

## Key Elements of Rhythmic Gymnastics in The Efficient Training of the Professional Dancer

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**Abstract:** “The other one’s model and the mobility’s culture” represents the interdisciplinary example that every devoted researcher should follow in their work and study, and emphasizes, in reality, the fact that only by opening up our heart and soul to another person and to other cultures and fields, we can discover and rediscover ourselves, before we can truly understand the purpose of our artistic research. Starting from this premise, I’m proposing myself to go thoroughly into a research in sports and art alike, always putting in antithesis those two directions of body movement from Eurhythmics and Ballet, in order to discover the key elements in the most efficient forming and improvement of a professional dancer. After a rigorous selections, I wish to assemble a methodological direction that can guide and support the dancer in his formation, confirmed and reinforced by my own experience, a kind of bibliographical exteriorization, as a gift, but also as a guarantee. But, in order for me to achieve my goal, I know that is not enough. Therefore, “the other one’s model” offers me not only the ambitions, but also the obligation to extend my research internationally, resorting, in the lack of a generous national bibliography, to external sources.

**Keywords:** sport; eurhythmics; ballet.

“There comes a time when you realize that almost everything has been said before.  
Use all of the possible forms, as long as the message comes from your soul”.  
(Aureliu Manea)

The course of the life of man is linear at the beginning. We are all born equal. It is the will of iron that turns thoughts into deeds and gets obstacles out of the way, so as to reach the true potential. For this to become possible, we must carefully choose the instruments which model our evolution and progress, not only physically, but also mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Throughout my doctoral research, I wish to thoroughly analyse the informational substrata of two different spheres of motion, namely rhythmic gymnastics and ballet, with the purpose of gaining precious time and knowledge. These gains are planned to be compressed within a methodology

comprising the life experience of several acknowledged practitioners. This will serve the young dancers who choose dance both as a profession and a lifestyle.

After a rigorous selection, I intend to put together a methodological route capable of guiding and supporting the dancers during their progress, a route which has been confirmed and upheld by my own experience – a sort of a bibliographical manifestation, a gift and, at the same time, a guarantee.

The roots of technical motion of both rhythmic gymnastics and ballet have combined at the beginning of their footing, due to their similar means of training and to certain “temporary or constant content borrowings”<sup>1</sup> concerning basic technical elements, and also due to their common founders (Gineta Stoenescu mentions, in her work, *Gimnastica ritmică modernă* [Modern Rhythmic Gymnastics] Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Emil Jacques-Dalcroze, François Delsarte, Rudolf von Laban, and many others). Although “dance was originally the expression of prayer, the gesture of collective education”<sup>2</sup> and although “dance continued to express renewed joy through gestures”<sup>3</sup>, later there has been a need to set out and clarify the lines between these two directions of motion, thus separating them for good. Contrary to this more recent necessity, I actually want to break out these lines and combine, as harmoniously and functionally as possible, the methods and techniques of motion which form the basis of both genres and which, through an act of integration, will conclude a training methodology for professional dancers.

Before carrying out this integration of information from the two fields of motion, in order to achieve my goal, I would like to define each of these fields in part, in order to make them a little clearer.

Iuliu Hațieganu, a Romanian doctor and scholar, defined the physical education of women as “one of the most interesting feminine motions, not only psycho-physically, but also socially and politically”<sup>4</sup>, insisting that it was

a truth which characterized the essential features of the feminine motion under its various aspects”<sup>5</sup>. According to La Rochefoucauld, the “absolute gracefulness is for the body what common sense is for the mind”<sup>6</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> Gineta Stoenescu, *Gimnastica ritmică modernă* [Modern Rhythmic Gymnastics], București, Editura Sport-Turism, 1978, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem.*

on the other hand, Plato claimed that “there are two arts which the Gods gave to mankind: music and gymnastics, for the harmonious adjustment of spirit and knowledge”<sup>7</sup> – the philosopher is thus acknowledged as an early precursor of the *harmonic* gymnastics, the modern rhythmic gymnastics.

Consequently, in complete agreement with the emotional importance of rhythm-music-motion-physique-psyche, modern rhythmic gymnastics is, as Gineta Stoenescu maintains, “a branch of gymnastics which seeks the fulfilment of the basic objectives of physical education with specific expressive and artistic-emotional means, with the use of musical accompaniment. It is a discipline which contributes to the aesthetic education of the youth, while music, as it accompanies the artistic motion, plays a particularly important role, as it involves an infinite variety of rhythm and tempo, which implicitly influences the features of rhythm and motion form, thus supplementing its artistic qualities. This is why the motion in modern rhythmic gymnastics can be particularly wave-like, cursive, flowing or sudden, emphatic, intermittent, slow or dynamic, in a relation of intimate correspondence with the feature of the accompaniment music”<sup>8</sup>.

Surprisingly or not, classical dance also has its origins in a series of steps that had generated some “dances occasioned by civil and religious, noble or rural celebrations”, which later developed into couple and group dances, dramatic scenes or buffoonery with masks, “ways of expression that converged towards the new theatrical form which has dominated, for four centuries, the whole Europe: Classical Ballet.”<sup>9</sup> However, the different direction adopted by this type of motion is due to the royal facet, from the Italian fashion, which has “united dance and literature through a common destiny, traced by the poets of La Pléiade, who advocated for a form of total theatre in which the song, music, dance, declamation and décor contributed to the display of a story”.<sup>10</sup> *Ballet comique de la Reine*, by Balthazar de Beaujoyeux, was the first historic performance, held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1581 at the Louvre, on the occasion of Duke de Joyeuse’s marriage. Later,

the evolution of this court ballet, as Thoinot Arbeau described it in his treatise, *L’Orchésographie*, published in France in 1588, reveals a totally new meaning of the motion meant to value the dignity of the courtier.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gineta Stoenescu, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Isabelle Ginot, Michel Marcelle, *Dansul în secolul XX* [The Dance in 20<sup>th</sup> Century], translation by Vivia Săndulescu, București, Editura Art, Centrul Național al Dansului, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

The motion gives up any track of violence or uncontrolled impetus, and acquires plenitude and calm, while the *demi-pointe* technique becomes a “prelude of elevation”.<sup>12</sup> New rigorous rules come into act, leading dance towards the development of its performing technique. Pierre Beauchamps suggested the *en-dehors* [outward] position, an unnatural posture, where the dancer’s leg moves outward; it comprises five fundamental positions corresponding to five positions of the arms; Raoul Feuillet comes with the first choreographic notation consisting in the graphic description of the steps, the direction and the consecution of the movements.<sup>13</sup>

While rhythmic gymnastics develops as a high-performance sport with an emphasis on the corporal aesthetics and plastics, classical ballet sets the bases of modern dance and represents the fundament of the corporal motion of every dance style, precisely due to the increased attention to the “correctness” and form of movement, as well as to the control exerted on and during it. Rhythmic gymnastics develops its own performing rules and generates specific basic elements, with an emphasis on the degree of difficulty of the performance, with a system of recording the possible errors and of precisely quantifying every element which has been carried out accurately; ballet develops the theatrical facet and emphasizes the transmission of emotion and the playing of a character who is a part of a story or, at least and most often, is carrying a message. However, both directions of motion represent forms of art which coexist and complete one another, whenever there is a common interest: the shaping, development, evolution and refinement of the human body – the instrument of motion expression. Thus, the blend between gymnastics and ballet leads to a form of complex movement which combines dance and acrobatics at the highest level of performance.

As a practitioner of both forms of art, I feel that it is my duty to analyze thoroughly, in my doctoral research, both directions of motion. The goal is to study, discover, meticulously examine, select and elicit the work instruments which are useful in the creation of a training plan, a methodology, a structure with the most efficient techniques and methods of professional preparation, teaching, development and refinement; the techniques and methods also focus on bringing awareness, balance, control and mastery of the exterior and interior corporal abilities, both physical and mental. The methodology addresses future dancers from far and wide, thus completing the applicative professional education system.

“The model of the Other and the culture of mobility” represent the interdisciplinary model which all of the devoted researchers should follow in

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<sup>12</sup> Isabelle Ginot, Michel Marcelle, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, pp. 17-18.

their work and study; they underline, in fact, that only by opening our mind and soul towards the Other and towards different cultures, we can discover and rediscover ourselves, before truly understanding the purpose of our artistic research.

The same quality of a practitioner of both forms of movement, along with this “model of the Other and culture of mobility”, gives me both the ambition and the responsibility to expand my research on an international level, accessing, in the absence of a generous national bibliography, external sources. Moreover, several interviews consisting in professional dialogues with internationally acknowledged specialists would represent a significant achievement. They could give me precious information about their own perception of corporal movement, concerning the technical precision, the aesthetic and plastic corporal image, the theatricality of choreographic motion and, last but not least, the performing of the role and of the character.

The steps of my research will categorize all of these aspects which are indispensable for the training of a complete dancer on the stage, and will set out and underline the importance of each one in part. However, it depends on how each performer in part will understand, perceive and apply what I have to offer, as I will not impose a precise and rigid methodology; instead, it will be more of a guide towards the discovery of a training process adapted for everyone, which will allow the fulfilment of the desired objectives and the achievement of the desired results provided that there is much discipline, patience, perseverance, will and ambition in the organizational structure of each user.

Following this multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary path, I wish, through my research, to add to the parallel made between the two directions of motion several analogies and antitheses between dance and other sciences which implicitly modify the creation process of making a dancer and his artwork, and also the final artistic performance. Starting with mathematics, physics, biology, philosophy, astrology and not only, the body of a dancer is, in my opinion, able to transcend all of the stages in which the human body had been regarded initially; in choreographic terms, numerous simple and complex principles, such as the principle of fractals in mathematics (based on the Mandelbrot set concept) presumably translate into an interminable corporal motion, which links its movements and its passing from one another without the sensation of beginning or ending – an infinite corporality which applies simple and fundamental laws of the universe – gravity, antigravity / levitation, friction, sliding friction, etc., as well as unwritten universal laws or principles governing all that happens in the Universe and holding everything together in a perfect harmony - the law of mental attraction, of vibration, of polarity/duality, of rhythmicity, of cause-effect, of correspondence and of gender (masculine and feminine).

However, besides the perfectly built and adapted for survival biological machinery, the human body is energy; it is vibration; it is consciousness. Besides the physical barriers, a dancer is, thus, able to transcend the known visual limits and to connect energetically with another level. And although the human essence surpasses any degree of complexity that we can imagine, and even if it cannot be defined, numerous thinkers, throughout history, have approached the existential problem of man, his origin and purpose, the link between body, consciousness and spirit, the immortality of the soul, ways of thinking and reasoning, subconsciousness and unconsciousness, human essence and many other topics of interest from several perspectives: biological, psychological, social, political and philosophical. It is, however, the corporal vibration that leads the performer to the capacity of functioning in the scenic environment, canalizing and materializing the creator's energy, thoughts, ideas through actual gestures and movements, defining the physicality of the steps in a coherent and expressive manner.

A compelling point of analysis in this field is Raluca Ianegic's book, *Trasee coregrafice [Choreographic Routes]*, which, "for the first time in the aesthetics of the art of dance, brings ideas such as the dance-science relation, dance and other areas of human thought, dance-transdisciplinarity"<sup>14</sup>.

Dance is a form of art, which will certainly continue over the centuries, will permanently evolve, represent civilizations and feed the souls of those who understand it. This is why it is topical for everyone involved in this field to be interested in someone who analyses the multitude of variants discovered throughout the evolution of dance, who identifies and selects the strengths and impediments, the obstacles in the way of progress in students' education, who displays the efficient and innovative methods and techniques that could bring the art to another level, thus helping those who choose to devote their whole life to practicing this profession which is full of sacrifice and of satisfaction at the same time.

(Translated by Andi Sâsâiac)

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<sup>14</sup> Raluca Ianegic, *Trasee coregrafice [Choreographic Routes]*, București, U.N.A.T.C. Press, 2007.