

Chapter 11

The dynamic palette

Introduction to Effort

- 1 Learn the following phrases:

Balancé à la seconde (right)

Balancé à la seconde (left)

Tombée pas de bourée en avant to fifth position plié

- 2 Choose three words from the following list:

Press

Burst

Float

Skitter

Elongate

Billow

Pierce

Timidly

Smoothly

Quickly

Leisurely

Forcefully

Gently

Glide

- 3 Embody the qualities of the first word invokes as you perform the phrase. Repeat this two more times with the other words. For example: perform the phrase forcefully the first time, then timidly the second time.
- 4 **Reflect:** *How do the technical and artistic qualities of the movement change as the word changes?*

Part III: Deepening Dynamism provides you with the tools you need to expand your dynamic range and make clear dynamic choices when performing balletic movement. Performing the same series of steps with a different movement dynamic changes the feeling tone of the movement. For example, you may have performed the above phrase with smooth delicacy, conveying perhaps a gentle

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and serene attitude, and then performed it with piercing forcefulness, conveying instead a feeling of boldness or determination. The choices you make are important. So, as you progress through the remaining chapters, challenge your dynamic range and experiment with different choices from class to class.

Introduction to Effort

Effort is a comprehensive “map” for studying movement dynamics and a primary area of study within Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis (L/BMA). We are in the realm of Effort when we consider the overall energy of any given movement. There are four main categories within the Effort framework and each category is broken down into two polar parts:

- **Flow Effort**—Bound and Free Flow, describes the fluidity of your movements, whether they are controlled or easeful.
- **Weight Effort**—Strong and Light Weight, describes how you engage the mass of your body, whether it’s powerful or delicate.
- **Time Effort**—Sudden and Sustained Time, describes the timing quality of your movements, whether they are urgent or lingering.
- **Space Effort**—Direct and Indirect Space, describes how you attend to your environment, whether you are single-focused or multi-focused.

You can perform any ballet step with any Effort quality. You might perform each Effort quality in isolation—Strong Weight during a *plié*, for example—or in combination with other Effort qualities—Strong Weight with Bound Flow and Direct Space, a grouping often seen during a *piqué arabesque en relevé*.

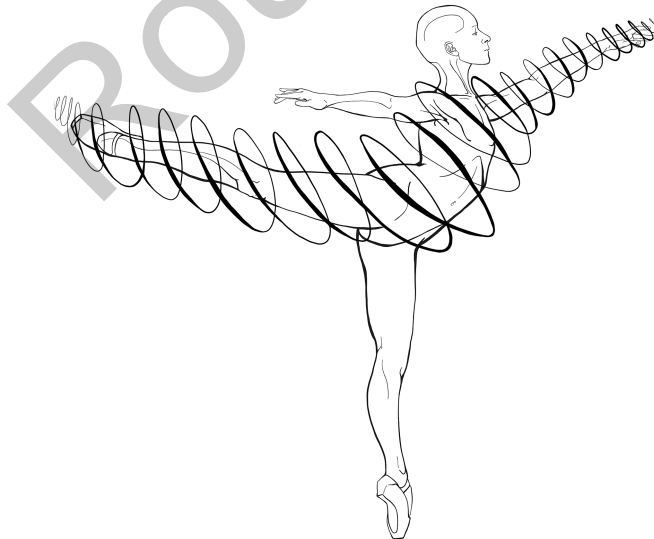


Figure 11.1 Explore a Strong, Bound, and Direct *piqué arabesque*

Use of a particular Effort or combination of Efforts will change how you execute balletic movements. For example, a *sauté arabesque* performed with out-pouring power (Free Flow and Strong Weight) looks and feels quite different than a *sauté arabesque* performed with controlled delicacy (Bound Flow and Light Weight).

Practice these two examples in your body. Do you feel how the movement changes? The first emphasizes force and momentum, while the second emphasizes lifted control.

Since there are many possible Effort permutations to explore, navigating through L/BMA Effort provides you with both flexibility and specificity.

Why study Effort in ballet class?

You do not have to concentrate on dynamics in order to be dynamic; Effort is present whether you are conscious of it or not. **So, if this is true, why is it important to be conscious of Effort during class?**

- 1 *Ballet dancers perform dances of differing dynamics and qualities.* L/BMA Effort is a broad and multifaceted tool for expanding your dynamic range and preferences.
- 2 *Ballet dancers respond to and analyze the dynamic nuances within the musical accompaniment, technique class phrases, and balletic choreography.* Explorations in Effort strengthen your ability to identify and analyze the dynamic nuances in the musical accompaniment and balletic movement.
- 3 *Ballet dancers express differing moods and emotions when dancing.* Studies in Effort increase your capacity to interpret and embody the emotional content and expressive nature of the balletic movement.
- 4 *Ballet dancers perform as soloists and dance with others.* You develop your artistic skills as soloists and as members of an ensemble when you experiment with Effort in class.
- 5 *Ballet dancers contribute to the choreographic process.* As you learn to navigate through the vast landscape of Effort qualities, you will expand your expressive range and strengthen your ability to make conscious choices about your performance energy during class and rehearsals.

Effort, artistry, and technique

As your Effort-life changes, so does your technical execution of the balletic movement and the demands on your body. Strong Weight requires greater force, Light Weight greater buoyancy, Sudden Time greater immediacy, and so on. These dynamic differences change your muscle tone, body connectivity, breath support, and coordination.

Artistically, experimenting with Effort teaches you how to use your energy to create different moods and qualities when dancing. This is a similar process to those employed by musicians; even though a musical score typically includes annotations that reveal the composer's intentions, a musical score is

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simply a series of notes until the musician or conductor interprets the score and brings specific qualitative nuances to the surface. Similarly, even though a choreographer or teacher indicates the intention of a movement phrase, you must decide how to actualize those intentions, a process that typically involves artistic interpretation.

Table 11.1 presents some of the many technical and artistic benefits for each Effort quality. Add to these benefits as you experiment with Effort in technique class.

Let’s explore Effort!

Musical romp!

- 1 Select three pieces of music that are dynamically different. Think about differences in speed, rhythm, force, and flow when choosing your music. Choosing music from different genres may help: hip-hop, pop, classical, and so on.
- 2 Choose a *barre* or *centre* exercise you performed in class recently.
- 3 Perform the class phrase three times, once to each piece of music.
- 4 **Reflect:** *How did you physically respond to the different tones and textures in the music? Did playing with different energetic qualities affect your technique or dynamic “personality” when performing the movement?*

Same step, different Effort!

- 1 Create a list of your favorite steps or movement phrases from ballet class.
- 2 Choose three movements from your list and perform them in any way you want. Challenge yourself by choosing three very different movements from class (e.g., *sissonne fermée*, *en dehors pirouette*, *grand plié*).
- 3 Read the following Effort words and accompanying Effort adjectives.

Sudden: Urgent, Quick
 Sustained: Lingerin
 g, Prolong

Table 11.1 Technical and artistic benefits of Effort

Effort	Technical	Artistic
	Moving with ...	Performing with ...
Sudden Time	Speed and agility	Urgency
Sustained Time	Prolonged suspension	Lingerin g indulgence
Direct Space	Channeled attention	Pinpointed awareness
Indirect Space	Multiple points of focus	Expansive awareness
Strong Weight	Power and force	Firm command
Light Weight	Delicacy and buoyancy	Gentle softness
Bound Flow	Controlled fluidity	Measured containment
Free Flow	Outpouring fluidity	Easefulness

Direct: Pinpointed, Channeled

Indirect: Expansive, Multi-focus

Strong: Powerful, Forceful

Light: Delicate, Buoyant

Bound: Controlled, Contained

Free: Easeful, Outpour

4 Perform each of your three steps with each of the eight Effort qualities.

5 **Reflect:**

How does each Effort quality affect your technique?

How does each Effort quality affect the expressive quality of the movement?

Did different characters or feeling tones emerge as you played with each Effort quality?

More Effort play!

- Listen to different styles of music outside of class, and dance around to that music in any way you want! Record what you feel after you move.
- Listen for Effort differences from one piece of music to the next during technique class. Embody those dynamic differences throughout class and notice how they affect your performance.
- Use colorful words to describe your movement during class. This chapter and the following chapters present adjectives and adverbs that invoke different Effort qualities. Add to those lists with your own words.
- Listen to how your teachers describe movement in class. What words do they use?

Observe the dynamic choices your peers and teachers make during classes and rehearsals. Embody those choices inside and outside of class.