The elements of dance: Part 1 Space

Shape 1

Shape is an aspect of the element of space. Shape is perhaps the strongest visual component in dance. The term shape may refer to individual body shapes (the way in which 3-dimensional space is used by the body) and group shapes. Body shapes are present in all actions in dance. Shapes in dance convey meaning.

There are many types of shapes:

- shapes with straight lines and angles
- curving or organic shapes
- open and closed shapes
- symmetrical and asymmetrical shapes
- harmonious and contrasting shapes
- centered and off-centre shapes.

Shapes with straight lines and angles

Students can make shapes with straight lines and angles relatively easily because of the straightness of the bones and the way the body is jointed. Simple angular shapes are also easy to recognize and learn. Angular shapes and actions can convey a range of meanings e.g.

![Angular shapes](image1)

Curving or organic shapes

The natural curve of the spine and the ability of the body to flex at a varying degrees allows us to make softer, more curved shapes. Curved shapes and actions can communicate a range of emotions to an audience. What do the shapes below convey to you?

![Curved shapes](image2)
The orientation of body shapes
It is important to consider how the audience views shapes in dance. A shape that looks good facing front may not be as pleasing when viewed from another angle. Look at the shapes viewed from different angles below. Which viewpoint or viewpoints do you think are pleasing?

Shape and relationships
Considering partner or group shapes and formations:

- repeated shapes
- harmonious shapes
- complementary shapes
- positioning and orientation.
The elements of dance: Part 2

The second part in this series on the elements of dance. It provides additional discussion about SHAPE as an aspect of space. >>

The elements of dance: Part 2 Space

Shape 2

You can explore the personal space (kinesphere) around your body to create new shapes.

You can reach into this space using different parts of the body, in any direction. See what shapes you create by 'reaching' high or low leading with your knee, elbow or shoulder. How much of this space can you reach into (open shapes, positive space)? How little space can you take up (closed shapes, negative space)?

Shapes in non-locomotor and locomotor movements When moving on the spot (non-locomotor) or across the floor (locomotor), consider the shapes that your body is making. You can apply the same explorations of personal space when you are moving. Try making different shapes while you are walking, running or leaping. How many different shapes can you make when you are jumping?