

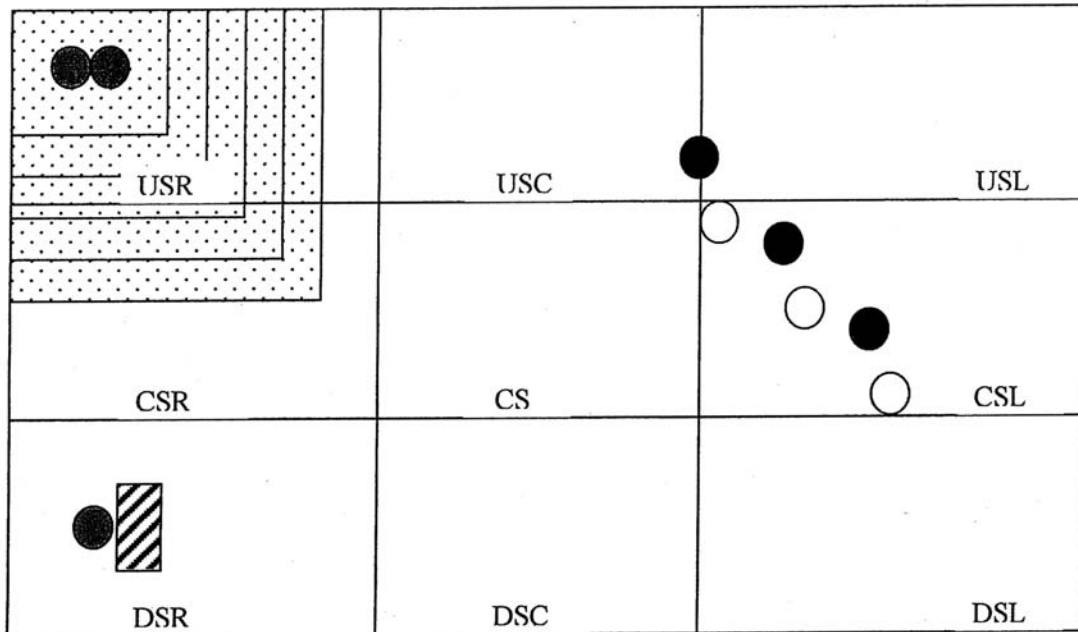
Dominic Moodie (AH) Dingwall Academy

DANCE MACABRE

Visual Theatre Scene set during the Great Plague

DANCE MACABRE

GROUNDPLAN AND KEY



- Death
- Duchess
- Duke
- Male Courtier
- Female Courtier



Harpsichord



Staircase (Tiered Staging, draped with red carpet)

- USL Upstage Left
- USC Upstage Centre
- USR Upstage Right
- CSL Centrestage Left
- CS Centrestage
- CSR Centrestage Right
- DSL Downstage Left
- DSC Downstage Centre
- DSR Downstage Right

DANCE MACABRE

BRIEF CHARACTER SYNOPSIS

Character: *Death*

- ◆ **Status:** High status. Although it is not revealed until he begins to dance with the other characters, he is the most powerful character in the scene.
- ◆ **Key Relationship:** Death does not engage with the characters until he joins the dance. Once he joins the dancers, we see that he initiates all subsequent movement.
- ◆ **Attitude:** Impassive. He symbolises the power of death and the plague to move unseen and affect anyone.
- ◆ **Motivation:** Death is powerful and deliberate. He is symbolic in nature and needs to move purposefully, showing no emotion to emphasise this. He orchestrates events (as represented by the playing of the harpsichord) and he seeks to infect everyone with the plague.
- ◆ **Voice and facial expressions:** He is mute and wears a mask.
- ◆ **Costume:** He wears black seventeenth century male dress and wears a red mask, with a long hook nose (ironically similar to those worn by doctors during the plague in an attempt to escape it, to no avail.)

Character: *Duchess*

- ◆ **Status:** High status.
- ◆ **Key Relationship:** She is obviously more important than the surrounding courtiers and this power relationship is portrayed..
- ◆ **Attitude:** She is proud that the dance is being held and is unaware of Death's presence.
- ◆ **Motivation:** To entertain her guests and to reassure them of the immunity that their social class and status provides.
- ◆ **Voice and facial expressions:** Those that most clearly express the emotions detailed above. In addition, a slightly haughty posture may be adopted. It will be hard to use the face to convey her motivation etcetera as she will be wearing a mask.
- ◆ **Ideas for gestures:** A royal wave as she descends the staircase.
- ◆ **Costume:** Mid- seventeenth century ball gown. Elaborate costume mask. Elaborate wig. A white silk scarf tied around the wrist.
- ◆ **Make up:** Only her mouth will be seen until the mask is removed. Lower face: white, with red lipstick. Upper face: blue-grey/white, smudging, heavy dark shadows around eyes and cheekbones.

Character: *The Court Guests and Duke*

- ◆ **Status:** High status, but in the company of the Duchess, they are of moderate status, and are equal in each other's eyes (except for the Duke). That does not mean there will be a lack of rivalry for the Duchess' attention, but this should be minor and not detract from the main focus of the scene.
- ◆ **Key Relationship:** To their dancing partners and to Death when he dances with them.
- ◆ **Attitude:** They are proud as they have been invited to an important social event. They are relieved when the Duchess reassures them of their immunity.
- ◆ **Motivation:** To enjoy themselves and to meet other important people.
- ◆ **Voice and facial expressions:** Smug when the Duchess announces that all there are 'worthy'.
- ◆ **Ideas for gestures:** Small applause to the Duchess's speech. When dancing to remain focused on their partner.
- ◆ **Costume:** Flamboyant seventeenth century dress. Only their mouths will be seen until the mask is removed. Lower face: white (with red lipstick if female). Upper face: blue-grey/white, smudging, heavy dark shadows around eyes and cheekbones. They must all wear a small white silk scarf tied around their wrist.

DANCE MACABRE

LIGHTS UP: *on 17th century court ball room*

MUSIC BEGINS: *Death/harpsichord player, DSR, begins to play*

Duke and Duchess: *(USR) slowly descend the staircase*

Court Guests: *clap*

Duke and Duchess: *reach bottom of the staircase*

Duke and Duchess: *side by side, move elegantly but purposefully CS*

MUSIC FADES: *Harpsichord music fades*

Duchess: *acknowledges the Court Guests*

Duchess: Ladies and Gentlemen of the court, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our annual Masque Ball. As you are no doubt aware, there have been rumours of the plague in our streets and markets.

Court Guests: *shift uncomfortably*

However, I have it on very good authority that this particular plague will only affect the faithless, the unworthy, and the destitute. It is therefore our duty, as the faithful worthy and rich of this city, to stand, as the very pillars of society and maintain our social traditions. But, we must also protect those who are perhaps not as worthy as ourselves. I, for one, have asked the Court Physician to develop a cure for the masses.

Court Guests: *Slightly startled glances, very quickly followed by appreciative nods.*

He assures me that as soon as he finds a cheap replacement for leeches then any plague, if indeed there is one, is as good as cured. So, without further ado, take your partners for the first dance.

(Duchess delicately nods to Death (DSR) who begins to play)

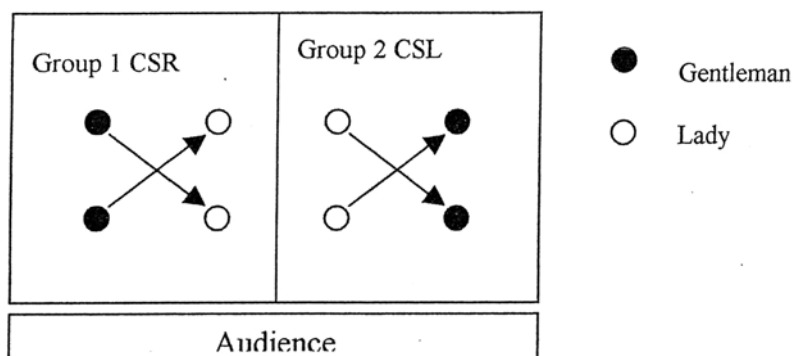
MUSIC BEGINS – *Baroque waltz*

PHASE 1 OF DANCE

The Duke and Duchess begin a slow waltz to music. As in a Snowball waltz, after 8 beats they take a new partner each. This continues till all members of the court are dancing.

PHASE 2 OF DANCE

The couples then group into two sets. One on Centre Stage Left, the other Centre Stage Right. These groups are made up of two couples.



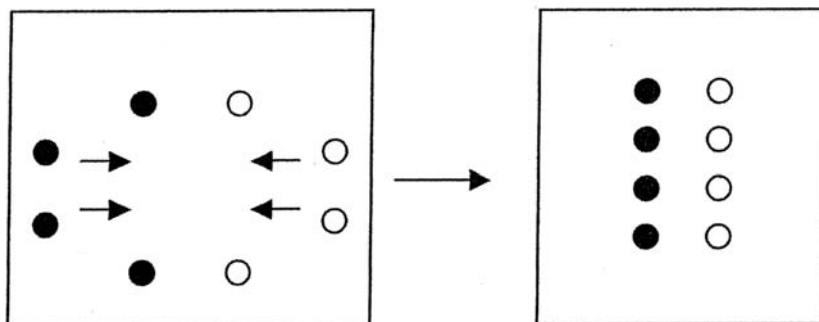
The following applies to Group 1. The second group mirror Group 1's movements exactly.

1. The 1st Gentleman (Top Left) crosses to meet the 2nd Lady (Bottom right).
2. The Gentleman places his left hand flat against the ladies left hand (palms touching as in prayer).
3. The Gentleman steps to the Lady's left and the Lady steps to the Gentleman's right.
4. Facing each other once more, they drop hands.
5. The Gentleman then places his right hand flat against the Lady's right hand and then steps to the right and the Lady steps to the Gentleman's left.
6. They return to their original positions.
7. The 2nd Gentleman (Bottom Left) and 1st Lady (Top Right) then do likewise.
8. The 1st Gentleman and 2nd Lady then repeat stages 2-5 but instead of returning to their original positions the Gentleman takes the Lady's hands, lifts them and crosses his left hand (still holding the Lady's right hand) behind his neck.
9. The Lady crosses her left hand behind her neck (still holding the Gentleman's right hand).
10. They then turn in a circle.
11. They part sliding their hand down the length of their partner's arm.
12. The 2nd Gentleman and 1st Lady do likewise.

PHASE 3 OF DANCE

- ◆ The 1st Lady of the 1st group and the 1st Gentleman of the 2nd group turn to each other.
- ◆ They move upstage.
- ◆ The 2nd Lady of the 1st group and the 2nd Gentleman of the 2nd group turn to each other.
- ◆ They move downstage.

The following therefore occurs:



- ◆ The dancers facing each other now become partners.
- ◆ They dance the end of a stylised square tango where:
- ◆ The top couple proceed Stage Left;
- ◆ The second couple proceed Stage Right;
- ◆ The third couple proceed Stage Left;
- ◆ The fourth couple proceed Stage Right.

PHASE 4 OF DANCE

The couples then begin a stylised form of an eightsome reel. At the part where the 1st man enters the middle of the circle of dancers the music stops and the couples all freeze.

LIGHTS DOWN ON DANCERS

END OF DANCE

RED SPOTLIGHT DSR — Death playing harpsichord

Death starts to play. The music is still baroque. It starts quietly and as it builds in tempo it becomes more menacing. As the music reaches a climax Death dramatically lifts his fingers from the harpsichord but the music continues to play. He rises and moves to the centre of the circle of dancers.

Death taps the 1st Gentleman (the Duke) on the shoulder and removes