

The Benesh Movement Notation Score

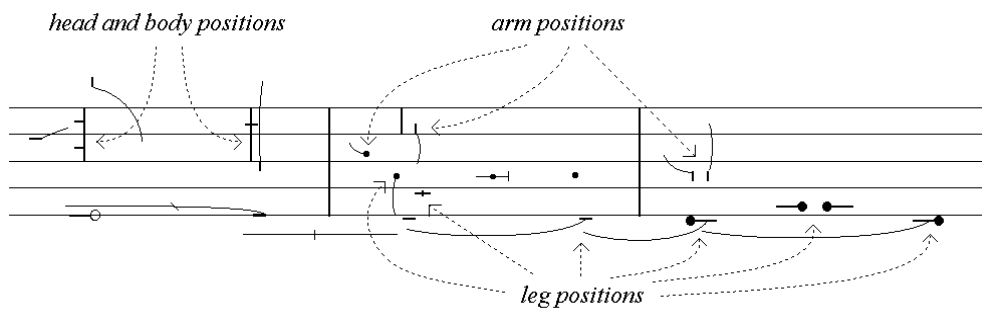
In many respects a Benesh Movement Notation score resembles a music score: The notation is written on a five-line staff that is read from left to right and from the top of the page to the bottom.

Giselle Act I, Peasant Pas de Deux, Male Variation
Choreography: Coralli / Perrot / Petipa

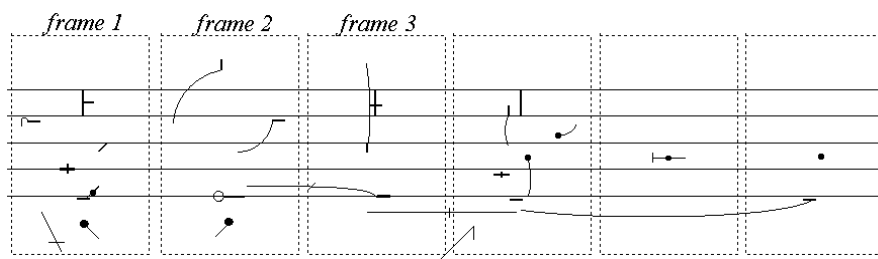
Allegretto

The score is written on eight five-line staves. The notation includes various symbols such as dots, lines, arrows, and curved lines, representing dance movements. A large number '2' is placed on the first staff, and a large number '3' is placed on the fourth staff. The notation is read from left to right and from top to bottom.

All information about body and limb positions is shown within the five-line staff:



Positions are recorded in a series of frames, similar to the build up of a cartoon film:



The staff lines coincide with visually distinctive features of the body:

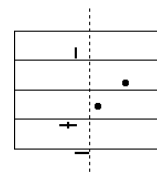
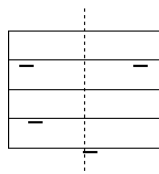
- height of the top of the head - _____
- height of the shoulders - _____
- height of the waist - _____
- height of knees - _____
- floor - _____

The positions of the hands and feet, relative to the body, are represented by the three basic signs:

- In front |
- 'Level' -
- Behind •

From these are derived a further three signs for plotting the positions of bent elbows and knees:

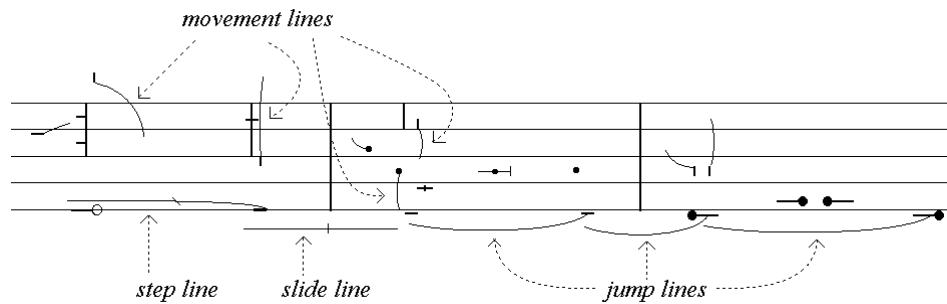
- +
- ⊕
- ×



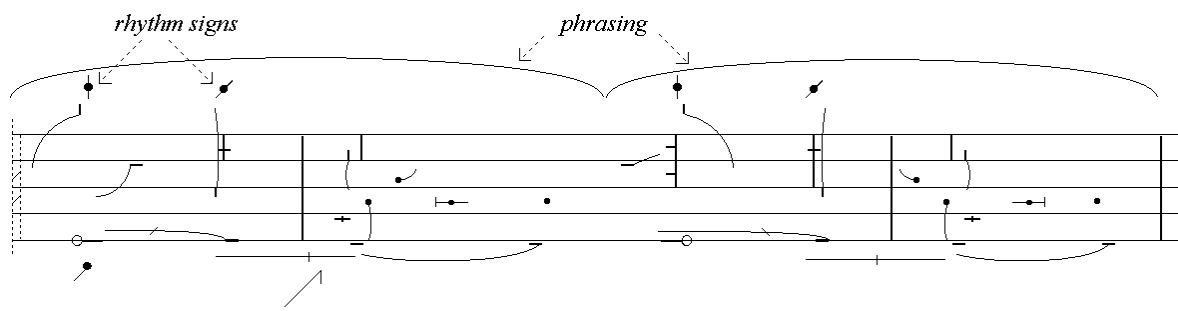
Standing on the right foot, left foot 'level' at just below knee height, hands 'level' at just below shoulder height.
(The positions of the extremities are plotted in relation to the centre line of the frame, which is not normally shown but is included here to aid reading)

Standing on the left foot, left knee bent. Right foot behind at mid-thigh height. Left hand in front at just above shoulder height. Left hand behind at just above waist height.
(Arabesque en fondu)

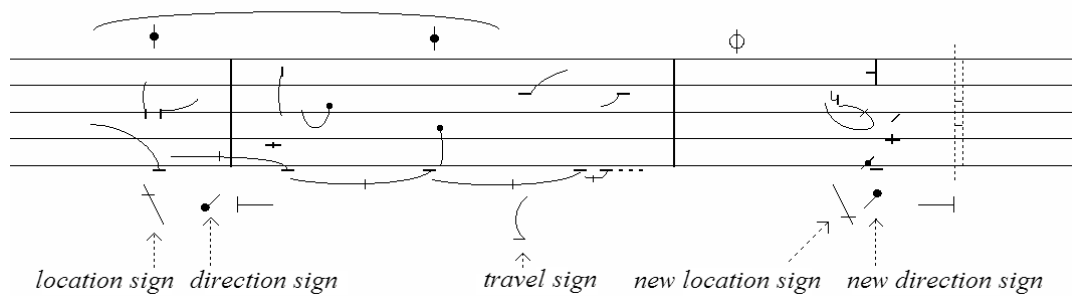
Transitions from position to position are shown by movement lines which describe the paths taken by the limbs from one position to the next, and by locomotion lines, which link the positions of the feet, showing whether the performer steps, jumps or slides from one position to the next.





Rhythm, phrasing and movement quality are shown above the staff:

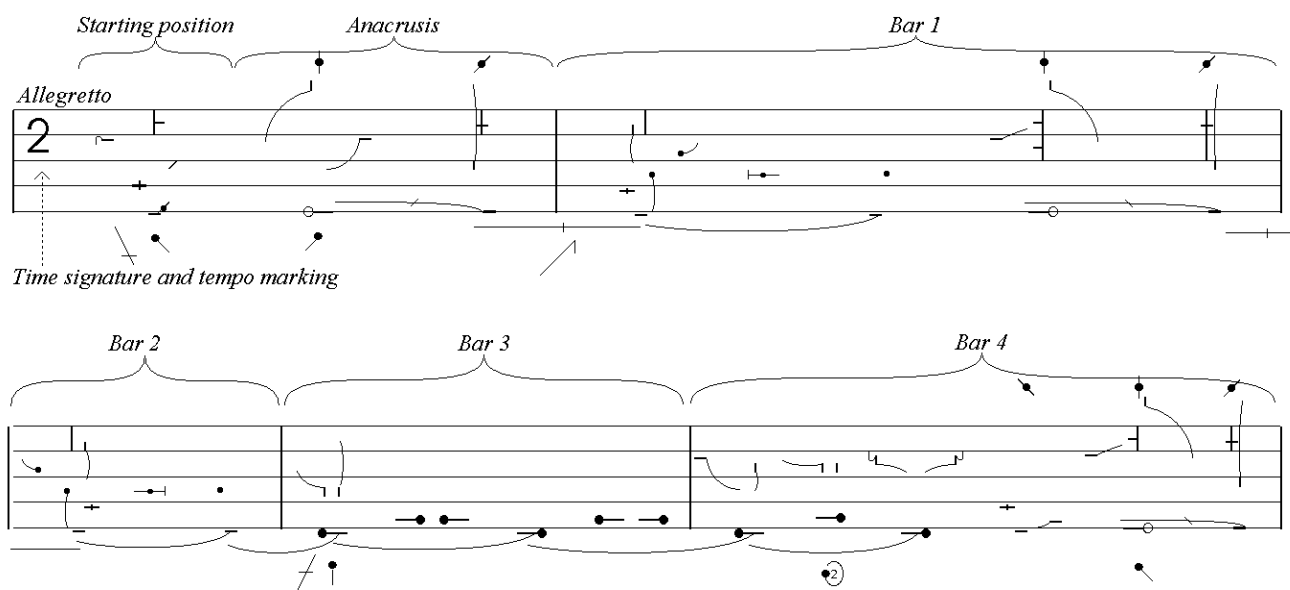


Direction faced, location within the working space, and paths of travel are shown below the staff:



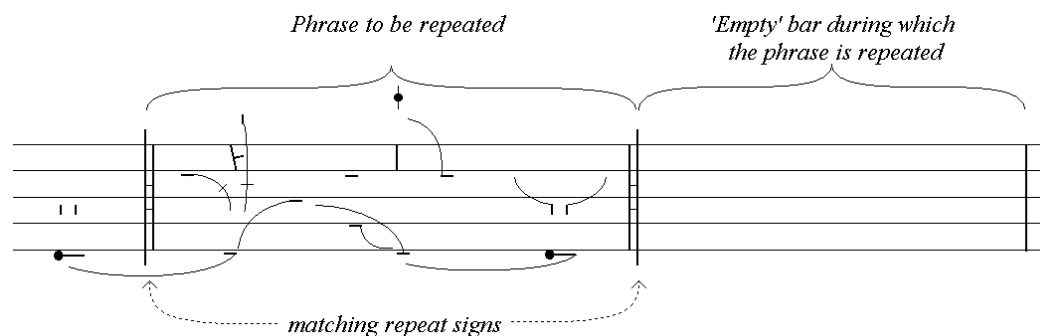
The direction sign  can be read as an arrow  that 'points' to the direction faced

Where movement is accompanied by music, the notation is divided into musical bars by vertical dividing lines, corresponding directly with the bar lines in the music score.



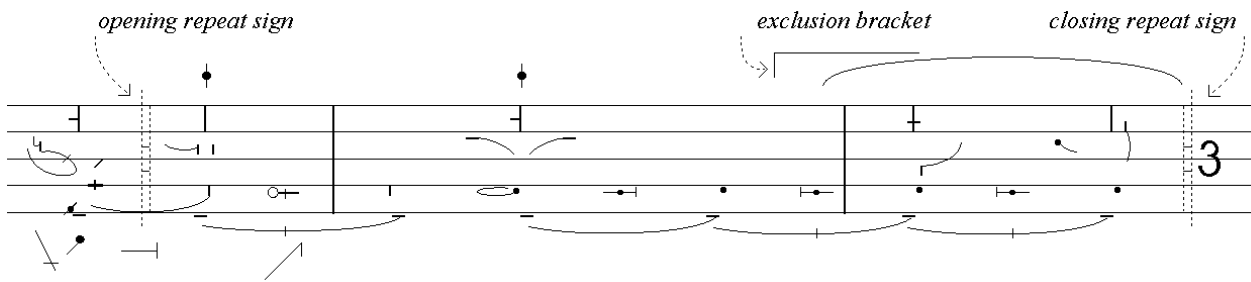
As in a music score the movement score has a 'time signature', which shows how many beats there are in each bar and a 'tempo marking', which gives an indication of the speed of the movement. Where applicable, the language used for the tempo marking is the same as in the music score, providing a cross-reference point.

Repeated phrases are enclosed within matching repeat signs, but unlike a music score, the bars during which a phrase is repeated are shown in the movement score by a corresponding number of 'empty' bars.



The small horizontal dashes written within the vertical repeat signs indicate the manner in which the phrase is to be repeated, in this case, exactly the same again.

The repeat signs shown above coincide with the bar lines. Those that do not are drawn using dotted vertical lines. A numeral immediately following a closing repeat sign indicates multiple repeats.



The phrase written between the dotted repeat signs is executed three further times.
 The exclusion bracket embraces frames of movement that are excluded the last time the phrase is repeated.

Scores recording the actions of a single person or a number of people all executing the same movement are recorded on a single staff.

Scores recording the related actions of a number of people executing different movement are recorded on the required number of linked staves. Simultaneous movements are recorded on vertically aligned frames and the barlines extend down from the top staff to lowest staff, linking the set.

Soirée Musicale
 Choreography © Kenneth MacMillan, London 1988. Notated by Julie Lincoln

Allegro brillante
 Intro

1-8 5 1-12

The score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has two staves, the second has two staves, and the third has two staves. Above the first system, there are three boxes containing the numbers '1-8', '5', and '1-12'. The staves contain various musical notations including notes, rests, beams, and dynamic markings like 'p' and '6'. A large bracket on the left side groups the staves. At the bottom, there are additional notations including '1-6' and a small figure of a person.

Music score 1 beat rest. (Intro) ———
Ask for 3 beats

9

12

Each staff is labelled to show who is executing the movement recorded on it. Modifications of the direction sign are used to identify different individuals or groups of people. Women are normally represented by filled in identification heads and men by open ones, to which a variety of cross-outs may be added as required.

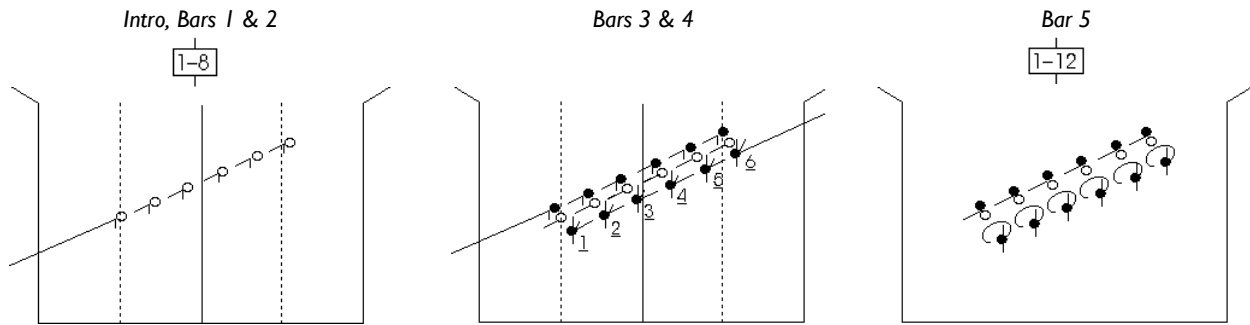


Where appropriate, brackets in the left hand margin link the staves of people who are working together.

In multi-person scores the relationships between people, their locations and travel paths are summarised between the top two staves of a linked set providing an overview of the floor plan. Where necessary the relevant information may be restated, or more detailed instructions given, beneath the relevant stave.

'Stage plans' which give an overview of the working space, may be used in addition to the below-stave summary of the floor plan, and to show the placement of furniture and other structures within the working space. Written in sequence, separately from the score, they can serve as a useful reminder of the floor patterns.

Sequence of stage plans corresponding to the Soirée Musicale excerpt above



Stage plans show the working space from the performers' point of view. The open side of the box represents the front (towards the audience).

