Benesh Movement Notation Lesson Manual
Contemporary Dance Students, aged 6-9 years

These lessons are designed for dance teachers with no knowledge of Benesh Movement Notation

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Introductory Information

- For the teacher:
  - These lessons are designed for a dance teacher with no knowledge of Benesh Movement Notation (BMN). There is a short theory section at the beginning of each for the teacher, who must be able to understand the theory in order to teach it. The theory is followed by a suggestion of how to teach the theory for this age group, with goals, games, homework activities and a review test the following week, accompanied by an award chart.

- About the students:
  - The lessons are aimed towards 6-9 year old contemporary dance students, male and female, in an extra-curricular or professional dance school.

- Goals:
  - By the end of these lessons, the student will be capable of following a sign to perform an action. The notation provides a different way to teach dance and approaches the understanding of movement in a unique fashion. The discovery of performing a movement is found through reading and creating (internal), rather than imitation (external).
  - The teacher will have BMN as a pedagogical tool (in the same manner as photos, videos, etc.)

Practicalities:

- Approximately twenty minutes should be assigned to each lesson. This can be at the end of the regular dance class.

- Lessons should follow consecutively on a weekly basis.

- If a complete lesson can not be achieved within the assigned period, don’t rush students through. Pace the lesson according to their ability and follow on in the next class where you left off (this may mean that all ten lessons are not achieved over a ten week period).

- The format of the lessons and homework booklet has been created to facilitate the learning of all students, particularly those who have difficulty with learning through visual imitation, which is the method traditionally used in dance.

  - These lessons have been used with success for children with the following: dyslexia and other types of learning disorders affecting physical coordination, attention deficit hyper/hypoactivity disorders, and social disorders.

- The notation used in this manual, and its appendices, only contain content that is taught in the manual, so they can be read after the material from all ten lessons have been assimilated.
Chart of Excellence Proposal: The award chart tracks the progress of the students. One or two students are selected each week as being the top students of the class, and are marked on the chart, explaining why they were chosen (helped another student catch up after missing a class, was the most focused – very important for learning disabled students—reviewed the homework the most thoroughly, etc.) The quantitative evaluations should be diverse and consider the ability and personality of each student. At the end of the ten lessons, the students with the most recognition will receive a prize, such as tickets to a dance performance. This will encourage each student to work as hard as possible, as well as encouraging them to see professional productions.

Material required for all classes:
- Musical Whiteboard with 5-line staff
- Plain Whiteboard
- Three coloured whiteboard markers – Black, Blue and Green (or any other colours that are clearly visible and different from one another to help illustrate certain concepts), and an eraser
- One easel to support a whiteboard
Direction Signs

- Teacher Theory Material:

Eight signs point to eight different directions which can be faced.

![Diagram showing direction signs]

Front (Downstage)

Downstage Left Corner

Left side (Stage Left)

Upstage Left Corner

Back (Upstage)

Downstage Right Corner

Right side (Stage Right)

Upstage Right Corner

Turn Signs

The direction sign can be curved to show a turn to face a new direction (or the same direction, if a complete turn)

- Turns to the Right, beginning facing the front

- Turns to the Left, beginning facing the front

In Class:

Goals:
- To recognize direction signs and be able to face the way they indicate while dancing.
- Also, for students to manipulate the direction sign to demonstrate which direction should be faced.

Materials: 8 Direction Signs on Bristol Board, measuring about 2 ½ ft by 3 ft
(These signs can be written on in permanent marker, or cut out of construction paper and glued to the Bristol Board)
Studio Setup: Lay the 8 Direction Signs around periphery of studio, each facing one corner or side of the studio so it looks like this from an aerial perspective:

![Diagram of 8 Direction Signs]

Have the plain whiteboard up and ready on the easel, which can be placed wherever it fits in the studio.

- Suggested Lesson:

Using the idea of the direction sign portraying a stick figure, lead the students around the room standing behind each direction sign and pointing their fingers the way the head of the direction sign is pointing.

Then lift up the direction sign from the floor to show the students that a changed perspective of the sign does not change the meaning of the sign. Move the sign to face different directions and have the class face the way the sign is indicating.

Game: Compose a short movement sequence. Students change direction during the sequence when the teacher changes the sign to indicate a new direction.

Students take turns in being the leader and moving the sign.

Extra: Draw a turning sign on the whiteboard and see if the students can figure out what it means. Draw another turning in the opposite direction.

Homework: Activity booklet for Lesson One.

- For the next week…

Goal: To review direction signs, applied so student can change the ‘front’ of the studio and still be able to follow the changing direction signs.

This skill is especially useful when students have to find which direction to face, for example when changing the ‘front’ of the studio, performing a sequence on the opposite side, or changing to another performance space.
Game: Choose three students to stand at each wall of the studio, facing the center. Give each student a large direction sign. Teacher stands at the front of the studio, with the remaining students in the center facing the teacher. Students begin movement sequence from last week, following direction changes as indicated by the teacher. As soon as a direction sign has them pointing to face a new side of the studio, the students continue dancing following their new leader who is standing at that side of the studio.
Lesson 1: Direction Signs

Find different routes to get to the rain cloud, leaves, snowflake and tree.
Use the direction signs to point which way you're going!