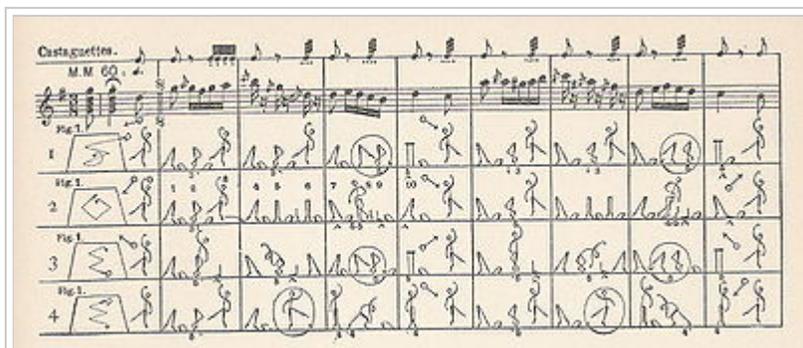


# Dance notation

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**Dance notation** is the symbolic representation of human dance movement and form, using methods such as graphic symbols and figures, path mapping, numerical systems, and letter and word notations. Several dance notation systems have been invented, many of which are designed to document specific forms of dance, such as tap dance. Recorded dance notation that describes a dance is known as a *dance score*.



*La Cachucha*, by Friedrich Albert Zorn.

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## Usage

The primary uses of dance notation are historical dance preservation through documentation, and analysis or reconstruction of choreography, dance forms, and technical exercises. In ethnochoreology, dance notation is used to document dance for study. The two systems most often used<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> in Western culture are Labanotation (also known as Kinetography Laban) and Benesh Movement Notation. Two other systems, Eshkol-Wachman Movement Notation and DanceWriting, are used to a lesser extent.

Several notation systems are used only for specific dance forms. Examples of such systems include Shorthand Dance Notation for dances from Israel, Morris Dance Notation for Morris dance, and Beauchamp-Feuillet notation for Baroque dance. Many dance notation systems are specifically designed for European dance and, as a result, cannot effectively describe dances from other cultures. Examples of

such non-European dances include the polycentric dances of many African cultures, where movement of the body through space is less important than form-changing movements of the body. Attempts have been made by dance ethnologists to develop notation systems for such dances.

## History

In the 1680s, Pierre Beauchamp invented a dance notation system for Baroque dance. His system, known as *Beauchamp-Feuillet notation*, was published in 1700 by Raoul-Auger Feuillet and used to record dances throughout the eighteenth century.

A well-known collection of dance scores is the Sergeyev Collection, recorded using Vladimir Ivanovich Stepanov's notation method. This collection documents the Imperial Ballet's (today the Kirov/Mariinsky Ballet) repertoire from the turn of the 20th century, including Marius Petipa's original choreographic designs for *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, *Le Corsaire*, and *Swan Lake* (staged with Lev Ivanov), as well as *Coppélia* and the original version of *The Nutcracker*. It was with this collection that many of these works were first staged outside Russia.

In 1948, Hanya Holm became the first Broadway choreographer to have her dance scores copyrighted, for her work on *Kiss Me Kate*.

In 1975, Ann Hutchinson Guest reconstructed choreographer Arthur Saint-Léon's *Pas de Six* from his 1844 ballet *La Vivandière*, along with its original music by composer Cesare Pugni, for the Joffrey Ballet. The piece was reconstructed from Saint-Léon's work, which was documented using his own method of dance notation, known as *La Sténochorégraphie*.

In 1982, the first computerized notation system — the *DOM* dance notation system — was created by Eddie Dombrower for the Apple II personal computer.<sup>[1]</sup> The system displayed an animated figure on the screen that performed dance moves specified by the choreographer.

## Notation and computers

There are four areas of dance notation research and development:

- notation editing software for the creation of printed notation scores
- machine-readable versions of existing dance notation
- handwritten and / or machine readable dance notation for computer animation and Human use
- machine specific movement notation such as Motion capture data

## References

- <sup>^</sup> *Dance Notation Journal* (Fall): 47–48. 1986.



An example of a dance pose and its corresponding "dancewriting" notation.

## See also

- Action stroke dance notation
- Motif Description, a subset of Labanotation

## Categories

- Dance notation
- Dance notators

## Further reading

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