

Graham based Floor Work

.....The torso is the center of the movement and the dancer discovers the shape of the movement is dictated by the dynamic relationship of the body to space, gravity and time.....

A dancer needs strength and flexibility.

The focal point of these exercises is to develop strength in the abdominals and lower back muscles. These muscles provide the continued lift that floorwork requires. Flexibility in the hips is built on that support. Balance is developed on the basis of the co-ordination of the torso with the arms, legs and head.

When dancers move, they balance against the pull of gravity by the correct placement of the upper torso and the head over the lower torso.

Alignment begins in the lower torso, at the base of the spine. The lift through tensed buttocks, hips and stomach stretches upwards through the core of the body to the base of the throat. A vertical line, between the base of the spine and the base of the throat, centres the erect torso.

The same points form the guidelines for the contraction that curve the spine. The lowest point of the curve begins at the sacrum.

Internally, the stomach muscles contract in, up and back towards the spine while the ribs and chest hollow, to maximise the depth of the curve in its upward movement to the base of the throat.

Externally, the back curves upward from the sacrum to the topmost vertebrae of the neck. The head either completes the line of the spine or it moves completely independantly.

To place movement at spirals, the dancer imagines a shaft as their centre with the access point at the base of the throat and the base of the spine. The external line of the spiral begins in the lower torso at the sitting bone of the pivoting hip and circles upward to the opposite shoulder of the upper torso.

The dancer relates to the same internal line that centre the erected torso and use the opposition of hip and shoulder and centre line as cross reference to keep the upper and lower torsos in alignment.

The turn of the head is the final factor. The spiral that begins in the pelvis end when the head completes the rotation.

In centre movements, beginners are taught to move the head as an extension of the spine. The effect of the gaze is taken into account with back straight, eyes look straight forward where head and neck complete the line of the straight spine. In the curve, eyes

may be turned inward without dropping. If the gaze drops, it may cause the chin to drop and break the continuation of the line of head and neck as part of the spine.

The shift from centre to off-centre is a key movement for all groups (levels). It establishes the basic principle that the pelvis is the motive source for movement. The hands pressing down against the floor with arms braced activates a high lift and help students to assemble hips, ribs, shoulders and head into an integrated unit.