

## Laban-based Dance Class Planning Strategies: A Brief Outline

By Karen Scherwood

*Editor's Note: The following article is based on Karen Scherwood's presentation at the advanced Bartenieff Fundamentals seminar.*

First, to maintain my own interest and to fuel my creative process, I plan the class backwards, establishing the big dance combination first.

Secondly, I analyze what is in the combination, considering themes, actions, skills, etc.

Then I create sequences to build the combo and to warm up the whole system for support. Essentially my planning process moves in reverse from a complex task (the final combo) to intermediate skill building (working on specific technical challenges like transitions, order of actions, unusual movements) to the initial warm-up (for connections, range of motion, expressive range, etc.).

Another applicable strategic model might be SYNTHESIS – ANALYSIS – SYNTHESIS. That is, I like to start with the whole body, progressing to more focused warming-up actions. Then I move through specific work on skills in order to facilitate the whole self dancing by the end of the class. Alternatively, one can also conceptualize the technique class as a linear progression from the simple to the complex.

In planning warm-up activities, I think about what is needed and what is to be used. Then I might warm up a part of the body specifically. Or I might warm up the parts around it for support. I also tend to progress from smaller movements to larger ones.

Within the preparations for the final combination I might consider the following:

- Connectivity patterns,
- Developmental patterns,
- Sequencing,
- Refinement of skills, and/or
- Specific movement sequences, progressing from simple to more complex actions.

Lastly, I ask – do I feel motivated to invest myself fully in the movement? This is important for me if I am to be able to motivate my students by example. Clarifying the expressive layer is quite useful here, although expressive content often becomes clearer during class, when I can see the movement on others and also have the support of the accompanist's interpretation.