

Choreography for "Hymn of Promise"

by Rosalie Branigan

This choreography was originally conceived as a solo, then reworked for group presentation. Consider dancing the piece behind a low table covered with an Appalachian quilt with black squares. (When an Appalachian woman felt she was making her last quilt, she included the black material she had saved for this quilt.) A costume "cover" that serves as the "cocoon" helps the interpretive dance. It is like a large chasuble or poncho made of fairly sheer fabric and becomes

the "bud," "cocoon," "butterfly wings," covers the face on "unrevealed" and so forth.

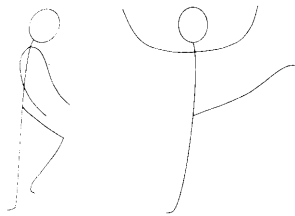
Terms

Plie - legs are bent while the back is held straight
Coupe - a step to transfer the weight from one foot to the other
Developpe - the free leg is drawn up beside the working leg, then extended into the air



VERSE 1 IN THE BULB THERE IS A FLOWER

Dancer stands in 3rd position with the left foot in front. On the word "bud," she does a *plie* on the right foot and a *coupe* with the left. Arms are crossed at the



wrist, in front of her body, and, with head down, she is "folded up" as low as possible (Fig. 1). On "flower" she does a *developpe* to 2nd extending the leg as high as possible. As the leg extends the arms open to above the head as if the "bud" is becoming a flower (Fig. 2).

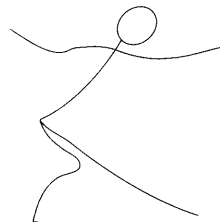
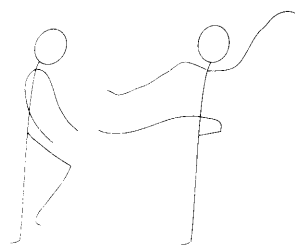


BUTTERFLIES WILL SOON BE FREE

With arms behind her, forming "wings," the dancer runs in as large a circle as space permits, ending facing stage left near center (Fig. 7).

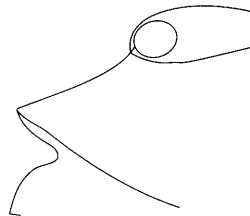
IN A SEED, AN APPLE TREE

The dancer repeats the *plie/coupe* on "seed" with arms and head folded in as before (Fig. 3). On "apple tree" she does an attitude to the back with her left leg. Her arms come up in an asymmetrical position with an angular shape (Fig. 4).



IN THE COLD AND SNOW OF WINTER

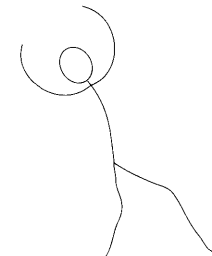
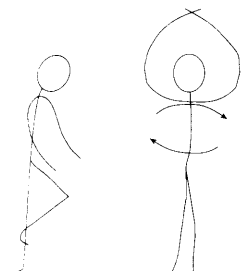
Standing in a wide 4th position, left foot front, the dancer *plies* the right leg, stretching the left leg to the pointe. The weight is entirely on the right foot. The dancer bends forward at the hips, head down, so that the body forms a "V" sitting on its side (Fig. 8).



First the right arm and then the left are brought in almost a full circle back, up, and over the head and down. Right arm on "cold," left on "snow" (Fig. 9).

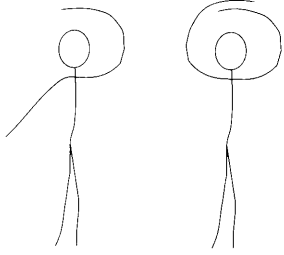
IN COCOONS, A HIDDEN PROMISE

The dancer, again, repeats the *plie/coupe* on "cocoon," but this time the left foot crosses over into a turn or spin (Fig. 5). With the arms staying crossed at the wrist and slowly rising until they are over head, the dancer spirals till she is upright (Fig. 6).



THERE'S A SPRING THAT WAITS TO BE

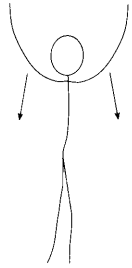
While remaining in the *plie* in 4th, the dancer raises her arms up and over head and back into a back bend, arms open to the side (Fig. 10).



**Chorus:
UNREVEALED UNTIL ITS
SEASON**

Each time the chorus happens the movement is basically the same, only the direction the dancer faces changes. Facing diagonally stage left, the dancer lifts her left arm and, bending at the elbow, lays it

over, but not touching, her head, (Fig. 11) then repeats the movement with her right arm going over the left (Fig. 12).



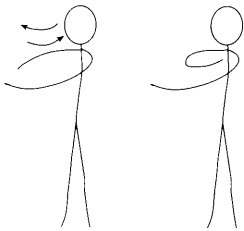
**SOMETHING GOD ALONE CAN
SEE**

Both arms open up high and wide, face lifted, and then slowly come down to the dancer's side (Fig. 13).

**VERSE 2
THERE'S A SONG IN EVERY
SILENCE**

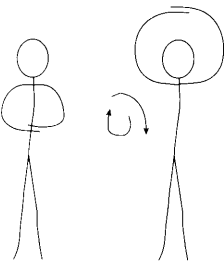
The dancer runs, or walks swiftly, to down stage right and while moving does the deaf sign for music: the left arm is held forward, shoulder height and curved, palm up. The right hand, palm down, moves back and forth just above

the arm from wrist to shoulder and back again (Fig. 14). On the word "silence" she stops, on half toe, and her right hand, palm facing out, sweeps across her mouth, with the elbow up (Fig. 15).

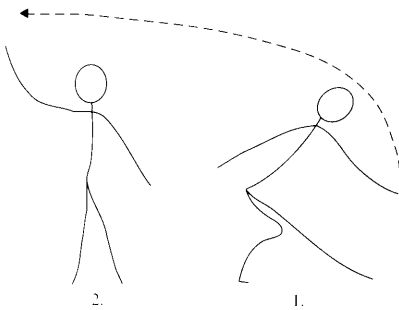


**SEEKING WORD AND
MELODY**

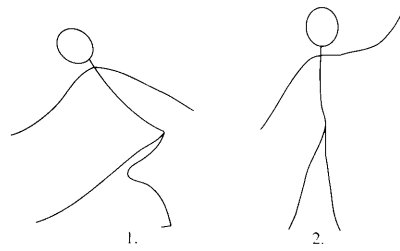
The dancer runs, or walks swiftly as before, to down stage left. While moving, her arms and hands "roll" over each other, starting waist high and coming up over her head. She again stops, perched on half toe, arms reaching over head (Fig. 16).



**THERE'S A DAWN IN
EVERY DARKNESS**
Dropping back on the right foot, in 4th position, the left toe stretched, the dancer bends forward and with the right arm reaches to the left ankle and comes up to standing, with a slight bend



backwards, the right arm describing a half circle (the sun coming up into the sky) (Fig. 17).

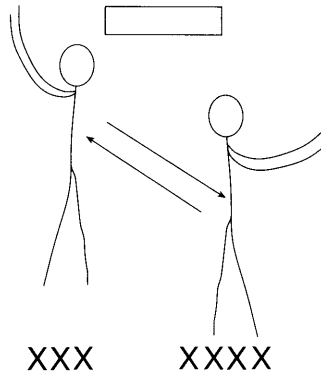


**BRINGING HOPE TO
YOU AND ME**

The dancer pivots to face down stage right and repeats the movement with the left arm moving (Fig. 18).

**FROM THE PAST
WILL COME THE
FUTURE**

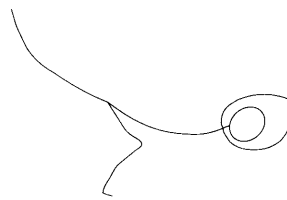
The dancer runs to up stage right corner, back to congregation, arms reaching high on "past." Then turns, (Fig. 19) runs to the down stage left corner, reaching out into space on "future" (Fig. 20).



**WHAT IT HOLDS. A
MYSTERY**

The dancer, still facing down stage left, drops into an arabesque, with the right leg extended back. The left knee is

bent and the body is low and flat, the head is down between the arms, which are extended forward. The fingers are spliced together and then turned backwards, so that the palms are pushing away from the body (Fig. 21).



CHORUS REPEATS

This time the dancer steps back on her right foot (the one that was extended in the arabesque) and turns to face the down stage right corner and does the same movement as the first chorus.

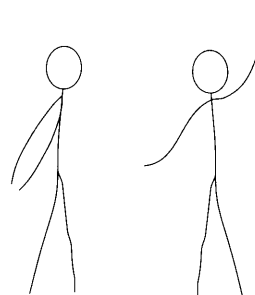
VERSE 3

A. IN OUR END IS OUR BEGINNING;

B. IN OUR TIME, INFINITY

A. IN OUR DOUBT THERE IS BELIEVING

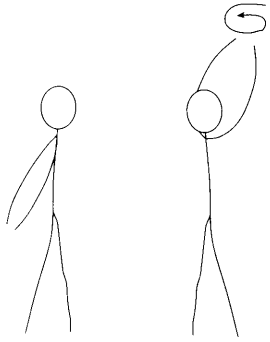
B. IN OUR LIFE ETERNITY



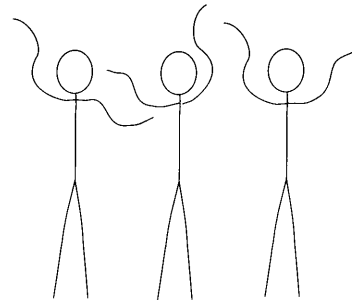
Moving in a circle, clockwise, and keeping the circle as large as possible, the dancer does waltz triplets (flat, toe, toe - right, left, right - left, right, left). 2 triplets occur on each "A" line. On the 1st triplet both

1. 2.

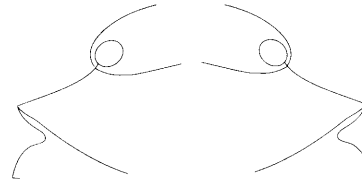
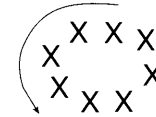
arms are down toward the outside of the circle. on the 2nd, the right arm reaches high over head to the inside of the circle (Fig. 22).



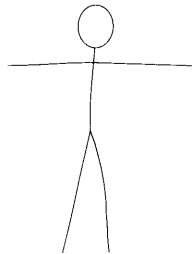
On the "B" lines there is one regular triplet with the arms down again, (Fig. 23) then a turning triplet with both arms swinging up and circling over head, the upper back arched. The swing of the arms causes the turn (Fig. 24).



dancer takes a different, asymmetrical arm position so that one "apple tree" is formed (Fig. 29). On the "cocoon" all the dancers spin in place the then run counter clockwise on "butterflies" (Fig. 30).

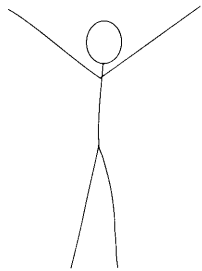


The movement on "snow and cold of winter" is the same, but all dancers face into the circle and then all open out on "spring" (Fig. 31).



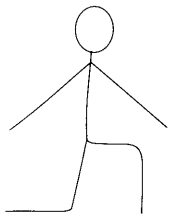
**IN OUR DEATH,
A RESURRECTION**

Facing forward, as near center as possible, the dancer does triplets in place and extends her arms as if hanging on a cross. Palms and head turn down on "death" and up on "resurrection" (Fig. 25).



AT THE LAST, A VICTORY

The dancer does one more triplet with head and palms down on "last." The feet stop and on "a victory" she stands, arms stretched and strong (Fig. 26).



LAST CHORUS

Facing the cross, table, or whatever is the focal point of the chancel, repeat the movement as before, but at the end as the arms come down the dancer kneels. back straight and head bowed only slightly so as not to look "decapitated" from the congregation (Fig. 27).

CHORUS

Same with all dancers facing the same direction and the arms moving in unison.

VERSE 2

All the movement for this verse is the same, except for the arabesque which becomes a lunge. Most chancels do not have room for all the legs, and unless the group is very proficient, it is hard to have every leg exactly alike.

CHORUS As for solo

VERSE 3

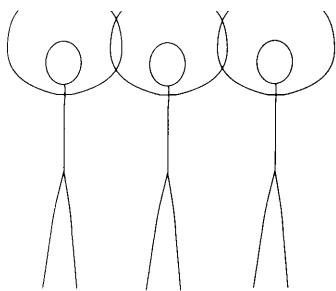
All the dancers form a circle and do the same movement as in the solo. Care must be taken when they turn to face front at the end that the taller dancers are in back and not blocking the shorter ones. All kneel at the end facing the cross.

The dancers should move in as near unison as possible and their position should be a clump (an irregular formation with no straight lines). If possible the taller dancers should try to move themselves up stage, so as not to block the shorter ones. Be sure that the diagonals are clean. An odd number of dancers is more interesting. Three or five dancers make a nice size group for this piece. This is a serious piece, but the faces should be pleasant and radiant. Also, a good rule is that if the arms are up the head is up, too. Do not, however, raise only the eyes and not the chin.

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CHANGES TO MAKE FOR A GROUP PRESENTATION

VERSE 1



Dancers stand in a circle facing out. The movement is the same, bending and opening, but there is no extension of the leg. The first time up on "flower," all arms overlap and form one large "flower" (Fig. 28). On the "apple tree" each