eyes.” Finally, in *Day’s Garish Eyes*, the protagonist of the depicted story performs the gesture on the word “display’d,” followed by “Softly on my eyelids laid.” A detailed picture of Omura performing this gesture can be observed in Escoffier and Lore’s book (on p.90).

Since *L'Allegro*’s text explores human behavior, Morris choreographed other gestures depicting viewing, singing, eating, and listening. These gestures range from complex, such as the “pleasures” gestures in *Melancholic Octet* (described on p.42), to simple, such as the “notes”

gesture in *The Ladies Dance*, that is repeated by Omura, as the protagonist, in *Day's Garish Eye*, on the word "above." This gesture has the right arm raised to bring the right hand in proximity to the ear as one would do to augment the auditory capacity and better listen to a faraway sound. The simple gestures are minimalistic in content and therefore require a performer to fully embrace the motion, initiating the movement from the totality of the whole body rather than utilizing its parts in isolation. What this means is that even though only an arm might be moving, the entire body is involved, physically and emotionally, in the action. There is an energetic intention uniting the body even in stillness. A performer is still dancing even if just standing. Truly, the physical structure of a body is muscularly connected as a whole. As described by Dr. Theodor Dimon Jr. in his article "The Organization of Movement. Four Talks on the Primary Control. Part One: The Architecture: How Muscles Work in the Context of Skeletal Framework," the human body is a tensegrity structure, where oppositional forces in tension create the balance, supported by the strength of the bones and the elasticity of the muscles (21). This means that movement in one area affects the whole and should therefore be supported by it. Including when standing, since it involves movement that opposes the gravitational pull.

This capacity to continue dancing even in stillness is necessary since often, in Morris pieces, dancers perform minimalistic movements or simply stand. His folk dance heritage makes him unafraid to employ an array of natural human behavior while fully utilizing gravity. Acocella writes: "Morris dancers tend to stand in *demi-plié*...with their feet flat on the floor. They look solid and you can feel their weight in your mind. And often, when they jump...they land with a thud" (76) This results not from carelessly landing, but from carefully guiding the body weight and riding the pull of gravity toward the floor in order to rebound and continue to the next step whatever that might be. In fact, at times this momentum is used to increase pressure

onto the floor for various purposes such as jumping off of it, stomping, or changing direction. Again, this is a combination of modern and folk dance techniques. The floor functions not only as a support, but as a partner as well.

In many sections of *L'Allegro*, Morris utilized folk dance steps taken directly from his formative background. He mentioned: “Dances from Croatia, Scotland, Bulgaria, Greece, Morris dancing, English dances, Eastern European dances...Spanish dances” (personal intvw.134). Specifically, the previously described Romanian-Bulgarian *Wallachian* step in *Haste Thee Nymph* (on p.39-40), paired with a “direct quotation from a Croatian dance” (Escoffier and Lore 147), in which the step involves jumping up and down with a specific rhythm composed of two quarter notes and three eighth notes. Another step aforementioned (on p.51) is the direct quotation of a Bulgarian *Thrace* performed at a slower tempo in *The Walking Duet*. Finally, the first segment of *Merry Bells* is a quadrille that relates to a contra-dance from New England and Britain, as well as Morris dancing and square dancing (personal intvw.135). It employs quartets of dancers performing intricate exchanges of placement by crossing, circling, or rotating around each other. Indeed, the grounded style of folk dance permeates Morris’ movement style in many other instances such as the five-step turns in *Populous Cities*, discussed for the canon execution (on p.31-34), which share the same characteristics of the Croatian step by being very rhythmic and grounded.

Another characteristic of folk dance that Morris likes, is the relaxed foot often utilized by Duncan as well. During her interview, Fehlandt commented on how hard it was to jump with relaxed feet and how she struggled to do so. She also mentioned that *L'Allegro* was the first time Morris asked for balletic pointed feet (personal intvw.153). Morris likes the shape that a relaxed foot produces, telling his dancers he wants the line to look softer, and rarely utilizes the fully

flexed position (dorsal flexion). The relaxed foot is found in the folk steps of *Haste Thee Nymph* and *The Walking Duet*, plus in the kicks that the crickets perform and the *attitudes derrière* in the *Melancholic Octet*, clearly visible in Escoffier and Lore's book (Julie Worden on p.112). The latter is the most difficult because it is sustained during the slow and repetitive *relevés* previously described (on p.43). Normally, during a balance the distal limbs are important because they energetically support the shape as if actively rising even though they do not. In other words, it is the idea of rising that keeps the shape energized and helps stabilize it. But if the lifted foot is in a relaxed position, it counterbalances the intention of rising, making it more difficult to energize the shape.

In addition, every foot action that is involved in the folk dance steps is guided and intentional even though it may appear to be free and casual because of its pedestrian form. It is not because the steps are executed with relaxed legs and feet that they are not choreographically set. On the contrary, they are very specific and more difficult to perform due to the unfamiliarity of the technique for most modern dancers. A performer needs to temporarily let go of the ballet and modern dance forms and channel the movement in a more pedestrian manner while maintaining a skilled level of technique required for the intricate and expressive steps.

This concept mirrors the earlier discourse about supporting a simple action with the totality of the body while intentionally retaining the pedestrian form. That is why Morris often tells his dancers that they are "faking it" if he feels that they are too artificial, as in the balletic and modern dance forms, when he wants them to look human. The key to a full commitment to the movement, for which he searches, is simplicity and complexity simultaneously working together, woven through a blend of ballet, modern and ethnic techniques.

For this reason, often Morris' dancers comment on his attention to details and call his requests "super specific" (Williams personal intvw.173). At times the details go as far as to involve specific fingers' positions, as in many of the gestures. Only his dancers are aware of how detailed his vision is and the hard work it takes to manifest it. Luckily, some critics do too. Acocella describes: "the steps themselves, plain though they may look, are highly artificial" (*M. Morris* 86), and Anna Kisselgoff, of the *New York Times*, also wrote after first viewing *L'Allegro* in 1990, "His shapes and patterns can become fiercely complex" (C11). Indeed, because of the complexity of Morris' layering of material, his request for specificity is essential for a satisfactory result. This involves all aspects, not just the technical but also the rhythmical execution along with exact spatial placement. The previous detailed analysis of many of the canons and choreographic systems exemplified such necessity.

As for the deceptive nature of his work, Omura offers a helpful commentary as to why the simplicity, or minimalism, that is often mistaken for easily achievable, on the contrary, is the result of hard work and a specific vision:

Isadora (Duncan) had this somewhat artificial run that ended up looking free and natural where you really pick up your knees as you run. You would have to engage your abdominal muscles to make the legs look so free and then on top of that you had this Limón-ish, Doris Humphrey-ish freedom in your upper-body, but there was a completely grounded, strong support so that you could hold all that together. In her technique class, it was hard to make it look so free. Mark's got that as well, where you look so free but it's really specific while you are holding it together with this inner strength that shouldn't be physical necessarily, but consciously holding on, because he wants it to look natural. (telephone intvw.164-165)

Therefore, the reason Morris also describes it as "not free" ("Mark Morris at 'On the Board'"), is because such esthetic is a carefully crafted choreographic style. In sum, the minimalistic aspect in *L'Allegro* results from the ethnic influence in his work, but is deceptively simple because it involves meticulously crafted forms and rhythms which can be supported by balletic and modern

techniques, but can exist on their own. In addition, there is a heavily balletic influence, which is intertwined with a modern form resembling Duncan, Humphrey, and Limón techniques. Of course, this observation regards *L'Allegro* in particular since Morris has a wide variety of forms informed by the equal variety of music he utilizes. Acocella writes: "There is also a great deal of music in the world, and this helps to account for the great variety of Morris' repertory" (*M. Morris* 181). This is a true observation, confirmed by Morris himself by this aforementioned quote: "Every dance starts directly from a piece of music."

## **IV. Pedagogical Analysis of *L'Allegro,* *il Penseroso ed il Moderato***

### **Through the Lens of Laban Movement Analysis**

As shown, *L'Allegro* is a mélange of simultaneous simplicity and complexity, where basic elements transform into the multilayered structures of the canons and choreographic system designs. Attesting to this, *The Wall Street Journal* critic Dale Harris wrote; “The naturalness of the choreography is deceptive...repeated viewings only make clearer the complexity and richness of the choreographer’s art, not to mention the technical skills of his performers” (A13). Precisely from a performing perspective, it contains an extensive amount of material, making it a wonderful piece to utilize in a pedagogical setting. Hence, in the third chapter Morris’ choreography was discussed from the technical and artistic standpoint pertaining to traditional dance training. Here, it will be analyzed through the lens of dance education, which focuses on the elements of movement according to Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). The discourse will show how *L'Allegro* can serve as an exploration of LMA’s elements for the students, as they observe how these constituents manifest in Morris’ choreography. Additionally, the discussion will include analyses through further elaborations of said system, adapted to younger populations by the New York City based Dance Education Laboratory, and the Seattle based dance educator Anne Green Gilbert. For this purpose, this chapter will begin with a brief general introduction to LMA, and subsequently alternate between introduction of some elements, in their respective category, and their observation in Morris’ work. First, here are a few words on Laban.

Rudolf Laban (Hungary, 1879- England, 1956) was a European dance theorist, teacher and choreographer whose studies of human movement provided a foundation for the

development of European modern dance and elevated the status of dance, legitimizing it as art and as a scholarly practice. He eventually codified a system of dance notation called Labanotation as well as developed a study of movement that laid the foundation for what is now Laban Movement Analysis (Preston-Dunlop). Laban believed that dance could exist independently from music and drama, as pure motion (Maletic 6). He was interested in observing the basic factors of movement which he categorized into *Body*, *Effort*, *Space* and *Shape* (BESS). However, he initiated only a part of what constitutes the LMA today because many of his initial inquiries were further developed by his students, such as Irmgard Bartenieff, who developed the *Body* category creating the “Bartenieff Fundamentals,” or Warren Lamb, who developed most of the *Shape* category’s constituents.

The following is only a brief review of the basic structure of LMA this present day, with a separate chart for *Relationship* because both LMA practitioner Dr. Carol-Lynne Moore and somatic movement therapist Peggy Hackney, list it as another important aspect of LMA. Although not a category, but rather a unifying component, it concerns the relationship of the body to itself, others and the environment (Hackney 16-18, 237) linking all kinetic aspects, which function (or should) holistically in all movement. For a better view, both charts are shown in the next page.

| <b>BODY</b><br>(WHAT)  | <b>EFFORT</b><br>(HOW)  | <b>SPACE</b><br>(WHERE)   | <b>SHAPE</b><br>(WHY)  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Body parts actions:</b><br>flexion, rotation, etc.  | <b>Motion factors:</b><br><u>flow</u> - free/bound<br><u>space</u> - direct/indirect<br><u>weight</u> - light/strong<br>or increasing/decreasing<br><u>time</u> - sudden/sustained<br>or<br>accelerate/decelerate | <b>Levels:</b><br>High, middle, low   | <b>Symmetry:</b><br>symmetrical,<br>asymmetrical   |
| <b>Body parts relationship:</b><br>posture, gesture, etc.                                      | <b>Effort combinations:</b><br><u>states</u> - 2 motion factors<br><u>drives</u> - 3 motion factors<br><u>full efforts</u> - 4 motion factors   | <b>Directions:</b><br>dimensions, diameters,<br>diagonals, etc.   | <b>Movement sequence:</b><br>mono-linear, poly-linear,<br>chordic                                      |
| <b>Relationship to limbs:</b><br>support, gesture, bilateral,<br>unilateral, upper-lower, etc. | <b>Rhythm:</b><br>metric, non-metric, tempo,<br>etc.  | <b>Spatial path:</b><br>straight, curved, etc.  | <b>Still forms:</b><br>pin, ball, screw, wall,<br>tetrahedron  |
| <b>Body parts phrasing:</b><br>simultaneous, successive,<br>etc.                               | <b>Tempo:</b><br>slow, moderate, etc.   | <b>Reach space:</b><br>near, middle, far  | <b>Modes of shape change:</b><br>shape flow,<br>directional (spoke-like, arc-<br>like)<br>carving      |
| <b>Body usage:</b><br>isolation, part leading, etc.  |   | <b>Approach to kinesphere:</b><br>central, peripheral,<br>transverse  | <b>Shape qualities:</b><br>spreading/enclosing,<br>rising/sinking,<br>advancing/retreating             |
| <b>Use of trunk:</b><br>one unite, differentiated, etc.  |   | <b>Dimensionality:</b><br>one, two, or three<br>dimensions  | <b>Shape flow support:</b><br>internal shape form that<br>shifts with breathing<br>(growing/shrinking) |
| <b>Use of center of weight:</b><br>understanding body center of<br>gravity                     |   | <b>Use of general space:</b><br>place, size, level, etc.  |  |
| <b>Body actions:</b><br>locomotion, turn, ect.   |   | <b>Orientations:</b><br>above, below, in front, etc.  |  |
|  |   | <b>Space harmonies:</b><br>specific spatial scales based<br>on Platonic solids, which are<br>connected to<br>dimensionalities |  |
| (Fluty; Hackney 238-239;<br>Moore)   | (Hackney239-241)  | (Brooks 32; Hackney 243-<br>247; Moore)   | (Hackney 241-243; Moore)   |

| <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>  |
|---|
| <b>Grouping:</b><br>single file, line, circle, scattered, etc.  |
| <b>Contact:</b><br>touching, grasping, supporting, etc.   |
| <b>Relationship play:</b><br>with, sharing, against   |
| <b>Orientation:</b><br>opposite, above, etc.  |
| <b>Kinespheric relation:</b><br>near to, far apart, etc.  |
| <b>Group relationships:</b><br>leading, following, contrasting, mirroring, echoing, synchrony, asynchrony |

----- *Body category* -----

As mentioned, LMA's *Body* category was mostly developed by Bartenieff, who studied with Laban in Germany where she started her career as a dancer. She later moved to the United States and became a physical therapist, while still teaching dance and integrating her LMA knowledge with both practices (Levy 113). She eventually developed the "Bartenieff Fundamentals," which are a series of exercises based on early patterns of neurological development in infants (Hackney 44), meant to support coordination and balance within the physical and emotional body (Levy 117). The Fundamentals are mostly practiced in a semi-supine position and particularly geared toward the lower body since Bartenieff worked extensively with polio patients. They are:

- Preparation is Heel Rock.

While supine, the heels press on the ground to rock the body in the vertical dimension relative to the body.

- Femoral Flexion.

Flexes the hip in the sagittal plane, focusing on the iliopsoas muscle and coordinates the pelvic-femoral rhythm.

- Sagittal Pelvic Shift.

Mobilizes the pelvis in the sagittal direction.

- Lateral Pelvic Shift.

Mobilizes the pelvis in the lateral direction.

- Body Half.

While supine in an X shape, brings homo-lateral knee and elbow toward each other, moving the body with left and right body-halves' differentiation.

- Diagonal Knee Reach.

Starts in a semi-supine position and both knees drop laterally, creating a cross-lateral connection between the knees and the opposite arm.

- Arm Circle.

Practiced in conjunction with knee reach, Moves the opposite arm in circles along the floor, coordinates eye-hand connection and scapula-humeral rhythm, while narrowing and widening across the sternum. (Woodruff 11-13)

From these, a new set of organizational tools were developed and categorized into “Fundamental Patterns of Total Body Connectivity” by Hackney, who studied and worked with Bartenieff in New York City for fifteen years (Hackney 1). The patterns are:

- Breath.
- Core-Distal Connectivity.
- Head-Tail Connectivity.
- Upper-Lower Connectivity.
- Body-Half Connectivity.
- Cross-Lateral Connectivity. (Hackney 14, 45)

These connections also involve coordination and balance within the whole body and operate in the Bartenieff’s basic six. Ideally, all patterns work simultaneously within whole-body movements, as in a grid of connecting mechanisms that complement and support each other. However, it is possible in some cases to observe the actions of the basic six and the patterns of connectivity distinctly as, for example, in some of the movements in *L’Allegro*. At first, students’ attention can be focused on these particular instances, to understand how to identify them, how the coordination involved serves the body as a whole, and how they pertain to the development of a strong base for physical activity as well as dance technique. Thereafter, they can observe these connections in Morris’ work.

For example, in the femoral flexion the stability of the pelvis allows the mobility of the femur to operate. Furthermore, the efficient functioning of the pelvic-femoral rhythm, supports both the movement of the femur as well as the movement of the pelvis because the supporting action functions binarily. Hence, the sagittal and lateral pelvic shifts are the following operational stages for establishing a solid base for movement coordination since they allow the femur and pelvis to work together and fortify their relationship in order to transfer weight efficiently. The same principle operates in the upper-lower and body-half connectivities, where each component functions as a mover and a stabilizer. And so, the next level of coordination is the cross-lateral connectivity, which requires coordination between the right upper-body-half and the left lower-body-half (or vice-versa), crossing the body in a diagonal path and making possible the more complex mechanism for locomotion, such as walking and running.

A section of *L'Allegro* that offers a good opportunity for observation of the basic six and the patterns of connectivity is *Crickets*, where three central dancers perform a movement sequence with jumps, turns and leg extensions. They enter traveling with a prancing step and suddenly leap sideways, a “lateral pelvic shift,” to begin their movement phrases. Here, the standing leg must push firmly onto the floor to propel the pelvis in a sideways trajectory. The strength and stability of said leg determine the quality of the leap. Immediately after landing from the leap, the dancers tap and lift their right leg in the sagittal plane, which is a “femoral flexion,” then they take two steps backward, hop and turn on their right foot as they lift the left leg forward in another “femoral flexion.” Since it is performed in the standing position, the standing leg and the pelvis work together to supports the working leg. Next, they execute a series of *piqués* with homo-lateral arm and leg lifted in the sagittal plane. Here, is possible to observe the “body-half connectivity.” Again, the standing body-half sustains the working body-half, while the latter

does not interfere with its alignment with the floor, permitting it to stabilize and balance. Then the dancers slide forward with a “sagittal pelvic shift,” which requires the standing leg to utilize the floor as a support to mobilize the pelvis as they kneel, lean forward and join their hands in the praying-like gesture. The latter position shows an “upper-lower” pattern since the two body-halves are functionally differentiated. Then, after a few more steps, they stretch into a balance requiring a “cross-lateral” pattern in order to stand on their right leg while extending the right arm and left leg laterally in opposite directions. Here, the body is in balance on the standing leg thanks to the opposing actions of the working limbs. This motion also involves a “core-distal” pattern since the limbs move from a near to a far reaching shape.

The other constituents of the *Body* category as Laban first listed them, such as “body parts actions,” “use of trunk,” and “body parts phrasing,” have already been mentioned in the description of Morris’ choreography due to their use in dance anatomy, besides being involved in the Bartenieff Fundamentals because the latter are the core of the mechanisms that result in those actions. Additionally, the “body actions” elements are often utilized in a less meticulous analysis. For example, one can refer to locomotion or jumping as opposed to specifics such as “center of weight” transfer and “pelvic shift” elements.

----- *Effort* category -----

The next category of LMA is *Effort*, which contains the motion factors of flow, space, weight, and time. As shown in the chart, for each of them Laban identified two opposing sides of the spectrum. “Flow” is concerned with the degree of energy and muscular tension involved in a movement. “Space” regards the relationship to the environment and how attention is focused. “Weight” relates to the use of weight and pressure. “Time” involves the intended duration to

complete a task. (Newlove and Dalby 112-128) These are easily relatable to the movement in *L'Allegro*.

To observe bound and free **flow**, the *Three Graces* section is ideal. In it, the dancers execute a step previously mentioned to describe Morris' style (on p.71) consisting in a parallel *attitude derrière* performed as *piqués* or as *temps levés* at a fast tempo, with free flow. In contrast, the "come" gesture, formerly discussed for its association to the text (on p.46), requires the upper-body to bind and operate as one unit in order to form its correct quality. This is clearly visible because, as the dancers bring the arms in a balletic first position in the right-forward direction and circle them in the sagittal plane, the torso and arms are held in a fixed shape that expresses the gesture in its entirety. Additionally, the legs are in a balletic second position in *demi-plié* and respond to the activity of the upper-body by accompanying the circle.

The **space** factor has the direct and indirect elements regarding the attention and focus to space. Most of the movement in *L'Allegro* is very direct. Morris' classical forms require clear intentions and patterns, especially during the complex choreographic systems. For example, in the aforementioned *Finale* canon (on p.54-56) the dancers must direct their movement with high precision in order to produce the spatial accuracy that that system requires. Nevertheless, an indirect spatial approach is found in *The Hunt*, where the two dancers representing the foxes run across the stage in search of safety from the dogs and hunters who are chasing them. As the foxes frantically seek out the best route to escape, they continuously change path and focus, erratically. In an effort to find them, the dogs do the same.

As for increasing and decreasing **weight**, *The Stupid Men's Dance* offers a good example. Positioned in a circle of six male couples, following an opening series of pretend slapping across the face, each couple holds hands and performs eight parallel *balancés*, which are performed only emphasizing the decreasing pressure quality of the step, rotating the circle counterclockwise. Thereafter, they turn *en face* and start a series of jumps in a parallel balletic second position, shifting their torso and arms from side to side with each landing. During these landings, they visibly increase pressure on the floor to appear manly and strong. Next, they execute a few kicks, maintaining a grounded presence through strong weight but, immediately after, they return to their *balances*, decreasing pressure and picking their feet lightly off the ground. Morris choreographed this contrast to underline the dichotomy of the behaviors that oftentimes men display. One more example of weight factor, is the previously analyzed five step turn in *Populous Cities* (on p.31-34) that goes from increased weight during the preparation in *demi-plié*, to a decreased weight during the turn in *relevé*.

Next, the **time** factor is emphasized in the very opening section, *Mad Crossing*, that inspired thoughts of “creation” for Acocella and Macaulay (on p.26). The scene begins in near darkness. From each downstage corner, two dancers enter, running and rushing to exit in the opposite upstage corners, with the urgency of “accelerated” time. Additionally, the choreography itself accelerates time with the running entrances spaced in a strict canon of irregular intervals, the duration of which is halved every 8 counts. This means that dancers enter every 4 counts twice, every 2 counts four times, and every count seven times until the last two collide. Therefore, this canon creates the sensation of acceleration in the structure of the choreography as well as the rushed run.

In contrast, decelerated time can be viewed in the *Sage and Holy* section, during the partnering movements. A woman enters the stage from the downstage left corner, runs in a semicircular pathway and leaps in front of a man positioned on center-stage left. He catches her in mid-air, decelerating her momentum until he reverses her direction. Thereafter, she performs a *temps de fleche devant* (with both legs straight) while turning, on her way to another dancer, placed on center-stage right. Before arriving in front of him, she decelerates until she comes to a complete stop, to perform a partnering shape with him. Other definitions of time, are “sudden,” and “sustained.” The latter is apparent in most of *The Ladies’ Dance* section (second act), where there is very little variation in tempo, and the former is in the second entrance of part *B* of *The Walking Duet* section. Dancers enter from a corner taking two steps in *demi-plié*, then turn around with a sudden *piqué arabesque* in *demi-plié* and run to exit.

Certainly, all motion factors are simultaneously involved in movement to some degree, but there are instances where some are much more pronounced than others. For these motion factor combinations, Laban created categories of movements primarily containing two motion factors, called “states” (Newlove and Dalby 218-221), or three motion factors, called “drives” (Newlove and Dalby 129-130). A good example of a state is presented in *Hansel and Gretel*, where the protagonists, wander around the enchanted forest utilizing the motion factors of space and time, which corresponds to the “awake” state (Newlove and Dalby 218). They are aware of their space because they carefully observe and follow the actions that are unfolding in front of them, and their timing is accelerated or decelerated according to the spatial location of the events to which they get closer in order to observe. But in so doing, they do not exhibit any particular flow or weight element. As for drives, a good example comes with the Bulgarian *Thrace* in *The*

*Walking Duet*. This section shows the “spell drive” (Newlove and Dalby 222), containing mostly flow, space and weight, and where time is mainly unattended. In this line-dance, performers do change direction every four steps, but there is no real variation in the time element. The pathways continue to change and intertwine in a very orderly manner, as the lines seem to advance endlessly. Nevertheless, the space is direct, the weight is strong, and the flow is bound in their held shapes. These are just a few examples of the possibilities that *L’Allegro* offers, to analyze the *Effort* category of LMA.

----- *Space* category -----

The following main category in LMA is *Space*. This was Laban’s primary contribution to the system, being the category upon which he mostly elaborated. He created a system based on Platonic solids, which brought the flattened action of theatrical dance, caused by the proscenium view, back into a three-dimensional space. In this system, levels, directions, dimensions, and planes are intertwined into the Platonic solids. Certified Movement Analyst Lynn M. Brooks writes:

He used the constructs of Pythagorean mathematics to provide a foundation for his systematization of space: the circle-eternal and central to his view- could be poked, pushed, extended, prodded, compressed, and reshaped into a series of regular geometric forms. In three-dimensional space, the circle becomes a sphere, and the regular polygons which are made to emerge from the sphere are those taken from the “Platonic solids”-the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron, the dodecahedron, and the icosahedron. (32)

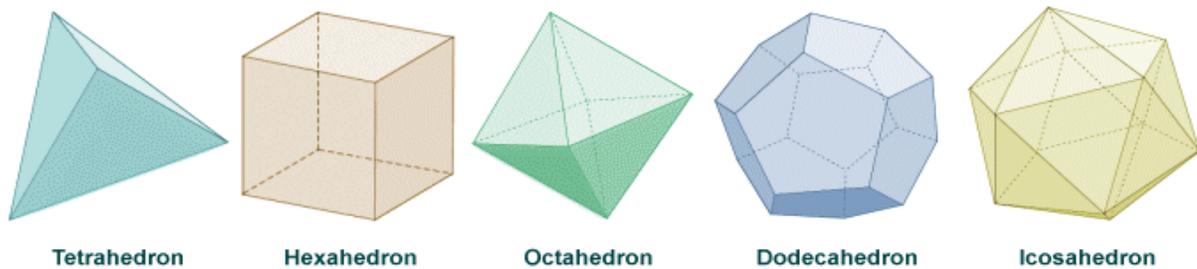


Figure 7.

Additionally, the term and concept of “harmony” was taken from music, meaning the harmonious sounds of a scale could be paralleled by the harmonious movement progression of a body, hence the reason why this system is called “Space Harmony” (Brooks 31). Laban constructed movement scales that relate to the solids and can be reproduced with precision. He worked with twenty-six directions constitutive of the kinesphere (Thiriot 9), which originate from dimensions, planes, and diagonals. There are eight directions for each level, plus up and down as shown in figure 8. Laban marked the low level in black, the middle level in a dotted white, and the high level in a striped white (Hackney 244-245).

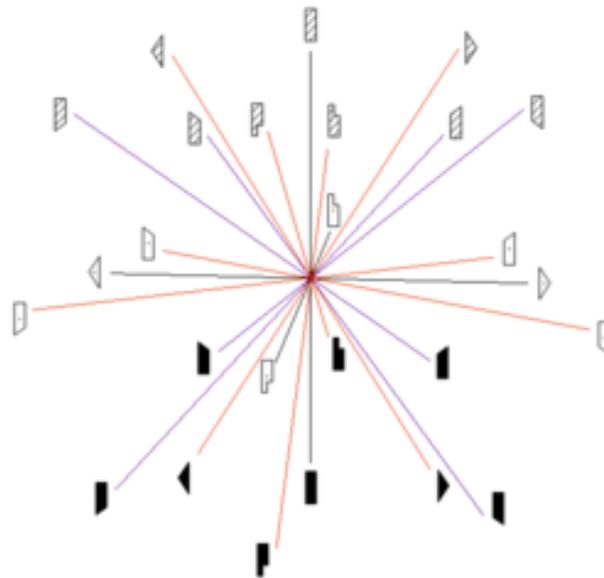


Figure 8.

Different combinations of special pulls in multiple directions form dimensions, planes, or diagonals, which in turn originate the solids as follows:

- Dimensions. Manifested from one spatial pull.
  - Vertical= up-down.
  - Horizontal= side-side.
  - Sagittal= forward-backward.

The solid that originates from these dimensions combined is the octahedron (Newlove and Dalby44-46).

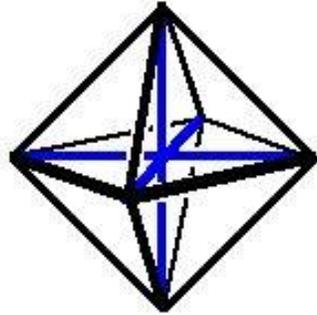


Figure 9.

- Planes. Manifested from two unequal spatial pulls.
  - Vertical= up-down (primary), side-side (secondary).
  - Horizontal= side-side (primary), forward-backward (secondary).
  - Sagittal= forward-backward (primary), up-down (secondary).

The solid that originates from these planes combined is the icosahedron (Newlove and Dalby 50-52). Lines that connect the opposite corners of a plane are called diameters.

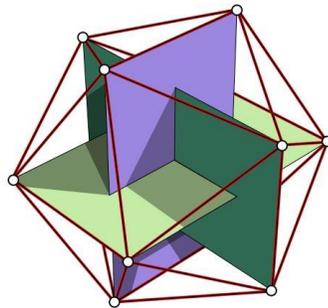


Figure 10.

- Diagonals. Manifested from three equal spatial pulls.

The solid that originates from the combined diagonals is the cube (Newlove and Dalby 28-38). An example of a diagonal is right-forward-high.

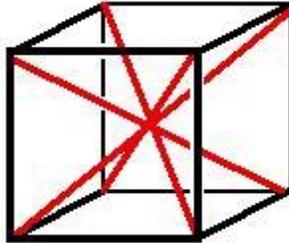


Figure 11.

- The tetrahedron is used to create three-dimensional shapes (Newlove and Dalby 39-43) with three points at the base and its vertex in space.
- The dodecahedron relates to the icosahedron because it possesses twelve faces and twenty vertices and the latter possesses twelve vertices and twenty faces. They both have thirty edges. However, Laban largely disregarded it because he associated it with smaller inward movement concerning stability rather than mobility, which was his primary interest (Newlove and Dalby 47).

Hence, the solids are necessary to understand the functions of the spatial pulls and their manifestations into dimensions, planes, diagonals and, in the next category, the shapes. However, even though LMA contains many more elements in the space category, for simplicity this segment will investigate Morris' choreography solely in relationship to the levels, directions and dimensional grouping (dimension, planes, etc.).

Regarding levels and directions, the ideal movements to explore these concepts are the previously described gestures (on p.61-63) in the *Each Action* section. A less detailed description

will be used here. For the “earth” gesture, while kneeling with both hands touching the floor in front of the body, dancers lift the torso and hands slightly upward, then return to the original position, moving in the sagittal plane on the low level. In the “water” motion, placed in *demi-plié* and leaning sideways, dancers move their bodies on the high level, while sweeping their arms from the left to the right side at shoulder level, on the horizontal plane. As for the “fire” movement, while rising in the vertical dimension on the high level, dancers’ hands press together, open, and join again at the top, to trace a teardrop shape representing a flame. Finally, in the “air” gesture, standing erect on the high level, dancers blow the air out toward the right-forward-high diagonal and hop briefly off the floor, traveling up and down in the vertical dimension.

A three-level formation is also in the *Sage and Holy* section, when the three women are holding an identical shape but while the downstage one is kneeling, the central one is standing, and the upstage one is being lifted. The dancers are positioned in a medium, high, and elevated high levels and because they are aligned in the sagittal dimension, the three bodies are distributed along the diameter that connect the backward-high corner to the forward-low corner of the sagittal plane, creating a level scale.

To investigate the planes element, the second act section *Hymen* offers many opportunities. The dance sequence that three couples perform, moves through the three planes alternatively, as if Morris was keeping in mind balance while he choreographed it. The analysis will follow the movements of the woman of a single couple, not including those of her male partner. As the couple enters from downstage left, she turns to place her back against her partner, who supports her, holding her under the arms. Now facing the audience, she moves both legs sequentially from left to right, at a 90° height, in the horizontal plane. Continuing to move toward

stage right, she executes a *soutenu* in the left direction, circling her right arm counterclockwise along the vertical plane. Next, she performs a *temps levé*, supported by her partner, still moving in the vertical plane toward stage right, while directing the jump to the right-side-high direction, between a sideline and an *arabesque*. Then, she lands and brings both arms upward in the sagittal plane, while her partner takes her by the waist in preparation to flip her over his shoulders. In doing so, her legs lift upward and over in the sagittal plane. After a few more lifts, that keep moving toward stage right, the sequence ends with her partner holding her in a curled-up shape, rotating her in the horizontal plane and letting her roll onto the floor in the sagittal plane.

----- *Shape category* -----

The last category of LMA is the *Shape*, which was mostly developed by Laban's pupil Warren Lamb (Levy 109-111). As with all the elements of LMA, some are anatomical in origin and others study the body-mind connection and how intention manifests in the body, whether to move in dance or to interact with others and the environment. Because this category is more closely related to the inner body, it includes many aspects of internal and minute motivational movement. Hackney writes "What forms does the body make? Is the shape changing in relation to self or in relation to the environment? How is the Shape changing—what is the major quality or element which is influencing its process of change?" (241). The elements of *shape* that regard these motivational changes are mostly: "modes of shape change," when the change is motivated by the self, the environment, or an interaction with the external world (Hackney 242); "shape qualities," associated with the body changes toward some point in space; and "shape flow support," associated with the internal shape form that shifts with the process of breathing, with the most basic qualities of growing and shrinking (Hackney 241). These motivational elements will not be further discussed, in order to focus on technical aspects of Morris's work. Also, other

elements of the *Shape* category, such as symmetric and asymmetric, or the *Space* category, such as “spatial path” and “use of general space,” or in the *Effort* category, such as the “rhythm” and “tempo,” have been included in the previous discussions of Morris’ choreographic systems and musicality because they are a common discussion in dance logistics.

Similarly, the “shape forms” are also part of dance vocabulary but not always in the wording of LMA. In this system, the shapes differ in relation to their dimensionality. They are divided as:

- Linear shapes are one dimensional (pin).
- Flat shapes are two dimensional (wall).
- Round, spherical shapes are three dimensional (ball).
- Twisted shapes are three dimensional with an element of rotation (screw)
- The tetrahedral shapes are three dimensional and can have rotation. They have three points of support and a vertex in space (pyramid). However, as it will be shown shortly, the vertex can also be the base, creating three points in space. (Hackney 241)

Once again, the *Each Action* section offers clear examples for LMA application. As mentioned, the “fire” shape is standing with both arms extended upward and the entire body is extending in one dimension (pin shape). In the “water” shape, the torso and arms lean to one side, while the legs are in a *tendu* in *demi-plié* toward the opposite side. Here the body stretches in two dimensions, standing in the vertical dimension, with the limbs and upper-torso operating in the horizontal dimension (flat shape). And the “earth” shape is kneeling, with the upper-body rounding over the legs. The roundness of this shape involves all three dimensions (ball shape).

The *Sage and Holy* section contains both twisted and round shapes in the sequence described above for the decelerated time (on p.89). The twisted shape is produced during a leap

with the front leg bent, the torso slightly arched and twisted in opposition, and the arms raised in a balletic second position with an upper-curve. The round shape is shown during a lift where a dancer is arching the thoracic and cervical spine, with her right hand shielding the eyes, and the left arm open to the side. Her left leg is held in a parallel *attitude devant*, while the right is bent in an *attitude derrière*. The bent torso and limbs create the roundness of the shape. Finally, a tetrahedral shape is shown in the *Pensive Nun* section, when the soloist rises from a *demi-plié* with a forward torso flexion, into an *attitude derrière* with torso still leaning forward and both arms bent, with the elbows lifting upward. The lifted leg and arms form the triangular base of the tetrahedron, but in space, while the standing leg represents its vertex on the floor.

Certainly, these are just a few examples of how Morris' *L'Allegro* can function as an exploration of LMA's elements. However, these concepts require an advance understanding of space and force, usually reached by students at a later age. In other words, LMA is such a highly detailed and specialized system that it requires time and maturity to be fully integrated into a person's work. For example, even the simple aspects of the spatial concepts can be grasped mentally by the middle and high school populations, thanks to their geometry studies, but are still difficult for them to apply in space. Other examples are the effort qualities, which are nuances that are difficult to achieve and require an advance stage of training. Therefore, since the presentation of this material must be modified per age and experience of the student populations, the next section will discuss how *L'Allegro* can be analyzed through two LMA's adaptations for younger students, the work of the New York City based Dance Education Laboratory and the Seattle based dance educator Anne Green Gilbert.

**Through the Lens of Dance Education Laboratory  
and Anne Green Gilbert's Pedagogical  
Adaptations of Laban Movement Analysis**

Like Laban's pupils, today's dance teachers continue to elaborate and adapt the LMA system to serve a wide range of students' ages. More specifically, it is not so much the traditional dance training field, but the dance education field that has utilized this system for many years.

Professor and writer Susan Koff, distinguishes the two methodologies:

Dance education does not seek to prepare children to become performers. Dance training, however, dictates movements and strategies for learning specific motor skills with the aim of mastery and future performance. Dance education can be described as the sequential development through the exploration of time, space, and energy in order to express oneself. (27-28)

Hence, LMA provides dance education with a theoretical framework needed to develop the physical, mental, and emotional character of a student.

A good example of adaptation comes from long time dancer, professor, choreographer, and author, Bill Evans, who created a modern dance technique based on LMA and Bartenieff Fundamentals, during the seventies, which emphasizes body-mind integration, working on core support, inner-outer connectivity, stability to find mobility, and three-dimensional approach to the kinesphere among others. Evans established the "Evans Technique Certification Program" in 2003 and his technique is widely used among contemporary dance teachers today (*Bill Evans Dance*).

Moreover, Head of the Department of Dance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and author, Jan Erkert, utilizes the developmental movement guidelines found in the Bartenieff fundamentals, as a beginning platform to assist her college students develop their motor skills. Therefore, in her teaching Erkert emphasizes three fundamental patterns, which are

homologous, homo-lateral, and contralateral, as in the Peggy Hackney’s Fundamental Patterns of Total Body Connectivity of Upper-Lower, Body-Half, and Cross-Lateral, derived from the Bartenieff Fundamentals (Erkert 26-27).

An adaptation for younger students comes from the New York City based dance center, Dance Education Laboratory (DEL), that provides its own version of the LMA diagram shown below:

| <b>BODY</b><br>(WHAT)   | <b>EFFORT/DYNAMICS</b><br>(HOW)   | <b>SPACE</b><br>(WHERE)   | <b>RELATIONSHIP</b><br>(WITH WHOM)   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Actions:</b><br>traveling, stillness, turning,<br>jumping, twisting, swinging,<br>shaking                        | <b>Motion Quality Factors:</b><br>weight-light/strong<br>time-sudden/sustained<br>space-indirect/direct<br>flow- free/bound | <b>General Space:</b><br>everywhere   | <b>Situations:</b><br>unison, solo, duet, trio,<br>group, leading, following,<br>shadowing, mirroring,<br>copying, matching,<br>action/response, echoing                         |
| <b>Body Shaping:</b><br>contracting/expanding<br>rising/sinking<br>narrowing/widening<br>advancing/retrieving       | <b>Actions:</b><br>float, punch, glide, slash,<br>flick, press, dab, wring.   | <b>Personal Space:</b><br>located   | <b>Spatial Relationships:</b><br>meeting, parting, linking,<br>connecting  |
| <b>Parts:</b><br>used, leading, gesturing,<br>emphasized, touching  | <b>Descriptive Words:</b><br>bubbly, carefree, droopy,<br>soft, bold, confident, fierce,<br>sharp, excited, heavy           | <b>Reach:</b><br>near<br>middle<br>far  | <b>Spatial Formations:</b><br>line (spoke, cross, square),<br>circle, scattered, solid<br>(wedge, block)   |
| <b>Shapes:</b><br>round (ball), wide (wall),<br>narrow (arrow), twisted<br>(pretzel), symmetrical,<br>asymmetrical. |   | <b>Levels:</b><br>high<br>middle<br>low   | <b>Time Relationships:</b><br>metrical/non-metrical<br>beat, tempo, accent<br>rhythm, pattern  |
| <b>Regions:</b><br>upper/lower<br>right/left<br>front/back  |   | <b>Directions:</b><br>up/down<br>forward/backward<br>right/left<br>diagonal                       | <b>Body Relationships:</b><br>body parts to each other<br>individuals to each other<br>groups to each other  |
| <b>Bases:</b><br>standing/sitting<br>kneeling/lying   |   | <b>Floor &amp; Air Patterns:</b><br>straight, angular, circular,<br>curvy                         | <b>Other:</b><br>music, props, costumes,<br>curriculum, environment,<br>audience   |
| <b>Flow:</b><br>simultaneous<br>sequential  |   | <b>Space Words:</b><br>over, under, around, through,<br>in front, behind, beside,<br>toward, away | <b>Choreographic Structures:</b><br>themes and variations- AB,<br>sandwich-ABA,<br>rondo-ABACADA,<br>accumulation-AABABC,<br>call and response,<br>canon, chance, site specific. |

In their chart, the DEL placed a few elements from the *shape* category, under *body*, replacing the former with *relationship*, in which, for example, the grouping “kinespheric relation” is listed under “spatial relationships.” Also, in the *space* category the “spatial path” grouping, with straight, curved, angular, and spiral, is listed under “floor and air patterns,” with the slightly different terms of straight, angular, circular, and curvy. Nevertheless, even though they modified the structure by changing some of the groups, they still utilize mostly the same terminology. For example, they list all the LMA’s eight action drives under “actions,” and they kept the “effort motion factors” subdivision the same (Arnhold and Biddle).

An instructor who has further modified the LMA’s vocabulary, is Seattle based teacher, choreographer and author Anne Green Gilbert, who created yet another version of the dance elements and who has collaborated closely with the Bill Evans Dance Center Seattle and the Creative Dance Center, also in Seattle (Gilbert x). In her book, *Creative Dance for All Ages*, the various LMA’s elements are grouped under “concepts” (24). Gilbert simplified the LMA’s structure considerably, yet retaining most of its components. She divides her structure in concept of space, time, force, body, movement and form, organizing her material into a list, rather than into a chart, as follows:

- Concept of space.  
Place - self space/ general space.  
Level - high, middle, low.  
Size - big, medium, small, far reach, near reach.  
Direction - forward/backward, right/left, up/down.  
Pathway - straight, curved, zigzag.  
Focus - single/multi focus.
- Concept of time.  
Speed - slow, medium, fast.  
Rhythm - pulse, breath, pattern, accent.
- Concept of force.  
Energy – smooth/sharp.

Weight – strong/light.

Flow – free/bound.

- Concept of body.

Body parts - head, neck, arm, etc.

Shapes - curved/straight, angular/twisted, symmetrical/asymmetrical.

Relationships - body parts to body parts or objects, individual to group and objects, group to objects, etc., such as near/far, meeting/parting, alone/connected etc.

Balance - on/off balance.

- Concept of movement.

Locomotor/ non-locomotor steps - walk, run, jump, skip, etc. verses bend, push, melt, etc.

- Concept of form.

Forms - recurring theme, A-B-A, abstract/narrative, suite/broken. (Gilbert 24)

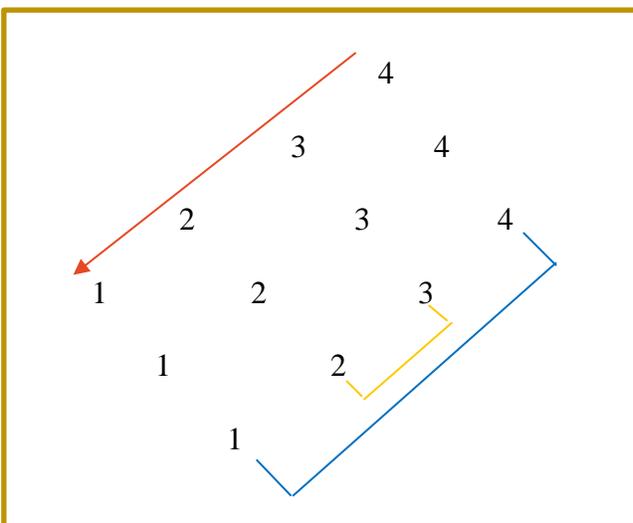
As mentioned, all the vocabulary and elements are simple to understand for the young students, aside from a few exceptions such as the “locomotor” term, or mirroring and flocking elements, which are easily explained by the teacher. As for the concepts of form, these are derived from musical structures, with which dancers often work, including Morris. For example, the DEL chart lists them under “choreographic structure,” which include the musical structures of theme and variation, Rondo (A-B-A, A-B-A-C-A, etc.), call and response, and canon among others.

The following analysis of *L'Allegro* will be based on the revised LMA's structures by DEL and Gilbert, to instruct younger students. It will show how, through observation of Morris' work, students can understand the many LMA's elements in a simplified form. Once again, the *Haste Thee Nymph*, *Pensive Nun*, *Come- Come*, *Birding* and *Male Bird Solo* sections from *L'Allegro*, will provide good examples for some of these concepts.

*Haste Thee Nymph* begins with a men's trio aligned diagonally between the upstage left and the downstage right corners. To clarify, in this segment a diagonal refers to the traditional dance definition, as going from one corner of the stage to its opposite, unlike the LMA's diagonal that extends from the center to a high or low corner of the cube. To enter, the men are divided into a duet and a soloist (the central dancer), executing three short movement sequences

in what is called an echo structure: the duet performs first, followed by the soloist, who repeats their movements. Then, they join in what is called ensemble, a term that means literally “together.” After executing a movement sequence that shifts between high and middle level, they jump in a straight (or DEL’s “narrow” and LMA’s “pin”) shape, with legs together and one arm extended upward as they tilt the whole body sideways on their descent into the floor, to roll into a curved (or round)-low-level-shape, obtained by sitting on the floor with bent legs and both arms on the knees.

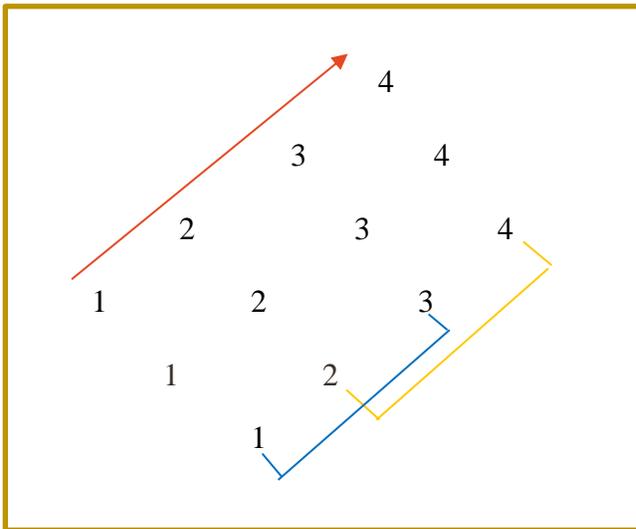
Similarly, the group of twelve women that enters with the musical chorus, shows an echo and ensemble structures before going into a canon. This formation has four lines of three dancers each, linked together to form a rectangle that can be viewed as four lines of three length-wise, or three lines of four width-wise and is oriented with the downstage right corner as the furthest downstage point (see figure 12). As typical of Morris’ work, he explored many of the possibilities offered by this formation. To help explain, each line will be given a number, line 1 being the most downstage trio, and line 4 being the most upstage, as shown below.



Echo: group 1, group 2. Canon: line 4 to 1.

Figure 12.

During the entrance the echo structure unfolds between line 1 and 4, echoed by lines 2 and 3. Then, the lines dance briefly together (ensemble) before executing a canon that proceeds from line 4 to 3, 2, and 1 (figure 12).



Echo: group 1, group 2. Canon: line 1 to 4.

Figure 13.

Thereafter, they perform another echo, this time between lines 1 and 3, echoed by lines 2 and 4. They join each other again for a moment (ensemble) before performing the previously described canon (on p.39-40), with the clicking Romanian/Bulgarian *Wallachia* step, which begins on line 1, followed by 2, 3, and 4 (figure 13). As figures 12 and 13 show, this formation along with the echo and canonic structures, can be easily drawn for students, to help them understand visually how they operate and how Morris applied a few of the many possible variations within a group dance. Thus, this section showed: a grouping of three in a trio; dancing in two formations, such as the line and the solid (rectangle); choreographic structures, such as echo and canon; straight or narrow, and curved or round shapes; and all three levels. The student can then recreate and explore said elements, or have already done so, in a separate creative compositional activity.

The *Haste Thee Nymph* section shows spatial formations and choreographic structures clearly because it is mostly performed non-locomotor, but *Pensive Nun* and *Come, Come* are

ideal to observe more shapes plus locomotion and pathways. In the former, a solo dancer enters from downstage right, locomoting by spinning in a straight pathway. He is binding his body in an angular shape, consisting in one arm extended to the side and the other bent, with the hand over the sternum, while the body is in a standing position, with a slight arch. This position creates an angle between the arms and the torso as per Gilbert's "angular" shapes' classification. It is also "wide" in the DEL classification as well as "wall" in the LMA's original definition for two-dimensional shapes. The soloist then stops on down-center-stage left to perform a few non-locomotor gathering gestures before a high-level-straight (or DEL's "narrow") shape, produced in balletic fifth position *relevé*, with both arms extended upward. Next, he turns and lowers himself to a low-level-curved shape in a *demi-plié* with both arms extended to the floor in a downward V. Still non-locomotor, the soloist rises and lunges into a few more gathering gestures, before he begins to locomote in a curved pathway with a series of *demi-pliés* and brief *relevés*. He exits downstage left by spinning in a straight pathway.

The *Come, Come* section follows, with four lines walking across the stage along its horizontal dimension. Put simply for the young students, the lines walk from one side of the stage to the other, two from stage right and two from stage left. The lines are distributed equally from down to upstage. There are also two soloists that enter and place themselves slightly upstage and downstage on each side of centerstage. These two soloists perform the rest of the dance with non-locomotor steps, moving only on the melodic parts of the music, while the lines locomote only on the singing parts of the music. Both parts freeze when not dancing. This creates a call and response structure throughout the section, showing the contrast between locomotor and non-locomotor movements and a stage design built solely on straight pathways.

The simplicity is stunningly beautiful and a good example of utilizing a step as simple as walking as a base element for the development of a choreographic structure.

Finally, the *Birding* (A) and *Male Bird Solo* (B) form an A-B-A structure that follows that of the musical score. It begins and ends with A, a group of dancers placed in a scattered formation running and flocking all over the stage in precise straight, curved, and zigzag pathways described previously (on p.57). The B section is performed by a soloist who executes a series of locomotor hops, turns, leaps and runs, mostly in curved pathways and non-locomotor head, torso and arms movements. Morris utilized the multi-focus approach, hops and fast arms flaps to recall the behavior of a small bird. During the solo, there are three people on each side of the stage who step out of the wings to look for the bird in flight from their pretend windows. The upstage dancers are on a high level, the ones at center are on a middle level, and the ones downstage are on a low level.

So, in the *Birding* and *Male Bird Solo* sections the students can observe the rondo A-B-A structure, also called “sandwich,” plus locomotor and non-locomotor steps, shapes, and pathways. Additionally, the imitation of birds’ behavior and the pretend set, as with the imaginary windows, introduces the students to important aspects of dance, as in the Foster’s modes of representation (mentioned on p.50) regarding choreographers’ various interpretations of a subject. These range from concrete to abstract, and were earlier related to Morris’ work with the music and text. The teacher can explain Morris’ decision to work more closely with the melody or the text, and to which degree the text is interpreted. For example, the *Day’s Garish Eye* section depicts a story, while *Come and Trip It* relates the movement to single words, abstractly.

As shown, these simplified LMA's adaptations still allow a complex analysis of movement and choreographic works. For this reason, they have been used in the Mark Morris Dance Center Community Outreach Program called "Dance, Music and Literacy," that introduces Brooklyn's elementary public school children to Morris' *L'Allegro*. The students are first introduced to dance concepts and steps. Then, they learn some combinations that recall the choreography, which they view and analyze, plus they learn a modified version of *Haste Thee Nymph*. Finally, they are invited to see the Mark Morris Dance Group perform a few excerpts of the work so they can witness all the material that they have learned in its practical use.

## Conclusion

When I first asked myself, what could be the thesis' topic that encompasses my artistic and professional experience to the present day, my mind flooded with ideas, however, none seemed to give a complete picture of my history. Suddenly, I realized that. *L'Allegro* epitomizes the "crossroads" of my professional life. An accumulation of "firsts.". This piece marked the beginning of my professional career, the beginning of my tenure with Morris' company, and it was the first piece he created on me. *L'Allegro* was also the first repertory work that I taught during my first company workshop, my first summer in Jacob's Pillow. I performed it nearly every year during my time with the Mark Morris Dance Group and, recognizing my knowledge, Morris eventually put me in charge of company rehearsal and teaching it to new cast members. Finally, after I left the company to become part of the faculty at the newly opened Mark Morris Dance Center, *L'Allegro* became once again a central part of my work, through one of the center's first community outreach programs, "Dance, Music and Literacy" (DML), that introduces elementary public school children to Morris' work.

Hence, this thesis is reflective of my experience. It is a map of my coming to know, understand, and perform *L'Allegro*, through my traditional training background, concerned with performing skills, and my consequent learning to analyze it and teach it through the lens of dance education based on LMA and its various adaptations. Therefore, after introducing both Morris, myself, and the previous history of the *oratorio*, the first part of this analysis is concerned with the technical aspects of Morris' work, as I understood them: his creative process, mainly informed by his interpretation of the music; his choreographic systems, which I organized in spatial and movement patterns; and his stylistic form specific to *L'Allegro*, which I view as a result of his background training in ballet, modern and folk dance. Furthermore, the use of torso,

feet, weight, and gestures, are examined in relationship to the above mentioned traditional dance techniques because it is in those terms that I first integrated his style into my own artistry.

Another aspect of this thesis explains how I came to embody Morris' expressional elements, which he expects his performers to mostly personalize and not interpret. Meaning, to let the dance express through the body, rather than the acting speak through the dance. It is a post-modern assimilation of traditional dance techniques, due to the presence and human essence of folk dancing. This is why, Morris has often been called an avant-garde choreographer even though he views himself as a traditional one.

The second part of this analysis maps my journey after I learned about the dance concepts of LMA and a whole new perspective of the work came into my view. I could now deconstruct the same dances with different criteria, concerned with universal elements of movement, such as time, space, force and weight. I no longer needed to teach only dance steps because I could explore movement concepts as well. I believe this is the invaluable contribution of LMA to a beginner student, because it bridges dance movements with natural physical expression, promoting physical and emotional understanding of motion.

Thus, as this thesis exemplifies, dance choreography is a rich collection of material both technical and conceptual in nature, a pedagogical tool for the professional and the educational dance fields, which do not exclude but only complement each other. Other Morris' dances could have been utilized for this purpose, but it is *L'Allegro* that took me through this journey. Lastly, this thesis seeks to establish the importance of a technical review in an academic field dominated by theoretical studies. Therefore, the steps, and not the possible conjecture of their meaning, are the central focus presenting movement as the essence of dance.

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## APPENDIX A

William Blake's watercolor illustrations of "*L'Allegro*" and "*Il Penseroso*."

Each followed by his handwritten notes containing the lines illustrated,  
with additional personal comments on the motifs pictured.

Milton's text in each handwritten note is written on the following page.

Illustrations and notes derived from  
The Morgan Library Museum's website,  
under "The William Blake Archive"  
"Drawings and Paintings"

in

"Illustrations to Milton's '*L'Allegro*' and '*Il Penseroso*' (Composed c. 1816-20)"

Text derived on the web from  
"*L'Allegro, and il Penseroso. The author John Milton.*"



"Melancholy and Her Companions" from William Blake's "Il Penseroso." Object 7 (Butlin 543.7).

Melancholy. Penseroso

7 Come pensive Nun devout & pure  
Sober stedfast & demure  
Still in Robe of darkest gown  
Flowing with majestic train  
Come but keep thy wonted state  
With even step & musing gait  
And looks commencing with the Skies  
And join with thee calm Peace & Quiet  
Spare Fast who oft with Gods doth diet  
And hear the Muses in a ring  
Ay. round about Jovs altar sing  
And add to these retired Leisure  
Who in trim Gardens takes his pleasure  
But for the chiefest with thee bring  
Him who upon golden wing  
Guiding the fiery wheeled Throne  
The Cherub Contemplation  
Lest Phobos will design a song  
In her sweetest saddest plight  
Smoothing the rugged Brow of Night  
While Cynthia Checks her dragon yoke  
Gently oer the accustomed oak  
These Personifications are all brought together in  
this design surrounding the Principal Figure who is  
Melancholy herself

"Melancholy"

Blake wrote:

*Come pensive nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, steadfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestic train,*

The previous four lines are in the *Pensive Nun* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*And sable stole of Cipres lawn,  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.*

*Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
With ev'n step, and musing gait,  
And looks commercing with the skies,*

The previous three lines are in the *Come, Come* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,  
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet, (Milton, *Il Penseroso*.15)  
And hears the Muses in a ring  
Ay round about Joves altar sing.*

The previous four lines are in *The Diet Dances* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*And add to these retired leisure,  
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
The cherub Contemplation,*

*'Less Philomel will design a song,  
In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,*

The previous three lines are in the *Bird Duet* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*,

*While Cynthia checks her Dragon yoke,  
Gently o're th'accustom'd Oke; (Milton, *Il Penseroso* 16)*



*Mirth and Her Companions* from William Blake's "*L'Allegro.*" Object 1 (Butlin 543.1).

Mirth. Allegro

1 Heart-easing Mirth.

Haste thee Nymph & bring with thee  
Jest & Youthful Jollity

Zuips & Cranks & Wanton Wiles  
Nods & Becks & wreathed Smiles  
Spot that wrinkled Care derides  
And Laughter holding both his sides  
Come & trip it as you go.

On the light fantastic toe  
And in thy right hand lead with thee  
The Mountain Nymph Sweet Liberty

These Personifications are all brought  
together in the First Design. Surrounding  
the Principal Figure which is Mirth  
herself

Blake wrote:

*Heart easing Mirth*

This above line is not found in Milton's verses.

*Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,  
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles, (Milton, L'Allegro 4)*

*Sport that wrinkled care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.*

The previous six lines are in the *Haste Thee Nymph* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*Com, and trip it as you go  
On the light fantastick toe,*

The previous two lines are in the *Come and Trip It* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*And in thy right hand lead with thee,*

*The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty; (Milton, L'Allegro 5)*

The previous line is in the recitative of the *Birding* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.



*Night Startled by the Lark* from William Blake's "*L'Allegro.*" Object 2 (Butlin 543.2).

2 To hear the Lark begin his flight  
And singing startle the dull Night  
From his Watch Tower in the Skies  
Till the dappled Dawn does rise

The Lark is an Angel on the Wing  
Dull Night starts from his Watch Tower  
on a Cloud. The Dawn with her  
dappled Horses arises about the Earth  
The Earth beneath awakes at the  
Lark's Voice

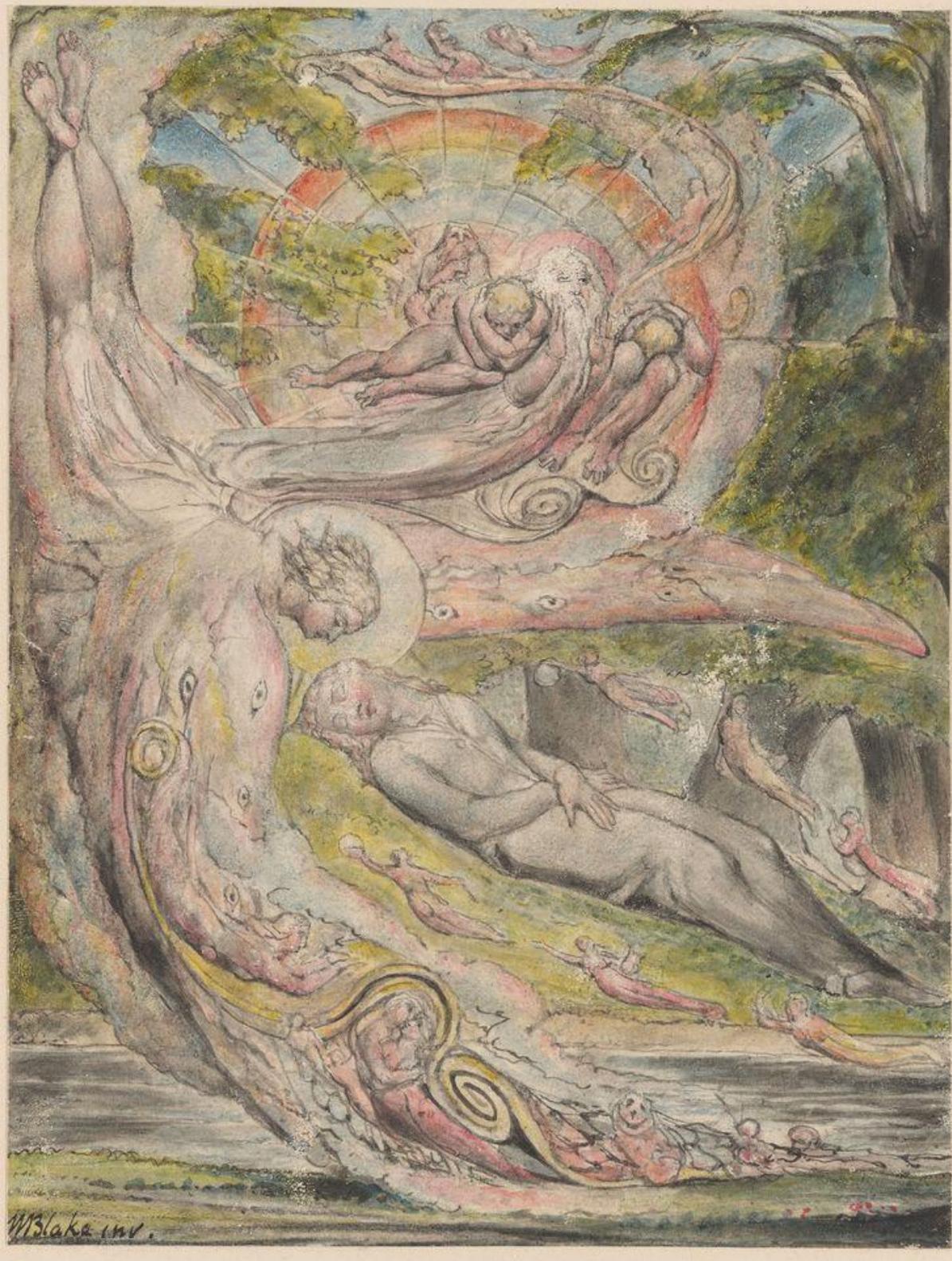
"The Lark"

Blake wrote:

*To hear the lark, begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night,*

The above two lines are in the *Male Bird Solo* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*From his watch-tower in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;* (Milton, *L'Allegro* 5)



*Milton's Mysterious Dream* from William Blake "*Il Penseroso*." Object 11 (Butlin 543.11).

11 There in close covert by some Brook  
When no profaner Eye may look  
With such Concert as they 'keep  
Entice the dewy feather'd Sleep  
And let some strange mysterious Dream  
Wave on his Wings in airy stream  
Of sweetest Potpourri display'd  
On my sleeping eyelids laid  
And as I wake sweet Music breathe  
Above: about: or underneath  
Sent by some spirit to Mortals good  
Or the unseen Genus of the Wood  
Milton sleeping on a Bank. Sleep  
descending with a strange mysterious  
Dram upon his Wings of Scrolls &  
Nets & Webs unfolded by spirits in the  
Air & in the Brook around Milton  
are six spirits or Fairies hovering on the  
air with Instruments of Music

"Mysterious Dream"

Blake wrote:

*There in close covert by some Brook,  
Where no prophaner eye may look,*

*Hide me from Day's garish eye,  
While the bee with honied thie, (Milton, Il Penseroso 21)  
That at her flowery work doth sing,  
And the waters murmuring (Blake excluded these four lines and continued)*

*With such consort as they keep,  
Entice the dewy-feather'd sleep;  
And let some strange mysterious dream,  
Wave at his wings in airy stream,  
Of lively portraiture display'd,  
Softly on my eye-lids laid.  
And as I wake, sweet music breath  
Above, about, or underneath,  
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,  
Or th'unseen genius of the wood. (Milton, Il Penseroso.22)*

All of the above lines are in the *accompagnato* and air of the *Day's Garish Eye* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.



*The Wandering Moon* from William Blake's "*Il Penseroso*." Object 8 (Butlin 543.8)

8 To behold the wandering Moon  
Riding near her highest Noon  
Like one that has been led astray  
Thro the heavenly wide pathless way  
And oft as if her head she bowed  
Stooping thro a fleecy Cloud  
Oft on a plot of rising ground  
I hear the far off Curfew sound  
O'er some wide waters thron  
Sounding slow with sulken ear  
A Million in his Character of a Student  
at Cambridge. Sees the Moon terrified  
as one led astray in the midst of her  
path thro heaven. The distant Peep  
seen across a wide water indicates  
the sound of the Curfew Bell

"The Wandering Moon"

Blake wrote:

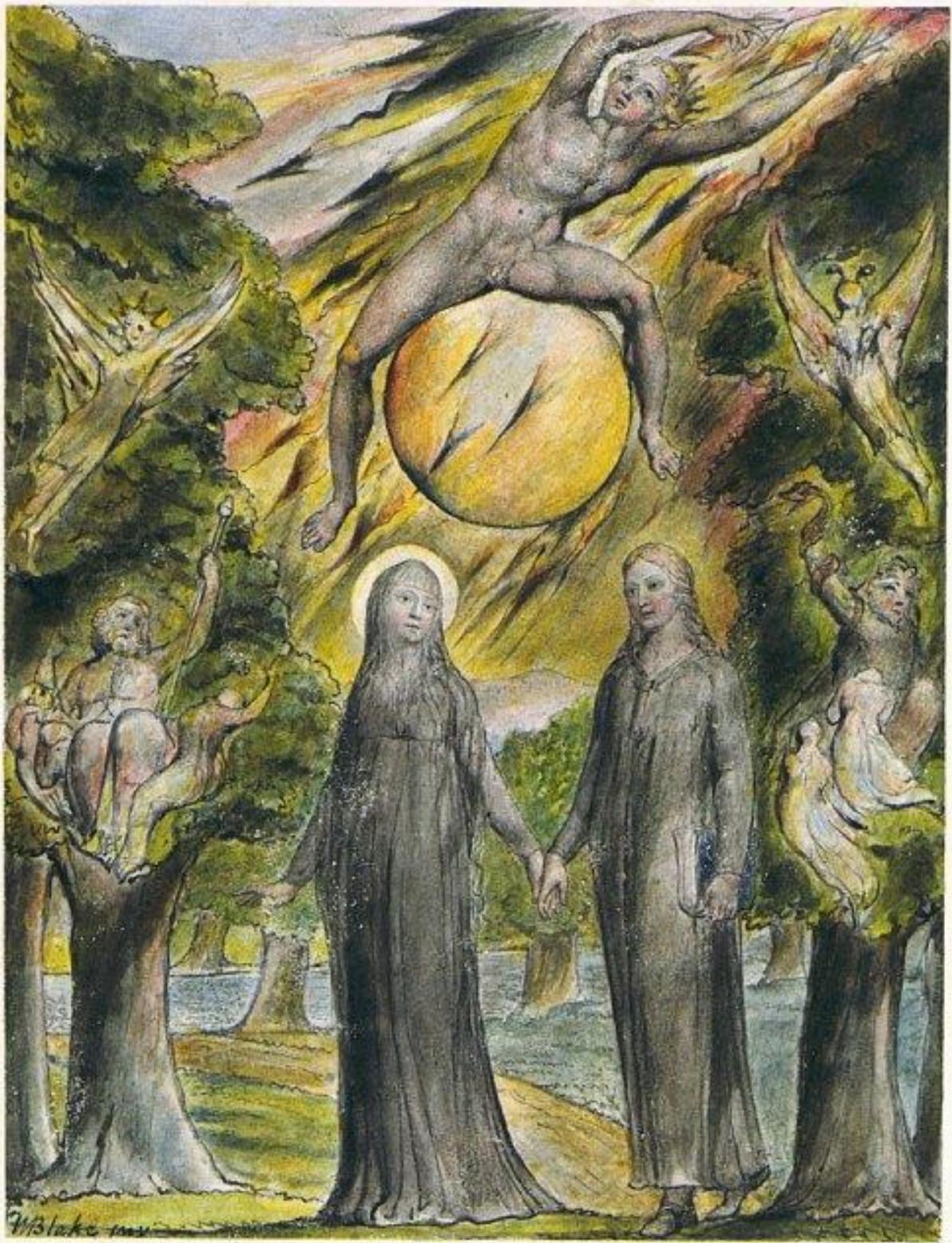
*To behold the wandring moon,  
Riding near her highest noon,*

The previous two lines are in the *Sweet Bird* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

*Like one that had been led astray  
Through the Heav'ns wide pathless way;*

*And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft on a plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off Curfeu sound,  
Over some wide-water'd shoar,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar;* (Milton, *Il Penseroso* 17)

The previous six lines are in the *Fireplace* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.



*The Sun in His Wrath* from Blake's "*Il Penseroso*." Object 10 (Butlin 543.10).

10 And when the Sun begins to fling  
His flaming Beams, we Goddess bring  
To arched walks of twilight Groves  
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves  
Milton led by Melancholy into the Groves  
away from the Sun's flaming Beams, who is  
seen in the Heavens, throwing his darts of  
flames of fire. The Spouts of the Trees  
on each Side are seen under the Domina-  
tion of Insects, caused by the Sun's heat

"The Sun in His Wrath"

*And when the sun begins to fling  
His flaring beams, me goddess bring  
To arched walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves* (Milton, *Il Penseroso* 21)

The previous lines are in the beginning *accompagnato* in the *Day's Garish Eye* section of Morris' *L'Allegro*.

APPENDIX B

Interviews with Mark Morris

and *L'Allegro*'s original cast members

Tina Fehlandt, June Omura, and Megan Williams

## INTERVIEW WITH MARK MORRIS

**Mireille.** Which modern dance technique, or style, from your dance training has had the most influence on your choreographic work in *L'Allegro*?

**Morris.** Most evidently, and to me obviously, is not the modern dance part of it but the ethnic dance of it, the national dances, and of course I didn't study with Isadora Duncan, or Doris Humphrey, or José Limón, but those have bled into my work because of the esthetic, or what used to be called esthetic dance or bare foot dancing, in the first part of the twentieth century. I don't know anything about that, except it appeals to me, so it is just like reconstructing a dance from history, from photographs and notes, I am not interested in that, but there is a tone and a look that, in my bare foot dancing, that is pre-Cunningham for sure, and also from dances from Croatia, Scotland, Bulgaria, Greece, Morris dancing, English dances, Eastern European dances, and there is a little bit of Southern-European Spanish dances.

**Mireille.** I was going to ask you about Flamenco.

**Morris.** And it doesn't necessarily look like that, but that's where a lot of the rhythm comes from and a lot of the formations and stuff like that.

**Mireille.** In regards to that, can you be a bit more specific about, for instance, the step in the *Haste Thee Nymph* section? The one in six counts?

**Morris.** The clicking one?

**Mireille.** Yes.

**Morris.** That is from what is called a Wallachia, or in English is known as Vlach, which is partly Romanian, and partly Bulgarian. They had boots with spurs so there is a lot of heels clicking, like a lot of the Hungarian dances have this sort of clicking, not necessarily cowboys, but you know, they wore spurs because they rode something. And so, the overlay of the rhythm is

because that's a six-counts step and six over eight is just more interesting. And the part that bounces up and down is from an old Croatian dance that I cannot remember the name of, some kind of a Drmeš.

**Mireille.** And what about *The Walking Duet* entering step. Where is that dance from?

**Morris.** That dance is from a direct quote, but at a much slower tempo, of a dance from Bulgarian Thrace, as opposed to Greek Thrace. A Thracian dance is a harvest dance, that I believe is done only by women, and is in these symmetrical lines that someone leads. They do opposite patterns and can be many tens of people in a line.

**Mireille.** And the *Merry Bells* dance in quartets?

**Morris.** That is a quadrille basically. A four-part dance that is a contra-dance from New England and Britain, and relates to Morris dancing and square dancing because of the coupling and the patterns. So it's not a specific dance but from those traditions of group and couple dances.

**Mireille.** Susan Leigh Foster writes about different modes of representation which can imitate a subjects exactly, or get inspiration from its visual aspect. Was *L'Allegro* the first work in which you used images like the trees and the water that are very visual?

**Morris.** No. I always have. I disagree from the concept of a direct translation from a corporeal representation of an idea because, as much as dancing is never abstract since it's people doing it, it's always an abstract translation of it and it's possible to think that this looks like a mountain because I said so. You give yourself a peek, it's like, "Oh that looks just like a mountain," it's like telling children to dance like a french-fry or a banana. That's absolutely fantastical and has nothing to do with an eye-brain translation of a corporeal subject. You can't do it. I mean an action can mean that, or any sort of gesture language or expressive language reminds you of something, but it's not a one-to-one equal.

**Mireille.** When did you start working with gestures? Was it with *L'Allegro*, or prior to that?

**Morris.** Always! First of all, that's how people on earth communicate. Nobody cares what your legs are doing, nobody cares. You don't have to use words at all to get a message across. I am interested in communication, so obviously that's facial and gestural everywhere in the world. A gesture can't not mean anything; it automatically means something. You don't always decide what that is because of cultural communication codes that aren't a universal language. People talk about music or dance being a universal language but they're not. There are things we have in common but you can be very misunderstood by anything, especially nowadays. So, gesture it's...that's what dancing is. There is no other kind of dancing.

**Mireille.** What about interpretive roles and neutral roles? For example, there are some expressively specific roles, as in *Orpheus*, and non-specific ones, as in *The Ladies' Dance*. Do you use them equally in *L'Allegro*? What do you think of your use of these two categories?

**Morris.** First of all, are these the only two categories there are?

**Mireille.** Now you are testing me.

**Morris.** Aren't there gradations in between?

**Mireille.** Yes of course there are tons of gradations.

**Morris.** So, anything that has words, the words exist and of course if it's an oratorio or an opera, the words were there first. That's why the music is written the way it is. Always the text comes first. So even if Handel's English wasn't that great it doesn't matter, that's the same thing, it's word painting or not. There is no reason to have bird imitations in the flute if you are not talking about birds. It's not just nothing. It's all direct. So, that leaves it open for any kind of interpretations. You can ignore the text entirely if you want to, but then you are ignoring the music in a certain way. What you are referring to is how specifically narrative something looks,

meaning an individual person dancing a character as opposed to a scene being created that still represents the text. So, you are not saying: “The river runs through the meadow,” you show that. You are not saying it with the sign language, you are illustrating it, if you want, by the stage picture and not just by the action, but the visual. Because by the way, dancing is visual!

**Mireille.** In your previous works, the roles of men and women were not as traditional as in *L’Allegro*. Would you agree with this statement? And why?

**Morris.** By “traditional” you mean what straight people call heteronormative?

**Mireille.** Well...yes.

**Morris.** That’s because the period of the music and the idea of opposites, which is what the whole piece is about because of the poetry. *Moderato* is not important, *L’Allegro ed il Penseroso* are the important ones, *il Moderato* was added later and it’s not interesting. If the whole show were called *Moderato*, it would be the most boring show in the world. So, that’s partly sex difference, which I am all for. That is part of it. How men and women behave. Some of it doesn’t matter at all and some of it is very specific to that because of the style of the poetry, the music and the text. You know, when you go to gender neutral square dancing, when they say: “Bow to your partner,” you don’t know who to go for because they are all men. How are you supposed to tell? In sports they would do the shirts and the skins or one team would wear a bandana to be able to know the different teams. So, it’s easier to say men and women. There has to be some way to differentiate because it’s a binary dance, not because it’s men and women.

**Mireille.** I would describe your leg work in *L’Allegro* as a mix of ballet, folk dance, character, and modern dance. Would you agree?

**Morris.** Yes, but I would just use the word “dance.”

**Mireille.** Yes of course “dance”! Beautiful! But if you were to name any modern styles, like you previously mentioned Humphrey or Duncan, is there any name that would come up?

**Morris.** Of course, Limón! Who, nobody likes it when I say it but it’s true, wasn’t a very good choreographer? He made up a couple of really, really good dances but he didn’t make up a lot of dances. Doris Humphrey was a much better choreographer, but the technique that he came up with because of her, is very valuable and the Limón company today still uses it which I think is very beautiful. It’s what people think of as modern dance, using gravity and as antithesis to ballet which I think is nonsense cause ballet, if anything, has gotten much more conservative and much more codified than it was twenty years ago. It used to be much more adventurous and much less misogynist and it is way behind the time now, but the ballet industry as gone to this sort of neutral international style that I can’t stand. I like nothing better than a great *Giselle*, but the last one I saw was at the Paris Opera ten years ago and it was great. But it’s like...just a minute, the stuff that started the schisms between modern dance and ballet, which is the early part of the twentieth century and it was when modern dancers were seen as the intellectuals and the radicals. Duncan was dancing to Beethoven and *The International*, great huge pieces of music, and then Balanchine was the first one to really use instrumental music and concertos that weren’t written for dancing. So, he did that radically, if there is a piano concerto that he choreographed, very often somebody is dancing the role of the piano and somebody else is dancing the *tutti*. And so, all of those things are part of what I think is interesting about dancing but it’s also in my ballet work which is also related to my own company’s work. I like something that is pre-Balanchine balletically. I have had a couple of people say to me that it looks like what ballet used to be like. I love that. It is also due to how my dancers are built, especially now. I would also include Ashton and Bournonville who was a great genius and has influenced me tremendously. It’s not

this virtuosic creepy post-Balanchine hip dysplasia kind of placement. I don't like that. I love Balanchine but that's not what he was doing. It's post him that everyone has gone crazy. So, I would say Limón, Bournonville, and Ashton and everything in the world.

**Mireille.** Well you just said everything I wanted to ask you. I was going to talk about Ruth St. Denis because her gesturing—

**Morris.** Well that was the fabulous exoticism which has become funny cause it's so corny, but you know, dances of the world is how they saw stuff. They would travel and then come back with a fake Javanese dance having being in Java once. If you do that now, you would be assassinated because it's cultural appropriation. Of course, for me cultural appropriation is the same thing as culture. That's it. There is no pure culture, there never has been...It's like, "May I please borrow these noodles so I can invent spaghetti when I get back home?" Everybody thinks that they invented something and they own it, but nobody does.

**Mireille.** Looking at your work and looking at previous and contemporary artists, I can name Ruth St. Denis for her theatricality, Ted Shawn because of his musicality and his idea about men being an important part of the dance world and also partnering each other.

**Morris.** Of course because he was gay like everybody was.

**Mireille.** Yes, but he is the one that made it happen at first.

**Morris.** Certainly and that's distinctly American.

**Mireille.** Right yes. Doris Humphrey, because of the choreographic systems and structures that she used that remind me of you.

**Morris.** Yeah.

**Mireille.** Duncan, which you mentioned.

**Morris.** Yes.

**Mireille.** Balanchine for his musicality, Limón with his torso work.

**Morris.** Yes.

**Mireille.** Now, what about Graham. Is there anything in her technique that you—

**Morris.** No!

**Mireille.** Right. I don't really see much there.

**Morris.** No.

**Mireille.** You made a comment in one of your interviews—

**Morris.** Aren't you going to say Busby Berkeley?

**Mireille.** Busby Berkeley yes, absolutely.

**Morris.** He was a great genius. He is the one. He was a genius. Director, choreographer.

**Mireille.** I was also going to ask you about the Judson era because in the *Hidden Soul* documentary, you said that there is a fine line between what is dancing and what is not dancing. Were you influenced at all from it?

**Morris.** Of course. Hugely.

**Mireille.** For me was a bit too conceptual and somethings were good but others made me think: "Ok already."

**Morris.** Right. There is no need for minimalism anymore.

**Mireille.** Right.

**Morris.** It's done; but you know, Lucinda still does really good work. But that's the thing, just elements I would relate to what is called minimalist music, early Steve Reich, Terry Riley, La Monte Young; early Philip Glass where it's...Sol Lewitt, the fabulous visual artist where is just triangle, square, circle, red, blue, and yellow, that's it. And with those elements what do you do. And of course I learned hugely from that but I was, always been, much more dramatic than that.

However, it's been said that any dance you see, any modern dance specifically, you see people just walk on stage out of character, then dance, then walk off, comes from Judson Church and I disagree with that entirely. That is what you do in lots of dances. You don't enter and exit everything. In Indian dance, you hear the bells and then they come on and then the dance starts with the music. So it's not, "How do you get rid of these people," but it is an option, it's pedestrianism, to me it's just behavior. Spinning wasn't invented by Laura Dean or by the Sufis it's something everybody just does. Children figure that out. Every child discovers how to skip. And that's the Judson Church thing, just using behavior and that's fine. It's a period.

**Mireille.** What about the people you danced with: Lar Lubovitch and Hannah Kahn. Do you think that they have left you something that you use in your work?

**Morris.** Everything does. It's like when people ask me how have your travels in India manifested in your work. Maybe it hasn't. Going there was part of my life but it doesn't mean now I am doing imitation of Indian dance because I like Indian dance. Not everything is a simulation. Like in this piece that I am working on right now which is Sufi, Muslim, Middle Eastern, Persian, Azerbaijani, Turkic, it's a whole bunch of things, and I have a few quotes from other dances from Georgia, from Sufi tradition, so people are watching my dancers spin and think: "Oh that's a Sufi, that's Dervish," well, kind of, but so is this step taken directly from this style of dancing from Georgia or Armenia and you don't know that, I do. So, if you want to say this is from here and here, I think very few artists do that. For example, Hannah Kahn is an unsung choreographer. She lives in Boulder or Denver now, and that was the most sophisticated constructions of dances. A choreo-musical approach of score analysis, theme and variations, all musical derivations that she used compositionally in her choreography. It was the most challenging mentally and coordination-ally of anything I have ever done in my life.

**Mireille.** Wow. And for you to say that it must have been truly complex.

**Morris.** So, my very complicated brain stuff where you have to do a bunch of things at one time, or rhythms over other rhythms, or a bigger structure that doesn't match the structure of the music but refers to it, that's what Hannah did. The most difficult stuff I have ever done. Very satisfying intellectually. Conceptual. It's like, it has to fit in this imaginary box that only you know where it is and that decides how something is going to work. Like *Trio A*: "Lean over until you fall over." That's the dance, part of it. Physical facts, not this angle in the room divided in angles, but this spiral that you are imagining. So it's a kinetic and a kinesthetic thing.

**Mireille.** How important do you think it is for your dancers to study ballet?

**Morris.** Hugely important. Because it's a *lingua franca*, it's symmetrical, it's a great organizational device and I love it. I also teach a non-injurious, difficult, biomechanically intelligent class and I am against ballet that is bad, injures people and makes them think that they should change everything about themselves. It's getting much better because of sports medicine trickling down to the arts and people know more about their instrument, they are less likely to be injured and ask questions for good or ill like, "Why do I have to do this. It hurts?" Well, "Let's try this" instead of, "Because I said so." So, it is not automatically helpful, but I love it because of the symmetry and the balance.

**Mireille.** Yes, I think that it can absolutely be done anatomically correct.

**Morris.** And also, who says that just because you are a modern dancer you shouldn't point your foot. Why not have those options?

**Mireille.** What about floor work. You use it in a lot of dances. Do you incorporate it in your class?

**Morris.** In my teaching I don't anymore. If I taught a modern dance class, which I used to do, always. I just don't anymore.

**Mireille.** As a preparation for *'Allegro* is there any particular floor work you would advise?

**Morris.** No. But you know I am a devotee of legitimate old style Pilates. I have been doing it for thirty years. So, the cross training that you need: different kinds of dancing, swimming, yoga, whatever. The only point I am concern is that I don't want my imagination to be limited by what people are willing to do. So it's not like Guillermo (Resto) says: "We couldn't dance at all those days," but of course you danced great and things have changed. My dancers now would look like shit doing that and vice-versa. Because it's thirty years later. Come on. So if anything, dancers now are more conservative in a certain way but they also know more about other things. It used to be like, "My neck hurts." And now it's like, "I have a cervical impingement in my C3."

**Mireille.** These are all things you said about *L'Allegro*; getting inspired by the music, sometimes the text, sometimes the melody—

**Morris.** I wouldn't use the word "inspired."

**Mireille.** Informed?

**Morris.** Yeah. I do my homework and I chose that piece of music to dance to because I learned about it. It wasn't that I just heard it and thought that it would be good to dance. It's because it's not a dramatic narrative, it's in discrete poems so it's completely open. There are not characters throughout or a story line through it. It's not narrative like an opera or a ballet with a story, it's tonal, it's ideas, and it also contrasts itself. So, there is the night bird and the day bird, the happy bird, the sad bird, man, woman, city, country, all of those things, that's why the music is so interesting because the poetry is so interesting, and that's why the dance is so good and has endured.

**Mireille.** How long did you listen to the music before you worked on it?

**Morris.** I first heard it in '85, I would say, and I knew a lot of Handel's music. The early music movement was in full bloom and that was a much less known piece of Handel than some of the operas and oratorios but all of that was coming out. So, when I heard it, it blew my mind and I wanted to choreograph it. In '86 I was close to setting a piece on Boston Ballet and my company and it just didn't work. So, it went away for a long time. And then going to Brussels, "What do you want to do...a big show" this is it. It was already ready in my head. So, I listened to it for four, five years. Putting it together took about three months.

**Mireille.** In the *Hidden Soul* documentary, you said that sometimes you have a basic geometrical idea of what you are going to do. Does that work also for solos, duets or trios?

**Morris.** Yes. First of all, no one is ever alone in *L'Allegro* and even if they are it's not the whole time. That was always built on the text and linking sections together so that all the recites lead you into the next piece of music. They are fully transitional. They are really short or a little bit longer, arioso, or it turns into an aria or an accompanied recite, they serve different purposes and when I first made it up, I gave those to the people who had been dancing for me the longest. They got to do the most and then as it went down they got shorter. The moderato sections are the only ones that have everybody in it. Strictly geometric, those two movements are the only time the set is completely white and empty: *The Walking Duet* and *Each Action*.

**Mireille.** Is it important for your dancers to know a little bit about music?

**Morris.** Well, they will from working with me, whether they want to or not. It helps if you can read music but that doesn't mean you are more or less musical. It's just a good skill to have for everybody and, as I say all the time, about ninety-nine percent of dancing in the world is because of music. That divorce is just non-sense. It's like here is no music, let's dance. No! You are

going to chant, or have percussion, or sing, something is going to happen. If it's just rhythmic work, you find a way to make it interesting from the rhythm of it and the singing and the movement of it. It's based on walking and heart-beat, that's what it is. Very simple.

## INTERVIEW WITH TINA FEHLANDT

**Mireille.** How did you meet Mark and started working with him?

**Fehlandt.** When I was nineteen I decided that I had to move to New York to try to be a dancer. So, I moved there in the winter of 1977 since I had applied and was accepted to the Joffrey Ballet School in the West Village. The girls at the Joffrey Ballet School were very mean and nobody would talk to me and there was this one other girl who was also new, her name was Karen Strand, and so we became friends that first week because nobody else talked to us. On Saturday, after our last class, she asked me if I wanted to go hang out with her friends from Seattle, because Karen was from Seattle. So, we walked to the East Village to second street between first and second avenue, and the East Village in the late seventies was frightening. It was scary. So, we go to this tenement building, go up five flights of stairs, knocked on the door and Mark Morris and Penny Hutchinson opened the door. They were roommates. That's how I met Mark and I accidentally became part of this crowd of people that were from Seattle. So, we started hanging out but after a few months I had to leave town for several reasons, then went home to Delaware, I went to Pennsylvania Ballet, then I decided I had to move back to New York a year later, winter of 1978. I moved in with Karen and met Mark and Penny again in Marjorie Mussman's class. When I first met Mark, he was dancing with Elliot Feld and when I came back a year later I think he was dancing with Lar Lubovitch by then. And so we just started hanging out and we really liked each other, he was a lot of fun and one day a year later he said: "I am applying for this grant from the New Music Council for the Arts and I am going to do a show next year, do you want to be in it?" and I asked: "Why would you possibly want me to dance in your show?"—

**Mireille.** Oh. Cause you were scarred from the bad experience at the Joffrey school.

**Fehlandt.** I was scarred from my experience at the Joffrey and as a teenage ballerina...I was the only one in the group who had not dance with anyone...I was really like, “I know we are friends but why do you want me to dance with you?” and he said: “I like people who dance big and you dance big!” So he had this loft in Hoboken and all the other dancers who were his friends were dancing, some with Lar, some with Kahn, and so he said: “Why don’t you come over and I’ll just work on some material with you.” So we did the *Propter Magnam Gloriam* section of *Gloria* (1981) ...I remember going to a studio somewhere in Long Island City and we worked on material...and then we had a rehearsal, I don’t remember much about the first rehearsal period.

**Mireille.** And that led to the first concert?

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, that was the first concert. He rented the Cunningham studio and we did two nights. So that’s how I met Mark and that’s how the first show happened. And in the long tradition of Mark finishing things at the last second, he finished his new piece in the Cunningham studio a half an hour before the audience was going to be let in.

**Mireille.** I remember he did that with *Grand Duo* (1993).

**Fehlandt.** Do you remember *Medium*? (1998)

**Mireille.** Yes, I remember that.

**Fehlandt.** He finished on stage. He did my solo in *Rhymes with Silver* (1997) in like, the hotel room, or no, in the studio at Zellerbach the day of the premiere. I was so nervous. So that’s how I met Mark and how the first—that was the lead up.

**Mireille.** And then, year after year you did one or two concerts.

**Fehlandt.** Yes. I was still not doing much else with other people and then I started doing other stuff with other groups and doing other shows.... because Mark’s work was really part time from 1980 till 1984 and no one got paid anything...1984 was the big BAM (Brooklyn Academy of

Music) show and then 1985 we actually started touring and that was the year that I was able to quit my waitressing job because we had twenty weeks of work and I was able to collect unemployment. So 1985-86, and between 1985 and 88, when we went to Brussels, we were really starting to work and to tour and 86 to 88 we were working, we were touring, we were going all over.

**Mireille.** So what kind of classes were you taking before and after that time?

**Fehlandt.** I studied ballet from the age of five to seventeen, when I graduated from high school, and in conjunction with that I did a little bit of Scottish dancing because my teacher was a champion Scottish dancer and he also taught character dance, which was awesome. We wore character shoes and skirts and we would learn the character dances. That was one of my favorite class, I loved that and I know they do character at A.B.T. (American Ballet Theater) in the school there and I hope it's still taught because is really great.

**Mireille.** Yeah. Like the Mazurka and the Czardas.

**Fehlandt.** Yeah. Is really, really great. And then when I was in junior high, I actually did start studying modern at my dance studio in Wilmington, Delaware, and my teacher had danced with May O'Donnell so it was an offshoot of Graham technique. So I was basically doing Graham technique probably from fourteen until I graduated and I was really good at it. I was a really good ballet dancer too. Sorry that will be on your transcription, but it becomes disingenuous to not be honest about what your facility was. Then at Point Park, I discovered Luigi Jazz dance which I loved and I did more Graham technique and ballet and point work of course. Then when I moved at the Joffrey it was straight ballet, then at Pennsylvania Ballet, that was only ballet and no modern. Then, when I moved back to New York, I was really interested in trying to do musical theater for a while, so I did go to the Phil Black Studio, which was like a jazz studio in

the late seventies and that lot of people went to. I was doing ballet with Marjorie Mussman and there were so many great modern dancers in Marjorie's class doing ballet so beautifully and so differently from uptight ballet dancers, that I was like, "oh, I can do ballet and be a modern dancer." So, I continued studying with Marjorie, I went to Jocelyn Lorenz. There was a great teacher whom I missed when she moved out of the city, Cindy Green; there were some wonderful teachers at the Pineapple Studio and at the old Dancers Studio on sixth avenue, that's where I first met Lawrence Rhodes, director of Julliard, I studied a lot with Larry. There was a wonderful teacher...well the floor barre person Zena Rommett, so I did Zena Rommett floor barre and studied with one of her disciples, Ernie Pagnano, who unfortunately we lost to aids. So, I was going around between these different teachers mostly doing these ballet classes in downtown Manhattan that were filled with modern dancers. Then I went to the Cunningham studio for about two years exclusively and I loved Cunningham technique, it was really great. My legs were up around my ears doing that technique, it was amazing. Then I also did a lot of Limón technique with Ruth Currier, who had been in José's company, amazing teacher and I actually did a pedagogy workshop with her that I am still influenced by. She was just great. So I did Limón, I studied a little bit with Risa Steinberg in the eighties but that was more drop-in and I also started Pilates in the mid-eighties. Then later on, after we came back from Brussels, I got very much into Iyengar yoga and then I did a big time period when we were filming *Dido (and Aeneas* 1989), like that year or maybe two years, I did Simonson technique, which I loved and I—I mean I never did the teacher certification there or anything but I was very influenced by their style of teaching and the way that Lynn herself taught anatomy in the context of moving. And of course Christine Wright. All those teachers who had studied with Maggie Black, were able to incorporate these ideas on how you work anatomically in class, where's when I was

learning dance as a teenager was just like, “Lift your leg up in the air.” There was nothing, no understanding of body movement. I even did a little Susan Klein release technique.

**Mireille.** That is so much stuff.

**Fehlandt.** Well I am old.

**Mireille.** No but still you did a lot of stuff. You were here and you took advantage of what New York had to offer.

**Fehlandt.** Well I did my own, as I jokingly called it, the university of the streets, because I just went around and I just tried a bunch of stuff and I even did some Erick Hawkins classes, I also studied with some May O’Donnell people when I first moved to New York because that was a technique I was familiar with and that I liked. So I just tried to do stuff and find a place for myself.

**Mireille.** When you started with Mark you kept doing all these different things?

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, and we all went to ballet class. That’s what we did.

**Mireille.** So Mark was not teaching back then.

**Fehlandt.** He did teach, he was teaching. He started teaching modern classes in the early eighties. He rented spaces and he would put an ad in the Village Voice, that’s what you did, and he taught at a place called Space Place and I would go and take all of his classes, and he would teach at PS 122, modern classes and I would go to all his classes. I was like his scholarship student and he would also do workshops in Seattle. But at that point it was all modern. He was really experimenting and because there was so much experimentation in his class, sometimes I would go and take a ballet barre first because I wanted to be ready.

**Mireille.** I find it interesting that then he taught just ballet classes when we were in Brussels.

**Fehlandt.** Yeah and I don't remember when that change happened. I mean Mark was dedicated to going to ballet class. He really liked it, you know still what he says, as a "Latin" form because he is not working in a set movement vocabulary, like Graham or Cunningham. It seemed just the best way to prepare for rehearsal and that kind of happened maybe when we started doing the summer intensives and we were teaching ballet. That probably was when he started teaching ballet. We would offer a ballet class, a modern class and a rep (repertory), you know similar to what we do now. I think he ended up wanting to teach ballet because he felt it was a better way of dealing with the students and then he got into it more.

**Mireille.** I think that is interesting though, because in his work you have to be able do folk dance and to be versatile. For example, a strict ballet dancer could not do Mark's work.

**Fehlandt.** True. No it's really hard because you have to know when to drop your weight.

**Mireille.** Could it be because of *L'Allegro* since it's very balletic?

**Fehlandt.** Well he started getting ballet commissions before that. There was the Joffrey Ballet and ABT (American Ballet Theater), he did *Drink to Me (Only with Thine Eyes)* 1988) before Brussels and he had done the *Mort Subite* (1986) for the Boston Ballet, because we did a lot of work for Boston, and he might have taught company class there. He loved that group of dancers and Mark is very well versed in the ballet vocabulary and we had this relationship with the Boston Ballet and speaking of *L'Allegro*, Mark had done the *Mort Subite* on Boston Ballet everybody loved it and then the director of Boston Ballet at the time, Bruce Marks, said let's do more, let's do a joined project—

**Mireille.** Oh yes! And then it never happened because they did not want to take the risk.

**Fehlandt.** Right. After they did another program that didn't—I mean this is early and actually Bruce was ahead of his time in the idea of bringing modern and contemporary dance to ballet

companies, but in 1987 people weren't quite ready for that. So we were going to do *L'Allegro* as a joined project with Mark Morris Dance Group and Boston Ballet and then that fell through. I mean, Mark had been listening to that music for a very, very long time. I remember sitting in his house in Seattle and him playing it. We listened to a lot of different baroque music and a lot of that I think was the influence of Erin Matthiessen who was so into baroque music. I mean there was music in that house all the time.

**Mireille.** About technique. How do you think *L'Allegro* was different from what Mark had been doing before? And how?

**Fehlandt.** Well the first thing that was extremely different was that there were gender assignments. That there were women and men and that we were in different costumes. So, it had happened a little bit, we never had men in women's dresses, except for Mark in *Bijoux* (1983) and *Deck of Cards* (1983), you know the costuming was very open. Mark would say: "Do you want to wear a dress or pants?" and I would say: "Well you know in *Gloria* we have to slide on the floor so shorts wouldn't work so maybe I'll wear a dress since Teri (Weksler) is wearing pants," you know, something like that.

**Mireille.** Was *New Love Song Waltzes* (1982) purposely mixed up?

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, it was purposely mix up except for the sex dance which was specific: male on male, female on female and a breeder couple right. I mean Mark was specific, "I want to show love in all of these forms because it is legitimate." And so the early work was really non-specific. In *Strict Songs* (1987) there was a women's dance and a men's dance but we were all wearing the same costumes, it didn't seem so much about these ideas of prescribed male and female because he was really not interested in that or any of these experiences, which he has talked about being a gay man in ballet.

**Mireille.** And do you think that that also translated directly into the movement in *L'Allegro*?

**Fehlandt.** Absolutely! Some of it I think is from the text because of the observations on behavior. So the *Stupid Men's Dance* section is about this silly behavior that men show. So that was the first thing, that it felt more gendered and that it was specific. He did it on purpose, "I want to show this part of humanity, that sometimes men act this way and sometime women act this way." But there is still stuff in *L'Allegro* that is non-specific. Also, there was a lyricism that had not been so evident in some of the early work although *New Love Song Waltzes* is very lyrical, but the original manifestation of it, the coaching and the way Mark wanted it performed was much clunkier. Mark would say: "Jump. Don't point your feet, I don't want you to point your feet, I want it to look softer, I want the lines to look softer." Once I was complaining to Teri, "my legs hurt" and she said: "Well of course they hurt, you can't jump without pointing your feet," and I looked at her and said: "Do you mean that you are pointing your feet when Mark says not to?" and she said: "Well of course I am!" and so I was like, "Oh, I am going to do that from now on." So yes, what was different was this idea of gender, the lyricism of the movement and the specificity, like he wanted pointed feet, "I want to see you in an arabesque." But there had been things incorporating more ballet technique. He did this piece to Schubert, that didn't really make it past the first show, that had male female couples. So, he was already playing around with it.

**Mireille.** What about the character dance steps, was that the first time—

**Fehlandt.** No, he had already been doing tons of integration of folk dances but a little bit more ... I don't like to say stylized, but a bit more separated. Like in *Haste Thee Nymph* that's a direct quote. There is some stuff like the solo *I Love You Dearly* (1981) to the Romanian folk dance; so

he was already using folk dance. But specifically saying in the line dance this is a Croatian folk dance, but yeah there had always been that feeling, you know the folk dance feeling.

**Mireille.** Do you remember anything in particular on how he built some of the choreography in the big sections like the *Finale* or *Merry Bells*? Like, for example, in *Haste Thee Nymph* he had the idea of reflecting the call and response in the music.

**Fehlandt.** He's always liked canons and as early as *Gloria* he was looking at the musical line and was influenced by the parts of the soprano, alto and bass. In terms of the formations, Mark won't mind me saying this, he is a structure queen, so one of the first pieces I remember with a very strict spatial structure was *Marble Halls* (1985). He decided ahead of times that the first movement was going to be three lines (from up to downstage), the second movement two lines this way (stage right to stage left) and then the third movement, the orchestra is on the diagonal and the soloists, who were with the harpsichord, were only moving in straight lines, except for the spinning part, which is on a diagonal. So he's made these lines, he's made an X and then he's doing a diagonal in the middle to make a spatial formation. He did that somewhat in *Stabat Mater* (1986) also, and I think that with twenty-four dancers he was overjoyed at the possibility of doing these different spatial patterns because he's always loved that.

**Mireille.** Now, when did he start working with the score in his hands?

**Fehlandt.** Oh he did that right at the beginning. *Gloria* had a score.

**Mireille.** So he always did that.

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, if he could afford it. Like the original *Socrates* (*The Death of Socrates* 1983) he couldn't afford the score, so he sat down, listened to it and counted it.

**Mireille.** As an original company member you were experienced in Mark's work. During the creation of *L'Allegro*, was there anything that was more difficult regarding the technical or artistic aspects?

**Fehlandt.** Well, I think I wasn't paying attention to what was difficult technically because I was too busy dealing with the emotions I was feeling at being in Brussels, watching the changes taking place with my best friend and the people around him. The way that people related to Mark, you know someone would call him "Mr. Morris"; and just trying to figure out a way to process what had been an intimate group of people and now this giant mob that I was trying to get to know. You know, the first year of *L'Allegro* I thought: "I am not doing anything, I am not dancing at all, Mark is not interested in me anymore" because there were so many people and we were used to doing everything. In hindsight, I was dancing a lot...at the same time we were also preparing for the next program and Mark was double casting which I wasn't used to. So, I didn't have any physical problem because I wasn't paying attention to that...at some point later in the year I thought: "What am I doing here? I am in a foreign country, I really need to think about this," but I decided to come back the next year and little did I know that the next year was the best year of my life. Who knew.

**Mireille.** If you were to name some earlier or preceding modern techniques, before Mark established himself, which ones do you think have some common ground with Mark's style in *L'Allegro*?

**Fehlandt.** I am speculating, but I think as a teenager he studied some Limón technique because Marjorie Mussman did Limón, I don't think when he came to New York he ever took a modern dance class but he did modern dance, he was in Lar's company. He was influenced by Hannah Kahn and she was an amazing teacher, I forgot to mention that I took a lot of her classes and she

was an amazing teacher. She did like a modern dance barre that was super-cool, really hard classes. She would have you do one thing with your arm and a different thing with your legs.

**Mireille.** Yeah, what Mark did in class all the time. What kind of background does she have?

**Fehlandt.** I am pretty sure she did Limón; she was from Juilliard...I am not sure what Lar did, he might have been a Graham person, but Matthew Rose who was in the Graham Company made an astounding transition to doing Mark's work and so did Bill (William Wagner), so there is something in the Graham technique, I think is the rhythmic thing, and then in Limón with the release and the curve. I think studying those two can be—and also you use muscles, like a Trisha Brown movement doesn't translate so well to what Mark wants, but then you see Petronio's work and it's so astoundingly physical and hard, but I could be totally wrong about that. But I did study some Limón and Ruth Currier was very influential, but I also thought Cunningham was really helpful for me personally. All of those three things, I think, were really helpful in doing Mark's work. Mark always said: "I don't want to have a modern dance technique, I want people to do what is interesting in a modern class and what they think will work." But on the other hand, I have spent a lot of time developing a modern, contemporary dance technique that I think warms you up to do Mark's work.

**Mireille.** That is a great idea. I am sure the students enjoy learning a movement style that can prepare them for Mark.

**Fehlandt.** I don't know now because I am many years out of Mark's work, but you know they do singing in the company now. It is the idea of the breath and how, if you are dancing to singing, it's really amazing to know it connects. I mean he obviously thinks that ballet taught in a specific way is the best preparation for his choreography and ballet in a way that is un-stylized

and pure, which doesn't detract from its beauty. I hesitate to say that Mark would say he is influenced by all of those teachers who taught in the eighties and nineties.

**Mireille.** All of the ones that were teaching ballet to modern dancers?

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, and it's anatomical ballet and very pure. I do think is the best preparation for his work, but all of those people had come out of college studying a ton of modern dance.

**Mireille.** Could you tell me about the classes that you teach?

**Fehlandt.** Yeah, I have a whole syllabus that I made up. When I was teaching a lot of modern dance I had a set series of exercises. I would start with a combination which I call "circulation," which I based on Simonson and is just gross body movements, big moves in second position, and stretch forward just to get everything going. Then I do a specific upper-back combination with a square pelvis and twisting because Mark does a lot of stable pelvis with an upper-back twist. Then I do a *grand-plié* combination with upper-body. *Tendus* from first, *tendus* from fifth, *degages* from first, *degages* from fifth or third in the center, this is all in the center. The *tendus* in first I always try to move through space, like either walking or chasséing, just get the idea of shifting weight. The *tendus* from fifth or third I like to vary the rhythm so I have them in five, in seven, and in nine. Then I do the same thing in *degages*, a rhythmic shift, then sometimes I do a *rond de jambe* at the center in five or seven. Sometimes I do things just in straight fours. Then I do a combination that I call the "big swing," which is sixty-four measures that you would do to the right and to the left. Then I will have students create a module, like an eight or sixteen measures phrase on their own or with a partner, teach it to the class and then we combine them so that in the context of the class they also have a pedagogical experience. There was one year I taught at LIU, and I did pedagogy with them. I had them create combinations, teach them, give feedback, and work with the accompanist, like how to work with an accompanist and how to

count them in. I also added a whole new floor section, which sometimes I do at the beginning and sometimes in the middle. In Simonson technique they used to do this warm-up, then you'd lie down and do this whole floor series and then you'd stand up and do *grand battement*. Then I do the center almost like a ballet class.

**Mireille.** I do the same because it's a very effective progression.

**Fehlandt.** Yeah. I do something slow, then a traveling combination, then I do little jumps and bigger jumps, then I have a whole series of combinations in phrases of five, which I would start separately and then put them together. So I do a lot of rhythm and specific upper-body work and I always end with a stretch at the end of class...in general, I do try to actively being engaged and having an evolving teaching practice. I also started doing improvisation in class.

**Mireille.** Which is very rare in Mark's work.

**Fehlandt.** It's very rare but then there is the *Grand Duo* section and the party scene in *The Hard Nut* was created through improvisation.

**Mireille.** Yeah, that's true. Now, going back to technique, do you work with a relaxed foot, which is very particular of Mark's work and for me very Duncan.

**Fehlandt.** It depends on the level of the students, with beginning and intermediate no, but with advanced students in the context of doing rep, I do use it, or I'll do specifically, "Lift your foot off the floor without flexing your toes." So I do it only with advanced students.

**Mireille.** In my opinion Mark has a lot in common with Isadora Duncan, because of the musicality, the shapes. What would you say about that?

**Fehlandt.** I think not so much the technique as what his impression from photograph, like the shapes.

**Mireille.** If a student asked you: “I am going to audition for *L’Allegro*, next month, what kind of classes should I take?” What would you answer?

**Fehlandt.** I would say ballet, Limón, maybe hula because there is the gesture thing, something that uses your hands; flamenco, classical Indian dance Bharatanatyam. Something that uses gesture.

**Mireille.** Was there a lot of use of gesture before *L’Allegro* in Mark’s work?

**Fehlandt.** Yes, he was starting to work with it. *Strict Songs* has a lot of gesture that was tied to ESL. And that I think was the influence of Hannah Kahn, who did a lot of non-specific gesture as a part of her work.

## INTERVIEW WITH JUNE OMURA

**Mireille.** When you started working on *L'Allegro*, what was your personal training background?

**Omura.** I started taking ballet classes when I was seven in Alabama, with the community program that was part of the university program where they did the *Nutcracker* every year. So not only did I have a recital to work towards, but always the *Nutcracker* was there. The other wonderful thing about this school in Birmingham, was they had summer workshops where we would take character classes and both of my teachers were from Yugoslavian so they had some Vaganova training and were able to draw from their own training, which was very old school and a pretty solid foundation. So, we had not only character in the summer but also, once in a while, mime, jazz; but the character I loved and was the main thing we studied that when I first studied with Mark I felt like, "Oh, I finally met someone that is appealing to this other thing that I love." The other training that I got by the time I was in high school was modern dance, also in the summer program. Our director wanted us to study modern dance to be prepared to dance in his contemporary ballets. In his mind, it would give us other things to draw on when he was choreographing. We still had a little bit of the typical ballet attitude that modern dance was weird and was only for the people that couldn't do ballet. So the modern teacher, who was wonderful, put me in this show with the college students and for me it was a whole other way of getting to be a dancer on stage so that by the time I got to college, I think I was ready to discover that modern dance was this whole other world most physically and mentally, and it wasn't just the non-ballet world, it was a whole thing unto itself. So I became a modern dancer in college but I had all of those backgrounds: ballet, character, and performing with modern dance that was Limón technique, contact improvisation, and a little bit of Graham.

**Mireille.** Which college did you go to?

**Omura.** Barnard College.

**Mireille.** It sounds like all the perfect things to prepare you for Mark's work. In the modern dance classes that you took, what was the modern technique that you felt became most useful to you when you started working on *L'Allegro*?

**Omura.** Probably the Limón and in fact I saw Mark during college in 1984 at BAM, where he did *O Rangasayee* and *Gloria*, which was what really struck me with its patterns. I had never seen a canon built to the pyramid at the end, which I remember specifically. In 1984, I fell in love with the combination of his musicality, his structures and the vocabulary, which was so evocative. Also, seeing him doing the solo, I fell in love with the man not just his work. Then the third piece I saw was *Championship Wrestling (After Roland Barthes 1984)* and I had no idea of what was going on. So the first piece was *Gloria* and I fell in love with the work, the second was the solo and I fell in love with the man, and the third was *Championship Wrestling* and I thought: "What?"

**Mireille.** Yes, I remember watching it in Brussels and I loved the slow motion scene. I thought it was so cool.

**Omura.** So I had seen that show and still had two years of college to go and somehow I knew that Mark had worked with a woman who used the Limón technique as her base, her name was Hannah Kahn. So I tried to dance with her. I went to her classes because I wanted to know how could I possibly ever dance for Mark. I wanted to learn how to dance that way and I learned more about that technique that seemed integral to his style. But the other thing that I felt well prepared for in the first *L'Allegro* rehearsal, was my own musicality that had been the first thing that drew me to dance with music when I was a really young child. And the other was the character classes. When I graduated from college I took my first workshop with Mark and he had

a guy from Koleda Dance Ensemble come and teach us folk dances a couple of nights a week during the workshop, and I loved it so much. So I already had that under my belt when I joined the company, doing all the intricate rhythms that he had in so many steps in *L'Allegro*.

**Mireille.** Was anything particularly difficult in the new material?

**Omura.** I was never a particularly quick study. I could get the style immediately, but then my mind did not work that way when I would go over sequences. So I can learn steps pretty close right away, but then putting them together I would have to either write them down, which I was pretty lazy and didn't do enough of that, or do them over and over. One thing that I remember having big trouble with was that one time, that he gave me that little solo at the beginning of the *Melancholic Octet*, I had been watching him working on it...and he suddenly said: "June learn this." I also think that was the day my mother was watching too, so I was under a lot of pressure and I had been watching and enjoying the movement that they were creating but I hadn't been trying to learn it, and had never been one who can just watch and then know what it was, like you, I never could. So he thought that maybe because I was watching I had picked something up by now, but no. So I am learning this from scratch and trying to learn the sequence and I am thinking: "Oh my god he is going to take this away from me," and he finally said: "go out in the hall and learn it," and I did. But I was so grateful that he didn't say: "clearly you are a disaster and you are never going to learn this," and give up on me.

**Mireille.** Wow. That's a really good story. Any significant personal process emerged from creating *L'Allegro* for you? For example, any learning process that you developed doing it, or something changed in your approach to technique?

**Omura.** Well, I would say that dancing for Mark gave me an incredible musical education and what was starting to happen definitely with *L'Allegro*, was in choreographing the way he does,

making a phrase to music and then manipulating that phrase. It made me hear what was going on in music and then in turn reinforced what the choreography was. So, it's a process of mutual reinforcement with what the steps are, what the choreography is, what the music is, and how to hear it. It really worked with what I was naturally inclined to do, which is to respond to the music. But choreographing the steps the way he did, he had given me something to respond to the music with and made the music come alive even more. It did two things: one bad, one good. The bad thing is that it made me probably a little lazy because I assumed that learning it would be as easy as it was to remember it and do it, once I had learned it, and it never was. It never became easy to learn it in the first place, but the good thing was, once I learned the dance, I knew it so well, not only would I never forget it once I performed it, because it was so inextricably bound to the music you're hearing, but, especially with the live music that we had with *L'Allegro*, learning it so well allows you the freedom to be able to respond to that live music in the moment. Live music is never the same, even the most brilliant conductor in the world would not be able to give it the exact same time every single performance. In fact, no performance is going to be identical. So, knowing it so well and knowing when and where things are going to stop, because we learned it to the score as Mark created it, gave me so much freedom to respond in the moment with what was actually happening. I didn't have to think about what the steps were, I only had to open myself to the music. It's what Mark always did better than anybody else. Although, I have to say Dallas has the same thing, where there is no difference between the movement that's happening and the music that you are hearing and then what you are seeing is what the performer gives beyond that. So that is the base, doing the movement with the music, responding to it and whatever extra you have, is what you give to it.

**Mireille.** What other early or preceding modern dance techniques do you think have common grounds with Mark's style specifically in *L'Allegro*?

**Omura.** He has something, also in other dances, where from the waist down you have a grounded, squared off base, and from the waist up you may curve over to the side or something. I always had more trouble with that because I hadn't studied Graham, not because is like Graham but in Graham you study the deep contraction which was very hard for me as a ballet dancer but I ended up understanding it fairly well. What Mark doesn't want though, is the tucked under-pelvis that you include in a Graham contraction, but you do have to be able to curve your torso and understand that you are not effecting the base from the waist down. I had never found that anywhere else but I think that it was closer to Hannah Kahn than perhaps other techniques that Mark studied, where you go off center but the reason you don't fall over is not exactly the fall and recover of Doris Humphrey, but because you have this grounded base below the waist. That may come more from folk dance where you have your vertical below the waist doing separate rhythms and then whatever is on top of that, you can have whatever you want. It could be different rhythms or shapes, So, that to me is an interesting key to Mark's technique.

**Mireille.** If we look at Isadora Duncan, do you think there is any common ground between her and Mark's work?

**Omura.** Absolutely. I had an Isadora Duncan class in college, so I had a little bit of understanding of her technique. She talked about the solar plexus. To me, one of the similarities between her and Mark is to run with your legs underneath while you have this freedom in the upper body. Isadora had this somewhat artificial run that ended up looking free and natural where you really pick up your knees as you run. You would have to engage your abdominal muscles to make the legs look so free and then on top of that you had this Limón-ish, Doris

Humphrey-ish freedom in your upper-body, but there was a completely grounded, strong support so that you could hold all that together. In her technique class, it was hard to make it look so free. Mark's got that as well, where you look so free but it's really specific while you are holding it together with this inner strength that shouldn't be physical necessarily but consciously holding on, because he wants it to look natural.

**Mireille.** That's why a lot of people say that Mark's choreography looks like you can just come on stage and do it when the reality is very far from that because it takes conscious and specific effort to actually make it look that way.

**Omura.** Exactly, and that relates to the ballet technique, which was the most technique that I had, and also a lot of what Mark had and it's in *L'Allegro* all over the place, but it's in it structured without being added to or changed by the other techniques so that you can no more do this work with no ballet training than you can with all ballet training. So I think of ballet dancers that come to Mark's auditions but cannot do the work because they can't let go and yet still hold on so that it still looks like what Mark wants, which is this supported, specific technique. So it is very difficult if you haven't started in time to let go of the ballet technique that makes you look like a ballet dancer, but hold on to the technique that's there that will allow it to be a base for other techniques.

**Mireille.** I also think that is the character dance training that you and I had, which teaches you how to use your body with gravity and when to let go. Now, were you used to work with relaxed feet? It was very new to me.

**Omura.** I was not used to that, except for the contact improvisation training that I had in college as well. I started taking this class because my roommate, her name was Louise, she was taking this cool class with Cynthia Novack and all of the cool people seemed to be taking that class so I

went to check it out. She did a lot of release technique and I couldn't do it. I felt that when I dropped my ballet training, I had nothing. It took so long to figure out that it is still technique but different. As a ballet snob that I was, it was really a puzzle to me. But the women in this class with no ballet training were able to do this stuff better than I was and looked more authentic doing it. It was really eye opening. I thought: "Oh my gosh, to let go doesn't mean you throw everything away, it means you let go of somethings and you learn what you need." So by the end of college, I had danced in a style where Mark's use of the relaxed foot was not strange to me. I thought it was amazing that he would ask for that.

**Mireille.** Do you have any memory of Mark creating any of the choreographic systems in *L'Allegro*?

**Omura.** From the *Finale* I remember that his initial idea was that the same groups of people would come in on similar iterations of the words and the music, but it was so complicated, which is partly why he responded to baroque music...he wanted everyone to come in and take turns but he also had the competing values of wanting it to match the musical phrases and it ended up messing up the pattern so he ended up just saying: "Fine! Who's next?" (meaning whomever is ready to enter). Some people managed to stay with their original grouping and others didn't otherwise they would have never appeared on stage again. The other thing I remember, is that in *Haste Thee Nymph*, the steps that the women do with the chorus don't match the words the way that the men's steps do, plus they are broken up into the canons. The men just do a straight canon and it matches up with the words all the way through, but then, when the women come out in the chorus, the words are still there but the musical phrases don't match up and certainly then the canons that he wanted the women to show also don't match up. It's not throughout, some of the parts match. But that was interesting.

**Mireille.** Anything else you would like to add?

**Omura.** Well, the whole system of *The Walking Duet*, I remember how difficult it was because he was choreographing it from each corner and working on phrases and then the second year we did it, when we were teaching it to the new people, we really realized what the problems were and that it wasn't a perfect system. When he choreographed it, he just gave each corner their choreography but the crossings were not codified. So the second year, he made it boy-girl, we clarified the patterns and some of the rhythms.

**Mireille.** I am impressed with all of the details you remember about the setting of this piece.

**Omura.** Well, it's all very vivid maybe because I came back to it for so many years, talked about it, wrote about it, it's fundamental to my growth and my learning as a person and as a Mark Morris dancer for sure.

**Mireille.** So do you remember how he set up the canon in the *Finale*?

**Omura.** So, after the whole beginning that did not work out numbers wise he then asked: "Which wing are in," and then made it where you are in the wings. The phrases are each slightly longer than the previous one, but first he just did the steps and then realized looking at it that each one could take you further out from the wings, but that was secondary to what went to the music in his mind. He musically designed the cross where you have to leap and I think subsequently after he designed it he realized that the leap should take place across the center. Of course, is very difficult to get there, cross in the air, land on the beat and get off stage. Making all of that fit is part of the challenge of every moment of that whole bit. You know there is a Busby Berkley canon and then leaping across and then magically, "Oh they seem to be leaping on this verse of the music." Well, all that takes so much. You know what is like to be in it. It's scary, you're dealing with the wings, you're dealing with your partner, you're dealing with crossing

someone with whom you could bash your head together. It's so challenging but amazing when you achieve all of it. And then you get to do the last circle and that is so freeing after all that tight canon.

**Mireille.** Yes, that last circle is great. You know, when I was interviewing him and asking about his influences, he brought up Busby Berkley, which I had seen but not all of his work. So when I got home I viewed some of it and I saw one part that was exactly like the end of *L'Allegro*.

**Omura.** Of course. You know, if you are going to branch out and talk about other influences, he had said himself about Trisha Brown's piece *Set and Reset*, where there is the concept of a whole other dance going on outside of the stage that does not only happen on stage but it continues on the outside of it and you are just getting to see this part of it. Mark drew from it in several places, just the fact that people spin on almost mid-phrase in several places, including in the canon of the *Finale*.

**Mireille.** Yeah, even at the end of *Mountains*, while I was exiting there was another person running on the other side of the screen as though the dance was also happening somewhere else.

## INTERVIEW WITH MEGAN WILLIAMS

**Mireille.** When you started working on *L'Allegro*, what was your personal training background?

**Williams.** I had gone to the Juilliard school for College, so I studied ballet and American modern dance. Limón, Graham, eventually Paul Taylor, which wasn't really a technique but it was material that we learned because that was the new thing at Juilliard at the time, but then some other choreographers... I did an Alvin Ailey piece I was in, lot of Limón stuff. Prior to that, I studied Jazz and musical theater as a high school person and a little bit of ballet. So I kind of did a crash course ballet in order to even audition for Juilliard. My mom got me a private teacher to learn the names of the steps. But when I got to Juilliard they wanted me to be a ballet dancer, pushing me into *Les Sylphides* variation class and pointe shoes, which was not a good idea because I just didn't have the body for it. But they thought I did. I think pointe you really do have to start when you are young and find it interesting enough. I got tendinitis and...yeah, anyway my training was mostly in dancing in musicals when I was in high school. So ballet, modern dance. And then after I graduated from college, I danced in Ohad Naharin's company and I danced with few other smaller companies during the eighties when we still called it modern dance stuff, before we called it anything else.

**Mireille.** So, of these experiences, which one was the most helpful as a preparation for working on *L'Allegro*?

**Williams.** Well the other thing that I did at Juilliard was study music, rhythmic training, and theater for four years and I played the piano a little bit. So I think I had the "dancing to music" the way Mark thinks about dancing to music. I had experience in that. The early modern dance stuff, Limón, Graham and even the Ailey thing that I did and some other stuff of Paul Taylor in

particular, I was dancing to baroque music such as Bach. So I was practiced in listening and dancing in that way. Dancing in rhythm and dancing to movement motifs that fit music motifs. So I felt that when I auditioned for *L'Allegro* and that was being asked from us, of course we did phrases from other dances at the audition, but I felt really comfortable with that. So ballet and modern dance techniques in my body but also that ability to catch the phrase musically is probably what made him pick me.

**Mireille.** What was your experience regarding the learning and the performing of the new material in *L'Allegro*? What came easy and what was difficult technically?

**Williams.** I remember that when we first started, so much about that experience had to do with the social experience also and the pressure of being a new person in an environment where some people knew each other well and were very possessive of the environment and of Mark. That was challenging. Competing for his attention, trying to get noticed. I had come from a couple of different experiences where, in small companies, I was always very vocal and also picked up things pretty quickly and was given a lot of responsibility like, “Megan teach the phrase to so and so.” I couldn’t take that kind of role, and I tried to, initially, and I got shut down...I was told like, “just dance.” So, so much of that experience was yes about learning the new material every day, but it was also about negotiating and navigating the social and political environment which was new to the old dancers, so they were dealing with it. Mark’s transformation from being their peer and friend in this one setting back here, to this maestro-impresario getting more attention and the company doubled in size and he was trying to impress everybody in the room. We were all trying to impress each other and not step on each other’s feet. So, for me there was a lot of psycho-social stuff going on that I don’t want to say was more important than learning the dance,

but I would say it was as important. But I realized pretty quickly that it wasn't about favorites and that I was part of a bigger thing.

**Mireille.** Sometimes, I was confused about the task in question because I could not see what details we were working on since the steps appeared simple to me. I was not yet used to what I call "detailed simplicity," and Mark's specificity. How did you feel about the simplicity of some steps?

**Williams.** I didn't need it to be any fancier than it was...but sometimes I didn't understand why the simplicity was actually the most extraordinary thing about it. Like people running like this as birds, it's so simple and that's what makes it extraordinary. Nothing fancy about it. While I was learning it, I found it all hard enough...because I worked with a few people like that and I had done a few dances up until that point that were about that kind of thing too. More minimalist kind of thing.

**Mireille.** Do you have any significant personal process that emerged from the experience of working on *L'Allegro* for years? Something about the way you approach movement or artistically?

**Williams.** As it went on in time, I got to do more parts and there was no real logic to how he put—like by the time we did it at Lincoln Center, I was the star of the first act. I did the bird solo and *Mountains*...and then the second act I was just in the chorus. I remember learning the bird solo from Olivia (Maridjan-Koop), who learned it from Teri (Weksler), and I taught it to Julie (Worden). I remember passing that on to her. I used to do a certain kind of warm up that I developed just for that. Being able to be lifted that way because I had never done any bird lifts before that. I was never a lifted person at all. So I think it was yoga. I would do all this stuff on the floor to practice getting my back into that kind of articulation so I could move and be able to

sustain my weight and have my head as far back as possible. So I feel like I evolved a *L'Allegro* warm-up.

**Mireille.** Did you pass that onto Julie?

**Williams.** I did. Yes, because she was young and she said: “Tell me what to do,” so I said: “I always do these floor exercise.” Who knows if she ended up doing it, but that’s how I taught it to her, with that bit of personal input.

**Mireille.** In what ways was dancing for Mark different from other people for whom you had previously danced?

**Williams.** Well some of that is understanding the personalities of some of the people that I danced with before. So much is about not just the work but the person and the climate that’s created because I danced in much smaller companies and we toured, rehearsed weird hours. I dance in Ohad Naharin’s work, in Batsheva, for over three years and it was technical, but it was really leggy and wild, and a lot of throwing yourself onto the floor. He was really into hyper-mobility and I am hyper-extended. Mark hated that and Ohad loved that. You do all this stuff with your hands in Ohad, like baby hands and Mark was like, “What the hell are you doing with your hands?’ So I had to transform myself from Ohad to Mark for sure, in terms of how I used my body.

**Mireille.** What about the torso?

**Williams.** Yeah. I feel that Mark’s material lent itself so much more to ballet and modern dance architecture. Whereas Ohad was all about sensation, feeling, drama.

**Mireille.** Yes, now that I think about it, Mark uses a lot of upper-body but it is more linearly sequential.

**Megan.** When I set Mark's work, I have to get students to be able to soften their sternum, to get rid of the tightness, releasing your weight into the floor in a certain kind of way, and the other work I have done had curves and arches to it, but everything was less specific. Mark is just super-specific. It's not like the other people were less specific, but it was another kind of specificity.

**Mireille.** What about all the folklore steps in Mark's work. Had you studied character dance before?

**Williams.** A little bit here and there. It also felt very natural to me. I didn't feel that was uncomfortable at all. I had done a little bit of tap dancing too, but not really to say that I know how to tap dance. That stayed with me, like when I make up dances, there is always a little folk dance feeling to it. I love the idea of holding hands; that made me feel good. There was something really pleasurable. I still watch his work and is the thing that really gives me warmth, which is when people turn away from the audience and hold hands. You feel like you are watching a community of people experiencing something instead of telling you what to experience. And it's a brave thing to put folk dancing in the middle of a theater work. At the time it was unique.

**Mireille.** Can you recall any specific choreographic system that he devised in the creation of a complex group pattern? For example, the *Finale* or *The Walking Duet*?

**Williams.** I just remember being very impressed with the B section of *The Walking Duet*, because I hadn't really worked with so many canons before. Like it's so obvious now, if you dance with Mark for years, you become an expert. But the fact that he could make up these systems and knew in advance they were going to work, was impressive to me.

**Mireille.** What other early or preceding modern dance techniques do you think have common grounds with Mark's work? For example, I mentioned to him about Ruth St. Denis and how he reminds me of her work.

**Williams.** No, Mark is Ruth St. Denis. I think he is. Because she did all this orientalism stuff too, which is totally, you know, you don't call it like that anymore. Mark was drawn to that before he started going to India, he was making Indian dances, which nowadays you have to be so careful about appropriation. But he is not appropriating anymore, he is going and studying with those women, he is part of a lineage now and he can take it back to his work in a way that is probably more palatable to a lot of people. But yeah, when he was young and was doing *O Rangasayee*, he was like Ruth St. Denis. Totally. Also in *Tamil*, which is more like a ballet strange thing, with weird angles. So I would say, yeah, those things you listed like Isadora, but José Limón for sure. The men dancing, like the choruses of men, José did that too. And even though Mark would never admit it, there is Paul Taylor stuff in there too. Because Taylor was coming out of Cunningham but then his approach to music was more along the lines of what Mark ended up being drawn to. In Taylor's work the music motif is highlighted, when you hear, "one, two, three," and you know the dancers are going to, "go (one), like (two), this (three)." Then the next time the music does it again, the dancers are going too also, and he used a lot of baroque music. The more recent Paul Taylor is kind of regurgitated, but some of his early works maybe were influential to Mark, without him knowing. The other multi-cultural thing about Mark always being drawn to these other forms that aren't about a person dancing, they're about a culture dancing. All the folk forms and images in visual art, like portraiture, all of that it's been...you know...processed. I think of when we did *Romeo and Juliet* (2008), and he was looking at all of these paintings of just figures with their heads together. He really digs into a lot of things and he

doesn't go the studio and improvise. It's all very visual from the outside and he finds a way to kind of come back into it that way. And then I would say Merce Cunningham work, which is more about the way space is used, and Merce's work is the only one he would go see, otherwise he'd rather go to the opera or go listen to music.

**Mireille.** If a student would ask you: "I am going to audition for *L'Allegro* next month, what kind of classes should I be taking?" What would you answer?

**Williams.** Ballet class with a really musical teacher and someone who makes music important in the class. Anybody who is making you practice rhythm would be my first thing and ballet for the strength and agility. Maybe modern class at the studio with people whose bodies are in the dance already. I would say also Limón because it's musical in that way too. Got to dance to the music that way.

**Mireille.** Do you think that the Graham technique has something in common with Mark's work? He didn't think so.

**Williams.** None of the floor work but some of the dances. It depends who is teaching it to you because so much of my experience of doing Graham, has to do with this emotive quality that Mark is not interested in at all. He doesn't want you to act. He says: "only smile if you are happy." He doesn't want you to sell anything. Maybe the shapes and the architecture of Graham would be useful and where it is musically clear. But I remember being musically vague sometimes. I had two different teachers at Juilliard. One whose approach was gentler, Ethel Winter. She was in the original company and she was extraordinary, but she didn't give you this, "Your guts have to be ripped out," or exposing your jugular for the wolves to come and bite you, that's how I was taught by the other teacher, which apparently is how Martha thought about it

all. You weren't just vulnerable; you were about to die. And if you danced it that way she was happy. So that part of it I know Mark is not interested in because is fake.

**Mireille.** What would you say about the way Mark asks people to dance?

**Williams.** Specifically, about *L'Allegro* I don't remember him ever saying: "I want you to smile in this section, to have more fun here." He didn't give that kind of coaching, he was not nurturing that way. He never said: "have fun with this section everybody, let yourself go," that's not how he taught. So he is like, "Run, run faster, you're late, together," and if we decided to smile it was because it was fun and I remember him saying: "If you are happy smile, otherwise please don't," because it was fake to him. I remember doing a duet with Keith (Sabado) in *New Love Song Waltzes*, and I was used to smiling on stage and being performative in that way, because I had always done it that way all my life, like "joy" this is happy, is about love. I remember looking at him in the face, and he came up to me, this is during rehearsal, and said: "stop looking at me like that," and I went, "Ok, I get it." It wasn't like a fight and I respected him so I was nervous and that was probably my default. What he meant is that it felt fake and too sweet. So that stuck with me too, it made me think of it on my own because Mark never said to me: "I don't like what you are doing with your face." So I figured, no news is good news, "He is not saying anything to me so I must be doing it right." I got some positive feedback from other people watching the show. But Mark never talked about that, he would only say: "don't do that with your face," he would only tell people what not to do. Mark wants people to be natural and connect with each other.

**Mireille.** Anything else you would like to add about the dancing aspect of *L'Allegro*?

**Williams.** At the time it felt like one of the hardest things I had ever done because I had never done something that long. As it evolved, we toured more and more, and we knew that people

loved it, that changed it. It changed how I danced in it. It is an interesting evolution because in Brussels we had no idea and we were treated so strangely by the Belgium community, like that review that said that we were just jumping and skipping around and that all of those American women are ugly. How do you love the thing you are doing if you know that everybody is thinking it's strange and there is a lot of pressure for it to be great? It didn't feel great yet. I remember Andy and my brother coming to see it and they went like, "What was that?" because it was weird. It was so simple. And it wasn't until a couple people said: "This is so simple and so beautiful," and everybody agreed that all of its visual made it spectacular. But the contrast of dancing these really amazing things and then getting to be a "tree," I never experienced anything like that before. As time went on and we started doing it in front of audiences that loved it, it was great. Think of when we stopped running and finished the dance, and the audience would go wild. That was great and I don't think I have experienced that ever again. Good endings are worth a million bucks and that's a cheap ending. Busby Berkeley. Is magic; it's just like nature and flowers blooming.