

## Chapter 14

# Rhythmical nuance

## Sustained and Sudden Time

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- 1 Practice the following steps in any direction:

*Battement frappé*

*Developpé*

*Grand battement*

- 2 Sharply and swiftly accent the outward movement of your leg during the *battement frappé*. Then, slowly glide your leg back inward. Reverse this. Extend your leg outward like the elongated, suspended pull of an elastic band. Then, quickly close the foot to *sur le cou de pied* as if the rubber band snapped.
- 3 Repeat this process with the remaining two steps, darting the leg away or toward the body with immediacy or lingering suspension.

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**Sustained** and **Sudden Time** Efforts are common dynamic qualities in ballet training. Dancers prolong their movements with legato-like suspensions or attack their movements with urgent, staccato-like accents throughout a ballet class. Do you ever perform a *glissade* before a *grand jeté en avant* quickly so that you have more time to suspend the *grand jeté*? Or, do you speed up your *chassé* in order to prolong a *jeté entrelacé (tours jeté)*? In the above exploration, tossing the leg up quickly and descending it slowly during the *grand battement* probably felt familiar to you. *Did the reverse offer new challenges?*

“Time” in the context of L/BMA Effort does not refer to your quantitative use of time—how many minutes have gone by or how many beats to a measure—but instead to your qualitative sense of time. Do you perform the movement with lingering suspension or with brisk immediacy? Does the choreography require an indulgent or urgent atmosphere?

The use of a specific Time Effort quality affects the artistic tone of the movement. The Bluebird solo in Act III of *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, is notorious for its skittering *pas de bourées*, brisk *batterie*, and whipping *piqué* turns. The *Grand Pas de Deux* in this same act is filled with lingering balances *en pointe* and suspenseful *promenades* and lifts, creating an indulgent atmosphere. Many

contemporary choreographers, such as William Forsythe, create movement phrases that alternate seamlessly between Sudden and Sustained Time. This syn-copated use of time contributes to an unpredictable, exciting, and rhythmically sophisticated choreographic style.<sup>1</sup>

Table 14.1 presents a list of synonyms, images, and musical suggestions for Sudden and Sustained Time. *Add to each list as you explore Time Effort.*

**Table 14.1** Synonyms, imagery, and musical suggestions for Time Effort

<i>Sudden Time</i>	<i>Sustained Time</i>
<i>Synonyms</i>	<i>Synonyms</i>
Urgently	Elongate
Crisp	Lingered
Instantaneous	Gradual
Staccato	Legato
Burst	Prolong
Dart	Drawn out
Briskly	Suspended
Swiftly	Leisurely
<i>Imagery</i>	<i>Imagery</i>
Instantaneous pop of a firecracker	Elongating a rubber band before it's shot
Sudden upswEEP of fall leaves in a brisk breeze	Dripping of thick honey
Fluttering of a hummingbird's wings	An eagle gliding in on current of air
<i>Musical suggestions</i>	
Album <i>Hush</i> , Bobby McFerrin & Yo-Yo Ma	
<b>Sudden:</b> Rimsky-Korsakov, "Flight of the Bumblebee"	
<b>Sustained:</b> Bach, "Orchestral Suite #3 in D, BWV 1068—Air"	
Album: <i>Divenire</i> , Ludovico Einaudi	
<b>Sustained:</b> "Svanire"	
Album: <i>Essential Vivaldi</i> , Christopher Hogwood	
<b>Sudden:</b> Concerto in G "alla rustica," RV 151—I Presto	<i>Musical variation</i>
<i>Musical Variation</i>	
Album: <i>The Inevitable</i> , Squirrel Nut Zippers	
"You're Drivin' Me Crazy," "Danny Diamond," and "Lover's Lane"	
Album: <i>All Time Greatest Hits</i> , Louis Armstrong	
"Skokiaan," Mack the Knife," and "It Takes Two to Tango"	

## Time Effort: technique and artistry

Both contemporary and classical ballet choreography challenge dancers to perform movement phrases that alternate between Sustained and Sudden Time. This requires both muscular control and musical intelligence. Time Effort facilitates the development of these skills. Sudden Time teaches you how to accent movements with swiftness and immediacy and how to accelerate a movement

Table 14.2 Technical and artistic benefits of Time Effort

**Sudden Time** is useful when:

1. Performing with a quick and urgent attitude.
2. Attacking movements with immediate confidence.
3. Accelerating movements.
4. Conveying an urgent emotional state: *excited, happy, panicked, bustling, frantic, nervous, terror, sprightly*, and so on.

**Sustained Time** is useful when:

1. Performing with a lingering attitude.
2. Accenting movements with elongated aplomb.
3. Decelerating movements.
4. Conveying a drawn out emotional state: *luxuriating, sorrowful, confident, shock, sneaky, indulgent, solemn, leisurely*, and so on.

after an *allongé* position. Sustained time teaches you how to prolong and suspend movements and how to decelerate movements after a series of quickly performed steps. Artistically, Time Effort is an effective tool to use to enhance your musicality and sense of rhythm.

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### Embodying Sudden and Sustained Time

- 1 Learn the following simple *centre dégagé* exercise. Create your own *port de bras*.

**Begin:** *fifth position croisé* right

*Battement dégagé croisé devant* (right)

*Battement dégagé croisé derrière* (left)

*Two battement dégagé écarté devant* (right)

*Coupé derrière* (left) *pas de bourée dessous* to the right

**End:** *fifth position croisé* left

- 2 Create your own rhythm for the exercise by experimenting with Time Effort.
  - a Explore Sudden Time in five places within this exercise.
  - b Explore Sustained Time in same five places.
  - c Alternate between Sudden and Sustained Time in any way you want.
- 3 **Reflect:** *How do Sudden and Sustained Time facilitate your technique in this exercise?*

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Time Effort is an effective tool to use when learning how to perform more musically, rhythmically, and variedly. The following activities strengthen your

ability to perform movements with varying accents, embody different rhythmical patterns, and coordinate your movements with the musical phrasing.

## Let's explore Time Effort!

### Name and sound the steps!

- 1 **Names:** Expand the names of the balletic steps to include their timing quality: *leisurely* or *quick soutenu*, *crisp* or *prolonged rond de jambe*, and so on.
  - Give “timing” names to 10 steps during your next technique class.
- 2 **Pop! Tap! Whip! Burst! Prick!** These one-syllable words/sounds are good to use for quickly executed balletic steps or movements, such as the whip of the head during turns, the bounce of the leg during *battement piqué*, the brush of the leg into a *grand jeté*, and so on.
  - Identify 10 movements from a recent technique class that would benefit from these Sudden Time sounds.
- 3 **A quick trilled sound, such as “d’d’d’d’d’ding!” or “skit’t’t’t’t’ter!”**  
A series of quickly executed sounds are appropriate for consecutive movements that build in urgency, such as a *pas de bourée couru* that ends in a *sous-sus*, or a series of *pas de bourée en tournant* performed consecutively.
  - Identify five balletic movements that would benefit from these sounds.
- 4 **A sustained “Biiiiillooooooow ... ” or “Eloooooonnnngate ... ” or “Aaaahhhhhhh”**  
“Aaaahhhhhhh” might rise in inflection throughout the word, like an *arabesque* where the leg and arms slowly ascend in space and suspend at the end. Reversing the inflection prolongs the descent of the leg and arms to the floor. Drawing out the middle of the word suspends the *arabesque* in middle of the balance.
  - Identify 10 movements from a recent technique class that would benefit from these Sustained Time sounds.

### Monotonous no more—Time Effort

- 1 Choose an exercise you practiced in class recently.
- 2 Perform the exercise as if it were a monotonous speech. Maintain evenly phrased, unaccented rhythms.
- 3 In your second performance, imagine your movements are words. Emphasize some “words” with sudden bursts of insight and other “words” with prolonged contemplation.
- 4 **Reflect:** How did the use of Time Effort strengthen your technical execution?

*Describe any characters or feeling tones that emerged as you played with each Effort quality.*

### **Clapping, stomping, sounding!**

- 1 **Choose a centre floor exercise from class.**
- 2 **Clap, stomp, and/or sound out the rhythms of the steps in the centre floor exercise.**

Pay particular attention to how the rhythms accelerate and decelerate. For example, a *tombée pas de bourée en avant* may be phrased with a Sustained *tombée* followed by three Suddenly phrased steps in the *pas de bourée*. Stomping with a pause for the slow *tombée* and clapping quickly three times for the *pas de bourée* teaches you how to feel the rhythm. Exclaiming out loud, “Sloooooowwww, pa! pa! pa!” also works.

- 3 **Exaggerate the Sustained and Sudden accents you identified.**

Suspend the Sustained moments even longer. Perform the Sudden moments with greater immediacy.

- 4 **Create your own timing for the exercise.**

Movements that are Sudden might become Sustained, and vice versa. Sound out the rhythmical changes first before practicing them fully in your body.

If creating your own timing and rhythms is difficult, listen to a piece of music that alternates between Sudden and Sustained Time (see Table 14.1 for suggestions). Then, experiment with performing the exercise to the varied rhythms in the music.

### **Note**

- 1 Reference the following contemporary choreographers’ work online: William Forsythe (*Forsythe Company*); Crystal Pite (*Kidd Pivot*); Alonzo King’s (*Lines Ballet*); and Jiri Kylián, Sol León, and Paul Lightfoot (*Nederlands Dans Theater*).