

Chapter 15

Attentive movement

Direct and Indirect Space

- 1 *Start standing. Attend to something in your environment that is just beyond your reach. Reach toward it with your fingers. Notice how this causes your entire arm to move toward the object, and subsequently how the reach of your arm causes you to step toward the object. Your body naturally follows the curiosity of your attention.*
- 2 *Repeat this activity, reaching with your arms, legs, and senses of the face toward objects all around you. What happens when you reach with multiple parts of your body toward multiple objects all at once?*

Ballet is an outwardly expressive art form. You use your face, eyes, and limbs communicatively all of the time. **Space Effort** is a useful tool when learning how to effectively channel your energy and attention in space. Sometimes your awareness must be pinpointed, or **Direct**, and sometimes it must be all encompassing, or **Indirect**.

For example, in the “Mad Scene” from the Romantic Ballet *Giselle*, Giselle’s emotions are conveyed, in part, through the use of Direct and Indirect Space. She searches frantically and Indirectly among the crowd for a sword and then desperately and Directly grabs the sword and pushes it toward her heart. There are also many instances when Giselle’s awareness of her surroundings disappears completely. The contrast between these moments and those previously described create a highly charged and emotional scene of desperation, shock, longing, and anguish.

The word “space” in Space Effort can be misleading. “Space” in the context of Effort does not refer to locomotive pathways through space or even to your locale within a space. Instead, it pertains to the quality of how you use your attention as you dance. Do you convey a single-focused or multi-focused use of energy? Does the choreography require an expansive or channeled use of your attention?

Table 15.1 presents a list of synonyms, images, and musical suggestions for Direct and Indirect Space. *Add to each list as you explore Space Effort.*

2 Creative Ballet companion website material

Table 15.1 Synonyms, imagery, and musical suggestions for Space Effort

Direct Space	Indirect Space
<i>Synonyms</i> C hanneled attention Single-focused Honing in Piercing Laser-like Located awareness Pinpointed	<i>Synonyms</i> Expansive attention Multi-focused Taking it all in Enveloping Octopus-like Overlapping awareness Scanning
<i>Imagery</i> Aiming an arrow at a bulls eye Gazing at the moon at night Bottle rocket rising in the air Hawk diving for its prey	<i>Imagery</i> Tour guide gesturing to the vast landscape Looking for someone in a large crowd Multiple bubbles rising in the air Bees swarming around a hive
<i>Musical suggestions</i> Album: <i>Two-Foot Yard</i> , Carla Kihlstedt Indirect: World of Made Album: <i>The Sad Machinery of Spring</i> , Tin Hat Direct: Janissary Band Indirect: Dionysus Album: <i>The 50 Most Essential Pieces of Classical Music</i> Direct: Suite No. 1, Op. 46: IV. In the hall of the mountain king, Gynt Indirect: Concerto for Two Violins, Strings and B.C. in D Minor, BWV 1043: I. Vivace, Bach	

Space Effort: technique and artistry

You can perform any movement in ballet with Direct or Indirect Space. Determining which Effort quality to use is therefore dependent on your technical or artistic goals. Both Direct and Indirect Space Effort require you to be actively engaged with and aware of your surroundings. It is a good tool to use when learning how to perform more communicatively with your whole body.

Awakening the senses of the face, skin, and body is a great way to practice embodying Space Effort. Your sensory system is designed to take in information from the environment, whether that is your body’s internal environment or the external environment beyond your body.

Table 15.2 Technical and artistic benefits for Space Effort

Direct Space is useful when:

1. Channeling the body's energy to a specific locale.
2. Move with pinpointed precision.
3. Conveying a laser-like or single-focused emotional state.

Indirect Space is useful when:

1. Sending the body's energy to multiple locales.
2. Moving with overlapping awareness.
3. Conveying an all-encompassing or multi-focused emotional state.

Embodying Direct and Indirect Space

- 1 Choose three stretches, three strengthening exercises, and three balletic movements you perform regularly when you warm up for technique class.
- 2 Warm up your Space Effort as you perform these movements. Imagine you have “eyes” or “ears” on the distal parts of your body: fingers, toes, and head.
- 3 Allow these “eyes” or “ears” to actively explore the space around you either Directly or Indirectly as you perform your warm-up movements.
- 4 **Reflect:** *What do those parts attend to in space as you perform your chosen movements? Do they “see” or “hear” the places above, below, or all around you? Do they attend to or reach to people or objects in the room?*
- 5 Before your next class, imagine “eyes” or “ears” on more complex body parts, such as the mid-limb or proximal joints, or places along your torso.
- 6 **Reflect:** *What do you experience when you imagine “eyes” or “ears” in these places? Does it activate your core, enliven your spine, or engage your limbs? Does it help your body become more outwardly expressive?*

Imagining “eyes” or “ears” on different parts of your body teaches you how to use your body more communicatively in space. The above exploration required you to:

- 1 Notice your environment with different body parts.
- 2 Initiate movement toward something in your environment with those parts.
- 3 Follow through with the initiation so that the whole body participated in the action.

Did you also feel how Space Effort coordinated the movements of your entire body? If not, practice the above explorations again. Notice how attending to space with

4 Creative Ballet companion website material

one part of the body activates other parts of the body. For example, Directing or Indirecting with insides of your knees or heels engages the rotation in your hip joints. “Seeing” or “listening” with the top of the head facilitates spinal movements that bend, twist, and arch. Doing this with the elbows activates the upper arms and scapulae. *What else might you discover?*

Let’s explore Space Effort!

Look around!

Do you tend to keep your eyes and head fixed in the same direction when balancing or performing a complex movement? If so, let’s begin to break that habit.

- 1 Practice the following exercise.
Four *grand battement devant*, four *à la seconde*, and four *derrière*
Finish with a *relevé retiré* balance
- 2 Choreograph the focus of your eyes and head in different, but familiar, directions during each set of four *grand battement*. For example, channel your attention diagonally upwards during the *battement devant*, away from the gesturing leg during *à la seconde*, and down and forward during *derrière*.
- 3 Choose directions that feel counterintuitive: perhaps Directly downward during *devant* or *retiré*, behind you during *derrière*, and all around during *à la seconde* as if you were gazing Indirectly at a vast landscape.
- 4 Explore other exercises in this way: look in different directions for each *sauté* during warm-up jumps, or for each *développé* during *grand adagio*, and so on.
- 5 **Reflect:** Write about this experience in your dance technique journal.

Space Effort with props!

Hold an object in each hand—a marker, a tennis ball, or a scarf, for example. Stand in *first* or *fifth position*. Before you begin moving, allow your attention to be expansive; take in the environment all at once. Imagine that your favorite piece of music is playing through surround sound speakers. Or, imagine the entire room is filled with your favorite smell. Indirect your focus to take in those delightful scents or sounds.

- 1 Begin to move through various *port de bras* from technique class.
- 2 Use Direct Space Effort to channel your focus on the object you are holding in your right hand. Move your entire head not just your eyes when following the object. Repeat this to the left.
- 3 Use Indirect Space Effort to focus on both objects simultaneously. This will cause you to expand and Indirect your focus between both arms as they move through the *port de bras*.
- 4 **Reflect:** *How do Direct and Indirect Space feel expressively different?*

Front, back, side, and side

- 1 Practice a travelling waltz exercise from technique class.
- 2 Give yourself light, sweeping touches on the front surfaces of your body starting at the feet and moving upward until you reach your face and the top of your head. Then, perform the waltz exercise and imagine your favorite color emanating from the front surfaces of your body and into space.
- 3 Repeat the above task with different surfaces of the body: the back surfaces, then the right, and finally the left.
- 4 **Reflect:** *What differences did you notice between the back and front surfaces when “expressing” the movement? What about the right versus the left? Did you prefer one surface to the other? Why?*

Routledge