

“Gh. Dima” Music Academy – Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Musical Performing Arts

Department of Stage Performance

Livia Gună

COURSE

SPECIALIZATION

Dance Improvisation

SYLLABUS

FOR

the first cycle of studies

from the 1st to the 3rd year of study

INTRODUCTION

The study of the Improvisation subject aims mainly to the discovery, awareness and capitalization of body language. Other objectives to be achieved through the study of different methods that are specific to dance improvisation, aim to enable the student to communicate harmoniously in every system of movement – Classical, Modern or Contemporary.

The set objective is to be met with by employing techniques that are specific to dance, as well as elements that have been borrowed from music and visual arts.

The practical approach includes:

- Body harmonization - means of relating to the stage space, with emotional impact
- Body forging studies - means of relating to the stage space, with visual impact
- Exploring the sound dimension from new perspectives
- Defining space-time coordinates
- Warm-up and body mobility techniques
- Creative visualization exercises
- Body forging exercises
- Exercises for the awareness and capitalization of vital energy
- Movements studies: solo and within a group, free or given – on any type of vocal support, with or without vocal insertions

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Examination – 1st year 1st / 2nd semester (practical)

2nd year 1st / 2nd semester (practical)

3rd year 1st semester (practical)

Bibliography

Livia GUNA – Ipostazele coreografiei moderne – sisteme, concepte, realizari de spectacole / *Modern Choreography Instances – Systems, concepts, staging performances*

Livia, Guna – Arhitecturizare corporala – metoda de sistematizare a miscarilor in compozitia coreografica / *Body forging – method for the systematization of the movements in regard to choreographic composition*

Jacqueline M. Smith-Autard – Dance Composition – A Practical Guide to Creative Success in Dance Making

1ST YEAR – 1st semester

| LEARNING UNITS | LESSONS | OBJECTIVES / COMPETENCIES |
|---|---------|--|
| I. Warm-up and body mobility techniques | 2 | The discovery and capitalization of one's own body movement systems |
| II. Coordinates: Space | 3 | Defining the spatial coordinate and means of exploiting it |
| III. Coordinates: Time | 3 | Defining the temporal coordinate and means of exploiting it |
| IV. Rhythmic – kinetic exercises | 4 | Exploring the sound dimension from new perspectives in the context of dance improvisations |
| V. Creative visualization techniques | 2 | Training within different movement studies in view of their public presentation |

Lesson 1 – **Warm-up and body elasticity techniques** – the warm-up routine, which is crucial, aims to carefully making the joints and muscles more flexible – floor and exercises, as well as exercises in the center of the room.

Lesson no. 2 – **Stretching, yoga and gymnastics** – The training routine is to progress slowly, free of tension, paying close attention to the way the student is doing the exercises.

Lesson 3 – **Space** – exploring conventional and non-conventional spaces

The student is required to identify unconventional areas by a brief improvisation – of a gestural and / or verbal nature; to express himself / herself expressively;

- The objective is to have the student let aside his / her inhibitions matured as a consequence of the thorough practice of Classical dance
- The importance of the awareness in regard to the play ground – no matter which this is – is pointed out
- The objective consists in the mature and natural assumption of the exercise

Lesson 4 – **Time** – rhythm exercises

For starters, simple rhythmic patterns are to be used which are to be further developed as the student does the exercises that have been indicated.

- simple rhythmic patterns in the binary measure
- The pattern is to be rendered only by clapping hands – the focus is on keeping the rhythmic pattern, individually but especially when doing group exercises
- rhythmic patterns have to be learnt by heart and then executed

Lesson 5 - **Time** – rhythm exercises

- in ternary measure
- the clap is to be combined with the foot pattern
- the focus is on keeping the rhythmic pattern, individually but especially when doing group exercises
- rhythmic patterns have to be learnt by heart and then executed

Lesson 6 – **Rhythmic – kinetic exercises**

- a series of body movements are to be tailored onto a simple rhythmic pattern, on the given rhythm of the initial pattern

The exercises are to be done as follows:

- basic pattern – the palm of the hand
- metronome – the foot
- basic pattern – the foot
- metronome - the palm of the hand

Lesson 7 – **Complex rhythmic – kinetic exercises**

- the drill implies different rhythms at the level of the arm and foot

The exercises have to be done following the pattern from the previous course: palm, foot and metronome combined

Lesson 8 - **Rhythm exercises with rest**

- rhythmic – kinetic exercises; the movement rest is introduced

The exercise, although apparently easy, requires close attention and focus

- the basic rhythmic pattern has to be learnt by heart and then executed
- the exercises is to be done individually and in group

Lesson 9 - **Rhythmic– kinetic exercises with combined segments**

- the move proposed doesn't have to alter the rhythm of the basic pattern
- the move can use all body segments (head, arms, chest, shoulders, legs)

- the exercise is to be done individually

Lesson 10 – **The space-time coordinate** – the study of the changes in rhythm and in direction

It starts with the basic rhythmic pattern to which a movement – of free choice – is added, a movement which compulsorily preserves the given rhythmical pattern

- the basic rhythmic pattern is complex.
- The movement improvised on this rhythm can be done using the space:
- Vertically (plies, jumps, arms)
- Horizontally (by travel)
- Vertically + horizontally (with slides, with drop jumps, jumps, etc.)

Lesson 11 - **The space-time coordinate** - the study of the changes in rhythm and in direction – The movement proposed doesn't have to alter the rhythm of the basic pattern

- The movement can make use of all body segments (head, arms, chest, shoulders, legs)
- The exercises in to be done individually

Lesson 12 - **The space-time coordinate** - the study of the changes in rhythm and in direction – The exercise is done in group on the same coordinates

Lesson 13 - **Creative visualization exercises**

- Applications of the material proposed

Solo

- The movement study of the body segments is to be done individually, everyone being thus given the opportunity to discover his / her own kinetic and aesthetic potential

Lesson 14 - **Creative visualization exercises**

- Applications of the material proposed

Solo duo

The movement study of the body segments is to be done individually as well as in partnership

1ST YEAR – 2ND semester

| LEARNING UNITS | LESSONS | OBJECTIVES / COMPETENCIES |
|--|---------|--|
| I. Discovery and capitalization of one's own body movement systems | 6 | The discovery of the different body segments and their use by means of specific exercises (head, arms, chest, shoulders, legs) |
| II. Movement studies | 2 | Assimilation and development of different improvisation studies based on the technical elements that have been studied |
| III. Body harmonization – Creativity study | 3 | The given assignment suggests the deciphering of the potential related to conveying emotional meanings – group movement study |
| IV. Body conditioning | 3 | Ways and methods of relating within the stage space, with visual impact |

Lesson 1 – **Body conditioning** - The discovery of the different body segments and their use by means of specific exercises

The study is to be conducted sequentially; the student is to be made aware of the movements of each body segment and the information is to be processed spatially.

- The assignment consists in the discovery of the different body segments, their use by means of specific exercises which are meant to develop the mechanism of one's own movement system

Lesson 2 – **Segment no. 1 – Head**

- It represents the area destined to mimic
- It is integrated in the body frame next to other segments
- The movement study of the body segments is to be done individually, everyone being thus given the opportunity to discover his / her own kinetic and aesthetic potential. They can move:
 - Face – back
 - Right – left
 - Through rotations
 - Through balance

Lesson 3 – **Segment no. 2 – Shoulders**

- The initial exercise is to be done without manoeuvring other helping segments (head, arms)
- The movement of the shoulders can be:
 - Face-back
 - Up-down
 - Rotational
- By moving both shoulders simultaneously: on the same route
- In opposition one and then the other: on the same route
- On different routes

Lesson 4 – **Segment no. 3 – Arms**

- The movement of the arms is wider and more complex

In the context of a dance improvisation, the technique for using the arms helps in shaping the body and in regard to the aesthetics of the body

The movement of the arms is wider and more complex

In the context of a dance improvisation, the technique for using the arms helps in shaping the body and in regard to the aesthetics of the body

Lesson 5 – **Segment no. 4 – Chest**

- The chest and the upper segments above mentioned can render visual and expressive effects

It renders the pulse:

- Contraction- release
- Fall / recovery. The study of the body segments started in the previous course is continued
- It represents the support for the other body segments
- It is the axis of the symmetry – asymmetry effect (according to the reference point)
- It represents the area destined to the emotional energy
- As in the case of other body segments, the chest has its own mobility

Lesson 6 – **Segment no. 5 – Legs**

- It is the segment that realizes the moving around of the other body segments
- Spatial and rhythmic function
- It is able to accomplish, within the choreographic approach, both the technical as well as the expressive component

- The three areas pertaining to this segment (sole, ankle – knee, knee – iliac joint) may function on their own or together

Lesson 7 – **Movement study**

- Studies meant to identify and correlate space-time coordinates
- Checking the way the students understood and assimilated the material analyzed by using the material that has been taught in a choreographic coherent sequence

Lesson 8 - **Movement study**

- Studies meant to identify and shape body segments
- Checking the way the students understood and assimilated the material analyzed by using the material that has been taught in a choreographic coherent sequence

Lesson 9 – **Body conditioning**

The given assignment suggests the deciphering of the potential related to conveying emotional meanings

- individual movement study
- the expressive component is targeted
- mimic, gesture and expressive posture are worked on
- the study is made individually

Lesson 10 - **Body conditioning** - The given assignment suggests the deciphering of the potential related to conveying emotional meanings – group movement study

- in what group exercises are concerned the objective is to observe how the student focuses on the study topic and on the way in which he / she uses his / her multi-tasking abilities
- the creativity and expressivity of the proposals as well as the awareness in what the topic proposed is concerned are valued in individual exercises

Lesson 11 – **Creativity study**

The student is to conceive choreographic phrases in which to make use and to capitalize on the material analyzed in the previous courses

Lesson 12 – **Body conditioning** – building exercises and relating within the stage framework

Choreographic phrases

The student is to conceive choreographic phrases in which to make use and to capitalize on the material analyzed in the previous courses - basic phrase, Pb

- the length of a choreographic phrases (Pb) = 8 beats
- one choreographic phrase (Pb) is to be built for each body segment (5Pb) the final phrase Pb no. 6 is to comprise combined elements of the other five choreographic phrases

Lesson 13 – The choreographic phrase

- The focus is on the way the student fulfilled his / her assignment for each segment
- His / her creativity will be assessed
- The final form - from a visual and technical point of view – is valued

The study is an individual one

Lesson 14 – Movement study - Checking the way the students understood and assimilated the material analyzed by using the material that has been taught in a choreographic coherent sequence

2nd YEAR – 1st semester

| LEARNING UNITS | LESSONS | OBJECTIVES / COMPETENCIES |
|--|---------|---|
| I. Body conditioning | 6 | The study of the means specific to dance improvisation |
| II. Movement studies | 2 | Developing creative skills |
| III. Complementary techniques in dance improvisation | 3 | The study and assimilation of the complementary techniques of dance improvisation |
| IV. Assessment of the improvisation techniques studied | 3 | Practical approach to creativity – Creative strategies in dance improvisation |

Lesson 1 – Body conditioning

Shifting direction – 1. By changing the reference point – it presents building and relating means within the stage framework by different methods

Any modification brought to the basic phrase by shifting the reference points by preserving compulsorily the sequencing of the elements in the basic form

Lesson 2 – **Shifting all directions**

In the case of both exercises the aim is to carefully watch the shifts proposed (direction and rhythm) not to alter the sequencing of the elements from the Pb

Lesson 3 – **Shifting rhythm**

Dilation or augmentation – increasing the time of execution

Any modification brought to the basic phrase by shifting the reference points by preserving compulsorily the sequencing of the elements in the basic form, having to comply with the sequence of the elements and of the reference points (initial direction) according to the stage topography.

Lesson 4.

Compression or diminution – the decrease of the execution time – practical exercises

Lesson 5 - **Combined rhythm shifts plus rest**

Practical exercises

Lesson 6 – **Movement study** – the basic phrase to which all the methods studied can be combined

Lesson 7 - **Movement study**

- Ways to apply the material that has been taught
- Body forging by body conditioning – the proposals in view of the fulfillment of the task are of free choice and depend on the individual's creativity
- The study is unfolding individually and in group

Lesson 8 - **Repetition or shaping** – aiming to increase the volume of the choreographic material or to emphasize – from an expressive point of view – certain sequences of the choreographic form.

- The use of the method implies going back and repeating a movement, a choreographic sequence or even an entire choreographic phrase for a specific number (n) of times (when $n = +1 \rightarrow +\infty$). We observe the way in which the method is able to develop a new, expressive, image by manipulating the eight movements comprised in a basic phrase.

Lesson 9 - **Complementary techniques for body conditioning**

Pas chasse / Side shuffles - by side shuffles we can shift the travel directions inter-movements. From this point on we can operate a shift of direction within the shift that has been set obtaining a spectacular image.

Lesson 10 – The ornament

- In the case of movement it refers to any slight nuance which occurred in the basic shift without altering the line or direction that has been set.

Lesson 11 – Fragmentation

- It resumes to a certain extent the tameru (deterrence) technique practiced by the Noh dancers in the Japanese theatrical field.
- The technique is to be used if the time augmentation / dilation sequence equals or is superior to four beats or within certain interpretative improvisations. In the second case, the duration of the execution in view of rendering the expressive effect of the choreographic material is flexible, being adjusted to the dancer’s technical and interpretative needs.

Lesson 12.

Assessment of the knowledge matured – a) Theoretical (memorizing the exercises, the sequencing, the technique and the form)

Lesson 13 - Assessment of the knowledge matured – b) Practical – the way in which the body conditioning methods have been assimilated and the way in which they are being applied

Lesson 14 - Assessment of the knowledge matured – practical study of improvisation (choreographic section)

2nd YEAR – 2nd semester

| LEARNING UNITS | LESSONS | OBJECTIVES / COMPETENCIES |
|-------------------------------------|---------|--|
| I. Body conditioning | 1 | The study of the means specific to dance improvisation |
| II. Applications - Movement studies | 6 | Developing creative skills |

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|--|---|---|
| III. Complementary techniques in dance improvisation | 4 | The study and assimilation of the complementary techniques of dance improvisation |
| IV. Assessment of the improvisation techniques studied | 3 | Practical approach to creativity – Creative strategies in dance improvisation (individually and in group) |

Lesson 1 – **Body conditioning**

Rebellion – method aimed towards the re-construction of the sequence of movements pertaining to the basic phrase.

Lessons 2 and 3 – **Canon**

1. By means of reference

By taking over

Lesson 4 – **Applications** – Movement study

Lessons 5 and 6 – **Symmetry** – it becomes a way by which we can make up a spatial aggregate out of the corresponding elements of a geometrical identity

1. Closed symmetry or profile symmetry
2. Linear symmetry

Lesson 7 – **Shadow**

- Rendering method by identical juxtaposition of the choreographic material

Lesson 8 – **Applications** – Movement Study

Lesson 9 - **Movement Study** – with one, two or three Pb

Lesson 10 - **Movement Study** – individually

Lesson 11 - **Movement Study** – combined and in group

Lesson 12 – **Assessment of the knowledge matured** – is to take place individually and in group

- The focus is on the response time and on who spectacular the final form is

Lesson 13 –

Assessment

- Theoretical (memorizing the exercises, the sequencing, the technique and the form)

Lesson 14 – **Assessment**

- Practical – the way in which the body conditioning methods have been assimilated and the way in which they are being applied

2nd YEAR – 2nd semester

| LEARNING UNITS | LESSONS | OBJECTIVES / COMPETENCIES |
|--|---------|--|
| I. Identification and capitalization of the energetic, spatial and sound dimensions in dance | 6 | The study of the techniques and of the specifically complementary techniques of capitalization on the inner energy, sound and space in dance improvisation |
| II. Applications - Movement studies – Creativity study | 4 | Developing creative skills |
| III. Techno - improvisation | 3 | The study and assimilation of several contemporary techniques in dance improvisation |
| IV. Assessment of the improvisation techniques studied | 1 | Practical approach to creativity – Creative strategies in dance improvisation (individually and in group) |

Lesson 1 – **Technical study** - based on the body conditioning techniques The focus is on the way in which the techniques that have been assimilated enable the student to develop a new image, expressive, by means of manipulating the movements comprised in a basic phrase or more

Lesson 2 – **Self-awareness and capitalization on vital energy**

- Exercises aimed towards the manoeuvring of personal and collective energy

Lesson 3 – Exercises for creative visualization

Improvisation based on auditory, visual, kinetic or ideational stimuli

Lesson 4 – Improvisation study without sound accompaniment – the use of the inner pulse, of personal or group energy

Lesson 5 – Sound and energy – vocal elements associated with the movement ones

- Associating sounds by means of vocal emission (e.g. Onomatopoeias)
- Combinations of movements with personal sounds

Lesson 6 - Sound and energy – auxiliary sounds - associating movements with body sounds (e.g. clapping, stamping feet, snapping fingers, etc.)

Lesson 7 – Ideational improvisation – associating movements with the literary text

Lesson 8 – Creativity exercises – with or without sound material

Lesson 9 – Exercises for creative visualization

Lesson 10 – Movement study – approaching new techniques pertaining to the choreographic language

- Different types of language are studied pertaining to different contemporary choreographers
- The proposals are flexible according to preferences or to the overall benchmark of the class
- Video material or similar others are to be used in this regard

Lesson 11 – Techno – improvisation - Different types of language are studied pertaining to different contemporary choreographers

- The proposals are flexible according to preferences or to the overall benchmark of the class
- Video material or similar others are to be used in this regard

Lesson 12 - Techno – improvisation - Different types of language are studied pertaining to different contemporary choreographers

- The proposals are flexible according to preferences or to the overall benchmark of the class

Lesson 13 – Applications – Movement studies

- Is to be used by combining different styles taken over by means of techno-improvisation

Lesson 14 – **Assessment**

- Theoretical (memorizing the exercises, the sequencing, the technique and the form)
- Practical – through improvisation “scenes” in which the student combines the form, the techniques and the style that define him