

Symmetry, Asymmetry and the Elements of Dance

Symmetric Position: A symmetric position is identical on the right and left sides of the body. It looks and feels stable, balanced and resolved. Think of a pyramid, or mirror image.

Symmetric Sequence: A symmetric sequence is one in which movements to the right are mirrored by movements to the left, and vice versa.

Asymmetric Position: By contrast, an asymmetric position is different on the right and left sides of the body. It suggests mobility and potential loss of balance. Think of actions that are unstable, lopsided or unbalanced.

Spatial Patterns: Spatial patterns, like body shapes, may display symmetry or asymmetry, suggesting stability and equilibrium versus irregularity and imbalance. Choreographers use these devices to evoke strong or weak dramatic effects.

(From the National Arts Centre-Arts Alive website- <https://nac-cna.ca/en/artsalive>)

ELEMENTS OF DANCE

Body: body awareness, use of body parts (e.g., hips, shoulders), body shapes (e.g., angular, stretched, twisted), locomotor movements (e.g., leap, dart), non-locomotor movements (e.g., twist, rock), body bases, symmetry versus asymmetry, geometric versus organic shape, curved versus angular shape, isolation of body parts, weight transfer

Space: levels, pathways, directions, positive versus negative space, proximity of dancers to one another, various group formations, use of performance space

Time: stillness, rhythm, tempo, pause, freeze, with music, without music, duration, acceleration/ deceleration

Energy: quality, inaction versus action, percussion, fluidity (e.g., glides, sink, fall, shiver)

Relationship: dancers to objects, opposition, groupings (e.g., large and small groups), meet/part, follow/lead, emotional connections between dancers

(from Grade 1-8 Ontario Arts Curriculum, 2009)

Grade 8 Dance, Drama, and Critical Literacy – Finding Balance