A NETWORK OF STYLES:
DISCOVERING THE CHOREOGRAPHED
MOVEMENT OF FREDERICK ASHTON (1904-1988)

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ABSTRACT

Analysis of choreographed dance movement style has generally been neglected by ballet practitioners. The literature written by them focuses mainly on training methods and instructions for performing the movements taught in class. Whilst training is undoubtedly important, the emphasis on it has unfortunately been at the expense of choreographed dance movement. This thesis considers the choreographed dance movement style of Frederick Ashton (1904-1988) and discusses its relationship with the classroom movement from which it is derived.

A model for examining the concept of dance movement style is developed from philosophical papers on style in dance and other art forms. Its focus is on the specific paradigms from which a style is drawn. Theory from cognitive science, which proposes a method for discerning stylistic patterns across an established system, is also used to support the model. For the analysis of Ashton's dance movement, the study draws on established dance scholarship, in particular, Laban theory.

First, the relationship between training and choreographed ballet movement is examined, revealing that aspects of the contemporary training systems form the basis of Ashton's choreographed movement. This is followed by a discussion of the influence of choreographers and performers such as Bronislava Nijinska and Anna Pavlova, amongst others, and the relationship of their dance movement style to that of Ashton is considered.

Ashton's dance movement is divided into two elements: the smallest unit is the ballet step, classified by the technical term and the second comprises a cluster of movements, described as a phrase. A detailed analysis of Ashton's 'steps' and phrases
reveals their distinctive characteristics in terms of body use, dynamics and spatial elements and shows how they differ fundamentally from the movements described in the training systems. In the following chapter, the contribution made by dancers, such as Margot Fonteyn, Anthony Dowell, Antoinette Sibley and others with whom Ashton most frequently worked is considered. Their qualities form a distinctive aspect of the style and it is apparent that this did not develop in a linear way but altered with each dancer. As a result, the dance movement style was greatly enriched.

The last chapter addresses the concept of interpretation in dance movement. It is suggested here that the sources which underpin the style, as identified in this thesis, could be used as a basis for interpretations of Ashton’s dance movement style.

An approach to choreographed ballet movement is proposed which separates it from the movement used in training and shows how an understanding of the differences between the two can prevent the homogenisation of ballet movement, whilst providing abundant scope for future interpretations.
Introduction

When Frederick Ashton (1904-1988) created his first work A Tragedy of Fashion in 1926 his principal ambition was to be a great classical dancer. He never achieved his ideal. Instead, he is remembered for his choreography and has become widely regarded as the founder of the ‘English style of classical ballet’ (Vaughan, 1996, 1). Exactly what constitutes style in Ashton’s dance movement is the subject of this thesis.

Having spent most of his early years (Clarke, 1955, 10) both as dancer and choreographer, with Marie Rambert (1888-1982), Ashton joined the Vic-Wells Ballet (now known as The Royal Ballet) in 1935 and it is with that company that his work is most closely associated. But what he saw and experienced in the early years had a profound effect on him. He made no secret of his admiration for Anna Pavlova (1881-1931) and claimed that both she and the Russian dancers and choreographers of the Ballets Russes (1909-1929) had influenced his dances.

Alongside those influences, the dancers he chose to work with equally affected his work. He depended on their collaboration and this is evident from the fact that it was not until faced with the dancers that he began to compose the dance movement. His aim was to draw the movement and expression from the dancers, rather than impose actions on them which might be alien to their style (Ashton, 1958, 35). Thus his movement material can be seen to be related to, perhaps even dependent upon, the prior training of his dancers.

Ashton was trained in the system conceived by Enrico Cecchetti (1850-1928), a system he greatly admired, and the values of which underscore aspects of his movement style. But only a limited number of dancers in the Vic-Wells were trained in this system
and, between the years 1935-1960, he had to accommodate the range of other styles in which his dancers had been trained; in particular that of Margot Fonteyn (1919-1991) whose training was decidedly eclectic. Similarly his later dances, from the 1960s onwards, were made on dancers trained according to Ninette de Valois’ syllabus, which was adopted at the Sadler’s Wells/Royal Ballet School in the early 1950s (May, 1999). This tended to produce dancers with highly articulate feet and mobile upper bodies: both of these features came to dominate his later work.

It is against that background that this thesis seeks to identify and analyse Ashton’s dance movement style. Its aim is to demonstrate that, although ballet choreography derives from steps learned in the classroom, it is created from a number of different sources. It will be argued that recognition of these sources could prove fruitful for future interpretations of choreographed ballet movement. For reasons which are addressed in the methodology, the term ‘dance movement style’ is adopted to distinguish that specific element of style from other aspects of choreographic style.

There is a dearth of research into movement style in ballet. Written material indicates that the majority of the profession is preoccupied with streamlining and updating the codified classroom technique and that the dance movement style of choreographers using balletic vocabulary as a basis is rarely a focus of concern. Paradoxically, despite searching for a more scientific approach to training, the profession does not recognise that these new systems alter not only the classroom movements themselves but also the aesthetic values previously accorded to them. The choreographed movement is frequently altered in ways which both reflect and accommodate the contemporary rules and codes of the classroom and even subtle changes in aesthetic values can fundamentally alter the appearance of the dance movement of past
choreographers when their dances are revived. This can result in uniformity of style across choreographed ballet movement, which uses the classroom movement as its basis. Those elements which distinguish the movement from that of the classroom disappear, making it difficult to separate the dance movement of one choreographer from that of another.

Accordingly, the approach here is to draw attention to the differences between Ashton’s dance movement and the codified movements¹ as described in the various syllabuses used in this thesis. The thesis seeks to demonstrate that the changes made to the codified movements by Ashton stem from the influences of the choreographers and dancers whom he admired and the other aspects of his dance heritage: the earlier training systems, the dancers he worked with and stage dancing of the 1920s and 1930s.

Examination of Ashton’s dance movement style involves the discussion of a number of issues. At the outset, the reasons for the profession’s perception of the classroom version of the movements as isolated, even in some ways completely unaffected by cultural or aesthetic change, need to be investigated. It will be argued that this stems from a lack of awareness of the balletic code’s own historicity and from the supposition that there is a single method of training which produces style-less dancers who are capable of performing any ballet choreography.

The use of the term ‘style’ also needs consideration. It is generally regarded as a contentious term and, because of its connotation as something fixed, is for many dance theorists open to question. Whilst acknowledging that it is a problematic concept, ‘style’

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¹ The term ‘codified movements’ stands for the description of the ballet movements as outlined in the various syllabuses used in the thesis. These are the movements used in the classroom.
is still a useful term as it provides a framework for discussing a particular aspect of a choreographer's work, though not necessarily a fixed one.

It is proposed that Ashton’s dance movement is developed from several styles. The dancer’s movement style is only one aspect of the style; the choreographer’s artistic heritage is another. These elements interact and intertwine making the dance movement different from, though informed by, aspects of the classroom. The thesis will show that Ashton’s dance movement is not a single style but is derived from a network of different components. Thus a more fluid account of style is presented and the aim is to open up a range of possibilities for interpretation, rather than restrict the movement to the constraints of classroom rules and values.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. In Chapter I, the methodologies which facilitated the development of a model for examining Ashton’s dance movement style are presented and clarified. The chapter begins by discussing the relationship between style and dance technique in order to highlight the problems that arise when the stylistic elements of technique are unrecognised. To discuss these concerns, the chapter draws on notions conceived by Berel Lang (1995), although others have also made the point, that there is no objective method of conveying information. Lang suggests that ‘method’ is dependent on style and that these stylistic aspects are ignored by philosophers. It is proposed here that the style of method is similarly ignored by ballet pedagogues. An argument is advanced which demonstrates that training methods are dependent on style and, as a result, each method gives rise to dancers with different dance movement styles. Recognition of this enables me to show that these training systems are not stable and that they change within different cultures and geographical regions and through time. Because the dance movement of ballet choreographers uses aspects of a particular
system as a basis, not every training style develops the appropriate bodily facilities for
dancing their movement.

Theories developed by Joseph Margolis (1984, 1995), Adina Armelagos and Mary
in the field of philosophy are explored. The first four of these deal with questions
relating to dance style and its relationship to both the dancer and the creator’s artistic
heritage. McFee’s theory is derived from Wollheim whose concerns are with the notion
of style in painting and sculpture. Theories from the cognitive sciences, as expounded
by Douglas Hofstadter (1997), are also explored. These provide a paradigm for
discerning style, based on the notion that the pattern of recurring changes made to an
established code constitutes the stylistic features. Drawing on aspects of these theories
allows the formation of a model which presents style as a multiple concept, fed from a
number of sources and not solely derived from one individual.

Issues of terminology are clarified and a system of dance analysis is then
discussed. It was decided to divide Ashton’s dance movement into two discrete areas:
the ‘ballet step’, defined by the technical term, and the ‘phrase’, which comprises several
movements. While retaining the technical term for the ballet movements, the analysis
draws again on Hofstadter’s (1997) theory. This allows the ballet step to be examined
structurally by considering each one as a number of separate actions occurring
simultaneously. The methodology also employs existing practice rooted in dance
scholarship for exploring the spatial and dynamic aspects of the movement and Ashton’s
dance movement is illuminated by reference to this body of knowledge.

Chapter II considers Ashton’s dance heritage. Using the methodology established
in Chapter I, the major training systems, which functioned during the time Ashton was
choreographing, are examined along with his other dance influences: Anna Pavlova, Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978) and stage dancing of the 1930s. The development of formal ballet training in England from the 1920s to the 1930s is outlined, with particular emphasis on that of the Vic-Wells/Sadler's Wells/Royal Ballet School. But the main focus of the chapter is an examination of the differences in practice between the various training syllabuses and the extent to which these constituted diversity. This demonstrates and supports the notion that a variety of movement styles can result from different systems. The purpose of the investigation is also to discover the characteristic movement style of both Ashton himself, as a performer, and that of his dancers.

Throughout the rest of the chapter, both the dance movement style and approach to movement of his other mentors are examined. Despite limitations in the sources, it is possible to extract some notion of their various styles and, consequently, their contribution to that of Ashton. The chapter establishes and analyses the elements that inform the style and acts as the basis for the detailed examination of the dance movement which is presented in Chapters III and IV.

Ashton's use of the ballet step is dealt with in Chapter III. For this purpose, all the available Ashton dance movement on film and video was explored before deciding which steps to choose. These steps were to some extent dictated by the style model developed for this study, which considers recurring patterns to be stylistic hallmarks. However, because the thesis is mainly concerned with performance, a decision was made to focus on those aspects which appeared to be most at risk from change. This decision contributed a rationale which was needed in order to limit the extent and range of exemplar material which, in turn, provided opportunity for depth of analysis. Thus the
choice was limited to specific steps. There are four which recur in almost every work and the term ‘signature step’ is used to describe them. The main focus of the chapter is to demonstrate the ways in which Ashton’s steps differ from the codified movements and to highlight how his artistic heritage informs these steps. It is also recognised that other unknown sources may have affected the steps.

Chapter IV builds on the analysis of the previous chapters by examining the ways in which the steps are linked to form short phrases. The phrases chosen for analysis are taken from a wide range of works and are defined as ‘key phrase patterns’. The analysis confirms that the assembled steps are altered by several elements: their position within the phrase, the context in which they occur and by the ways in which Ashton either diminishes or magnifies their role. The frequency with which certain patterns of movement recur is linked to the values which dominate the dance movement. The chapter shows that, according to the model developed for this study, a distinctive pattern of style emerges which gives priority to intricate actions of the upper body and speed of execution.

Whilst the key phrase patterns and signature steps identified in the previous chapters still form the basis of the dance movement, the style was altered and expanded by the dancers. Chapter V focuses on the dancers with whom Ashton most frequently collaborated and it is apparent that the movement has a different focus for each of these dancers. Ashton highlighted the specific talents of each dancer and this meant that during some periods the movement was influenced by pliancy, complex upper body movement and line, while during others, speed and articulation of the feet dominate.

What emerges from Chapters II to V is that there are many core features of Ashton’s dance movement which can serve as a basis for a variety of interpretations.
Whilst the concept of interpretation is analysed and discussed in other performing arts, it has not been considered, at least with regard to dance movement, in dance. The notion of interpretation in dance movement is examined in chapter VI. Because of lack of research into interpretation in this field, the issue of interpretation in drama and music is initially explored and draws on relevant literature from these areas of performance.

It became evident that the problems raised by the concept of interpretation in those fields are equally applicable to dance, notwithstanding that the status of the score in ballet is different from that in music, or the text in a play. The interpretation of choreographed dance movement in general, and Ashton’s in particular, is considered and it is suggested that revivals of a choreographer’s dances, even when the original dancers are available, could benefit from more knowledge of the choreographer’s artistic heritage.

The chapter also examines a number of different interpretations of the dance movement. It concludes that these interpretations focus on different aspects of the key phrase patterns and vary accordingly. Other performances, however, which alter or omit aspects of the dance movement are more problematic, at least according to the style features identified in this thesis; this latter point is identified and addressed in the chapter.

In the final chapter, the conclusions are presented and there is a discussion of the contribution made by this research and the ways in which it could form a basis for further research.
Chapter One

Methodology

1.0 Introduction

Steps\(^2\) and poses are central to ballet. Not only do they form the basis of the ballet class, they are also the starting point for many ballet choreographers. Choreographers change and manipulate these steps and use them in ways that can reflect both their dance heritage and the dancers for whom they choreograph. It is the way in which the steps and poses are affected and changed by these elements that forms part of their dance movement style. Understanding the relationship between the codified movement\(^3\) and the choreographed step is critical to performances of a ballet choreographer’s dances. Failure to recognise the differences can result in the dance movement reverting to its codified form.

This manipulation of the codified movement by the choreographer is deliberate. Ashton (1930) believed that a choreographer should only use the steps and poses as a point of departure for the choreography. A similar approach is evident in the work of other ballet choreographers. For example, Muriel Topaz (1988) has highlighted differences between the codified movement and the choreographed steps in the dances of George Balanchine and Antony Tudor. It is these changes to the codified movement which are important to the choreography and which help to separate and make distinctive

\(^2\) It is recognised that this is a complex term but, in order not to disrupt the flow at this point, it is not examined here. Its use is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

\(^3\) As mentioned in the introduction, the term ‘codified movement’ refers to the written description given in the various syllabuses used in this thesis. It is this version which is purportedly taught in the classroom using those syllabuses as a basis.
the dance movement style of ballet choreographers.

The readiness to return to the codified version of a step was beginning to affect performances of Ashton’s dance movement even during his lifetime. Michael Somes, (cited in Vaughan, 1977, XIX), notes how the tendency ‘to iron everything out and revert to a more conventional way of doing a given step’ is proving damaging to some of Ashton’s dances. What Somes means by a ‘more conventional way of doing a step’ is unclear, but he is probably referring to the contemporary classroom version of the movement. The tendency to restore the movement to its codified form continues, with the consequence that many aspects of Ashton’s dance movement are now omitted from performances. The reasons for this are complex and it is suggested that they derive, in part, from lack of research into choreographed ballet movement.

In order to present an in-depth exploration of one aspect of the dance movement, only the movement for the single body is analysed: both that of the soloist and the individuals within the corps de ballet. An investigation of the movement for the pas de deux would require quite a different approach and is thus beyond the scope of the thesis.

As anticipated in the introduction to the thesis, the methodologies, from which the model for analysing Ashton’s dance movement style is developed, are considered in this chapter. It begins with a discussion of the reasons for the dominance of ballet’s codified technical movement over that of the choreographer.

1.1. The Relationship between Technique and Style

In this section it is argued that the majority of ballet’s professional practitioners and critics perceive the codified movement not only to be autonomous but also, the most significant component of classical dance. Comments by Francis Sparshott (1995, 70-71)
reinforce the point. He observes that the tendency, in much ‘off-the-cuff’ writing, to discuss classical ballet as an art that aims solely at technical perfection and aesthetic beauty leads to an assumption that the ideal is to achieve technical perfection in the performance of exercises. The readiness to value technical perfection, which itself is not style-less, over choreographed style may stem from lack of study of the choreography. Previously, sources for analysing choreographed dance movement style were not available and the most obviously tangible elements were the codified movements, which were seen as the dominant determinants of the genre. Consequently, emphasis was (and still is) placed on performing the steps and *enchaînements* in accordance with the values implicit, at any one time, in the codified movement. As a result, ballet choreography, derived from the codified movement, is altered and the dance movement becomes subordinate to the current version of the codified movement. In other words, the choreography is subjected to current classroom values whether or not these are appropriate.

Contrary to the general belief that the standards for judging ‘good technique’ remain constant, it is argued below (1.1) that ballet is not a singular concept. Thus what is perceived as ‘good’ in one training may not necessarily be so in another. The word ‘technique’ is interpreted here as referring to both the code itself and the dancer’s execution of it, according to a prescribed system, or, as Graham McFee puts it, ‘bodily training for a dancer inculcating ...specific sets of bodily skills’ (1992, 201). To provide evidence to support these points, an examination of the ways in which the profession and critics regard technique and training follows in 1.1 and 1.1.2.

The ballet profession is represented by both technical manuals and articles which give prescriptive directions for execution of the codified movements, and by the
comments of a variety of dance teachers (Ward Warren, 1996). The selection of the technical manuals is dictated by their relevance to dance training in England and is derived from the following writers: Cyril Beaumont and Stanislas Idzikowski (1966), Margaret Craske and Cyril Beaumont (1946), Tamara Karsavina (1956), Joan Lawson (1979 and 1984), Agrippina Vaganova (1965), Richard Glasstone (1977-2000) and Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev (1995). A paper by the philosopher Berel Lang (1995) is also used to support the notion that neither the training - the method used to teach the codified movements - nor the technique - the way in which those movements are executed - are free from style. Although Lang's comments are not new, his paper is useful because there appear to be similarities between the attitudes of philosophers and those of the ballet profession. The critics chosen form a characteristic sample of those who specifically discuss technique or their interpretation of it.

Examination of the written material on technique indicates that, in general, its meaning has been given rather hurried attention. Amongst those in the profession, the term is usually invoked to refer to a dancer's ability to control the body for the purpose of performing the codified movements. The writers in the majority of training manuals imply that the customs and rules for the performance of the codified movements are fixed. Whatever the system, implicit in the instructions for training is a belief that any of the methods can produce a dancer who is able to execute the style of all ballet choreographers (Markova, 1996, 182, Glasstone, 1999a, 951). According to Joan Lawson (1979, 27), amongst others (Blasis, 1968, 8, Glasstone, 1977, 9) the technique (Lawson uses the word to refer to the codified movements) itself is acquired by training the body to adhere to a set of principles based on stance, turnout, balance and transfer of

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4 This was first published in 1922
weight. These principles, however, could equally apply to other dance forms and there is no recognition of the ways in which different arm positions, rhythm and context affect each technical movement, although it is these features which make them distinctive and particular to different training methods. Indeed, pedagogic manuals conceal the presence of style by implying that their concern is with the ‘rules’ which operate as a means by which the dancer can be trained to perform the codified movements.

1.1.1. The Pedagogues

In a recent article, Richard Glasstone (1999a, 951) separated style from technique arguing that technique is the ‘ability to execute a given movement or step, starting or finishing at a precise moment in the music’. Technique, he claims, is concerned with the control of the body; style with a ‘given role’ (951). Glasstone’s approach is somewhat insubstantial here and only allows for a broad definition. He regards the codified ballet step as an absolute with no cultural or geographic variations and, in this article, does not acknowledge the effect that a specific training has on a dancer. Earlier, in 1994a, he adopts a different position, arguing that training is style specific. In that article (1994a), he criticises The Royal Ballet School for abandoning the Cecchetti method of training in favour of that of Soviet Russia. The latter, he claims, was geared specifically to a ‘somewhat restricted repertoire’ (52). It is thus unsuitable for work, such as Ashton’s, which, he believes, is informed by Cecchetti principles. His approach to training and technique is thus somewhat equivocal. But his earlier point (1994a), that training affects a dancer’s understanding of dance movement, is supported by an example from a recent

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5 This is the official title adopted by the school and company since 1992. Thus, to avoid confusion throughout the thesis, ‘The’ has a capital T.
conference, The Fonteyn Phenomenon. During a performance of the Bride’s variation from Le Baiser de la Fée (Ashton, 1935) a young dancer, Anita Hutchins (partially trained at The Royal Ballet School), with apparently excellent body control, was, according to Pamela May and Julia Farron, unable to perform Ashton’s dance movement style. Her training did not allow her to move freely in the upper body, as demanded by the movement, neither did it enable her to, make a deep plié in the chassé.

The approach in the pedagogic texts is predominantly prescriptive (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter II), which is consistent with Glasstone’s (1999a), assumption that there is only one ‘correct’ way of performing the codified movements. Yet, in all these manuals only the leg, arm and head movements are prescribed, thereby omitting other essential information. For instance, some manuals place emphasis on positions whilst others appear to give priority to motion. Moreover, the codified movements are not all similarly described across the various systems and are frequently assigned different arm and head movements. Equally, each codified movement is affected by its position in the enchaînements, which vary in length and content. Indeed, Erik Aschengreen (1986, 54) maintains that the secret of Bourronville’s style is not found so much in the steps themselves, as in the ways in which they are put together. Scant attention is paid by pedagogues to these stylistic details. Yet, additional evidence from Ann Hutchinson Guest (1981) and Paul Boos (1995) indicates that it is these elements which contribute to the style of each training method, and thereby to the facilities of the dancer. As Hutchinson Guest (1981) demonstrates in her examination of the Bourronville system, recognition of the presence of style acknowledges the

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6 This conference was held at the Royal Academy of Dancing in September 1999. The written material derived from the conference has not yet been published.
Boos (1995) is equally revealing in his discussion of George Balanchine’s (1904-1983) dance movement style. Although not specifically relevant to technical training during Ashton’s era, an interview in *Ballet Review* (1995, 69-78) with Paul Boos, is pertinent to this study. The article deals with his experiences as a Balanchine répétiteur with several European ballet companies: the Royal Danish Ballet, Dutch National Ballet, the Moussorgsky Theatre Ballet, St Petersburg and the Monte Carlo Ballet. Boos discusses Balanchine’s method of classroom training and several of his observations reveal an emphasis which is particular to that training.

Highlighting the discrepancies between the Bourdonville method and that of Balanchine, he finds that, in Denmark, stress is also placed on speed and coordination, but in a different manner from Balanchine. The codified movements most emphasised by Balanchine, the *plié* and the *tendu*, are interpreted in other ways by the Danes: there, the *plié* is much heavier and the *tendu* is executed in a more legato fashion (70). Other discrepancies are evident in the approach to pointe work and in particular to music. Boos (73) claims, that Balanchine required the dancers to listen to rhythm rather than melody, something all the dancers alien to Balanchine’s tradition found difficult. This pattern of differences was repeated, to a large extent, in St Petersburg where ‘the [Vaganova] system is ingrained in them in the way the Bourdonville system is ingrained in the Danes’ (Boos, 76).

Because of these discrepancies in training, when mounting a Balanchine ballet, Boos always insists on teaching company class; teaching the steps of the dance, he claims, is not enough (74). Boos’ approach to training differs from the technical
manuals. It recognises the stylistic elements in training and their conditioning effect on the dancer and it also provides evidence of the link between choreography and training. Despite this, he does not openly acknowledge the presence of style in Balanchine's training system, believing it to be 'absolutely traditional, absolutely classical' (70) and thus independent of style.

Equally, the interviews with eminent ballet teachers, conducted by Gretchen Ward Warren (1996), demonstrate the ways in which the training is filtered through their own distinctive methods, adding yet another layer to the stylistic elements of training. Evidence of these differences is apparent from their remarks about training. On the one hand, David Howard (cited in Ward Warren, 124) believes that dancers should dance through the combinations rather than concentrating on accuracy of placement or position while, on the other, Semyonova (cited in Ward Warren, 182) dissects every movement, teaching it section by section. Some teachers, like Larry Long (cited in Ward Warren, 156), feel that there is too much emphasis on technical prowess at the expense of individuality and his classes emphasise interpretation and the variety of interpretative possibilities within a single combination (158). Unfortunately, there is no discussion of what he means by interpretation and the point is not developed by Ward Warren. Alexander Ursuliak is anxious to develop the creativity of the student by discouraging a mechanical reproduction of the exercises, while Anne Woolliams (cited in Ward Warren, 263) believes too much emphasis is placed on training methods; she prefers to allow dancers to move more freely. From these samples it is evident that many renowned teachers have a highly individual approach to training and the balletic code, but it is pertinent to note that none discusses the purpose of their training: to enable the dancer to perform choreographed dance movement. Implicit in their comments is a belief in the
dominance and centrality of the codified movement.

In practice, as is apparent from their comments, and despite, in some cases, acknowledging their use of a specific system, teachers interpret the system in different ways. Yet all assume they are teaching the same thing: the title of the book *The Art of Teaching Ballet* (Ward Warren, 1996) testifies to this. Moreover, the presence of several prescriptive systems for teaching the code, in itself, indicates that there are different versions and thus different rules, but the variations across the rules are unacknowledged by them. The assumption appears to be that they have an objective method for teaching the codified movements and that this can produce dancers able to perform in any ballet.

This situation has some similarities with the attitudes adopted by many philosophers to philosophy. Berel Lang (1995) takes up the point in a paper which deals with the presence of style in the methods employed by philosophers. He argues that claims for the objectivity of any method, even those which depend on objectivity, are based on a false premise and demonstrate that the method used by philosophers to discuss, mainly abstract, issues, is articulated by style. He points out that philosophy’s denial of its own literary elements, coupled with the emphasis it places on rigour, is itself a stylistic trait and this makes style and method interdependent (34). Yet, as Lang observes, an acceptance of the relationship between method and style could be beneficial to philosophy because it would allow hitherto concealed areas of philosophy to be revealed (31).

His discussion is based on an examination of philosophers’ work, few of whom make reference to the expressive aspects of their own writing. He argues that the repression of style has ‘ideological’ roots based on a belief that application of method yields the same results for anyone who follows its rules and is thus both autonomous and
impersonal (23). Style, in contrast, he claims, is personal, historically rooted and occurs in numerous different ways. Thus acceptance of the presence of style could undermine the objectivity of the philosopher. To prove the presence of style, Lang draws examples from the work of several philosophers but in particular, that of Descartes and Kant. In the work of the first, he claims, the reader is instructed in the method and then left to apply it himself (sic) whereas in that of the second, discourse is relayed through a ‘transcendental method’ (Lang, 1995, 32).

Whilst his arguments are specifically related to philosophy, they are pertinent to the ballet profession’s perception of technique, where the role that style plays is also repressed and unarticulated. Equally, the reason for its repression stems from a similar ideological position. In the training methods examined, the systems, like philosophy, are seen as autonomous and impersonal but, as in the case of philosophy, the methods are differently enshrined. In some, Bourbonville and de Valois, for example, method is relayed primarily through expressive combinations or enchaînements, whereas in others, notably Vaganova, combinations serve only as examples and the method involves prescriptive instructions for the execution of each codified movement. Acceptance of the presence of style in ballet has similar consequences as those for philosophy: for the latter, recognition of the style of method reveals the existence of different conceptions of philosophy and, as Lang points out, allows for a pluralistic notion of philosophy; in ballet training, acknowledgement of style, while similarly allowing for a pluralistic approach, could also act as a catalyst for a discussion on training systems and their outcome on the dancer’s movement style.

From the preceding discussions, it is apparent that different training systems do
in fact have different stylistic traits which are unacknowledged. But, as Lang (1995) points out in the context of philosophy, the problem is generated by the ways in which the pedagogues perceive both the balletic code and the diverse methods of training and not by what they are in fact; the practice, it appears, is at odds with the perception. Moreover, the abundance of written material on technique and the absence of anything written by the profession on choreographed dance movement style is a fairly clear indication of a belief in the supremacy of the codified movement. For them, the important aspect of classical dance is found in the codified movements as performed in class and by comparison, the choreography appears to be secondary.

1.1.2. The Critics

The attitude to both the technique (the ‘correct’ execution of the codified movements) and training, adopted by the ballet manuals, accords with that of the dance critics who address the subject: Stokes (1934), Levinson (1925/1991), Denby (1954/1986), Siegel (1972) and Haskell (1945) (the critics are placed in this order because of the conceptual relationships between their attitudes to technique). Whilst the critics use of terminology tends to be more journalistic and is conceived within a different framework, it must be borne in mind that much of it is typical of the era in which it was written.

The accounts of ballet technique given by Adrian Stokes (1934) and André Levinson (1991) have an underlying agenda which seeks to portray ballet as an ideal of beauty. Stokes was writing in the late 1930s and his critique of classical dance is of its

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7 This point is more fully tested in Chapter II.

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time: the dominant concern then was to move ballet into the realms of ‘high art’. He argues for the supremacy of ballet over Spanish, Indian or Javanese dancing and claims that the classical technique ‘defines dancing which is ballet dancing’ (77). Levinson, whose principal concern was to retain ‘pure dance’ (1991,10), agrees with this notion. He argues that technique is the ‘gymnastics of ballet’ and that its aim is to transform the ordinary body into an ‘ideal’ image. Because of this attitude to ballet, Levinson finds nothing of interest in the ballets of Michel Fokine, Vaslav Nijinsky, and Bronislava Nijinska, condemning them as little more than ‘applied’ art. His argument assumes that the codified movements are the defining features of ballet and should not be susceptible to choreographic change. It has been argued that this notion stems from the nineteenth century practice of arranging steps into enchaînements which were then organised into variations (Challet-Haas, 1976, Blasis, 1830). Both Stokes and Levinson assume that the technical body of movements is the superior element of the dance but this leaves little room for choreographic development. More dangerously perhaps, they also suggest that the aim in classical dance is to produce dancers with ‘ideal’ bodies. But as Elizabeth Dempster (1998, 225) warns, creating an ‘ideal’ body erases both the ‘natural’ body (the unique qualities of an individual) and the individual. It can also ‘condition’ dancers, preventing them from making choices about the way they move, leaving them less free to perform different styles.

Of the other critics examined, both Edwin Denby (1986) and Marcia Siegel (1972) acknowledge the stylistic implications of training. Siegel describes technique as ‘a method of training the body to be able to accomplish specific movement tasks’ (1972,106), which in ballet means emphasising verticality and ‘ex-centricity’ (movement spreading outwards from the centre). While Denby notes (542) that despite the
universality of the principles of classicism, they look different when danced by differently trained bodies. Both Denby and Siegel accept that there are variations in the interpretation of balletic movement, but Arnold Haskell (1945, 40), is more ambivalent. He argues on the one hand, that ballet training is comprehensive (42), allowing the ballet dancer to execute any dance style and on the other that technique is only a means to an end. The notion that the achievement of a ‘good technique’ should be the only goal of the ballet dancer is, he believes, misconceived. But he does suggest that the technique itself is unchanging, based on the system codified by Carlo Blasis in 1820, and that whatever role is played by the dancer in a ballet, it must be ‘subordinated to the technique’ (44). Thus despite deploring a mechanical rendering of steps, he still makes claims for the supremacy of technique over the choreography.

There is some confusion amongst the critics between training and technique. Most, however, agree about its content which is perceived as the codified movements. Both the dancer’s ability to execute the movements ‘correctly’ and the codified movements themselves are thus tacitly assumed to constitute the art.

The critics’ contribution to the literature on technique is highlighted here because, in the main, it reinforces the notion that execution of the classroom vocabulary is the dominant value. It thus supports and encourages the tendency to ‘correct’ the steps created by the choreographer. This point is endorsed by research carried out by Lesley-Anne Sayers (1997, 137) into the ballet class. She notes the dominance held by the ‘canon of classical ballet’ and in particular by organisations such as the Society for Operatic Dance, founded in 1920, who dictated how steps (sic) should be performed. They insisted on the ‘correct’ presentation of a step and any deviation from this was held to be ‘illegitimate and anatomically unwise’ (Sayers, 1997, 137).
In the light of the foregoing discussion, certain points emerge which demonstrate the profession’s attitude to ballet’s codified technical movement and highlight some of the reasons for giving it priority over the dance movement of the choreographer. Whilst the pedagogues might accept the presence of different training systems, they do not recognise that the codified movements are enshrined differently in each, are affected by their position within a prescribed *enchaînement* and thus are not independent. This association is more fully investigated in Chapter II where it is argued that the significance of the codified movements can alter amongst systems and equally, they can be even more radically affected when they appear in the dance movement of different choreographers. But the quest, in the profession, is for new and more efficient systems which aim to produce better dancers and they do not recognise that they are replacing one set of values with another and, consequently, introducing a different movement style.

1.2 The Concept of Style in Dance Movement

The notion of style in dance movement is considered in this section and whilst few theories which explore this concern have yet been formulated, those that do are helpful in their illumination of some of the inherent problems raised by the concept of style in dance. Despite significant variations in procedure and approach, the theories discussed below are relevant to this study. A combination of these theories allows choreographed dance movement style to be considered as multilayered and the theories are chosen because they deal specifically with problems central to this thesis.

The research which examines style is limited, consequently material from Douglas Hofstadter (1997) in the field of cognitive science is also used. His study examines alphabetic styles in an attempt to discover the concept or ‘spirit’ of letter style.
The theory is demonstrated by examining the ways in which a letter style, for example ‘Baskerville’ or ‘Goudy’ or ‘Times New Roman’, confers sameness across the full alphabet. This notion, discussed more fully below, is useful for application to ballet movement because it demonstrates how seemingly minor changes, when reproduced across an established code of movements, or, as in this particular enquiry, a choreographer’s dance movement, can confer on it a stylistic pattern.

Several philosophical papers examine the concept of style in dance movement. Not all of the points made are relevant to this study, since they deal with the broader concept of choreography; those which relate to more specific concerns are explored and form the basis of the style model constructed for this study. The following scholars address the problem: Joseph Margolis (1984), Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge (1977, 1978, 1984), and Graham McFee (1992). Each scholar tackles the problem differently: Margolis (1984) asserts that style resides only in the dancer; Armelagos and Sirridge (1977, 1978, 1984) see style as the ultimate criterion of a work’s identity, but as residing in both the work and the dancer; whilst McFee (1992), who deals specifically with choreographic style and its relationship to technique, argues that the two are interdependent. One of the problems with these papers is that there is no clear distinction made between choreographic style and dance movement style and the philosophers frequently conflate the two. Thus they do not always address significant issues concerning dance movement.

Much of Margolis’ (1984) paper is devoted to counteracting the claim, which he attributes to Armelagos and Sirridge (1977, 1978, 1984), that dance is allographic as opposed to autographic. The terms ‘allographic’ and ‘autographic’ are derived from Nelson Goodman (1976) who argues that allographic arts are those, like poetry, in which
innumerable inscriptions of the work can exist, all of which are the work; autographic arts are those in which there is only one true example, that worked on by the artist. Goodman believes that an art such as dance is allographic:

only when the classification of objects or events into works is legitimately projected from an antecedent production, in terms of a notational system.

If dance is conceived of as autographic, as Margolis argues, the art work is exemplified by what the dancer dances and style chiefly resides in the dancer. Margolis reasons that for a dance to be allographic it must be as equally well exemplified by the notation as by the danced dance. But this is not the case because, he claims, notation cannot demonstrate style. Style, in dance is constantly renewing itself through the personal style of the dancer, while in other performance arts a music score or play text are capable of being equally representative of the performance. Although he revises this claim in a later paper (1995), reasoning that the score, in music, is not equally representative (see Chapter VI, 6.2). He argues there (1995), that it is only the starting point and that other elements have to be added to complete the work.

While his points about dance are tenable, the approach is limiting. It leaves little room for choreographers or the way in which the choices they make form an aspect of their style. Margolis (1984) concludes that there are no fixed elements of a dance and that it is dependent on cultural and historical change and on the influences of both the initial performers and those who subsequently perform the dance. What he does not address is what and how much change is appropriate. Suzanne Youngerman (1984, 101-123) believes Margolis' approach is misconceived at least as far as the Laban system of recording movement is concerned. She argues that much more than steps and positions are evident in a score and that as a consequence it can be highly illuminating, providing
adequate data for exploring the style (but see Chapter VI, 6.1).

By allowing style to reside only in the dancer Margolis also negates the part choreographers play in the construction of the dance movement. Also absent from his paper is any discussion of the role of technical training and its outcome on dancers’ style. As he sees it, any training is suitable for any dance and he has no difficulty with a balletically trained dancer performing the dances of Martha Graham or José Limon. The problems that this view gives rise to are elucidated by Chris Challis (1999, 149) who argues that a work can be inappropriately changed when the style of one dance genre is performed by dancers trained in another.

Margolis’ (1984) interpretation of the concept of dance style is restrictive and fails to take account of its multi-layered nature. What is at issue in his paper is a refutation of Goodman (1976) and his arguments concerning allographic and autographic art. However, Margolis does accept that aspects other than those available in the score are part of the dance. While his approach presents too narrow a model for examining dance movement style in this thesis, his comments on the score are pertinent and the relationship of the notation score to the dance is discussed in Chapter VI.

The arguments advanced by Armelagos and Sirridge (1977) similarly use Goodman’s allographic/autographic notion as a basis for formulating the identity of a dance work. Like Margolis (1984), they believe that notation is not adequate for capturing the style of a dance work because of its shortcomings with regard to style. It is style, they claim, which identifies a work and in order for a performance to be a performance of a specific work it must retain its style.

They conceive of style as two-fold: style 1, or general style comprising the choice of spatial vocabulary together with kinesthetic motivation and style 2, the dancer’s style,
which articulates and generates the choreographer’s dance movement (1977, 131). Spatial vocabulary is conceived of as an ‘inventory of acceptable positions and position sequences’ and kinesthetic motivation as ‘the pattern of the movement flow’ (131), or as Youngerman (1984, 117) puts it, the motivating force of the movement. General style, they reason, can be either a choreographer’s own movement creation, or his/her development of a pre-existing style. But even in a codified style, such as ballet, they argue that the choreographer ‘borrows’ steps but treats them in a specific way so that they are recognised as separate from the genre from which the ‘step’ is borrowed (1977, 133). In other words, choreographers modify and adapt steps to fit their own choreographed dance movement style. Armelagos and Sirridge also recognise that dancers’ style is generated by their training and that, as a result, it can either enhance or inhibit the choreographer’s style when the training and style are not compatible.

The model proposed by Armelagos and Sirridge is primarily developed to demonstrate the relationship between the dancer and the dance, linking the dance movement to both the choreographer and the primary dancer. However, it has limitations for this thesis. In presenting their argument, they do not distinguish between the different interpretations of codified ballet movement, simply bracketing ballet as one style, referred to as ‘style T’. In the case of ballet this is unhelpful since most ballet choreographers draw on that genre and it is their interpretation of it, further refined by a specific training system, that produces their individual style. They do touch on this point but it is not developed.

Aspects of their arguments are, however, useful and the notion that the style of a work comprises both the dance movement and that of the dancer, is used in this thesis. But it is argued that style comprises more than these two elements and thus a more multi-
layered concept of dance movement style is adopted. This approach is shared by Youngerman (1984, 104) who argues that there is no need to restrict style to two levels; other factors such as 'genre, style of movement technique, style of the choreographer, style of work, style of dancer' could all be equally relevant.

McFee (1992), borrowing from Richard Wollheim (1979), argues that the aspect which makes style in dance coherent is its decipherability. By 'decipherable', he means that style is only comprehensible within the context of an artistic tradition, by reference to the codes and conventions it employs. His argument is mainly concerned with technique and its relationship to choreographic style, which in the main he takes to be dance movement style. Technique is characterised as a systematic way of training the body within a set of aesthetic values and is identified broadly as 'Graham' technique, or 'ballet', or others. Developing the argument, McFee contends that technique is not merely body mechanics but has expressive potential. Choreographers work within the medium of technique and exploit its characteristic, expressive possibilities. The concept of technique was addressed earlier (1.1.1 and 1.1.2) and it is argued here that ballet is not a single system but includes a range of different techniques (the outcomes of training systems). If these arguments are correct, then the expressive possibilities will vary according to which of the different ballet techniques a choreographer chooses from.

McFee points out that using the movement for expressive purposes prevents it from becoming merely high level bodily skill. Thus when ballet is described as becoming too technical, it represents a decline because value is placed only on the ability to perform complex skills and the expressive elements in the technique are given less significance and consequently, diminished. According to McFee, recognition of the difference between an expressive performance and a merely technical one occurs because
the expressive properties of the work are built into the technique and not into the dancers. Thus if the dancer chooses only to execute the technical properties of the movement and ignores the motivation and potentiality, the expressive elements are lost. McFee (1992) separates the dancer from the dance and like Armelagos and Sirridge (1984) places the responsibility for interpreting the expressive elements, or, properties of the movement, with the dancer.

In contrast to Margolis (1984), McFee (1992) accepts the notion of individual dance movement (choreographic) style and contends that it is in the choreographer's manipulation of the expressive potentials of the technique that style resides. But it has already been argued (1.1) that the expressive potentials of the technique change with each era and this needs to be accounted for. Recognition of the conventions and traditions that a choreographer employs is thus an equally significant element of style and an important aspect of McFee's argument. For Ashton's dance movement, this means that style can be deciphered by investigating the conventions of the technique he uses in conjunction with the aesthetic features he selected from his own dance heritage.

The exploration of the preceding papers was undertaken in order to address the issue of dance movement style. There appears to be no common agreement amongst the philosophers on where to locate it and no single approach fully addresses the concept of style. But the work of Armelagos and Sirridge (1977, 1978, 1984) and McFee (1992), offer solutions from which a model for examining dance movement style is built.

Fundamental to this thesis is the assumption that a choreographer's dance movement style is compiled from various strands. The model thus adopts the notion that dance movement style derives from both the dancer and choreographer (Armelagos and Sirridge, 1977, 1978, 1984), from the choreographer's dance heritage and from his/her
manipulation of the expressive potentials of the technique (McFee, 1992). The final part of the model draws on Hofstadter (1997) to show that dance movement style is also the result of a consistent treatment of the dance movement in a specific way.

Hofstadter’s (1997) model provides a paradigm for both recognising style and demonstrating its recurring features across different elements. His study rests on the assumption that styles occur because of the existence of flexible, context-sensitive concepts, or as he calls them ‘fluid concepts’ (407). His premise is tested on letter alphabets and addresses two specific problems: how do we recognise a particular letter as being the same letter across several styles, such as Goudy, Baskerville or others and secondly in what way does an ‘a’, for example, possess similar stylistic traits to the ‘e’ or ‘c’ within a specific letter style.

Unlike the more familiar approach (of other scholars in the same field) which views the letter as a shape, he treats it as a concept, which allows it to be categorized according to the strokes or circular elements that make up the letter; these he describes as ‘roles’. Style is the way in which the ‘roles’ are employed. His concept of the letter presupposes a norm, or, an instance of the letter which is easily recognizable. Any violation of the ‘norm’ is a stylistic hallmark that can be transferred, by way of analogy, to other letters in a given style. For example, the ‘role’ of the crossbar on a ‘t’, ‘f’ and ‘e’ can be raised or tilted and he suggests that the pattern can be assigned to letters without crossbars by making an analogous change, as in the raising or tilting of another element of the letter. What Hofstadter is suggesting is that there is no need for the patterning to be repeated exactly across a given element, that as long as similar relations can be made across the range; this is sufficient evidence for identification of style. No single letter, however, contains all the information about a style and more must be
gleaned from other letters. As a result, the final design is usually seen to be derived from an amalgam of influences from several different letters.

Hofstadter’s premise accords with that of Leonard Meyer (1989), the musicologist, who argues that ‘style is a replication of patterning...that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints’ (1989, 3) and, in common with Hofstadter (1997), he argues that the patterns need not be alike in all respects but only to the extent that they are commensurate with each other.

Hofstadter’s (1997) approach is particularly pertinent to ballet because it is applied to a similarly tightly-knit and, in one sense, fixed system, the Roman alphabet, and can be applied directly to Ashton’s dance movement. The principle that styles are possible because of the presence of flexible context-sensitive concepts, that styles are formed by making a change in the standard representation of something and that stylistic patterns are formed by making analogous changes in other elements is directly relevant. Equally, the notion of treating ballet’s codified movements as concepts allows them to be divided into their basic components. It is then possible to see how, for example, a glissade, can be different, yet remain conceptually a glissade across differing training systems and how an Ashton glissade can relate to an Ashton pirouette. This relationship can be discerned by examining the way in which persistent minute changes of a body part, spatial pattern or dynamic in one ‘step’ are analogous with changes made to a different Ashton step. But Hofstadter (1997) also recognises that style is made from an amalgam of changes and thus it is not just an alteration in dynamic, or, spatial element in one Ashton step but a variety of modifications throughout a range of Ashton steps which together make up the style.

The notion of the ‘step’ as a concept, rather than a named unit is rarely explored
in ballet. Jacqueline Challet-Haas (1976) looks at the basic structure of ballet technique but confines her examination to the leg movements. That Ashton tended to create his movement conceptually, rarely referring to steps by name and more usually presenting an idea for the dancer to interpret, is remarked on by several dancers including Alicia Markova, Antoinette Sibley and Anthony Dowell (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 182, 147-157). Thus, the adoption of a conceptual approach to the movement seems appropriate for Ashton. Equally, applying the notion of analogous changes across the range of movement allows for the treatment of one movement to be compared with a similar treatment of another. For example, the abbreviated glissades of the Fairies at the end of The Dream (1964) have an analogy with the abbreviated pas de chat of the ballerina in her second entrance in Rhapsody (1980).

The model thus established for examining Ashton’s dance movement style interprets style as multi-layered. It draws on the following notions: that the dancer’s style and choreographer’s style are separate but interdependent; that style is decipherable by reference to both the choreographer’s dance heritage and his/her interpretation of the codified movement and that specific treatments, recurring across different movements and sequences, confer stylistic patterns on the dance movement.

1.3. The Movement Content

In this section, a methodology is formed for examining the properties of Ashton’s dance movement. The descriptions of movement throughout the thesis use linguistic terminology and, where appropriate, line drawings or Labanotation. But, as Mary Alice Brennan (in Horton Fraleigh and Hanstein, 1999, 291, citing Sally Ann Ness) points out, language is ideologically framed and its users culturally conditioned. Thus it can never
present a fully, or even marginally, objective account of dance movement. Recognising this problem, it is suggested that while a bias-free interpretation is probably not possible, since all systems are culture specific, the use of an approach to the movement, in which the actions of the body parts are described as well as the manner in which they move, can help to reduce some of the bias produced by a ballet background. In general, the ballet profession tends only to see named units of movement, positions and the main outline of the movement, taking no account of type of path, movement initiation, or the effort quality involved. Because of these limitations, the approach to movement developed by Rudolph Laban (1879-1958) is applied in the thesis. It involves asking similar questions about the movement as those asked by a dance analyst using Laban theoretical methods. Whilst recognising that Laban's analysis is also culturally encoded, it must be pointed out that it is part of a different movement culture from that of ballet and deals with elements not acknowledged, and frequently not recognised, in ballet. For instance, it highlights motivation and the subtle spatial and dynamic properties (the term is discussed below), none of which is addressed in the ballet manuals. Thus, the questions raised by the system encourages a more in-depth study of the named codified movement and can bring to light the subtle changes made by the choreographer.

1.3.1 Issues of Terminology and their Interpretation

Ballet's Technical terms

To avoid more description than is necessary, it is proposed to retain ballet's
technical terms for naming both the codified classroom movement and Ashton’s steps\(^8\), even though it is recognised that these are not the same. Retaining the technical terms precludes the need, initially, for long, verbal movement descriptions of those terms already recognised by the ballet profession. The terms are elucidated by the descriptions given in the pedagogic manuals written by the following: Cyril Beaumont and Stanislas Idzikowsky (1966), Margaret Craske and Cyril Beaumont (1946), Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev (1995) and Rhonda Ryman (1997 and 1998), although the differences in terminology are recognised and discussed. Whilst retaining the use of the terminology, the analysis recognises that the ballet step is not a single movement but comprises the movement of several body parts, dynamic and spatial features and requires several body parts to move simultaneously and/or successively. A more detailed description is given in Chapter III.

1.3.1.2. Dance Analysis

In academic dance studies, the term ‘dance analysis’ can be used to describe the process of dissecting a dance work. However, it is a controversial term in that there is no universally accepted methodology for analysing dances or dance movement and the selection of elements for examination frequently depends on the purposes of the individual observer. There is little agreement amongst dance researchers as to its focus. Scholars such as Imgard Bartenieff (1984) and Adrienne Kaeppler (1972) provide a context-bound, in depth analysis of the movement, whilst others, like Janet Adshead-Lansdale (1989) and Susan Foster (1986) are more concerned with choreography and its

\(^8\) Throughout the thesis Ashton’s steps are written as ‘steps’. The reasons for this are given in Chapter III.
historical, contextual, and aesthetic features and movement is only one component.

Janet Adshead-Lansdale (1990) argues that the work of movement analysts, notators and those using the effort/shape analysis is incomplete because they describe only the movement, omitting meanings and aesthetic qualities (1990, 24). Interpretation, Adshead-Lansdale claims, is the main purpose of analysis and this entails addressing the aesthetic qualities of the dance. But her arguments do not consider the position of dance performers, whose aims are likely to be different from notators or scholars (this point is more fully discussed in Chapter VI).

The purpose in this study is to examine the movements in order to provide a basis for performance interpretation. This involves taking account of both my interpretation of the movement and that of the dancers. The model established is flexible but is developed to give dancers the ability to make knowledgeable, interpretive choices. Thus the dance movement alone is analysed but with reference to its contextual elements and aesthetic qualities. This broadens the notion of dance movement analysis since it includes aspects of the dance which cannot be documented in a notation score, however sophisticated. Moreover, unlike Adshead-Lansdale's analysis, it is not a choreographic investigation and thus the focus is not on the works but on the choreographer's use of individual ballet steps and phrases.

1.3.1.3. Dance Movement and Meaning

The words 'dance movement' are used in this text for the sake of clarity, although some scholars regard the use of the word 'movement' as not applicable to dance. David Carr (1984, 1987-88, 1997), for instance, prefers not to use the word 'movement' at all in connection with dance. He argues that 'dance concerns action rather than movement.
because actions rather than movements are bearers of meaning' (356). In an earlier paper (1987-88, 146) he elucidates the point claiming that an action involves intention, and in dance, an expression of artistic ideas; as a result, choreographers should be concerned to create human actions rather than human movements. Notwithstanding Carr's objections, the proposal here is to use the term 'dance movement', but to regard it as an intentional artistic activity. This is because to refer to 'Ashton's dance action' style is awkward and to use the term 'Ashton's dance style' is too ambiguous, since it could cover other elements as well as steps and phrases.

Meaning is not central to this particular topic but is seen here to result from the ways in which the choreographer draws attention to the aesthetic features of the dance movement: its qualities, line, dynamics, shape and actions, as defined in this thesis, in conjunction with the qualities and abilities of the chosen dancers.

1.3.1.4. Virtuoso Skills

The display of virtuoso skills for their own sake is contentious and is thought by some to be irrelevant to considerations of art works (Mark, 1980, 29). In dance, works which are only concerned with high level skills are frequently condemned for their use of technical extravaganza (McFee, 1992, 206 and see Haskell, 1945, 40-45) but virtuosity is a term frequently used by the profession. Indeed, as a student at The Royal Ballet School, we had a session named 'Virtuosity' which incorporated such skills as fouettés and the learning of solo dances. Thus in this thesis, the term needs clarification as does its relationship to Ashton's dance movement style.

9 I was a student at The Royal Ballet School between January 1963 and July 1964 and a member of The Royal Ballet Company from August 1964 to August 1971.
Selma Jeanne Cohen (1982, 63) addresses the issue of virtuoso skills, arguing that they are usually attached to something difficult or daring but that their impact can be limited to the era in which they first occur. Distinguishing between audience perception of ‘virtuoso’ display and actual difficulty, she argues that obviously impressive feats are often applauded while equally difficult dances can pass unnoticed. She suggests that one of the reasons for this is that showy movement is isolated from the dance for effect, its purpose to excite by displaying skill or danger. Equally, virtuoso skills can be present in works which are not attempting to display skill for its own sake and whilst the movement may be difficult in itself, it is chosen not for display but for dramatic purposes. She cites as examples the work of Martha Graham and José Limón and also claims that the fouettés in both Michael Fokine’s Bluebeard (1941) and David Lichine’s Graduation Ball (1940) are an intrinsic part of the story and not there simply for display. She admits that there is a place for some bravura display but that it must be contained within the choreography: some problems occur when performers display their own skills at the expense of the music and the choreography. Thomas Carson Mark (1980, 41) shares the view advanced in Cohen’s last point. He notes that a musical performance can, for example, be dominated by piano playing skills even when these are not the subject of the piece. This occurs when performers use a work, not intended as display, to exhibit their abilities. Mark (1980), however, accepts that in some musical pieces display is its subject.

Among dancers and other writers on dance, the terms ‘technique’ and ‘virtuosity’ are sometimes used interchangeably and there is some confusion as to the exact meaning of ‘virtuosity’. According to Ninette de Valois (interview, 1988) there are no choreographers of ‘virtuosity’ in the English school, none who have produced anything
as exacting as the Bluebird variation in _The Sleeping Beauty_ (Petipa, 1890, Petipa/Sergeyev/ de Valois 1939, Petipa/Ashton/ de Valois 1946). She claims that Ashton was really only interested in characterisation and lyrical work, despite his insistence that his works were about ‘movement and steps and not ideas’ (Ashton in Crisp, 1977, 173). She complains that his work is not testing enough for the dancers and does not necessarily require a strong technique. Whether she means that it does not appear hard or is physically not difficult is not clear. Her last point is at odds with what the dancers experience when dancing Ashton (Jordan & Grau, 1996, 170-202) and, as Marks (1980, 41) and Cohen (1982) point out, a work can be hard without obviously showing it. A. H. Franks (1954, 99) also comments on the absence of ‘bravura’ in Ashton’s works but attributes it to the lack of technically competent dancers during the 1930s. He does, however, suggest that _Les Patineurs_ (1937) displays ‘sustained passages of virtuosity’ (104), by which he presumably means obviously difficult movement. But, he argues, in that particular work it is organised in such a way as to prevent mere spectacle. Thus, he shares Cohen’s view.

The term ‘virtuosity’, as opposed to ‘virtuoso qualities’, in this thesis is used to mean a display of skill for its own sake. It occurs when the dancer isolates dance movement from the main body of the dance in order to display skill at the expense of expressive qualities. However, the term ‘virtuoso qualities’ is employed to describe a spectacular phrase or the qualities of a dancer and, even when demonstrating difficulty, is considered to be part of the expressive features of the dance movement. But it does not necessarily indicate whether or not the movement is hard to dance.
1.4 Conceptual Framework for Examining the Dance Movement

1.4.1 Laban Theory

As explained in 1.3, the starting point for the analysis is Laban theory. This allows me to examine the ballet steps as movement and to perceive them from an outsider’s perspective. Inevitably, my own knowledge of the dances sometimes overrides this perspective and, where appropriate, the insider’s perception is also given. It was pointed out earlier in the chapter that descriptions in a typical ballet manual omit many crucial details of the movement. In Rhonda Ryman’s dictionary (1997), for example, the instructions for performing an échappé relevé to second position (31) only describe the action of the legs and feet. But no mention is made of the resulting shape, of rhythm, or what happens to the other parts of the body:

An échappé relevé in which the feet begin in 5th position en demi-plié, push equally away from the floor into 2nd position en pointes, and return directly to 5th position en demi-plié, with or without a change of feet.

Ryman, 1997, 31

The aim when analysing both Ashton's dance movement and the codified classroom movements is to discuss all of these features and those omitted by Rhonda Ryman with the help of Laban’s theories. These theories are used as a framework and only certain elements from them are adopted. Because the use of Laban theory for examining ballet movement is less familiar to the ballet profession in the United Kingdom (it is used a little in the USA), a brief description and its use with regard to Ashton and the codified movements follows.

Youngerman (1984) in seeking to explain the value of Laban’s theories describes them as a conceptual framework for both analysing the dance and highlighting its...
aesthetic elements. It is formed from several systems initiated by Laban and, according to Youngerman (1984, 106-109), is made up of the following: Labanotation, Effort/shape and Bartenieff Fundamentals and, Choreutics. In their present form, the systems have been developed, refined and added to by Laban’s pupils and followers and have evolved over several decades.

1.4.2 Labanotation

The aim of Labanotation was not only to record but also to analyse the structure of movement; as Youngerman puts it (1984, 106) the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ of movement. For example, analysis and recording of a movement involves asking the following questions: what is the nature of support? What body parts are moving? Are distinctive shapes formed or traced through space? Do they follow a path, relate to a limb or joint or surface? Is a limb moving away from or towards the body? What is the resulting shape and from which part of the body is the movement initiated? The foregoing list is representative and not exhaustive. According to Hutchinson Guest (1989, 181) the approach in this form of notation is to record the inner workings of the movement and thus the questions are aimed at exposing the subtle differences between movements. Consequently, the conceptual elements of the system, rather than the notation itself, are useful in providing a system for observation; these can help to form questions that reveal nuances of use not identified in ballet manuals. Some examples of phrases and a ‘step’ are, however, shown in the thesis in Labanotation. The system was chosen because of its capacity to record the finer details of the phrases and form a logical link with the verbal analyses.
1.4.3 Laban’s Effort/Shape and Bartenieff Fundamentals

Laban’s Effort theories were first published in England in 1947 and were based on research into movement in industry. However, as Redfern (1982 p. 25) indicates, some of the theories were derived from his earlier studies, during the 1920s and before. These dealt primarily with two elements: the degree and nature of effort used and the rhythmic aspects of movement. The spatial elements were not addressed, with the exception of one spatial component which Laban deemed to have dynamic properties: the degree to which a movement can be seen to be either focused or flexible. The theories were refined for dance, by his own students, which included amongst others, Preston-Dunlop in England and Irmgard Bartenieff in the USA. Bartenieff developed an approach which emphasised ‘movement motivation, spatial intent and kinesthetic awareness’ (Brennan, 1999, 289) while, in England, the theories were mainly used as a teaching tool in Modern Educational Dance. The concept of shaping was added by Warren Lamb in 1969 Management Behaviour so that the notation for recording effort patterns and the approach to dynamics eventually became known in the USA as Effort/Shape analysis.

The Effort factor describes an individual’s approach to a particular expenditure of movement (Walker and Rostankowski, 1980); how a movement is executed rather than what is executed. According to Preston-Dunlop (1996), it can also be used to discern the dynamic patterns in a choreographer’s movement sequences. There are four Effort factors: time, flow, space and weight. Changes occur within a range lying between two extremes: thus the attitude to time ranges between sudden and sustained, flow between bound and free, space between direct and indirect and weight between strong and light.

The shaping aspects of the system are described by Walker and Rostankowski
(1980) as the way in which an individual adapts the form of the body, its shape, in relation to the space around it. They identify three shape elements: the first, concerned with design, involves either a point, a line or the three dimensional aspect of the body and can be either central or peripheral to the body. It can also be concerned with the shape of the path, either curved or straight, rather than with the end position (Walker and Rostankowski, 1980). The second, shape-flow, deals with the flow through the body and involves shape change describing how the body unfolds, grows or shrinks from its centre (Walker and Rostankowski, 1980). Consequently, a movement may grow or shrink, move away from the body or towards it. The third element is shaping or carving and is concerned with moulding or sculpting the space.

Bartenieff’s ‘fundamentals’ were developed by Iggard Bartenieff, a Laban student in the United States, in conjunction with Albrecht Knust. They were aimed at the movement practitioner rather than the dance analyst. According to Youngerman (1984, 108-109), Bartenieff added elements such as ‘the study of the principles of weight shift, initiation of movement, breath support, sequencing of movement and interaction of body parts’. Bartenieff’s goal was to reveal interrelationships between spatial elements, effort, shape and the body. These inform my reading of Ashton’s dance movement but are not specifically isolated for use. In the main, the analysis draws on principles derived from Effort/Shape and an explanation of the ways in which these are used follows.

1.4.3.1 Use of Effort/Shape in Ashton

Identification of Laban’s four motion factors, time, space, weight and flow is used to focus attention on the physical qualities of Ashton’s dance movement. They highlight
contrasts in movement patterns such as the introduction of sudden accelerations of speed, and emphasise a key Ashton trait of creating surprise by the unexpected introduction of slow or fast 'steps' or phrases of movement. By identifying fluctuations in flow in combination with patterned recurrences of suddenness, attention is drawn to the ways in which Ashton unites several motion factors and distinctly colours a single 'step'.

Other characteristics, such as Ashton's attitude to space are brought to light by examining how the movements address the space around the body. For instance, codified movements tend to be goal orientated, whilst Ashton movements are often initiated by the torso and are perceived as more luxurious: when demonstrating an arm movement to Antoinette Sibley (Masterclass, 1988) he insists that it should be led from the shoulder and curl inwards.

Despite the dominance of delicacy as opposed to strength in the majority of Ashton's dance movements, changes in the use of the weight factor, such as variations of strength and delicacy, reveal subtle differences in the movement made for specific dancers. In particular, the movement made with Anthony Dowell includes both aspects: actions which end with an impact and those which start from an impulse. The latter are perceived as delicate and lacking in force.

In most movements or movement sequences all the above categories recur, but in the sequences they are frequently present in combinations, with one or two combinations stressed more frequently than others. A typical example occurs in the women's solo in Symphonic Variations (1946) where the centre woman performs two turning pas de basque followed by a posé turn en dedans. The arms form a semi-circular position in the pas de basque and, without losing their rounded shape, rotate rapidly down and upwards from the shoulder, with a tendency towards abruptness. They contrast
with the flow of the *pas de basque* and the smooth sustained turn which follows.

The purpose of using the theory is to discover and describe the principles underpinning the movement. Whilst it is not used in its fullest form, in other words, for documentation purposes, it is effective for drawing attention to significant stylistic characteristics. The word ‘dynamics’ is used as a shorthand throughout this study to stand for the notion of Effort.

1.4.4 The Choreutic Unit

The notion of choreutics was developed by Rudolph Laban to identify the spatial organization of dance movement. According to Preston-Dunlop (1983, 78), the way in which this space is used can also reflect meaning in the dance. The term describes the space activated around the dancing body: the personal space (kinesphere) and reinforces the perceptions of spatial characteristics that emerge from the Effort/Shape theory. However, the notion was extended in an MA thesis (1978) by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and further developed in her PhD thesis (1981). In the latter she adopted the term ‘choreutic unit’ to denote ‘the base unit fundamental to both fixed form and free association use of choreutics...’ (1981, 44). Her thesis also established that the pathway which traces the form materialises in several different ways. For instance, the unit consists of either curved or straight lines (1981) which vary in size and directional content: oblique, horizontal and vertical lines and circular, flattened, arched and spiral curves. These occur either in the body or by means of the moving body (1983, 81) and are virtual lines although they can also have ‘actual’ elements, such as in spatial tension where there may also be physical tension in the movement. She locates four ways in which the choreutic unit materialises in the dancer’s body through: ‘body design, spatial
The ways in which Ashton uses the limbs and torso and their relationship to space is a characteristic feature of his choreography which is frequently unlike the limb and torso patterns found in the contemporary ballet class. All four spatial elements are manifest in Ashton’s dance movement in both the shapes that occur in the dancer’s body and in the virtual lines and curves which continue beyond or within the dancer’s body. Their identification has been of specific importance to this thesis.

**Body Design**

Preston-Dunlop argues that it is not just the design itself but the way in which the movement draws attention to it that is the significant aspect of this unit. It is described by her as follows:

> In body design the choreutic unit inhabits the body itself. The unit is perceived immediately as a visible patterning of limbs or torso or head. The line is the body.

Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 83

This approach to movement is particularly useful for Ashton’s dance movement because it draws attention to phrases which are arranged specifically to highlight body design. For instance, in a short sequence of movements found in Cinderella’s solo in Act II of Cinderella (1948) the abruptness of the move from backbend to upright position calls attention to the verticality of the body design (video, example 1). Other examples are found throughout the dance movement and this characteristic is specifically discussed in Chapter IV, 4.3.2.

**Spatial Progression**

In contrast to body design, the term ‘spatial progression’ describes a movement,
which is made apparent 'through the direction of the motion' (1983, 82). For example, if the dancer carried a sparkler (firework), the illusory pattern left in the air after the completion of the movement would denote the spatial progression. Identification of this concept focuses attention on Ashton's use of the upper body and the way in which volume and motion are generated in and around the body. This is a useful concept to apply to Ashton's dance movement for it highlights the way in which he creates the appearance of motion even when the dancer remains on place.

Spatial Tension

'Spatial tension' is produced by moving or holding a position so as to 'cause a connection to be seen between the two ends of a choreutic unit' (1983, 83). The effect creates an illusory line and makes it perceivable. It can be both actual and virtual but equally, only virtual (1981). For instance, Oberon, during his first solo in the pas de deux in The Dream (1964) performs a temps de poisson in reverse. Attention is drawn to the hands and feet and this connection is made manifest by the execution of the movement: virtual tension exists between the hands and feet. (video example 2)

Spatial Projection

'A line or curve which continues beyond the body into the kinesphere... and is made visible by the dynamics and timing of the performance' (Preston-Dunlop, 1983, 83) is termed 'spatial projection'. As Preston-Dunlop (1981, 190) points out, the main body fragment for projection is the face and there are frequent examples of deliberate facial projection in Ashton's dance movement, in particular in the movement made with Margot Fonteyn. He claims to have worked specifically on Fonteyn's use of the eyes because he felt eyes to be a 'terribly important' aspect of dance (Ashton in Doob, 1978, 18). But arms, and consequently finger tips, also manifest frequent projections and these are most
often found in spatial clusters which include both body design and progression (see Chapter IV 4.3.1.1). Thus the notion of spatial projection is useful because it highlights Ashton’s preoccupation with space and his desire to create a moving body, as opposed to a body in which the focus is mainly on position. His use of outward projections demonstrates how the energy extends into the space beyond the body, creating the perception of on-going activity, even as the dancer momentarily rests. This is particularly evident in the phrases in which the major activity is created in the upper body (see Chapter IV).

1.4.5. The Basic Units of Movement

The following paragraphs explore the ways in which other dance researchers have identified units of movement, but the main aim is to provide more substantive reasons (than those given 1.3.1.1) for adopting the ballet step as the basic unit in this thesis.

Studies by Adrienne Kaeppler (1972)\(^\text{10}\) and Imgaard Bartenieff et al. (1984) in dance movement analysis take the smallest component of movement recognized by a particular tradition as the basic unit of a dance. This can be a single body part, a position, or an Effort element. Kaeppler isolates head, leg and arm movements as being the significant features of Tongan dance; all other movements, such as rotations of the torso or hips, whilst they are present in the dance, are unrecognised in that genre. Thus the accurate performance of the head, leg and arm can be of crucial importance in Tongan dance. For example, Kaeppler indicates that the use of the head makes the dance more

\(^{10}\) Whilst I am aware that Kaeppler has developed her work in structural analysis and is involved with the ethnochoreology study group of the ICTM, I feel that her work is more choreographically based and thus less relevant to this study.
aesthetically pleasing and helps to distinguish good from bad performances of the dance (1972, 177). The strong emphasis on single body parts in that genre dictates the necessity for isolating them in the analysis. She does, however, propose a hierarchy of units and divides the dances into: kineme, morphokine, motif and genre.

The study by Bartenieff, et.al. (1984) also focuses on a single body part, body position, or Effort as the basic unit of movement. The term element/component is used to describe it but the study also establishes a hierarchy of units to accommodate larger groupings of components. This approach can also function as a basis for analysing the choreography, because it describes the structure, showing the pattern of organisation, as well as the actual movements. The International Folk Music Council (IFMC) (1974), studying Folk Dance adopt a similar approach and use the term ‘Element’ to stand for the smallest movement, for example: ‘jump, step, bounce, swing; movements of the head, arm, and trunk; all poses; and gestures, stamp, clap, etc.’ (1974, 127).

The purpose of the dance movement analysis in all three studies was different: Kaeppler’s (1972) aim was to find a way of describing the dance that not only coincided with the culture’s own interpretation but also allowed a stranger to have access to it; Bartenieff, et.al. (1984) focused on developing a methodology which could be widely understood and potentially applicable to other dance research, using both Labanotation and Effort/Shape as the conceptual framework; whilst the IFMC (1974) wanted to develop a system for classifying all European folk dances so that they could be compared. All three studies accept that their distinctions and structural hierarchies are based on the requirements of the individual genres but anticipate that some elements of the research are applicable to other genres.

This study takes the ballet step, as denoted by its technical term, as the basic unit
of movement. It relates to the cluster/constellation in Bartenieff, et.al. (1984), but Kaeppler’s (1972) division has a semantic basis and does not have a grouping which corresponds to the ballet step. Her approach is based on linguistic structural analysis which seeks to ‘discover units and patterning valid in terms of a particular system’ (215). In the IFMC (1974) study, the ballet step comes closest to the motif, although it is not the same thing. The purpose of retaining the ballet step as the basic unit is twofold: first, because Ashton’s use of the ballet step is identified by reference to the differences between it and the codified movement, as manifest in a particular system, and secondly, because, despite using several body parts simultaneously, the ballet step is perceived, by ballet practitioners, as one unit. For this reason, and despite aiming to study the movement from the point of view of the outsider, it is necessary to retain the ballet step as the basic unit, so that the culture itself can recognise what is being described and analysed.

1.5 Delineating the Phrase

Bartenieff et.al. (1984, 6) point out that the phrase is the most difficult unit to define and is not consistent across genres. Phrases can be of different lengths but in general have elements in common. Doris Humphrey (1959) describes it as ‘the organization of movement in time-design’ (66). She asserts that its length is akin to a long controlled breath, modulated by a wave-like pattern and should have a ‘recognizable shape with a beginning and an end’ (68).

The two studies that examine the dances from a non-western culture both define the phrase in ways that are recognisable to those cultures. In her study of Tongan dance, Kaeppler’s (1972) term ‘motif’ groups several movements together. However, her
delineation of units is not appropriate to this study for two reasons: first, because her motifs, which correspond to 'phrases' in the Bartenieff study, are semantically based and allude to specific meanings in the dances and secondly, because her work is with Tongan dance, which is differently structured from ballet. Bartenieff, et.al (1984) agree that the phrase comprises a sequence of movements, united by intent and possessing a sense of continuity. The divisions were decided on the basis of 'unit markers' (8) identified as pauses, changes in, or a contrasting use of, effort, alterations in density, or in the use of joints.

Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin (1982) examine the phrase from the point of view of western theatre dance but approach it from a pedagogic stance, as a resource in the teaching of choreography. Like Humphrey (1959) and Bartenieff, et.al (1984) they contend that the phrase has a beginning, middle and end with movements that relate to each other, logically follow each other and are connected by the way in which they are combined to form a unit (23). They align the phrase with the classroom enchaînement, but argue that the function of each is different: the classroom enchaînement is combined for pedagogic reasons, devised to provide a technical challenge, while the choreographed phrase usually has a design or expressive function. The distinction that they make, between the classroom and the choreographed phrase, is useful. It not only differentiates between the function of both but also indicates that a focus on the qualities of the movement changes the nature of the choreographed phrase and distances it from the class.

Stephanie Jordan (1986) also addresses the problem of defining the phrase. Her analysis is concerned with the relationship between dance and music in the choreography of Doris Humphrey. Drawing on music theory, her aim is both to divide
the material into distinct structural units and analyse its rhythmic structure in relation to music. She coined the term ‘event’ to denote the movement of the body as a whole in a single move and ‘event cluster’ to signify a number of events clustered together. According to Jordan (1987, 50) it is a psychological law that governs our perception of group formation:

we cluster elements together in terms of their proximity and similarity and perceive rest, contrast and repetition as factors of separation between clusters’

1986, p. 50

Rest, contrast and repetition are identified as the elements which delineate phrase boundaries, or, in Jordan’s terminology, event clusters. All three of these elements divide the dance into discrete units: clusters are separated either by sustainment or rest, indicating a brief break in the sequence; contrast refers to a change from the previous event or in one or more elements, and repetition occurs when there are identical patterns of phrases or events (52). She adopts the term ‘parallel cluster’ to denote identical groups of movement or music, but groups in which a variation of the original sequence occurs are also deemed to be parallel. Moreover, parallel clusters can occur in groups of two or more and thus are gathered together as similar material. In Ashton movement, comparable incidences occur where a sequence of steps is repeated two or more times without changing any of the components. For example, the opening of the Fonteyn solo in Birthday Offering (1956) comprises two phrases grouped together, repeated identically and can be described as a parallel cluster:

♦ the first phrase comprises a pas de chat followed by a pas de bourrée à cinq pas and the second, three posés into arabesque on pointe. This is repeated three
Similar parallel clusters occur often enough for the term to be adopted here. However, the term ‘parallel phrase cluster’ is used to denote two or more phrases grouped together when this combination is repeated identically. ‘Phrase cluster’ is used to stand for two or more phrases grouped together. It must also be noted that the term phrase is different from the notion of ‘phrase’ used in Labanotation. There the phrasing bow ‘groups actions as belonging to one movement idea. [It can also] add temporal shaping [beginning and end] to a sequence’ (Beck, and Reiser, 1998, 325). Sustainment, rest and contrast also act as separation points in Ashton’s dance movement, but other additional factors occur and these are discussed below.

Anita Donaldson (1993) also discusses the phrase. Using theories derived from literature and music, she demonstrates that the dual concepts of ‘mobility’ and ‘closure’ operate to define units, not only in those arts but also in dance. She finds three areas common to all the different sources, namely, [1] that although part of a larger whole, each phrase makes a definite statement (150), [2] that the components relate logically to each other (151) and [3] that the constituent features of the phrase relate to other material seen in the dance work (151). ‘Closure’ has similarities with ‘rest’ and ‘mobility’ and is described by Donaldson (156) as being the continuity of an activity, in the sense that the movements which follow each other are related, combine together logically and progress one to the next. Her approach shares some similarities with both Humphrey (1959), Bartenieff, et. al. (1984) and Jordan (1986) and is used in conjunction with Jordan’s conception of the phrase to delineate the phrase in Ashton’s dance movement (see below).

Analysis undertaken for this thesis reveals that a feature of Ashton phrases, in
the dances up to 1960, is their similarity with the classroom *enchaînements* of Cecchetti (Craske and Beaumont, 1946). These *enchaînements* frequently consist of: four steps, or four steps interspersed with linking steps, or variations in which a step is repeated twice followed by a different step repeated twice. This pattern can be rearranged, but the basic structure tends to be similar. Like the *enchaînement*, the phrase contained the most likely number of steps and variations that a dancer could easily remember in a short space of time. When teaching an Ashton solo, the material is generally taught in short lengths of dance which correspond to phrases. Hutchinson Guest (1984 p. 147) confirms the rationale for this procedure, suggesting that the 'kinetic sense' of the dancer is established by teaching the dance one phrase at a time. This accords with the practice of most dancers who perceive and remember complete dances in terms of the phrases.

The dividing factors, defined by Jordan (1986), see 1.4, can be perceived by examining one of Ashton's dance phrases. For example, the concept of rest occurs during the phrase in Cinderella's solo in Act II of *Cinderella* (1948), (see video example 1) where a pause or held position at the end of the phrase denotes the division. Cinderella performs a parallel phrase moving upstage and the pause occurs between the two phrases and at the end of the second one. A change in step pattern also acts as a phrase boundary. For instance, in the phrase cluster, discussed below, in *Birthday Offering* (1956), the second phrase shows a distinct change of step pattern from the first. An example of contrast denotes a division between the two phrases where, for example, there is a change of dynamics. In the second entrance of the Fairies in *The Dream* (1964), a flowing, light, sustained bourrée backwards, continues until the arm reaches a fifth position. This is repeated once and is followed by the sharper, more condensed
movement of three échappés relevé on pointe, travelling forward. The contrast is reinforced because the échappés are made to appear more forceful. The plié occurs on the last beat of the previous bar and this helps to emphasise the relevé action because it occurs on the stressed elements of the 4/4 phrase (video example 4).

The term ‘phrase cluster’ is used to describe related phrases which can be separated by a contrast in step pattern but which are joined together. An example is found in the Fonteyn solo in Birthday Offering. The first phrase of the cluster comprises a pas de bourrée à cinq pas followed by a second phrase involving three posés, moving in a circle, into arabesque. The group of three has already been described as a parallel phrase cluster. Parallel phrases are also evident in this dance. For example, the phrase following this parallel phrase cluster is repeated identically four times. It comprises the first half of a brisé volé followed by a tap behind with the raised foot.

To summarise: a phrase cluster describes two or more phrases joined together, a parallel phrase cluster describes a phrase cluster which is repeated identically and a parallel phrase is used for single phrases which are repeated identically. The latter phrases are frequently composed of only two ‘steps’.

1.6. **Summary of Conceptual Model**

The methodology for Ashton’s dance movement style is based on the following principles:

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11 I hoped to provide an example on video of both the parallel phrase cluster and the parallel phrase which follows but the quality of the video was not good enough and the resulting example (video 5) is damaged and becomes blurred before the parallel phrases.
Ballet’s technical terms are retained, but their constituent features are analysed separately. The technical terms describe the smallest unit of movement identified by the classical dance culture.

The phrase is delineated by reference to Jordan (1987) and Donaldson (1993) and the classroom *enchaînements* of Cecchetti (Craske and Beaumont, 1946). The dividing elements are as follows: the pause; contrast, shown by a change of dynamic, movement, or, spatial orientation; repetition. The terms ‘parallel phrase’, ‘phrase cluster’ and ‘parallel phrase clusters’ are also used.

The approach to spatial form is derived from Valerie Preston-Dunlop’s choreutic units (1981 and 1983), and the ways in which these inhabit the body of the dancer in Ashton dance movement highlights Ashton’s concern with space.

Laban’s four motion factors together with Lamb’s concept of shape are used to identify and draw attention to the movement qualities, referred to throughout the thesis as dynamics.

1.7. **Sources**

1.7.1 **Literature Review: Sources on Dance Training and Ashton Dance Movement**

Because of limited research in the area of dance movement style, several literature reviews have been undertaken. In the case of training, except where both the Balanchine (Boos, 1995) and Bournonville (Hutchinson Guest, 1981) classes are briefly discussed, the review is limited to those aspects which are concerned with classical dance in England. This included researching material on the ex-Russian Imperial Ballet dancers who opened schools in Paris and London, because their classes contributed to
the dance movement of many of the dancers from the Vic-Wells Ballet. The sources in this particular area are problematic in that there is little available which focuses on the dance movement taught in the classroom. For instance, there appears to be almost no material, either primary or secondary, which describes the classes of Serafina Astafieva (1876-1934). She was a retired dancer from the Russian Imperial ballet and the Ballets Russes (1909-1929) who taught in London from 1911 to her death. Her contribution to dance training in the teens and twenties of this century was significant, but beyond a brief comment on her approach to training by Phyllis Bedells (1954), nothing else tangible remains. Oral sources, such as the memories of dancers who worked with her are vague and give little information. There is an equal dearth of information on the Russians teaching in Paris. Pamela May (1999, interview) observed that:

with Kschesinskaya\textsuperscript{12}, we did lots of fast jumps, just dancing. With Egorova it was lots of slow adage but with Preobrajenska it was more like Aurora (Sleeping Beauty, 1890), doing movements from her dances.

Such information is too rudimentary to form an interpretation of the values and traditions embedded in their particular ways of training. Equally, research into the Dancing Times\textsuperscript{13} revealed nothing of their teaching methods. In her book on Olga Preobrajenska (1870-1962), Elvira Roné (1978, 120) mentions that Preobrajenska ‘took over’ the Cecchetti tradition and enriched it, making it a part of the Russian school. Details about her way of teaching arm, head and eye movements are also useful and

\textsuperscript{12} There are five different spellings for this name: Kschesinskaya, Kshesinskaya, Kschesinska, Kschessinskaya and Kschessinska. The first example is used throughout the thesis.

\textsuperscript{13} The title for this publication was originally The Dancing Times but was changed to Dancing Times in 1967; for consistency the latter title is used throughout the thesis.
these are discussed more fully in Chapter V, in relation to Fonteyn.

Other sources on the establishment of training systems in England vary in usefulness. Some provide only a list of technical terms giving no indication of the rules for performing them, while others give prescriptive details about each movement. But, in the latter, despite giving this level of detail, much vital information is omitted. For example, as discussed earlier in the chapter, musical interpretation, movement dynamics and other nuances of bodily use are not referred to. A fuller discussion of these sources occurs in Chapter II. Articles on training in current journals (see Chapter II) have also been consulted. Many of these manifest a particular bias towards one training system or another but, nevertheless, give information about the way in which the ballet pedagogues view classical dance and its unchanging nature. The belief persists in these writings that change, when it occurs, is usually for the worse.

Interviews with some of the dancers and teachers who contributed to Ashton’s dance movement were also undertaken. These discussions helped to clarify when the more formal (written) de Valois system was introduced into the Sadler's Wells school and the teachers’ approach to teaching it. Interviews with the dancers were brief and centred on discussions concerning changes in the movement. Other comments made by them tended to reiterate what they had already said in Following Sir Fred’s Steps (Jordan and Grau, 1996) and in television Masterclasses. However, their comments are more revealing when used in conjunction with video analysis.

Critical reviews, biographies and autobiographies also provide limited information. The reviews tend to be of their time and are usually more concerned with the dancer’s physical appearance. A few, such as those by Denby (1986), are more informative giving some detail of the movement. The biographies and autobiographies
consulted vary in the amount of actual movement description given. Bedells' (1954) autobiography discusses her training, but beyond naming the teacher, gives no further descriptions of the classes. Fonteyn's (1976) is slightly more informative and gives details of the teachers she liked to work with, but, equally here, there is little about what she learnt from them or their approach to training. A similar situation exists with biographies: much personal detail is given at the expense of concrete evidence about the dancer's style of dancing.

Material written by Ashton is scant and, in the main, concerns his approach to choreography. It is probably not surprising that he gives little detail of the movement itself, since this was often dependent on the dancers he was using. These documents are, nevertheless, of interest since they give some indication of Ashton's values and preferences. They reveal the part music played in his choreography, indicating that he frequently used it to embellish and vary the dance movement. However, he also discusses other sources such as narrative and thematic material which he used as a stimulus for finding new ways of moving or developing new choreographic structures.

The major sources of documentation come from four publications on his life and work: Frederick Ashton and his Ballets (Vaughan, 1977/99), Secret Muses (Kavanagh, 1996a), Following Sir Fred's Steps (Jordan and Grau, 1996) and Moving Music (Jordan, 2000b). David Vaughan's (1977) work is seminal to any study of Ashton since it is the first and, so far, only attempt to investigate both the choreographic and contextual elements of Ashton's work. It deals with all of Ashton's known choreography up to 1976, including his non-balletic and operatic work. A revised version is now available (1999) with increased material on the choreography made between 1976 and 1986 but this information can also be found in Dance Now (Vaughan, 1994). The text of the
book provides broad descriptions of the movement, but these tend to cover the stylistic aspects of the choreography and deal with complete works. Influences on the movement, such as those of Pavlova, Karsavina and Nijinska, and contextual details are also discussed, confirming their significance to the dance movement. It constitutes a hybrid source since it draws on both primary and secondary material: Ashton was still alive when it was first published and much of the information comes from interviews with him and with others with whom he worked. Additionally, it draws on other written texts.

Much of the movement detail in Julie Kavanagh's (1996a) book is adapted from Vaughan, although there are some added details concerning Ashton's working relationship with Tamara Karsavina, Rudolph Nureyev (1938-1993) and Natalia Makarova (born 1940). There are many useful quotes from Ashton and some of these confirm the significance of the role played by the dancers with whom he worked. Much of the material relating to Ashton's dances was gathered while Ashton was still alive, but the main focus of the book is Ashton's personal life. While this aspect throws some light on his choreography, it is less helpful regarding his dance movement.

Following Sir Fred's Steps (Jordan and Grau, 1996) is a key text, based on a conference held at Roehampton Institute London in 1994. It contains scholarly papers, panel discussions and accounts of masterclasses held by the dancers with whom Ashton worked. The accounts of workshops, panel discussions and audience participation are written by scribes and there is another source comprising a video recording of the whole conference housed in the Learning and Resource Centre of the University of Surrey Roehampton. The book (1996) contains other primary sources, such as letters written by Ashton and interviews with dancers on whom he created works; the latter
provide additional material on aspects of the dance movement. These add to the information already gathered from videos of the dances and support the account given in this thesis, that Ashton varied the movement from dancer to dancer.

Jordan’s book, *Moving Music* (2000b) includes a chapter on Ashton’s use of music. It is unique in that no similar material on Ashton’s musical style has hitherto been published. Jordan has analysed the relationship between the movement and the music taking short sections from many works. Also included is a complete analysis of both *Symphonic Variations* (1946) and *A Month in the Country* (1976). The chapter provides a useful record of his musical history and her analysis of the relationship between the movement and the music is extensive, demonstrating Ashton’s characteristic and inventive way of linking the music with the movement. In addition, her recent paper ‘Scènes de Ballet - Ashton and Modernism’ (*Dance Research Journal*, 2000a) links Ashton’s work, and in particular dance movement, with that of Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972) and George Balanchine (1904-1983). It also provides new insights on the way in which his dance movement is affected by the music, for instance, his firm handling of pulse and his use of up-beat phrasing. Both these texts are used throughout the thesis to support the analysis and provide examples of Ashton’s musical style.

For investigating the dance style of Karsavina and Anna Pavlova both written sources and, where possible, film sources are used. There is almost no film footage of Karsavina and only a limited amount of Pavlova.

Evidence of Karsavina’s approach and aesthetic is available from written sources. She herself has written extensively about training in ballet, but these articles and books (1920, 1956, 1962, 1964, 1981) focus more on the mechanical aspects of the
movement. Thus the areas in which she reputedly influenced Ashton most, gesture and the use of her eyes, are not covered. Sources from critics, such as Cyril Beaumont (1945a), are also of limited use: their main focus is on personal aspects, such as charm and grace. While these characteristics may also have attracted Ashton they are too intangible to be discussed here.

Written material on Pavlova's dance movement style is also unsatisfactory except for that by H.T. Parker (Holmes, 1982). He was a perceptive contemporary critic whose descriptions provide added support to the analysis taken from video. Other material on Pavlova deals with her life and travels and provides little evidence of her dance movement style. The film material is discussed below.

In the case of Nijinska, there is both written and visual material. Her own writing, which includes both an article on her school of movement and a biography, discusses in some detail her approach to movement and this can be corroborated by examining some of her extant works.

Stage dancing of the 1920s and 1930s is less tangible. The written sources give no detail of the movement, but two key sources exist: the film Evergreen (1934) with choreography by Buddy Bradley (with whom Ashton frequently worked) and a paper by Constance Valis Hill (1992). Valis Hill's text is informative and analyses Bradley's approach to movement, while the film provides sufficient dance material to give some notion of the dance movement he choreographed.

1.7.2 Videotape

In the main, videotapes are used for the analysis, the majority of which come from the archives of The Royal Ballet. Some of the tapes are of poor quality but are,
nevertheless, the only source for examining both the dancers from the past and the majority of Ashton’s dance material. These include excerpts from and in some cases complete renderings of thirty seven works. Other material from the Rambert archives, English National Ballet, Television programmes and film has also been consulted. It is recognised, however, that there are limitations inherent in the video and film material. Preston-Dunlop (1981, 15) points out that the body is to some extent distorted and the dynamic modified.

Much of the early material from The Royal Ballet archives was filmed with the camera in the theatre stalls and thus is some distance from the stage, but in the more recent recordings a close-up recording appears in the top, right corner of the screen and this is useful for checking detail. Apart from the Frederick Ashton Gala (1970), the majority of the videos were made during final rehearsals, and it is recognised that the dancers may not be performing to their maximum capacity. Whilst it must be acknowledged that the tapes are evidence of only one version of the work and sometimes include unintentional errors, they still provide the only available information on the appearance of the movement during Ashton’s lifetime and beyond. In many of the videos, the movement is performed by Ashton’s chosen dancers and thus gives some notion of the dynamic and spatial elements favoured by Ashton. In order to assess the movement more fully, however, as many versions as are available were examined and judgements subsequently formed on the basis of several versions. While dancers from the past often regret the video performance, the video still reveals vital information about the dancer and, as such, cannot be dismissed, or its use avoided.

Other film of Pavlova and performances of Nijinska’s ballets Les Noces (1923, 1978) and Les Biches (1924, 1964) are also helpful. The films of Pavlova were made
when she was no longer a young dancer in 1924. These have been upgraded and much of the idiosyncracies of early filming removed. They are the only available evidence of her dancing and despite camera distortion, provide information about her dynamic range and extensive use of spatial elements.

Nijinska mounted Les Biches (1924) on The Royal Ballet in 1964 and the film, taken at the dress rehearsal, provides the closest record of her instructions. She mounted Les Noces in 1966 and the later 1978 version has several changes of cast, notably amongst the corps de ballet but was rehearsed by Christopher Newton, who recorded the work in Benesh Notation during the initial rehearsals, and Michael Somes who was also present at the rehearsals in 1966. These provide some evidence of her movement style and the way in which she wanted it performed. I also took part in the rehearsals and performances of these works and thus bring an added performer’s perspective both to the works and to Nijinska’s approach to movement.

1.7.3 The Writer’s Own Experience

I danced in many Ashton ballets and in other works under his supervision during my time with The Royal Ballet between 1964 and 1971. I frequently saw the original cast in the works as well as many changes of cast over the years. As far as my own work is concerned, I was one of the six chosen dancers for ‘Thursday’s Child’, along with Lesley Collier, Carole Hill, Patricia Linton, Susanna Raymond and Diana Vere in Jazz Calender (Ashton, 1968). I was conscious, at the time, of Ashton’s constant requests to ‘move’, change the shoulders, twist from the waist, bend lower, deeper, sideways. Analysis of the movements in this study is also informed by experimentation on my own body and through my teaching of some Ashton dances at The Royal Ballet.
School. For instance, execution of the sequence from Troyte’s dance in *Enigma Variations* (1968) highlighted the way in which the landing of one movement becomes the preparation for the next; it also revived my memory of dancing Nijinska’s movement. Whilst an ability to execute the movements oneself for analysis and for teaching purposes is helpful, it sometimes masks what is actually seen; and the Laban framework, which presents a different perspective, draws attention to those areas not always recognised by the ballet dancer. For example, my own training was based on the system devised by Nicholas Legat and later on the de Valois’ system in The Royal Ballet School. Both of these systems are compatible with Ashton’s dance movement and thus, the demands of the Ashton movement were already, in part, built into my training. Because this became my accustomed way of moving at the time, I was not always aware of the nuances and characteristics of the style, such as dynamic and spatial elements.

1.7.4 Benesh Notation

Although much of the dance movement analysed exists in the form of a score, many of these scores were created from the existing video material rather than through a collaborative process with Ashton. Where discrepancies occur on video between one performance and a later one and to check choreographic changes, the scores have been used. But because performance of the movements is a major focus of this thesis, the analysis has not been done from the score but from the videos, from which some of the scores were made. Another problem with the scores is that the notation was still underdeveloped during the years that Ashton was working. The first written score was for *Scènes de Ballet* (1948), made in 1960, and consequently, many of the early scores
do not provide a very full description of the movement. Moreover, for this investigation, more information is needed than is available in the score and it must be stressed that Benesh notation was designed to record the movement, rather than to analyse it. However, the early scores have been useful for confirming which version of the video shows the earliest choreography.

1.8 Summary

The methodology formulated in this chapter for investigating Ashton’s dance movement style emphasises the fluid nature of style. It recognises that the dance movement style is not solely the result of Ashton’s own imagination but is an amalgam of various factors, discussed in the chapter. The analytical framework has also been set out in the chapter and has been established to allow a perspective other than that of the balletic culture, although, it is also accepted that there are times when my own ‘insider’s’ knowledge is useful as a way of highlighting aspects not covered by the analytical procedure. Chapter II examines both the training systems in which the majority of Ashton’s dancers were trained and the other aspects of Ashton’s cultural heritage, all of which, it is proposed, are part of and contribute to the dance movement style.
Chapter Two

Ashton's Dance Heritage: the Influence of Training, Performers and other Dance Movement Styles

2.0 Introduction

The initial focus of this chapter is on the establishment of the major training systems in England, but its main aim is to investigate Ashton's own dance background and heritage. As anticipated in Chapter I, it draws on the notion that ballet is pluralistic, involving several training systems, which produce dancers with a variety of dance movement styles. Using the relevant aspects of the morphological methodology established in Chapter I, a brief investigation of the training systems encountered by Ashton and his dancers follows. Analysis of the training systems gives some notion of the dancers' dance movement style, which has a bearing on Ashton's dance movement style. The remainder of the chapter examines the other major influences: the dance movement styles of Anna Pavlova, Bronislava Nijinska and Tamara Karsavina and stage dancing of the era, in particular, that of Buddy Bradley.

Study of the syllabuses not only gives an indication of the technical values of the era but also demonstrates that dancers' approach to the codified movement and their abilities to perform specific technical skills depend, in part, on the conventions of a specific training method. For instance, Ninette de Valois (1977, 18 and in Vaganova, 1965, 5) believed that the strength of Enrico Cecchetti's system lay in its attention to balanced port de bras, while that of Agrippina Vaganova (1879-1951) in its gradual,
step-by-step approach to training. The former system has a specific way of training the arm movements while the latter approaches each of ballet's codified movements as a separate entity (Vaganova, 1965, 12-16). As far as Vaganova's system is concerned, this means that each movement is learnt separately and the *enchaînements* for younger dancers comprise up to eight repetitions of the same movement.

Ashton was influenced by the strengths and qualities of the dancers with whom he worked most frequently, choosing movement best suited to their talents. But, more importantly, he also required them to participate in the creative process, modifying and adapting their suggestions and blending these into his choreographed dance movement. Because his dance movement is developed from a collaborative process, both the style and the skills engendered by the training form part of his dance movement style. Chapter V examines this point more fully.

2.1 **Historical Overview and Analysis of Selected Syllabuses**

2.1.1. **Rationale for Choice of Syllabuses**

The training resulting from the following systems is discussed in 2.2: the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing (AOD, now Royal Academy of Dancing), the Cecchetti system (Beaumont, Idzikowski, Craske), Ninette de Valois' syllabus, the Vaganova system, filtered through Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev (1995). These systems are chosen because Ashton himself was trained in a version of the Cecchetti system, many of the dancers he encountered had an AOD (RAD)

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14 This was known as 'Madam's Syllabus'. The name 'Madam' was given to de Valois, apparently by Robert Helpmann (1909-1986), during the 1930s.
background (May, 1999) and the School for Choreographic (sic) Art initially used an amalgam of these systems. De Valois' syllabus, though not taught at the School until the late 1940s, affected most of the dancers Ashton worked with throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and while it may seem incongruous to deal with the Vaganova (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev) system, it is incorporated here because it was the basis for the training at The Royal Ballet School between 1983 and 1999. As a result, most of today's interpretations of Ashton ballets are informed by this training style. During the 1920s and 1930s some dancers also attended classes given by the ex-Imperial Russian ballerinas in London and Paris (May, 1999), but apart from some basic information on Olga Preobrajenska's classes (Roné, 1978) there are no written syllabuses for these classes, so their influences are harder to assess.

2.1.2. Sources

The sources were briefly referred to in Chapter I and are discussed in more detail here. The materials used for the analysis include a mixture of primary and secondary sources, some of which are unpublished. First there are visual sources for demonstrating the port de bras according to the method favoured by the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing (AOD) now Royal Academy of Dancing (RAD) (anon, 1922, 595-599). They appear to be somewhat static interpretations, which may be the result of early camera techniques or because only the final pose is shown, thereby removing the dynamic from the movement (Poesio, 1993). The Cecchetti manual (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1922/1966 and Craske and Beaumont, 1930) includes drawings of poses, arm and finger positions and variations in the positions of the head; Lydia Lopokova (1891-1981) stood for some of these but for the majority, Cecchetti
himself posed (Beaumont, 1945a, 181). These are of their time and show several positions which are no longer used (Beaumont and Idzikowsky 1966, plate, XVII, no. 70 and plate, XVIII, nos. 72,73 and 74). A video recording of a Royal Ballet School Test Class (1996) is used to support evidence drawn from Vaganova’s written class and there are also two recent recordings of Valerie Adams giving a ‘de Valois class’ 15 (1997 and 2000); these are executed by dancers trained in today’s methods and demonstrate some of the difficulties encountered by dancers working in an unfamiliar system.

The written sources vary in detail; those (primary sources) of the AOD (RAD) are sketchy and the only syllabus available is a list of steps published in the Dancing Times (1920, 1922,1923); enchaînements are not given. There is also a history of the RAD (Parker, 1995) drawn extensively from Ivor Guest (1958 and 1985), Phyllis Bedells (1954) and others, including articles in the Dancing Times during the 1920s. Derek Parker’s (1995) history is mainly a documentation of the development of the RAD and gives little idea of the kind of dance movement taught, nor of the early syllabuses. The library of the RAD also holds Edouard Espinosa’s Enchaînements published in 1921 by the Dancing Times. These give examples of enchaînements for teachers and suggest alternative ways of linking the technical exercises. Beyond the commentary in the Dancing Times during the 1920s, which gives basic instructions for the ‘correct’ execution of a few exercises, there is little else which describes the approach to the codified movements of the AOD.

The major sources for the Cecchetti work are the two books Manual of The Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1922/1966) and The Theory & Practice of Allegro in Classical Ballet (Beaumont and

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15This is a class based on Ninette de Valois’ syllabus, discussed later in the chapter.
Craske, 1930/1946). Reference is also made to the research carried out by Toby Bennett (1997 and 1998). Letters and other material on Cecchetti’s earlier classes in Russia exist, but these books are chosen because the classes taught in London in the 1920s and 1930s were based on the system recorded in them. Secondary sources in the form of comments from other more recent pedagogues are also useful, as these record the changing perceptions of his work and the different ways in which it was interpreted.

Vaganova’s own textbook, Basic Principles of Classical Ballet, (first published in Russia in 1934) prescribes the way in which each technical movement should be taught and includes some examples of classroom enchaînements. But the version used here is in translation and thus some of the meaning could be slightly distorted. The 1965 publication is used rather than that published earlier in 1948 which, apart from the introduction by Ninette de Valois, is unchanged. However, because her system has been ‘updated’ (1995, 16) in School of Classical Dance by Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev (1995) this version is also referred to and it is this later approach which was more in use at The Royal Ballet School between 1983/4 and 1999.

For Ninette de Valois’ syllabus, the written unpublished account owned by Valerie Adams (1956) is employed, though I also studied this method with both Pamela May and Ninette de Valois. Other sources include an unpublished interview with de Valois in 1988 and recent interviews, undertaken for this thesis, with Barbara Fewster (1999) and Pamela May (1999), both of whom taught the system.

The Cecchetti manual is the most detailed of the sources and includes itemized instructions for the accomplishment of the épaulement, head and arm movements. The other documents all assume knowledge of head, arm and eye actions but whereas those of de Valois and Cecchetti recommend the use of specific enchaînements, as

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mentioned above, that of the AOD (RAD) gives no suggestions and lacks guidance. As a result, the latter is a more problematic source but, since the purpose here is to establish the values and emphasis of the syllabuses rather than an in depth study of each movement, the material provides something of value. Vaganova’s syllabus gives sample *enchaînements* which are generally longer and involve a greater range of technical steps than those in the other syllabuses, but she makes it clear that the construction of the class depends on the individual, experienced teacher (1965, 14).

2.1.3. **Availability of Formal Training in the 1920s in London**

Before 1920 there was no formal system of ballet training in England, although, in London, Edouard Espinosa (1871-1950), ballet master from 1914 at the Empire Theatre, was a highly regarded teacher (de Valois, interview, 1988). Concern for the lack of any established standards was voiced in the December *Dancing Times* (Genée, 1920) and evidence that teachers all over the country were using unsafe methods (Rambert, 1972, 124) led to the establishment of the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing (AOD) in 1920. Coincidentally, Cyril Beaumont (1891-1976), with Stanislas Idzikowsky (1894-1977), began recording Enrico Cecchetti’s method of teaching (published in 1922). In 1920, Marie Rambert (1888-1982) opened a school using a training method based on her interpretation of Cecchetti’s teaching (Vaughan, 1977, 8), while in 1926, Ninette de Valois (b.1898) opened her School of Choregraphic Art. The latter amalgamated several systems (Sorley Walker, 1987) to form its individual style.

Emigrés from the Russian Imperial Ballet also contributed to the training. In London, Serafina Astafieva had been teaching a version of the Russian Imperial School
training since 1911 and, between 1918 and 1923, Cecchetti also taught there. The exact date of Nicholas Legat’s (1869-1937) arrival in London is unclear, but de Valois (1977, 19) claims that she studied with him in North London in 1923, after the departure of Cecchetti. This eclectic mixture of teachers, schools and consequently dance styles is evidence of the pluralism that prevailed in London during the 1920s and later; although a contemporary source (anon, 1920, 181) considered the ‘traditional technique’ to be ‘inviolable’ and impeccably retained by the great schools in Paris, Milan, Petrograd and Moscow. This notion is open to challenge because it rests on the assumption that ballet, comprising the codified movement, is style-free (see Chapter I, section 1.1). This attitude has discouraged any in-depth analysis of the different styles of ballet located in the training systems of the major schools.

2.1.4 Historical Overview of the Development of Formal Training in the 1920s

The Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing was formed in 1920 by the five dancers Phyllis Bedells (1893-1985), Lucia Cormani (dates unknown, circa 1872-1930), Edouard Espinosa, Adeline Genée (1878-1970) and Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978). These represented the five different schools: the English, the Italian, the French, the Danish and the Russian.

The latter four schools were well established systems but it is not clear what could have been meant by ‘the English school’, since no formal, recognised system existed. But it probably comprised a mixture of the teaching of Leon Espinosa (1825-1904) and that of Katti Lanner (1831-1908), both of whom set up ballet schools in England. Lanner was subsequently maitresse de ballet from 1887 at the Empire Theatre (Wilson, 1961). Bedells’ training, however, was sufficiently eclectic for her to have
developed a highly individual style. She studied for two years in a theatre school in Nottingham with Theodore Gilmer, one year with the Italian teacher Malvina Cavallazzi (1852-1924), a further year with Alexander Genée (1850-1938), later with Adolf Bolm (1884-1951) and finally with Cecchetti (Bedells, 1954). Espinosa's French school came second-hand from his father and included much quick terre à terre work but little adage or port de bras (de Valois, 1977, 12). According to Bedells (1954, 113) the initial AOD syllabus was devised by Espinosa but modified by the other members of the group. The AOD/RAD changed the standard of teaching in England and elsewhere (it now has teachers in sixty five countries, Parker, 1995, 24) and its approach to training affected the majority of the dancers with whom Ashton worked. Students at The Royal Ballet School took its examinations until the mid 1980s when Merle Park became Director; she eliminated all examinations from the curriculum. When Gailene Stock took over in 1999, she reinstated the RAD examinations, which all students now take. In addition, the two solos choreographed by Ashton for Solo Seal still form part of that examination.

Following the codification of the Cecchetti method in 1922, a society was established to promote and explain the method (Anon, 1959, VII). The founder members included Rambert and de Valois along with Margaret Craske (1892-1990) and Derra de Moroda (1897-1978). Two years later it amalgamated with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing: a body established in 1904 to protect the interests of dance teachers, although it was mainly concerned with ballroom dancing (Dickie, 1992, 58). Cecchetti examinations at elementary, intermediate and advanced were introduced. To begin with, the advanced had no prescribed syllabus, comprising the many enchaînements devised by Cecchetti, but this was later changed (Anon, 1959, VIII).
Subsequently, children's grades were introduced and syllabuses for all the examinations were created by Craske, de Moroda and Laura Wilson (1901-1999), with help from Rambert and Molly Lake (1899-1986). The syllabuses depended on both the Beaumont manual (1922) and the memories of those who worked with him.

The Soviet (Vaganova) system is the only system which claims to have 'scientifically analysed' (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995, 16) the principles of the Russian School. It was derived from a combination of several systems: that of the old Russian systems of Pavel Gerdt (1844-1917), Nicholas Legat and Ekaterina Vazem (1848-1937), with that of Cecchetti (Beckwith, 1993, 1451). Giannandrea Poesio (1994, 128), however, is wary of a blanket description of the Cecchetti work pointing out that his system of teaching in Russia differed in many respects from his London approach. For instance, the combinations of the daily *enchaînements* differ from those in the manual (1922/1966), as do the use of arms and some of the technical terms (Poesio, 1994, 128). It is most likely to have been this earlier version that Vaganova used, since the sources for these classes were available in Russia. According to Kristin Beckwith (1993, 1451), the training of the Russians Gerdt, Legat and Vazem produced soft, graceful dancers who lacked virtuosity, whilst the Cecchetti system lacked harmony and poetry but developed strong dancers. Vaganova, after a career as a dancer with the Russian Imperial Ballet, became a teacher, joining the Petrograd Theatre School in 1920. She codified a teaching system, published in Russia 1934 (translated into English and published in 1948, re-issued in 1965), which was formed out of these older methods but adapted for the newer demands of the Soviet Republic. Beckwith (1993, 1451) claims that the system, built on rigorously planned classes, was designed to produce a virtuoso technique. The method, based on a nine-year course of study (Kostrovitskaya
and Pisarev, 1995, 16), was subsequently accelerated to a six-year course by Vera Kostrovitskaya (17, 1995) and, as she puts it, 'clarified' so that the evolution of each movement is more fully described; the method is developed from its 'simplest to its final most complex form, as well as [introducing] different versions of each movement' (1995, 20). It was used in all Soviet ballet schools and has subsequently been adapted for use in many English schools.

The School for Choreographic Art initially claimed to teach the Cecchetti method, but Katherine Sorley Walker (1987, 63) argues that the school was never confined to one system. According to de Valois (interview, 1988), her method drew on the best elements of the Italian, Russian and French schools and was put on top of, what she describes as, 'our own natural roots'. These, she claims, stem from English national dances which give priority to neat, fast footwork. Her own system has a strong concentration on terre à terre work and aims to produce dancers with strong, articulate feet. The early curriculum included 'composition' classes based on 'plastique' dance: 'dance not derived from steps and established vocabularies but from the rhythm of the moving body' (Van Norman Baer in Preston-Dunlop, 1997, 17). Pamela May (1999) confirms that this description accords with her own memory of 'plastique' and that although it was used to teach choreography, its impact on the technique was more far-reaching, giving the dancers the experience of a greater range of movement. For

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16 These are not really different versions but different conceptions of the technical term. For example, both the Russian and Italian pas de chat are given but only different types of sissonne, ouverte or sissonne tombée (1995, 255, 267).

17 She presumably means Irish and Scottish traditional dances as well as English, as these are also taught along with Morris Dancing at The Royal Ballet School.
example, it encouraged the use of parallel feet and a more pliant and mobile torso.

During the 1930s, the school (since 1931, the Sadler’s Wells Theatre School of Ballet, Clarke, 1955, 53) provided a somewhat eclectic training employing teachers from differing backgrounds. These included Nicholas Sergeyev (1876-1951) (Imperial Russian), Stanislas Idzikowsky (1894-1977) (Cecchetti), Margaret Craske (Cecchetti), Anna Pruzina (dates unknown, circa 1880s to 1950s) (Imperial Russian) as well as de Valois herself (Espinosa, Cecchetti, Legat) (May, 1999). ‘Character dancing’ was taught by Ursula Moreton (1903-1973) who had learnt it with the Ballets Russes (1909-1930). Later in the 1940s Vera Volkova (1904-1975), a disciple of Vaganova, taught for several years and the de Valois’ method, described as ‘Madam’s Syllabus’, was introduced at the beginning of the 1950s (May, 1999). It remained the primary teaching system until Barbara Fewster introduced more Cecchetti work in 1968 (Fewster, 1999). There is some discrepancy between Fewster and May regarding the syllabus: both agree that Madam’s Syllabus was taught at the School, but Fewster insists that de Valois did not want her syllabus taught, only the principles, whereas May claims that all aspects of it, including the *enchaînements* were taught daily. May’s assertions are confirmed by both Valerie Adams and Audrey Harman who also taught at the School.

2.2. **Dancers’ Style**

2.2.1. **Discrepancies between Different Syllabuses**

The full syllabuses present something of a problem because they are aimed at different levels of achievement and development. Cecchetti’s was created mainly for the professional dancer or advanced student (de Valois, 1977, 18), although the
Cecchetti Society later developed a range of syllabuses geared to take the dancer from beginner to professional level (see 2.1.4). Those of Vaganova and de Valois, follow a graded plan and start with the eleven-year old (nine or twelve in Russia) taking her/him through to the professional graduate, while the AOD/RAD was originally established to train teachers how to teach and ranged from elementary to advanced; the children’s grades followed in 1923 (Parker, 1995, 13). Because of these discrepancies and because a study of the total training is not wholly relevant, only a brief reference to the early training in the Vaganova, de Valois and AOD/RAD methods is made.

Whilst the four systems appear to have similar aims, they differ considerably as to how these should be achieved. The RAD syllabus is entirely examination based and makes no reference to choreographed dance movement. It was revised in the 1950s and 1960s and May (1999) notes that, prior to that, it had significant gaps. Although, she does not say what these were. Cecchetti, as interpreted by Beaumont in 1922, approaches the training with a detailed and prescriptive set of *enchaînements* to be executed on different days of the week. According to Beaumont (1945a, 180), the manual was devised so that the exercises could only be performed in one specific way. The problem with this method is that it can inhibit development, or, as de Valois (1977, 20) discovered, prevent the muscles from adapting easily to a different system and, by analogy, to different choreography. De Valois’ syllabus was designed to produce professional dancers for her company: the Vic-Wells/Sadler’s Wells/Royal Ballet. Vaganova’s syllabus is, perhaps, the most repetitive, in that it advocates extensive daily repetitions of single technical exercises (1965, 16). To prevent boredom, she advises that variations in rhythm be introduced, such as moving between a 2/4 and 4/4 rhythm, although, there is little difference to the ear between these two rhythms. While these
instructions are aimed only at beginners, the syllabus differs significantly from de
Valois' elementary syllabus which proposes a much greater range of variation in the
enchaînements both at the barre and in the centre. Vaganova's syllabus appears to be
the most dogmatic- even more so than that of Cecchetti, perhaps because the latter was
written by Beaumont. Her syllabus' insistence on the mastery of 'dry' (12) exercises
(meaning dull) appears to diminish the dance element, placing greater emphasis on the
accomplishment of technical skills.

2.2.2. Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing/Royal Academy of Dancing

The syllabus of the AOD gives little prescriptive detail and it is difficult to
gauge the precise abilities and characteristics of the AOD dancer. The inclusion of
much terre à terre work, probably taken from Espinosa's classes, indicates the
emphasis placed on footwork. De Valois (1977, 12) claims that Espinosa excelled in
teaching batterie and pirouettes and produced dancers with excellent feet and footwork,
but she also points out that the brevity and speed of the general training in England at
the time never really allowed the dancers to develop good ballon or a sound adage. For
over ten years, Espinosa was a leading figure in the AOD and much of his pedagogic
approach was included in the early syllabuses (Parker, 1995, 5).

When first formed, the system appears to have had a very liberal approach to the
codified movements. For instance, it lacked directives for épaulement or the use of the
head and gave no prescribed way of combining the arms with the technical steps. The
technical terms of the movements were also listed there but were equally devoid of
detail. This suggests that the founders of the syllabus believed these to be so familiar
that description was unnecessary, but this practice must have led to significant variations
in their execution. The exercises given are not defined by gender so it is likely that the same material was taught to and by both men and women.

Physical accomplishment of a given list of codified movements was expected at each level and because these were not formed into *enchaînements*, teachers were free to invent their own. But this approach may also have impeded the less knowledgeable teachers. By the time the advanced syllabus was reached, teachers and their pupils were expected to have mastered a comprehensive range of technical movements, many of which require years of training to accomplish. If, as de Valois (1977, 12) suggests, the length of time for training was brief, the early version of the syllabus probably produced dancers who could execute all the movements of the Advanced examination in one way or another, but with little chance of having developed strength and precision. The absence of set *enchaînements* may have created dancers who could adapt easily to new or unusual combinations of movement but this approach could equally have exposed a dearth of invention by the teacher, and dancers with little ability to adapt to new combinations. Moreover, it is likely that this particular characteristic of the syllabus led to significant variations in standards across the country.

When first introduced, the system was not really designed to train the professional ballet dancer. Dancers emerging from this training may well have had strong individual qualities but are likely to have been ill-equipped to enter a professional ballet company; although in terms of standards, style and approach the professional company was probably very different from today and the requirements between one company and another were likely to have been similarly divergent. According to May (1999), it was, nevertheless, the main source of training during the 1920s and 1930s and as such is important, since the majority of the dancers entering the Sadler's Well Theatre
School were likely to have started with some form of AOD/RAD training. In addition, de Valois was a member of the Society and took the examinations herself in 1929 (Parker, 1995, 17). However, lack of sources in the area means that it is not possible to discern where the major emphases lie, although development of the feet must conceivably have been important because of the inclusion of Espinosa's work.

From this examination of the available material, it has to be assumed that the ability to execute a full range of codified movements took priority over their careful execution: this is in marked contrast to Vaganova's approach. It is probable that standards rose as the syllabus matured, but without clear and comprehensive guidelines it must have been difficult to set consistent standards, at least in the early years.

2.2.3. Enrico Cecchetti

As indicated above, this section looks briefly at the manuals written by Beaumont and Idzikowsky (1966) and Craske and Beaumont (1946) in order to form some idea of both the conventions and values embedded in the Cecchetti system and the resulting dance movement style of the dancer. Some of the dancers Ashton worked with were trained in this system and his own training was based on it, though as Rayner Heppenstall (1936, 588) points out, Marie Rambert's approach was far from being strict Cecchetti and incorporated many Russian elements.

The Cecchetti manuals prescribe each day's class in detail. The épaulement, head and arm movements are set for every technical step and this constant repetition can elicit an automatic response whenever that movement is called for. Such a response to the codified movements is likely to affect the dancer when working with a choreographer. Ashley Page, in an interview with Cara Drower (cited in Drower, 1999,
84), confirms that this is a problem. He makes the point that, although dancers trained in the Cecchetti system have an ability to learn quickly, they also tend to force the choreographed movements back into the Cecchetti style they have learned. He finds too that they are less willing to take risks (Drower, 1999, 88) and suggests that this reluctance may stem from the security of the class formula. De Valois (1977, 20), commenting on this repetitive aspect of the system, believes that although it produces great strength and harmony, it is ultimately limiting and should not be used on its own as a training system. Despite de Valois’ respect for the Cecchetti system, she believes that it was Cecchetti’s abilities as a pedagogue that were of prime importance and that in her opinion, ‘it was his special system [which]...possibly cramped his full powers’ (1973, 45). She observes that Cecchetti never produced a ballerina solely trained under his system but that he had a great capacity for identifying and correcting a serious fault (1973, 47). Writing in 1977, she argues that Cecchetti’s autocratic and monotonous approach could be detrimental to dancers because of its tendency to condition their bodies to move only in one way. It could be for this reason that de Valois was keen eventually to disassociate herself from his method. But despite these reservations, the dancers that emerge from this training tend to have strength and technically able bodies.

Interpretations of important aspects of the Cecchetti system vary. Karsavina (1964, 130) claims that Cecchetti would not allow her to do ‘a circular body limbering with the torso at right-angles’, yet Cara Drower (1999, 9) points out that it is customary to introduce deep bends into the Cecchetti work, particularly in the renversé. The manual (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1966, 165) agrees with Drower, suggesting that a deep sideways bend in an attitude penchée is required. According to Rhonda Ryman (1998, 121) the Pas de L'Alliance, which demands extensive use of the torso, was first
danced by Karsavina in 1918. If Karsavina is right, then the emphasis on deeper bends was introduced later. To compound the problem, Toby Bennett (1998, 206) also discovered discrepancies in accounts of Cecchetti’s teaching from former pupils: some highlight the precision he required, while others argue that, for Cecchetti, it was the quality of the movement that was more important. The subject of the Cecchetti method is clearly contentious but what emerges from the investigation is that there are different versions and different interpretations of his approach to teaching and, perhaps not surprisingly, these have changed even more through time (Drower, 1999).

Although the manuals are very detailed, it is still not really possible, from such basic information, to glean the exact style of the dancer, although some aspects are revealing. Dancers trained in the Cecchetti method complain of the stiffness of today’s dancers (cited in Bennett, 1997, 58) and believe that this is caused by too much rigidity in the lower back. Cecchetti, they claim, emphasised the postural muscles of the stomach which allowed the dancers to move more freely, although this aspect is not specifically stressed in the written material. According to Bennett (1997, 57), the Cecchetti method is characterised by a ‘rich use of the back and harmony of line, the play of weight, the use of the ground and a generous use of space’. Adding to this, Molly Lake (cited in Bennett 1998, 206) remembers ‘flow, continuity and coverage of ground...’ as the most significant features, while Laura Wilson argues that the focus was more on ‘spatial patterns and dynamic change’ (Bennett, 1998, 207). Emphasis on dynamic variations in the effort patterns of similar steps is commented on by Bennett (1998 205), who makes the point that some movements (steps) appear to be incorrectly named. Yet on closer examination, he reasons that the grand temps levé, despite having the action of a sissone, is probably so described in order to emphasise the height of the
jump. He finds similar explanations for the other 'incorrectly' named movements (steps) and concludes that dynamic range is a more important feature of the system than a mechanical application of the codified movements.

Bennett's (1998) analysis indicates that the Cecchetti trained dancer had strength and flexibility in the lower body, an appreciation of the subtle rhythmic variations between steps, coupled with a deep sense of épaulement (203). However, his knowledge is based on his own interpretation of the system and on the ways in which Cecchetti's various pupils have interpreted and remembered it. It differs slightly from both de Valois' and Karsavina's memories and from the criticisms of Heppenstall (1936, 588) who complained that the system produced 'stiffness of the upper body'. Like all systems, it is dependent on the teachers who interpret it and evidence from dancers (see, for example, Kersley, in Bremser, 1993, 690 and Newman, 1982,133) suggests that, even in the early days, significant variations occurred.

Material from the ISTD does not specify how many teachers taught the system nor whether it was widely taught, so it is difficult to discover how many dancers entered the Sadler's Wells Theatre school with a Cecchetti background (there are no Royal Ballet records either). Certainly the dancers Ashton worked with initially in the Rambert school were trained, to some extent, in the style and the available footage shows a capacity for rapid movement, combined with a significant degree of upper torso flexibility, though the dancers lacked articulate feet.

Ashton was trained according to Rambert's interpretation of the system and his own classical dancing must have owed something to that training. He attached great importance to it as a training method, believing it to 'be the best system of dance training' and that, through Marie Rambert, it had given him excellent grounding (cited
in Pritchard, 1996, 107). He is particularly praising of the Cecchetti *port de bras* and the way in which it develops a feeling for line and *épaulement* (cited in Glasstone, 1996, 8).

The available material on Ashton’s own dancing is limited and does not give much indication of the nature or extent of his technical capacity. He began his training very late when he was already nineteen and by the age of twenty-one was already dancing professionally (Vaughan, 1977, 9). He thus crammed the more usual four to five years training into two years and it is possible that only some aspects of the Cecchetti training affected his own style of dance movement. It must be remembered that Cecchetti’s classes were not designed for beginners and that the material taught by Rambert was likely to have been only minimally adapted for adults from these professional classes. Thus two years of struggling with the advanced classes cannot have given Ashton a sound technical grounding. His talents appear to have resided more in a natural aptitude for movement, coupled with a keen eye for absorbing detail, rather than in virtuoso qualities: *tours en l’air*, he observed, were ‘problematical’ (Vaughan, 1977, 27). Unlike Balanchine, he did not create his own pedagogic approach to the codified movement and although he occasionally watched the professional class for ideas for creating dance movement (May, in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 189), he was never really interested in training. This may well have been because of his own scant

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18 There are no specific sources which indicate at what age youngsters started professional training in England during this era. According to de Valois (1977, 12) a dancer’s training was ‘spasmodic’ and there is little material available on the training for English male dancers. Anton Dolin (1904-1983), however, started at the age of ten with Grace and Lily Cone and later with Astafieva but he is one of the few English male dancers of the era who was recognised as a competent dancer by the standards of the time; he became a principal dancer with Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes (1923-25 and 1929).
training; Balanchine, it must be remembered, had been trained for eight years in Russia between 1913 and 1921.

David Vaughan claims he had excellent *petite batterie* and film from that time in *Foyer de Danse* (1932), (in Frederick Ashton- A Real Choreographer, 1979) supports this judgement. According to Nijinska, his character dancing was of a very high calibre and she draws attention to his musicality and his ability to recognise detail:

> He stood out by his exact rendering of style and his flawless accuracy in the details of my choreography. Ashton did not dance solo parts... but he knew how to render individual what he did in ensembles

Cited in Dominic and Gilbert, 1971, 10

Nijinska suggests that Ashton had a great understanding of choreographed movement, but the omission of any description of his technical achievements might indicate that technical facility was not his strongest point. Dismissing suggestions that he was influenced choreographically by Leonide Massine (1895-1979), Ashton claims to have been more affected by Massine as a dancer, we ‘were in the same rut because he wasn’t properly a classical dancer, nor was I... We were both a bit bizarre in the way we danced, a bit burlesque’ (Wohlfart, 1996, 25).

### 2.2.4. The Teaching at the Sadler’s Wells Theatre/ Royal Ballet School

As early as 1937 (225-252) de Valois asserts that she was developing an English system of training based on both the Russian and Italian methods; although this was not strictly true, prior to the 1950s, the school employed teachers from a variety of different backgrounds. Later in 1988 (anon, unpublished interview) she acknowledged that she also drew on the French system but that she took what she needed from all three. She
believed an emphasis on footwork to be important because, she maintained, English choreographers ‘work from the knee down’. But analysis of Ashton’s dance movement shows that this is not entirely the case. While articulate footwork is certainly important in some of his work, there is also a significant emphasis on the upper body and his work demands a highly mobile and active torso.

Pamela May (1999), whose early training came from the AOD teacher Freda Grant, remembered working with numerous different teachers. She claims that Nicholas Sergeyev, who taught for several years, tended to work within the ‘old’ nineteenth century Russian tradition. Much of his centre work comprised phrases of soloist movement from the nineteenth century ballets: The Sleeping Beauty (Petipa 1890), The Nutcracker (Ivanov, 1892) and Swan Lake (Petipa/ Ivanov, 1895). This practice of using the solos from particular ballets seems to come directly from the Imperial Ballet School (Karsavina, 1981, 111) and Ashton (cited in Pritchard, 196,106) also claims that Rambert used enchaînements drawn from variations from The Sleeping Beauty (Petipa, 1890). Classes were also taken by Margaret Craske, who taught the version of the Cecchetti system recorded in the Manuals, and by Stanislas Idzikowsky, who, despite being a student of Cecchetti, had his own approach to the system (May, 1999. Interview). In addition to working on choreography and rehearsals, de Valois also took class and these are described by May (1999) as a mixture of styles and systems. May also remembers Anna Pruzina teaching for a while, chiefly ‘to improve the jumping’.

According to Barbara Fewster (1999) the syllabus was first established to ‘fill in the gaps in the RAD syllabus’ and indeed when Pamela May, Winifred Edwards, Audrey Knight and Ursula Moreton rewrote the RAD syllabus in the 1950s, May (1999)
claims that much of de Valois’ work was incorporated into that system. May (1999) believes that the de Valois system was taught at the School from about 1950 onwards but that de Valois frequently changed and updated it. For instance, after de Valois’ visits to Russia in 1956 and 1957, she significantly altered the set work by including croisé, effacé and écarté positions in all the sequences formerly performed en croix. This added considerably more directional movement to the dancing body: it forced the dancer to alter the position of the body more speedily and prevented her/him from relaxing in any one position.

Examined on paper and from the later video recordings (1997, 2000), de Valois’ syllabus covers an extensive range of steps, with the major emphasis on terre à terre work and petite batterie. The enchaînements usually comprise four different codified movements and they demand rapid alterations in weight and change of spatial orientation from movement to movement. For instance, a jeté en tournant at 90° is followed by an assemblé and sissonne en tournant and the whole is repeated (unpublished syllabus, 1956, 86). This sequence sends the body whirling into space but is sharply adjusted by the full stop of the assemblé before it turns again. According to Lawson (1955, 769), when demonstrating these classes to teachers, de Valois analysed the role played by each part of the body. In particular, de Valois drew attention to the potential for light and shade in each movement, to spatial orientation and to the dynamic emphasis of the whole enchaînement.

The greater part of the syllabus is devoted to developing the leg from the knee down and to producing strong feet. The footwork of dancers such as Antoinette Sibley, Georgina Parkinson, Lesley Collier and Shirley Grahame provides evidence to support the point. But perhaps one of the strengths of the syllabus was that it did not establish,
in written form, a strictly codified notion of each step. This meant that it retained a flexibility and was able to change and adapt to the choreography of the day. May (1999) confirms this point and claims that although de Valois was keen to have all aspects taught, she allowed teachers to interpret the syllabus in their own way and occasionally to insert their own combinations. In the summer sessions for teachers in 1955, Lawson (1955, 769) indicates that de Valois placed great emphasis on choreography, showing how the codified movements could be joined and developed to create interesting dance movement. The stress on creativity demonstrates just how closely the system was tied to choreography and it is conceivable that this emphasis must also have given the dancers a greater awareness of its significance.

What is apparent from the structure and emphasis in the classes is that they are primarily designed for her own and Ashton's needs since both choreographers demand rapid alterations in direction and weight, and an ability to articulate the feet. According to May, the latter emphasis comes from de Valois’ work with Edouard Espinosa. His significance to the development of ballet in England is commented on by de Valois (1977, 11) who claims that it was his interpretation of the technical movements that formed 'the basis of the English technical school'. Missing from the written syllabus is an emphasis on the use of the torso and upper back, which can be achieved through a greater involvement of the weight of the torso in the movement (Bennett, 1998, 207). This emphasis is not apparent in de Valois’ written syllabus but it is likely that there was a greater emphasis on the use of the torso in the day to day teaching. The video examples of the classes (1997 and 2000) show the gap between what was expected of the earlier dancers and those of today: today's dancers have difficulty in adjusting to the speed, the directional changes and the variety of the enchaînements.
The impression to be drawn from the foregoing investigation is that dancers trained in the first part of the century, in England, had a varied background which drew on several different systems and accordingly on different conventions. What is also probable is that this somewhat eclectic training gave the dancers a less dogmatic approach to the codified movement, giving choreographers freedom to develop the dancers and interact with them in an experimental way.

2.2.5 Agrippina Vaganova’s Syllabus

It is not intended that this syllabus be examined in any great depth because Ashton was dead by the time the dancers trained in it came to maturity. It is included because most of today’s interpretations of Ashton movement are informed by its values. It must also be stressed that it is The Royal Ballet School’s interpretation of the syllabus that is addressed here, as taught by a variety of teachers, three of whom are Russian. Reference is also made to Vaganova’s own book (1965) and to the revised version (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995).

Vaganova seems to be the first pedagogue, at least on paper, to analyse the separate aspects of each codified movement and make them appropriate for teaching youngsters. Earlier syllabuses, on the whole, simplified sequences of movements rather than breaking down each step into its component parts. The technical movements in Vaganova’s system are taught one at a time until the student has assimilated each element and learnt to execute them with the required turnout, height of leg and position of the body. The movements are taught at a markedly slower pace than those of either Cecchetti or de Valois and new movements are only introduced gradually over an eight (now six, Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995) year period. This approach isolates each
step, teaching it as a separate entity and can restrict the dancer's ability to adapt to rapid changes of direction or to faster combinations of steps. For example, Rudolph Nureyev and some other Russian dancers found much of Ashton's and de Valois' choreography difficult to perform (evidence for this is found in the Ashton Gala, 1970).

Unlike the previous systems examined, the *enchaînements* give priority to locomotion and *grand allegro*. Less stress appears to be placed on the quicker *terre à terre* movements or on developing flexible and fast moving feet. The system is underpinned by different values and many *terre à terre* movements are relegated to the status of 'linking steps'. Moreover, it may be that because the training is arranged for the relatively huge Bolshoi and Kirov stages, it has little emphasis on swift directional changes within a phrase of movement\(^{19}\). Turn-out of the legs is given priority and it is apparent, in The Royal Ballet School at least, that this slows down the dancer's movement. Royal Ballet School dancers who complete the training tend to move peripherally (not from the centre of the body). They have bodies that show clear, very turned out limbs and they perform each step with precision but with little understanding of torso-led movement, or of rhythmic emphasis.

Bennett (1998, 207) also notices the discrepancy between today's training and that used earlier, commenting that 'the contemporary form appears to place much emphasis on the shape of the body in each of its positions'. Comparing an earlier (1963) and later version (1994) of a short section of the Florestan *pas de trois* (Ashton, 1946) from Act III of *The Sleeping Beauty* (Petipa, 1890) he points out the change in speed, \(^{19}\)

\(^{19}\) To accommodate the large Covent Garden stage, Ashton occasionally stressed body design but, from analysis of the available movement, and, with the notable exception of the Queen of the Air variation in *Homage to the Queen* (1952), he does not appear to have made phrases which travel down long straight paths.
which is considerably slower in the later performance.

Underpinning the Vaganova system is the notion of ‘correct form’ (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995, 22) and execution. By ‘correct form’ Kostrovitskaya means the placing of the limbs in position as dictated by that version of the balletic code. These positions depend on retaining a straight torso and upper back. The approach in this system is for each codified movement to be performed according to Vaganova’s interpretation of the code and it does not appear to allow for different emphases when the steps are combined. Ashton’s dance movement is dependent on light and shade and he frequently compresses one movement in order to highlight another. Consequently, a system which gives priority to the physical definition of each balletic step can be problematic for dancers required to perform Ashton’s dance movement.

Chris Challis (1999, 147) argues that understanding the choreographed dance movement, in ballet and other dance genres, involves not just learning the steps but learning to understand a way of moving. Thus, when the training changes, the whole approach to movement is also altered. The training background of Ashton’s dancers was considerably different from that used today and the concept of movement central to those systems is also a characteristic feature of his dance movement style.

2.3 The Influence of Choreographers and Performers

2.3.1 Bronislava Nijinska

Ashton’s dance movement style bears other hallmarks of his dance heritage and, as the following paragraphs indicate, traces of both the movement theories and the
dance movement style of Nijinska’s choreography can be found in his dances. He had seen her works with the Ballets Russes during the mid 1920s, but only began working with her when he joined Ida Rubinstein’s company in 1928. During this time, she choreographed seven ballets in which Ashton danced, mainly in the corps de ballet but also as part of a male quartet. Initially appearing in only three of these, Les Noces de Psyché et de l’Amour, La Bien-aimée and Boléro, he later performed in the others Le Baiser de la fée, Nocturne, La Princess Cygne and La Valse (1929, all the other works were made in 1928) (these titles appear in this form of upper and lower cases in Vaughan, 1977, 27). In the summer of 1928 writing to Marie Rambert, he mentions Nijinska’s choreography and classes, commenting that her ‘knowledge and vitality [are] something quite super-human and inspiring’ (cited in Pritchard, in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 107). In later years, he was conscious of just how much he had learned from Nijinska, not only from watching her choreograph but also from taking her classes which, he claimed, were more like a choreography lesson (cited in Pritchard, in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 104). She had, Ashton insists, a ‘wonderful sense of movement which I inherited from her’ (cited in Wohlfart, 1996, 25).

Nijinska had spent some years working first as a dancer with the Ballets Russes and later as a choreographer. She claims to have been influenced by Nijinsky’s approach to choreography and that she could understand what he was trying to achieve simply by observing the movements and the images he created (Nijinska, 1992, 466). She began her own choreographic career in 1919, creating dances for her École de Mouvement and it was during this period that she devised her own theory of dance which is found in her essay On Movement and the School of Movement (Van Norman Baer, 1986, 85-87).
In this treatise, she focuses on three areas: first, the traditional teaching of ballet, secondly, the development of a new theory of movement and, thirdly, the importance of the relationship between choreography and training. Ahead of her time in her approach to gender, she is critical of the separation of male and female training and of the lack of development in the approach to classroom training. She argues that, even in the Ballets Russes, the source of much dance innovation, the classroom training of Cecchetti had not altered to meet the demands of modern choreography. To combat this problem, she adapted the ballet class for her own school, making it a more continuous event and encouraged movement rather than position as the main focus.

Nijinsky's movement constituted an ideal for her and her aim was to develop a similar effect in both her students' movement and her own choreography. Describing his jump, she claims that during the course of a single leap several transitions and dynamic nuances were involved (1986, 86). Her account suggests that the jump was not a flowing direct movement but appeared to hover momentarily. This point is confirmed by Beaumont (1950) who observed that Nijinsky had the ability to jump in a whole manner of ways, including the attainment of a 'momentary suspension in mid air' (50). It is not possible to state whether Nijinsky's abilities as a dancer were due to his training, or to his own exploration of movement but Nijinska suggests that it is the choreographer who, ultimately, creates the dancer's style. She argues that in the past, choreographic innovations informed and were absorbed into the danse d'école (87) and that consequently, the dancer's training was moulded by this and adapted accordingly. Her criticism of the contemporary training (1920s and earlier) is that it no longer accommodated innovation and thus lacked relevance to contemporary choreography.

An analysis of a brief phrase of dance movement from Les Biches (1924) serves
to illustrate her approach to movement. The ballet opens with a group dance in which twelve women are divided into groups of three, four and five respectively. As the curtain rises, a single dancer performs two parallel phrases followed by two more. The first parallel phrase comprises:

♦ a series of turns across the front of the stage, which ends with a chassé to arabesque temps levé, repeated. The second is composed of a chassé to arabesque temps levé to croisé, followed by chassé to arabesque temps levé to the side and repeated with the other foot (Video example 6).

The impetus for the chassé, however, comes not from the gesturing leg but from the shoulder, which is thrust forwards and upwards, creating a series of different body transitions in the single jump. Nijinska also employs idiosyncratic arm movements and positions, which prevent the limbs from giving the major momentum to the movement. Accordingly, the dancer has to generate more movement from both the torso and centre of the back. For instance, for most of the dance, the hands of the female corps de ballet are arranged decorously on the left shoulder:

♦ the right shoulder is thrust forward, the elbow bent and the hand rests on the left shoulder where it meets the left hand; the left elbow is at a gentle right angle to the body and the fingers are folded, knuckle to knuckle, in a relaxed clench with bent wrist. The head is turned and looks over the right shoulder.

At other times, the women use a fixed, circular position in fifth, or they simply bend
the elbow, resting the hand on the shoulder, allowing the shoulder to lead. By fixing the arms in positions, Nijinska forces the dancer to use other body parts. This creates a greater degree of activity in the torso, contributing to the perception of continuous movement. Ashton also fixes the arms in a similar way, for example in Le Baiser de La Fée (1935), as described in Chapter V, and by introducing props such as the ribbon in Lise’s first solo variation in Act I of La Fille mal gardée (1960) (see Chapter III, 3.5.2).

Equally apparent, in the phrase clusters found in the dance for the two ‘Girls in Grey’ in Les Biches (1924), is her desire for ‘the action of movement [to] be continuous’ (1986, 85). Throughout the long first section of the dance, there are no pauses in between the phrases. This blends them into a continuous thread, although changes of step sequence denote the presence of multiple phrases. The dancers have to generate the momentum from the shoulders and upper back because of the way in which they are positioned: one is behind the other, with the woman in front placed slightly to the right of the other. The arms of the front dancer are held loosely, close to the body, whilst the other dancer places her right arm on the shoulder of the dancer in front.

Nijinska’s dance movement is different from much of today’s teaching, where priority is given to the accomplishment of the codified movement and its final position. In her work, the shoulders and upper back play a much greater role and, in the lower body, movements are given force from the pelvis. Her attitude to space is also different. According to the instructions given in the ballet syllabuses, the limbs move directly into positions, whereas, in much of Nijinska’s movement the focus is more flexible, with spatial progressions forming curved or zig-zag lines. The arms too are treated not as separate entities but as part of the torso and are less frequently used simply to frame or elongate it. The arms, in Les Biches, tend to move centrally, advancing close to and up
and down the body, as opposed to peripherally. The effect of this is to focus attention on the upper body and away from the feet and legs. The positions are also changed from the mainly symmetrical poses of ballet to curved more convoluted shapes, which involve twisting from the torso.

An example from the dance movement in Birthday Offering (1956) demonstrates similar traits to those just described. The work, for fourteen soloists, was made to celebrate twenty-five years of the Sadler's Wells Ballet. Amongst other things it has seven variations for the women. The phrase described here comes from the variation choreographed for Margot Fonteyn. It comprises:

♦ a demi-contretemps, followed by a posé backwards with a petit battement and ends with a relevé into a croisé pose in fifth with low, bell shaped arms (this material was not of a good enough quality to provide a video example).

The right shoulder leads the demi-contretemps forward but is quickly retracted, allowing the left to replace it as the dancer takes the posé petit battement backwards. This gives the phrase momentum. By moving towards and immediately away from the arrival point, the movement appears light and dazzling, focusing attention on the multi-faceted aspects of the body. There is little time in the action for clear positions to be shown, and what is perceived is activity, created by the rapid impulse at the start of the movement, followed in quick succession by the fixed pose at the end of the phrase.

Nijinska observed, when watching Nijinsky warm-up, that he concentrated almost entirely on the action itself, giving little attention to the achievement of clean positions of the feet at the end of an exercise (Nijinska, 1992, 401). In much of the
dance movement in Les Biches, the speed of the phrase allows little time for accurate positions during its execution. Ashton, in some of his work, shares this approach and the examination of his phrases (Chapter IV) demonstrates his tendency to give priority to positions at the end of a phrase rather than at the end of steps.

2.3.2 Anna Pavlova

For Ashton, Pavlova was his ideal dancer. She was his main point of reference when working with dancers and much of his dance movement contains tributes to her. Kavanagh’s biography of Ashton (1996a, 1-4) opens with a description of her dancing and there are thirty-one other references to her in the book. Vaughan (1977) too devotes much space to the influence she had on Ashton and includes an equally substantial number of references. Yet, according to Cyril Beaumont (1945b), she made no attempt to extend the ‘vocabulary’ of dance, rarely created new choreography and as Ashton himself observed, she ‘just danced to teashop music’ (cited in Wohlfart, 1996, 30). If this is the case, it was not what she did but how she did it that inspired Ashton. Thus an analysis of her training is not really relevant, even if it were possible, since it was not her technical abilities that Ashton admired (Doob, 1978, 16). As a tribute to her he included a step (now known as the ‘Fred step’) from her Gavotte Pavlova (Clustine, 1913) in nearly every ballet he created and it was often remarked that every role Ashton made was, in a sense, for her (Vaughan, 1977, p. 9). Fonteyn too believed this and felt that she could never fulfill Ashton’s demands for a more Pavlova-like performance; although an examination of her movement suggests that she had some understanding of Pavlova’s dance style. The photographs included in Money (1973, 238-239) and Fonteyn’s own performance in Nocturne (Ashton, 1936, in Ashton Gala, 1970) suggest
similarities between Fonteyn’s use of the arms and that of Pavlova in the film version of *The Dying Swan* (Fokine, 1905/7). For instance, like Pavlova, Fonteyn extends the arms from the centre of her back and the movement seems to be carried sequentially through to the wrists, allowing the hands to appear relaxed and free from strain.

Contemporary criticism by the American H. T. P. (Henry Taylor Parker, Holmes, 1982, 30) describes the Russians in Pavlova’s troupe as dancers who moved not merely with their legs but with their whole bodies. More importantly, despite acknowledging Pavlova’s plasticity he also notes her capacity for quick, precise movement, observing that her dancing was like ‘a swift-shot arrow’ (1982, 32). Beaumont supports these observations and claims that she danced ‘with her whole body, from the crown of her head to the tip of her toe’ (1945, 20). Nijinska is equally praising of Pavlova’s energy and vitality, describing her dancing as an embodiment of the ‘true nature of movement’ (in Van Norman Baer, 1986, 86).

For Ashton (Kavanagh, 1996a, 1) she was ‘the greatest theatrical genius he had ever seen’ and despite having what he described as a poor technique (Kavanagh, 1996a, 1), she gave the impression of being significantly more accomplished than she was. These qualities are not easily analysed from film but certain features do emerge repeatedly and it is these which Ashton seems instinctively to have admired and incorporated into his dance movement style.

The analysis of the material on film demonstrates that Pavlova is rarely still, that her movements are not easily separated into codified movements and that the dances appear to be made from a continuous thread of movement. Although this latter feature is caused by a number of factors, in general, it is made apparent through her attitude to the Effort factors. Her movements start with an impulse from the centre of the body and
radiate outwards, only just achieving a position. As a result, their focus is less goal-orientated, displaying a more indulgent attitude to the space around the body. Unlike performances today, where the movement is frequently arrested by the pose or position, Pavlova’s movement does not stop with the end of the limb but creates a series of spatial projections. For example, in *The Dying Swan* (1905/7), which comprises mainly *bouffées* and a kneeling *port de bras*, there is a sense that the movement flows from the *bouffées* into the body, exits through the fingertips and out into the space. When she throws herself to her knees, the *port de bras* is generated from the middle of her body and not, as can sometimes be the case, from the arms themselves.

Another example is found in the solo described on the video as *Night after Music* (no further information available). It comprises *bouffées*, running, a distinctive pose and several *grands jetés en tournant* ending on the knee. Of particular significance are the *grands jetés en tournant* in which the impetus for the movement is generated from the centre of the body into a projection, which seems to pierce the ground as it ends in a backwards/sideways bend on the knee. The violence of the flow through the body creates an impression of complete abandonment. There is little evidence in her dancing of the control and restraint which is usually associated with ballet. Her limbs are more abandoned than placed and her movement displays characteristics of risk taking, which, paradoxically, has similarities with Alexander Grant’s dancing (see Chapter V). This ability to resist control is a dominant feature of her dancing and contrasts with today’s values. For example, for today’s dancers in The Royal Ballet both control and precision are major aspects of their dancing.

The vitality, incandescence and luminosity that are so often attributed to Pavlova (Beaumont, 1945b, 21), are apparent in some of her lighter, faster variations. In
Invitation to the Dance (Zaylich, 1913), the *bourrées*, which dominate the dance, are executed with rapid, flowing actions that propel her in several directions creating a flame-like sensation of light, darting movement. According to Beaumont (1945b, 18) and de Valois, Pavlova had ‘superb’ feet ‘with highly arched insteps, delicately wrought as a cast-iron piece of tracery’ (cited in Sorley Walker, 1987, 51). Ashton was also enthralled by her feet. Her ability to show them to advantage and to move with speed on *pontte* is evident in the recorded variations. Ashton frequently referred to them when working with dancers (Vaughan 1977, Seymour, 1985) and introduces fleeting, rapid *bourrées* and movements which highlight the feet whenever possible (see Chapter V, 5.3.3 and 5.3.4).

Ashton’s dislike of ‘stiff’ dancers and his demands for more bending (Jordan and Grau, 1996, 176) are, in part, attributed to his infatuation with Pavlova. He associated stiffness with an inability to create fluidity of movement and an absence of movement in the shoulders. In the investigation of Pavlova’s dancing it appears that her fluidity did not derive so much from bending as from a facility to initiate movement which seemed to circulate through the whole body and not merely from the arms and legs. In other words, she demonstrated a sense of total commitment to movement, as opposed to steps, but she achieved this by sacrificing her technique. As Ashton observed:

> she was a rule unto herself; she didn’t bother about turning out or any of those things and she had...wonderful nobility of stance...that I haven’t seen equalled in anybody’.

> cited in Doob, 1978, 16

Ashton was equally unconcerned about ‘correct’ codified movement and performance of his dance movement depends on accepting his approach: that expressiveness should
take precedence over technical achievement. As he put it 'you must use your technique in order to help you with your feelings, not to smother them' (cited in Wohlfart, 1996, 29). From the accounts of Pavlova's dancing, it seems that she subordinated her technique to the expressive elements of the movement, but this may also have arisen as a necessity to mask poor aspects of her technique.

It is apparent, from the foregoing analysis, that Ashton's dance movement pays tribute to Pavlova in several ways by introducing the following features: actions of the arms which originate in the centre of the back, sequences which articulate the feet, rapid, flowing actions and references to the steps she most frequently employed. These are considered in Chapters III, IV and V.

2.3.3 Tamara Karsavina

Descriptions of Karsavina's dancing are limited but it appears that as far as Ashton was concerned, it was primarily her advice and coaching that most influenced and inspired him. The available written material gives priority to her beautiful eyes and acting ability and suggests that she had an accomplished technique. Other sources include her own articles on technique (1920, 1956, 1962 and 1964) and her autobiography Theatre Street (1930/1981) but none gives sufficient detail to inform a study of her training. While her attitude to dance can to some extent be gleaned from these articles, her effect on Ashton is most strongly revealed in his own comments. He describes how encouraging and generous she was when he first worked with her in 1930 and how he and the other Rambert dancers 'watched her every movement, admired her discipline, her exquisite manners, her humanity and her approach to the public.' (1945, 151). Above all, he praised her arm movements observing that they radiated throughout
the theatre (Vaughan, 1977, 59) and that she had 'a unique force of gesture and a marvellous use of eyes' (Doob, 1978, 16).

Ashton danced with Karsavina in *Les Sylphides* (Fokine, 1909) and, as well as choreographing for her (*Mercury*, 1931), he was also chosen by her to accompany her in her own choreography *Valse Fantaisie* (Karsavina, 1931). May (1999), who danced the waltz in *Les Sylphides* with Ashton, remembers how he encouraged her to imitate Karsavina, forcing her to balance without his support; the only assistance he gave was to take the tip of her fingers very lightly to create the appearance of weightlessness.

Of the three influences discussed in this section, Karsavina’s is the most difficult to determine but beyond her use of eyes it is possible that some of his *port de bras* (see Chapter III), many of his more gestural (this term is discussed in Chapter III) arm movements and the ways in which he coached dancers’ arm and hand movements were inspired by her.

2.4 **Stage Dancing of the 1930s**

2.4.1 **Ashton’s Contribution to the Commercial Theatre**

Both Vaughan (1977) and Kavanagh (1996a) make substantial references to Ashton’s work in the commercial theatre during the 1930s. Yet, it is sometimes forgotten just how much work he did for the commercial theatre and the effect of this on his dance movement style can sometimes be glossed over. Ashton choreographed for nineteen revues and musical shows during the 1930s. Many of the numbers he did in these were short ballets often danced by, what is described in the programme as, ‘C. B. Cochran’s girls’ in conjunction with Ashton himself and dancers from the Rambert
company. However, he also choreographed dances, known then as ‘stage dancing’, in works like *Magic Nights* (1932), which included a rumba and tango, in *Nursery Murmurs* (1933) *Jill Darling* (1934) *Round about Regent Street* (1935) and *Home and Beauty* (1936).

2.4.2. **The Influence of Stage Dancing of the 1930s**

The lack of any concrete evidence that the ‘stage dancing’ of the 1930s in general affected Ashton’s dance movement makes its influence difficult to ascertain. Leslie Edwards (Chapman and Morris, 1997, video) claims that the chorus exit step at the end of the *Foxtrot* (1940) from *Façade* (1931) is taken from ‘stage dancing’ of the era. In addition to this, in the same dance, when the dancers move in a semi-circle the high, backward kick, in which the dancers are supposed to hit the back of their head, was also inspired by the high kicks of the chorus line.

Beyond these more obvious influences, it could also be suggested that the relaxed upper body, apparent in many performances of ballet dancers from that era, is also derived from stage dancing. For example, when rehearsing the Bride’s variation from *Le Baiser de la fée* 20 (1935), Fonteyn demands a relaxed appearance from the dancer insisting that the dance ‘mustn’t (appear to) be hard work’ (Private video, Foy, 1988). She suggests that the dance should be perceived as relaxed with attention deflected from the technical elements.

The easy appearance of Ashton’s dance movement style is not readily achieved by dancers whose training gives priority to technical accuracy. After working with

20 This and other French titles are written according to the programmes of The Royal Ballet at The Royal Opera House Covent Garden
Natalia Makarova (1987) on *Apparitions* (Ashton, 1936), May (1999) observed that the Russian dancer found it impossible to adapt to the lilting rhythms and body movement of a sequence of turning backbends. These are characterised by a series of lunges into fourth position in conjunction with a low, unrestrained backbend. According to May (1999), Fonteyn (1987) also tried to rehearse her, but later commented that Makarova tried too hard, that she had been unable to allow her upper body to relax and that she had insisted on doing the soft, turning backbends, originally on *demi-pointe*, on pointe. As a result, the movements developed a similarity with the codified ballet steps and the easy, unrestrained appearance of the upper body disappeared. Makarova was willing neither to ground the weight lower in the pelvis nor to allow the upper body to be led from the torso.

Apart from the more general ‘stage dancing’, there is more tangible evidence of a link with Buddy Bradley (1908-1972), whom Ashton met and worked with during the 1930s.

2.4.3 The Influence of Buddy Bradley

Bradley, a black American dancer and choreographer arrived in London in 1930 to choreograph the dances for *Evergreen* (Rodgers & Hart), which was later made into a film in 1934 (Saville). The success of this show led Bradley to choreograph the 1931 Cochran revue with George Balanchine. According to Constance Valis Hill (1992), Bradley and Balanchine shared the same dancers, with Bradley making twenty nine of the numbers and Balanchine two; a pattern which continued when Ashton began working for Cochran in 1932. The jazz craze had already captivated Paris in the 1920s with many European choreographers [Leonide Massine (*Crescendo*, 1925), Bronislava Nijinska
(Jazz, 1925) and Jean Borlin (La Création du Monde, 1923, amongst others) creating jazz ballets. But as Valis Hill (1992, 78) points out, the jazz elements were interpreted through non-American eyes and showed little understanding of real ‘American vernacular dance’.

Valis Hill claims that it was Bradley who transplanted ‘American vernacular dance’ to the London stage (1992, 77). This she describes as the dance created in Uptown New York by African-American tap dancers who invented intricate movements with complicated rhythms. This dancing differed significantly from the mainly white, often simpler, steps of the Broadway musicals of the Twenties. Bradley’s particular talent was for arranging new and different ‘foot-tailored’ routines, often for star performers (Valis Hill, 1992). In London, the success of his work on Evergreen led to other commissions, over thirty musicals during the 1930s and in addition, Bradley opened a school which kept him teaching in London until 1968.

He first worked with Ashton in Magic Nights (1932). For this revue, Ashton choreographed a ballet, An 1805 Impression, for Pearl Argyle and a tango and rumba for Eve, the contortionist, and Bradley also choreographed the final tap dance number in which Ashton danced. Partly as a result of this, Ashton became interested both in Bradley’s work and in working with him and later that year invited him to collaborate on a dance for the Camargo Society: High Yellow (1932), with music by the English jazz composer Spike Hughes. According to Vaughan (1977, 78), most of the movement was choreographed by Bradley with Ashton probably shaping the piece as a whole. They worked together on four other works: Ballyhoo (Walker & Nesbit, 1933), After Dark (Jeans, 1933), The Flying Trapeze (Furber and Benatzky, 1935) and Follow the Sun (Cochran, 1935). Aspects of Bradley’s form of jazz dancing intrigued Ashton and there
are certain aspects of Ashton’s dance movement which hint at Bradley’s influence.

Evergreen (1934), with a cast led by Jessie Matthews, is the only available film of Bradley’s dance movement. There are four major dance numbers which include tap, a Soft Shoe routine for Matthews and other popular dances, such as the Edwardian two step, the polka and the tango. Valis Hill (1992) points out that in the Soft Shoe number, Bradley creates polyrhythmic effects, with the head shoulders and feet moving to different rhythms. Another characteristic of the dance movement is the plastic, fluid use of the torso which moves in undulating waves, while the feet adopt a faster, sharper rhythm. An example, performed by a chorus of women, is found in the number Over My Shoulder. There, the legs perform a lilting step moving backwards and forwards. The body doubles horizontally forward on the step back and tilts back on the forward step with a sense of the weight being grounded in the pelvis. The upper body flows while the stepping movements are more abrupt and focused. Both of these features, the weighted, undulating upper body movement and the use of polyrhythms in the body, occur in Ashton’s dance movement. Evidence for the former is found in several dance phrases but in particular in one of Fonteyn’s dances in the ballroom scene in Apparitions (1936) and the latter also occurs, for example, in the first phrase of Vera’s variation in A Month in the Country (1976) (see Chapter III, 3.4.1.3).

Other less tangible elements can also be traced to Bradley’s dance movement. In an earlier number in Evergreen (1934), Matthews performs a movement in which the body tilts backwards from the pelvis releasing the front leg across the body (croisé). The weight again is grounded in the pelvis and the gesturing leg loses itself in the space. The emphasis on low, grounded weight occurs in several works but most specifically in La Valse (1958) where the group movement depends specifically on a similar action to that
of Matthews and a heavily weighted lower body.

Ashton also borrows some of this movement for his Ugly Sister variation in Act II of Cinderella (1948). For instance, in Evergreen, Matthews performs a high kick to the side of the body in which the torso bends slightly at the waist and the shoulders are raised, to accentuate and allow for the highest possible kick. Ashton imitates this several times with the characteristic shoulder and torso movement. The movement appears comic because his leg hardly reaches waist height, but has the characteristic bodily exertion. In another number, Over My Shoulder from Evergreen, the chorus perform low relaxed kicks forward and back and these also find their way into the same Cinderella (1948) variation. According to Vaughan (1977, 100) Ashton employed the pelvis coiling, snake-hips movement, derived from Earl Tucker and used by Bradley in Evergreen, in Four Saints in Three Acts (Thomson, Stein, 1934) and he believes that Walter Gore’s dance movement in Les Masques (1933) was also affected by Ashton’s work with Bradley. Edwards (Chapman and Morris, 1997) too points out the use of the snake-hips in the Foxtrot from Façade (1931/1940). (1977, 86). However, snake hips are also found in pieces which have no obvious jazz influence. For instance, in Scene 3 of Daphnis and Chloe (1951): from a fifth position on pointe, Chloe makes a plié on pointe and performs the snake hip movement at the same time.

Bradley’s characteristic polyrhythmic body movement is apparent in much of Ashton’s dance movement though it is not entirely clear whether these were absorbed from Bradley, or arose through Ashton’s own response to the jazz music of the time (Wohlfahrt, 1996, 28). It is most likely to be a combination of both and, as Valis Hill points out (1992, 79), Bradley’s dance movement was also a response to the jazz music. The loose plasticity of the upper body, a centring of the weight in the pelvis area, and the
relaxed approach to movement, all of which are evident in Ashton’s dance movement, were probably directly influenced by Bradley and by ‘stage dancing’ of the era.

2.5 Conclusion: Multiple Influences

Ashton’s heritage provides a basis for exploring Ashton’s dance movement style. As anticipated in Chapter I, the analysis in this chapter confirms that all training systems are informed by different values and practices which inevitably affect the dancers’ approach to the codified movement. A significant difference between the de Valois and Cecchetti systems and that of Vaganova is the way in which the various movements are weighted: in the former systems, the small rhythmic movements are given equal status with the larger movements of locomotion, but in Vaganova’s, priority is given to grand allegro and the smaller movements are, in general, accorded the subsidiary status of linking steps. On the whole, the enchaînements in Cecchetti and the de Valois’ system are short, comprising little more than four different steps, which demand simultaneous actions of limbs, torso and head as well as multi-directional floor patterns. Consequently, the dancers trained in these systems were more familiar with short intricate phrases of movement, which required quick thinking and the ability to make rapid changes of direction, than with long continuous phrases.

Examination of the other components of Ashton’s heritage reveal an emphasis on motion as opposed to position, achieved through torso initiated movement and through the development of phrases in which the transitions between steps are fluid and often concealed. Mobility is also evident in the qualities of the dancers he admired and this seems to have generated an ability to play with the dynamic aspects of a movement. Other elements, such as the development of polyrhythms in the whole body and the
relaxed casual appearance of the upper body are features found in the ‘stage dancing’ of the 1930s. These qualities are also seemingly present in performances of the ballet movement of the era, including that of Ashton himself. The ways in which these qualities link with Ashton’s dance movement style are more tenuous, although there is some evidence of their presence.

Ashton’s dance movement style was formed out of this background though it was ultimately moulded and shaped by him. The effect of these influences can be deciphered in the style which comprises combinations of these features. These affect the steps and sequences of movement in various different ways, making them significantly different from the codified movements, although, as noted, some of the conventions and values of classroom practice are evident in the style. Chapters III and IV investigate Ashton’s steps and phrases and will continue to consider the effect of this heritage on them. These chapters concentrate on those aspects which are relevant to performances of his dances and which, if recognised, could act as a basis for interpreting his dance movement, despite changes in dancers’ training.
Chapter Three

Ashton’s use of Ballet’s Codified Movements

3.0 Introduction

The codified movement forms the basis of both ballet choreography and the ballet class, but the identifying features of each technical term are dependent on the ways in which they are interpreted within a particular training system. Moreover, in choreography, it is changed by the choreographer and, as a result, its function, its aim and its appearance are altered and this has implications for the performance of the movement.

The following chapter focuses on Ashton’s treatment of codified movements. Using the morphological methodology established in Chapter I, the distinctive ways in which Ashton uses the codified movements are identified. This involves comparing his ‘steps’ (this term is discussed below) with the codified movements and discussing the ways in which his other dance influences may have contributed to them. In order to distinguish his ‘steps’ from the codified version pedagogic text books are used, but there are discrepancies amongst the training methods: both the names and interpretation of the codified movements, and even their numbering of arm positions and arabesques (Glasstone, 1999a and b, 549-550 and 649) are different. Because of these variations, the version of the movement classified by Cecchetti21 (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1922/66 and Craske and Beaumont, 1946) is taken as a point of reference, but for the sake of accuracy, other methods and further discussions of the movement from Richard

21 The reasons for this as the primary choice are given on page 117.
Glasstone\textsuperscript{22}, a renowned contemporary pedagogue and interpreter of the Cecchetti system, are also consulted.

The style model conceived in Chapter I is adopted for the ensuing analysis. This proposes that Ashton’s treatment of the codified movement is affected by his dance heritage and that style occurs because of the repetitive way in which a range of movements is consistently treated. The premise is that changes made to a codified movement are identified as stylistic hallmarks and that these changes can be shown to be analogous with changes made in other codified movements, thus establishing a recurring stylistic pattern. While consistent repetitions (of any movement) are usually also deemed to be an aspect of style, the concern here is to highlight those areas that are different from the codified movement because these are the ‘steps’ that are most at risk of being returned to their codified form.

The main sources for this chapter are videos of rehearsals and performances. These comprise film and video material from The Royal Ballet and BBC archives and some commercial videos. To clarify discrepancies between two performances of the same work, where possible, the Benesh notation scores are also consulted.

3.1 Terminology

3.1.1 The Ballet ‘Step’

For the sake of brevity, ‘step’ is sometimes used to replace the technical term. The word is found in many pedagogic manuals but does not appear in dictionaries of


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ballet's technical terms; there it is replaced by 'pas', the French word for step. 'Pas' is considered to have several meanings: a movement involving a transfer of weight, a dance for one or more persons or a group dance (Wilson, 1961, Beaumont, 1975, Koegler, 1977, Mara, 1987, Kersley, 1997 and Ryman, 1997 and 1998). The dance artist and pedagogue Carlo Blasis (1795-1878) who codified the technique of classical dance in Traité Elémentaire, Théorique et Pratique de l'Art de La Danse (1820), and The Code of Terpsichore (trans. 1830), however, uses the words 'step' and 'pas' differently. The pas, he maintains, describes 'the various manners of arranging one's steps in walking or leaping either as [the dancer] moves in front or turns around' (1830, 102); in other words, he uses it as a description of a dance sequence or dance phrase. The word 'step', he adopts for a codified movement such as 'entrechat, battement tendu etc' (59) or a newly invented movement (98). Pedagogues employ the word 'step' in a similar way, to stand for the codified movement.

However, because Ashton does not employ the codified movement in any of the prescribed ways, the word 'step' is used here to describe his interpretation of the code and the term 'codified movement' is applied to the technical term. To avoid confusion between the word step meaning a transfer of weight as in walking and 'step' meaning an Ashton jeté, brisé, pirouette and other such terms, inverted commas are introduced around 'step' in this chapter and throughout the rest of the thesis to connote this specific concept of the Ashton-step. Bearing in mind that Ashton's jeté, brisé, pirouette are frequently not the same as the codified rendering of these movements, the technical terms are, nevertheless, used. They do have some elements in common and provide a useful,
shorthand description. As mentioned in Chapter I, both the term, ‘step’ and the codified movement, stand for all the movements of the body, including the head, arms and torso.

3.1.2 Rationale for the use of Specific Syllabuses as a Point of Reference

For a comparison between the codified movement and Ashton’s ‘steps’, Cecchetti’s approach and other methods, relevant to Ashton, are consulted. As noted in Chapter II, neither the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dance (AOD), nor the de Valois syllabus give prescriptive details for each of the codified movements, but a later Royal Academy of Dancing (RAD) publication Dictionary of Classical Ballet Terminology (Ryman, 1997) gives substantial information. Rhonda Ryman’s dictionary of Classical Ballet Terms: Cecchetti (1998) is also used because it deals with more codified movement than the manual (Craske and Beaumont, 1944) though that is also consulted. Ashton’s principal teacher, Marie Rambert, studied with both Cecchetti and Serafina Astafieva and her teaching was based on her understanding of Cecchetti’s method. It thus had some similarities with the method described in the manual. Reference is also made to School of Classical Dance (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995) because this method was used at The Royal Ballet School between 1984 and 1999 and, as mentioned in Chapter II, the conventions of that style are affecting today’s interpretation of both the codified movements and Ashton’s dance movement style.

Whilst the majority of the text books adopt a 4/4 time signature for each movement, they give no indication of dynamics or tempi; thus the instructions indicate very little about the rhythmical variations within the movements themselves or their recommended speeds. As a result, the dynamics are open to interpretation (Bennett, 1998). Another element which affects the execution of a codified movement is the context in which it is placed in an enchaînement. The two dictionaries (1997 and 1998)
give no examples of *enchaînements* and the instructions in the other texts are too rudimentary to discern the changes which occur when the movement is placed in different contexts. Bearing in mind these concerns, the texts are, nevertheless, useful as a basis from which to examine Ashton’s ‘steps’.

3.1.3 The Codified Movements: Principles which Govern their Analysis

As indicated in Chapter I, the codified movements are treated conceptually. In other words, the meaning of a technical term is not taken for granted and, despite being described as a single movement, it is recognised here that it involves the movement of several body parts. This approach draws attention to the differences amongst the various syllabuses and demonstrates that even slight changes significantly alter the movement.

Both the codified movement and Ashton’s ‘steps’ are analysed by reference to several factors: the intention (the aim in a *développé* is to reach a ‘horizontal [position] ... in the lateral plane of the body’, Ryman, 1998, 49), the rhythm, the dynamic and the spatial and shaping elements of the movement.

Little in-depth analysis has been carried out on the structure of the codified movement but the work of Jacqueline Challet-Haas (1976) provides a starting point. Using Laban’s Kinetography, she breaks down the codified movements to identify their structure. She suggests that most movements comprise two components: the transference of weight from one or two legs and the leg gestures performed successively or simultaneously. She argues that it is because of the ways in which spatial content, rhythmic components and the positioning of accents are organised that the codified movements retain their individuality.

Challet-Haas’ research (1976) indicates that the accents of a movement can be
identified by examining the units peculiar to each step. These can be short or long, or a combination of both. For example, (80) a développé comprises two equally long units: the slow drawing up of the leg to a retiré position and the slow unfolding of the leg. Whereas, a pas de chat (80) has two equally short units: the simultaneous retiré and quick jump from one foot to the other and the quick retiré and closure of the second foot (the Russian pas de chat is different, Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1997, 325). The relative length of the units constitutes the rhythmical pattern in a codified movement.

Apart from the features identified by Challet-Haas, other elements affect the rhythm of a codified movement, not least the way in which it is generated. For instance, the creation of an impulse at the start, or, in contrast, an impact at the end crucially affects the rhythm. The syllabuses give no indication of these subtle dynamic nuances and it has to be assumed that such detail is likely to come from the teacher. These are, nevertheless, important elements and an examination of Pavlova’s movement (see Chapter II) indicated that she tended to create an impulse at the start of the movement, allowing the movement to drift into the space, only just reaching a position at the end. The effect of this is to reduce the amount of time left for perceiving the position and create more emphasis on the movement itself.

3.2. The Choice of ‘Steps’ Representing Style

The notion that style in ballet depends on a choreographer’s idiosyncratic use of the codified movements was posited in Chapter I (see Topaz, 1988, 3). Thus, only those movements which are different from their codified version, across a range of systems, are discussed here. It is not possible to analyse all of these ‘steps’, but use of the Hofstadter (1997) model (see Chapter I) makes it unnecessary and only a small selection
of ‘steps’ is needed to make the point. According to Hofstadter (1997) style is revealed by examining the changes made to a specific system. By deconstructing a single letter, it is possible to discover what change has been made and he found that similar changes are made to the other letters in the system. Equally, with Ashton, it is apparent that alterations made to one codified movement are similar to alterations made to another. Thus it is the treatment (changes) of the movement which is believed to constitute the style. To demonstrate this stylistic feature a small group of ‘steps’ are chosen but others also manifest similar changes. From an examination of the various works, it is also apparent that Ashton used an abundance of *arabesques* and *attitudes* and other similar body designs and some of these are referred to in the section on the *port de bras*. Clearly it is not possible to document all of these and only those changes which most frequently recur are discussed.

A study of the available works reveals that although Ashton employed an extensive range of ‘steps’, there is a small group of four which return, with variations in form, in almost all of his dances for the solo body. Two of these, the *pas de chat* and *pas de bourrée*, make up part of the phrase, found in almost every Ashton ballet, known as the ‘Fred step’. It is described by David Vaughan as: *posé en arabesque, coupé dessous*, small *développé à la seconde, pas de bourrée dessous, pas de chat* (1977, 9). The third ‘step’ is the *ballonné* (but see 3.3.3 for a further discussion of this) and the fourth the *rond de jambe à terre*.

Henrietta Bannerman (1998, 51) uses the term ‘signature motif’ to describe the presence of frequently recurring motifs in Martha Graham’s (1894-1991) work. Because the four ‘steps’ chosen for analysis appear so habitually, in different guises, in Ashton’s dance movement, a similar term *signature ‘step’* is adopted here. The expression is also
used by Michael Somes (1961, 54) who describes the ‘Fred step’ as a ‘signature step’. A fifth ‘step’, the *petit battement battu devant* (also called *battements serrés*, Kersley, 1997a, 40 and Mara, 1987, 20), can also be found in the majority of Ashton’s dances, but it tends to be presented in its codified form. There are variations in its description across the syllabuses and Ashton’s use of it comes closest to that described in Ryman (1997, 57), although no arms are given in that description. It is significant because it recurs so frequently and not because of any specific treatment. Consequently, it is not dealt with in this chapter but is highlighted here because it is an unusual ‘step’ to find recurring so frequently.

The *pas de chat* (Italian), *pas de bourrée*, *ballonné* and *rond de jambe à terre* are chosen not only because of the frequency of their appearance, but also because their recurring presence demonstrates Ashton’s preoccupation with the less complex *petit allegro* movements. It is also apparent that he found them susceptible to alteration. They can be simplified for use with more complex upper body actions, or made more complex by an increase in speed or unexpected coupling with another ‘step’. Ashton employs these ‘steps’ in a number of different ways. For instance, in common with the *pas de chat*, he uses the *pas de bourrée*, the *ballonné* and *rond de jambe à terre* as travelling steps, and to arrest the flow in a phrase. He also changes their function either making them the dominant ‘step’ in the phrase, or, giving them qualities not traditionally attributed to them. Ashton’s specific use of both the arms and torso are examined separately in 3.5, although they are not excluded in the analysis of the ‘steps’.

As mentioned in Chapter II, equally pertinent to the choice of ‘steps’ is Ashton’s habit of creating movement out of the characteristics and aptitudes of the dancers with whom he most frequently worked. This practice gives rise to a proliferation of certain
types of ‘steps’. The frequency with which these ‘steps’ recur and the ways in which Ashton used the particular dancers’ abilities, however, is the subject of Chapter V.

Although found in the majority of the extant works, the chosen ‘steps’ are taken from specific works. These span most of his choreographic years and, as such, are believed to constitute a representative sample of his dance movement. In the sources reviewed, nine out of the fifteen works chosen have the original cast dancing, while five out of the other six are known to have been rehearsed by Ashton, probably in conjunction with Michael Somes. No recording of Les Patineurs (1937) is available which is definitely known to have been rehearsed by Ashton, but the work is referred to because it demonstrates clearly some typical characteristics. The material from the Ashton Gala (1970) was rehearsed mainly by Michael Somes, though in some cases, the dancers who first danced the role were also present at the rehearsals.

3.3 Analysis of the Codified Movements

As anticipated, the examination makes reference to the text book descriptions of these movements but also analyses them structurally.

3.3.1 The Pas de chat

Cecchetti (Craske & Beaumont 1946, 40) indicates that the Italian pas de chat moves from one foot to the other foot, completed by the closure of the second foot. Structurally, it has two equally short units and is executed with both working legs bent and raised either at the cou de pied or higher. The aim is to create a jump with two movements, emphasising the leap and the closure. The body shape is compact with the arms correspondingly bent and curved, en troisième arabesque encroisée (Craske &
Beaumont 1946, 40), the head is bent and turned towards the direction of travel and the torso is turned and inclined also in the direction of travel. Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, 324) describe the Italian *pas de chat* as a movement that imitates the leap of a cat and thus is light and buoyant. Their description does not mention torso turn nor give prescribed position for the arms. Ryman (1997, 54) stipulates that the torso is bent and that the legs should be lifted to retiré height for the RAD.

3.3.2 *The Pas de bourrée*

This movement is presented as a linking movement used to travel in any direction. Its chief characteristic is the three changes of weight and it can be done with the feet picked up to ankle height (*marché* or *piqué*) or with a stepping movement; in either case, it is described as a continuous movement (Ryman, 1997,50), although this does not necessarily mean sustained. Both Richard Glasstone (1994b, 279) and Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, 167) claim that it is a step (meaning the codified movement) which gives definition to other more important steps in the *enchaînement*. Directions are given (in Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev) for the execution of twelve variations: these include *pas de bourrée* with and without changes of the feet, *dessus* and *dessous* and *en tournant*. Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995) advise that the movement be taught with the foot picked up to the ankle on each step and that the travelling version, used in allegro, should be performed with a stepping or running movement. They give no directions for the arms and recommend that the picked-up version be used only in adage, so that the flow of an *allegro enchaînement* is not disturbed. Glasstone (1994b) too advises that the *pas de bourrée* should be executed fluidly but that it should not be slowed down, as this disturbs the balance of the *enchaînement*. Cecchetti (Craske and
Beaumont, 1946, 39) indicates that it be performed with three clear changes of weight in fifth, second and fifth and with two short stresses and one long, which includes the closure to fifth. The variations amongst these approaches are of some significance since Kostrovitskaya & Pisarev make no mention of the stepping between fifth nor of the rhythmic emphasis. What all agree on is its secondary nature. In short, whether turning or travelling, the *pas de bourrée* comprises three short steps with, in the case of Cecchetti, the main accent at the end of the movement, and it typically functions as a link between two more important movements. The body design can vary depending on the type of *pas de bourrée* employed and little is prescribed in terms of spatial characteristics.

3.3.3 *The Ballonné*

This is a problematic term since it is also sometimes described as a *coupé fouetté raccourci sauté* (Ryman, 1998, 18) although that term does not appear either in the Cecchetti manual (Craske and Beaumont, 1946), or in Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995) and Ryman (1998, 38) admits that Cecchetti does not seem to have used it. Hence it is unlikely that Ashton employed that term. He tended to use the word *ballonné* for both the jumped and on pointe version, if he used the term at all. The classroom *ballonné simple* is a jumped step with two equally short actions ending on one foot, with the other bent on the *cou de pied*. The precise details of how the *ballonné* should be performed differ in several of the text books. Cecchetti (Craske and Beaumont, 1946, p.17) describes it as a movement from two feet, with one leg opening to second and landing with the working leg on the *cou de pied*, or, higher; Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, p.307) agree with Cecchetti, but add that after the first *ballonné* the jump is from
one foot to one foot. Glasstone (2000, 449) describes the movement needed to execute the ballonné as similar to a frappé sauté but observes that it should be taught using a temps levé as the basis; this approach to the movement gives the opening extension of the leg a stronger emphasis than that described in the other textbooks. The use of the arms also varies: Cecchetti (Craske and Beaumont, 1946) indicates that they move simultaneously from demi-seconde to fifth en bas, while Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev vary the arms according to the direction of the movement. Both textbooks advocate that one arm is almost always bent on landing. Ryman (1997, 1998) gives no directions for the arms. Apart from Glasstone (2000), the dynamic of the ‘step’ is not referred to by the other pedagogues and writers. However, the word ballonné is associated with ‘a large bounding movement’ (Mara, 1987, p.14) but it can also be performed with a coupé and step on to pointe, retaining its double action and ending in a similar way to the jumped version. When performed on pointe, it is described by the RAD (Ryman, 1997, 22) and new Cecchetti Syllabus (Ryman, 1998, 38) as a coupé fouetté raccourci which can also be sauté. The Russians (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995, 413-415), however, refer to the pointe version, as a coupé ballonné. There are thus considerable differences amongst the various systems, but since Ashton used the term ballonné for both the jumped and pointe versions, it is this term which is used here.

3.3.4 The Rond de jambe à terre

None of the textbooks considers the rond de jambe à terre (rond de jambe par terre in Russian manuals) to be a significant part of the centre practice, although it can be performed in the centre. In all the texts (Beaumont and Idzikowski, 1966, 71, Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995, 125, Ryman, 1998, 158), emphasis is placed on the
correct execution of the circling of the working leg which moves in an arc from fourth position in front to fourth behind or vice versa and on the flowing continuous quality of the movement. Cecchetti (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1966, 71) does conceive of it being performed as an exercise in the centre, but the others do not suggest this. It is a static movement, with only the working leg moving and its aim in training is to improve and strengthen the turn-out.

3.4 Ashton's 'Steps'

Ashton sometimes allowed a dancer to change the 'steps' in a minor way (Collier in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 170-182) and it is probable that, as long as the emphasis on qualitative and expressive concerns remained the same, the 'steps' per se were not fundamentally significant. For example, in The Dream (1964), during Titania's second entrance, she performs a series of travelling turns with the working leg extended forward. According to Antoinette Sibley when she performed the turn it was *en dedans*, but when performed by Merle Park it became an *en dehors* turn (cited in Dowell and Sibley, in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 154)\(^2\). Ashton allowed either version, but insisted on the extended leg and bend in the torso (Park, cited in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 178). From comments such as this, it appears that as long as his characteristic treatment of the movement was maintained, Ashton could accept the change.

Accordingly, in the following discussion, the 'steps' are categorised in relation to their treatment. After extensive analysis, carried out for this thesis, it was apparent

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\(^2\) There is a discrepancy between Park and Sibley's recollections of this turn, since Merle Park also claims to have done *en dedans* turns (cited in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 178). On the rehearsal video (Wood, 1964) Sibley performs *en dehors* turns.
that the treatment of the movements fell into two major areas. The first to be addressed here are the ways in which the rhythmic, dynamic and, sometimes, spatial elements are altered to arrest the flow of a phrase; the second focuses on the ‘step’s’ significance and demonstrates Ashton’s tendency either to elevate or reduce the importance of a ‘step’. The ‘steps’ are usually discussed in the context of the phrase in which they occur because they can be affected by the other ‘steps’ in the phrase and by their position in the phrase. Equally, the use of the arms can alter the ‘step’, and although the paragraphs in 3.5 deal specifically with arms, their effect on the ‘step’ is also addressed in the following discussion.

3.4.1 The ‘Step’ as Texture

Ashton frequently breaks the rules for executing the codified movements. One way in which he does this is by placing two ‘steps’ together in a way that alters the dynamics, preventing the dancer from executing it as a codified movement. This affects the flow of the phrase and creates texture. The word ‘texture’ is used to describe the disruption of continuity caused either by inserting the ‘step’ in an unconventional position, or, by adjusting the spatial and/or dynamic properties of the codified version.

3.4.1.1 The *Pas de chat*

The identifying features of the codified *pas de chat* were discussed above, but Ashton uses it in a variety of different ways. For instance, the *pas de chat* (Craske and Beaumont, 1946 and ISTD Diploma) is usually placed so that the movement following the *pas de chat* begins with the non weight-bearing foot. Ashton frequently ignores this convention.
In *Les Rendezvous* (1933), the female *pas de trois* dancer performs a short solo near the beginning of the work in which this occurs (video example 7)\(^{25}\). The *gargouillade* version of the *pas de chat* is used. This is similar to the *pas de chat* except that the starting leg performs a double *rond de jambe* before landing. The phrase comprises two *gargouillades* and a *pirouette*. The first is to the left, closing with the right foot in front and for the second, the right foot is immediately released to perform the *gargouillade* to the right. The codified version of both the *gargouillade* and *pas de chat* employs the back foot to begin the jump (Craske and Beaumont, 1946, 40). Ashton’s use of the front, weight-bearing foot creates a sudden stop and alters the balance and flow of the phrase. The ‘light springing’ (Ryman, 1997, 54) qualities of the codified movement are also changed. Lightness is diminished because the use of the weight bearing foot means that less time is spent in the air, making the ‘step’ appear floor-bound and abrupt. The arms retain the codified position (see 3.3), but there is no time for a twist and bend of the upper torso. Thus the ‘step’ is shaved of its essential qualities and the predictable *enchaînement* pattern is distorted by the use of the weight bearing foot for the second *gargouillade*.

Ashton, however, does not just alter the dynamic but occasionally interrupts the conventional movement pattern of the codified movement. This creates a new ‘step’, but it still retains a link with the codified version. In *Cinderella* (1948), towards the end of Act I scene I, while dancing to her imaginary Prince, Cinderella performs a *pas de chat* which appears to use the expected leg gestures but prevents the change of weight from

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\(^{25}\) This example has not been fully captured on the accompanying video. This is because too much footage was needed to show it and this gave a confusing message. As a result, only the second *gargouillade* is seen.
one foot to the other. This creates a more concentrated lower body design as both legs are pulled up quickly under the body. The upper body provides a contrast, with both arms extended to second, but the movement appears so briefly that the body design is only just perceptible. It follows a version of the ‘Fred step’:

♦ The dancer is standing on the right foot with the left sur le coup de pied. Moving to the left, she raises the left leg into a pas de chat position with the second leg appearing to follow it but, instead of landing on the left foot, she ends again on the supporting right leg (video example 8).

Adrian Grater (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 93) describes it as ‘the ‘supporting foot jump[ing] over the raised foot’ and wonders if it was originally a pas de chat which was changed over the course of time. This seems unlikely because that would create a very balanced phrase and as Chapter IV demonstrates, evenness is rarely a feature of the Ashton phrase, at least not when the preceding phrases are relatively smooth. The movement is quick, agitated, almost teasing since the expectation is that the dancer will transfer her weight. The removal of the conventional transfer of weight confers on the ‘step’ a flickering, spark like quality. Attention is drawn towards the feet by the dancer’s head and eyes which focus downwards towards the working leg.

By positioning the ‘step’ between a rendering of a codified movement which accords with the text books (Ryman, 1997, 22) and a body design, Ashton lifts the phrase, giving it a mercurial quality which would be absent if replaced by the conventional pas de chat. The two ballonnés on pointe, before the pas de chat, and the small leap in fourth position croisé on pointe which follows are performed evenly, but
the irregularity of the *pas de chat* changes the consistency of the phrase, interrupting its flow and creating a textural effect. The accents, which usually occur at the end of the jump, are also inverted: the snatching of the leg into the torso means that the accent occurs at the height of the jump rather than on the landing and stresses the elevation. Additionally, the held position of the arms at shoulder height encourages the impetus to come from the lower torso, which grounds the movement in the body as opposed to the limbs.

The following Labanotation example illustrates that the movement is grounded in the body. It includes the arms, while the Benesh notation version (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 94), depicting the feet only, shows the difference between Ashton's 'step' and the conventional *pas de chat*.

Labanotation:

Benesh Notation:

(Figure 1)
This inversion of the accent is a device Ashton uses elsewhere, though to different effect. The Russian *pas de chat* in *Scènes de Ballet* (1947) is reversed in the woman soloist's second variation, with the legs thrown forward rather than behind (see video example 39). The emphasis is on the raised legs rather than the landing in the conventional version. It is reversed again in Troyte's dance in *Enigma Variations* (1968).

These two examples, and there are others, demonstrate Ashton's concern with detail and his desire to challenge expectation by altering the rhythmic elements of the 'step'. This creates texture within the phrase and distances both the 'step' and the phrase from the classroom.

3.4.1.2 The *Pas de bourrée*

Ashton also creates texture with the *pas de bourrée* by using it to make sudden stops. This amounts not only to a change in the dynamic of the 'step' but also to an alteration of its function. An example occurs in *Les Patineurs* (1937) during the Blue Skater's first solo entrance where the introduction of gestural arms adds a further characteristic feature to the 'step'. (Ashton's arm movements are more fully discussed in 3.5.3). This 'step' follows two *cabrioles* on the video:

* two smooth, sliding movements, are followed by a quick *pas de bourrée marché* (example 9).

The dancer slides the working leg to the side whilst simultaneously making a low *plié* with the supporting leg. The introduction of the *pas de bourrée marché* not only alters the pattern established by the smooth slides but also brings the dancer to a vertical
position. This emphasises the contrast between the sustained slides and the quick, sharp \textit{pas de bourrée}. Whilst the staccato elements of the movement are a feature of most codified \textit{pas de bourrée marché}, these sharp, goal-orientated qualities are given greater emphasis here and this draws attention to the ‘step’, giving it prominence in the phrase.

The ‘step’ in \textit{Les Patineurs}, like the \textit{pas de chat} in \textit{Cinderella} (1948), is condensed, drawn up into the body and further altered by the ‘behavioural gesture’ (the use of this term is explained in 3.5.1). The gesture is almost a shrug: the arms are stretched outwards from the shoulders to the side of the body, the elbows bent and the palms face upwards. This introduces a multi-focused perspective: having attracted attention to the sharply accented feet Ashton quickly raises it to focus on the gesture.

Described as ‘essentially a linking movement’ (Glasstone, 1994b, 279) with three transitions of weight, the \textit{pas de bourrée} is used in \textit{Les Patineurs} (1937) as a ‘step’ in its own right. The advice of Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, 167) to use this version of the ‘step’ only in adage to avoid disrupting the flow (see 3.1.1) is disregarded by Ashton who emphasises the transitions by keeping the dancer on the flat foot rather than on \textit{demi-pointe}. The RAD (Ryman, 1997, 53) refers to this as a \textit{pas de bourrée piqué} though it is not given specific attention in the Cecchetti manual. Ryman’s Cecchetti Dictionary (1998, 119), indicates that it is only done by female dancers on \textit{pointe}. Glasstone (1994b, 281) also advises that it should only be performed by the female dancer. Interestingly, Ashton does not appear to have discriminated much between male and female in his deployment of ‘steps’ and, with some male dancers, he was able to increase the range of movements deemed acceptable for male dancers (see Chapter V).

While it is not possible to know for sure the extent to which the dance movement of other choreographers directly affected Ashton, it is likely that there is some influence.
in this example from *Les Patineurs* (1937). The dance movement of Buddy Bradley was discussed in the previous chapter and it is conceivable that the relaxed appearance of the final pose owes something to his dance movement style. However, the effortless poise and ease of execution, which is built into the choreography, could equally have been inspired by Harold Turner (1909-1962), who was renowned for his technical abilities and capacity to appear relaxed (Vaughan, 1977, 127 and Kavanagh, 1996a, 209).

Other examples of the *pas de bourrée marché*, used in a similar way, are peppered throughout Ashton’s dance movement. For instance, in the Seasons’ coda in Act I of *Cinderella* (1948) it appears again as a full stop and with strongly articulated transitions.

Textural effects are created in other ways with the *pas de bourrée*; for example, in opposition to the dynamic of the music. Stephanie Jordan (2000, 222) points out that Ashton frequently introduces changes in dynamic which are not influenced by the music but which prevent the relationship between the movement and the music from becoming too predictable or self-indulgent. In the Fairy Godmother’s solo (1965) in *Cinderella* (1948), the music has a flowing, legato tempo, yet Ashton choreographs quick *pas de bourrée marché* in opposition (video example 10). The first two begin slowly in conjunction with the music, but after a brief *ballonné* on *pointe*, the three which follow not only accelerate but also become sharp and percussive. These are continuous and remain on *pointe* creating strongly accented, razor sharp movement. They are only just recognisable as *pas de bourrée* because, although performed as a sideways movement, they actually travel slightly forward concealing the presence and perception of the three weight transfers.

The dancer looks downwards, focusing attention on the sharp spiky feet while,
in the upper body, the arms, stretched out at shoulder height, breath luxuriously with the music. The simultaneous rhythmic contrast between the upper and lower body is a feature of Buddy Bradley's work although here, Ashton has added another rhythmic layer by contrasting the rhythm of the feet with that of the music. The presence of these polyrhythms in the body and between the feet and the music could be an indication of Ashton’s ability to assimilate dance movement from several sources and absorb it into his own.

3.4.1.3 The Ballonné

The use of the ballonné in Vera’s solo from A Month in the Country (1976) is chosen for discussion not just because it illustrates a way in which Ashton creates texture but also because the head, arms and legs all follow different rhythmic patterns. The ‘step’ occurs at the beginning of the dance and is part of a phrase comprising the following:

♦ chassé, coupé, ballonné. (Video example 11)

The ballonné and coupé have to be performed in one beat, so that the jump is little more than a hop, rendering the ballonné almost unrecognizable; the coupé too becomes a shuffle from one foot to the other. Equally, the chassé is almost imperceptible but is recorded as a chassé in the Benesh score. The speed of the three ‘steps’, combined with the bend of the upper body towards the working leg, prevents the supporting foot in the ballonné from being fully stretched or the coupé from stretching fully on the ankle. In conjunction with the moving limbs, the torso bend makes this short section of the phrase very active. The activity is made more conspicuous because the limbs move along
different paths, adding to the complexity of the phrase: the arms in consecutive, circular progressions, whilst the legs use straight progressions. The *ballonné* is changed from a soft, jumping movement to a sharply accented *terre à terre* ‘step’ with extravagant arm movements, embellishing the simple leg gesture. As with the previous examples, the potentially even rhythm of the phrase is disturbed by the sudden, sharp action of the leg as it performs the *ballonné*.

Other similar examples occur in Lise’s first variation in *La Fille Mal Gardée* (1960) and in the duet for the two women in *Symphonic Variations* (1946). In the latter work, the *ballonné* appears after the dancers have completed a diagonal line from mid stage left to down stage right. As they move straight across the stage front they perform a parallel phrase comprising:

♦ a step, *coupé*, *ballonné*, *coupé*, *ballonné*. *(Video example 12)*

In common with *A Month in the Country* (1976), the *ballonnés* are little more than a hop with the emphasis placed on the step preceding the *coupé*. The step registers as significant because the body bends quickly towards it and it has equal status with the *ballonnés* because all three movements take a full beat. There is also a stronger stress on the *cou de pied* ending. In contrast with the *ballonnés* in *A Month in the Country* (1976), the actions of the arms and head reinforce the sharpness of the dynamic: the head moves sideways and downwards and one arm comes abruptly up the side of the body to an open fifth, with palms facing outwards; this upper body pattern is repeated for each *ballonné*. The straight sideways progression of both the leg and the arm causes the ‘steps’ to appear clear, angular and sharp, whilst the fast pace and crisp dynamic add to
the animated appearance of the phrase.

In both examples, the alteration of the ballonné from its codified version creates texture and Ashton forces extra movement from the dancer by the simultaneous motion of the limbs, head and torso.

3.4.1.4 The Rond de jambe à terre

The rond de jambe à terre is frequently used for its textural effect and instances in other works are discussed in Chapters IV and VI. The example chosen for discussion here appears in Natalia Petrovna’s variation in A Month in the Country (1976). It is found after the first phrase cluster in the dance and comes at the end of the second phrase in a parallel phrase cluster comprising two phrases which are repeated (video example 13). The rond de jambe à terre starts from a dégagé devant croisé with the left foot and moves only a quarter of the arc to effacé devant. The upper body bends towards the foot in the croisé position and both arms are placed forward in a low fifth en avant position. During the rond de jambe, the torso and arms sweep upwards and round to end in a body design: the arms are in fourth en haut in opposition to the working leg, and the head is inclined towards the extended leg. The movement is sudden and involves a twist in the torso and, like the pas de bourrée in Les Patineurs (1937), it acts as a full stop at the end of the phrase, although it is only briefly held.

The ‘step’ embodies the choreutic units described by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1983). The arched spatial progression of the arms resonates in the leg and spatial tension occurs between the two arms and between the arms and leg in the final body design. The dynamic of the upper body contrasts with that of the lower but, unusually, the more vigorous action is given to the upper body, while the leg performs a gentler,
more sustained action. Despite the fact that the rond de jambe à terre only comprises a leg movement and has no weight transitions, the characteristics already noted in the other ‘steps’ are also present here. In the classroom, it functions mainly as an exercise to increase turnout, but Ashton turns it into a more significant movement. The presence of a variety of spatial elements also shows the importance Ashton attached to the use of space and this feature becomes even more apparent in the analysis of the phrases which follows in Chapter IV.

3.4.1.5. **Summary**

The ‘steps’ analysed above share a common treatment. They are all used to create texture and punctuation in a phrase and this is achieved either by accenting or shortening the units, by altering the codified movement of the upper body and arms, or by changing the dynamic from that normally accorded to the codified movement.

3.4.3 **Treating Minor ‘Steps’ as Major Movements and Altering their Function**

In Ashton’s dance movement, the ‘steps’ are often given more spectacular qualities than they are traditionally accorded. By altering the function of some ‘steps’, he converts ‘minor movements’ to ‘steps’ of major significance and makes them the main focus of the phrase. With others, he achieves this by changing the pace from the codified rendition.

3.4.3.1 **The Pas de chat**

According to Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, 324), the function of the pas de chat is to move the body sideways. But Ashton uses it as a turning movement, mainly
for male dancers: not as a series of ‘steps’ moving around in a circle but as a *pas de chat* which completes a circle in one jump. The Bridegroom in *A Wedding Bouquet* (1937) performs this turning *pas de chat* in the first section of the work (video example 14).

The series of turning *pas de chat*, which heralds the first entrance of the Bridegroom, is used to create a whirlwind effect, but a similar result could equally have been produced with a more ‘suitable’ ‘step’. In this *pas de chat*, the accent occurs on the high point of the jump and the *plié* of the landing doubles as the preparation for the next *pas de chat*. The double actions, present in the codified movement, are also diminished and become almost a single movement. In conjunction with the circular jump, the arms trace analogous circular paths: up into fifth *en haut* and down at the side of the body on the landing. The ‘step’ retains its links with the *pas de chat* in the *retiré* movement of the legs, but the action of the spine is altered and remains vertical; further changes are made to the appearance of the codified movement by the turning action. In this context, as an entrance ‘step’, and because of the haste with which it is performed, the *pas de chat* is made to appear comic. The pace also prevents both the movement from having a neat ending in fifth position, and the arms from tracing the traditional codified path. The use of the *pas de chat* as a turning, travelling ‘step’ alters its function and, as the only ‘step’ in the phrase, gives it the status of a major ‘step’.

The turning *pas de chat* occurs in other dances such as the peasants’ dance in Act I of *La Fille mal gardée* (1960) and in Troyte’s variation in *Enigma Variations* (1968). But in both of these, it appears in a singular form. In *Fille* (1960), it comes at the end of a short phrase comprising two *cabrioles*, forward and back, followed by the turning *pas de chat*. The arms move up to fifth *en haut* but end with one on the hip. Here, it has the structure of the codified movement but is again altered by the turn. It occurs only
once in Troyte’s variation and is concealed within a longer phrase. Its presence in this different guise suggests Ashton’s preoccupation with the ‘step’ and his capacity for exploiting the ‘step’s’ potential.

There are, however, discrepancies of terminology concerning this turning *pas de chat* and it has also been perceived as a turning *grand pas de basque*, found in the Cecchetti syllabus. It is not mentioned in the Craske and Beaumont (1946) manual and the version described by Ryman (1998, 92) does not allow for the turn to occur on the jump. She indicates that the *pas de basque* should be performed as a non-turning jump, with high elevation, and that the turn occurs in the *pas de bourrée en tournant en dedans* which follows it. This makes it quite a different action with a more lilting 3/4 rhythm. Anthony Dowell (1999) confirms that the movement in the Troyte variation in *Enigma Variations* (1968) is usually referred to as a turning *pas de chat*, but adds that Ashton himself rarely gave names to the movements. Whilst it has some similarity with the *grand pas de basque*, there are significant differences, and it will continue to be referred to as a turning *pas de chat* here. Indeed, the inspiration could have come from the Cecchetti work and a version of the *grand pas de basque* occurs in Jeremy Fisher’s dance in *Tales of Beatrix Potter* (1970). Even there, however, the *pas de chat* itself partially turns before the *pas de bourrée en tournant*.

Ashton also gives the ‘step’ spectacular qualities by changing the pace and linking it with sharp, *piqué* movements. In *Rhapsody* (1980) the *pas de chat* becomes part of a dazzling display of rapid ‘steps’. In the short solo, during the second entrance of the woman soloist, after the first series of phrase clusters, it appears at the beginning of a cluster comprising two parallel phrases:
A pas de chat croisé is followed immediately by a quick step into fourth croisé on pointe in the opposite direction and, in a third change of direction, the dancer executes a dégagé in front croisé (Video example 15).

Although the leg actions are performed as in the codified version, the pas de chat again has markedly different rhythmic elements and both legs appear to close together. This is because it has to be performed to one beat only, which increases its speed. It is perceived as a small leap but attention is drawn to it by the use of the arms. They move from fifth en haut to open around the body accompanied by a slight bend in the torso. The space around the upper body is more fully defined and amplified and the body shape is altered from its compact, rounded shape. The legs flick outwards into the space, adding dynamic features not usually associated with this ‘step’. These arrest the eye briefly but, as is often the case with Ashton, their sharpness is modified by the curved progressions of the arms. The speed at which it is performed prevents the twist and full inclination of the head and torso, but the quick successive retiré actions, followed by the two croisé movements, create the perception of brilliance. Thus its function as a travelling action is altered and it becomes a movement with virtuoso qualities.

The women’s movement in Rhapsody (1980) is characterised by these rapid bursts of energy. The focus is on the lower body and, unusually in Ashton, there are few bends in the torso throughout the work. It is conceivable that Ashton introduced these bursts of activity to conceal the lack of pliancy in Lesley Collier’s use of the upper body (Collier in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 175). To compensate, he drew attention to her other assets, in particular, her sparkling, distinctive feet. Making the most of articulate feet is a significant feature of Ashton’s dance style deriving from his admiration of Pavlova’s
feet (Vaughan, 1977, 321) and he usually drew attention to the feet of dancers who shared this capacity for articulation.

3.4.3.2 *The pas de bourrée*

The conventional role of the *pas de bourrée*, as a connecting and auxiliary step for changing places (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995), is also frequently altered by its use as a travelling ‘step’. In the codified movement, when several *pas de bourrée* are done consecutively as a travelling movement, they are described as a *pas couru*; quite a different movement, in which the feet, on pointe, are either parallel or in fifth and the weight transfers rapidly from one foot to the other. Ashton, however, uses the triple weight change *pas de bourrée* in a series to propel the dancers from one side of the stage to the other. This rendering of it occurs in different forms in several works: *Les Rendezvous* (1933), *Symphonic Variations* (1946), *Ondine* (1958) and *The Two Pigeons* (1961).

In *Les Rendezvous*, during the first entrance of the female dancer from the *pas de trois*, the *pas de bourrée* is used as a travelling ‘step’. It moves in a line across the front of the stage to the exit. The parallel phrase sequence comprises:

♦ *chassé croisé*, which doubles as the first step of the *pas de bourrée* which follows and the phrase is repeated until the dancer exits. The *épaulement changes* with each execution of the ‘step’ (video example, 16).

The arms remain in a fixed oval position and circle the body. They move downwards from the left and up the right side of the body, embellishing the staccato movements of the feet. Whilst forming continuous circles around the front of the body, they remain in
a fixed circle so that the movement is generated more from the upper back than from the limbs. Thus the impetus for the \textit{pas de bourrée} comes from the upper body rather than the feet. There are similarities here with the way in which the arms are used in both Les Noces (1923) and Les Biches (1924). For instance, in her first entrance the Garçonne, in Les Biches (1924), struts upstage on \textit{pointe} in a swinging walk, her arms are in fifth \textit{en haut} and remain fixed but the shoulders twist from side to side, generating the locomotion of the whole body (video example, 17). Other instances of fixed arms occur throughout Les Biches (1924), see Chapter II.

The combination of speed, repetition and changing upper body makes this \textit{pas de bourrée} from Les Rendezvous distinctive. It loses its function as a connecting movement and becomes a fleet, dazzling ‘step’ in its own right. The upper body action is smooth and continuous while that of the lower has a staccato rhythm, caused by the quick \textit{plié} into the \textit{chassé} and the quickly picked-up movements of the \textit{pas de bourrée}. The observer’s attention flickers between the upper and lower body because the picked up \textit{pas de bourrée} draw the eye to the feet, only to be diverted again by the swirling, twisting actions of the torso and arms. The feet are perceived as sharp, spiky and articulate and it is conceivable that Ashton wanted them to be noticed. The dance was made for Ninette de Valois who was praised for her strong, well arched feet by her colleagues in Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes (de Valois, 1977, 13).

As with the \textit{pas de chat}, Ashton exploits the potential of the ‘step’ in different ways. In \textit{Symphonic Variations} (1946), the \textit{pas de bourrée} appears in the Interlude, again as a travelling ‘step’, but this time it is perceived as a fluent, legato movement (video example, 18). The three women move from one side of the stage to the other followed by the men and the \textit{pas de bourrée} is performed by both. For the women, only
the first step of the *pas de bourrée* is on *pointe* and the other steps are lengthened to allow the *pas de bourrée* to fill the width of the stage. Three slow, continuous *pas de bourrée* are followed by a *soutenu* and semi-circular progression of the arm before the sequence is repeated. The men follow the same pattern as the women but replace the *posé* on *pointe* with a *jeté*. In conjunction with the music, which has a sustained quality, the ‘step’ appears continuous and relaxed without the usual tension in the movements of the feet. However, this is somewhat misleading, because the three accents of the *pas de bourrée* remain and the dancers make little hops to accomplish each transition of weight. Ashton frequently makes a contrasting dynamic between the music and the movement (see 3.4.1.2) but here it is less obvious and the flow of the music helps to disguise the slightly percussive elements of the ‘step’. In addition, the static arm position, held throughout the three *pas de bourrée*, contributes to the perception that the dancers are gliding.

The following illustration gives a diagrammatic representation for the purpose of comparison of the ways in which Ashton altered and extended the codified movement in *Symphonic Variations* (1946). The characters used in the diagram are there to give some idea of the difference in length between the three weight transitions and the altered accent. The difference in scale is intentional.

Cecchetti (Craske and Beaumont, 1946, 39)
The effect of this recurring ‘step’ is to elevate the *pas de bourrée* from auxiliary to major movement by repeating it consecutively and making it the sole ‘step’ in the phrase cluster.

In both *Ondine* (1958) and *The Two Pigeons* (1961) the *pas de bourrée* is also used as a travelling movement, but in the latter, the movement at the beginning and end is exaggerated and the arms move up and down the sides of the body creating a jarring effect.

3.4.3.3 The *Rond de jambe à terre*

The previous paragraphs dealt with the ways in which the smaller codified movements are magnified and developed into significant ‘steps’ by Ashton. These paragraphs focus on the altered role of the *rond de jambe à terre* and its transformation from an exercise, usually confined to the *barre*, to a major ‘step’.

In *Enigma Variations*, (1968) the *rond de jambe à terre* is given prominence. It occurs twice in Dorabella’s variation. In the first, near the beginning, a clearly defined *rond de jambe à terre* is followed by two quick *relevés* (see Chapter IV). According to Antoinette Sibley (cited in Macaulay, 1985a, 6) this *rond de jambe à terre* has its genesis in *Napoli* (Bournonville, 1842, Royal Ballet [Bruhn], 1962). The second *rond de jambe*
à terre, occurring later, is less conspicuous: quick, buoyant *pas de chat* are followed by a *chassé*-like *rond de jambe à terre*. This latter phrase comprises:

- a *pas de chat* and *rond de jambe à terre* repeated five times with varying repetitions (video example, 19).

Only the first phrase is discussed here. The *pas de chat* are quick with sharply articulated accents and rounded arms, while the *rond de jambe* provides contrast with its swift gliding action and flowing arms, one of which travels across the body in opposition to the leg. Initiated from the upper back, the arm pulls the shoulder right round causing the torso to twist and form a body design which is almost serpentine. The leg also transgresses the boundary defined by codified movement, swishing right across the body, so that instead of finishing in a *dégagé* in front, it crosses in line with the other shoulder.

Both the *rond de jambe à terre* and the flowing arm movement become a foil to the *pas de chat*, setting off the small abrupt jumps by their slightly languid appearance. No longer functioning as a movement for increasing turn out, the *rond de jambe à terre* is used to provide contrast and to give added activity to the torso.

Later, in the Nimrod variation (*Enigma Variations*, 1968), Ashton uses the *rond de jambe à terre* as a behavioural gesture (this term is explained on 149). It is performed at the beginning of the dance by A. J. Jaeger, with head dropped and his arms behind his back. The upper body helps to make the movement behavioural, but the slow definition of the foot gives it the appearance of an interrogatory gesture.

The *rond de jambe à terre* appears again in the Foxtrot (1940) from *Façade* (1931). This time it draws on popular dance. The Foxtrot has corollaries in both stage
dancing and popular dance and exploits the *rond de jambe* for its potential to involve the hips (video example, 20). The movement occurs when the four dancers are lined up across the front of the stage. The parallel phrase is performed straight to the audience and comprises a *rond de jambe*, in which the hips gyrate with the leg movement, and ends with two brief, lilting steps forward and back. The action is emphasised by the arms which together execute circles around the hips ending, in front, with the palms facing forward.

The variety of ways in which both the *rond de jambe à terre* and the preceding ‘steps’ are used reinforces the notion that Ashton frequently preferred to employ what are perceived as insignificant ‘steps’ and to amplify and embellish them, either with unconventional arm movements, or by elevating them to the status of major ‘steps’. Analogous examples are found in such ‘steps’ as the *chassé*, the *pas de cheval* and the *sissonne*, amongst others.

3.4.3.4 The *Ballonné*

This ‘step’ does not come into the same category as the previous ‘steps’. With the *ballonné*, Ashton reverses his tendency to elevate an insignificant ‘step’ to the level of major movement. The *ballonné* is generally perceived as a light jump on one leg (Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995, 304 and Ryman, 1997, 8). Ashton tends to remove its lighter qualities and use it as a sharper more clipped ‘step’ and thus subordinates its more usual status as a major movement. Even when it occurs in a series in *Les Patineurs* (1937), for the Blue Skater during the finale, it is used as a fleet, almost preparatory ‘step’ to give emphasis to the *grand jeté* which follows it. The *grand jeté* commands attention and the *ballonné* is diminished, making it a more minor ‘step’. Whilst its
appearance there may not have been arranged by Ashton, it is in character with the rest of the Blue Skater’s movement in other sections of the work. According to David Vaughan (1977, 148), this entry was created by Harold Turner because Ashton was ill at the time and absent from rehearsals. Other occurrences of the ballonné, such as those in Natalia’s solo in A Month in the Country (1976), or, those of the Friends and Lise in her first solo in La Fille mal gardée (1960) all show it in its shortened, more abrupt form, employed for its dynamic qualities rather than for its elevation.

3.5 Ashton’s Port de bras

Ashton’s use of arm movements in relation to the ‘steps’ has been examined above and it was apparent that the ways in which the arms are used can convert the codified movement into one of Ashton’s ‘steps’. However, there are characteristic features of the arms which have not been covered by the ‘step’ analysis so far. For this reason the two are separated to allow priority to be given to this aspect, which is discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.5.1 Port de bras: Ashton’s sources

Exercises to generate ‘correct’ arms are extensively outlined in the pedagogic textbooks used in this study. There are some similarities between the exercises of Cecchetti (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1966 and Ryman, 1998) and Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995) while those of the RAD (Ryman, 1997) are quite different. The former incorporate more movement of the upper back, while the RAD introduce forwards, backwards and sideways bends. In all, the names and numbers of the arm positions differ. However, the Cecchetti work conflicts with the others in one fundamental way.
According to Cecchetti (Beaumont and Idzikowsky), the *port de bras* is governed by the principle of balance: the body is conceived of as a straight line with the arms stretched horizontally across it; when one end is depressed the other rises in proportion and vice versa. In other words, the arms move in direct relation to each other, either sideways, forwards or backwards and a similar balance exists between them and the leg movements. Glasstone (1997b, 457) reasons that the arms in ballet have three main functions: to balance the body, make specific shapes and make expressive gestures. But in the different syllabuses the *port de bras* are mainly used for balance and to trace specific pathways. When moving from fifth *en bas* to fifth *en haut*, the codified movements all trace pathways up the front of the body through fifth *en avant*. They appear never to trace the outward path from second position to fifth *en haut*.

Ashton’s relationship to the Cecchetti method has already been mentioned, but he had a particular admiration for Cecchetti’s *port de bras* exercises. In a letter to Glasstone (cited in Glasstone, 1996b, 8) he asserts that execution of the Cecchetti *port de bras* is an excellent exercise for students because it produces a wonderful feeling for line, the use of the head and *épaulement*. Some years earlier, in a letter to Rambert, he observes that Nijinska’s use of arms in class is entirely based on Cecchetti (cited in Pritchard, 1996, 107). It is not at all clear what he means by ‘based on’ and he does not elaborate further. As suggested in Chapter II, it likely to have been Nijinska’s use of the upper torso to initiate the movement that Ashton is referring to, although Glasstone (1997b, 459) does not mention this as being a feature of Cecchetti’s teaching. However, her approach to arms may also have been influenced by Mikhail (later changed to Michel) Fokine (1880-1942). She describes in her autobiography (Nijinska, 1992, 335) her own struggle to free herself from her training at the Imperial Ballet School and to try
to achieve the new fluidity of arms and torso required by the ballets of Fokine.

Ashton claims that his use of the arms came from several sources (Doob, 1978 and Draegin, 1977, 70), but it is generally acknowledged that his approach is, at least in part, derived from Cecchetti (Glasstone, 1996b, 8-13). Whilst this belief is not in doubt, it is also evident that he combined and manipulated arm movements in a variety of ways, transforming the *porte de bras* into a distinctive aspect of his dance movement style. For instance, his use of expressive gesture as part of his dance movement has been identified by Giannandrea Poesio (1996, 73). Poesio highlights particular poses, such as the characteristic curved arm posture adopted by Ondine (1958), and the listening posture of the Fairies in *The Dream* (1964), which, he suggests, originate in Italian mime. But he also notes influences from Russian mime and from the work of both Bronislava Nijinska and Léonide Massine. According to Poesio (1996, 78), a gesture used by Massine in *The Good-Humoured Ladies* (1917) in which the elbows are bent and the palms of the hands face upwards, is an integral part of Natalia Petrovna’s *porte de bras* in *A Month in the Country* (1976). Although Poesio locates this gesture in the stylised manners of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, his main concern is with Ashton’s use of ‘canonic’ gestures and the way in which he altered and integrated them into the *porte de bras* for expressive purposes.

Ashton observes that he learnt both the meaning of gesture and its ability to convey drama through dance from Karsavina (Kavanagh, 1996a, 118). But he does not develop the point and it is not entirely clear whether he is describing behavioural gesture, the arm, and hand movements made in everyday Western life to communicate feelings or attitudes, sometimes made in conjunction with language, or mime. Thus a brief discussion of mime and gesture is needed before an analysis of his arm movements can
be undertaken, although Poesio (1996) argues that by the early twentieth century the two
began to feed into each other. Rachel Richardson (1995) also discusses gesture in the work of Antony Tudor (1909-1987), although it appears in a more abstract form there. She argues that, whilst the movements are not really recognizable as gestures derived from everyday life, she describes them as gestures because they appear to have a similar function to ‘realistic gesture’ in everyday life: ‘revealing aspects of character, psychological experience, or mood’ (1995, 247). Richardson’s text, however, is concerned with the function of these gestures in the choreography and is thus less relevant to this study but her terminology has links with the use of the term ‘behavioural gesture’ here, describing arm movements which convey elements from everyday life.

According to Poesio (1996, 74) the strictly codified Italian mime was brought to Russia by Virginia Zucchi at the end of the nineteenth century. This was imitated by the Russian dancers though adapted to suit their more personal approach. Further alterations were made by Mikhail Fokine who, as Poesio observes (1996,76), diluted the codified system, so that the movements no longer related to words but to moods or feelings. Poesio suggests that Fokine’s approach to movement was strongly influenced by Isadora Duncan whose gestures often derived from behavioural sources (Duncan, 1937, 11). Duncan’s effect on Ashton is well documented (Vaughan 1977, 4, Kavanagh, 1996a, 46,). He claims that his use of arms is influenced by her and that he ‘went back to see her time and again. The way she used her arms, the way she ran across the stage - these I have adopted in my ballets’ (Draegin, 1977, 70). It seems likely that Ashton’s use of arms is derived from a network of different sources including Duncan, Karsavina and his Cecchetti background together with his own inventive use of behavioural gesture.

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3.5.2 The Upper Body: Arms and Body Designs

The use of *épaulement* is central to the way in which upper body movement is presented in Ashton. Dixie Durr (1987) explains the function of *épaulement* in ballet movement. She argues that there are two spaces that have to be accounted for in ballet: the particular physical space in which the dance takes place and the conceptual space, or, imaginary square, in which the dancer is trained. The notion of an imaginary square allows the dancer to execute a single position and yet, by turning the body to face the corners of the square, enables the audience to perceive the position differently. Whether the dancer faces forward or back, crossed or open, the actual position of the leg remains the same but is perceived differently. Ashton’s dance movement rarely faces directly *en face* and the use of *épaulement* allows him to present the body three dimensionally, even when the dancer remains in one position.

An example occurs near the end of the man’s variation from *Les Rendezvous* (1933) (video example, 21). After a kneeling circular port de bras, Ashton introduces a phrase of movement which, despite lacking significant movement in the arms, makes the upper body appear active. The right arm is placed on the shoulder with bent elbow and remains in this position throughout the phrase, while the left arm moves to the left shoulder on the first ‘step’ and remains there until the final lunge. The movement of the arms is generated from the spine and shoulders. These swing to *croisé* on one side and then the other, before the left arm is thrust forward to an *arabesque* position which accompanies a lunge into fourth position. The arms here are treated as an extension of the upper back and not as separate limbs; this, Barbara Fewster (1999) argues, is inspired by the Cecchetti *port de bras*. The dancer, Stanislas Idzikowsky, on whom Ashton first created this variation, had, as mentioned in Chapter II, been trained by Cecchetti, so it
is conceivable that the use of the arms also came naturally from his way of moving.

The arms and upper body are arranged to create maximum movement. In Ashton’s early choreography he was criticised for his ‘over-elaborate arm movements’ and an excess of ‘twists and twirls of the arms and wrist’ (Beaumont, 1949b, 29) but the critic later modified this to ‘original and very elaborate’ (1947b, 143). Beaumont was commenting on the waltz in Façade (1931). But there are several dances in which Ashton uses the hands to trace elaborate spatial patterns, principally by creating exaggerated wrist movement.

For instance in the waltz in Façade (1931), the four women execute a waltzing movement with arms raised over the head accompanied by twirling wrists (video example, 22). The twirling movement then continues at waist height, the elbows are bent, and the hips perform exaggerated movements. The flexed wrist also appears in the Pas de Quatre in Les Rendezvous (1933) and, in The Wise Virgins (1940), the Bride’s solo is composed almost entirely of flexed and circling wrist movements. A second characteristic arm movement involving the wrists is also found in Façade (1931) and Les Rendezvous (1933). It usually occurs with a chassé and involves pushing the arm out from the centre of the chest with flexed wrists; the ‘step’ changes direction, moving from corner to corner. Ashton re-uses this movement frequently and it appears, in particular, in the dances he made for Margot Fonteyn.

Despite demanding extensive upper body movement, Ashton frequently freezes the arms with a prop. There are numerous examples of dances with fans (The Lord of Burleigh [1931] Apparitions [1936]) with ribbons or scarves (Capriole Suite [1930] La

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26 This reference is to a collection of criticism although the criticism was written in June 1931.
Fille\textsuperscript{27} mal gardée [1960]), hunting bows in Sylvia (1951) and a broom in Cinderella (1948). He may have done this to force movement from the torso. When the hands are occupied, the dancer has to use the shoulders and upper back to form the \textit{épaulement} and initiate the movement, and this helps to create a more mobile torso.

Arms bent angularly at the elbows are also a significant feature and in his early work, references are made to both Les Noces (Nijinska, 1923) and Les Biches (Nijinska, 1924). Many of the arabesques in his dance movement take a pose with the arm bent at the elbow and the hand resting on the shoulder, a pose also taken by the Garçon in Les Biches (1924) (see video example, 17). Extensive use of the flexed wrist and bent elbow is also evident in the video (1970) of the gala performed for Ashton’s retirement. This included excerpts from the majority of his works and thus provides a substantial account of his dance movement.

In contrast to these confined movements, he also used the space around the body extensively (this is more fully dealt with in Chapter IV). He does, however, frequently deviate from the standard paths of the codified movement and his arms move from a low position tracing paths up through second position in a generous curve that pulls the space inward as opposed to the more confined, outward paths of the code. For instance, in the finale of \textit{Daphnis and Chloe}\textsuperscript{28} (1951), the dancers make lunges into an \textit{arabesque par terre} and the arm traces a curve up and over the head. Whilst these form clear spatial progressions, the path taken activates the space around the body more fully than if the progression was traced in the manner dictated by the codified movements. In \textit{Nocturne}\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} This title is written according to the programmes at The Royal Opera House Covent Garden

\textsuperscript{28} There is no accent on the e in the title.
(1936), in the Poor Girl's dance, there are relevés into arabesque in which the arms, coming from a position level with the head, fold into the body, tracing a path down the body to end straight forward at shoulder level (video example, 23). This port de bras demonstrates another deviation from codified movement and shows that despite his admiration for Cecchetti's port de bras, Ashton's use of the arms is derived from a range of different influences.

Elements derived from Cecchetti are evident in the Moon variation from Horoscope (1938). The dancer is placed centre stage facing straight forward. She performs rapid pas de bourrée couru with parallel feet, interspersed with one and then two battement dégagé on pointe (video example, 24). These movements are sharp and quick but attention is centred on the upper body. The arms are held in a semi-oval, half-moon shaped position with the palms facing inwards; one arm is above the head and the other is to the side, just below shoulder level. Significantly, the limbs themselves do not move but are pulled in a swaying motion from side to side, from the centre of the back. Although the position is most likely to have been influenced by the shape of the New Moon, which appears on the backcloth, the motion of the arms follows Cecchetti's principles of balance. Yet, in spite of the undulating flow of the upper body, the feet make sharp attacking movements in counterpoint to that of the upper body.

Joan Lawson (1951, 705) points out that Ashton's use of the arabesque rarely resembles the codified version. She cites the 'crescent -like' version in Horoscope (1938) which is also mentioned by Pamela May (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 185). According to May the raised leg had to be curved with the arm placed high, in line with the head. A similar arabesque occurs in the pas de deux from The Dream (1964). Lawson also indicates that these have similarities with the arabesque of the girl in
Nocturne (1936), in which both arms are curved and held high over the head. This arabesque does not appear in the solo from that ballet danced by Fonteyn on the video of the Ashton Gala (1970) and it has to be assumed that either it occurs elsewhere in the work or Lawson has mis-remembered it (Chapter VI discusses the role of memory when reviving a past work). A prominent arabesque appears in Les Rendezvous (1933) in which the upper arm is placed higher than usual (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1946, 31) and stretches straight, almost parallel with the head. The position occurs in several other works, for instance, before the duet of the two women in Symphonic Variations (1946) and in the Autumn variation in Cinderella (1948). What is significant about this arabesque is that the changed arm creates a stronger upward emphasis disturbing the more balanced, linear position of the codified arabesque. These recurring angular positions create asymmetry and emphasise the upward pull. A different, though equally striking arabesque recurs in several works, but particularly in Symphonic Variations (1946) and Scènes de Ballet (1948). The pose is a low arabesque in which both arms are pulled downwards from the shoulder. It appears mainly in the pas de deux, although it is also found in solo movement. The arabesque recurs in almost every Ashton variation but only the more distinctive uses of it have been selected for examination here.

3.5.3 Port de Bras Derived from Behavioural Gesture

The gesture derived from Massine in the port de bras of Natalia Petrovna has already been identified by Poesio (1996, 78), but there are other dances in which it is used more as a behavioural gesture. For example, the Blue Skater in Les Patineurs (1937) finishes several of the phrases in his first solo with this gesture (see video example, 9), though the elbows are closer to the body and much lower down than that of
Natalia. Puck in *The Dream* (1964) is characterised by the gesture, yet, there it becomes more like a large ‘W’ (Marshall, 1996): the elbows are much further away from the body than in either of the previous versions, the shoulders are raised and Puck’s head tilts to one side in an interrogatory manner. The first solo, Elaine Fifield’s, in *Birthday Offering* (1956) ends with the gesture and the male soloist in *Rhapsody* (1980) also performs the movement several times. Apart from Natalia Petrovna, all the other examples of the gesture are given to dancers performing spectacular roles. It appears, in these instances that Ashton is drawing attention to the technical feat and demonstrating the dancer’s skill, by ending each dance in a manner which indicates effortlessness. The ethos has similarities with stage dancing of the 1930s where extremely taxing, often acrobatic, movement was performed with a casual, almost careless air, most notably characterised by the dancing of Fred Astaire.

Behavioural gesture derived from everyday movement is also found in many of Ashton’s works and it is not confined to ballets with a narrative theme. In *Les Rendezvous* (video example, 25), during the *pas de trois*, the trio execute an arm movement that swings from the shoulders. Accompanied by *relevés*, it has the appearance of a breezy walk and conveys the same casual approach as the dancing of Astaire. The rapid, sharp *relevés* are strikingly opposed to the swinging upper body and this also serves to underpin the perception of ease. The swinging arms re-appear in Psyche’s variation in *Cupid and Psyche* (1939) but there they become part of an *arabesque*. The dancer performs two *posés* into second *arabesque* (Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1966, Plate VIII) but the arms swing from the shoulders into the *arabesque* position and have a similar nonchalant quality to the movement in *Les Rendezvous*.

The gestures in *La Valse* (1958) are buried in the *port de bras* of the trio of
female soloists (video example, 26). They first enter centre stage performing two *posés* forward in a low *retiré*, the second of which ends in a deep lunge to fourth position. As they execute the *posé*, the left arm is raised, bent at the elbow, whilst the other hand lightly touches the raised arm moving from fingers to elbow. Although the ballet has no narrative (the theme centres on couples waltzing in a ballroom) the gesture suggests the pulling on of the long gloves which the dancers are already wearing (Beckley, personal communication, 1999). Ashton thus uses the gesture to invent new port de bras while enabling it, simultaneously, to suggest a specific action. The condensed body design in *La Valse* (1958) concentrates attention on the arm gestures, but as the phrase ends in a deep lunge in fourth position, the gesture fades into a more conventional *port de bras*: the raised arm sweeps over the head forming a circular movement which ends in an *arabesque* line. The action of pulling on the glove is only hinted at but understanding where the gesture is derived from is highly significant to the performance of the phrase.

*Enigma Variations* depends on behavioural gesture to communicate much of its dramatic meaning. In the ‘Nimrod’ section the gestures are overt and resemble conversation, but in the ‘Winifred Norbury’ variation the gesture is fleeting and, like in *La Valse*, slipped in as a *port de bras*; it occurs when she travels upstage with her back to the audience (video example, 27). She raises her hand to the back of her head, lightly touching her hair, and glances sideways twice while simultaneously twitching her skirt. Developing from a *port de bras* in which the arms move from side to side in a modified version of the fourth *en avant* position, it is perceived as a natural progression from the *port de bras* but like the previous example has its roots in everyday behaviour.

Nijinska too conceals behavioural gesture in her *port de bras*, in particular in *Les Biches* (1924). In a recurring motif, the *corps de ballet* slide their hands down their
bodies to the top of the leg and immediately withdraw them back to the shoulder. The gesture is sexually suggestive but like Ashton’s it doubles as a *port de bras*.

The examples in both sections of the *port de bras* demonstrate Ashton’s range of upper body movement. Those that arise from codified movement deviate from it in almost as many ways as his use of the ‘step’ (but see 3.5), but equally demonstrate recurring treatments of the arms, while those arising out of gestures are likely to emanate from multiple sources. The presence of Cecchetti’s principles of balance is apparent but is only one of several influences, a combination of which create a distinctive approach to movements of the arms and the upper body.

3.6. **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter it was proposed that style exists because of consistent changes made to an established version of the codified movement and that the inspiration for some of these changes could be traced to Ashton’s dance heritage. Examination of his ‘steps’ revealed that alterations made to one ‘step’ were similar to those he made to others, demonstrating the stylistic aspects. What makes them unique are the ways in which his heritage and his own approach to movement combine and permeate the codified movements, altering their construction and affecting their appearance. As a result, different criteria are required for their performance since they are no longer dependent on the rules governing the performance of a codified movement.

Although the rules for executing the codified movement vary between schools, they are primarily concerned with turn-out, achieving specific, codified body designs and verticality. In Ashton’s dance movement these are superseded by different criteria which are dictated by motional values and generally require the codified movements to be
curtailed, elaborated on, reconsidered and, in the case of the upper body, expanded.

The recurring use of the *pas de chat, pas de bourrée, rond de jambe* and *ballonné* suggests that their particular qualities of spatial elements and shape were particularly suited to Ashton’s dance movement style. That he also changed their function, using them in place of other more obviously suitable codified movements is, perhaps, indicative of the important role they play, although, as indicated, they are not the only ‘steps’ to receive this treatment.

While the notion of influences is a complex issue, some of which are subconsciously absorbed, there is some tangible evidence that his dance movement is affected by his dance heritage. For example, the values of the contemporary classroom and his own training feed into his ‘steps’. De Valois’ approach to training gives priority to footwork, so it is hardly surprising that the ‘steps’ most frequently chosen by Ashton are those which demand articulate footwork. The effect of his Cecchetti training is also evident and is found in the balanced use of the upper body and in the way in which his *arabesques* and *attitudes* frequently use the curved upper torso (see drawing Chapter VI, 6.4, and Beaumont and Idzikowsky, 1966, XV, 62). It is difficult to pin down Nijinska’s influence on his ‘steps’ in this chapter, but her tendency to immobilise the arms is also one that Ashton shares. Her approach to movement and her values are more clearly evident in Chapters IV and V and are discussed there. However, her dance movement also employs a degree of small footwork and it is possible to speculate that his choice of movements could also have been affected by her. Equally, his choices could simply derive from the dominant balletic values of the era.

The references to Pavlova tend to be qualitative, in that his selection of particular ‘steps’ is often employed to emulate her dazzling, energetic dance qualities. It is not
possible either to be certain about the influence of Buddy Bradley and stage dancing of the 1930s, but the relaxed, easy appearance of the movement associated with that style is evident in the use of specific gestures and in the way in which difficult movement in the lower body is sometimes disguised by the creation of a liberated, less hard-edged upper body.

What emerges is an intricate maze of influences, affecting the signature ‘steps’ which are found throughout Ashton’s movement. But ‘steps’ on their own are only one feature of the style, what is of equal significance are the ways in which these are grouped to produce phrases and phrase clusters. His phrases and phrase clusters demonstrate a broader view of the dance movement style and their examination in Chapter IV builds on the discussion in this chapter.
Chapter Four

Ashton's Phrases

4.0 Introduction

Dances (in ballet) comprise individual ‘steps’, but are perceived and performed as continuous activities. As far as Ashton is concerned, his dances consist of several ‘steps’ grouped together into a phrase, or cluster of short phrases, which are combined to form the dance. How the ‘steps’ are combined affects both the ‘step’ itself and the performance of the other ‘steps’ in the phrase. Dividing Ashton’s dances into phrases not only allows for this aspect of his dance movement to be considered but also builds on the stylistic features already identified in the preceding chapter. Whilst the separation of dances into hierarchical units for the purpose of analysis is familiar, the ways in which these combinations affect the execution of the dance movements, reveal their stylistic elements and alter the codified movements, is still under-researched. This chapter examines these features and considers their relevance to Ashton’s dance movement style.

The style model used in Chapter III is also adopted here. As far as the phrase is concerned, it allows for the treatment of one phrase of ‘steps’ to be seen as similar to a different phrase of ‘steps’ treated in a like manner, and thus identifies the particular treatment as a stylistic hallmark. In common with the ‘steps’ of the previous chapter, the model is also informed by the notion of decipherability (McFee, 1992, see Chapter I), meaning that Ashton’s dance movement style is discernable by reference to his dance heritage.
4.1 Characteristics of Ashton’s Phrases

In Chapter I, an investigation into the concept of the phrase drew on the work of the following dance scholars: Humphrey (1959), Bartenieff et.al. (1984), Kaeppler (1972), Blom and Chaplin (1982), Jordan (1986) and Donaldson (1993). Following their various, though related, approaches to the phrase, it was evident that the boundaries used by some of the scholars to identify phrase length were specific to the particular dance or choreographer studied and thus were not suitable for application to Ashton’s dance movement. Stephanie Jordan’s identification of the factors which create boundaries comes closest to those which delineate Ashton’s phrases and is adopted here. Although Donaldson’s notion of mobility and closure is also relevant. Jordan’s boundaries are delineated by the following: a pause in a group of ‘steps’, the introduction of contrasting material, and the repetition of material.

The terms ‘phrase cluster’ and ‘parallel phrases’ are also adopted from Jordan (1986) to define related material which belongs together. The former term refers to two or more phrases gathered together and repeated and the latter to repetitions of identical material. For instance, a phrase cluster can comprise three phrases with an A A B pattern: the first phrase is reiterated and is followed by a third, different though related phrase. Parallel phrases occur when one or several identical phrases are repeated, or, when closely related material is repeated.

Whilst the concept of related material can be used to demonstrate structural and choreographic unity, it is also a significant element of dance movement style because it highlights Ashton’s tendency not only to re-use material but also to transform it according to the context in which it appears. As Wendy Ellis points out in an interview in Ballet Review (Daniels, et.al. 1997, 22), ‘What is unusual about a lot of Fred’s ballets
[is that] he would use certain steps and then put them in a new context'. Thus, while re-used material may act to demonstrate choreographic unity or stylistic preferences, analysing it here also shows how a ‘step’ or phrase is changed by its position in a new context.

Gathering the phrases into clusters highlights the way in which Ashton creates contrasts in density and speed. Patterns of change, variation and repetition have implications for the performance of the phrase. Where there is a change of tempo between one parallel phrase and the next, where an extra ‘step’ is introduced into the repeated phrase, ‘throwing the phrase outside the pulse framework’ (Jordan, 2000b, 227), or where there is dynamic variation amongst ‘steps’ within the phrase, the dancer can be forced to acknowledge and respond to these deliberate elements of light and shade. Where these characteristics have been ‘ironed out’, knowledge of Ashton’s approach to the movement is also important. According to Antoinette Sibley (1996, 139), when dancing Ashton, some ‘steps’ should be held at the expense of others in order to create surprise. The point is supported by Pamela May (1996, 159) who adds that Ashton liked to create unexpected moments in the dance by emphasising the change from a fluid downwards movement to a sharp, upwardly-focused one.

Ashton’s phrases tend, on the whole, to be short and a link can be found between them and the classroom *enchaînements* of Enrico Cecchetti. For instance, there is a recurring emphasis on *petit allegro* combinations which demand rapid intricate footwork: both the *pas de bourrée couru* (Craske and Beaumont, 1946, 68) and *jeté assemblé* (Craske and Beaumont, 1946, 95) *enchaînements* provide examples. A distinctive use of certain body parts is also a feature of the Cecchetti style: in performing a series of *jeté battement en arrière* and *en avant* the head inclines away from the leg on the first
series and turns to look over the shoulder on the second. This use of the head is specific to the Cecchetti system and indicates the emphasis he placed on all aspects of the body.

While there are no exact repetitions of Cecchetti material in Ashton's dance movement, he too considered all aspects of the body to be significant and his emphasis on the use of the head in a variety of ways makes a characteristic contribution to his dance movement. Other elements, like the structuring of *enchaînements* into patterns of four movements or variations in 'step' tempo within an *enchaînement* are also features which find their way into Ashton's phrases. These may have more to do with his training and that of the dancers, but they support the notion that the traditions of the training style infiltrate into the dance movement style of the choreographer.

There is also evidence that the ways in which Bronislava Nijinska combined her 'steps' into phrases had an impact on Ashton's phrases. Although Nijinska choreographed some eighty-five ballets and numerous dances in opera, little of her work remains. On film, besides *Les Noces* (1923) and *Les Biches* (1924), there exist five excerpts of works by Nijinska but all of these were choreographed between 1936 and 1951, after Ashton had worked with her. In order to narrow the field, these are not discussed here since her later developments are less likely to have affected Ashton. The extent to which these two works are representative of Nijinska's dance movement cannot be fully judged, but they were the two works which Ashton requested her to mount for The Royal Ballet in 1964 and 1966 and it is probable that he regarded them as significant. These works remain in the repertory of The Royal Ballet and it is on the basis of recordings made of *Les Biches* (1924), at the dress rehearsal, in 1964 and of a BBC recording made in 1978 of *Les Noces* (1923) that the following assumptions about her phrase patterns are made. Two phrases are chosen as examples.
In Les Noces (1923), the dance movement in the first three scenes, in general, comprises very long phrases. There are no equally long phrases in Les Biches (1924) but they may occur in other Nijinska works. Long phrases are found in Ashton, but are less frequent, and thus a shorter phrase from the final scene of Les Noces (1923) is analysed. The phrases in Scene 4 demonstrate changes in both the spatial and dynamic elements within a cluster. The opening cluster, danced by a group of twenty-four women is characteristic of other clusters in Scene 4.

♦ The first phrase has a parallel pas de bourrées couru, facing front, performed four times and each ends with a plié and parallel dégagé to the side. The second comprises a posé into a low arabesque croisé on the right leg, with right arm raised. It ends in a momentarily held pose: the supporting leg is turned out, in a plié, with the working leg in a sideways dégagé with a flexed foot. The cluster is then repeated.

There is a difference in the dynamics between the first, swaying, continuous pas de bourrée and the sharp, staccato posé of the second half of the cluster. The body designs too provide contrast. They change from the initial flattened shape of the first half, to the twisted appearance of the arabesque croisé and return to the opening position with a variation in the upper body: the arms are bent at the elbows with the hands in a relaxed fist, placed close to the left shoulder. Body design dominates the phrase and it is made apparent because of the suddenness of the pause caused by the quick plié at the end of each bourrée couru in the first phrase and the abrupt posé in the second.

Whilst similar contrasting elements in phrase clusters are evident in Les Biches.
a more dominant characteristic of the dance movement is the absence of 'breath pauses' (the term is accounted for in 4.3.2). This treatment demonstrates Nijinska's desire to create threads of movement rather than a series of 'separate pas' (Nijinska in Van Norman Baer, 1986, 85). One way in which she achieves this is to remove the pauses between 'steps' so that the landing also becomes the preparation for the next 'step'. A phrase cluster performed by the Hostess amply demonstrates this point:

♦ eight continuous entrechats six are followed by a demi-contretemps to each side and a glissade, assemblé. The elbows are bent, the shoulders change with each 'step' but the arms are conventionally placed for the assemblé.

Each 'step' is accorded a single beat, leaving no time to straighten the knees and take a second plié between each entrechat six, or the other 'steps'. The twisting shoulders create a highly active upper torso and add to the difficulty of the phrase: not only is the dancer required to perform high jumps at speed, but she must also demonstrate upper body mobility. Of equal significance is the timing. The entrechats six begin on the up-beat and the demi-contretemps are slipped into one beat. Jordan (2000b) observes that jumps on the up-beat are also a characteristic of Ashton's musical style. It is possible that Ashton could first have encountered the upbeat jump in Nijinska's dance movement and the omission of the breath preparation may also have been learnt from her. Some of his own phrases omit the 'breath pauses' and his capacity for forcing movement out of the torso, is also shared with Nijinska.

Although the enchaînements found in the classes of Cecchetti are taken as the basis for measuring the phrases in Ashton's work, a number of his phrases cannot be
fitted into this pattern. In some instances, where there is a series of repetitions of two or three ‘steps’, the whole of the recurring group can sometimes be considered as a single phrase. This occurs when the movements are related to each other and have no recognisable pauses and, as a result, the series combines to form a unit. An example of this longer phrase is found, in Les Deux Pigeons (1961) (Later, in 1962, the ballet was called The Two Pigeons). The young girl performs a series of eight percussive, arabesque, pas de bourrée, arabesque movements, which travels in a straight line downstage, moving from stage right to left. The arabesques, performed first time on pointe and second time in a plié, serve as part of the pas de bourrée: the first acts as the first ‘step’ and the second as the end of the pas de bourrée (the phrase has analogies with the pas de bourrée in Les Rendezvous, discussed in 3.4.3.2). These three ‘steps’ exist together as a unit, the repetitions comprise a phrase and the whole cannot usefully be divided. The phrase exemplifies the concept of mobility (referred to in 1.4 Chapter I) in that the movements are related, progressing without breaks from one to another. There are some other equally long phrases but they are more usefully described as ‘combinations’ (this term is defined in 4.3.5). The term is used to highlight a group of parallel, travelling phrase clusters, which belong together (see 4.3.5).

In contrast to the long phrases, there also exist very short phrases, which consist of no more than one or two ‘steps’ and display concepts of closure. Whilst many of these short phrases are repeated, the group cannot be regarded as a single entity and instead is described as a cluster of parallel phrases. In Symphonic Variations (1946) the two women, after their short duet, perform a series of parallel phrases comprising two ‘steps’: piqué derrière followed by a sissonne en avant. The perception of these short entities as a series of separate phrases is considered to be appropriate: first, because there is a
definite break between phrases and secondly, because there is a change of directional focus between each phrase. Other examples of similarly short phrases do occur but not with the frequency of the four ‘step’ phrase.

4.2 Categories of Phrase

In preparation for this chapter, extensive analysis of solo and corps de ballet dances was carried out by reference to the available video material from The Royal Ballet archives and commercial sources. This involved an examination of extracts from forty two works. Where possible, several versions of the dance were examined and discrepancies between dancers’ performances of the movement noted. Although the Benesh notation does not single out phrases, where questions arose concerning differences in ‘steps’, both the notation and, in some cases, the dancer who performed the role were consulted. Phrases from all the works examined were documented, the recurring treatments identified and the particular phrases for analysis were chosen because they provide the clearest examples of those specific treatments of the phrases.

The phrases are divided into categories, each of which demonstrates a different treatment of the group of components. In each, the dominating features of the phrase are either spatial, dynamic, or rhythmic. Within the categories, one or two phrases are chosen as examples. These can usefully be described as a key phrase pattern because they disclose the ways in which a range of spatial, or, dynamic, or other features are used as the main focus. The term is helpful because a key gives access to something unknown and the chosen phrase patterns are instances of the type of treatment in the particular category; pattern is used to describe the specific treatment of the components and the ways in which the ‘steps’ combine to focus attention on a particular element. The adoption of
this term thus allows a single phrase pattern to act as an example of a particular treatment. This does not mean that other phrases in the category use exactly the same range of components, but that the treatment is similar. The stylistic model adopted (Chapter I) allows for this approach because it enables phrases, comprising different ‘steps’ but treated in a like manner, to be gathered together under one heading. The categories also concur with those elements which Ashton and the dancers who worked with him recognise as being of significance: his commitment to flexibility in the upper body, to body design and to the use of contrasting dynamics. Other aspects of his style, however, also emerge from the investigation which follows.

The key phrase patterns are divided into the following categories, each of which is dominated by the characteristics highlighted in the title:

1. Spatial patterns in the Upper Body 4.3.1.
   a) phrases which remain in place, 4.3.1.1.
   b) travelling phrases, 4.3.1.2.
2. Body design emphasised through dynamic, 4.3.2.
3. Rhythmic and dynamic characteristics, 4.3.3.
4. Absence of breath pauses, 4.3.4.
5. Intricate floor patterns, 4.3.5.

The foregoing classifications aim to show that the inventive use of codified movements and the ways in which they are linked form a major aspect of the dance movement style.

4.3  **Analysis of Ashton’s Key Phrase Patterns**

Although sections of all the available Ashton dance on video were examined for
this chapter, the dance movement created for a range of different dancers was given priority over those dances specifically made for Ashton’s most frequent dance collaborators; this means that phrases consisting of grand allegro are not represented. Except in the case of specific dancers, notably Alexander Grant and Nadia Nerina, these are not a dominant feature of Ashton’s dance movement. Work made for these dancers, together with that made for the other influential dancers, is discussed in Chapter V. The phrases chosen for analysis in this chapter can be seen as archetypical and cover a full range of his dance movement.

4.3.1 Spatial Patterns in the Upper Body

The phrases analysed below are dominated by the upper body. In the majority, the focus is on spatial elements. These are emphasised through the dynamics, with the actual shapes and virtual lines made by the body commanding attention. The treatment of the chosen examples is seminal to many of Ashton’s port de bras and the phrases provide a key to understanding other analogous phrase patterns. Four are chosen for analysis because each presents a different combination of spatial and/or dynamic elements and exhibits features which are developed and recur in most of the dance movement. They can be subsumed under one heading because they all relate to the upper body, but are divided into two sub-headings: phrases which remain in place and travelling phrases. Throughout, the actions of the upper body are seen to be crucial to Ashton’s dance movement style.

4.3.1.1 Phrase Patterns which Remain in Place

Two phrases are analysed under this heading. They are found in Les Rendezvous.
(1933) and *Symphonic Variations* (1946) and the dancer remains in one place, with minimal movement in the lower body.

The phrase in *Les Rendezvous* occurs in the male solo and comprises a parallel phrase cluster. This dance was originally danced by Stanislas Idzikowsky (see Chapter III), and the phrase bears some of the hallmarks of Cecchetti’s style: in particular, there is extensive use of *épaulement*. Ashton presents the body asymmetrically and makes use of *épaulement* to emphasise its three-dimensional aspects, although the movements themselves are basic.

In the analysis which follows, the spatial theories proposed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1981, 1983) are employed to draw attention to the actual and virtual properties of the movement. The dancer commences the phrase kneeling on the left knee in a *croisé* position, the hands rest on the shoulders and the left elbow is thrust forward. Thus the body is inhabited by a spiral-shaped design. It is made apparent through spatial tension, created between the protruding elbow and the raised knee. The movement untangles and rewinds the shape and comprises the following:

♦ an immediate change of shoulders to right *croisé* develops into a circular *port de bras* of the right arm. As the body bends forward, the arm moves from a low crossed position in front, ending on the right shoulder, and returns to the spiral body design. In the second phrase, the left arm performs the same movement, though without moving the shoulders; it ends with the right shoulder forward. The dancer remains kneeling throughout. (Video example, 28)

This short phrase cluster uses the full range of spatial features identified by
Preston-Dunlop (1981, 1983). The arms and torso change from one body design to another, achieved through the circular spatial progression. This virtual semi circle, left by the first port de bras, fades into the body design, but is made more conspicuous because it is initiated from an impulse at the start of the movement. The phrase appears complex because of the number of body designs occurring, chord-like together. These appear simultaneously, materializing in the arms, which move from one design to another, and in the head: the latter made apparent by the spatial projection of the eyes. Spatial tension in the phrase is both physical and virtual. Preston-Dunlop (1981, 192) argues that spatial tension is usually created by the play between virtual and actual elements, but that it can also be purely virtual. Physical tension occurs in the spine and also between the knee and the shoulder and virtual tension is created by an illusory line between the elbow and knee. The phrase ends with a spatial projection, effected by the face and eyes, looking outwards, over the front shoulder. The presence of all these spatial features demonstrates Ashton’s concern with space, using the arms and shoulders to animate the area around the body.

Alastair Macaulay notes that the ‘kinesphere of an Ashton dancer is less expansive than that of a Balanchine dancer’ (1992, 11) but that the space used is more embellished. Whilst Ashton’s movement has been perceived as complicated (Beaumont, 1949b and Denby, 1986, 58) or intricate (Macaulay, 1992, 11), the foregoing analysis demonstrates that Ashton frequently uses basic movement and that this is not always the case. The impression of complexity is caused by two factors: a combination of unorthodox spatial paths, which deviate from the conventions of the codified port de bras, and by flexibility in the torso. For instance, the movement paths are different from those followed in the codified movements: in the phrase above, the arm moves across the body’s central axis
in a sweeping circular movement, yet, in codified port de bras, the arms rarely, if ever, cross the torso’s centre. It is this feature which contributes to the impression of an expansive, open upper body in the classroom. In Ashton’s phrase, the route, from a low, crossed position to a higher, yet still more compact shape, exaggerates and expands the possibilities of the port de bras. Equally, the generation of the action from the croisé épaulement increases the perception that the movement is convoluted and restricted.

Dynamic elements also operate to produce an impression of plasticity. The movement around the upper body appears fluid and generous, created by the twisting and bending torso and from the impulse at the start of the action. The circular swirling movements of the arm generate fluidity and helps to soften the angularity of the protruding elbows and knee. The perception is of continuous motion which occurs because the movement is passed from one body part to the other: the circle is completed at the shoulder and its impact is transmitted to the other shoulder and arm which generates an impulse for the second progression. These soft, pliant actions are uncharacteristic of traditional male ballet, which generally promotes a more conventional presentation of the man as strong and powerful, an impression reinforced by the more expansive port de bras of the codified movement.

There are various features of this phrase which occur similarly in others or which are developed to create more complex patterns. For instance, circular progressions combining spatial tension, body design and projection are found in Le Baiser de la Fée (1935) in the opening phrase of the Bride’s solo (see video example, 51). There, the dancer is moving and the progressions are formed vertically around the head and shoulders, whilst in the phrase above, they are horizontal. The involvement of all these spatial features is characteristic of much of Ashton’s movement for the upper body and
is one of the reasons why dancing Ashton’s movement demands a high level of energy. Michael Somes (in Daniels, et.al. 1997, 30) maintains that the arms were much more important to Ashton than the feet, which, he claims, were ‘de Valois’ province’ (see Chapter II, 2.2.4).

Another distinctive feature of Ashton’s dance movement is the creation of volume around the torso, evident in several works, including Symphonic Variations (1946) and Birthday Offering (1956). When coaching the Bride’s solo from Le Baiser de La Fée (1935), Margot Fonteyn (Foy, 1988, video) also stresses the importance of volume, advising that the arms should feel as though they are enclosing a balloon. A similar impression is conveyed in the opening *port de bras* phrase in Symphonic Variations. The circular *port de bras* carves out the space, emphasising volume and expanding the area around the upper body, but in a more sculptural manner than the previous phrase.

The arms in *Symphonic* follow a circular route, which curves outward from the body tracing a semi-circular path, but then curves upward over the head to form a complex body design, involving several simultaneous designs. The phrase, performed by three women, begins in a design: the arms are relaxed at the sides of the body and the right foot is crossed over the left ankle, pointed and resting on the ground; the dancers’ heads are turned looking downwards over the left shoulder:

♦ the dancers rise to fifth position on *pointe*, executing a rapid *bourrée couru* on place. As they do so, the arms move immediately to fifth position *en avant*; not as in the classroom position, but asymmetrically to the left side of the body. Retaining the oval volume of the arms, a half-circle is traced to the right side; the circle is then continued by the right arm moving over the head to an extended fifth
position. It reaches an elongated, stretched out body design, in which the torso is both twisted and tilted and the head bowed. The left arm remains stretched in opposition across the body. As the phrase ends, the feet return to the starting position. The minimal activity of the lower limbs gives extra life to the port de bras yet without detracting attention from it. (Video example, 29)

The way in which the choreutic units materialise in this phrase has some similarity with the previous port de bras. However, in this phrase, spatial projection is less evident. In the final body design, the eyes focus down towards the floor, cutting the line of communication between dancer and audience. The body design is made visible by the physical tension caused by the position of the arms, which pulls the shoulders together, emphasising the span between the two arms, and by the virtual tension between the upper right arm and the crossed foot.

The body design involves both a semi-circular pattern and two (virtual) parallel lines, formed by the upper and lower arms (see drawing). The semi-circle stretches from the upper arm through to the crossed foot and is pierced by the left arm which protrudes at right angles to the body. These complexities, not only of the body designs but also of the use of the space around the body can only be fully identified by using the spatial theory formed by Preston Dunlop (1981, 1983), which isolates specific stylistic features, in this case, unusual spatial projections and complex body designs. The use of the spatial theories helps to identify the nature and degree of detail which occurs in each, apparently simple, phrase.
Analysis of the choreutic content of the upper body in the dance movement demonstrates how far Ashton moved from the orthodox routes of the codified movements. His body designs are also changed from codified positions and are a central feature of the dance movement. Ashton, in conversation with Els Grelinger (1994, 24), believed that his main strength as a choreographer lay in his ability to create beautiful poses and that it was only when these had been formed that he would find a way of connecting them. A characteristic feature of these is the twisted upper torso, evident in this pose and recurring in many of his dances (see drawing, Chapter VI): for instance in the Bride’s solo in Le Baiser de la Fée (1935), in the Fairies in The Dream (1964) and the Pas des patineuses in Les Patineurs (1937) amongst others.

A further distinguishing feature of the body designs is their complex patterning, with separate designs occurring in different body parts simultaneously. Whilst the genesis of these body designs is in the codified movements, in particular as interpreted by Cecchetti, they are significantly different from the wider less complex positions of today’s
training. Equally, the employment of different paths from those used in codified movement demands a highly active, mobile torso and this can only be easily achieved through a training which strengthens the lower pelvis, allowing freedom in the torso.

4.3.1.2. Travelling Phrases

This section discusses key phrase patterns which use complicated upper body actions with basic ‘steps’ and movements. The upper body enhances and magnifies the ‘steps’, but equally, the absence of difficult actions in the lower body allows for a more intricate upper half. Joan Lawson (1951, 704) notes that this is a characteristic of Ashton’s dance movement and that even in early works like Capriol Suite (1930), he used the *port de bras* to amplify and adorn simple actions such as the stepping movements of a pavane. In some key phrases, attention is drawn to the upper body because of the contrasting body designs, in others, it is because of the dynamic elements.

Two phrase clusters, from Cinderella (1948, Fairy Godmother variation made in 1965) and Ondine (1958), provide an illustration. They are chosen because they are clear examples of the variety of Ashton’s upper body movement, used either to enhance a basic codified movement, or as a foil to walking actions.

The following phrase cluster uses basic ‘steps’ with some locomotion. The contrasting shapes made in the body and the spatial paths of the arms, make the upper body the dominant element. The cluster occurs in the Fairy Godmother’s variation in Cinderella (1965) and comprises three phrases in an AAB pattern: the first two are repeated identically and the third has only three of the four ‘steps’ from the initial phrase. Travelling diagonally towards stage left, the cluster is found near the beginning of the dance and follows on from a repeated picked-up staccato-like *pas de bourrée*. The A
phrase comprises the following ‘steps’:

**Lower body:**
- a low open *arabesque* on the left foot on *pointe* is completed by a transfer of weight to the right foot. This is followed by a *tombé* to an open fourth, on the left foot, and a *rond de jambe à terre en dedans* with the right foot; phrase B omits the *arabesque*.

**Upper body:**
- Both arms are raised above the head, with the palms facing outwards for the *arabesque*. On the *tombé*, the torso tilts over the supporting leg with the arms in fourth *en haut*, right arm up. As the leg moves from back to front, the arms, simultaneously, sweep around bringing the left arm up to fourth *en haut*. The torso too imitates the sweeping arm and moves from a horizontal bend forward to a bend on the right side, towards the audience. (video example, 30)

*Labanotation example:*

![Labanotation example](figure 4)

This Labanotation example demonstrates the extent to which the movement is
concentrated in the upper body and the way in which this is reinforced through a similar spatial path in the lower body. The contrasting body designs are also evident.

These are basic ‘steps’, and even the movement of the arms is not significantly different from codified arms. The phrase’s distinctive characteristics are found instead in the use of the torso, the range of spatial elements and the concentration of the actions in the second half of the phrase. The music is unobtrusive and the phrase registers because of the contrasting body design: in the first ‘step’ it is star shaped with the limbs and head acting as points of the star whilst in the third and fourth ‘steps’ the upper body has a curved design.

The actions of the arms also draw the eye. During the rond de jambe, the right arm makes a semi-circular progression inwards; the left, although also circling inwards, moves upwards, in opposition to the right. The spatial paths made by the arms are distinctive. They do not make the wide circles of the codified movement but have relaxed elbows, drawing the circles close to and almost touching the body. The arm movements, generated from the tilting, twisting torso, resonate in the rond de jambe heightening the circularity and, consequently, the contrast between it and the star-shaped arabesque.

The spatial projections made by the head and eyes play an equally significant role. According to Katherine Healy (1994, 18), Ashton believed that the head and eyes should also be choreographed and she claims (1994,17) that one of the main corrections Ashton made was of her use of the head. He insisted that she make clear, definite movements, never allowing the head to remain static. In the opening arabesque, in the Fairy Godmother’s variation, the head is raised up and the eyes project upwards and out. On the tombé, the head remains in line with the shoulders, but the eyes project downwards, whilst on the rond de jambe, as the torso twists, the head turns and the eyes focus towards
the audience. This patterning of spatial projections is a key feature of many of Ashton’s phrases. For example, a similar treatment of the head and eyes occurs in other phrases such as, the flute dance in La Fille mal gardée (1960) and the trio in La Valse (1958) and several of the dances Ashton made for Fonteyn depend on projections of the head and eyes.

Dynamic variation also plays an important role in many Ashton phrases and throughout the conference Following Sir Fred’s Steps (1994), the dancers who coached the Ashton dances made repeated references to this aspect of the movement. According to Michael Somes (1961, 53), Ashton deliberately restrained some movements so that the following faster movement would make more impact. In the example just given, there is a contrast in dynamics between the first and second half of the phrase. In the first half, the posé into the arabesque is direct and immediate while in the second, the movement of the arms drifts to the position rather than moving directly there. Thus the perception is of plasticity reinforced by the rounded body shape.

However, the extent to which the contrast between the two designs is evident varies amongst performers. In the three performances examined (1965, 1979 and 1996) the variations in dynamic were more strongly emphasised in some performances. In Monica Mason’s (1979) performance the contrast was significant; it was less so in those of Georgina Parkinson (1965) and Christina McDermott (1996). Mason holds the arabesque, making it appear sharper and more distinct than the circular rond de jambe which follows. The extra time taken for the arabesque also makes the actions in the last half of the phrase marginally faster, accentuating the contrast. Parkinson, however, emphasises the end position, focusing attention on the circularity of the body design, whereas McDermott presents a more fluid, sustained interpretation throughout. The effect
of these different emphases is to alter the perception of the phrase. In the version danced by Mason the phrase appears cleaner, with each 'step' more clearly defined, but with Parkinson and McDermott, it is continuity which dominates, creating an impression of mobility and pliancy. But despite these different interpretations, the differences between the designs and range of spatial elements are present and help to add light and shade.

Ashton also draws attention to the 'basic' 'step' in the phrase. The rond de jambe à terre, identified in Chapter III as a signature 'step', but as a basic exercise in the codified classroom movement, is given increased significance by the spatial activity of the upper body. This is because the dual circular actions of the lower and upper body cause the 'step' to register as the dominant element of the phrase. Analogies can be made between this phrase and a similar use of the signature 'step' in Natalia's phrase in A Month in the Country (1976) (video example, 13).

The key elements of the phrase are thus found in the use of contrasting body designs, the spatial projections of the head and eyes and the enhancement of a basic 'step' through a combination of spatial and effort elements in the upper body. The clustering of the actions into the second half of the phrase is also a distinctive feature and is even more pronounced in other phrases (see paragraphs 4.3.3).

Employing the upper body to give significance to simple 'steps' occurs in several Ashton phrases but in the next phrase cluster, the movements only comprise strutting walks and a swivel on two feet. This particular phrase cluster is chosen because its qualities are so different from the previous example. It acts as a key phrase pattern because it demonstrates complex treatment of both upper and lower body, though employing basic movements to do so. Thus the effort is equally divided between both upper and lower body. It is distinctive because, despite the lack of difficulty in either
groups of movement, both halves are treated in a detailed manner. It occurs in Ondine (1958) Act III during the Mediterranean Divertisements and is danced by a trio, two women and a man. The dancers begin the first phrase facing sideways, upstage and travel to stage right and left. They perform the following actions:

**Lower body:**

- two steps travelling forward, facing stage right, with the right and left leg, the left leg then moves back and the body turns sideways with it. This is followed by a swivel, which involves taking the right foot back *en dehors*, to end facing stage left. In the second phrase, the right foot travels forward to stage left, then back, and finally, the left foot moves back, transferring the weight, before moving into a series of *chaînés*.

**Upper body:**

- The first phrase starts facing *en face* to stage right. The arms move to fifth *en haut* as the right and left feet move forward. They move to the hips when the left foot moves back and through second position to fifth during the swivel. In the second phrase, the arms return outstretched to shoulder level for the step forward; to the hips for the step back and almost to *arabesque* for the last step. The head moves back and forth in accordance with the directions of the legs (video example 31).

This demonstrates a complicated pattern of movement demanding rapid changes of direction and very quick shifts of weight, often from the same foot: as soon as the foot is placed on the ground it is immediately raised and moved backward. These rapid directional shifts have their genesis in the de Valois class and depend largely on the abilities conferred by that training. The steps are not quite walking steps but involve a
bounce on each, giving them a more dance-like appearance.

The following Labanotation example was formed from the movement of Pirmin Trecu, the male dancer in the trio.

(figure 5) 183
The notation example demonstrates the dense concentration of movement in the lower body, the shifting directions and the corresponding activity in the upper body. The actions are not evenly placed in that the arms do not always move at the same time as the body.

Materialization of the choreutic units is only faintly discernable and the cluster, unusually, contains almost no perceptible spatial progressions. A possible reason for this is that the arms are lifted over the head and then to the hips so rapidly that the virtual line only emerges on the third movement of the arms as they move to fifth position and into the final arabesque. Spatial projections occur only in the fourth movement where the arms move to a second position from fifth and again in the final arabesque. The impression of lines extending beyond the kinesphere is created only in these two movements. Body designs feature more strongly but these too change rapidly and are perceived as brief punctuation marks. Whilst there is little time for the eye to focus on the actual design, they are, nevertheless, registered as the stable elements in the phrase.

The designs occur mainly in the upper body and attract attention because of the clipped dynamic. The arms move decisively to positions, with the impact coming at the end of the movement, and it is this which draws the eye to the upper body. According to Jack Anderson (1970, 8), however, curves and flowing lines, as opposed to strong impactive movement, are more frequently found in Ashton dances, a comment borne out by other writers. (Moore, 1952, 399). While this may be part of their perception of Ashton's style, several of his dances do give priority to forceful impactive elements. There are enough phrases with similar properties to those in Ondine, for forceful movement to be significant in Ashton and for this treatment of the upper body to signify as a key patterning element. For instance, the Blue Skater in Les Patineurs (1937) and the
Town Mouse in Tales of Beatrix Potter (1970), amongst others, manifest similar dynamic properties, the effect of which is to draw attention to the upper body.

The phrase is dense and this is increased by the rapid tempo and clustering of actions in the first phrase. It starts on the last beat of the previous bar and sometimes has several movements to a beat, requiring the dancer to move at a brisk pace. Despite the rapid activity of the lower body, it is the energy generated from the upper body which registers: the torso appears to twist from side to side and the arms activate the space around the body. Ashton crams multiple movement of body parts into this short dance phrase and this is a key feature of similar phrases throughout his dance movement. In all the phrases, several body parts - limbs, torso, eyes and head - move sometimes simultaneously, sometimes successively, making phrases of densely packed movement.

This particular phrase acts as a key phrase pattern because of the ways in which directional changes, shifts of weight and multiple activity in the upper body combine to create spectacular movement without employing codified virtuosity. The codified movements are only hinted at and speed and dynamic take priority over carefully placed arm positions and turn-out. Additionally, it demonstrates Ashton's ability to take pedestrian movement and embellish it. The dancers, Merle Park, Pirmin Trecu and Doreen Wells, perform the dance with little attention to the demands of codified movement and the phrase exemplifies Ashton's preoccupation with lively, animated movement. As Judy Thomas (in Daniels, et.al. 1997, 28) points out, 'If you made the movement work the way he saw it, he didn't actually care how you did it'.

These two examples, from Cinderella (1948) and Ondine (1958), demonstrate and reinforce the significance of the upper body in Ashton. Its activity gives basic 'steps' and movements a spectacular quality and demands a highly mobile neck and torso. The torso
is involved in both phrases, tilting, twisting and turning, increasing the range of both the movement and the limbs. According to Ann Hutchinson Guest (1983, 66-76), such an extensive use of the torso is less common in codified ballet movements. Thus it is important, both for performance and the development of the dancers’ technical abilities, to draw attention to the way in which it is used by Ashton.

Ashton draws attention to the upper body in each phrase, though using different means to do so. In the phrase from Cinderella (1948), it is because the major activity is concentrated in the upper body, while in Ondine (1958), despite the presence of activity in the lower body, attention is drawn to the upper body by the body designs, which briefly punctuate the cluster.

In both the phrase and cluster examined, Ashton’s commitment to dynamic contrast is evident. The notation demonstrates his tendency to bunch actions together in one part of the phrase or cluster, giving only one beat or half a beat to a movement and in contrast to allow more time in another section of the phrase.

In all four phrases examined, the upper body has a constant dialogue with the space. It attacks it, accentuates its volume, gathers it and releases it. The treatment is employed to increase the movement of the upper body and demonstrates Ashton’s need to create activity by animating the space around the body. The use of Preston-Dunlop’s (1981,26, 1983, 80-82) approach to the choreutic units, draws attention to this and to the complexity of Ashton’s spatial patterns.

A similarly activated upper body is found in some of Nijinska’s phrases. Lydia Sokolova (1989, 216) describing Nijinska’s rag Mazurka solo in Les Biches (1924), comments on the way in which Nijinska “flew around the stage, performing amazing contortions of her body”. Twists and turns of the upper body feature consistently in Les
Biches and the upper body also plays a major role in Les Noces (1923), although there it is more in terms of body design. Ashton may well have absorbed these elements from her work but equally, the extensive use of épaulement, possibly derived from Cecchetti’s classes, is also evident and the result is a three dimensional and fully active presentation of the upper body.

4.3.2 Body Design Emphasised through Dynamic

Body design is of major importance to Ashton’s dance movement, as he himself noted (Grelinger, 1994, 22) and the phrases above show how contrasting body designs are used to draw attention to the upper body and increase the perception of activity. Many of his other phrases use dynamics to focus on a body design, drawing the audience’s attention to the design rather than to the movement. He achieves this primarily in two ways: either by creating an impact at the end of the movement so that the body design is given priority, or by creating sudden stops which allow the position to dominate. What is particularly significant in the following phrase is that the movement does not stop but has an impact at the end of each movement, forcing the dancer to form the body designs at a pace which is less than comfortable. The phrase selected for analysis here demonstrates how a specific treatment can make body design a distinctive feature and it provides a key to those phrases in which design is dominant. One phrase from Birthday Offering (1956) is chosen.

The solo (usually performed second) was made for Rowena Jackson, a dancer renowned for her clear and spectacular technique. As early as 1952 her dancing in Scènes de Ballet (1948) was noted (Anon, Sitter Out, usually thought to be PJS Richardson 1952, 589) and praised for its speed, precision and timing and for the understanding of
épaulement which it displayed. Ashton identified these qualities and gave priority to them in this solo. The phrase occurs near the beginning of the solo and forms part of a parallel cluster. It consists of the following:

- a retiré derrière in a plié, with arms rounded in front of the body and with the torso bent forward over the arms (body design 1), is followed by a quick hop into an open arabesque on pointe (body design 2). The plié, retiré derrière is repeated, this time with the arms in fourth en avant and the torso bent over the front arm (body design 3) and the phrase is completed by a coupé, forward into a quick pas be bourrée couru (body design 4) in fifth moving backwards. For the second half of the phrase, the arms remain in fourth en avant with the torso bent over the front arm (video example, 32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Design</th>
<th>Second Design</th>
<th>Third Design</th>
<th>Fourth Design</th>
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(figure 6)
These four designs are perceptible shapes, given greater emphasis by spatial projections. The shapes are made more apparent because, with each, the eyes project either downwards or upwards extending the range of the body design. The four shapes materialize because of the suddenness of the movement, the quick plié, the hop, the plié and the coupé before the pas de bourrée couru, and because of the changes in the torso. The shifting body weight also amplifies the body designs. It remains on the same foot for the first three movements, shifting from the full foot to pointe, and returning to the full foot before changing to two feet on pointe. This necessitates fully centring the weight each time, demanding very quick reactions and an ability to adjust the weight forward and back while remaining on the same foot.

The body designs are complex and, in three of them, a contrast between the upper and lower body is involved. In the first and third, the arms are curved and create a semi-circular shape around the upper body, while the position of the legs is diamond shaped. The second has a star-shaped arabesque (unlike that of the Fairy Godmother where both arms are raised), whereas the fourth is curved, but given sharpness by the vigorous motion of the bourrée. These different shapes are derived from codified positions but altered by several factors: the exaggerated bends of the torso, the speed at which they occur, and the spikiness of the leg positions. They appear sudden and sharp as though propelled into the space. But, despite the curved upper body, the designs could be read as angular because they are connected by short bursts of energy, inviting such a reading.

In spite of remaining almost on the spot, the phrase appears active and densely packed. Each ‘step’ comprises a group of movements, which involves simultaneous actions of the head, arms and torso with the legs and feet. One beat only is allowed for each change of ‘step’ and this, combined with multiple movement, makes each ‘step’
highly concentrated. On the plié retiré the torso bends forwards, the head drops and the arm comes sharply together; on the arabesque, the head, arms and torso shoot upwards, returning again to the initial position for the repeat of the first body design, now altered by the sideways bend and position of the arms. The final section of the phrase, the pas de bourrée couru, requires the torso to bend forward as the body is propelled rapidly backwards by the bourrée couru. Like the phrase in Ondine (4.3.1.2), the simultaneous movement of all the limbs creates maximum activity, reinforced by the dynamics and giving these basic ‘steps’ virtuoso qualities.

The dynamics in the first three ‘steps’ are direct and sudden and the movements of the arms, head and torso pierce the space around the body with quick sharp gestures. Each element of the body moves forcefully, straight to the position, accentuating the body designs. In the final ‘step’, the dynamic has more of an explosive quality, caused by the backwards propulsion of the rapid bourrée couru.

The extent to which the dynamic affects the perception of the phrase and encourages the body designs to dominate is highlighted by comparing it with a phrase from the Hostess’ dance in Les Biches (see 4.1). The two phrases have some common elements in that there are no breath pauses (see 4.3.4) in either and, in Les Biches, the torso, limbs and head also change with each movement. But whereas the Hostess’ phrase is perceived as fluid and easily accomplished because of the lack of fixed points, Ashton’s phrase looks harder to achieve and more spectacular. The strongly delineated body designs which materialise through the impact of the movement dominate, in contrast to the sustained qualities which take priority in the Nijinska phrase.

This key phrase pattern from Birthday Offering (1956) illustrates Ashton’s concern with body design in ways which are characteristic of his dance movement style. It also
incorporates other typical elements of the style which are less prominent but do contribute to the overall effect. For example, the absence of breath pauses makes the impact of the body designs more forceful by diminishing any extraneous movement. The use of several body parts simultaneously is also a feature of other phrases. Here, it makes the phrase more concentrated and difficult to execute, but in other phrases, it draws attention to the upper or lower body. Other phrases in this category have fewer or more of the stylistic features referred to above, but in all, the key element is the way in which the dynamics of the actions draw attention to the design.

Such qualities were rarer in Ashton’s dance movement at this time, since a major part of his dance movement was made for the more lyrical dance qualities of Margot Fonteyn. But their presence not only demonstrates the way in which he adapted his choice of movement for different dancers, but also challenges the perception that Ashton’s dance movement is confined to the lyrical and fluid (Moore, 1952, 399).

4.3.3 Rhythmic or Dynamic Characteristics

Jordan (2000b, 226) indicates that Ashton frequently created unexpected differences in dynamic between the music and the movement, adding accents to the movement where none are indicated in the music. This practice confounds expectation and introduces asymmetry in the phrase cluster. Ashton also creates variations in the timing within a phrase cluster by adding more ‘steps’ to the second cluster or phrase. To highlight this aspect of the dance movement, two examples are chosen, one from Cinderella (1948) and one from La Fille mal gardée (1960). Two phrase clusters are explored in 4.3.3 because Ashton alters the rhythmic and dynamic patterns in different ways. In both, extra ‘steps’ are added to the second phrase or second group of clusters.
In the first example, he introduces dynamic variation to create new rhythms, over and above those inherent in the codified movements themselves or in the music. In the second, he alters the pace of the movement, despite a constant musical tempo, challenging the conventional speed of a codified movement and removing the accents from the first version of the 'step'.

The first phrase comes from the Fairy Godmother's variation in Act I of Cinderella (1948/65). In it, Ashton combines both legato and strongly emphasized movement, creating an unusual juxtaposition of 'steps'. The phrase cluster occurs at the beginning of the dance and in the second phrase of the cluster, different, more strongly accented movements are choreographed to the same slow, lyrical music as those in the first phrase. It is useful to describe both phrases because, while the contrast in dynamic is present only in the second phrase, its crisper elements are highlighted by the presence of the first phrase and the subtle contrast between the two is more fully revealed by examining both. The first phrase comprises two 'steps':

- **a posé into arabesque** with the arms in first arabesque, followed by a held pose in fourth position croisé of the legs, with the arms in fourth en haut and the head inclined and slightly turned towards the audience.

The second phrase, executed to a repeat of the same music, consists of five 'steps':

- A repeat of the posé arabesque into fourth, but, this time, the arms go to fourth en avant in opposition, for the fourth position croisé. This is followed by a double pirouette en dehors and two quick échappés changés on pointe from fifth to second with arms in second (example, 33).
Ashton significantly alters the dynamics of the codified movements in this second phrase and between the 'steps' themselves. The *posé arabesque* in this phrase, although less sustained than that of the first, is perceived as relatively slow, whilst the *échappés* are crisp and quick. The insertion of these extra 'steps' comes as something of a surprise after the slow, lingering opening phrase. The choice of 'steps' is not generated by the music, which remains the same, and the *échappés* are performed quickly with an almost imperceptible closure in fifth. The use of the *échappé* in this way highlights Ashton’s approach to the codified movement. Instead of allowing the opening and closing to be performed with the same degree of stress, he changes it slightly. As a result, the *échappé* becomes more clipped and is perceived as having an uneven rhythm; the opening seems to be slightly slowed down, while its closure is accelerated. The extension to second position appears to be given priority and, because this is repeated in the arms, the open position dominates. The codified function of the pirouette, as a whirling movement, is also attenuated and the *pirouette* is used primarily to change the direction of orientation.
Beginning in a diagonal towards stage right, the *pirouette* ends to face downstage, diagonally left and the *échappés* are then performed to this corner.

The dynamics of the first phrase contrast subtly with those of the second. In the first phrase, both the *arabesque* and the pose in fourth position have sustained, flowing qualities, which match the legato tempo of the music. Because of this, the *arabesque* is performed as a continuous action and carries on upwards, never reaching a conclusion until the raised leg floats smoothly to the fourth position body design. This phrase demands the ability to perform slow, controlled movement qualities, usually associated with dancers who excel at adagio movements. Yet, the second phrase requires fleeter, more precise movement and these alternating demands recur throughout the solo.

The *arabesque*, in the second phrase, loses the on-going quality it had in the first. This is because the dancer is already mentally preparing for the *pirouette*. Thus the pose in fourth is no longer perceived as a body design and becomes instead the brief preparation for the turn. The ending of the *pirouette* is also the preparation for the *échappé* which means that breath pauses are omitted throughout the second phrase. But the phrase does not have the characteristics of those other Ashton phrases in which omission of the breath pauses is the main focus (4.3.4). For instance, it lacks density and incorporates an unexpected change in dynamics, with the introduction of the quick, percussive movements at the end. The dynamics of the phrase as a whole are also affected by the change in body orientation because the logical or conventional progression is denied and the diversion of the movement path alters the flow.

The only significant spatial element is facial projection. In the first phrase it is orientated towards the audience and, in the second, towards the feet. This directs the attention to the feet, something Ashton tended to do with dancers whose feet he admired.
But the effect here is to increase the sense of activity in the phrase and emphasise the change in dynamics.

Richard Alston (1984, 9) notes that Ashton frequently confounds the observer by using the same piece of music, sometimes heard later, to make two quite different phrases of ‘steps’. In the Cinderella (1948/1965) phrase cluster, the second phrase fills the same musical phrase as the previous one, only this time three extra ‘steps’ are added, making it a tighter, denser phrase than the first. The introduction of a flute, which coincides with the pirouette, could however, be Ashton’s reason for altering the phrase, but not for adding more ‘steps’. Following the swell of the music in the first phrase allows the music to amplify the movements, but in the second, Ashton counteracts this by making smaller, slightly sharper, movements. Jordan (2000, 220) also notes that Ashton sometimes creates movement independently of the music as for example in Les Patineurs (1937) when the two picked-up ‘steps’ of the White Skaters are supported by the music the first time, but not the second. Jordan notes that this tendency is a recurring feature of his approach to the music and demonstrates that despite Ashton’s claim to have been led by the music (Ashton, 1992, 33), his choice of ‘steps’ sometimes creates the dynamics, preventing the music from dictating the qualities.

The use of the theory of dynamics derived from Laban tradition, as a way of perceiving the movement from a perspective outside that of ballet, is helpful here because it highlights subtleties not otherwise evident. For instance, in the first phrase the energy flows through and beyond the body, investing the phrase with a leisurely quality. In the second, the energy is halted, initially by the pirouette and subsequently by the introduction of the échappé. The dancer’s attitude to time is also subtly affected in the second phrase. Whereas, in the first, the approach is indulgent with no sense of urgency, in the second,
the dancer is anticipating the ensuing two ‘steps’ and thus the first arabesque becomes a less sustained movement. These qualities do not reside in the dancer alone but are generated also by the phrase pattern. The dancer is forced to consider the whole phrase cluster and to adapt to the different levels of energy required for it and thus, interpretation is here limited by the choice and context of the movement.

The second phrase cluster for discussion in this section is in Act II of La Fille mal gardée (1960). It occurs near the beginning of the act when Lise performs a dance to a tambourine, played by Widow Simone. The cluster is made from one of Ashton’s favourite combinations:

♦ a small pas de chat, followed by a pas de bourrée dessous, repeated. In total both these ‘steps’ are repeated twelve times. The first four pas de bourrée use the picked-up version while the second quicker ones are little more than an accented shuffle. The arms vary with the dancer: Nadia Nerina holds them in a low second position, while Lesley Collier holds her skirt (video example, 34)

Phrase 1  Phrase 2

(figure 8)
Initially, Lise performs the combination twice to the left and twice to the right and the tempo is slow enough for each ‘step’ to be demonstrated with clarity. The left and right phrase cluster is then repeated twice, but with two phrases compressed into the same musical phrase which was occupied previously by one.

This practice has affinities with the construction of some of Cecchetti’s enchaînements. For example, both the Friday brisé, pas de bourrée enchaînement (Beaumont and Craske, 1946, 83) and the échappé changé sauté on Saturday (1946, 90) share elements with Ashton’s arrangement. The first enchaînement comprises a brisé, pas de bourrée to each side followed by three brisés and a pas de bourrée. In the enchaînement the codified version of the movement is used and thus is different from Ashton’s approach, but the rhythmic pattern, although not identical, has some analogy with Ashton’s. In Cecchetti’s sequence the first movement has a single stress followed by a movement with three equally stressed elements and this phrase is repeated. The second half of the enchaînement consists of three movements each singly stressed followed by a single movement with three accents. Typically, in Ashton (see chapter III 3.4.1.1) the pas de chat has only one accent, or, at least a barely perceptible second one, with both feet landing together, while the pas de bourrée has three and this pattern is repeated throughout the phrase cluster, despite the increase in pace of the movement.

The musical approach has similarities with the phrase from Cinderella (1948/65), in that extra ‘steps’ are fitted into the same musical phrase, but differs in that the basic elements of the ‘steps’ or phrase pattern are not changed.

Each phrase is multi-focused, with the dancer alternately directing the focus towards the feet, towards Widow Simone and outwards, to stage left. The upper body is more freely choreographed, although there is a deep bend in the waist on the pas de chat.
The head turns towards the working foot at the start, and towards the closing foot at the end of the *pas de bourrée*. Both the waist bend and turning head occur with each phrase and this considerably increases the density of activity in the quicker phrases.

The acceleration of the ‘steps’ also affects the qualities. In the slower phrase clusters, the picked-up *pas de bourrée* gives the movement a crisp, goal-orientated quality while the quicker version is more indirect with less clarity of position. The *pas de chat* is also affected by the change in tempo. Whereas it is a distinctive movement, in the first phrase clusters, different from the *pas de bourrée*, in the second, it only just leaves the ground, drawing attention to the completion of the movement. This coincides with the ending of each *pas de bourrée* in the second group of *pas de bourrée*; this has to be performed so quickly that the closure in fifth is accentuated and thus, as with the *pas de chat*, the abrupt ending becomes the main focus. In the first slower phrases, the execution of the ‘steps’ themselves is dependent on articulate, fleet, well-pointed feet, but is less reliant on turnout or accurate fifth positions. The second, faster half of the cluster depends on quick changes in direction and clear upper body movement.

The phrase cluster serves to demonstrate the way in which Ashton takes elementary codified movements and alters them by adjusting the speed at which they are performed. As a result, they occupy less floor space, appear more intricate, because less time is filled with more movement, and provide a contrast with the more precise *pas de bourrée* of the earlier cluster. Other examples in which Ashton similarly alters the tempo within a phrase cluster are found throughout the dance movement (see Grater in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 92-100).

The phrase examples in this section differ from those in 4.3.1. and 4.3.2. in that their focus is on contrasting dynamic. Like some of the previous phrases, they use basic,
even elementary codified movements as the starting point. But in the examples given in 4.3.1, Ashton amplified and thus changed the movements by creating complex upper body patterns; in 4.3.2 he used strongly accented body designs to alter the movement and arrest the flow of the phrase. In the examples in this section (4.3.3), it is the alterations in pace which change the codified movements and, as a result, give them different performance requirements. These particular movements are susceptible to alteration and it is possible that Ashton chose them because of this.

The phrases demonstrate that Ashton was adept at adjusting the codified movements so that they are differently accented but still retain links with their codified equivalent. Equally, they display his interest in contrast and his use of the codified movements to that end.

4.3.4. The Absence of Breath Pauses

Dancers frequently describe Ashton’s movement as difficult (Newman, 1982, 231) without fully analysing the cause. A major factor is the absence of breath pauses (discussed below) in some phrases, which is also a feature of Bronislava Nijinska’s dance movement style (see 4.1). It is conceivable that this approach to dance movement was learnt from her, though Ashton may have absorbed this through working with her and dancing in her ballets. Absence of breath pauses can make the phrase dense and intricate, demanding a high energy level, but it can also cause the phrase to appear fluid and sustained. There are numerous examples of phrases without breath pauses in Ashton’s work. One is chosen to demonstrate the way in which their absence affects the phrase. It is a dense, close-textured phrase and is found in Enigma Variations (1968).

The term ‘breath pause’ is adopted here to describe the slight drop in energy that
usually occurs, in ballet, between the landing from one movement and the take off of the next. It can also include the added *demi-plié* performed on the upbeat before codified movements. A breath pause is used to give impetus to the movement which follows and its absence means that one movement has to provide the momentum for the next. The omission of breath pauses is not always significant, since a series of the same codified movement can be done without a breath pause, as in the *échappé on pointe*, or, a series of *entrechats quatre*. But it becomes a distinctive feature of the phrase when the movements in the series are not normally linked, or, when the build up of the ‘steps’ increases the pace at which the dancer performs, thus potentially removing the pace from the dancer’s control. For example, when there is no relaxation of energy between movements, the dancer has to anticipate and prepare for the final movement of the phrase when executing the first movement. When the phrase involves jumps and/or rapid changes of direction, this can be very demanding and requires repeated rehearsals to establish the kinetic sense.

In *Enigma Variations* (1968), the *pirouette* phrase in Troyte’s solo achieves its bravura quality through rapid pace and variety of turn, yet allows a maximum of two turns only for each *pirouette*. The phrase, which remains almost in one place, comes as something of a surprise at the end of a long diagonal of jumps.

♦ It begins *croisé* facing downstage right with a single *pirouette en dedans*, ending on *demi-pointe* with the leg extended in *arabesque*. The raised leg is placed forward in fourth crossed and the dancer jumps immediately to fourth *croisé* on the other side. He then performs a second quick jump to fourth and a second *pirouette en dehors*, ending in fourth, follows. The dancer continues the turn, *en*
dehors, on two feet, ending in another fourth position crossed, before performing a final double pirouette. The arms are in the conventional pirouette position, fourth en avant, for all the movements, including the crossed fourth positions (video example, 35).

Labanotation example:

The notation starts from the ending on demi-pointe and shows the concentration of movement within the phrase. The rapidity of weight transfer is dictated by the metronome count which is 146. Although musically this metronome reading accords only with an allegro and not a presto tempo, as the notation demonstrates, after the first section of the phrase, each movement has only one beat of music.

(figure 9)
As the dancer takes the arabesque at the end of the first turn, the action of the working leg, moving to fourth, becomes the preparation for the jump to fourth croisé, and this pattern, in which the completion of one ‘step’ becomes the take off for the next ‘step’, is continued throughout the phrase. The movements are performed within a short space of time and there is no opportunity for recovery between ‘steps’. Thus the dancer has to anticipate the final turn from the beginning of the sequence. A dense pattern is created and the perception is of a continuous turning motion. This vortex-like effect is reinforced by the spatial elements, which are confined to sudden changes in body design, from an open pattern in fourth to the compact shape of the turn.

Ashton frequently introduces changes in dynamic to create contrast or surprise but in this phrase this does not appear to be the case. The contrasting dynamics are, however, significant not least because they add to the performing demands. The dynamic alters from sustained to percussive movement and returns again to sustained for the second series of turns. This means that, despite the absence of breath pauses, the phrase does not have an on-going quality, but is interrupted by the jump and by the change of direction from stage right to stage left. Because there is relatively little happening to the arm movements, they are used primarily to aid the turns, and the actions are initiated from the legs and body working as one.

Whilst the torso, unusually in Ashton, does not play a major role in the phrase, it features in the turn on two feet. This is led by a sharp bend in the waist, adding a percussive element to the more sustained quality of the turn. It is important to highlight the dynamic in the phrase because its range, although not extensive, increases the expenditure of energy.

A number of features make the phrase characteristic of Ashton’s dance movement
style. For instance, the constant weight adjustments, made more difficult by the
directional changes of the floor pattern, the simultaneous though disjunctive movement
of the limbs, and the compression of many ‘steps’ into a short phrase of music, are all
typical features of the style.

The combination of these features, together with the omission of breath pauses,
makes demands on the dancer which have little to do with turn-out, extensions, or the
ability to cover large areas of the stage. Instead, the dancer is required to alternate
between turns, balances, jumps and turns without having time to adjust the weight; thus,
each change in equilibrium must be accurate. The movement is not solely culled from
the male balletic vocabulary and requires the ability to control short bursts of turning.

The phrase exploits the potential of the turn, and other phrases which omit breath
pauses also tend to have a single ‘step’ as their main focus. Whether the pace is rapid
or legato, the phrases all display a high concentration of movement. In the majority of
these phrases, spatial or dynamic contrasts can be less apparent and the role played by the
upper body, as in the phrase from Rhapsody (1980) (see Chapter VI, 6.4.3), is also less
demanding than in many other Ashton phrases.

The challenges which the absence of breath pauses brings need a specific
approach to moving and can be different from the traditional aims of the classroom.
Nijinska (in Van Norman Baer, 1986, 86) confirms this point and notes that much ballet
training fails to give the dancer sufficient knowledge to cope with different ways of
moving. She was keen to introduce more ‘movement’ into ballet and, as a result, her
own classes were often arranged in a way that omitted the breath pauses (Van Norman
Baer, 1986, 20). The ability to cope with phrases like that in Enigma Variations (1968),
and others in this category, needs a training which focuses on rapid directional changes
and which diminishes the preparation time between movements.

4.3.5. Intricate Floor Patterns

Section 4.3.1.1 demonstrated the ways in which Ashton used épaulement to emphasise the three dimensionality of the body but this is also indicated through his floor patterns. It is possible that he evolved these complex and changing patterns, to display different aspects of the ‘steps’. In certain works, such as Les Rendezvous (1933), Le Baiser de la Fée (1935) and Ondine (1958), there is a preponderance of these phrases, but they are also threaded through most of his dances. The phrase selected for analysis here comes from Dorabella’s variation in Enigma Variations (1968). It is chosen as a key phrase pattern to demonstrate the ways in which Ashton exploited the potential of a shifting floor pattern by starting the ‘steps’, within the phrase, facing one direction and ending them facing another. The phrase from Enigma, analysed in 4.3.4, also has some directional changes, but they are less significant there. Dorabella’s phrase has characteristic upper body features and could be considered under 4.3.1.2 but it is discussed here because of the way in which the floor pattern is used to moderate the effects of repetition, to display different facets of a ‘step’ and to exploit different ways of travelling.

Dorabella’s variation in Enigma Variations (1968) provides a combination of phrase clusters which, besides having an intricate floor pattern, has several other features which are characteristic of Ashton. These are also included in the discussion because they have a bearing on the directional switches in this and other phrases in the category. The group of phrase clusters is described as a ‘combination’ (Bartenieff uses the term to describe a group of phrases in Bartenieff et. al. 1984, 6) because the phrase cluster
comprises two short phrases and these two together are then repeated three more times. The term is not accounted for in the methodology because this level, which is more than a cluster, is not referred to throughout the thesis (apart from its introduction in 4.1) and is employed here only. The term is used for the sake of clarity and because the discussion is enriched if all four instances of the phrase cluster are treated as an entity.

The phrase cluster is made up of three ‘steps’:

**Lower body:**
- *a rond de jambe à terre* comprises the first phrase and is followed by the second phrase comprising two relevés: the first to *arabesque* and the second turning to *a développé devant*. It occurs four times.

**Upper body:**
- At the beginning of the *rond de jambe à terre*, the arms move almost to fifth *en haut* and then, as the dancer leans backwards, they fold down just behind the body to a low relaxed second position. For the second half of the phrase they are raised to first *arabesque* and then to fourth *en haut* for the *développé* (video example 36).

The phrase cluster has several characteristics of the typical Ashton phrase: a contrast in dynamic between the first and second phrase, significant focus on the upper body, and a change of head, arms and torso with each ‘step’. The pace of the phrase is relatively slow, with the emphasis on the body design which completes each phrase. For instance, in the *rond de jambe à terre*, the circular movement of the ‘step’ is quickened to give extra time to the backbend. Consequently the backbend appears quite leisurely and is perceived as the dominant movement of the first phrase. In the second
phrase, both body designs are emphasised by a sharp relevé. The dancer travels on each of the relevé ‘steps’ and thus adds energy to a codified movement that is usually more static. The introduction of these dynamic elements means that the cluster does not flow freely but is punctuated by brief pauses to display clear shapes. Despite these short pauses, and the presence of the body designs, the first ‘step’ and the extensions of the second ‘steps’ are performed with a sustained quality, which means that the phrase cluster is perceived as continuous.

The spatial progressions in the first ‘step’ are curved, as is the shape of the upper body in the last (développé) and this, combined with the legato dynamic of the ‘steps’, contributes to the perception of flow. Thus the angularity of the changing floor pattern is rendered relatively insignificant and the combination is perceived as both sustained and indulgent.

The most significant element of the phrase, however, is the constant alterations in direction with each ‘step’. The first rond de jambe à terre phrase faces downstage right and the second phrase ends facing upstage left; the second cluster starts upstage left and ends facing upstage right; the third starts upstage right and ends downstage left and the fourth remains facing downstage left. The use of these different directional foci allows Ashton to repeat the phrase without it appearing monotonous because the angle from which the body designs are seen alters each time.

According to Ann Hutchinson Guest (1981, 144) Bourvonville used equally intricate floor patterns, but his were devised to fit on a small Danish stage. Ashton’s may also, initially, have derived from necessity, but this can no longer have been the case at Covent Garden. Use of floor space in this way prevents the phrases from building momentum. Thus a diagonal or line of movement can comprise concentrated movement.
and constant switches in direction. As a result, covering a large stage with Ashton dance movement can involve more expenditure of energy than is needed in the movement patterns of, for example, Marius Petipa (1819-1910) (Hutchinson Guest, 1981, 144) which cover substantial areas with two, or, three codified movements. Nevertheless, the perception of these Petipa phrases, and others which travel in a continuous direction, is that they require a significant degree of energy expenditure. This is not necessarily the case, at least in comparison to that required by Ashton's dance movement.

Macaulay (1992, 12) describes Ashton's dancers' use of floor space as 'self-contradictory' because of the frequent switches in direction. These directional changes in this combination, and others in this category, are a central feature of much of his dance movement. They create intricate patterns of activity and allow the dancer to be seen from different view points. His obsession with intricate floor patterns is fully realised in Scènes de Ballet (1947) which is organised around complex geometric patterns. His aim there was to make a work that 'could be seen from any angle' (Ashton cited in Vaughan, 1977, 222).

In this phrase and others, Ashton uses the dancer's virtual square (see Chapter III for a discussion of this term) as the basis for directional changes. Phrases of 'steps' are designed to move and alter direction within this square. Progression along a continuous line is rare in Ashton and his use of these multi-focused phrases is contrary to much traditional male ballet movement which is usually designed to cover the space with fewer movements.

4.4 Conclusion

In her analysis of Ashton's music style, Jordan (2000b, 227-8) identifies
rhythmic asymmetry, upbeat phrasing, syncopation and the creation of independent choreographic contours as characteristic stylistic elements. There are of course connections between his musical style and his dance movement style, and it is evident that they are interdependent, the one growing out of the other. However, there are other aspects of dance movement style that are not revealed by an analysis of the musical approach, since this is not its purpose, and these are evident in the foregoing chapter.

The chapter confirmed that, in general, Ashton draws from a small pool of codified movements. These are altered by their position within the phrase and by the introduction of several devices: for example, by the use of extensive upper body movement and of contrasting rhythmic patterns for the torso, limbs and head. Many of his phrases are densely packed requiring different movements for each body part simultaneously. But the phrases vary in focus.

In some phrases, the role of the ‘steps’ is diminished so that body design can be given priority; sudden halts are required and the dancer has to execute a series of rapid, often complex, body designs. In phrases which focus on dynamic contrast, aspects of the codified movements are either pulled out for emphasis or are reduced in dimension. The codified movements are thus changed in order to compress them into a short musical phrase, or to make them faster. They are equally affected by the removal of breath pauses. In these phrases, the codified movements are prevented from fully forming their classroom shape and thus are perceived, if at all, as constituents of continuous motion.

Ashton develops and adjusts the codified movement, inherited from his dancers and from the range of available training styles, to create distinctive stylistic features. His phrases do not depend on values such as 180 degree turn-out, high leg extensions or an expansive covering of floor space. Instead, they are concerned with spatial elements
coloured with dynamic variety; both of which places demands on dancers and in some training systems these aspects are not always addressed.

As far as his dance heritage is concerned, Bronislava Nijinska's approach to movement appears to have contributed most to Ashton's phrases, in that his phrases are derived from similar tenets. The link with Anna Pavlova is more difficult to ascertain but an emphasis on spatial dexterity and vigour coupled with dynamic variety is apparent in her dancing. Since Ashton constantly referred to her as a source of inspiration, these features probably affected his perception and perhaps conception, of dance movement. The *enchaînements* of Cecchetti also bear a passing resemblance to Ashton's phrases in terms of their length and, sometimes, rhythmic construction, but the effect of specific training methods on the dancers he worked with is of equal significance.

The chapter extracted key phrase patterns in each category. The treatment of each is regarded as a stylistic hallmark and these key phrase patterns stand as the point of reference for the ensuing chapters. Also demonstrated in the chapter is the fact that very differently compiled phrases of 'steps' are given similar treatments and can thus be seen to be stylistically compatible. But in Ashton's work the dancers also played a significant role in its creation, through collaboration and through their own potentiality. Their role and their effect on his style are explored in the following chapter.
Chapter Five

Dance Partnerships: Ashton and his Dancers

5.0 Introduction

For some choreographers the dancer is little more than an object, a neutral body to be fitted into a pre-arranged pattern of steps (Farjeon, in Carter 1998, 24). For others, the dancer is the catalyst whose presence stimulates the creation of the dance. In the dance movement of certain choreographers, the influence of the dancer is apparent and the dancer’s movement style becomes the inspiration for the dance’s movement; it is into this latter category that Ashton falls. He needed the co-operation of the dancer to fashion his dances, making their strengths and skills a significant part of his dance movement style (Vaughan, xviii, 1977). Using the methodology already established, this chapter explores that relationship. It examines the dance movement he created with specific dancers and the ways in which he manipulates certain key phrase patterns, identified in Chapter IV, to draw attention to and amplify their talents. Crucial to the dance movement style is the collaborative interaction between Ashton and his dancers and their contributions introduce further layers and nuances to those characteristics already discussed in Chapters III and IV. Recognition of their participation could thus add to the range of possibilities for interpreting the dance movement style.

As anticipated in Chapter I, this study takes the view that the dancers’ style is not wholly personal but is, to a significant extent, affected by their technical training. A detailed analysis of the training was undertaken in Chapter II and thus is not repeated here, but distinctions between the training of one dancer and another are identified. The
analysis uses both written and video material.

5.1 **Is there an Ashton Body Type?**

The following paragraphs discuss the bodily appearance of Ashton dancers, as perceived by critics and the balletic world; photographic evidence has also been used. Whilst recognising the writer’s inevitable bias, the aim, nevertheless, is to discuss those elements which The Royal Ballet, and others, consider to be of fundamental importance to the female dancer, such as height, length of leg and construction of foot. Selected male dancers used by Ashton are also discussed, but their physical appearance was generally regarded as less fundamental.

As a profession, the balletic world adheres strongly to its own traditions and conventions without acknowledging that these are adapted to suit current fashions. Ninette de Valois, for example, looks back to the eighteenth century for a definition of dancer type, which she claims is still relevant. She identifies three (1937, 115-119) and classifies them according to their role in a dance work, which is dependent on their physical appearance. According to de Valois, her categories are derived from *Noverre’s Letters on Dancing and on Ballets* (trans. Beaumont 1930 from the revised and enlarged edition, St Petersburg, 1803), although Giannandrea Poesio has pointed out to me (discussion February 2000) that these roles were not classified until Carlo Blasis described them in his *Traité élémentaire théorétique et pratique de l’art de la danse* (1820). De Valois observes that the *danseur noble* who is taller and ‘perfectly proportioned’, is accorded the classical/heroic roles; the *demi-caractère* who is ‘elegant’ and of medium height, is given less lyrical roles and, in the ‘modern ballet’ (116), tends to be the technical virtuoso and finally the *character* dancer, who, according to de Valois,
needs few physical attributes, performs mainly mimetic roles and the balletic version of national dances. Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810) was describing the male body, but de Valois argues that the descriptions apply equally to the female body (121). There is no reason why this should apply, since the ‘classical/heroic’ roles were, in The Royal Ballet, usually given to the smaller female dancer.

In The Royal Ballet, founded by de Valois’, the practice of allotting roles according to bodily appearance was, and still is, evident (May 1996, 188). This may be for pragmatic reasons, since dancers who are admired for their technical capacity and ability to move rapidly (Wayne Sleep, Lesley Collier, Mikhail Baryshnikov) are generally smaller and shorter limbed. These rules are occasionally waived, since Collier, Rudolph Nureyev and Baryshnikov, all relatively small, have been cast as the ballerina or danseur noble. But in the main, the rules were observed and consequently had some influence on choice. In general, as far as the male dancer was concerned, Ashton did use the smaller dancers for the more flamboyant roles. For example, he used both Wayne Sleep and Graham Fletcher in dances that demand a display of technical feats, although the reverse was not necessarily the case. Some of the dance movement made for Anthony Dowell could, according to de Valois’ categorisation, be classed as both danseur noble and demi-caractère. Thus, in some ways, Ashton’s adherence to the rules is slightly ambivalent. But he was also influenced by his own proclivities and dance abilities and, as a result, his own body needs briefly to be considered.

At the beginning of his career, Ashton demonstrated the movement himself and sometimes worked it out on his own body. He was relatively small and, although never

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29 It could be claimed that these categories are also socially hierarchical but a discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study.
considered to be technically brilliant (see Chapter II, 2.2.3), had a great facility as a dancer. According to Margot Fonteyn, he had an extraordinary suppleness, which allowed him to fling himself into elaborate ‘swoops and twists and dives’ (1976, 57). Marie Rambert (cited in Barnes, 1961, 14) admired his sense of style and also remembers his wonderful ‘ease of movement’. Video material of Ashton’s early dancing is scant, but what there is demonstrates a capacity for rapid footwork and a concern with the spatial patterns in the upper body: detailed head movement and easy épaulement helped by a highly mobile torso (video, Gilbert, 1979). Physically, Ashton was slim with long thin legs and highly arched feet (Crisp, et.al. 1981, 21), but a survey of his most frequently chosen dancers indicates that, for him, thinness was not an issue. Indeed, he is reputed to have said of Isadora Duncan that she was ‘small, round, feminine, voluptuous... appealing - everything I thought, and think, dance should be’ (Vaughan, 1977, 389). Ashton’s female dancers tended on the whole to be small with an ability to move rapidly and with apparent ease. They were rarely as gaunt as today’s dancers, but then the notion of what constitutes the ‘ideal’ dancers’ body has changed over the years and Ashton’s ideals must, in some way reflect the ideals of the age.

There is little analysis devoted to the physical appearance of the dancers with whom Ashton chose to work. Early critics (Chappell, 1951, 83; Haskell, 1945) cite balanced proportions and well-formed feet as ‘essential’ for the female dancer, but are reluctant to develop this point further. James Monahan (1968, 55) claims that the ideal ballerina is about five feet three inches tall, has a strong light frame, a neat body and is distinctly elegant.

Beyond mentioning height, the physique of the male dancer in the twentieth century is rarely if ever discussed, at least not as a requirement for achieving the status
of principal dancer, or, indeed, any type of dancer. The reasons for this are complex and derive from the ballet profession's acceptance of what Ramsey Burt describes as 'traditional' ideas about the nature of femininity and masculinity as somehow 'natural', innate and essential' (1995, 31). In other words, the men were judged according to notions of maleness which portrayed the man as powerful, strong and in control (Burt, 1995, 73). The type of movement reserved for men dancers is a tacit indication that these attributes could be derived from the training. There was thus no need to discuss their physical attributes. Burt's research is concerned with the representation of masculinity in theatre dance and concerns issues of gender. Gender concerns per se are beyond the scope of this inquiry, but his research draws attention to the conservative nature of the twentieth century's approach to the body and, in particular, to that of the male dancer. Ashton it seems had a more ambivalent approach and the movement he made with Dowell (see 5.3.6) is not confined to 'traditional' male balletic movement.

For Ashton, Anna Pavlova embodied the 'ideal' female ballet dancer, but his admiration was more for the 'sheer glory' (Vaughan, 1977, 9) of her performances than for her bodily appearance or technical achievements. As already noted, he admired her feet and was later often seduced by well arched, articulate feet in female dancers: of the five women he most frequently choreographed for, three were habitually singled out for their expressive footwork. Yet, paradoxically, Fonteyn, his most frequent collaborator, had weak, problematic feet (Fonteyn, 1976, 46, 59) and much of the movement he made for her draws attention away from them, although he did consider that she had a 'wonderfully proportioned' body (Ashton in Wohlfahrt, 1996, 27). Once he ceased to

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30 This group includes Alicia Markova, although her dancing is not discussed in this chapter.
make dances for Fonteyn, he chose from an assorted range of female body types, though all were relatively small, and it can be assumed that bodily appearance, although a factor, was not his chief reason for selecting a dancer. Six dancers have been chosen for analysis and the rationale for their selection follows in 5.2.

By 1964 (Money, K. 1973) Fonteyn was slim with well defined muscles, yet, earlier video material (in Foy, 1989), show that as a youngster she had rather formless muscles and quite a rounded body. Her feet, described by Ashton as ‘pats of butter’, had little strength with under-developed arches (Kavanagh, 1996a, 184). Nadia Nerina did not have the slim, long limbed appearance of the later Fonteyn nor of today’s ballet dancers. From photographic evidence and my own memory, her legs were somewhat short with full thighs (White & Ashbridge, 1951, between 32 & 33 and Kavanagh, 1996a, 366), but film and video evidence (Dale, 1961) indicate that her feet were strong and flexible. Like the young Fonteyn, Lynn Seymour had a well rounded body, but her muscles were more strongly defined and her feet highly arched. Antoinette Sibley (Karsavina, 1962, 24) had strong legs and flexible feet, but was not long-legged. Apart from articulate feet, the only thing these dancers have in common is their height; none is more than 5ft.4ins tall. Height does appear to have been important to Ashton: less of his dance movement is created for the taller dancer, but this may only indicate that there were fewer tall female dancers in the company during the Ashton years.

As far as the two male dancers are concerned, Dowell was of medium height with long muscular legs and well defined feet (Lawson, 1979, 15), whilst Grant was small and muscular with short legs and almost no visible instep (Haskell, 1952, 169). Indeed, although Ashton clearly admired highly arched feet, they appear to have been of less importance in the male dancer.
The qualities Ashton valued were motion and the ability to effect rapid changes of weight (Ashton in Macaulay, 1984, 3-4). These appear to have been more important than an ‘ideal’ bodily shape. However, the very different movement made for each of the dancers indicates that although shape per se may not have been an issue, the dancers’ physical abilities were. He identified what he considered to be their best features and arranged the dance movement to draw attention to them. In some cases the dance movement gives priority to the feet, in others to fluid arms or a long-limbed line.

5.2 Rationale for Selection of Specific Dancers for Discussion

Ashton selected his dancers for a number of reasons: some like Markova reminded him of Pavlova (Kavanagh, 126, 1996a), others like Fonteyn (Vaughan, 128, 1977) and Nerina (Kavanagh, 445, 196a) were foisted on him. He literally fell in love with Grant but also with his energetic movement (Kavanagh, 384, 413, 1996a) and others were selected simply because he liked their way of moving.

The reasons for the choice of the six dancers examined in this chapter are three-fold: first, he created more major works for them; secondly, many of these works are still in the repertory and thirdly, video material of these dancers performing the created works is available. They also provide alternative responses to the dance movement style and hence add a range of different movement to that already identified. Regrettably, several dancers, such as Alicia Markova, Pamela May, Julia Farron and others are omitted because of lack of source material. Only fragmentary evidence of the dance movement of Alicia Markova exists on film and what there is is inadequate to demonstrate her style, but references to her from literary sources are occasionally cited. The dance movement style of Lesley Collier has also been omitted because although she contributed important
material, analysis undertaken for this chapter showed that some of her qualities, such as speed and strong, articulate feet, are shared with Sibley, possibly because of similar training. However there are several references throughout the thesis to Rhapsody (1980), the most significant work she made with Ashton.

Lack of film and video evidence also prevents discussion of Michael Somes, a dancer for whom Ashton created over twenty four roles. The video material that survives shows him in later life, when he was no longer able to dance to full capacity. There is a film of Ondine (1958), but there his solo material consists mainly of pedestrian movement and mime, which is not the concern of this study. Apart from Symphonic Variations (1946), Cinderella (1948) and Daphnis and Chloe (1951), few of the other works he created have been filmed or notated, or indeed, remain in the repertory. In some ways, Somes’s major contribution to Ashton’s dance movement style came later as a repetiteur. Kavanagh claims (1996, 476) that he had an excellent retentive memory and an ability to break down the music into the relevant counts. However, more material exists of two other male dancers, Alexander Grant and Anthony Dowell, for whom Ashton made several important dances. Their contribution covers forty years, enough time to provide an adequate sample of the dance movement he made for male dancers.

Margot Fonteyn’s collaboration with Ashton spanned fifty years, from 1934 - 1984: she was one of the four women in a new pas de quatre that he inserted into Les Rendezvous (1933) in 1934, while in 1984 he made Acte de Présence, a short mime scene to music from The Sleeping Beauty (Tchaikovsky, 1890). He created more major roles with her than with any other dancer and, of these thirty, seven are still performed. Her dance relationship with Ashton is regarded, by most dance writers, as seminal to the formation of his style. Yet, despite her prominence, few early recordings of her in the
Ashton roles exist. With the exception of Cinderella (recorded in 1957), Ondine (recorded 1959) and a short solo, First Arabesque, made for television in 1937, all the other recordings date from her later years. There are two other rehearsal recordings of Symphonic Variations (1946) and Daphnis and Chloe (1951) in The Royal Ballet video archives, but Daphnis is filmed without music and Fonteyn is not dancing to full capacity in either. Material has, however, been examined from both.

The other female dancers chosen have all created one or more major roles for Ashton. Nadia Nerina's dance movement is considered to be significant not only because a full evening work was made for her, but also because she is one of the few dancers, with whom Ashton worked at the Sadler's Wells/Royal Ballet, who was trained fully in the Cecchetti system; the training style he regarded most highly (Ashton cited in Pritchard, 1996, 107). Her earliest created Ashton role is Spring in Cinderella (1948) of which no video of her performance is available, but there are recordings of her dancing in La Fille mal gardée, (Dale, 1961) and in her own solo in Birthday Offering (Wood, 1956). Apart from the video material there is little useful written commentary on her dancing. What there is provides sparse accounts of her dance movement style and tends to focus more on personal appearance. The video material shows her easy technical facility and vitality and there is a marked contrast between her style and that of Fonteyn. Fonteyn's dancing shows ease, restraint and carefully placed positions, while that of Nerina is less cautious, with limbs that are flung rather than placed in the space.

Lynn Seymour also created several roles with Ashton: Les Deux Pigeons (1961), A Month in the Country (1976) and Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan (1976). Ashton admired the pliancy of her movement and above all her feet which, he claimed, reminded him of Pavlova (Vaughan, 1977, 321). Her movement was
more fluid than either Fonteyn’s or Nerina’s and, as Vaughan (321) puts it, she had the capacity to ‘subordinate technique to total expressiveness’. Unlike the movement made with Fonteyn and Nerina, the dance movement in Les Deux Pigeons and A Month in the Country frequently focuses on her feet. In Five Brahms Waltzes, however, he makes full use of the plasticity of her whole body and her ability to weight the movement by grounding it in the pelvis.

It can be argued that Antoinette Sibley replaced Fonteyn during Ashton’s later years. He created ten important roles with her, more than for any other female dancer save Markova and Fonteyn, and she also danced the principal role in a number of his other works. Of equal importance to this study is the fact that Sibley was the first female dancer, with whom Ashton created major roles, who trained from the age of nine in the de Valois syllabus. The training developed neat articulate footwork and thus an ability to execute clean, clear petit allegro (see Chapter II). It appears too, to have created strength in the pelvic area and, in most cases, developed mobility in the upper body; the latter is, according to Toby Bennett (1997, 58), partially dependent on the former. Sibley’s feet, unlike Seymour’s, were strong, though less highly arched. They were an equally important feature of her dancing, however, and Ashton focused on them in much of the dance movement he made with her. She is fleeter than the other women already discussed and it may be that, in the lower body, she was closer to Markova. Peggy Van Praagh remembers Markova’s dancing as having ‘amazing lightness’ and highly articulate feet (1959, 39), both of which are qualities that can be attributed to Sibley.

These female dancers have different abilities and characteristics, but it is through this variety that Ashton was able to expand his movement style. He himself claimed that out of necessity he sometimes worked with dancers less suited to his style (Kavanagh,
1996a, 445), thus forcing him to vary the choice of movement and to ignore his own stylistic preferences. It is possible, that had other dancers been available, aspects of his movement style might have been differently formed.

Grant had twenty-two important roles created for him, and Dowell eleven. Grant's training was eclectic, though the majority of it came from the RAD as taught in New Zealand (Newman, 1982, 73). Like Sibley, Dowell was fully trained from the age of eleven at the Sadler's Wells/Royal Ballet School and thus his dancing, in terms of training, is informed by similar codes and conventions. Ashton made ten significant dances for Dowell. The two male dancers represent opposite ends of the spectrum: Grant is a small flamboyant risk taker, whilst Dowell is controlled and pliant, yet active, combining Sibley's fleetness with Seymour's plasticity.

5.3 Cultivating a Dance Movement Style

The aim in the following paragraphs is to examine the different ways in which Ashton adapted and moulded the dance movement style, identified in the two previous chapters, to the talents of the dancers. In so far as it is relevant to Ashton, individual dancers are examined by reference to their own comments or those of the critics and both their perceived qualities as well as their training are identified. Whilst the amount of material available is not always consistent, there is sufficient to form some notion of their facilities and the effect of their training on their dance movement style.

Throughout the analysis which follows, attention is drawn to the particular features of the dancer Ashton extracted for display and these inform the choice of phrase. Whilst substantial analysis of the key phrase patterns was carried out in Chapter IV, the phrases chosen there were mainly made for dancers other than those for whom he most frequently choreographed; thus they display the more general characteristics of his style.
In this chapter, phrases are chosen which build on the key phrase patterns, either by developing denser and more complex patterns, by introducing 'steps' which were not signature 'steps' originally but which become signature 'steps' for that dancer, or by developing new 'steps' which are not generally part of the codified movement. Some phrases are more fully analysed than others and this is to demonstrate how Ashton focused on particular features to reveal the dancer’s talents. For other phrases, the significance lies in the choice of ‘steps’ and the ways in which they are executed by the dancer.

5.3.1 Margot Fonteyn

5.3.1.1 Sources and Training

The dance movement is chosen to reflect the variety of work Ashton made with Fonteyn (1919-1991). The sources for analysing this differ from those used for the other dancers, in that in some of the dances there are no recordings of Fonteyn. But the dance movement of these makes an important contribution to her dance movement style and thus some material is used in which she is not dancing. For example, there are several recorded versions of the Bride’s variation from Le Baiser de la Fée (1935) but none danced by Fonteyn: one is danced by Jennifer Penney in the video of the Ashton Gala (Wood [%]1970); a section of the variation is performed by Nicola Katrak (Foy, 1989) and there is a recording of Fonteyn teaching the variation to an un-named Panamanian dancer (Foy, 1988). This was the first solo variation he created for her and is too seminal to the style to be omitted, but more importantly, the recording of the rehearsal with Fonteyn provides evidence of what she regarded as significant to the dance movement style. Before analysing the movement an investigation of Fonteyn’s training is also presented, which, because of its eclecticism, is not fully covered in Chapter II.
A surprising number of the early dances Ashton made for Fonteyn have survived albeit in the form of fragments. Of the twenty-six works31 created between 1935 and 1963, fourteen are preserved on film and seven show Fonteyn herself dancing. Excerpts from some are found in The Ashton Gala (1970) and these provide enough material to establish some notion of the early dance movement, although with the older Fonteyn dancing. There is also some footage of her dancing in the 1950s and 1960s.

According to Julie Kavanagh (1996a, 182) Fonteyn was foisted on Ashton by de Valois. Initially, he found her stiff and restricted and was frustrated by her lack of mobility and precision (Money, 1973). These deficiencies are exposed in a recorded performance of Arabesque (Ashton, 1937 in Foy, 1989) where Fonteyn’s movement is both awkward and technically unsure. But, as later recordings confirm, some of these difficulties were eliminated, though sparkling technical feats were rarely considered to be a characteristic of her performance (Fonteyn cited in Gruen, 1975, 106). While Ashton did not necessarily demand technical accomplishment, he was, initially, unimpressed by her dancing and sought advice from Tamara Karsavina. She praised Fonteyn’s musicality, but suggested that she lacked any understanding of épaulement (Kavanagh, 1996a, 184). Perhaps as a means of rectifying this, the first solo variation made for Fonteyn in Le Baiser de la Fée (1935) uses épaulement as one of its dominant features. When teaching the solo, years later, Fonteyn (1988) makes épaulement central to understanding the dance.

Fonteyn’s training, like many of the dancers of the 1930s, was heterogeneous.

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31 This number does not include Cinderella (1948) because although Ashton originally intended this for Fonteyn, she was injured at the time and the ballet was created on Moira Shearer.
She began learning ballet (Fonteyn, 1978, 55-63) with a teacher from the Association of Operatic Dance (now RAD) and continued in China with the Russian dancer George Goncharov (1904-1954). Returning to London in 1933, she spent almost a year with Serafina Astafieva before joining the varied training at the Sadler’s Wells Theatre school (see Chapter II). In her autobiography (1976, 65), she made no secret of the fact that she had strong preferences for some teachers and there was one teacher:

who made ballet so incredibly boring that I made every effort to do the opposite... In the end... I began secretly to take lessons with Lydia Kyasht... [who] filled the room with movement and music and I was happy to find dancing once more a thing of grace.

Monahan (1957, 5) believes this teacher to have been Margaret Craske, a disciple of Cecchetti, who taught for the Vic-Wells Ballet during the 1930s. He indicates that Fonteyn found the method dry, repetitive and akin to ‘physical jerks’. During the years she worked in New York, Craske became a very highly regarded teacher. According to Carolyn Brown (comment made during The Fonteyn Phenomenon conference, 1999) Fonteyn attended Craske’s classes during the 1950s in New York and it is conceivable that Craske had by then developed her own approach to Cecchetti. Equally, Fonteyn may have changed her mind about Craske. Paradoxically, Fonteyn claims to have enjoyed the teaching of Stanislas Idzikowski who was a Cecchetti trained dancer. But this may not be so surprising since Idzikowski taught his own version of the Cecchetti training (Kersley, 1993, 690) and his lessons were likely to have been more flexible than Craske’s at that time (1930s). Fonteyn’s approach to the use of the upper body may, in part be due to Idzikowski’s teaching, and his appreciation of the principles of Cecchetti’s port de bras.

Fonteyn liked to vary her teachers and, during the 1930s and 1940s, was a
frequent visitor to the classes of the Russian ballerinas in Paris. According to Pamela May (1999), she, Fonteyn and June Brae regularly took classes with Lubov Egorova (1880-1972), Mathilde Kschesinskaya and Olga Preobrajenska. Fonteyn particularly liked working with Preobrajenska, even bringing new *enchaînements* back with her to London. Audrey Harman (1998) claims that part of the *rond de jambe en l'air* phrase at the end of the women’s duet in *Symphonic Variations* (1946) comes from one of Preobrajenska’s classes. During the 1940s Vera Volkova (1904-1975), a pupil of Agrippina Vaganova, made a significant contribution to Fonteyn’s dancing, helping her to strengthen her feet and expand her technical abilities (Macaulay, 1998, 38). Both of these improved under Volkova and, despite the fact that the classes were both ‘taxing and exhausting’ (Fonteyn, 1976, 108-9), Fonteyn found them extremely beneficial. Little information on the kind of classes given by these Russians remains and discussions with May produced only vague answers. Elvira Roné (1978, 123), however, claims that Preobrajenska was particularly concerned with the upper body and head and that her classes produced dancers with strong backs and expressive arms and hands. Throughout her career Fonteyn sought new teachers, working during the 1960s with Raymond Franchetti (b. 1921) and Valentina Pereyaslavec (b. 1907). Thus she was constantly adapting to and assimilating new styles of training. Analysis made from film (Asquith, 1963) undertaken for this thesis shows a striking ability on her part to adapt to different choreographic needs and this may be accounted for, in part, by the diversity of her training.

Critics (Monahan, 1957, Clarke and Crisp, 1987) discussing her dance relationship with Ashton tend to minimise her early technical problems, suggesting that she contributed as much to Ashton’s dance movement style as he did to hers. Both Mary
Clarke and Clement Crisp (1987, 117) take this view, arguing that despite shaping her talent, it also inspired him. But Monahan (1957, 60) sees the collaboration differently, claiming that it is Fonteyn who made Ashton’s choreography, less so, the choreography which made Fonteyn. Of course choreography covers more than dance movement, but Monahan’s view fails to account for either the collaborative nature of their relationship or the challenges that the dance movement posed for Fonteyn (Fonteyn, 1976, 57). It could be argued, however, that since Monahan’s book (1957) was specifically about Fonteyn, he was more interested in according her the greater artistry. Although he clearly regarded her as a supreme dancer since in a later work (Monahan, 1976), she has more entries than any of the other female ballet dancers mentioned.

5.3.1.2 The Dance Movement

A concern with spatial elements was already identified in Chapter IV as a key feature of Ashton’s dance movement style. In the early dances he created with Fonteyn, Ashton makes spatial elements of the upper body central; in later works he developed more complex phrase patterns for her, which include both upper and lower body. Fonteyn emphasises the importance of spatial patterns when coaching the Bride’s variation from Le Baiser de la Fée (1935) but also makes the dancer aware of the dynamic of the ‘step’ and the phrase. In addition, the phrase has the characteristics of the key phrase patterns in 4.3.1 (Chapter IV).

Fonteyn’s consciousness of the spatial features is made clearer by examining her coaching of a phrase cluster, referred to by her as the ‘Nijinska port de bras’. It comprises:
a step on \textit{pointe} to the left, with the right foot moving sharply first to a \textit{retiré} and then to an \textit{arabesque par terre}. Simultaneously the arms move from \textit{bras bas} towards the left side of the body in a circle across and up the front of the body, ending to the side, in a briefly held body design: the torso bent to the right with the arms encircling the head. The phrase is completed by a quick half turn \textit{en dehors}, into a briefly held body design in fourth \textit{croisé}, to face downstage left. The arms in the second body design are in second \textit{arabesque}. The second phrase has three quick steps forward on \textit{demi-pointe} to an abrupt stop in fourth position \textit{croisé} on pointe, with the right arm forward at shoulder height (video example 37).

Fonteyn focuses on the \textit{port de bras}, encouraging the dancer to make a generous, though well rounded, sweep into the body design and to make it a continuous action into the next body design (see Chapter IV, 4.3.1.2). The arms remain in a curved shape and the virtual half-circle, initiated by the \textit{port de bras}, continues on from the body design to a second curving progression which ends in second \textit{arabesque}. The half-circle thus develops a second loop and the linearity of the final pose is moderated by the curving pathways. The phrase manifests Valerie Preston-Dunlop's (1983) concept of choreutic clusters (1983) discussed in Chapters I and IV. It involves progression in the form of a virtual double loop, and projection is also demonstrated by the continuation of the arm into the second \textit{arabesque} in which both the hand and eyes project outwards into the space. Attention is drawn to the body designs by the sustained movement of the \textit{port de bras} and the brief emphasis on the shape. This phrase is again evidence of Ashton's concern with both space and bodily aspects of movement: it manifests a range of spatial
features and the space around the upper body is activated by the movement, creating the
impression of motion in an action which remains almost in one place.

Throughout this solo there is an emphasis on spatial patterns generating activity
outside the body. This tendency to animate the space around the body while remaining
almost in one place, is a feature of some of the movement made with Fonteyn. Much of
the other movement in the solo follows circular progressions, amplifying and extending
the upper body. These actions require both flexibility and strength in the upper body as
well as an understanding of épaulement.

Contrasting dynamics are also a feature of the phrase. The brisk action of the
retiré is different from the smooth, sustained movement of the port de bras and thus
draws attention to the latter. Clipped steps and the sudden halt of the second phrase bring
the fluidity of the port de bras even more sharply into focus caused by the disparity
between the two. This kind of dynamic variety is also a characteristic of the later
movement made with Fonteyn (discussed below) and throughout her coaching, she draws
attention to both the spatial and dynamic elements, stressing their importance.

Other dance movement depends equally on an understanding of spatial elements
but in a different relationship with the body. For example, the Bride's solo in The Wise
Virgins (1940), Chloe's foot-tapping solo in Scene 3 of Daphnis and Chloe (1951) and
Ondine's shadow solo in Ondine (1958) all manifest a concern with space, mainly in the
upper body. In The Wise Virgins, attention is drawn towards the upper body by the way
in which the arms and wrists are used. The solo mainly comprises arm and wrist actions
which move into the space with a twirling movement of the wrist, in spatial paths which
are close to the body. Twirling wrists are the dominant motif in the solo and the presence
of a such motif clearly demonstrates Ashton's concern to give priority to the arms and
hands. While these particular paths are specific to this solo, other similarly intricate spatial patterns recur throughout the dance movement he made with Fonteyn.

A phrase is examined here to demonstrate how Ashton and Fonteyn developed the potential of these elements. The spatial pattern found in *Daphnis and Chloe* takes a signature ‘step’, the *rond de jambe à terre* and develops it in the upper body, so that the arms counterpoint the legs. The phrase involves three separate, though simultaneous, spatial progressions which are completed by a body design:

**Lower body**

- Chloe performs a *posé* into a low *attitude derrière* in which the hand taps the sole of the working foot; the action ends in an over crossed *arabesque par terre* on a *plié*. The working leg then begins a *rond de jambe à terre en dedans*, but after moving a quarter of a circle, the leg bends and shoots through to an over crossed *dégagé* in front, before performing a full *rond de jambe à terre en dehors*. It ends with a final tap of the *arabesque* foot and a return to a body design.

**Upper body**

- The accompanying arms make two circles one after the other. The right arm starts at the side, in a relaxed second and moves with the palm facing inwards in a curved path upwards in front of the face, before returning to its starting position. Beginning above the head, the other arm travels down the side of the body and then up in front of the face. It ends level with the head to form a body design, in which the wrists are flexed and the palms of both hands face upwards (video example 38).

The phrase is performed smoothly and swiftly with the accent on the final position. It
does not demand articulate feet, technical brilliance, or excessive turnout, but depends on performing two contrasting, sustained, spatial progressions successively in the upper and lower body. These are interrupted briefly by a projection occurring in the thrust of the lower leg and the phrase is completed by a projection of the eyes in which Chloe throws her head back to look up towards her hand. Both the phrase in *The Wise Virgins* (1940) and this one remain on the spot. But, whereas the former involves mainly the upper body, this phrase has simultaneous spatial patterns occurring in both upper and lower body, making it considerably more complex. Equally, because of the continuity of the actions, attention is drawn to the shapes which materialize in the body, both during the movement and at the end.

The phrase also involves two different dynamic actions in the lower body. The sustained quality of the *rond de jambe à terre* is broken by the sudden thrust of the leg through to a *dégagé* and this serves to emphasise the continuous flowing circle of the leg which follows. The eye is thus drawn to the circular action of the second *rond de jambe à terre* and this action diminishes the impact of the quick forward thrust. As a result, the intricate spatial progressions, forming around the body, are more readily perceived. These curling snake-like actions are performed close to the body and, despite the dancer remaining in one place, this combination of spatial elements with the more sudden dynamics creates a strong impression of motion.

Ashton may have made these rhythmically complex and intricate *port de bras* to explore Fonteyn’s musicality. Equally they may be there to draw attention away from her feet and to compensate for lack of elevation which is significantly absent from the movement of these and other works. The phrase patterns increase and activate the space around the upper body and they frequently depend on intense concentration on the part
of the dancer and considerable expenditure of energy from the waist or shoulders. The energy needed to perform these upper body movements is not apparent because ballet traditionally presents upper body movement as effortless. Thus this aspect of the dance movement made for Fonteyn, while requiring substantial skill and effort, is not perceived as virtuoso movement (see Chapter I) or as being technically difficult because it does not require the more conventional balletic skills, such as turnout, and articulate feet.

An ability to create light and shade was a prominent characteristic of Fonteyn’s dancing. Not all dancers recognise the importance of dynamic contrast, despite its effect on the phrases and, according to Fonteyn, neither did she. She confesses that it was her mother who first highlighted the problem criticising her lack of attack and inability to recognise contrast (Fonteyn, 1976, 70). This is not a feature of her later dancing but it is possible that despite accepting her mother’s advice she was also made conscious of light and shade through Ashton’s dance movement, which, as demonstrated in Chapter IV, is a key feature of the style. But in the movement created for specific dancers, dynamic variety is manifest in a number of different ways.

In Scènes de Ballet (1948) Ashton explored Fonteyn’s understanding of dynamic by making movement which requires both sharpness of execution and languid sensuality. The strong dynamic in the first solo in Scènes may have been partially generated by the move to Covent Garden (1946) with its large stage and auditorium and Ashton may also have been keen to explore the challenges brought by these elements. In the first solo he creates sharp, goal orientated movement which focuses on body designs, drawing attention to position. Antoinette Sibley confirms that this was an important aspect of the dance and remembers Ashton insisting on an abrupt stop, to make the audience aware of the position (1996, 139).
The first variation from *Scènes* focuses on quick, sharp and precise movement, which draws the eye to the angularity and clarity of the position of the legs. The phrases, which include sharp relevés passés, draw the eye towards the lower body and demand strongly pointed, articulate feet. For instance, near the beginning of the solo a short spurt of *pas de bourrée courus* ends in a clear body design, which the dancer holds momentarily (video example 39). The solo focuses attention on line, turn-out and precise footwork. In comparison with the earlier work Ashton made for Fonteyn, this is a new departure. It is probable in this solo that Ashton was drawing attention to Fonteyn's recently acquired (see 5.3.1.1) technical accomplishments, specifically picking out her stronger feet, clear line and versatility.

The second solo in *Scènes* testifies to her dynamic versatility and depends on a more fluid approach in both the lower and upper body. Several of the 'steps' of the earlier solo return, such as the relevé and the Russian *pas de chat*, but the dynamic is changed and the arms, in particular, contribute to this effect. Near the end of the solo, a chassé with the right leg, followed by two chaîné turns to the left, is made to appear luxurious, even mysterious by the use of the arms: they move outwards at shoulder height, pushing the space away to a stretched position and gradually come together in front of the body for the chaînés (video example 40). In this phrase, the spatial progression, made by the arms, appears to meander and flow and, although the line made is straight, it appears to undulate. Other phrases also appear relaxed and sustained and it is this change in the dynamics which contributes to the contrast between the two solos. Ashton's aim was always to enhance the dancer's movement (in Gilbert, 1979) and these solos indicate Fonteyn's understanding of dynamics and her consciousness of its significance. The use of similar material in both demonstrates Ashton's interest in
dynamics but, perhaps equally importantly, the solos also indicate Fonteyn’s increased technical strength.

The contrast between the two variations is conspicuous, the one stressing clarity and precision, the other, indulgence and languor. Stephanie Jordan (2000b, 238), however, argues that the solos provide excellent examples of the different ways in which Ashton responds to music. They may also be evidence of Fonteyn’s response, since it is conceivable that her musicality helped to generate Ashton’s approach to the music. Fonteyn herself does not comment on this ballet in her autobiography and little has been written about her personal response to it. Vaughan argues that she was not initially at ease in the role (1977, 225), but according to Ashton, Fonteyn was his preferred performer in the piece (cited in Crisp, 1977, 170). The dance movement in Scènes is mainly concerned with changing and contrasting dynamics and the ability to exploit dynamics became a characteristic feature of Fonteyn’s later dance movement style.

Although she never discusses the contribution which she made to the dance movement, it must be assumed that Fonteyn played some part, even if subconsciously, in its creation. Her inherent sense of music is frequently referred to (Monahan, 1957, 21-28; de Valois, 1977, 70) and it was something that Ashton also admired (Ashton in Macaulay, 1984, 6). He makes the point (in Macaulay, 1984) that she had a flair for engaging with the music and did not allow it to control the movement. In particular, he praised her ability to appear unhurried and to play with the musical phrase, using it to extend or emphasise a movement (Ashton in Macaulay, 1984). These features are not examined here because Ashton’s use of music and Fonteyn’s response to it requires a different approach and is outside the scope of this study, but her capacity to hear music in a particular way was clearly an important feature of the collaboration.
The absence of either strong pliable feet or a spectacular technique forced Ashton to consider Fonteyn’s other qualities. This added different layers to his dance movement style encouraging him to depend on movement, such as that found in the key phrase patterns which involve spatial elements, particularly of the upper body. Her fine spatial abilities probably derive from a number of sources. Both Kschesinskaya and Preobrajenska placed great emphasis on the use of the upper body and, by focusing so strongly on it, Ashton must also have encouraged her to develop this aspect of her technique. Clearly her approach to music was an important part of the collaboration and her relationship with Constant Lambert may well have affected the way in which she heard the music.

Creating light and shade was also central to her dancing, though, curiously, apart from Baiser de la Fée (1935) and Daphnis and Chloe (1951), there are few extant examples which reveal dynamic contrast within a phrase. This may be because many of the dances he made for her between 1946 and 1958 are no longer danced and are thus not available for viewing. It was mainly because of her increased technical facilities, during the 1940s, that he was able to introduce this aspect. But conventional technical movements are not a feature of the majority of the dance movement Ashton made with her. Apart from the dances in Sylvia (1952), Scènes de Ballet (1948) and Birthday Offering (1956), there is no other extant material, which demonstrates the need for articulate foot work, spinning turns or high elevation. For this reason the dance movement made with her is sometimes described as ‘easy’ (remark made by Sibley when coaching the flute solo from Daphnis and Chloe at the conference The Fonteyn Phenomenon, 1999). Such descriptions fail to recognise the demands made on the upper body and the complexity of the patterns.
5.3.2. **Nadia Nerina**

Nadia Nerina’s technical ability is not in doubt. References are made to her ‘exceptional technique’ (Roslavleva, 1961, 234) and to her ‘great vitality and... intelligence’ (Fisher, 1954, 26). Like Grant, she was also a risk-taker and quite fearless when it came to performing high lifts or difficult movements (Kavanagh, 1996, 446). Ashton created six important roles for her of which three are still performed: Spring in *Cinderella* (1948), one of the ‘ballerinas’ in *Birthday Offering* (1956) and Lise in *La Fille mal gardée* (1960). Of her other Ashton roles little is written. Vaughan (1977, 271) notes that the Queen of the Earth solo in *Homage to the Queen*, (1953), was dominated by small batterie and poses on pointe with a bent supporting knee. He gives no description of the movement in *Variations on a Theme by Purcell* (1955) and it appears that the duet, *The Beloved*, performed in 1956, was based on material from *Apparitions* (1936). Nerina’s formative years were spent in South Africa where her training was primarily based on the Cecchetti syllabus (see Chapter II). She describes the shock she received when first working with Marie Rambert whose classes, although based on Cecchetti’s teaching, did not use the set exercises (cited in Newman, 1982, 133). This she found a difficult adaption to make but she spent only a short time with Rambert before joining the Sadler’s Wells School and soon afterwards the Company.

Ashton exploited her buoyant jump, her strong pointes and her ability to turn. He also made use of her talent for executing quick, precise movement and her capacity for risk-taking. The dance movement in Spring, the first dance he made for her, demands rapid changes of direction and extensive use of *épaulement*. The dynamics are sharp and clipped, demanding clear, precise footwork and a corresponding precision of the arms.
and head. Attention is drawn by the dynamics to the spatial projections of the arms and legs, which shoot virtual lines upwards and outwards at the end of almost every movement. These projections generate the perception that short bursts of movement are exploding into the space. For example, the opening phrase includes three *grands jetés* which move directly forward. The arms go from a low *demi-bras* position in front to shoulder level on the second *jeté* and higher for the third. Both the arms and the leg are propelled forward into the space, moving directly towards the audience and this adds to the impact. But the *jeté* can also be seen as a body design because there is a briefly held image in space. The variation requires a quick light jump and is dominated by springy leaps. It testifies to the strength of Nerina’s feet and legs and to her training which developed a light jump and strong feet.

Nerina’s flamboyant jump is again the focus in *Birthday Offering* (1956). In contrast to Spring, it depends not simply on elevation but on a particular way of jumping. This is derived from a pronounced impulse at the start of the movement, stressing the upward action, which contrasts with the wider, split jump popular today, resulting from an impact at the end. But the effect of Nerina’s approach to elevation is to create a perception of effortless and abandoned movement. This impression is aided by the way in which she throws rather than places her limbs in the space, although into more conventional positions than Grant (see 5.3.6). Ashton played on these qualities, using them to invent new movement such as the reverse *fouetté sauté* in the solo:

♦ the dancer lands out of a *grand jeté croisé* into *arabesque* and follows this with a *grand fouetté sauté* in reverse. Instead of turning into *arabesque*, the dancer turns towards the raised leg and the phrase is completed by a swish of the raised
leg backwards to a temps levé arabesque (video example 41).

Nerina’s habit of throwing the movement into the space creates spatial projections and, despite the absence of an impact, adds to the perception of wide, generous movement.

A similar reverse fouetté occurs again in La Fille mal gardée (1960), although here there are two consecutive fouettés sautés in reverse (video example 42). In later versions, with other dancers, the phrase is no longer danced in this way and it is possible that Ashton agreed to this change (Ashton’s attitude to change is discussed in Chapter VI). According to Beryl Grey (1996, 179), he wanted dancers to feel comfortable in his work and was more concerned with the overall vision, although Grey had no recollection of him ever changing anything for her. The ‘step’s’ inclusion in Nerina’s dances demonstrates not only the ephemerality of some of the dance movement and its dependency on the abilities of particular dancers, but also the way in which a different dancer generated new movement, adding new ‘steps’ to his dance movement style.

Nerina’s movement style is expansive. Despite being small and having relatively short legs and arms, she can cover a large area of floor space with a single, leap. The material Ashton made for her stands out for its inclusion of grand allegro and spatial expansion which includes both the space around the body and the use of space for travelling. In La Fille mal gardée, the dance movement is dominated by large jumps but it still demonstrates key phrases patterned by contrasting dynamics. For instance, a phrase from the middle of Lise’s first variation in Act I, Scene 1 uses an explosive, though buoyant jump with a sharply accented fouetté raccourci. It comprises:
a saut de basque en tournant followed by a fouetté raccourci on pointe, performed with the raised leg, ending in a fondu and sharp retiré derrière.

Ashton combines the light, bounding quality of the jump with a sharp fouetté raccourci. It is performed with a relevé into second and a rapid snapping of the leg behind into a fondu on the supporting leg. The fondu is sudden and the arms, accompanying the working leg, follow its line to the side and end at waist height across the body. The head too focuses towards the end position and turns to look over the shoulder towards the retiré derrière. The sharp ending of the phrase and backward focus highlights the contrast between the two movements, but the phrase is also dependent on the lightness and buoyancy of the jump for effect. Throughout the work, Ashton plays on Nerina’s capacity for light explosive jumps and the dance movement carries more big elevation than is common in his other works for female dancers.

Apart from the Hunt in Sylvia (1952) Act I, as noted, Ashton created very few ‘steps’ requiring big elevation for Fonteyn and there is a marked contrast between the movement made for her and that for Nerina. The absence of elevation in Fonteyn’s movement demonstrates the restrictions placed on Ashton by a dancer’s technical abilities, but it forced him to find ways of compensating. Equally with Nerina, there is little of the complexity in the upper body that dominates Fonteyn’s movement and Ashton rarely draws attention to a single body area. But, despite acknowledging that Nerina’s dance movement was not a style he responded easily to (Kavanagh, 1996, 445),

32 As noted in Chapter III, this movement is described as a coupé fouetté raccourci in the dictionary of the RAD (Ryman, 1997, 22) and as a coupé- ballonné in Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev (1995, 413). But Ashton’s movement is different from both of these.
he exploited her technical potential; interestingly, this has led to there being few invented ‘steps’.

According to Julie Kavanagh (1996a, 445) ‘she was not particularly musical’ and Monahan (1976, 81) too felt that her approach to music was unsophisticated. Unlike Fonteyn, she had little ability to play with the musical phrase. Ashton counteracts this by making her buoyant elevation contrast with smaller sharper movements. He thus encourages light and shade but without having to depend on her making overt reference to the music for this purpose. Quite apart from a proliferation of grand allegro, what also distinguishes the dance movement made for Nerina from that of Fonteyn is its relatively even approach to the music. Despite occasionally increasing the speed of a ‘step’ to fit a phrase, as in the pas de bourrée phrase in Act II of La Fille mal gardée (1960), described in Chapter IV, there is little of the subtle interplay between the music and movement that is particular to Ashton (Jordan, 2000b). Nerina’s movement is in the main linked to two key phrase patterns: those which use contrasting dynamics and those which focus on body design. However, it includes bigger more codified versions of the ‘steps’ than are usually found in Ashton.

5.3.3. Lynn Seymour

Lynn Seymour is more usually linked with the choreographer Kenneth MacMillan (Thorpe, 1993, 1281), who claimed that her ‘beautiful feet’ and ‘glorious port de bras’ (in Crisp and Crickmay, 1980, 11) affected and informed his choreographic style. Her acting ability is frequently singled out for attention, her technique less so. Critics are more taken by her pliancy and ‘creamy flow[ing]’ quality (Crisp and Crickmay, 1980, 18) than by her power to execute high-level skills. Indeed, Joan Lawson (1961, 99) criticised
her movement, arguing that it lacks understanding of strict academic form. Yet, despite the perceived absence of a strict academic technique, Ashton made two dances for the Solo Seal examinations of The Royal Academy of Dancing (1956) which centre on technical execution and chose Seymour to work with him. Later he choreographed two important major roles for her: The Young Girl in The Two Pigeons (1961) and Natalya Petrovna in A Month in the Country (1976) and in 1975 he made a short solo Brahms-Waltz for a Gala which was subsequently extended to become Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan (1976). It is possible that Ashton would have made more for Seymour, but not long after he became Director of The Royal Ballet, Seymour left to work with MacMillan, only returning in 1970, when MacMillan succeeded Ashton as Director of The Royal Ballet.

Seymour’s earliest classes were with Jean Jepson whose tap classes taught her much about rhythm. A little later, she became a pupil of Nicolai Svetlanoff (Austin, 1980, 20), a Russian dancer who had worked with Vaganova. According to Austin (1980, 20), he taught her about flow and the plasticity of movement. Seymour (1985, 19) claims that from him she learned how to convey emotion with a hand gesture, a raised foot, the half-turn of the head and her eyes. More recently (Seymour, 2000), however, she credits the mime classes, held by Ursula Moreton (1903-1973) at the Sadler’s Wells School, with teaching her about expressiveness. Curiously, Moreton is not among the teachers listed in Seymour’s autobiography (1985) nor is she mentioned in it, so perhaps it is only in retrospect that Seymour has become aware of this influence. Seymour joined the Sadler’s Wells Ballet School in 1954 aged fifteen and worked there mainly with Winifred Edwards (1894-1989), an ex-dancer from Pavlova’s company. Edwards was another major influence on Seymour’s dancing and her teaching at the time.
was almost entirely based on the de Valois syllabus. Seymour continued to have private lessons with her throughout her years as a professional dancer, at least until Edwards retired (Newman, 1982, 228, & Seymour, 1985).

Despite Seymour’s much praised fluidity, Ashton was more concerned, in the solo movement, to highlight her feet, mostly reserving her plasticity for the duets. The solos he made with her combine detailed, expressive footwork with fluid, though often gestural *port de bras*. In both *The Two Pigeons* (1961) and *A Month in the Country* (1976) the movement is generally confined to *terre à terre* ‘steps’ which have their genesis in the *pas de bourrée*, the *coupé- ballonné*, the *échappé relevé* and the *grand pas de basque*. Of the former work Seymour has said that it requires the ‘steps’ to flow fluently from one to another, ‘like unseen threads...’ (1985, 188). A similar pattern is evident in the solo dances from *A Month in the Country* (1976), which are described by Seymour as ‘knitting steps ... with the body bent’ (cited in Crisp and Crickmay, 1980, 87). Analysis of these dances indicates that Seymour is conscious of the continuity in the phrase and the absence of breath pauses between ‘steps’. The variations in *Five Brahms Waltzes* (1976) are, by contrast, bare-footed and the focus is mainly on Seymour’s pliant upper body, though the result is quite different from that of Fonteyn. Seymour’s movements have a seamless, undulating quality which Ashton draws out in the *Waltzes*.

In *The Two Pigeons*, there are only short sections of solo work in Act I Scene 1 and none in Act II Scene 2. The most prolonged solo section is performed at a fast pace, at times appearing almost frenzied with the arms and head changing position with every step. There is also a contrast between the upper and lower body: the arms follow curved, flowing paths while those of the legs and feet are linear and sharper. In Act I, a band of
gipsies intrudes on the relationship between the Young Man and the Young Girl and a row ensues between the Young Girl and the Gypsy Girl. The second phrase cluster in the solo dance, which follows the entrance of the gipsies and occurs during the row, is typical of the solo movement Ashton made with Seymour. It involves rapid, small, intricate movements, accompanied by the head and arms in rhythmically different sequences. The phrase is made up of the following:

- a small *pas de bourrée* on *pante* and a double *petit battement* on the front of the ankle, finishing in a *frappé*, is performed twice and the phrase ends with a *relevé* to fifth and an *échappé relevé*. As the feet perform the rapid *pas de bourrée* and percussive beats of the *petit battement*, the right arm moves in a circular movement up the front of the body, arriving just above the head on the *petit battement*. The head and eyes follow the feet on the *pas de bourrée* and end, looking under the arm on the *petit battement*. In the final section of the phrase, both arms are flung to the side to coincide with the opening snap of the legs in the *échappé relevé* and the head turns, towards stage right, to where the Gipsy Girl is sitting. The whole phrase is then repeated (video example 43).

This phrase is complex, combining contrasting dynamic, rhythmic and spatial elements. It demands an ability to perform rapid, small footwork and these ‘steps’: the three quick changes of weight in the *pas de bourrée*, the percussive *petit battement*, the *frappé* and *échappé relevé* require pliant feet. The specific combination forces movement through the whole foot and encourages the feet to work hard. Thus the high insteps are stressed and attention is drawn to the quality of Seymour’s fast footwork.
A number of features help to generate the perception of highly intricate footwork: the rapidity of the *pas de bourrée*, the precision of the double beat of the *petit battement* and the tiny spatial area occupied by the two 'steps. In addition, the combination of the contrasting spatial paths formed by the arms increases the complexity of the phrase.

Preston-Dunlop's research (1983) on the choreutic unit is again usefully employed here because it illustrates the spatial complexity of the phrase and demonstrates how Ashton's combination of two key phrase patterns, one focusing on the spatial elements of the upper body and the other on dynamic contrast (see Chapter IV), generates another layer of complexity to the dance movement. Whereas in the key phrase patterns one or other feature dominates, in this phrase the spatial and dynamic elements play an equal role and serve to reinforce each other. Within the phrase the choreutic units occur both simultaneously and sequentially. For instance, the arm performs a curved progression followed by a straight spatial progression with a spatial projection, occurring simultaneously, in the leg during the *frappé*. Spatial tension is created between the extended foot and the raised arm and between the eyes and the feet in the *pas de bourrée*. A briefly held body design is also visible, recurring both after the *petit battement* and at the end of the phrase. There is, in addition, contrast in dynamic between the flowing sustained arm movement and the incisive actions of the feet.

Like Fonteyn, Seymour excelled at combining complex patterns within a single phrase but, unlike those made with Fonteyn, Seymour's phrases highlighted her pliant, expressive feet. In common with *The Two Pigeons* (1961), much of Seymour's movement in *A Month in the Country* (1976) is chosen to display her feet and thus is drawn from the range of codified movements that demand rapid, picked-up pointe work. To articulate the feet, Ashton also combines arm and head actions that change with every
step. For example, the *pas de bourrée piqué en tournant* which occurs in the first diagonal phrase of Natalya’s opening solo has a circular arm movement, up the front of the body, to accompany each pick-up of the foot. The arm appears to draw the foot upwards on each of the picked-up steps, causing a tension to occur between the two. This encourages the eye to take in both the feet and upper body movement. Similar instances are found throughout the solo. Jordan (2000b) also notes the musical complexity in the opening phrase, observing that the movement ‘hold[s] its pulse... meeting and parting with its accent structure’ (2000b, 263). That he chose to play with the music in such a way, must testify to Seymour’s musical comprehension.

In *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan*, (1976) Ashton focused almost entirely on Seymour’s plasticity, allowing the more sensual qualities of her movement to come to the fore. The piece recreates Ashton’s impression of Duncan and is thus based on his memories of her dance movement style. Of all the dancers Ashton worked with, Seymour is the one who reminded him most of Duncan (Vaughan, 1977, 389), and descriptions of Duncan’s dancing have analogies with the qualities most associated with Seymour. The critic H. T. Parker wrote of Duncan that:

> As she moves, her body is steadily and delicately undulating. One motion flows or ripples, or sweeps, into another and the two are edgeless.

Parker in Holmes, 1982, 59

Seymour had a similar capacity to feed one movement into the next and her runs had an equally seamless quality. The movement Ashton created in the dances ebbs and flows and centres chiefly on running, expansive waltzes, and luxurious poses in which the arms often curl around the body. Since the movement throughout the five dances exhibits similar qualities, a phrase from one of the dances is sufficient to demonstrate how the
dance movement exploits Seymour’s ability to feed one movement into the next.

The phrase occurs in the first dance, just after Seymour rises from the floor, and comprises an extended waltzing movement (video example 44). Seymour executes it as though she is running but it is structured by a lilting waltz rhythm and the use of three definite steps. The emphasis is on the first movement of each phrase, which alternates backwards and forwards: the movement of the first phrase is performed with the body upright, the legs bent in a low fourth, followed by two steps; that of the second, with the body bent right forward and the right leg extended behind in a low arabesque on the floor also followed by two steps. The two phrases repeat three more times. The perception of seamlessness is reinforced by the arms which move in alternate circles with each phrase. The movement circles the stage and Seymour’s generous steps and ample arm movements promote the impression that she is simply running, almost in slow motion, around the stage.

The movement Ashton made with Seymour is different from the three dancers already discussed. The actions for the whole body are more intricate, there is little elevation and almost no grand allegro. In both the movement for Fonteyn and Seymour Ashton makes full use of the upper body and creates polyrhythmic body actions in which different rhythms and dynamics occur in the upper and lower body. But whereas Fonteyn’s are arranged to draw attention away from the feet, those of Seymour enhance and highlight them. Ashton also builds on certain of the key phrase patterns but combines two, in one phrase, creating greater complexity. This is indicative of Seymour’s ability to cope with compound rhythms (which may well have been fostered through her early tap lessons). In much of Seymour’s movement, Ashton creates complexity, making filigree, intricate movement and forcing her to exert her abilities to the full (Winifred

5.3.4. **Antoinette Sibley**

Clement Crisp (1991, 18) argues that Antoinette Sibley has every virtue that the Ashtonian style demands: an ability to hear music as Ashton does, a ‘fine technique’ and a profound understanding of the use of *épaulement*. His comments concerning the music are debatable but those focusing on her dancing are more easily verified. Others have remarked on the detailed way in which she articulates every movement (Monahan, 1963, 280) and on her strong, communicative feet (Newman, 1982, 248). Sibley claims that of all her work, she feels most at home in Ashton’s ballets, partly because she worked so much with him and partly because, she believed, he trusted her interpretation of his dance movement (cited in Macaulay, 1985a, 6). Her de Valois training may also have contributed to this ease.

As indicated earlier, Ashton choreographed more leading roles for Sibley than for any other female dancer since Fonteyn and Markova. These are listed by Macaulay (1985a) and comprise eight leading roles and two shorter pieces: a *pas de quatre* added to *Swan Lake* (1963) and a *pas de deux* for the awakening scene in *The Sleeping Beauty* (1968). Most of the dance movement for Sibley is in the form of duets, performed with Anthony Dowell, but there is some solo dance movement in *Swan Lake* (1963), *The Dream*, (1964), and *Enigma Variations*, (1968). The movement in *Monotones* (1966) is not considered. It was made for three dancers and its genesis cannot be attributed exclusively to Sibley, since it must be assumed that the other dancers were equally influential. An analysis of the dance movement in these other works suggests that, despite employing a variety of ‘steps’ certain recurring features are particular to the work he made
with Sibley. This gives further support to the evidence that his dance movement was
enhanced and changed by the different dancers.

Sibley’s training took place almost entirely at the Sadler’s Wells School. She
joined the School in 1948, aged nine, where she remained for the next eight years. The
de Valois syllabus is unlikely to have been fully in place at this time, although it was
already developing in the courses de Valois was running for teachers (Sorley Walker,
1987, 263). However, by the early 1950s, it had entered the School curriculum. The
syllabus stresses work from the knee down (de Valois interview, 1988), yet, despite this
emphasis, the upper body was not neglected. The mime classes of Ursula Moreton, which
Seymour praises, concentrated on the port de bras and the mime learnt from the Italian
dancer Francesca Zanfretta (Poesio, 1996, 74). The aim in these classes was to create:

broad, sweeping natural movements of the arms...and subtle use of hands,
wrists and head to convey every possible shade of meaning’
Moreton, 1955.

These classes contributed to an understanding of gesture and of upper body movement,
while technique teachers, like Pamela May, used imagery to give dynamic interest to the
arms and torso (May, 1999).

Sibley did not have highly arched feet like Seymour’s but they were strong and,
according to Antony Tudor (Newman, 1982,248), ‘talked’, like Spessivtseva’s. Ashton
used them, like sharp needles, to puncture the space and send quick shooting, darts into
the floor. In much of the solo movement he made for her, there are jumps and hops on
pointe, stressing both the strength of the feet and their piercing, steel-like character. These
strong feet also helped Sibley’s elevation and although it had none of the buoyancy of
Nerina’s, it was nevertheless, light and swift. Aside from Markova, Sibley was possibly
the most accomplished dancer with whom Ashton worked extensively. She appears to have had an easy command of a full range of codified movements and a highly expressive upper body. Hence the dances are not confined to elevation or to an emphasis on the upper body but use a variety of ‘steps’. This technical strength also allowed her to bend and swoop and dive in a seemingly effortless way. The combination of these facilities made Sibley into a dancer who was fleet, effervescent and lively and it was these qualities that Ashton sought to bring to the fore.

One way in which this is manifest is by the introduction of hops on pointe. Sibley (cited in Kavanagh, 1996a, 508) suggests that the hops were introduced as a mock punishment for dancing a ‘step’ on demi-pointe as a young dancer in the corps de ballet in Ondine (1958). Jumps on pointe proliferate in the solo variation in the pas de quatre in Swan Lake (Petipa/Ivanov/ Ashton, 1963 staging): the first important choreography Ashton made with Sibley. The opening phrase of the dance includes a series of little changements, punctuated by hops into an ankle high retiré, which are light and skim the stage with little piercing movements. The sharpness of the feet is slightly alleviated by the undulating arms which trail, ‘swan-like’, up and down on either side of the body, creating dynamic contrast between upper and lower body. Ashton uses hops on pointe again in the other solo work he made for Sibley and they become a recurring motif in both The Dream (1964) and Dorabella’s variation in Enigma Variations (1968). While motif development is not the concern of this study, the fact that the hops play such a prominent role is an indication of their significance in the dance movement made for Sibley.

A phrase in The Dream (1964) demonstrates the way in which Ashton and Sibley developed the hops, attenuating the perception of rigidity and harshness that can be linked to jumping on pointe. For instance, the backward moving hops devant on pointe, in the
dance of The Fairy of the Woodland Glade (Sleeping Beauty, 1890, 1946), appear heavy because the emphasis occurs at the end of the movement. But in The Dream (1964), they are more air-borne and serve to bring out Sibley’s dominant qualities. A phrase during Titania’s second entrance is typical of the inventive way in which hops on pointe are used to this effect: a light, pulsating, turning arabesque is executed on pointe followed by syncopated jumps in fifth position. The phrase is made up of the following ‘steps’:

♦ turning en dedans to face stage left, the dancer performs three hops on pointe on the right foot in arabesque. Using the raised leg, she steps forward, still on pointe, and performs a low développé through to en avant which ends on a plié. The raised leg then swishes back to arabesque and closes to a fifth position in a plié. The phrase is completed by one hop forward on pointe in fifth and, after a slight pause, two more hops in fifth on pointe. The whole phrase is then repeated to the other side. The arms move to second arabesque on the first arabesque, change to third position for the développé and the front arm remains forward for the swish into arabesque (video example 45).

Because the hops are rapid and the accent in the jump is upwards rather than on the landing, an impression of weightlessness is created. Keeping the dancer on pointe for the step before the développé also makes the transition between the hops and the plié smooth, augmenting the airborne quality of the phrase. The eye is also drawn towards the feet because they are the focus of the dancer’s attention for both the hops and the développé. Whilst spatial features are not dominant, the swish causes the body to arch suddenly backwards, drawing attention to the body design, punctuating the phrase in the middle and
juxtaposing vigour and liveliness with the gentler hopping movements. The phrase does not conform exactly to any of the key phrase patterns but, as with the movement made with Seymour, is an amalgam of two, combining contrasting dynamic with a focus on body design. This combination, together with an emphasis on expressive feet, draws out Sibley’s best qualities and Ashton uses them to make dance movement which depends on an easy relationship with both speed and footwork.

This phrase demands the ability to use the pointe shoe with the ease of bare feet. Not since working with Markova had Ashton been able to explore foot work in such an unrestricted way. Nerina’s footwork was strong and quick but it lacked Sibley’s clarity, while Seymour’s, though expressive, did not have the same kind of strength. Sibley’s strong feet, thus added another dimension to Ashton’s style, which enabled him to explore the potential of pointe work. Other hopping examples are found throughout The Dream (1964) and in Enigma Variations (1968).

Sibley also had an exceptional command of her arms and torso and this gave rise to an abundance of luxurious upper body movement. Both The Dream (1964) and Enigma Variations (1968) provide examples. The rond de jambe à terre was identified in Chapter III as a signature ‘step’ which Ashton used and reworked many times. It encourages expansive use of the upper body in conjunction with the leg, although Ashton did not always match the two, as the example described in 5.3.1.3 from Daphnis and Chloe (1951) shows. But in Enigma, the port de bras is circular, horizontal and wider than that in Daphnis (see Chapter IV), expanding and displaying the upper body in a leisurely way.

In The Dream (1964) Ashton uses the port de bras, as opposed to the hops to highlight Sibley’s quick, mercurial actions. During the duet with Oberon, both he and Titania perform short solo passages. Titania’s first solo phrase occurs after Oberon’s and
moves in a travelling diagonal path:

♦ The dancer dives forward to a low *dégagé tendu* with the supporting leg bent; the arms follow. Led from the shoulder, they move down, close to the body, one at a time, to the extended toe. With a sharp jack-knife she pulls immediately upwards into an *arabesque relevé on pointe*, with one arm pressing the working leg backwards and the other to a high *arabesque* position. The cluster ends with four jumps on *pointe* and two *arabesques* performed almost running (video example 46).

The arms move in rapid though opposing circles, which start in the shoulder but are completed by the *arabesque*: one arm flows upwards and the other back. The quick, abrupt dive into the position is countered by the more indulgent quality of the upper body, but the contrast in dynamic between the two helps to capture the restless quality of the phrase. It seems as though Titania cannot decide whether to yield to sensuality or retain her fleet mercurial qualities. According to Sibley (1996, 150), she suggested the particular movement, which relies on an extensive use of the shoulders and upper back. Ashton capitalizes on Sibley’s flexible shoulders and fluent back and the movement throughout *The Dream* (1964) is infused with similar actions. It bears a resemblance to the extravagant *port de bras* that Ashton made for Violetta Elvin in the Summer variation in *Cinderella* (1948) but is less apparent in the upper body movement of the other dancers discussed in this chapter.

Sibley’s technical ease, agility and creativity allowed Ashton the freedom to devise fleet intricate phrases which communicate either through the feet or the upper body.
Whilst the dance movement made for Seymour also focuses on her feet, it does so to emphasise her high arches, using relevés, picked-up pas de bourrée and other similar ‘steps’ to demonstrate the flexibility and shape of the feet. The movement made for Sibley is more precise and finely tuned in keeping with her fleetness. Sharp, piercing qualities dominate over fluidity as a result. Her upper body too is more dexterous and combines a sense of plasticity in its use of space with a more immediate attitude to time. It is these dynamic qualities which Ashton brings out in The Dream, enabling Sibley’s movement to appear at once both languorous and meticulous. The key phrase patterns which involve spatial elements have analogies with some of those made for Seymour but the repetitive use of hops on pointe introduces a ‘step’ which, like one of Ashton’s signature ‘steps’, becomes equally a signature ‘step’ for Sibley.

5.3.5. **Ashton’s Male Dancers**

The rationale has already been given for the choice of the following two dancers. Ashton made less solo dance movement for male dancers than for the women and this may have been because the 1939-1945 war removed the majority of the male dancers from the company. Thus, when they returned, they were less technically competent than the women and it was some time before they regained their earlier standards. Alexander Grant joined the company after the war and Dowell was too young to have been affected by it. Their talents and bodily shapes are considerably different (see 5.1) and the contrasting bodies suggest that the height and bodily shape of male dancers held little significance for Ashton. Equally, it could indicate that because there were so few male dancers of outstanding ability, he had little choice anyway.
5.3.6. **Alexander Grant**

Alexander Grant was trained by teachers of the Royal Academy of Dancing in New Zealand. Arriving at the Sadler’s Wells School at the end of 1945, he spent only a short time there before joining the Sadler’s Wells Ballet. His training is, however, of less consequence since he had a very individual way of approaching the codified movements and according to Grant (cited in Kavanagh, 1996b, 130) was almost more influenced by the films of Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly than by the classical technique.

Grant’s energy, exuberance and dance movement style were much admired by the Russians when The Royal Ballet visited in 1961 (de Valois, 1979,9). But he is described somewhat pejoratively by Ninette de Valois (1979, 9) as ‘a great character dancer’. He hated to be called a ‘character dancer’ and considered himself to have been more of an all-rounder, pointing out that he has performed most roles including one of the male dancers in *Symphonic Variations* (1946) (Roberts, 1958, 15). However, de Valois (1979) also applauds his individuality and capacity for risk-taking and it is probably these features that first attracted Ashton to Grant’s dance movement.

Ashton created twenty-two roles for him between 1946 and 1976, more than for any other dancer apart from Fonteyn and Somes. Ashton pushed Grant’s risk-taking to extremes and made him the first male dancer in The Royal Ballet to perform on pointe: in both *The Dream* (1964) and *Tales of Beatrix Potter* (1971). Although there are precedents for this in the twentieth century, for example, Nijinska’s Lysandre in *Les Fâcheux* (1924), performance on pointe for the male dancer is not without its hazards; particularly as male dancers in the 1960s lacked the necessary physical training to perform on pointe. Moreover, in this century, it has been more associated with fragile and ethereal
femininity (Burt, 1995) than with male ballet dancing. But as Sandra Noll Hammond’s research (1987-88) demonstrates, toe-dancing for the male dancer was already a phenomenon of the eighteenth century and exercises for strengthening the feet to prepare them for pointe work were taught to both men and women in the nineteenth century. Ashton is unlikely to have known this fact but he probably saw Les Fâcheux and it may have influenced him.

The critic Edwin Denby (1986, 360) has written cogently about Grant, describing him as one of the Sadler’s Wells Company’s most interesting dancers. In Cinderella (1948), he applauds his disregard for safety, demonstrated by leaping down flights of stairs, dashing in and out of groups of guests and throwing his body, bent in numerous directions, around the stage. References to Grant’s dancing give priority to his ability to move with force, to dart, to spring, to leap; jumping, he claimed, was what he enjoyed most and could do best (cited in Newman, 1982, 73). Earlier analysis undertaken for this study confirms that it is these characteristics that are given priority in the work made with Ashton. Ten of the works are still performed but two of these, Scènes de Ballet (1948) and A Month in the Country, (1976) are not major dance roles. The Neapolitan in Swan Lake (1952) is a duet, as is a major part of Pigling Bland in Tales of Beatrix Potter (1971).

To assess the legacy of this collaboration, the dance movement of the other extant works was examined and certain recurring traits revealed. Much of these are found in the Jester in Cinderella, one of the earliest dances Ashton created for Grant, and later in that of Bryaxis in Daphnis and Chloe (1951). The movement pushed Grant to extremes of daring and, according to Grant, certain ‘steps’ made for the Jester, such as some scissor jumps from a deep plié, can no longer be performed by today’s dancers (interview, 1999).

Despite Grant’s claims to the contrary, he is remembered more for his creation of
character and his energetic, muscular movement than for his precise, accurate presentation of the codified movement. Hence it cannot have been for his technical accuracy that Ashton chose to work with him. He openly enjoyed taking risks and introduced drama into his movement by ignoring the vertical: both his jumping and his turning were frequently off-balance. This involves greater expenditure of energy, since each jump requires the body to be returned to an equilibrium as it lands. A video from the 1966 television production of Cinderella (Vernon) displays these characteristics and shows Grant in the role created for him. By this time Grant was already in his early forties and so his powers may have been less forceful, although evidence from an earlier film of Daphnis and Chloe (1951) made in 1958 suggests that these qualities were not significantly diminished by 1966. Samples of the dance movement from Cinderella are analysed in the following paragraphs. They add to the evidence already uncovered of the way in which Ashton was prepared to allow the dancer some control over the movement and of how he adapted his style when confronted with an unusual or highly individual dancer.

An example from Cinderella (1948) demonstrates Grant’s capacity for taking chances. It occurs at the start of Act II with the Jester sitting at the top of a long flight of central stairs. Grant leaps twice with legs spread apart: the first leap covers three steps and the second two, and finishes on the stage (video example 46). The leaps are followed immediately by a somersault which ends in a kneeling position. It is not so much the actual movement here that is important but the way in which Grant performs it. He throws himself to the ground for the somersault and the scissor-like leaps hardly touch the steps. There appears to be no regard for position and the legs are flung outwards, displaying the extent of the jump rather than a carefully placed shape. Notably, when the
same role is danced by Wayne Sleep (Large, 1979), the shapes are clearly formed, but the element of risk is missing: he begins from a lower step and performs only one leap, though with more buoyancy.

The absence of breath pauses is also a distinctive feature of the dance movement made for Grant. While this characteristic was identified in Chapter IV as belonging to one of the key phrase patterns, it is not only a frequently recurring element of the movement created for Grant but is also a little different; it tends to occur during a sequence in which the same movement is repeated a number of times. A phrase cluster near the beginning of Cinderella Act II demonstrates this, but equally importantly displays Grant’s vitality and energy. The cluster is repeated twice and comprises:

♦ a ballotté to the front, back and side performed with one arm forward at shoulder level and the other to the side (shown in the second half of video example 47).

The ballotté has none of the soft rocking qualities usually associated with that ‘step’ (Ryman, 1998, 19). Instead, the accent is placed at the end of each movement breaking up the swaying effect, emphasising the downward pull of gravity and creating a slight pause between each ballotté. The absence of the breath pause is maintained because the dancer remains in the fondu before executing the next ballotté. On the développé forward, the front leg is thrown right across the body with little attention to placing and, in the arabesque, the body is thrown forward. The act of throwing rather than placing the limbs is important because, in Grant’s case, it draws attention to the motional aspects rather than the design.

The effort qualities identified by Laban are a particularly useful way of examining
the movement made with Grant because they highlight certain distinctive features. The legs are thrust directly into the space; the attitude to time is more sudden than sustained, a feature which tends to recur in most of Grant's movement, and the weight quality is perceived as strong and impactive. These effort elements are of paramount importance in this phrase, but become apparent largely because of the absence of breath pauses and from a disregard for 'accurate' placing.

As far as Grant was concerned, Ashton was more interested in giving priority to the dynamic elements and shape or position were of secondary importance. Grant was encouraged to abandon himself to the movement and maintains that he had complete trust in Ashton whose eye would always prevent the dancer from looking awkward (cited in Newman, 1982, 85). He was thus allowed to give full rein to his energy. The nine ballottés are performed consecutively and density of this kind is characteristic of the movement made with Grant. The unorthodox placing gives some indication of Grant's interpretation of the balletic code, but it is not repeated by later dancers in the role; it would, today, probably appear out of place because of a greater emphasis on placing.

Comparable effort characteristics occur in other works. For instance, in both Daphnis and Chloe (1952) and La Fille mal gardée (1960), Grant performs a series of leaps which involve jumping from two feet to two feet. The frenetic appearance of the jumps is caused by both the absence of breath pauses and the repetitive movements, and is reinforced by the recurring energy patterns. An equally frenetic series occurs in Ondine (1958), where Grant performs a number of temps levés, with the working leg moving in a retiré through to arabesque.

Grant's dance movement, however, does not consist solely of jumps. Countless turns are also a feature; they too lack breath pauses, giving them a seemingly frenetic
characteristic. A rapid phrase of seven renversé turns occurs in Daphnis (1952) which, characteristically, depends on speed and Grant’s vortex-like motion. Ashton also invented ‘steps’ for Grant and in Cinderella (1948) where the Jester executes a series of turns that have some alliance with the fouetté but in reverse: the turns are initiated from a relevé en dehors but each time the leg ends behind in a low arabesque (video example 48). Both these phrases of turns have something of a thrashing nature as they are performed wildly and briskly. They do not depend on turn-out, placing or clean positions and they are prevented from achieving these by their speed and sense of abandonment.

The main focus of the movement Ashton made with Grant is on his energy. By giving him a series of fast, daring turns and removing the links between a series of jumps, he stresses the forceful qualities of the movement and Grant’s animal-like qualities. While spatial elements, such as the circular progressions of the renversé and the projection of the legs and arms are present, they are subordinate to the dynamic features but do serve to reinforce them. Most of the movement made with Grant derives from one key phrase pattern (the absence of breath pauses) but whereas the phrases described in Chapter IV use different ‘steps’, those for Grant do not and are consequently perceived as more active, more frenzied. This may be because repetition of the same ‘step’ allowed Grant to gather greater momentum. Equally, there are few of Ashton’s signature ‘steps’ in the movement; many of the ‘steps’ remain particular to the dances made for Grant himself.

Discussing his contribution to the movement with Julie Kavanagh (in Jordan & Grau, 1996[b], 131), Grant claims that a combination of his own willingness to try anything and Ashton’s desire for ever more interesting movements was at the heart of the dances Ashton made with him. This collaborative element introduced both risk and
vitality into Ashton’s dance movement but there is also a sense in which this kind of movement is associated only with Grant. Whether these features can be recollected and retained is debatable, but once identified they could usefully form part of an interpretation of the dance movement generated by the Ashton/Grant collaboration.

5.3.6 Anthony Dowell

David Vaughan (1994, 7) observes that Dowell’s ‘line, aplomb and fluency of phrasing’ enabled Ashton to extend male adagio dancing. Like Sibley, he was trained at the Sadler’s Wells/Royal Ballet School, mainly by Harold Turner and Errol Addison, both of whom had a background in the Cecchetti method of training. Ashton created eleven major roles for him, the first in The Dream (1964) and the last, in Vari Capricci, in 1983. The Dream has a number of solo sections but several of the other pieces are confined to trios: Monotones (1966) and Jazz Calendar, (1968) and duets: Meditation from Thaïs (1971) and Sospiri (1981). Besides The Dream (1964), the major solos are found in Enigma Variations (1968), The Sleeping Beauty (1968), A Month in the Country (1976), Orpheus, (1978) and Le Chant du Rossignol, (1981).

Dowell’s long flexible limbs gave his dancing a linear quality, particularly evident in the adagio movement Ashton made for him. Critics acknowledged his control and plasticity (Croce, 1978, 217) praising his technical ease and ‘fine[st] classical style[ist]’ (Croce, 1978, 372). Much is made of the adagio movement Ashton made for him, particularly his use of the chassé (Vaughan, 1977, 402). It occurs abundantly in both Beliaev’s solo in A Month in the Country and in the solo interpolated into the Vision scene in The Sleeping Beauty (1968). But less mention is made of the ease with which he performed extravagant turns, and actions demanding rapid shifts of direction. These
additional talents were explored by Ashton, particularly in the scherzo in *The Dream* (1964) and in the solo for Troyte in *Enigma Variations* (1968).

The dances choreographed for Oberon in *The Dream* use both these facilities: fluent adage and rapid turns and jumps. Yet they show little trace of traditional male dancing, such as the expansive use of space and conspicuous show of strength, evident in the dances made for Alexander Grant. The traditional twentieth century attribute of the male dancer is physical strength (Moreton, 1968, 520 and Burt, 1995, 73) and consideration of line or bodily appearance is deemed almost irrelevant. But with Dowell, Ashton drew on calmer, cooler qualities choosing to explore these other aspects which are more usually features of female dancing. Their introduction into male ballet dancing takes the movement beyond the conventional boundaries. Precedents, however, do exist in, for example, the man’s variation in *Les Sylphides* (Fokine, 1909) and some of the dance movement for the Spirit of the Rose in *Le Spectre de la Rose* (Fokine, 1911), but these were created earlier and their ‘female’ attributes made acceptable by their Russian origins (Burt, 1995).

Adagio movement is threaded throughout *The Dream* (1964). An *arabesque* phrase, just before Oberon squeezes the juice into Titania’s eyes, is worth examining for its exploitation of Dowell’s restraint and control and its spatial content. Ashton packs the phrase with movement, but places it upstage right, almost on the back-drop, so only just visible to the audience. The dancer blends with the background and an unobservant audience could easily miss the bulk of the movement, perceiving only the pause at the end in the lunge. Oberon’s obtuse position is likely to have occurred because of the demands of the narrative, but the reasons for its intricacy are less obvious. Ashton may have wanted to exploit Dowell’s ability to perform an *arabesque penchée*, or sustained turns
while allowing him to camouflage unsteadiness if the ‘step’ did not work.

The phrase comprises three rocking arabesques, each ending in a penché. Using the raised leg, the dancer steps upstage to an arabesque à terre and performs a half turn into fourth position. There follows a double piroüette en dehors which extends straight into a double fouetté, without an extra relevé; the turn finishes in a deep lunge in fourth position facing upstage (video example 49).

The phrase is dominated by spatial and shaping elements and the effort, which remains sustained and flowing, is subordinate to these. The transitions between the arabesque and the piroüette and between the piroüette and the fouetté are seamless, continuing the fluidity established in the opening section. To reinforce these aspects, the movements themselves have a liquid quality. In the arabesque section, the body designs shrink and then expand, moving between a curved and an elongated shape. The inclusion in this section of a range of spatial features, linear spatial progressions, projections and changing body designs, make it analogous with the key phrase pattern (see Chapter IV, 4.3.1.1), although here the legs are also involved. The phrase demands balance, line and physical control and combines two of Dowell’s attributes: line and an ability to turn. In other solo dances such as that made on Dowell for the 1968 production of The Sleeping Beauty, Orpheus (1978) and A Month in the Country (1976) Ashton again makes use of Dowell’s restraint and controlled technique.

Besides having control, Dowell was also very agile and could jump easily. Ashton used this facility interspersing the quieter movements in a work with bursts of frenetic energy. In both The Dream (1964) and A Month in the Country (1976) there are sections
of fast spinning movement as well as adagio ‘steps’. However, the solo which most displays Dowell’s attack and drive is found in Enigma Variations (1968) which uses a combination of fast spins, rapidly turning jumps and constantly shifting weight changes. It lasts for one minute and is a whirlwind of twisting and turning movement, with long phrases and directional changes on almost every ‘step’. A phrase from Enigma Variations (1968), was already analysed in Chapter IV (4.3.4) and it demonstrates the kind of movement qualities Ashton was demanding from Dowell. These are notable for the absence of breath pauses, but also require an ability to make rapid directional changes and to absorb complex formations.

Ashton, however, did not build on these capacities and instead turned more frequently to the more adagio like movement already apparent in The Dream. Beliaev’s solo in A Month in the Country develops the fluid controlled movement of both the earlier ballet and Dowell’s solo in Act II of the 1968 production of The Sleeping Beauty (Petipa/Ashton/Wright). The deep languorous chassés, already evident in The Sleeping Beauty (1968), form a major part of the dance movement. Essentially these manifest spatial features, but they also draw attention to Dowell’s line and plasticity. A long phrase combining chassés with a slow sustained assemblé is found near the beginning of the dance. The two movements travel in several directions: forwards, in effacé and croisé, backwards, en tournant and forwards again. The whole makes an intricate floor pattern that forms a knot. Unlike many of Ashton’s other phrases, the phrases here are long, sharing this characteristic with those in Troyte’s solo. This particular chassé phrase, which ends with a series of chaîné turns, seems to be one of the longest Ashton created: including nine chassés and seven assemblés. It is perceived as a long phrase because the movements flow one into another and manifest a consistent smooth and sustained
dynamic. Only the first section of the phrase is discussed here since there are enough characteristic spatial elements in evidence to convey the style of the whole phrase.

It comprises a long, deep chassé followed by a slow assemblé with five repetitions of this combination. The arms have two distinct patterns. The first occurs in the first and second combination and is repeated in the fifth, while the other pattern is found in the third and fourth. The sequence is as follows:

A chassé movement slides forward with the front foot, while the back leg stretches out to an arabesque à terre, before closing in fifth with the assemblé. This pattern is repeated for all five. The arms on the first two and last combinations move out through first position (RAD, Ryman, 1997, 70), with the palms facing up, to end in second, closing in bras bas for the assemblé. The movement is perceived as a demonstrative gesture. On the third and fourth combination, the arms move in circles around the body for the two ‘steps’, joining the combinations by the continuous circular paths of the two arms (video example 50).

The opening chassé is light and sustained and the arms execute a semi-circular progression. The open body design is brief but, nevertheless, clearly visible. This lack of a forceful dynamic is rarely found in Ashton’s movement for other male dancers. For example, the key phrase pattern (Chapter IV) from Les Rendezvous (1933) activates the space around the body, both because of the force of the movement and the spatial elements, whereas these flowing, sustained port de bras do not. They display Dowell’s line and equilibrium and testify to the way in which Ashton varies his key phrase patterns.

The movement Ashton created for Dowell is characterised by surprisingly long,
seamlessly joined phrases, rapidly shifting weight, and an emphasis on line, whether of
the lower or upper body, is also a strong feature. Yet, as indicated above, some of the
movement is exceedingly active and exploits Dowell’s agility and capacity for rapid
movement. But this movement bears no comparison with that made for Alexander Grant.
Neither the choice of ‘steps’ nor their combination into phrases has any similarity. The
contrast is striking because Ashton uses key phrase patterns for both, yet adjusts them to
suit each dancer.

5.4 **Dancers’ Legacies: the Remnants of Dancers’ Style in Ashton’s Movement**

As the analysis in this chapter demonstrates, the movement style of the different
dancers shows that there is considerable variation amongst them. Whilst some
comparisons have already been made throughout the chapter, it is useful to gather the
differences together before coming to a conclusion. As mentioned, four of the dancers,
Fonteyn, Nerina, Seymour and Grant all had different training backgrounds which gave
priority to specific abilities ranging from expressive upper body movement in the dancing
of Fonteyn and Seymour and to buoyant jumps in that of Nerina and Grant. The training
style of the other two, Sibley and Dowell was more homogenous and, despite their
individual bodily abilities, there is evidence of some shared characteristics: for instance,
pliant upper bodies, an ability to execute rapid petit allegro movement with clarity and
apparent ease, as in Troyte’s intricate phrases, or Titania’s quick, little hops on pointe, and
strong articulate feet. An examination of the syllabus which dominated their training
shows that these abilities are, in the main, the result of that training. Other dancers, such
as Collier, Fletcher and Sleep, who also trained in that system, demonstrate similar traits.

With the exception of Cinderella (1948), Fonteyn did not perform Ashton roles
made for other dancers and, amongst those examined here, it is difficult to imagine her doing so. But some of the dances made for her were danced by the other dancers. Nerina and Sibley both danced Scènes de Ballet (1948), while Nerina also danced in both Ondine (1958) and Sylvia (1951) and Sibley in Symphonic Variations (1946) and Daphnis and Chloe (1951). Considering Ashton made over thirty roles for Fonteyn it is strange that so few were passed on to these dancers. This may be because many of the early Fonteyn works did not survive or because Ashton was not inclined to bring them back without Fonteyn; it is also possible that the dance movement suited only the early Fonteyn and depended less on attack and more on the specific way in which she used her upper limbs.

Amongst Fonteyn’s most attractive qualities (to Ashton) was her approach to the music and it could be argued that this was unique to her. Her dance movement style was careful, with limbs placed accurately, according to the conventions of the era. She had little elevation and found rapid footwork difficult and it is unthinkable that Ashton would have made dance movement for her that required fast articulate feet, like that of Rhapsody (1980) or Titania in The Dream (1964). It could be argued that the Shadow dance in Ondine (1958) incorporates rapid, well defined footwork but it does not depend on it, since, in that dance, the eye is more drawn to the movement of the upper body. Yet the dance movement made in Birthday Offering (1956) discussed in Chapter I, does require fast footwork, particularly in the first series of phrase clusters and in the final group. Evidence that Fonteyn’s feet were stronger between (circa) 1946 and 1956 is provided by a film of her dancing Aurora in The Sleeping Beauty (Petipa, 1890/Ashton, 1946), made

33 This film was made by a member of the American audience during the company’s visits to America between 1949 and 1952. It was filmed secretly and taken during various live performances. It is now in the possession of the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library at the Lincoln Centre, though is not yet available for
between 1949 and 1952. It was during this time that Ashton allowed her feet a little more prominence. However by the time Ondine (1958) was filmed she seems no longer to have had strong, responsive feet. Her dance movement style was unsuited to the movement Ashton made for the other dancers. She lacked the elevation and attack needed for La Fille mal gardée (1960), the plasticity for Seymour's dances and her feet were not articulate enough to perform the dances of Sibley.

Nerina too is significantly different from both Fonteyn and the later dancers, although she might conceivably have danced Rhapsody (1980): she was able to move with considerable speed and her feet were strong enough to run on pointe as easily as Collier does. She lacked the subtle handling of space that is a feature of Fonteyn's movement and, apparently, the musicality (Kavanagh, 1996a, 445). But Nerina's willingness to experiment, coupled with a capacity for attack, is particularly evident in the reverse fouetté phrase that occurs in both Birthday Offering (1956) and La Fille mal gardée (1960). Her movement is more expansive than that of the others, both arms and legs project extensively into the space beyond the body, contributing significantly to the flamboyance of her dancing. Like Grant she was a risk-taker and this gave Ashton the chance to explore more extravagant movement than he had hitherto been accustomed to with Fonteyn.

Of the works made for Seymour, both The Two Pigeons (1961) and A Month in the Country (1976) were danced by Sibley. Interestingly, apart from four other works, the Polka and Tango in Façade (1932), the white pas de deux in Les Patineurs (1937), Svetlana Beriosova’s variation in Birthday Offering and the title role in Cinderella (1948) (five performances), Seymour danced no other Ashton roles. Her feet were not strong viewing. It was shown at the conference The Fonteyn Phenomenon (1999).
enough to manage Sibley’s hops on pointe, though her limbs were more pliant, aided by her highly arched feet. Seymour did not possess the bravura quality evident in Nerina’s dancing, neither did she have Nerina’s buoyant jump. Equally, it is difficult to imagine any of these other dancers performing the Five Brahms Waltzes in the manner of Isadora Duncan (1976). The dance movement Ashton made with her is also dependent on an expressive and gestural use of the arms and this may have been learnt from Moreton’s mime classes (see 5.3.3). While both of these are features of Sibley’s movement, there is less spatial complexity in the upper body in the dances made for Seymour. The flexibility of Seymour’s feet is emphasised and her high arches shown to advantage, while the movement made with Sibley demonstrates diamond-hard pointes and strong, articulate feet.

None of the dancers discussed above performed in the dances made for Sibley and although she performed both Spring in Cinderella (1948) and Lise in La Fille mal gardée (1960), they were not a frequent part of her repertoire. She lacked the attack required by the dance movement in Fille and moved quickly from Spring to the title role in Cinderella (1948). There are aspects of her dance movement, however, that are closer to Fonteyn than that of the other dancers. For example, her attention to light and shade, evident in both her dancing and her coaching of Ashton work (in Jordan and Grau, 1996), and her relationship with the music. This has similarities with that of Fonteyn in that she never appeared to be rushed, however fast the pace, and was also able to extend and draw out the movement’s qualities. Her limbs lacked the plasticity of Seymour’s and although she did perform two of Seymour’s roles she had a limited number of performances in each. Essentially, Sibley’s movement had fleet, light and articulate qualities, which are significantly different from those of the other female dancers.
As far as the movement for Grant and Dowell is concerned, the vigorous athleticism of Grant is replaced by the pliancy, flow and control of Dowell. Grant’s risk-taking qualities match those of Nerina but the other aspects of their dancing are dissimilar. None of the other female dancers can be compared with either Dowell or Grant. The qualities Ashton highlighted in Fonteyn, Seymour and Sibley are unlike those of the men. Apart from these two dancers and Somes, Ashton used hardly any other male dancers in the consistent way that he used the women and, as a result, it is more difficult to analyse the contribution made to the male movement. For example, the men’s movement made for Les Rendezvous (1933), Les Patineurs (1937), for Colas in La Fille mal gardée (1960), Kolya in A Month in the Country (1976) and Rhapsody (1980) was made for dancers with whom he made little else of major significance and so are singular examples. This may be because, for Ashton, the ballerina was supreme. Equally, as indicated previously, male dancing during the 1940s and 1950s was not on a par with that of the female dancers and it was only during the 1960s that male dancing began to develop to the same level.

5.5 Conclusion

The foregoing arguments, based on detailed analysis, reveal that the dancers with whom Ashton worked expanded his style by offering him a range of different expressive qualities and technical abilities to explore. That the collaboration with the dancers elicited dance movement which was particular to each dancer is evident from the analysis and this allowed a reciprocity between Ashton and his dancers to develop. Equally, it was demonstrated that he had the skills to recognise their particular talents and the ability to draw movement from them, which both enhanced and advanced their dance qualities. For instance, he concentrated on developing the spatial aspects of the upper body for Fonteyn,
attack for Nerina and Grant, pliancy for Seymour, articulation of feet for Sibley and line for Dowell. Although he retained both the signature ‘steps’ and key phrase patterns, identified in Chapters III and IV, he chose those most naturally suited to the particular dancer, building on them, increasing the variety of ‘steps’ and introducing greater complexity into the phrases. What the analysis also reveals is that despite an underlying consistency of style, for example, recurring key phrase patterns and signature ‘steps’, the bulk of the movement made with each dancer focuses only on particular features. Thus the style is elaborated on and amplified through the development of the key phrase patterns. Knowledge of the key features of the movement made for each dancer could provide a further point of reference and allow future dancers the possibility of developing other interpretations outside of their own natural dance style.

Chapter VI builds on this last point by examining briefly the concept of interpretation in dance. With regard to dance movement style, scant attention has been paid to this subject and it is suggested that a consideration of the range of elements that make up a choreographer’s dance movement style could provide a basis for interpreting the movement. The chapter elucidates this point by considering the changes that have taken place in Ashton’s work through time, investigating their effect, and that of differently trained bodies, on the dance movement style.
Chapter Six

Shifting Performances: the Problem of Interpretation

6.0 Introduction

Chapters III, IV and V analysed Ashton's dance movement. The analysis revealed that the main characteristics are derived from a complex but interrelated web of sources which contribute to its distinctive nature. Keeping choreographed ballet movement alive, as something distinct and different from that of other choreographers, is difficult but it is suggested in this chapter that there are ways in which the problem can be approached. The main focus of the chapter is on the concept of interpretation and its relationship to choreographed dance movement, in particular, to that of Ashton. The discussion centres on the way in which interpretation can inform the performance and allow the distinctive features of the dance movement to emerge. Whilst it is likely that in some instances of a performance the process of interpretation subconsciously occurs, it is not possible to be absolutely certain since the interpretation of dance movement per se is not something that is widely, if ever, discussed. During the course of the chapter, it is argued that despite the lack of a choreographer's written instructions, such as those found in musical notation, other elements can provide a basis for this type of interpretation.

6.1 The Problems of Preservation

Since the 1930s, the performance of past works has been a major concern of the Vic-Wells/Sadler's Wells/Royal Ballet (de Valois, 1937, 125-6) and latterly of other ballet companies in Britain. Their preservation is now a further issue. The George Balanchine
Foundation in New York, has, since 1994, attempted both to retrieve lost ballets and provide a record of their primary creators and the Royal Danish Ballet has also taken steps to conserve the style and ballets of August Bouronville (Hutchinson Guest, 1981, 113). Even during Ashton’s lifetime, the survival of his works was causing anxiety, but he was averse to the establishment of a trust to protect them (Hunt, 1993, 780). Now there is concern that too few are being performed and that little is being done to retain them (Brown, 1999, 18).

Preserving dance movement is a controversial issue, not least because the execution of previously created dance movement gives rise to specific problems. In the nineteenth century, dance was part of a living performance tradition and performance practice was allied to the current composition style. Thus when older ballets were revived, or new ones handed on to different dancers, the dance movement was frequently altered to accommodate the changed aesthetic and technical abilities of the contemporary dancers (Wiley, 1997, 2). This situation altered with the Ballets Russes. Michael Fokine revolutionized the approach to dance works, making choreography, rather than the dancer, the major feature34 (Beaumont, 1981 135-143). A result of this altered focus was that the choreography came to be regarded as an integral part of the ballet and the choreographer’s dance movement of major importance (de Valois, 1937, 159-197). But choreographed movement is extracted, in part, from the training style of the dancers and this means that a conflict can arise between past and present performance styles. Placing

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34 In Helen Thomas’ (1998) review of Gendering Bodies/Performing Art: Dance and Literature in Early Twentieth-Century British Culture (Koritz, 1995) she points out that, according to Koritz, in the early part of the twentieth century, the performer came to be regarded only as the vehicle through which the choreographer’s ‘genius’ could be transmitted thus devaluing the performer’s own contribution. The argument in this chapter, however, is for the contributions of both to be recognised and reinstated.
the choreographer centre stage also means that s/he has come to be regarded as the only legitimate source for the movement and the role of the training, the dancers and the other elements that formed the style are diminished. This means that vital interpretive sources can be ignored.

Paradoxically, in conjunction with this attitude to the choreographer, there is also a belief in the supremacy of the contemporary codified movement and it was argued in Chapter I that as a result of this conviction, the contemporary technical style and its values are often applied to past work, a situation also noted by David Vaughan (1996, 1). It is often assumed, by dancers and directors, that because ballet choreographers use the codified movement (that which is current with their choreography) as a basis, the choreographers require it, rather than the choreographed movement to be exactly replicated. This confidence in the authority of the code and its resulting domination over choreographed dance has led to a unity of performance style. As a result, the distinctive hallmarks in the dance movement of diverse choreographers are disregarded and the dance movement becomes monotonous (Berg, 1992, 117).

For instance, in The Royal Ballet’s recent production of The Sleeping Beauty (Petipa/Ashton/Dowell 1890/1946/1994), the dancer (Viviana Durante) has the same approach to both the first and second act variations, although these are by different choreographers. In the legato solo variation in Act I (Petipa), she gives priority to high extensions of the leg, and places an emphasis on the extended position. When performing Ashton’s variation for Aurora in Act II (1952) she gives the opening movement the same accentuation, highlighting the extension and timing it to coincide with the strong accent in the music. According to Stephanie Jordan (1993, 44), the main stress in Ashton’s choreography is on the inward pull of the leg, which is clarified in Antoinette Sibley’s
teaching of the solo. Sibley claims that the dancer should fall off balance at the end of each of the movements and also draws attention to the shape of the dancer's body, which should be 'curved like the moon' (cited in Jordan, 1993, 44). As Jordan (1993, 44) points out, accenting both the downward progression of the leg and the fall changes the meaning. It also helps to distinguish the dance movement from that of the first and third Acts and demonstrates that there is a case for recognising the diverse ways in which choreographers use the codified movement. Durante's approach, for whatever reason, displays the tendency, on the part of the contemporary ballet dancer, to subject all dance movement to the same criteria.

There is undoubtedly some awareness, in the profession, that the revival of past works should elicit different responses to the dance movement (Jordan and Grau, 1996, 183-202); but ascertaining what these might be is not a straightforward process. In ballet, there is no set of instructions to guide the performer, and the score, when it exists, does not carry the same weight as the musical score or the text of a play. This is because ballet scores are rarely compiled by the choreographer and can even be made from a later video recording of the work. The problem is discussed by Judy Van Zile (1985-86) who advises that one way of approaching the problem is to make all dancers and choreographers literate.35

The skill of the notator is also of some significance. According to Imgaard Bartenieff, et.al. (1984, 8) notation is a translation of an event filtered by the notator and the entire focus of the dance can be altered by decisions made by the notator. Bartenieff, 35

Marie Rambert (1972, 218) also supports the idea but for choreographers only. She does not seem to have considered the importance of making the dancer equally literate.
et.al. (1984, 7-8) also raise concerns about the extent to which a notation system dictates the way movement is perceived. In the case of Benesh scores, the notational form in which most of Ashton’s dance movement is recorded, the score generally gives an account of the spatial patterns, the codified movement and its relationship to the music. Benesh choreologists do not usually record, for example, details of dynamic, the virtual spatial elements, facial expression or use of eyes. Thus, as instructions for performing the dance movement, scores have limitations; performance style, in other words, is not usually evident from the score (Wright in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 206-219). Laban scores are equally limited since the dynamics are not recorded, unless accompanied by an Effort/Shape score and this added information can make the score difficult to read. But when the choreographer is no longer available, or does not remember the movement, as was frequently the case with Ashton (Grant in Kavanagh 1996b, 131), they are of course of vital importance.

Whilst video recordings of works exist, the camera can distort the movement and the dynamics are also considerably reduced. The problem of interpretation is compounded with video because it captures only one performance and, as Jonathan Miller points out in relation to plays (1986, 33), there can be no single performance with which all others must accord. That would limit the interpretative possibilities of the work and make future realisations copies rather than performances. The video can, however, be a useful piece of evidence, demonstrating the way in which a past work was performed and forming part of the knowledge needed to contribute to an interpretation.

There is little research which explores the problem of uniformity of performance style in ballet movement and thus, there is no readily available formula for dealing with it. It is proposed here that the conscious application of interpretation to the dance
movement could be one way of addressing this problem. A discussion of the concept also helps to open up the debate and reveal some of the complexities surrounding the issue.

The question of interpretation is not straightforward and there is almost no research which considers it in relation to dance movement. Consequently, material on the subject is drawn from other performing arts, such as music and drama. While the problems encountered by other art forms are different, the issues raised can equally be applied to dance. For example, Michael Krausz (1995,1) points out that in music, the way musicians deal with elements such as pitch, tempo, dynamics and articulation of phrasing is a question of interpretation and depends on their attitude to the musical work:

> for example, on whether it [the musical work] is fully embodied in a score, on how strictly all markings should be respected, on what pertinence historical research has to his [sic] performances, on how decisive is the role of a historical or reconstructed composer...

> Krausz, 1995, 1

As emphasised earlier in the chapter, the score is of less significance to the dancer, few can read it and generally perceive it as providing the basic movements only. Thus it is the attitude of dancers to the dance movement that is pertinent in ballet. Their approach is governed by elements such as the relevance of a previous interpreter and the importance of the role of the balletic code (Collier, discussion, 2000).

While much of a choreographer's dance movement can be open to interpretation, some features may be more open than others. For instance, elements such as dynamic, the manner in which movement paths materialize, the generating source of the movement, musical emphasis and the use of eyes, could, in dance, be open to knowledgeable interpretation, although not in the work of all choreographers. Consciousness of the role
of these features in the dance movement style of a particular choreographer can give interpretative options to the dancer. But gauging the extent to which the structural features of the ‘steps’ can be altered is a more difficult question and, in some cases, less acceptable (Ashton’s response to change is discussed in 6.3). Unfortunately, because of ballet’s oral tradition, few dancers are, at present, given much freedom to interpret the dance movement. Dances are still handed on verbally from one dancer to another and the dancer is usually expected to follow the instructions of the rehearsal director (MacLeary in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 166).

A discussion of the concept of interpretation follows in 6.2 and its potential as a tool for releasing the dance movement from the strictures of codified movement is considered in 6.3. The notion that interpretation involves making considered choices is also an important part of the discussion and leads to the proposal that there are several ways of interpreting a choreographer’s dance movement, all of which can be equally valid. However, common sense suggests that the range of interpretations is not infinite and that there are some interpretive options which might be more appropriate than others.

The discussion is prompted by several renderings of a phrase or cluster from the following works: *Le Baiser de La Fée* (1935), *Cinderella* (1948), *Birthday Offering* (1956) and *Rhapsody* (1980). These offer a variety of approaches to the dance movement style and cover a substantial time span ranging from the 1950s to the 1990s. Later renditions, which appear to deviate substantially from an earlier one, endorsed either by the choreographer, or a trusted rehearsal director, raise questions about the admissible range of variety and about the acceptability of changes not sanctioned by the choreographer. Whilst there can be no definite rules, alterations to the ‘steps’ can substantially alter the dance movement style and bring it closer to the classroom *enchaînement*. 275
Throughout this thesis, the close connection between Ashton’s dance movement and his heritage has been discussed and, in the rest of this chapter, it is suggested that attention to this could expand the style and allow for greater interpretative variety. Interpretations are also limited by this approach.

6.2 Interpretation in Music and Drama

Two questions persist in the debates surrounding interpretation in music and drama. The first considers the extent to which an interpretation is an interpretation of a given work and thus concerns the identity of the work. The second addresses the concept of interpretation. Since questions concerning the ontological status of a dance are beyond the scope of this thesis, the foregoing questions can be reformed to ask whether the performance of the choreographed movement can be distinguished from that of the codified movement of other ballet choreographers, and, in common with the other performing arts, what is involved in the interpretation of ballet movement? Neither of these points can easily be answered; beginning with material relating to music and drama, the following paragraphs discuss the issues raised by these questions.

Because of the existence of a text or score, it may appear that the identity of a play or musical work can be more readily addressed. But there is a significant gap between the performance of a musical work or a play and the material written by the composer or playwright. Thus neither the text nor the score alone can constitute the work, which is only completed and realised in performance. The degree of detail in scores and texts varies and there is frequently little guidance as to how the composer/playwright wanted the piece performed. Because of these absent elements, the director and/or performer has to make several considered choices before realizing a work. Despite the presence of a
written text, Peter Brook (1968, 14) claims that the words are only ciphers on a page and even these have to be interpreted. Jonathan Miller (1986, 34) agrees, observing that the type of details required to construct a performance are not present in the text. For example, the way lines or verse are spoken, details of gesture, stance and facial expression are all omitted. Thus the text cannot even be regarded as a set of instructions and the problem is compounded when there is a long time lapse between the writing and its realisation. Changes in both culture and attitude make it difficult to uncover the original meaning of the play and this means that multiple interpretations are possible, although these are not infinite. For example, the words written by the author have a literal meaning constrained by grammar, but within these constraints different interpretations are possible (Miller, 1986, 98).

Both Miller and Brook conceive of identity as a fairly fluid concept. Brook (1968, 15) believes that the best dramatists leave their texts deliberately ambiguous, with the minimum of instructions for recreating the play and thus confer interpretative freedom on both director and actor. Miller (1986, 35), adopting a structuralist stance, compares a play to an evolving organism, which, despite extensive morphological changes, preserves the structural relationships, so that the underlying affinity between the different examples remains. He does, however, concede that, at the very least, the written words must be delivered. In answer to those who believe that there are greater benefits to be derived from reading the play than from a fallible stage production, he asserts that this is unacceptable because it dissolves the distinction between drama and other forms of literature. He argues that although the performance of a play is, of necessity, always a limitation, since interpretative choices have to be made, what helps plays remain vital, to survive even, is the fact that they can be interpreted.
Despite lacking full instructions, however, the written text remains an object against which performances can be verified, so that, for example, the audience do not believe they are watching *Hamlet* (Shakespeare, 1601-02) when they are in fact at *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov, 1904). The words and word order, however interpreted, are different in both. In discussing different readings of a work, Sophie Preston (1999, 80) makes a similar point. She argues that although a work can have multiple readings there is not an infinite range of interpretation, since it must be agreed that *Hamlet* is not *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1590s).

The situation with music is equally debatable and the majority of philosophers/musicologists also agree that musical scores are not determinate. Most do not directly tackle the identity of a work but discuss the relationship between the performance and the interpretation of the score. Joseph Margolis' (1995) argument is relevant to the problems facing dance. Like Miller (1986) and Brook (1968), he believes that the score is incomplete and claims that it represents only the sound structure giving little indication of the work’s expressive aspects. In order to interpret the score, he argues, an awareness of music’s technical history can be important since music has ‘historied properties’ (1995, 150). These, he claims, are the technical elements, such as sonata form, or, a descending perfect fifth which can be introduced into later musical composition and which then become assimilated within a new musical context. In a similar way in dance, classroom conventions sometimes find their way into the choreographed movement and then become absorbed into it, giving them a new context (see Chapter II for a discussion of the ways in which Ashton’s movement, though different from the class, absorbs some of the conventions).

Bojan Bujic (1995, 137), however, cautions against the application of
contemporary values to past works, claiming that in some historical periods, scores and performances were seen as two separate states of a composition. He argues that determinacy also varies amongst eras and that even within the work of a single composer, this can change (1995, 139). For example, Beethoven (1770-1827) left many more notational instructions in the *Hammerklavier* (1818 Op, 106) than in his early sonatas. The same can be said of choreographers, some of whom (for example, Ninette de Valois, Jerome Robbins and Antony Tudor) are much more prescriptive than others.

Göran Hermerén (1995, 25) raises the issue of musical interpretations which are so different from the standard approaches that they are no longer recognisable. This can frequently be the result of omissions and additions to the notes; such changes, he believes to be unacceptable. Others, such as Stan Godlovitch (1993, 573) and the duo Stephanie Ross and Jennifer Judkins (1996, 17) support this position. Despite these slightly different concepts of a score, most of the writers accept that within certain constraints the score/text is susceptible to multiple interpretations though not to the extent of radically altering the components. Thus, in common with dance, there are no fully determined scores/texts; they can only act as a starting point.

Neither Brook (1968) nor Miller (1986) discusses the act of interpretation from the point of view of the philosopher though Miller’s comments are philosophical and justify a range of his own interpretations. As far as actors are concerned, Miller (1986, 77) believes rehearsals are a dialectical process and that the final outcome is the result of trial and refutation. Several of the musicologists/philosophers, however, examine the concept of interpretation from a slightly different perspective. Jerrold Levinson’s paper (1995, 33-60) is concerned with the extent to which a performance counts as an interpretation. He holds that not all realizations of a work can be counted as an
interpretation, arguing that an interpretation must represent the following:

a set of considered choices to play a certain way, with some awareness of, if not active experimentation with, the alternatives available, and not merely a set of realizations of the sonic properties constitutive of the work.

1995, 46

In other words, he claims that a sound sequence which conforms to the instructions on a score is not automatically an interpretation, but could merely exemplify a way of realizing a set of instructions. Miller (1986, 34) adopts a similar position and contends that merely reading the words does not constitute a performance.\(^{36}\)

It seems inevitable that works will alter from one era to another. Miller (1986, 50) points out that aesthetic standards change and that the interpreter is no longer able to identify those elements thought significant by the playwright or director. To support his claim, he takes the example of a picture forgery, which he believes to be an interpretation, though not necessarily a conscious one. Miller argues that when a forgery is executed at the same time as the painting, it exemplifies similar aesthetic values to those of the painter, but when made after a time lapse, unwittingly highlights contemporary aesthetic concerns. Thus each new interpretation of a work is likely to give prominence to the dominant values of the period in which it is reconstructed. The problem with this is that a similar aesthetic emphasis can be placed on a range of disparate works leading to stylistic uniformity. This appears to be what is happening in ballet movement at present. A similar difficulty also persists in music. Richard Taruskin (1995, 47), whose arguments are concerned with the limiting elements of the ‘authenticity movement’ in music, is

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\(^{36}\) Hermerén too discusses the concept but his paper is discussed below.
wholly in favour of a pluralistic approach to performance practice. He believes that knowledge of both current and past performance practice informs performers, making them aware of alternative choices (19); only then can there be freedom from dogmatic approaches which confer sameness to all performances. Miller (1986, 71/2) is also conscious of the problems that can arise from a single aesthetic perspective and notes that, in theatre, the aesthetic perspective is now in a constant state of reappraisal.

6.3 Interpretation in Ballet Movement

The foregoing discussion considered the proposition that neither plays nor musical works have a fixed identity, but that there are elements, such as words or notes, which are considered intrinsic to the work; how these are articulated or played changes with the interpreters. Most agree that there is a need for some knowledge about a past work so that interpretations can be fuelled by conscious choices. The aim in the following paragraphs is to examine the concept of interpretation in relation to ballet movement. Whilst most ballet dancers are familiar with the idea of character interpretation, few have considered the role of interpretation in ballet movement, in particular, as a way of liberating themselves from the strictures of the codified movements. The investigation begins with a discussion of the way in which the dancer learns the choreographed dance movement and then deals with the problem of the classroom training in interpretation. This is followed by an examination of what it means, in general, to interpret dance movement and the discussion concludes by proposing a strategy for interpreting Ashton's dance movement.

When dances are revived after a period of time, the way in which the dancer learns the dance movement varies. Sometimes they are taught from the score, but in other cases
the dancer learns the movements from a video recording; neither approach provides adequate information. The first method needs the presence of a notator and thus a further interpreter. According to Ann Hutchinson Guest (1984, 176), a Labanotator, this is the most accurate way of passing on the dance movement, but important aspects, some of which were dealt with earlier in the chapter, are not recorded in either Laban or Benesh notation. For instance, Benesh notation is less concerned with process (Youngerman, 1984, 102) and as a result, there is no indication of the motivating source of the movement, or, its function. While it is still feasible to consider these features, in practice, and because the Benesh notation does not consider it necessary to record them, they are rarely addressed. This places a restriction on what can be interpreted since such elements are conceptually unavailable. Equally, in Labanotation the score is entirely dependent on what the notator perceives to be of significance. Learning from video is an even less satisfactory approach because the dynamics are diminished by the camera and, consequently, much of the contrast is lost. Thus when the video movement is faithfully reproduced by the dancer, the light and shade in the dance can be severely attenuated. In addition, dancers tend to perceive only the dancer and find it difficult, conceptually, to distinguish between the attributes of the specific dancer and those of the movement. There is too the question of accuracy, since the dancer on film or video may not have been able to perform the movement on that occasion and may have replaced part of it with something else.

In the dance movement of choreographers recently dead, dancers who worked with them are frequently called upon to help coach the present dancers. The role played by knowledgeable older dancers can be crucial since they are privy to the way in which a particular sequence or emphasis in the dance movement is created and thus understand
the source of the movement. Using the creator of the role tends to be, where possible, the approach in ballet and although it can be highly informative, is not necessarily always successful. As Miller (1986, 67) points out, the memory does not automatically reproduce a record of a previous experience and can frequently adapt the past to suit the contemporary values. For instance, as shown in the rehearsal (Nears and Lockyer, 1988) of *The Dream* (1964) with Anthony Dowell, Karen Paisey and Philip Broomhead, Dowell is more concerned with the technical mechanics and these, rather than the stylistic elements, are given priority. Thus it can happen that elements, which might have been vital at the time of conception of the movement, such as, an emphasis on the downward aspects of the movement, or, on the upper body, are either not perceived or not remembered as important. Despite these reservations, the creator of the role has extensive knowledge of the choreographer’s dance movement in general and can make controversial interpretative choices from a more informed position than the later dancer.

Neither the notated score nor the video provide adequate information for learning a dance, while the use of the original dancer, although more enlightening, still lacks some important ingredients. As with both music and drama, further knowledge is required to enable the dancer to make informed choices. More research is needed in this area, but in the absence of such an investigative processes, the contemporary codified version of the movement gains priority and it is this which leads to standardisation of the dance movement.

The problem, however, is not necessarily resolved by making the dancer aware of the different ways in which choreographers use dance movement, since the training of the dancer also plays a role. Few dancers, and others in the profession, are conscious of how strongly the training system informs their bodily style. Indeed as mentioned in Chapter
I, few recognise the stylistic aspects of codified movement. They tend to accept the codes and conventions of whichever system they were trained in as the norm for ballet because years of executing the same codified system means that it becomes their accustomed way of moving. Thus the tendency is to apply that system to all dances. It is argued in Chapter I that ballet is not a single system of training but a multiple range of styles. For this reason, a particular system may not provide the framework for developing the bodily knowledge needed for the dance movement of specific choreographers.

Bronislava Nijinska (in Van Norman Baer, 1986, 86) questioned the approach to training and was concerned about the mechanical way in which the dancer simply reproduces the codified movements in the routine way in which they are taught in the class (85). She was alarmed at the growing gap between what was learned in the ballet class and the contemporary choreography. The disparate relationship between the two, she believed, could have a detrimental effect on future choreography. She argues that the ‘academic dance’ is losing its connection with choreography and that, as a result, the dancer no longer has the bodily ability to work with the contemporary choreographers (1986, 86). Her essay is a plea for innovation in training and for giving the dancers a more appropriate education for understanding past and future ‘artistic development’ (87). Her paper highlights the conservative nature of ballet training and is indicative of the potentially negative role that ballet training can play in the development of both creativity and knowledge.

According to Rosemary Brandt (1990, 27), the current focus in balletic movement is on the execution of accurate placing and the achievement of correct static positions. Thus, there is little concern with the dynamic, or, as she describes it, the expressive aspects of the movement. Consequently, it is these technical features which dominate
present performances of ballet movement. The situation is not unlike that in the music world. Taruskin, citing Randolph Coleman, points out that current music teaching is involved with

Repetition, standardization, virtuosity, accuracy, perfection, and professionalization (with its emphasis on conformity)... not experimentation, idiosyncrasy, interaction, individuation and especially not open-ended creative play.

1995, 170

Susan Crow and Jennifer Jackson (1999, 38) are also concerned at the lack of creativity in the classroom training, complaining that learning is 'by rote, by looking and by copying the basic outline of steps'. The result is that ballet dancers find not only choreography difficult but also any dancing that conflicts with the rules formulated in the ballet class.

The training problem affects the dance movement of choreographers in different ways. For instance, Balanchine (1904-1983) combined his choreographed dance movement with the development of his own training system, and August Bournonville's (1805-1879) dances were subsequently adapted as classroom material. This means that an appropriate class can accompany the learning of the work (see Boos, 1995, Ch. 1), giving non-Balanchine trained dancers the opportunity to embrace a different movement system and to enlarge their scope for interpretation.

For those choreographers whose dance movement drew on the contemporary training system, there is a problem when their dances are produced at a later date, since the connection between the training and the dance movement is not usually recognised. A possible solution is to introduce a variety of classes derived from different systems into the training. These do not have to conform dogmatically to the systems but need only
extract the values underpinning them. The ‘de Valois class’, for example, rarely allows
the dancer to rest in a position and is concerned more with the process of movement than
with positional elements (see Chapter II). Hence the stress is on the energy of the
movement rather than the codified positions through which the movement passes.
Knowledge of these different aesthetic standards can help the dancer to understand alien
ways of moving. The question of training and the company class, however, is something
that would benefit from more in-depth research than can be undertaken here. The
introduction, at an earlier stage of the training, of the procedures for interpreting a past
work could also be helpful. There are, nevertheless, areas other than training which need
to be addressed and which bear on the interpretative process.

Hermerén (1995, 12) explores the process of interpretation by dividing it into six
areas, each of which considers different questions. The outcome of the interpretation
depends on which of these approaches the interpreter adopts. Four of these classifications
can equally be applied to ballet. The first and sixth are not relevant here because the first
concerns the object of interpretation and it is assumed, for the purposes of this thesis, that
the object of interpretation in ballet movement, is an amalgamation of the following: the
sequence of ‘steps’ assembled by the choreographer, the notated score, the video
performance, the dancer with whom the movement was choreographed and other aspects
of the choreographer’s heritage. The sixth type relates more to critics’ interpretation of a
given performance. Each of the four areas has a different focus: 1) the problem of
interpretation, 2) the material used in interpretation, 3) the method and 4) the purpose.
In dance, the interpretative problem (1) is concerned with what the dancer wants to know
about the movement and depends on whether s/he considers the choreographed movement
significant, or on whether s/he sees the movement as purely codified movement. The
attitude of the dancer can severely affect the movement. For example, questions of tempo can be crucial to a dance and the speed at which dancers perform the dance movement depends on, amongst other things, whether they want to present their ‘correct’ version of the code or the choreographer’s use of it.

The following three classifications: 2) materials, 3) method and 4) purpose are in a sense interdependent. Some of the materials used for interpretation were discussed above, but there are more. For instance, study of the dancers and the training that affected the choreographer are useful sources. Equally, an analysis of the aesthetic standards of the choreographer can also provide valuable information. As far as method is concerned, there are different ways in which dancers prepare themselves for performances and there are different methods of selection, but both Hermerén (1995, 13) and Levinson (1995, 46) agree that the method should involve the making of conscious choices with some notion of the alternatives available. The ability to make choices depends largely on having some knowledge of the choreographer’s dance heritage.

Finally, the purpose of an interpretation depends on the attitude of the dancer to performance. For instance, if Hermerén’s (13) approach to purpose is transferred to dance, the dancer needs to decide whether s/he is attempting to give a modern performance of the dance movement, or, to illuminate the differences between one choreographer’s dance movement and that of another, or to draw out the expressive elements.

Recognition that interpretation is problematic and that it involves making decisions gives the dancer more control. Knowledge about the choreographer enables dancers to make choices in accordance with their own capabilities and also make them aware that there are several equally valid ways of interpreting the movement. These
classifications seem a legitimate way of thinking about the concept of interpretation in
dance. They are not exhaustive, nor are all of equal importance, but they present a
framework for approaching this concept.

The elements that this study considers of significance to Ashton's dance
movement style have been outlined in the previous chapters. Throughout, it has been
suggested that, although referred to as Ashton's dance movement style, the movement is
derived from an intricate web of sources (see Chapter I). It is underpinned by the
dominant technical systems of the era onto which Ashton grafted his own aesthetic. Of
equal importance is the contribution of the dancers with whom he chose to work and the
influence of the choreographers and performers he most admired. The aim has been to
identify, as far as possible, the values which inform these features. For instance, it was
suggested in Chapter II that the ways in which a training system gives priority to some
aspects of the body over others highlights the values underscoring the system; they are
also displayed in the combinations which form the *enchaînements*. Equally, the values
of Ashton and those of the training systems are revealed by examining the features
Ashton chose to highlight in general. These elements are different from those chosen by
either George Balanchine or Antony Tudor (Topaz, 1988) and thus can be identified as
specific to Ashton's dance movement. They need not be the only focus, there are likely
to be others, but a consideration of these elements gives the dancer the opportunity to
make considered choices.

The other components that feed into Ashton's dance movement style could also
provide fruitful resources for interpretation. For instance, the exploration in Chapter V
of the dances made for Ashton's preferred dancers revealed that the movement gave
priority to their strengths and aptitudes. Knowledge of this provides a further basis for
interpretation. This does not mean reproducing the dance movement of the earlier dancer, which would simply provide a copy of the original, fossilizing it and preventing its adaptation to the contemporary aesthetic. On the contrary, cognizance of the dancer's aptitudes indicates the focus of the particular dance movement, and the interpreter can decide its importance. For instance, a dancer performing a role made with Margot Fonteyn may choose to draw attention to the upper body, but because of the current demand for technical precision may also combine this with more articulate use of the feet.

That there can be more than one acceptable interpretation does not mean that an 'interpretative anarchism' (Krausz, 1995, 5) prevails. Both music and drama theorists agree that there are restraints. The same is true of dance movement and there has to be some licence for changes to be made to 'steps'.

As highlighted throughout this thesis, Ashton could be ambivalent about the movement he had created. He was, occasionally, open to making small changes when a different dancer performed the movement. He was also comfortable with different interpretations even if that entailed adjusting the pace or slightly altering a 'step' (Jordan and Grau, 1996, 178). But this usually involved only a minor change: altering a pirouette from en dehors to en dedans (see Ch. III 3.4) or executing a pas de chat on pointe which had previously been performed on the flat (cited in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 178). The change in dynamics in the phrase, introduced by these alterations, is barely perceptible and it remains consistent with the dynamics and arrangements of other phrases. Other dancers remember that Ashton was less inclined to adjust the movement and that he insisted that they continue to work at it, finding ways of making it comfortable (cited in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 179). But this may have been because a change of 'step' altered the dynamics in the phrase.
Ashton was more reluctant to allow detailed stylistic changes, such as alterations in dynamic contrast, or inattention to the parts of the body that he deemed to be significant. He was unhappy about working with Rudolph Nureyev, whom he found difficult and somewhat resistant to his dance movement style (Kavanagh, 1996a, 479). Despite admiring Natalia Makarova's dancing, he was insistent that, when dancing his movement, she should follow his directions. In particular, he was determined that she retain the tempi he required; when she reverted to her own approach, he refused to attend rehearsals (Kavanagh, 1996a, 592). Katherine Healy (1994, 16) notes that Ashton discouraged certain stylistic nuances she had acquired. For example, he disliked fragmentation of the arm, insisting on a continuous line between shoulder and finger tip.

'Broken wrists' are a feature of Balanchine's style (Healy, 1996, 16-17) and Healy confesses that, when working with Ashton, it was something she had to remove from her own dance style. A second major area of emphasis was the use of the head and Healy's (1994, 17) comments on this are referred to in Chapter IV 4.3.1.2. According to Healy (1994), he was more insistent on details such as these than on turn-out or extension. While it might appear that Ashton was unconcerned about changes in the actual 'steps', he was unhappy when what he regarded as the spirit of the work was altered (Kavanagh, 1996a, 592). For Ashton, the spirit appears to reside in details such as head, eye, arm movements and the emphasis on contrasting dynamic. Knowledge of these characteristics can help to avoid treating the dance movement as an amalgamation of codified movements.

6.4 Varied Interpretations: Conformist and Nonconformist Performances

The introduction to this chapter points out that extensive efforts are being made to preserve the Balanchine legacy. His teaching has been documented by Suki Schorer
(1999) and the George Balanchine Foundation is recording his past works with the aid of the dancers who were their earliest interpreters. There is a danger that such a thorough documentation could ground the work permanently in the past, that the technique will stultify and that performers will be restricted, unable to bring fresh interpretative insights to the dance movement. In addition there are signs that, in New York, Balanchine’s approach to technique is considered to be ‘the only way to dance’ (Schorer in Witchel, 1999/2000, 84). This attitude to training fails to recognise ballet’s plurality and could reinforce the notion that all dance movement should be performed according to Balanchine’s tenets. Despite these reservations, it has to be acknowledged that the presence of such a record also provides a valuable starting point from which to build an interpretation. But it needs to be approached with caution. According to Leigh Witchel (1999/2000, 84-5), the training should be less about learning to dance in all ballets and more about a method for approaching the Balanchine repertory. This could be a strength, as long as its specificity to Balanchine is recognised. Since Ashton did not teach class or form a specific technique for performing his dances, a similar approach to documenting the dance movement is not possible. Thus no specific formula for performing Ashton dance movement exists. Its preservation depends not on replicating past performances but on allowing its characteristics to survive in a new context. This requires recognition of the differences between the values of contemporary training and the choreographic values and on consciously interpreting the dance movement of a specific choreographer.

There is no simple solution to the problem of giving life to historical material and the following paragraphs look at different performances of four works through time. The aim is to examine the changes that have occurred and to discuss the extent to which these alterations enhance or detract from, what are suggested here to be, Ashton’s intentions.
It has been argued that alterations to the ‘steps’ may possibly even inhibit the dance movement’s survival within the Ashton style. In common with the music and drama theoreticians, the notion that multiple interpretations are acceptable is important but, equally, that the range is not infinite.

6.4.1. **Le Baiser de la Fée (1935)**

There are two versions of the opening sections of this dance, the second of which has already been referred to in Chapter V. The first version is danced by Jennifer Penney and was recorded at the Gala to mark Ashton’s retirement in 1970. The second (Foy, 1988) is a recording of a rehearsal in which Margot Fonteyn coaches an unidentified Panamanian dancer. The opening parallel phrase cluster, as performed by Penney, provides an example of a change in the movement, though one not necessarily engendered by the prevailing classroom standards. Whilst the first recording was performed during Ashton’s lifetime, the solo was not seen by him until its performance in July (Kavanagh, 1996a, 516) and there is no record of his comments. It is not known who coached the version performed by Penney, but Michael Somes (cited in Daniels, 1997, 25) claims to have remembered and rehearsed most of it. If this is true, it bears out Miller’s point made earlier in the chapter, that memory can adapt to contemporary values. It is unlikely to have been Fonteyn who rehearsed Penney, since many of the stylistic features she is so insistent on in the later rehearsal are absent. The phrase cluster discussed is also the opening of the dance.

The dancer begins the phrase cluster upstage centre and travels directly forward. It comprises:
two posés en deuxième arabesque épaulé, followed by four quick posés en deuxième arabesque épaulé. These are performed directly to the side and in the second group of arabesques, two are condensed into the same musical phrase which previously was occupied by one (video example 51).

The arabesque is not the usual codified version: the front arm is curved with the palm facing in and the upper body is twisted, with a forward thrust of the shoulder (see drawing). The second arm is held low, behind the body, and although the position is only momentarily held, it is recognisable as a characteristic Ashton body design. Fonteyn (1988) observes that Ashton never allowed the arm to cover the face and throughout the rehearsal she reiterates the point, insisting on a relatively low position of the front arm. The second arm should also be held behind the body, lower than the traditional second position (Ryman, 1998, 70). The phrase is dominated by the upper body movement and has similarities with the two key phrase patterns described in Chapter IV 4.3.1, at least if it is performed according to Fonteyn's instructions. The spatial components, tension, body design, projection and progression, described in the key phrase are also present in this phrase (and it has analogies with the other key phrase in Ch. IV, 4.3.3).

As performed in the rehearsal (Foy, 1988):

♦ the dancer twists the torso, executing each posé to the side and the arms move consecutively following a circular path: after the first arabesque, the forward arm moves down the front of the body to the low second, it is briefly held and then continues the circle up the side of the body, over the head and across the face to
form again the front *arabesque* arm for the following *arabesque*\(^{37}\) (video example 51).

![Diagram of dancer in arabesque](image)

(figure 10)

This pattern is repeated throughout the cluster and introduces swirling circles moving vertically around the upper body, drawing attention to it and softening the more abrupt dynamic of the *posés* in *arabesque*.

When the same cluster is executed by Penney (video example 50), the arms follow a different pattern and the *posés* are taken *croisé*. From the first *arabesque*, she moves the front arm similarly to second but instead of coming up the side and over the head to the position, she moves the second arm directly up and across the front of the body. Thus the swirling circular pattern is lost. The progressions are cut to half circles and, because the dancer changes the direction to *croisé*, the twist in the torso is minimised. As a result, the actual tension in the upper body is considerably diminished and, because the dancer covers her face with her front arm, the outward projection of the face is also lost; the face

\(^{37}\) Although the dancer does not always manage to achieve this.
and eyes are now obscured by the hand.

This variation is particularly associated with Fonteyn. It was the first time that she and Ashton collaborated on a solo dance and she claims to remember it clearly (1988). The research in the earlier chapters demonstrated that spatial elements are central to the movement he made with her (Chapter V) and in this solo the rounded, swirling patterns of the opening phrase recur in other parts of the solo. Thus the circular progressions of the opening phrase cluster make sense in the context of the dance as a whole and act as a recurring motif; they are also an important aspect of the movement style.

Focusing on these spatial elements is a significant part of interpreting the dance movement (see Chapter V), as much of the early work Ashton made with Fonteyn seems to have been organised to divert attention from her feet. In this cluster most of the energy is concentrated in the arms, head and torso. The solo also makes a historical contribution to Ashton's dance movement style as it represents the beginning of a change. His work with Fonteyn encouraged him to consider new 'steps' and patterns of movement and thus it is an example of the way in which the dancer's abilities imposed on and affected his dance movement style. It requires a pliant and mobile upper body, which is equally as demanding as work which gives priority to the feet and legs.

The changes made by Penney, or more conceivably the rehearsal director who coached her, are limited in this phrase cluster to the upper body, but they constitute a significant alteration in the movement style. It was indicated in Chapter IV 4.3.1.2 that, in order to make complex movement for the upper body, he correspondingly simplified that of the lower body. Thus, removing the upper body movement from the cluster diminishes its complexity and interest and can return it to the codified version of today's classes. Ashton is unlikely to have condoned changes such as these, not only because they
so dramatically alter the movement content but also because most of his demands were for extra mobility in the upper body (Ashton Masterclass, Nears and Lockyer, 1988). Penney’s version of the cluster reduces the complexity of the arms and torso movements and gives the dance a clipped, restricted appearance. The change makes the posés easier to perform but this probably occurred from lack of knowledge; at the time (1970) the rehearsals were conducted in secret, in order to surprise Ashton, and thus Ashton’s own advice was not sought. With more extensive research and some notion of interpretation it might be possible in future to eliminate changes such as these, which can be seen to diminish the dance movement.

The path of a movement is a significant element of the dance and it would be difficult to argue that this alteration occurred because of a changed aesthetic. However, such extensive use of the upper body is less common in some training styles and it is possible that dancers may no longer be trained in a way that allows them such mobility in the upper body. In today’s training, the spatial pathways tend to be designed to open the upper body and trace wider paths around it. Twists of the torso are also less in evidence and, in general, the student is required to perform with a more erect body. Such extensive movement of the upper body requires strong postural muscles in the lower pelvis and, with the contemporary focus on a 180° turnout, these muscles tend to be weaker. However, it seems important to retain an awareness of the potential of the upper body because later training systems could reintroduce its significance. As Lesley Collier (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 179) points out, ‘steps’ are sometimes changed to suit a new dancer but it is important to revert to the initial choreography occasionally, since newer dancers may once more be able to perform a difficult or neglected ‘step’.

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6.4.2 Cinderella (1948/1965)

The foregoing discussion highlights the difficulties faced in trying to retain some of the stylistic features of a choreographer's dance movement. In some instances embellishing, or, adding more bravura elements to a movement or phrase can enhance the dance and create a new equally acceptable interpretation. Equally, they can detract from it. Three examples of the Fairy Godmother's variation from Cinderella (1948/65) highlight different interpretations and demonstrate that changes can sometimes amplify the dance, especially with a change of costume.

The three versions are danced by Georgina Parkinson (1966), Monica Mason (1979) and Christina McDermott (1996). Two key phrase patterns, both of which occur in this dance, have already been discussed in Chapter IV. The first in 4.3.1.2 has analogies with the cluster from Baiser (1935) described above and demonstrates how Ashton directs attention to the upper body by giving it the more complex movement. The second, a cluster in 4.3.3, provides an example of contrasting dynamic and rhythmic patterning. Throughout the Fairy Godmother's dance, Ashton shifts the attention between the upper and lower body and the movement is punctuated by sudden, quick, sharp movements, which form a contrast with the legato orchestral melody. These two key phrase patterns are typical of much of the other movement in the dance and the other clusters, referred to below, have much in common with them.

As danced by Parkinson (1996), the movement is gentle and flowing with less contrast between the held body designs and the freer arm movement. Mason's (1979) version is slightly different but is more cleanly articulated, with an emphasis on the body designs and the more staccato elements of the pointe work. McDermott (1996) performs
the same version as Mason (1979), but her interpretation is more fluid, closer to the flow of the musical melody. It is interesting to note that there is a change of costume between the three versions: Parkinson (1966) wears a skirt which comes just below the knee and comprises several layers of nylon chiffon, whereas Mason (1979) is wearing a short tutu. McDermott (1996) wears the longer skirt but with more layers than Parkinson’s (1966). There are changes to the ‘steps’ in Mason’s (1979) version which do not significantly alter the style, but confer a different interpretation on the dance. The phrase comprises the following:

♦ a pas de bourrée couru backwards is followed by two changements with changing épaulement and a relevé to an open attitude which ends in an arabesque (video examples 52, 53, 54).

Parkinson (1966) performs the changements softly, landing each time on the full foot. There is a strong emphasis on the changing épaulement and the arabesque folds quickly into the little jetés on pointe which follow. Mason (1979) and McDermott (1996), however, perform the changements on pointe, creating a greater contrast between the smoothly flowing pas de bourrée and the jumps. Mason (1979) too holds the arabesque longer, drawing attention to the body design. The change may have been introduced to coincide with the sharper lines of the tutu, since remaining on pointe makes the phrase appear sharper but requires stronger feet. It is possible that Ashton introduced the change himself, or that Parkinson (1966) omitted the jumps on pointe, since she had highly arched feet and may have found such jumps difficult. Mason’s (1979) interpretation does add sparkle to the dance by making the movements sharper and the resulting contrast with the
music is even more marked. According to Collier (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 178), Ashton liked the quality introduced by remaining on pointe and encouraged her not to return to the whole foot in a section of La Fille mal gardée (1960). These particular changes in Cinderella (1948) do not alter the dance movement style significantly and strengthen the opposition between the flow of the music and the stabbing action of the pointe shoe.

Other alterations are found in a later cluster, in the 1979 and 1996 version, which are consistent with this initial change. After the recurrence of the rond de jambe à terre key phrase pattern, the dancer performs a phrase cluster which traces a semi-circular path and includes a variety of turns. The cluster comprises:

♦ a body design in arabesque à terre, with arms outstretched and crossed at the wrists, three posé turns en dedans, followed by a turning coupé développé en dehors, two posé turns en dedans and a soutenu. The phrase is repeated twice more, but with four posés turns the third time (video examples 55,56,57).

Parkinson omits the body design in arabesque the second time and creates a succession of swirling movements broken only by the recurring, turning coupé développé. The perception is of a continuous turning phrase with little emphasis on spatial elements. When Mason and McDermott perform the cluster, the body design in arabesque is reinstated at the beginning of the second phrase. This defines the phrase boundaries and focuses attention on the body design. As danced by Mason, the phrase is sharper and the 'steps' more clearly articulated. She draws attention to the hands in the opening body design, creating both virtual and actual spatial tension between the hands and head.
Mason's wrists are strongly flexed and her head is thrown back creating the tension and while tension is not absent in Parkinson's, it is less strongly marked. The music is also used differently by both: Parkinson's phrases move across the music, while Mason accentuates the melody and follows the dynamics of the music. McDermott performs the same version as Mason, but, because she is a more fluid dancer, the change is less evident. The alterations in Mason's version make sense in the light of much of Ashton's dance movement style, although that danced by Parkinson is equally within the style. Parkinson's movements flow into the space, generated by an impulse at the start of the movement. In the earlier phrase, she uses the épaulement to draw attention to the three dimensionality of the body and although the body designs are diminished, a different element of Ashton's dance movement comes into focus. Mason, however, adds light and shade by her emphasis on body design in the second phrase and the added percussive pointe work, against the musical flow, is in keeping with the contrasts in the opening phrase of the whole dance (Chapter IV 4.3.3).

These different interpretations demonstrate the potential for variety within a single dance, both of which focus on different stylistic elements of the dance movement. The greater contrasts are found when comparing Parkinson and Mason and yet, both dancers had a fairly similar training: Parkinson received hers mainly at the Sadler's Wells/Royal Ballet School, while Mason initially had a Cecchetti training which was completed at The Royal Ballet School. A firm conclusion cannot be drawn from this but it could be suggested that the training allowed for individuality to be developed.

6.4.3 Birthday Offering (1956) and Rhapsody (1980)

The validity of altering the 'steps' and Ashton's response to change was discussed
in 6.3. The following paragraphs examine more ‘step’ alterations in two works, one of which was approved by Ashton and the other, effected after his death, may have occurred because the dancer’s training prevented her from performing the ‘steps’ as choreographed.

Birthday Offering (1956) was created for the twenty fifth birthday of the Sadler’s Wells Ballet and to celebrate twenty five years of English classical dance. The seven variations in the work were arranged to emphasise the individual qualities of the original dancers and drew on the properties of the classical dance of the 1950s. This means that both the ‘steps’ and their arrangement into phrases were closely pegged to the dominant classroom practice of the company. Two phrases from the variation made for Nadia Nerina are examined here. The videos analysed are all rehearsal tapes and the dance is performed by the following: Nadia Nerina (1958 or 1960 exact date unknown), Monica Mason (1962), Monica Mason (1978) and Deborah Bull (1998).

The phrase as danced by Nerina and Mason (1962) comprises:

♦ a pas de chat, rond de jambe à terre en dehors and entrechat trois (video example 58)38.

Both the rond de jambe à terre and pas de chat are signature ‘steps’ and here they follow a similar pattern to those discussed in Chapter III. The pas de chat is clipped, curtailed by the rond de jambe which is only just recognisable. The execution of the rond de jambe is rapid; it barely touches the floor and is contained close to the body, which

38 The version is also the one documented in the Benesh Notation score held by The Royal Ballet.
diminishes the size of the spatial progression but also changes it from the codified version. The inclusion of the rond de jambe affects the dynamic of the phrase: the first ‘step’ is crisp and brief but the rond de jambe is more sustained and creates a slight interruption to the flow. The entrechat trois returns to the crispness of the first movement but is given further emphasis by the arm which rises to fourth en haut with the palm turned outwards. The phrase bears all the hallmarks of an Ashton phrase: head, arms and torso all move on each ‘step’ and there is a slight contrast in dynamic caused by the encapsulation of a weak accent by two strong ones. The focus in the phrase is on dynamic contrast and the spatial features are less strongly emphasised.

In the later versions in 1978 and 1998 the phrase is changed. In place of the rond de jambe à terre and entrechat trois there is a brisé volé (video example 59). As a result, the torso bends forward and back with the motion of the brisé volé, thus changing the shape of the phrase. The contrast in dynamic is now lost but is replaced by a focus on body design. Attention is drawn to the design by the outward projections of legs and arms and by an impact at the end of the movement, which accents the end positions. The phrase is perceived as crisper and cleaner because of the prominence of the body designs. However, focus on body design is also a feature of Ashton’s phrases (see Chapter IV 4.3.2) and thus the change replaces one characteristic with another.

It is interesting to note that the change has similarities with that made, also by Mason, in Cinderella (1948/65), where the body designs become a dominant feature. The original phrase in Birthday Offering (1956) requires very rapid clean footwork and it is possible that later dancers, trained to give full value to each movement, found this too difficult to execute in a tempo consistent with the rest of the dance. The introduction of the brisé volé makes the phrase seem more precise and clipped. Mason (1999) claims
that Ashton accepted the change and it is also likely that, rather than slow down the pace, Ashton was happier to alter the 'steps'.

However, a second dance in the same work fares less well. The variation is seventh and occurs last. It was made with Margot Fonteyn but there is no recording of her performance. The earliest recording shows Merle Park in 1962. As performed by Park (1962) it lasts one minute and six seconds and there is no reason to suppose that Fonteyn performed it more slowly. It is danced to a crisp 2/4 polka-like rhythm and depends on speed to make its impact. As performed in 1996 by Jennifer Gelfand (Birmingham Royal Ballet) the dance lasts one minute and thirty seconds, an increase of twenty four seconds. The slower tempo distorts the polka-like rhythm and makes the dance appear heavy. The emphasis is on the \textit{plié} at the end of each 'step' which is largely responsible for its laboured appearance. In this instance, it is unlikely that Ashton would have endorsed the slower tempo and it can only be assumed that the dancer's training prevented her from moving up to tempo. It is evident from her dancing that Gelfand was trained in a way which gives priority to elements such as turn-out and position rather than to the more expressive elements of the movement. Analysis of other variations, not only by Ashton, shows that the tendency is to get slower, but not to this extent. This slower tempo gives the movements a more equal emphasis, each is given its full value, and the sense of light and shade is significantly diminished.

The second phrase for discussion comes from \textit{Rhapsody} (1980). In the 1996 version, aspects of the movement are omitted and the complexity of the phrase is simplified. The dance was originally made with Lesley Collier and exploits her articulate feet and her ability to move rapidly. There are two recordings, one made at the dress rehearsal in 1980 with Collier and the second at a dress rehearsal in 1996 with Viviana
Durante. The phrase cluster occurs at the start of the female soloist’s final entrance and comprises two identical phrases. As danced by Collier, the phrase consists of the following:

- a turn en dehors with the heel of the supporting foot just raised. The turn ends with a rond de jambe à terre en dehors followed by a single pirouette en dehors on pointe and a quick pas de chat. The arms are à la seconde for the first ‘step’, in fifth en avant for the pirouette and fourth en haut for the pas de chat (video example 60).

The key phrase pattern in Chapter IV 4.3.4 shows that when complex and challenging movement for the lower body is included, Ashton diminishes the movement of the upper body. The main focus is on the dynamics and the phrase from Rhapsody (1980) shares both of these features. Circular spatial progressions in the legs are perceived around the turning body, but, except for a brief facial projection at the end of the phrase, the other spatial features are surprisingly unemphatic. Collier achieves dynamic contrast by altering the quality of the rond de jambe, from its codified version, giving the emphasis to the end of the movement. This highlights the difference between the sustained, opening turn, the initial flow of the rond de jambe and its clipped ending. The crisp, rapid pirouette and concluding pas de chat are unexpectedly abrupt, but serve to create a sudden halt before the phrase is repeated. Contrast is also achieved by the interchange between the turns on the full foot and the pirouette on pointe. Thus, although it shares structural elements with the key phrase in 4.3.4, it also has some similar elements to that in 4.3.3 (Chapter IV). The phrase depends, for its effect, on the ability to move rapidly and on its densely packed
nature. Because there is little movement in the upper body, the intricacy of the footwork coupled with the turning body becomes the significant element.

Durante (1996) changes the ‘steps’ of the phrase (video example 61). She begins with a turn en dehors on two feet which is almost a soutenu. On completion of this turn she extends the leg and performs a turning rond de jambe à terre en dehors. The pirouette is omitted and the pas de chat becomes a little leap unto pointe in fourth position. As she performs the soutenu and rond de jambe her arms move to fifth en haut and then to à la seconde, but with bent elbows, and she adds a backbend to the rond de jambe. The phrase loses its density and the attention is transferred from the feet to the upper body. A legato quality is introduced by her arms, which drift up and down, broadening the expanse around the body. Instead of the sharp contrasts found in Collier’s performance, the movements fold into each other and the phrase loses its force.

Durante’s approach to the movement is more languid, more fluid than Collier’s, and could constitute a different interpretation. However, an analysis of the other dance movement Ashton made with Collier indicates that he consistently used rapid movement which focused on her fleetness and articulate feet. Collier (in Jordan and Grau, 1996, 175) admits that Ashton found her stiff and although she tried to improve this, Ashton rarely made material for her which depended solely on the upper body. Thus the qualities Collier brought to the movement are not part of Durante’s interpretation. Other features of the work as a whole suggest that attack and sparkle should usefully form a significant part of the interpretation. For example, Collier’s coupling with Mikhail Baryshnikov, a dancer renowned for his technical achievements (Greskovic, 1993, 109) and ‘ability to move with the speed of thought’ (Croce, 1987, 129), also suggests that Ashton was trying to create exciting, dazzling movement. Durante does not bring out these features of the
movement, and creates a different focus, which seems inappropriate in this piece.

The effect of the alterations made to this phrase is similar to those made to the Bride’s solo from *Le Baiser de La Fée* (1935) in that complex body movement is minimised. As noted, Ashton rarely combined equally demanding movement for the upper and lower body. Thus the removal of intricacy from the lower body when the upper body is more simply displayed, or vice versa, leaves the clusters with basic movement only and removes one of the characteristic features from the dance movement.

According to Collier (interview, 2000), she coached Durante for the role and believes that the changes were made subsequently. It is likely that Durante’s training and very different body prevented her from moving at the required speed and thus she had to omit part of the phrase in order to keep to the tempo. This tempering of speed was noted above and comes from stressing position. As Rosemary Brandt points out (1990, 25), this tendency to concentrate on static positions as the only points of reference means that the vital rhythmic link between sequences is lost and the dancer moves only from position to position. When the performance of a choreographer’s dance movement is partially dependent on creating the perception of activity, this practice can alter the movement significantly.

6.5 Conclusion

The analysis revealed that neither directors nor musicologists consider scores or texts determinate, although some scores are more so than others. Both are cautious about additions to or omissions of words or notes. They argue that while these can be acceptable, they are less so when they render the work unrecognisable. As far as the concept of interpretation is concerned, both groups see this as a dialectical process.
between the musician and the score and the actor, director and text. But the musicologists also make the point that interpretation should represent a set of considered choices.

The examination of the issues raised by interpretation indicated that despite differences between dance and music or drama, the problems of interpreting dance movement have similarities with those in the other performing arts. The discussion centred on the concept of interpretation and the ways in which it could be used to highlight differences amongst choreographers. It was argued that if the notion of interpretation was introduced, with some understanding of the problems that this gives rise to, dancers would develop knowledge, gain more control over their own performances and present a greater variety of interpretations.

It was evident that the present approach to reviving the dance movement of a past choreographer is still fairly rudimentary and could benefit from more knowledge and in-depth investigation into the choreographer’s dance heritage. What also emerged from the study is the need to develop more research into the relationship between training and choreography, and the notion of introducing the concept of interpretation at an early stage of dance training was raised as a possible way of addressing this problem.

In order for the contrasting features of the dance movement of diverse choreographers to emerge, dancers and directors have to realise that the codified movement is not in itself the dance and that it is different from choreographed movement, however much choreographers draw on it. One way of achieving this is for them to recognise that there is a relationship between training and the choreographed dance movement, but that the values underpinning both change over time. Thus an acknowledgement that earlier training systems are not less ‘good’ but have different aims and emphases could be a starting point. The conventions and values of the earlier training
system can thus act as a starting point for interpreting the dance movement: the concept
of considered choice is also crucial here.

The analysis of a range of different performances raised issues about changes
made to the ‘steps’ and found that not all of these were appropriate to Ashton’s style, in
so far as it is revealed in this thesis. Alterations that simplified the movement by
removing a complex action of the upper or lower body seemed less acceptable than those
which amplified the dance and drew attention to other possibilities within the movement.
The less apposite alterations appear to have occurred, in the first instance, because of
ignorance and in the second, because of the dancer’s training, which, it seems, prevented
her from fully accomplishing the phrase.

The aim, in exploring the concept of interpretation, was not to establish a blueprint
for dancing Ashton but to find a way of moving beyond the present procedures and the
chapter presented a way of achieving this.
Chapter Seven

Conclusions

In this thesis it has been demonstrated that there is a significant difference between Ashton’s dance movement style and the movement taught in the classroom, which I have termed the codified movement. This difference has been insufficiently recognised by rehearsal directors and as a result the choreographed ‘steps’ which make up the dance movement style are being replaced by the current codified, classroom version. The expressive qualities of the choreographed movement can thus become diluted and in time, the differences between ballet choreographers begin to disappear, imposing uniformity across performances of ballet movement.

One of the reasons for this tendency stems from a strongly held conviction by the ballet profession of the superiority of the codified movement. This belief has led to the practice of altering the choreographed ‘steps’ by subjecting them to the values of the contemporary codified, classroom movement. It is evident that this conviction persists but there is, nevertheless, a desire to recognise that choreographed dance movement varies across a range of choreographers.

This study has highlighted the dearth of analysis by the profession into the dance movement style of ballet choreographers and has shown that written material tends to focus only on training and training methods. There is no established practice for analysing choreographed ballet movement, nor has this been undertaken in detail by scholars. But as is evident in the thesis, the balance can be redressed by devising a method for analysing choreographed dance movement.

The model adopted in the thesis provides a useful framework within which to
discuss the stylistic features of both the codified movement itself and choreographed
dance movement. It was adopted to address two complex problems: how to distinguish
between codified, classroom movement and that of the choreographer and how to separate
a dancer’s style from that of the choreographer. Both of these problems had to be
considered because Ashton’s dance movement was drawn from a traditional code of
movements and was also constructed in collaboration with the dancers.

The methodology which informed the model for addressing style was introduced
in Chapter I and is a new integration of theoretical strands. It drew on a number of
different sources but was mainly derived from three different frameworks: the first,
decipherability (McFee, 1992), was taken from philosophy, the second, that style is caused
by the presence of fluid concepts (Hofstadter, 1997), was taken from cognitive science and
the third from Laban theory.

Decipherability is a way of discerning style by examining the choices
choreographers make from their dance heritage and demonstrating how these inform their
work. In other words, it focuses on the aspects of the dance tradition which infiltrate the
dance movement style. This was particularly helpful for identifying the elements that
inform Ashton’s dance movement style. The study indicated that the conventions
particular to his own training and that of the dancers he worked with form the starting
point for his choreographed movement. Equally, the research into the other significant
aspects of his heritage, the dance movement of the choreographers Bronislava Nijinska
and Buddy Bradley and that of the dancers Anna Pavlova and Tamara Karsavina, revealed
traces of their influence throughout the works.

The notion that styles develop because of the presence of flexible, context-
sensitive concepts was applied by Hofstadter to alphabet styles but the concept is equally
suitable for application to dance movement. By focusing attention on the range of variables within codified movement, it drew attention to the specific ways in which it was treated by Ashton. The premise is that modifications made to a movement or phrase recur, are replicated in other movements and phrases throughout the dance movement and that these form the hallmarks of style. This theory has been particularly appropriate for examining the dance movement of ballet choreographers because they use 'steps' drawn, like the alphabet, from an established system. It also meant that, for analysing Ashton's dance movement only a small number of 'steps' and phrase patterns were needed to demonstrate the changes between them and the codified classroom movement. Many of these modifications made by Ashton are the result of influences from his dance heritage.

The use of these theories showed that Ashton's dance movement drew on a number of different elements, including the styles of the dancers who collaborated with him. The thesis demonstrates that it was Ashton's specific choices and the ways in which they are combined which create the distinctive characteristics of his dance movement. These form complex layers, which are now available as a rich source for performance interpretation.

For investigating the dance movement, Laban's theory was adopted. Both the Effort/Shape system for exploring dynamics and the spatial theories, refined by Preston-Dunlop (1981, 1983), for examining the virtual properties of the movement, were found to be appropriate. These were used in conjunction with elements of other dance scholarship which were pertinent to this study (Bartenieff, 1984, Jordan, 1986 and Donaldson, 1993).

The dance movement was divided into two categories which, to some extent, retained ballet terminology but recognised the polykinetic nature, several body parts
moving simultaneously or successively, of the codified movement. Ashton's 'step', referred to by the technical terminology, was taken as the smallest unit of movement, while the phrase, denoting a cluster of 'steps' linked together, was defined by boundaries which have similarities with those identified by Jordan (1986) and Donaldson (1993). But it was also discovered that Ashton's phrases frequently coincide with the length of the enchaînement in the Cecchetti ballet class and, whilst not all of the phrases conformed to the enchaînement pattern, the latter was found to be a useful gauge. The relationship between the two also demonstrates the link between the training, contemporaneous with Ashton, and the choreography.

The use of the Effort/Shape theory helped to draw attention to features which were recognised as central to Ashton's dance movement style. Contrast and variation in dynamics occur in both the phrase and the phrase cluster: a group of two or more phrases gathered together as similar material. His 'steps' are also affected by this particular use of effort elements. Both 'steps' and phrases achieve their distinctiveness from the ways in which the 'traditional' dynamics of the codified movements are altered to create and reinforce contrast. These alterations are caused by arresting the flow of the phrase or 'steps', by the abbreviation of one movement in order to amplify another, or by introducing contrast through quickening the pace of some phrases within a cluster. This element, dynamic contrast, recurs sufficiently often for it to be identified as a key feature of the style.

A characteristic which occurs across a number of works is the use of polyrhythms in the body, in which different body parts move to different rhythms. This feature probably stemmed from stage dancing, in particular the work of Buddy Bradley who frequently used this device (Valis Hill, 1992).
Dancers who worked with Ashton consistently refer to his instruction to ‘move’ (Ellis in Daniels, et. al. 1995). The use of the Effort/Shape theory also showed that one of the significant ways in which he compelled the dancer to move is by removing the ‘breath pauses’ (Chapter IV 4.3.4) between ‘steps’. This creates sustained, continuous movement phrases and diminishes the concluding shape of each ‘step’, pushing the dancer to increase the pace at which s/he moves. This characteristic, coupled with the demands his movement makes on the upper body, demonstrates that de Valois’ (1988) concern about the lack of technical challenges in Ashton’s dance movement is unfounded. The absence of breath pauses makes the movement technically demanding, although without necessarily employing the more ostentatious virtuoso movement.

Throughout the thesis it is evident that distinctive body designs (Preston-Dunlop, 1983) are also a central feature of the dance movement. Recurring shapes, many of which are characterised by a twist of the upper body, are a persistent element (drawing Chapter VI). However, although these designs differ significantly from each other, the distinctive twist of both head and torso is found throughout the dance movement. The crescent shape is also a dominant feature (drawing Chapter IV, 4.3.1.1 and Chapter VI, 6.4.1) and is prominent in a variety of positions, which include arabesques and invented designs. These designs tend to be intricate, involving several designs simultaneously, occurring in the arms, head, legs and torso.

In contrast to the phrases which omit ‘breath pauses’, body design is also the focus of certain phrases. The study demonstrated that these emerge and are accentuated either through the dynamics of the movement or by introducing brief pauses at the end of a phrase. These pauses are deliberate, accentuated by the dynamic and are unlike the current training practice where the virtual properties of the body designs do not fully
materialize. This is because each movement ends in a static position, the emphasis on dynamics is diminished and thus the body design is not perceived as significantly different from other body designs which materialize consistently throughout the performance of the dance movement as a whole. Analysis of the movement using Preston-Dunlop’s theories clarified the significance of the body design in Ashton and showed that its properties are different from the more static, classroom positions. It can occur at the end of a phrase (Scènes de Ballet, 1948), or it can be used to create strong distinctions between movements. In the latter case, it punctures the phrase with sudden sharp designs, making a phrase of quick short bursts of movement (see drawing, Chapter IV, 4.3.2).

Preston-Dunlop’s (1983) other spatial theories also helped to draw attention to the intricacy of the paths traced by the arms. In particular, the concept of spatial progression demonstrated that these paths deviate from the more common peripheral paths taken by the codified arms, at least as described in the text books (Beaumont and Idizikowski, 1966, Kostrovitskaya and Pisarev, 1995). Ashton’s arms and hands frequently trace paths which curl down the body or cling close to it. These are a striking feature of the upper body movement in, for example, The Dream (1964) and Daphnis and Chloe (1951). Other spatial paths traced by the arms cross the central axis of the body and create virtual curves and swirls around the body.

Ashton was adept at generating activity whilst keeping the dancer on the same spot on stage and the use of Preston-Dunlop’s theories highlighted how the appearance of motion is created by these virtual curves, swirls and projections. In the codified movement, as interpreted in many of the vocational ballet schools in England today, the goal is to achieve ‘correct’ geometric, static forms (Brandt, 1990). In contrast, Ashton’s use of space is motivated by different factors: images, human behaviour, gestures and
a desire to generate motion, amongst other things. Using Preston-Dunlop's approach helped to demonstrate the presence of these spatial forms in Ashton's dance movement and shows the significance of dynamics to the movement.

From the examination of Ashton's use of space it emerged that the intricate movement occurs in either the upper or lower body but only occasionally in both together. This allowed him to confine the energy to one area and to give the dancer the opportunity to focus on specific actions. He frequently made movement which demanded flexibility, energy and control in the upper body and it was evident from the analysis of the training systems, and from Toby Bennett's analysis of the Cecchetti work (1998), that this is largely a taught capacity. Dancers whose training does not encourage flexibility in the torso are usually unable to perform this kind of movement.

Phrases of movement which progress along a continuous line across the stage are a common feature of some balletic styles, for example, Russian ballet; and the research demonstrated that, in Ashton's dance movement, this use of the stage space hardly features. More common are phrases with intricate floor patterns which change direction with each 'step'. Ashton tended to organise the directions for travel around the dancer's virtual square (see video example 4 and Chapter III, 3.5.2) and whilst the dance may ultimately progress in a continuous line, it is interrupted by phrase clusters which orientate the dancer towards the four corners of the square before moving on.

The three main strands of the methodology which form the model, decipherability, the stylistic relevance of repeated pattern formation and Laban theory, have given rise to a specific interpretation of Ashton's dance movement style. The use of decipherability indicated Ashton's choice of paradigms which narrowed the range of movement available to him. The second strand has been of practical value in accounting for style and enabled
the analysis to be confined to a small pool of movement, while the use of the Laban theory exposed many more aspects of the movement than are usually acknowledged by the ballet profession. All three theoretical strands were integrated for the analysis and revealed the multi-layered nature of Ashton’s dance movement style.

Chapter II commenced with a brief history of formal training systems in England at the beginning of Ashton’s career. An inquiry into the written sources on the training disclosed that there were often slight variations in terminology across the different systems. It also drew attention to the fact that, despite describing the codified movements in fairly similar ways, the dynamic features of the movements were only given cursory acknowledgement and that there was no consistency in the ways in which the movements were linked to form enchaînements. It was evident that these differences are unacknowledged by the profession but that these variations across the various systems provide dancers with different ways of moving. For instance, their attitudes to the spatial paths of the arms, to travelling, to the use of the music, or to patterns of emphasis within a movement vary according to the system in which they are trained. It was possible, however, by examining the system that dominated the training at the Sadler’s Wells/Royal Ballet School, to identify the capabilities of the dancers most frequently used by Ashton. These appear to have been three-fold: fleet articulate feet, highly mobile upper bodies and a capacity for engaging with rapid changes of direction.

Also examined in the chapter were the stylistic features of the dancers and choreographers admired by Ashton. Information about the dancers Pavlova and Karsavina provided some evidence of his preferred aesthetic features, namely, highly arched expressive feet and communicative arms, hands and eyes. Study of the other aspects of his dance heritage demonstrated that both Nijinska’s approach to dance
movement and the stylistic aspects of stage dancing can, according to this thesis, be found interspersed throughout the dance movement. References to Nijinska are found in Ashton's use of the torso and in the on-going quality of his movement, while his preference for easy upper body mobility is likely to have come from stage dancing.

From the analysis in Chapter III, it can be seen that Ashton drew on a core of 'steps' which he changed and adapted to suit the particular quality he was trying to achieve. Four of these 'steps', the pas de chat, pas de bourrée, ballonné and rond de jambe à terre and their accompanying arm, head and torso movement, were chosen and described as signature 'steps'. This is because they are threaded through the dance movement, recur in almost every dance and provide clear examples of the ways in which Ashton treated not only those but also a significant number of other 'steps'. Analysis of these 'steps' revealed that they are significantly changed from their codified form and that, consequently, their performance requires a different approach from that of the classroom. This means that the 'steps' are no longer subject to the same technical or aesthetic criteria as their codified versions. As a result, the qualitative characteristics he introduced are given priority over features like 'accurate' rendition of codified, classroom movement and turn-out. From this it has to be assumed that technical accuracy, as demanded by the training systems, is not the dominant feature of his 'steps'.

In Chapter IV, the inquiry into the phrases revealed that, as with the 'step', the criteria for performing these phrases differ significantly from those of the classroom. A variety of phrases were chosen for analysis and these were classified by reference to Ashton's treatment of the movement patterns. As with the signature 'steps', the phrases have been selected because they demonstrate a specific approach to the movement. These have been described as key phrase patterns because similar modifications to phrases,
though comprising different 'steps', recur throughout Ashton's work. They draw attention to the characteristic aspects of Ashton's dance movement style, namely, his attitude to the upper body, body design, dynamic contrast and motion. Motion is caused by complex spatial patterning, by linking movement into a continuous thread or by making intricate floor patterns. Each of the key phrase patterns focuses on one of the preceding elements and it was suggested that drawing attention to the key features of the phrase identifies a range of stylistic possibility and could aid future dancers in interpretive decision-making.

The examination of the qualities of Ashton's dancers in Chapter V indicated the significance of Ashton's dancers to his dance movement style. They provided him with a surprise or unknown element and enabled him to move beyond his own aesthetic boundaries. Although establishing guidelines, he encouraged them to explore the kind of movement most suited to their own bodies and he constructed the dance movement in collaboration with them.

It was evident that, whilst each of the dancers increased and expanded the style, there is no sense in which this can be seen as a linear development. Rather, the style moves back and forth, demonstrating different priorities at different times. For example, the dance movement of Margot Fonteyn and Nadia Nerina provided him with contrasting qualities. With Fonteyn he was forced to acknowledge her difficult feet and find movement that allowed her to display her other talents: her sense of timing and dynamics and her expressive upper body. Nerina's dance movement was significantly more alien to his preferred dance qualities. Yet he admired her fearlessness and buoyant jump, making use of these qualities in La Fille mal gardée (1960). Fonteyn had neither of these abilities and he was able to concentrate on more flamboyant elements when working with
Nerina. With Lynn Seymour and Antoinette Sibley he came closer perhaps to being able to exploit the qualities he most admired. Seymour provided him with feet like Pavlova and he elicited ‘steps’ from her that exposed the soft pliable qualities of her feet. Sibley’s feet also played a prominent role in the movement he made with her but he drew on her steely, razor-sharp points, creating movement that exploited both those qualities and her fleet, sparkling movement.

Apart from Michael Somes, Ashton worked consistently with only two male dancers. Alexander Grant and Anthony Dowell were opposites in both bodily appearance and physical ability and the movement made with them is drawn from both ends of the spectrum. But perhaps a more significant feature of the movement made with male dancers may be Ashton’s approach to gender. With Dowell, to a large extent, he dissolved the boundaries, making the kind of movement that is more usually associated with the female ballet dancer. Dowell’s movement is dominated by sensuous, expansive *port de bras*, and languid, linear *adage*. It was shown that the different qualities elicited from these collaborations are all elements of the style. They thus add to the characteristics already exposed and increase the interpretative possibilities.

Chapter VI raised the question of interpretation of dance movement style. Drawing on other performance arts, it demonstrated that the sources, highlighted throughout the thesis, could provide a useful basis for interpreting Ashton’s dance movement and that they had offered sufficient material to allow scope for an extensive range of interpretations. Ashton’s dance movement incorporated a variety of different elements and it was shown that these were not all present at the same time. Thus it is appropriate for future interpreters to allow those features best suited to their own style to dominate in their interpretations. This approach does not fix the style immutably, nor
does it suggest an infinite range of interpretations, but allows it to change and adapt to changing skills and aesthetics.

The difference between Ashton’s dance movement and the codified, classroom movement was highlighted throughout the thesis. Because of this, it is apparent that his dance movement is informed by different performance criteria from those of the classroom. This raises issues about training and questions the validity of having standards which do not bear a sufficient relationship to choreographed dance movement. The point requires further analysis and research would have to take account of the dance movement of other choreographers.

The study has shown that Ashton’s dance movement style has many facets and that his works must not become museum pieces but have the potential to provide future performers with abundant opportunities for performance interpretation.

**Further Areas for Study and Applications of the Research**

(1) The analysis of Ashton’s dance movement style could be used to underpin a choreographic analysis of Ashton’s dances.

(2) From the principles governing the stylistic features identified, a class, suitable for use with ballet companies wishing to perform Ashton, could be devised. As Paul Boos (1995) discovered when mounting Balanchine ballets, the movement of the dances alone is not enough for communicating the essential features of the style. Thus a class, informed by similar principles to those of the choreographer, is a useful way of helping the dancers to assimilate the dance movement style.

(3) An Ashton foundation for ‘preserving’ his ballets is currently being established. The information revealed in the thesis could perhaps clarify some of the issues.
with regard to movement style. There has been no other extensive study of its kind undertaken and it highlights some of the distinctive aspects of his style.

(4) The notion of decipherability could also serve as the basis for examining the dance movement of the various training systems. This would allow some of the interconnecting influences to be exposed and reveal the skills most likely to be acquired from the particular training. These findings could then act as a source for interpreting the dance movement of choreographers whose movement derives from these systems.

(5) The study could be used as the starting point for further research into the relationship between training and choreographed dance movement. It is suggested that this research could serve as a foundation for bringing an educational perspective into the training of ballet dancers by providing them with practical knowledge of choreographed danced movement. It could prompt a change in the way future training is devised and widen the scope of the ballet examination.

(6) The model used in this study could also be applied to the dance movement of other ballet choreographers.
Entries marked with an asterisk either have no volume or issue number. Occasionally, books are referenced twice. This is because when there is a direct quote from, for example Ashton, it is referenced as Ashton in Crisp, in the text, but there may also be a later reference to Crisp the interviewer. To avoid confusion, I have put this interview and Ballet Rambert: 50 Years and On in twice, under the appropriate headings. Following the practice established in the thesis the title Dancing Times is used, although it did not adopt this title until after 1967, earlier it was The Dancing Times.


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Dowell, A. February, 1999

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Grant, A. February, 1999, in a lecture for The Friends of Covent Garden

Mason, M. February, 1999

May, P. July, 1999

Page, A. March, 2000

Many of these interviews were in the form of discussions with the dancers and related to changes in the movement as found on later videos and thus were informal and unrecorded.

More formal interviews took place with Barbara Fewster and Pamela May and these
helped in the discussions about the de Valois syllabus.

Videography


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Not available for viewing:

**Ninette de Valois Class** (1997 and 2000) private video

The Royal Ballet School (1996) **Test Class**, School Archives

No information is available on the material on video which shows Pavlova dancing
APPENDIX

This refers to the video material accompanying the dissertation

Chapter One

Cinderella Act II (example 1)
Cinderella’s variation (Antoinette Sibley)

The Dream (example 2)
Pas de Deux: Oberon’s first solo (Anthony Dowell)

Birthday Offering (example 3)
Margot Fonteyn’s Variation (Merle Park)

The Dream (example 4)
Fairies: second entrance (corps de ballet, 1964)

Birthday Offering (example 5)
Margot Fonteyn’s Variation (Merle Park)

Chapter Two

Les Biches (example 6)
Opening: corps de ballet (1964)

Chapter Three

Les Rendezvous (example 7)
Female Pas de trois dancer: first entrance (Nicola Katrak)
Cinderella Act I (example 8)
Cinderella’s Variation (Lesley Collier)

Les Patineurs (example 9)
Blue Skater: first entrance (Kim Reeder)

Cinderella Act I Scene 2 (example 10)
Fairy Godmother’s Variation (Georgina Parkinson)

A Month in the Country (example 11)
Vera’s Variation (Denise Nunn)

Symphonic Variations (example 12)
Women’s Duet (Ann Jenner, Jennifer Penney)

A Month in the Country (example 13)
Natalia’s Variation (Lynn Seymour)

A Wedding Bouquet (example 14)
Bridegroom: first entrance (Alexander Grant)

Rhapsody (example 15)
Female Soloist: second entrance (Lesley Collier)

Les Rendezvous (example 16)
Female Pas de trois dancer: first entrance
(Nicola Katrak)

Les Biches (example 17)
Garçonne (Georgina Parkinson)

Symphonic Variations (example 18)
Interlude
(Michael Coleman, Anthony Dowell, Ann Jenner, Jennifer Penney, Antoinette Sibley and Gary Sherwood)
Enigma Variations (example 19)
Dorabella's Variation (Ann Jenner)

Facade (example 20)
Foxtrot
(Leslie Edwards, Douglas Steuart, Laura Connor and Ann Jenner)

Les Rendezvous (example 21)
Male Variation (David Ashmole)

Facade (example 22)
Waltz
(Sandra Conley, Vergie Derman, Sally Inkin and Ria Peri)

Nocturne (example 23)
Poor Girl's Variation (Margot Fonteyn)

Horoscope (example 24)
Moon Variation (Vyvyan Lorrayne)

Les Rendezvous (example 25)
Pas de trois (Nicola Katrak. No further information available)

La Valse (example 26)
Female Soloists: first entrance (Christine Beckley, Vyvyan Lorrayne, Georgina Parkinson)

Enigma Variations (example 27)
Winifred Norbury's Variation (Georgina Parkinson)

Chapter Four

Les Rendezvous (example 28)
Male Variation (David Ashmole)
**Symphonic Variations** (example 29)
Opening trio (Ann Jenner, Jennifer Penney, Antoinette Sibley)

**Cinderella** Act I Scene 2 (example 30)
Fairy Godmother’s Variation (Georgina Parkinson)

**Ondine** (example 31)
Mediterranean Divertisements: pas de trois
(Merle Park, Pirmen Trecu, Doreen Wells)

**Birthday Offering** (example 32)
Rowena Jackson’s Variation (Georgina Parkinson)

**Cinderella** (example 33)
Fairy Godmother’s Variation (Georgina Parkinson)

**La Fille mal gardée** Act II (example 34)
Lise’s variation (Nadia Nerina)

**Enigma Variations** (example 35)
Troyte’s Variation (Anthony Dowell)

**Enigma Variations** (example 36)
Dorabella’s Variation (Ann Jenner)

**Chapter Five**

**Le Baiser de la Fée** (example 37)
Bride’s Variation (unnamed dancer)

**Daphnis and Chloe** Scene 3 (example 38)
Chloe’s Variation (Margot Fonteyn)

**Scènes de Ballet** (example 39 and 40)
Female Soloist: first and second variation
(Jennifer Penney)
Birthday Offering (example 41)
Nadia Nerina’s Variation (Nadia Nerina)

La Fille mal gardée Act I (example 42)
Lise’s Variation in the coda of the *pas de deux* (Nadia Nerina)

The Two Pigeons (example 43)
The Young Girl’s Variation (Lynn Seymour)

Five Brahms’s Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan (example 44)
First Variation (Lynn Seymour)

The Dream (example 45)
Titania: second entrance (Antoinette Sibley)

The Dream (example 46)
Duet: Titania’s first solo (Antoinette Sibley)

Cinderella (example 47)
Jester (Alexander Grant)

Cinderella (example 48)
Jester (Alexander Grant)

The Dream (example 49)
Oberon: second entrance (section 5) (Anthony Dowell)

A Month in the Country (example 50)
Beltaev’s Variation (Anthony Dowell)

Chapter Six

Le Baiser de la Fée (example 51)
Bride’s Variation: Jennifer Penney
Unnamed dancer from Panama

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**Cinderella**  Act I Scene 2 (examples 52-57)

**Fairy Godmother’s Variation:**
- Georgina Parkinson
- Monica Mason
- Christina McDermott

**Birthday Offering** (example 58 and 59)

**Nadia Nerina’s Variation:**
- Nadia Nerina
- Monica Mason

**Rhapsody** (example 60 and 61)

**Female Soloist: final entrance:**
- Lesley Collier
- Viviana Durante
Transcripts of two interviews

Interview with Barbara Fewster 5th July 1999

With Cecchetti the trunk movement is very distinctive which is why I introduced it into
The Royal Ballet School when I took over in 1968.

Ninette de Valois formed her syllabus to fill in the gaps in the RAD syllabus. She did not
like systems and we were never allowed to teach it by the book.

Nora Roche taught at the lower school a very free version of the Cecchetti work.

There were no mannerisms in the training at the school.

De Valois showed the teachers how to make a simple *enchaînement* more interesting,
turning it round and round, making the steps bigger and smaller, travelling and on the spot
and by varying the music.

We listened to everything she said and absorbed the principles but she would not have a
syllabus taught. As for the pupils everybody interprets what they think they hear from their
teacher.
Interview with Pamela May 15th July 1999

First we had Sergeyev. He was pure Russian and used to take steps out of the classical ballets and do them in class.

Idzikowsky modified the Cecchetti work for us but Craske was pure Cecchetti.

Madam gave a mixture and Ursula Moreton taught character.

We had Anna Pruzina for jumps.

Of course we also had plastique, which was a mix of Dalcroze and bare foot dancing but I had already learnt it from my teacher Freda Grant.

I started teaching in the upper school in 1957. We taught the set de Valois syllabus but when Madam went to Russia in the late 1950s she changed all the set work putting everything on angles (croisé, effacé and écarté).

Madam was constantly changing her mind, you had to learn very quickly with her but we had to cover a certain number of steps every term. However, she did allow you the freedom to do what you wanted occasionally. I used to use visual imagery for my port de bras, both Sibley and Seymour loved this approach.

De Valois herself had beautiful footwork. I think she learned it from Espinosa.

When we were in Paris June Brae, Margot (Fonteyn) and myself used to go to the Russian teachers there. With Egorova we did lots of slow adage, with Kschesinskaya it was very lively with lots of fast dancing but with Preobrajenska we did movement like that in Aurora’s solos from Sleeping Beauty (1890). We mainly went to Preobrajenska.

When Audrey Knight, Winifred Edwards and I were devising the new syllabus for the RAD, Madam said to us that we could take anything we wanted. We took most of her syllabus and she was furious! Her syllabus covered everything but was a bit heavy, but it did give us those quick feet.
When Margot and I tried to teach Makarova *Apparitions* (1936) she could not do it and kept insisting on doing everything on pointe rather than just doing a lilting movement. Margot kept telling her she was trying too hard!