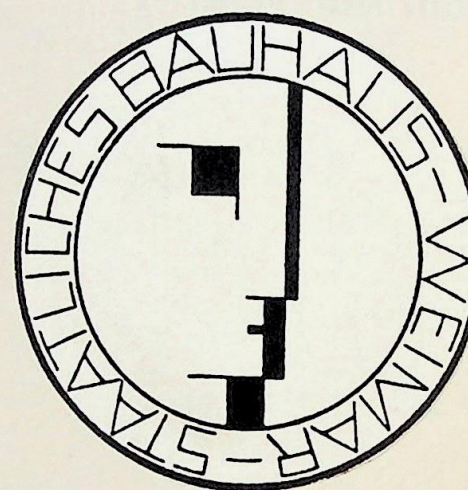VICKI ADAMS

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OSKAR SCHLEMMER'S PERFORMANCES

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

OSKAR SCHLEMMER'S PERFORMANCES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN & COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

AND

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF FINE ART

DEPARTMENT OF SCULPTURE

BY

VICKI ADAMS

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INTRODUCTION

The dominant features of the 'modern arts' movement in the 1900's are the belief in reason or logic, a conception of practicality and simplicity, an insistence on functionality in which an approach to the idea that fitness for purpose and the perfect functioning might be a sure sign of beauty or even a worthwhile replacement for it. The artists concerned were preoccupied with the obvious concept of function in industry and technology and within the first thirty years of the twentieth century, they made an effort to adapt themselves and their art to a new set of circumstances - life in the Machine Age.

Although this attitude is well developed through architectural ideas, which comes under the heading International Style, or known variously as Machine Age architecture or Modern architecture, involving artists like Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and others of less fame but no less interest; it also materialised through different mediums that of painting, sculpture and performance.

The Italian art movement known as Futurism which began in 1909, the Dutch group and magazine De Stijl, developed in 1917, and the Bauhaus institute of art, developed in 1919 are among those who operated within these mediums and concerns.

It could be said that the Bauhaus School was one of the first art institutes that began to exhibit a recognisable technological 'style', with its use of space, grids, glossy synthetic finish, steel and glass and the evolution of a basically Dutch elementarism of a De Stijl manner of typography - all these added up through constant repetition to a genuinely unified style. Admittedly, in general terms, style as such was not cultivated, but the forms that

were created to symbolise the world in which the Bauhaus found itself showed. The aim of the style had clearly been, to quote Water Gropius's (the architect and founder of the Bauhaus Group) words in elation to the machine age aesthetic:

"To invent and create forms, symbolising that world."[1]

The centre of the Bauhaus School, which literally means "House for Building" and nicknamed 'The living machine' was in Weimar, Germany. Their main influence as an institution was in applied design and architecture. They wanted to integrate art and technology by way of investigating the effect of design and they attempted to direct all activities towards architecture. The new goal was Art and Technology - A New Unity, the theme of Gropius' lecture on the occasion of the Bauhaus Week in the summer of 1923. Strict stereometry and emphasis on structure and function characterised the work of furniture design, architectural designs, domestic goods, sculpture, painting and performance. Some of these products remained one, perhaps not without cause, of the square style originated by the Wiener Werkstatte before the war. The aim of Gropius was to find a new working correlation of all the processes of artistic creation to culminate finally in a new cultural equilibrium in their visual environment.

Here, Oskar Schlemmer defined his role within the Bauhaus community. He joined the staff in 1921 where he first headed the sculpture workshop, and then he developed into the Bauhaus stage workshop. The stage workshop was the first ever course on performance in an art school.

Lotaar Schreyer, the expressionist, painter and dramatist and a member of the Der Sturm group in Berlin, was the first teacher of the stage group in the early years of the Bauhaus. His direction and emphasis was put on the movements and 'emotional states' that the performers would adopt. These productions were an extension of

the Expressionist Theatre of the previous five years in Munich and Berlin. They resembled religious plays, where language was reduced to emotional movement, where sound, colour and light merely reinforced the melodramatic content of the work. This of course was at odds with the Bauhaus goal of achieving a synthesis of art and technology in 'pure' forms and so Schreyer's resignation was inevitable. The direction of the Bauhaus stage was immediately transferred to Schlemmer.

Schlemmer's use of mechanical movements and overall pictorial design in his performances reflected the art and technology sensibilities of the Bauhaus. Schlemmer's ability to translate his painterly ideas were the early plans for the figurines which had already been suggested in his paintings into performances. This was much appreciated within a school which specifically aimed at attracting artists who would work beyond the boundaries of their own disciplines. Schlemmer's refusal to accept the limits of art categories resulted in performances which quickly became the focus of Bauhaus activities. Schlemmer was preoccupied in finding and working with a 'new form' to represent a technological environment, and to break down tradition which reflected craft sensibilities. This echos many of the Italian Futurists' developments which undoubtedly influenced Schlemmer, along with modern architectural ideas. However, Schlemmer's primary consideration was the representation of man in a technological and architectural environment, involving the concepts of form and space. He transformed into abstract terms of geometry or mechanics his observation of the human figure moving in space. Schlemmer stated:

> "The history of the theatre is the history of the transfiguration of the human form. It is the history of <u>man</u> as the actor of physical and spiritual events, ranging from naivete to reflection, from naturalness to artifice.

The materials involved in this transfiguration are form and
colour, the materials of the painter and sculptor. The arena
for this transfiguration is found in the constructive fusion of
<u>space and building</u>, the realm of architecture. Through the
manipulation of these materials, the role of the artist, the
synthesiser of these elements, is determined."[2]

INTRODUCTION - FOOTNOTES

1. Hans M. Wingler, <u>Bauhaus</u>, p. 20

2. O. Schlemmer. L. Molohy-Nagy. F. Molnar, <u>The Theatre of the</u>
    <u>Bauhaus</u>, p. 19

CHAPTER ONE

A NEW FORM

The machine age form was not an entirely new creation; it had already been worked out by other people in other places. The Italian Futurists between 1909 and 1914 equipped themselves with a new sensibility for their new environment, with a strong belief in the aesthetics of the machine. They proposed to forget their past culture. The qualities which made Futurism a turning-point in the development of modern theories were primarily ideological, and concerned with an attitude of mind rather than formal, technical methods and therefore the concept of function was never realised.

However, Oskar Schlemmer who belonged to a group called "Idealists of Form" was not primarily concerned with function of form, but was concerned with the traditional mind-body arguments and the concept of experience; on the one hand the aesthetics of form and on the other hand, form considered as an intellectual basis.

Schlemmer, however, shared a basic principle with the Futurists. Their performances/theatre can be clarified and, at least in part, explained in terms of its rejection of traditional forms. In this case it was the conventions of exposition, structure and characterisation that, among other things, were rejected. The aim was to break down conventions, where the public would normally expect crescendo, exposition and the final climax, the heroes and the villains and the contingent process of projection and identification were dismissed. Also rejecting what could be called "minute logic", that holds together traditional theatre and is the binding force in its structure, they dismissed the notion that the public must always understand the why and wherefores of every scenic

action, resulting in what we could loosely call "abstract theatre". However, the motivation for this line of thought is where Schlemmer and the Futurists part. The radical Futurists made a conscious effort to mock and provoke audiences on an alogical basis, whereas Schlemmer was purely interested in dealing with the "new form", as a new structure of rationality and system, and as a symbol of modern culture and environment which was increasingly becoming more technological.

In essence, the "elements of a new sensibility", that could be seen in Schlemmer's work involved an emphasis on function and rationality. They manifested a distinct style: the mechanical or objective.

On these grounds, we could consider his work "logical", in that of his analytic studies on the concept of function and rationality. However, his performances could be established on the basis of the alogical in theatre. For example, a word is not alogical, that is, its alogical aspects - its sound or retinal pattern - are not its most significant parts. It is the symbolic process, the standing for and representing something else, that is the essence of the word, and language is the combination of word/symbol into modified and accumulated meanings. Therefore, language process can be taken as the extent that a performance functions like a language, it can be considered logical; to the extent that it does not symbolise and does not elaborate structures of intellectual meanings, it may be considered alogical.

But at the same time, his performances are not a thing to be experienced for its own sake, they have references and implications. His performances are "there" but they also refer to something that is not there. That is, it has concepts of what Schlemmer would consider the 'reality' of urban environment. However, his performances can be thought of as alogical to the extent that it maximises purely bodily functions of the performer and minimises or eliminates the intellectual aspects of traditional theatre. The

word 'alogical' could be used in reference to emphasise physical presence, it is apt and functional. So his work could be considered both alogical and abstract, it involves immediate experience and it expresses an essence "abstracted from" a particular or material thing.

It is true that his work was rejected by the public on an alogical basis. After one of Schlemmer's performances a member of the audience shouted,

> "why do you have to disturb the people who have come here with pure hearts to enjoy themselves?"[1]

and

> "what happened to God's image of man?"[2]

Schlemmer answered these questions by stating:

> "We are basing our work on space, form, colour, material: the laws of these elements have a determining effect on psycho-physical behaviour. We are interested in exploring 'strict regularity'. We are striving to achieve the highest form of art, we are striving to achieve intensity."[3]

Where the Futurists glorified the machine on an aesthetic level, consciously forgetting economics, and where their performances leaned towards surrealism, they could hint on fascism. (They did reject the Negro - but possibly because Negro art was sympathised by the individual expressionists at that time). Schlemmer, however, glorified the machine on a slightly more humanitarian level, that it is designed by 'man' to help 'man'; echoing socialism. However, this point should not be stressed. Moholy-Nagy said in relation to the Bauhaus theatre:

"Thus the integration of the human being onto stage formation should not be burdened with moralising tendencies or with economic or individual problems."[4]

The connection can be made between Futurist performances and Schlemmer's performances but only on an aesthetic level. But when considering their motivations, they share very little, and so it is evident that they have taken different roads, but from a similar source. Schlemmer believes in freedom within law, the Futurists believe in freedom outside the law, thus implying anarchy.

Despite traditionalism, however, Schlemmer indicates in his diary that certain aspects of the old should be subject to the new.

It is true that new ground had been broken by Cubism, but it was a development based soundly on tradition - that of "Classicism". It seems that the only important part of scientific and technological methodology that was not new but had equal currency in the pre-machine epoch - that of the classical. Schlemmer noted the importance of Classicism in its formal vocabulary of mathematical precision in constructions. It was not considered on an individual basis, but on its basic principles of rationality. Like Cubism, there was a desire for system and both were prepared to recognise structure, planning and disciplines on a mathematical basis. Elementarists made references to the classical order, stating that "whoever constructs correctly builds as even as the Greeks"[5]. This was thought to be the key point in avoiding a 'stylistic' problem. It is rational and straightforward.

Understanding that mathematics meant preciseness of form, that of the square, cube, triangle, straight line, rectangle and circle; other shapes that were not regular or geometric were a result of emotional action, something that industry/technology could not afford to consider. As a result, Schlemmer began to represent man as a mechanical object with the aid of geometrical and cubistic style of costume.

Although Schlemmer's costumes and, possibly more so, his use of backdrops were often designed and painted in a modified cubist style. He was greatly influenced by Cubism, but there was a distinct difference. Most simply, Cubism presented simultaneous views of facets of the subject in what could be considered at a given moment, whereas Schlemmer attempted to show movement that implied an extension through time. Although an angular cubist style was used consistently in his (paintings) backdrops and costumes, there were a few attempts to convey the idea of the movement. The simplification of form and purity of colour may have derived from the necessity of being seen from a distance, but then again, synthetic cubism was following the same path. However, the impersonal geometrical qualities of Cubism were embodied in many costumes which represented a tendency towards the non human and the abstract. Schlemmer stated in relation to Cubism that "these forms did suppress individuality"[6]. This appearance, however, stems from the external similarity of all the Cubists' work, the similarity results from their principles, but this merely conceals the fine individual nuances within the general conceptual framework. Schlemmer considers that individualism will always exist, despite how systemised an attitude is, therefore individualism need not be the subject matter of any art work. In this way, Schlemmer avoids making moral or, for that matter, amoral statements, although he accepts technological developments, but only on the basis that it exists, however, he makes a clear decision not to reject it, despite the fact that industry/technology lays itself open for many moral rejections. Hugo Hariney stated in his essay "Approaches to Form" (1925-6):

"We should not try to express our own individuality, but rather the individuality of things. Their expression should be what they are"[7].

One pronounced aspect of Schlemmer's performances was to turn the actor's movements into mechanical movements, mostly through the

extent of costumes and the type of movement required. The mechanisation of the performance was done for different reasons, and a distinction must be made between characterisation and style. Dealing first of all what I would consider 'style', for this is the most reminiscent aspect of Schlemmer's work.

In Schlemmer's Mechanical Ballet, he introduced the element of man and machine. Man and machine was as much a consideration within the Bauhaus analysis of art and technology as it had been with the Russian Constructivists or the Italian Futurists. However, Schlemmer considered the machine as a secondary element, and man the first. It is man in relation to machine, never the machine in relation to man. Schlemmer stated:

> "man is the measure of all things....Man in his relationship to the world about him"[8].

Schlemmer noted the necessity for unity of action between man and his environment on stage. He recognised the dualism between man as the dynamic element and his environment as the static element. Theoretical and practical aspects of Schlemmer's costume design and acting was primarily focussed around these two concepts: the integration of the performer with the setting and what could be called the mechanisation of the performer. Neither of these concerns derived from Schlemmer himself. Like Cubism, they predated Schlemmer, but also like Cubism, he modified the ideas, producing results that were completely his own. A fusion between the performer and setting was achieved in part through the mechanisation of the actor through geometricised rhythmic movement. The mechanical movement was achieved by restricting the dancers' movements, by the aid of costumes. For example, in the Dance of Slatts (1927), performed by Manda Van Kreibig, the functional actions of lifting and bending the limbs of the body could only be seen in the movement of the long, thin slatts projecting from the body of the dancer. A more distinct fusion of background and

performers is indicated in <u>Equilibristics</u>, involving four people holding circular and cone shapes and curved and straight lengths of wire moving in a mechanical fashion, to a backdrop of geometric shapes. Moholy-Nagy stated in his essay "<u>Attempts at a Theatre Form for Today</u>" (1919):

> "a mechanised eccentric, a concentration of stage action in its purest form. Man, who no longer should be permitted to represent himself as a phenomenon of spirit and mind, through his intellectual and spiritual capacities, no longer has any place in this concentration of action. For no matter how cultured he may be, his organism permits him at best only a certain range of action, dependent entirely on his natural body mechanism."[9]

The Futurists were also preoccupied with the notion of unity of action between "man and his environment" on stage. In <u>Futurist Scienic Atmosphere</u>, Prampolini solved the problem in what he was later to call his <u>Magnetic Theatre</u>, by proposing a huge machine that would fill the stage space with movement, light and sound. The idea of bringing machines onto stage was essentially Futurist, an aesthetic which Schlemmer never investigated.

However, Schlemmer did include objects that were to represent machines. That of the circle, square and rectangle, and materials that were reminiscent of modern architecture, glass and metal. These were proposed new materials to replace wood, stone and brick. Schlemmer manipulated these materials in costumes and backdrops. In the <u>Glass Dance</u>, performed in 1929 by Carla Grosch, a female wears a hooped skirt of glass rods, head covered in a glass globe and carrying glass spheres. This costume equally restricted the performer's movement. In this case, not only the movement implies the machine but glass emphasised the idea even more. It must be understood that glass in architecture, like that of the machine, were used for purely functional reasons, so it could be said it is
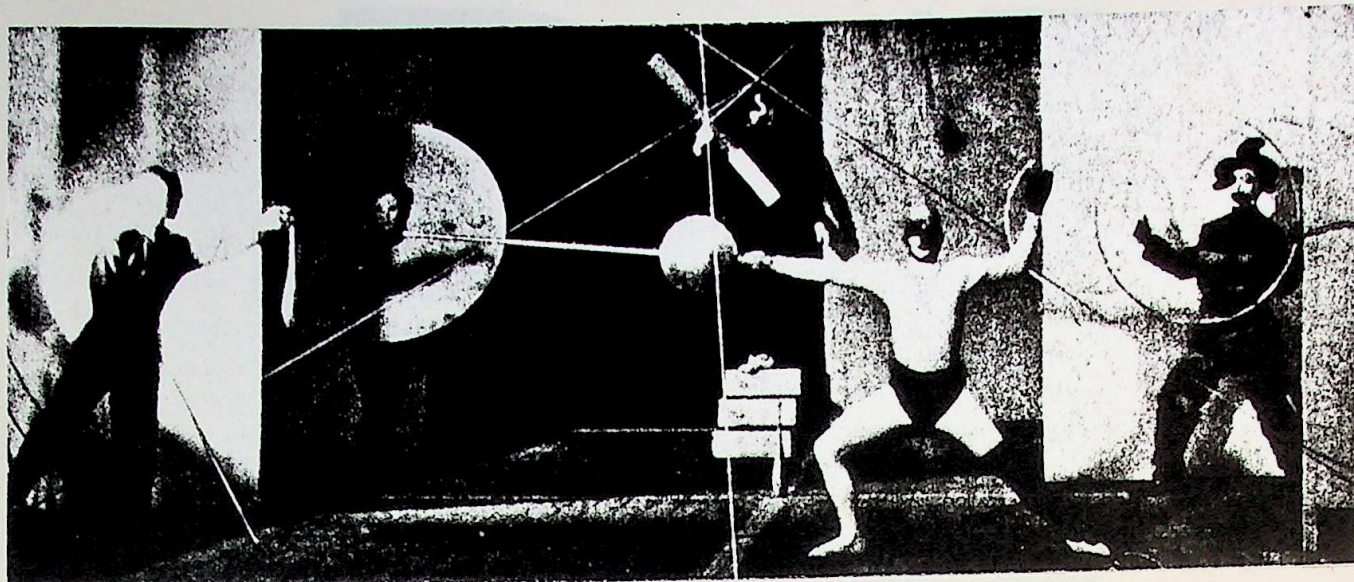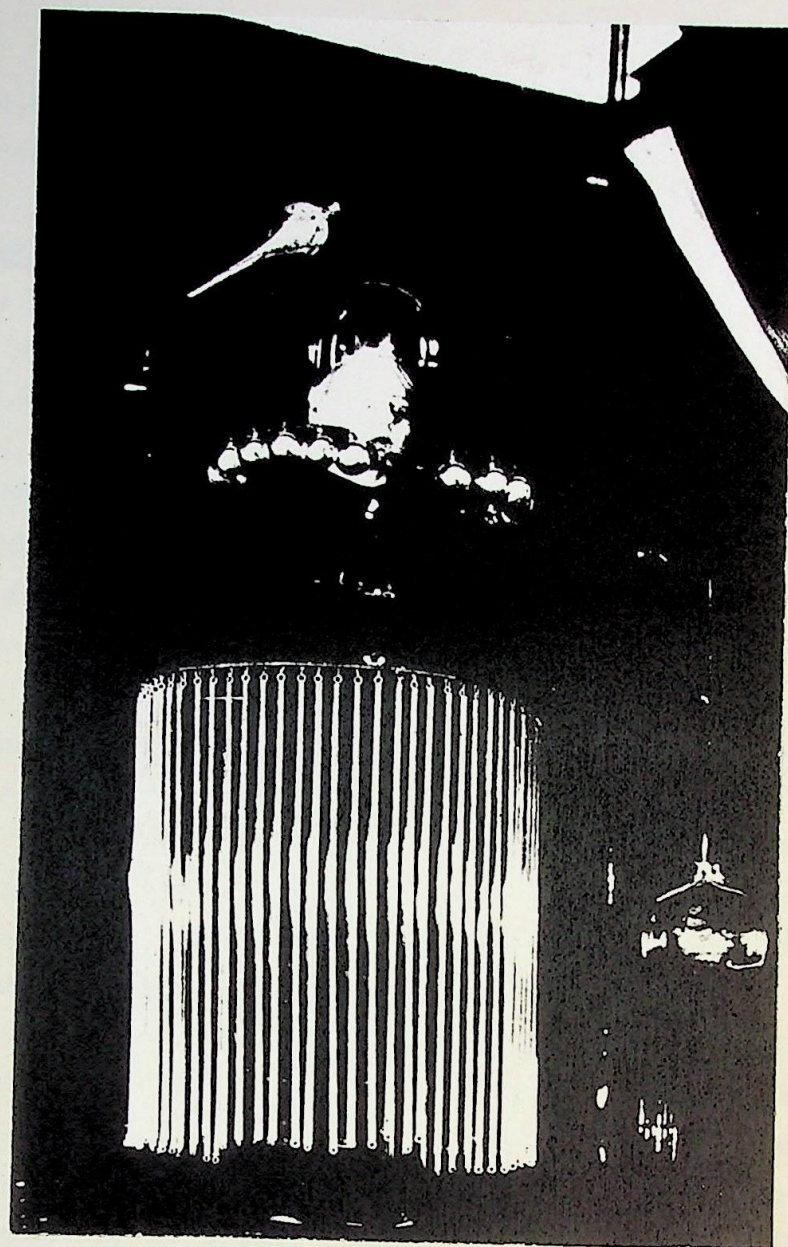
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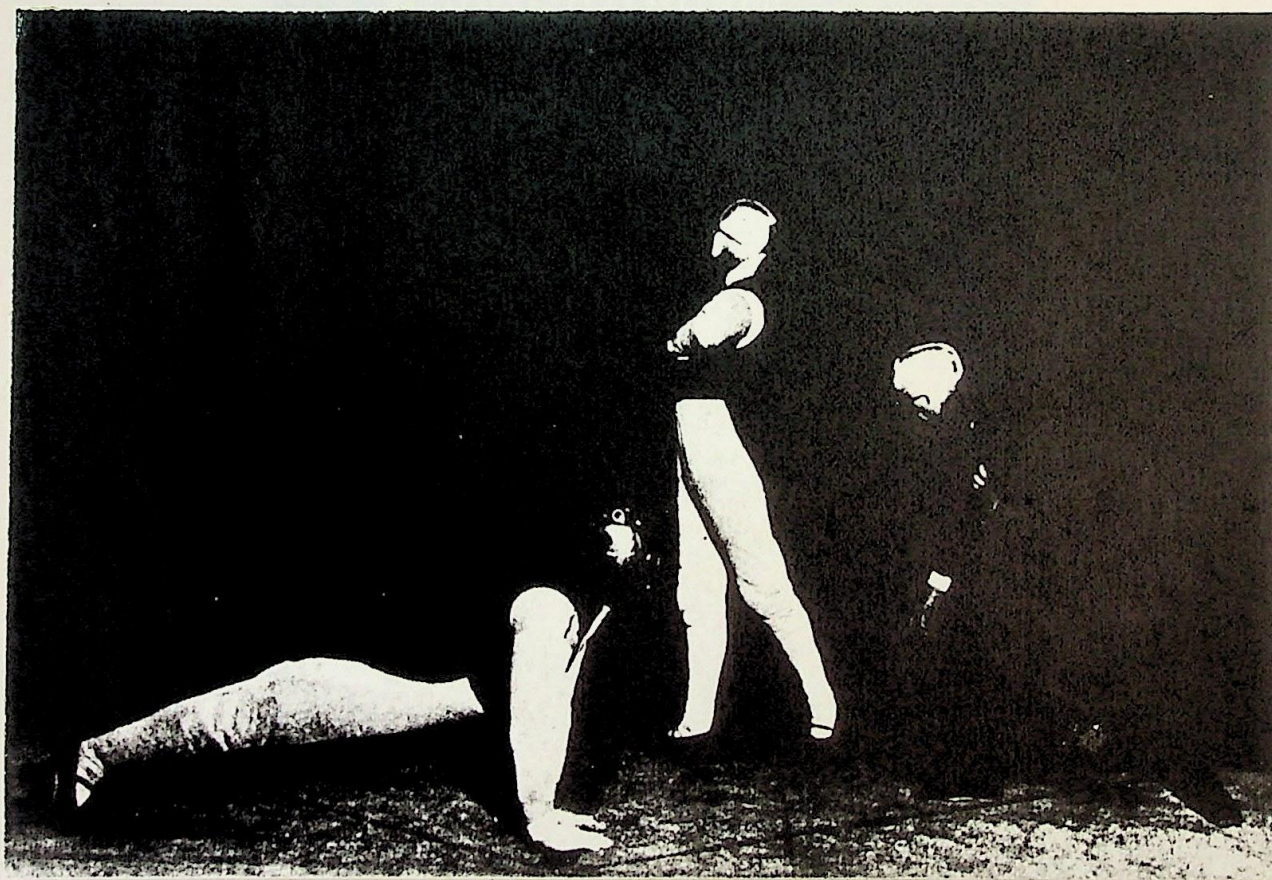
GESTURE DANCE 1926

GLASS DANCE 1929

manipulating 'style'. (However, the aesthetic of glass was realised by Modernist architects, more so than they care to admit).

The Metal Dance does not involve a metal costume but a backdrop of highly reflecting corrugated tin plate set on edge. Every other area of the stage is painted black, deep down stage a light illuminates the metal and a female figure appears, wearing white tights, head and hands enclosed by shiny silvery spheres. Music sets the figure to performing sharp geometric movements, reflecting a metallic quality of the metal. In this way, Schlemmer emphasised the 'object' quality of the dancers and each performance achieved his desired "mechanical effect". What may well deserve the name 'metal' or 'mechanical' more so than Schlemmer's performance is the Futurist, Depero, who constructed costumes from a framework of metal wires, and when the figures did various movements with their arms, hands, feet and legs, caused the costume to open certain fanlike contrivances like tongs. At the same time, there were to be bursts and rhythms of noise like instruments that were apparently built into the costumes. They were described by Depero in his notes as a "complex simultaneity of forms - colour - onomatopoeia - sounds and noises"[10]. Rather than being replaced by a machine, the human aspects of the actor are hidden or deformed by costumes. The transformation of the human body, its metamorphosis, can also be made possible by masks. Masks could either emphasise the body's identity or they could change it, they express its nature or they are purposely misleading about it, they stress its conformity to organic or mechanical laws or they invalidate this conformity. However, the mask served the purpose of connecting man and machine. The masks, like that of costumes, were made up of simplified geometric shapes to represent the eyes, mouth and so on. The method of standardisation was used, for example, a line would reprsent the mouth. It must be understood that the use of stereometric shapes was not for the purpose of characterisation but the opposite; to eliminate characterisation, to impersonalise the human expression, expression belonged to traditional theatre, and maybe it would be
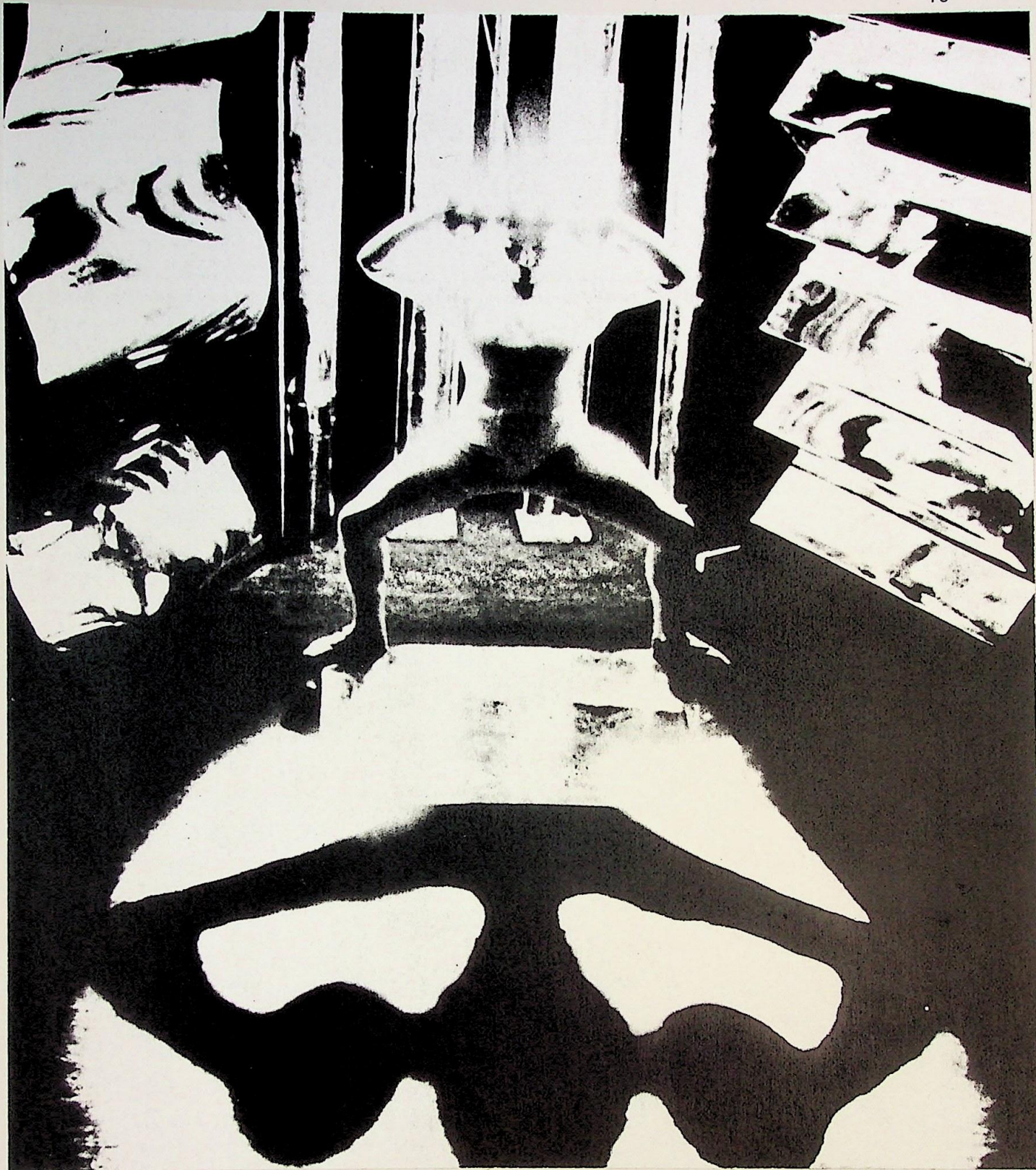
METAL DANCE 1929

correct to say, to create a sexless person. It could also imply perfection. However, one's concept of perfection will always be an individual opinion. If perfection was an opinion of one man which was to be accepted by all men, this could lead to the concept of Utopia, but of course only the concept; or the 'perfect race' which Fascism proposed. Schlemmer did, however, look through the more Utopian goals, but may have believed in a more democratic perfection. However, the issue could be made more on the 'impersonal' rather than that of politics or perfection, although these are not entirely irrelevant. The Futurist Fillia's Mechanical Sensuality echoes Schlemmer's line of thought on the impersonalisation or sexless person.

"men have been engrossed by mechanical expansion...Everything is geometrical - lucid - indispensible: Splendor of the artificial sex that has speed in the place of beauty -"[11].

Fillia infers that the machine is a sexless (person?) object.

Schlemmer's Chorus of Masks involved twelve masked performers. It starts off with a large shadow almost three times life size, which appears on the horizon of the stage and shrinks to normal human scale.[12]

The twelve performers assemble around a table and a drinking ceremony is celebrated. After the drinking, the party rises and comes to the very front of the stage, "frighteningly close"[13]; finally the party disperses quietly. Schlemmer stated:

"People who are trying to discover 'something' behind all this - will not find anything, because there is nothing to discover behind this. Everything is there, right in what one perceives! There are no feelings which are 'expressed', rather feelings are evoked. Pure absolute form. Just as music is".[14]

This clearly echos the Futurists, what is there is there and nothing else. It also implies the non personal and unemotional. However, the mechanical concept of urban environment remains. A slightly more amusing approach of the depersonalisation by masks can be seen in Depero's work, where a very close connection was made between man and machine.

> "Head light-eyes/megaphone-mouth, Funnel-ears/in movement and transfromation/mechanical clothes."[15]

Throughout these works, what is noticeable is the simplification of form as an aid to depersonalise the human form. Schlemmer states:

> "Simplicity, taken to mean the fundamental and the typical which develops organically into multiplicity and the particular, simplicity taken to mean a field cleared of all eclectic accessories of all styles and ages."[16]

Schlemmer tended to use only the primary colours in costumes, backdrops, drawing and so on. They are the basis of all colours and in a word the 'simplification' of colours. Schlemmer considered the more colour the less form, and stated in relation to his own work, "it is now more formed, but less colourful".[17] However, we can accept it as truth that all colour has a form. Mondrian, (the hero of the Bauhaus, as Schlemmer expressed) used line and colour to deal directly with visual experiences, related to primary forms on canvas. It was thought that he diluted their meaning and intent when he used them to achieve a romantic objective, namely the creation of 'reality', rather than dealing with sensation having to do with the primary forms themselves. But when Mondrian began to limit himself to verticals, horizontals and primary colours, it was because this kind of form contained his ideas most directly. He expressed with a tiny rectangle of colour, that epople are routinised and live within clearly defined grounds. Mondrian stated, "a system is as human as a splash of paint more so when the

splash gets routinised."[18]

It is true that certain colours are supposed to refer to something outside themselves. For example, in simplified terms, red represents anger. However, Schlemmer considered this only to be a myth and disposed these ideas as being irrelevant, untrue and irrational. Colour is colour and nothing else; echoing his thought on masks.

Schlemmer made a closer relationship between the numbers 3, 5, 7 (as opposed to the numbers 1, 2, 3) and the colours red, blue and yellow. He noted in his diary that the numbers 3, 5, 7 "cropped up in a great variety of forms and combinations in the painting of the Bauhaus workshop building, instinct decided and reason confirmed ex post facto".[19]

He relates the primary colours to the number 3 for obvious reasons, and extends it to 5 by the addition of the non-colours black and white. He said that these colours suggest only the rough dimensions of the incalculable dynamics of the whole.

The square, circle, triangle are immediately associated with the three primary colours. A survey was constructed by Kandinsky on how closely and in what way these terms are related. On a sheet of paper were a circle, square and triangle, and one was supposed to assign the colours red, blue and yellow to them. Kandinsky related the colour blue to the circle, red to the square and yellow to the triangle. According to Schlemmer, the experts agree on the yellow triangle but not on the others. And he stated that he instinctively always makes the circle red, square blue and triangle yellow.

Kandinsky's explanation was that the circle is comic, absorbent and feminine, while the square is active and masculine. This concept may be thought to be true, however, blue is internationally considered male, and red considered female. However, this

observation does not apply to Schlemmer, and it would be contradictory to his line of thought, because he does not separate the male and female. Schlemmer related the red circle with nature, as in the red sun, but the square does not appear in nature; it is abstract.

"Nature works to destroy the straight line" - Delacroix.

This issue is contradictory anyway; the Russian Malevitch presented a red square as a painting. It proves impossible to discuss this issue on rational terms.

The Triadic Ballet, which could be considered an encyclopaedia of Schlemmer's performances, was developed over a ten year period. Propositions lasting several hours, using three dancers (Triad - three), accompanied by a Hindement score for player/piano

"the mechanical instrument which corresponds to the stereotypical dance style."[20]

The music provided a parallel to the costumes and to the mathematical and mechanical outline of the body. The costumes were of the three primary colours, echoing the title, and the fusion of the dance, costumes and music. The dancers' movements consisted of the basic functional movements, standing, walking and running. Floor geometry determined the path of the dancers. For instance, the dancers move only from downstage to the footlights along a straight line. Then the diagonal or the circle, ellipse and so on. The costumes and masks take on a geometrical form, reducing and differentiating the parts of the bodies to simple unifying forms, emphasising the functional elements, resulting in depersonalisation, and imitating movements created by machinery. A distinction must be made here, that the figures never imitated a machine, in that they did not take on the form of a recognisable machine, but only implied mechanical movements, and therefore a hint of personalisation is
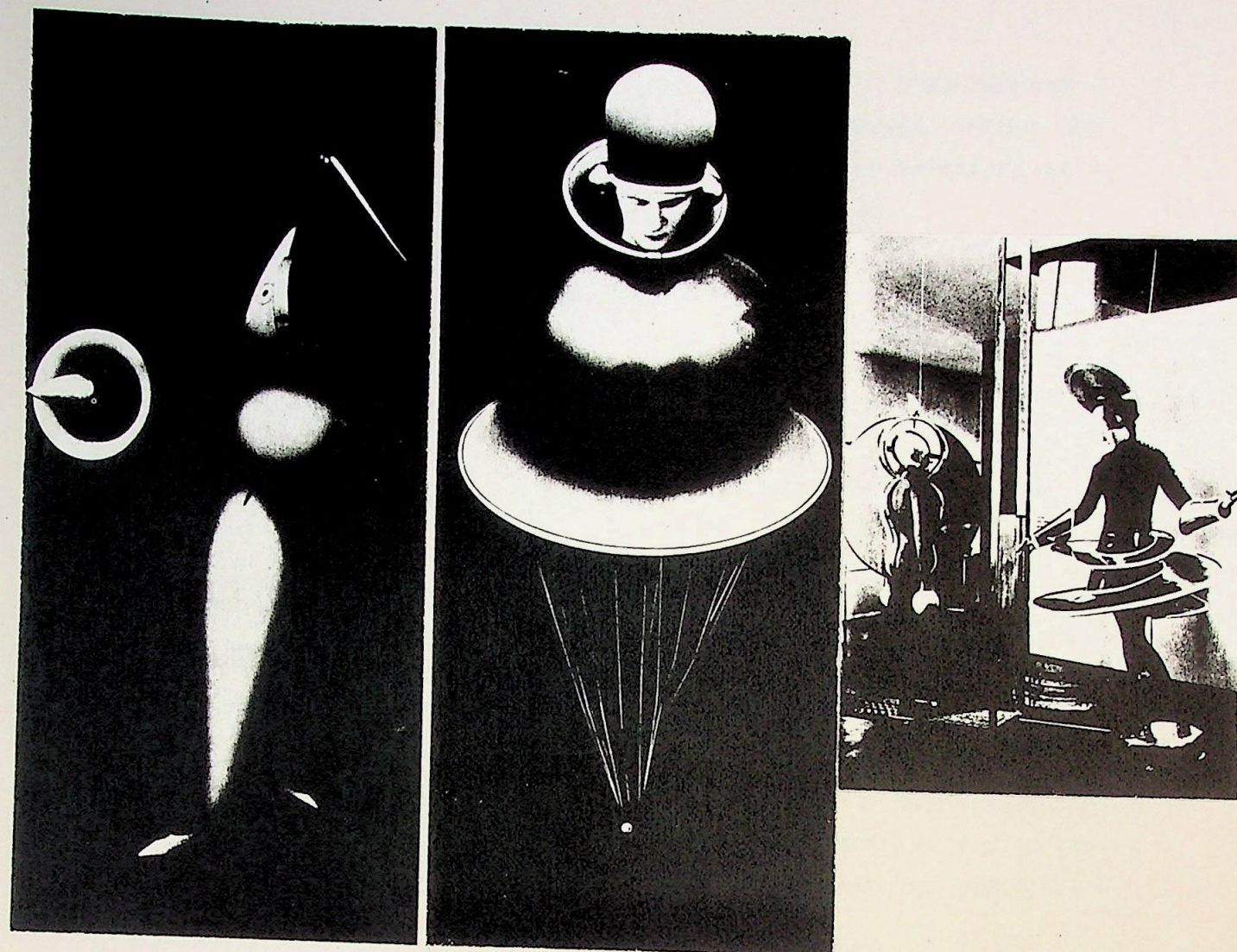
Designs for <u>Triadic Ballet</u> 1922 and 1926

there, but only implies 'person' as opposed to 'individualism'. Schlemmer never did state that man 'was' a machine, unlike the implications made in Depero's masks, where man was portrayed as a machine, neither 'person' nor 'individualism' applied.

In 1908, Edward Gordon Craig proposed that the performer be replaced by a nonhuman 'marionette'. He felt that the human actor was imperfect because he could not be completely controlled by the director-designer, and the personality of the actor was seen. And the Russian Brjusov stated that we "replace actors with mechanised dolls, into each of which a phonograph shall be built".[21]

These are two conclusions to the idea of form and transformation, with figure and configuration. The artificial human figure permits any kind of movement and any kind of position for as long a time as desired, also it gives access to a variable relative scale for figures, a point which Schlemmer considered. An equally significant aspect of this is the possibility of relating the figure of natural 'naked' man to the abstract figure. Many perspectives are opened up; from the supernatural to the nonsensical, from the sublime to the comic.

To some extent, Schlemmer used this tactic to increase the idea of making the actor and the decor to become one, as in man and his environment. However, a more important aspect of this was in the movement of the figure. Throughout his other performances where he used actual people, in each case the dancer would develop gestures and movements different from his or her normal 'kinesthetic sense', totally transforming traditional dance movement. By so emphasising the 'object' quality of the dancers, Schlemmer wished to arrive at a mechanical effect not unlike that achieved by puppets.

"Might not the dancers be real puppets, moved by strings or better still, self propelled by means of a precise mechanism, almost free of human intervention, at most directed by remote control?"[22]

Each puppet had a focal point in movement, a centre of gravity and when the centre is moved, the limbs follow without any additional handling. The limbs are pendula echoing automatically the movement of the centre. Everytime the centre of gravity is guided in a straight line, the limbs describe curves that complement and extend the basically simple movements.

However, almost from one extreme to the other, Schlemmer used objects to represent humans to create characters, or to personify.

Within context, it is tempting to make a generalisation that with Schlemmer, decor became mechanical, and acting, costuming and puppets turned the performer into a machine. To some extent, this is certainly true; it must be understood, however, in terms of the concept of personification. Abolishing the human actor does not abolish personification. Lights, sounds or moving elements may be used to replace the human actor, but also used to accomplish the task of personification.

In Schlemmer's <u>Figural Carbinet</u> (1923), he revealed a talent for farce. With the use of puppets, the play poked fun at the optimism embodied in the faith in progress and organisation - directions of his time.

Slowly the figures march by in procession: the white, yellow, red and blue sphere strolls, sphere becomes pendulum, pendulum swings, clock runs. The Violin Body, the Checkered One, the Elemental One and the Better-Class Citizen and the Questionable One. The bodies are searching for heads....A gigantic hand calls halt...In the middle, spooking around, directing, gesticulating and telephoning, the Master, E.T.A. Hoffmann's Spollanzani, dying a thousand deaths from self-inflicted gunshots and from worry over the function of the functional. Imperturbably, the window shade unwinds, showing coloured squares, arrow and signs, comma, parts of the body, numbers and adverts...The barometers get out of hand, the screw screws, and

eye glows electrically, deafening sounds, red. In the end, the Master shoots himself. It is to a certain degree ambiguous, almost implying that machine/technology is destructive and the tactic of farce echoes Dada, however, it is portrayed as a comedy and thus should be perceived as a comedy.

Personification by technology rather than by actors was to play a large part in the New Theatre in Mauro Montalti's Electric-Vibrating-Luminous manifesto in 1920 - with the use of lights, where thousands of coloured lights mechanically programmed acted at dramas. Different colours were to represent different types of people.

In Gesture Dance, characterisation is emphasised more. With the use of masks, mustaches and glasses, gloves, dinner jackets, the characters play different roles to represent 'types' of people which is stressed by their various ways of walking and places to sit down, using various sounds (murmuring and hissing noises, double-talk and jabbering). Characterisation is the key element of this work, however, only the characterisation os stereotypes and not individuals. It is arguable that we could consider what is considered individualism as a 'type' and even 'stereotype'.
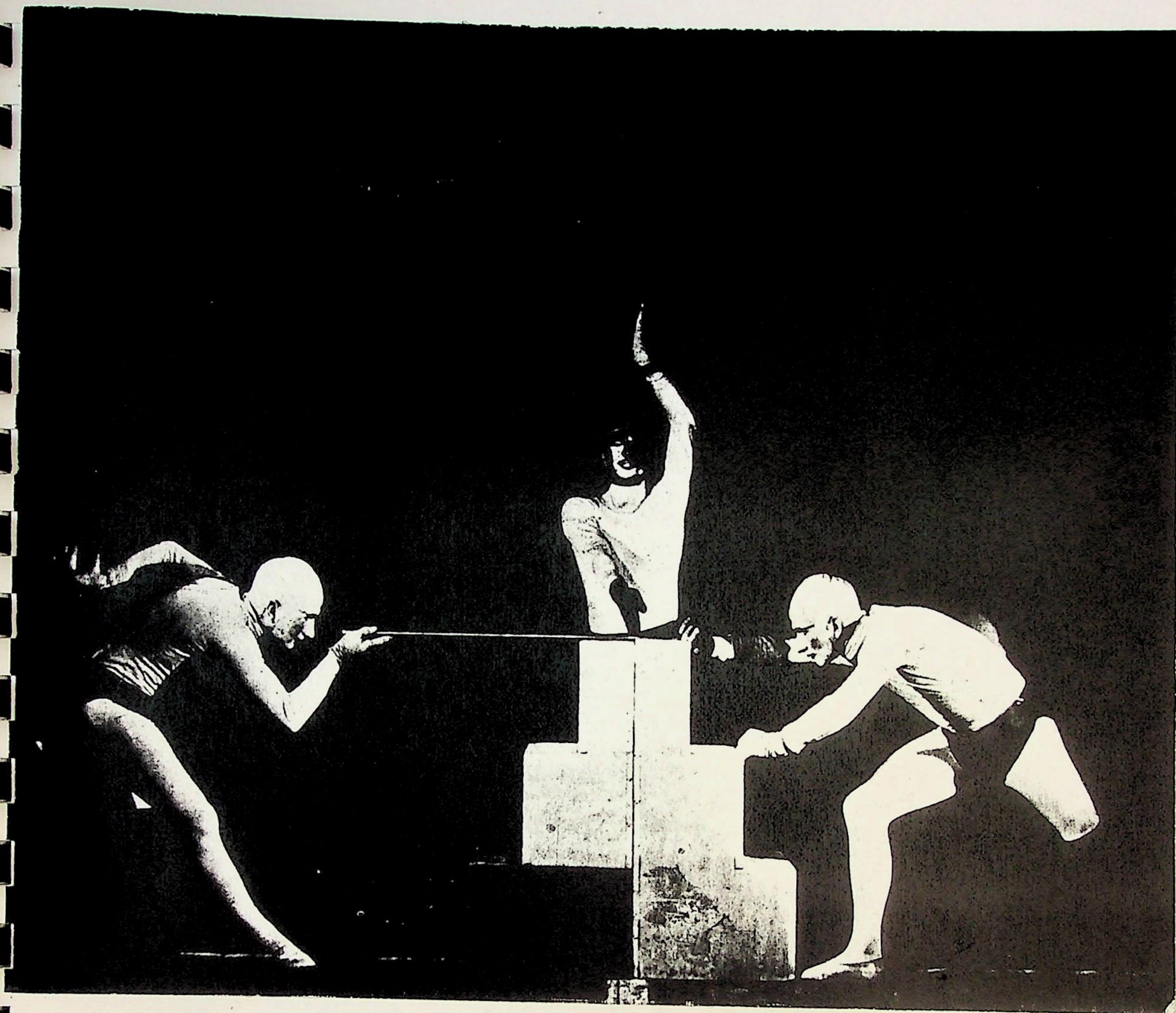
GAME WITH BUILDING BLOCKS 1927

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1.   Hans M. Wingler, Bauhaus, p. 158

2.   Ibid. The performance of the "Bauhaus Stage Dessau" at Frankfurt Schauspielhous on April 20th, 1929.

3.   Ibid.

4.   Hans M. Wingler, Bauhaus, p. 132

5.   J. Guadent. Quoted in Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, p. 19

6.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 12

7.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 105

8.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 133

9.   O. Schlemmer. L. Moholy-Nagy. F. Molnar, The Theatre of the Bauhaus, p. 52

10.   Michael Kirby, Futurist Performance, p. 114

11.   Michael Kirby, Futurist Performance, p. 287

12.   Schlemmer often either enlarged or reduced the human form, by aid of costumes or shadows, this implies the nonhuman-machine element.

13.   The only way Schlemmer involved the actors and audiences was in the design of the stage, where the traditional curtain and frontal stage was replaced by a central circular stage, in which the audience would sit around. However, in 'Chorus of Masks' the actors coming up close to the end reflected Futurists' tactics, this idea was not pursued by Schlemmer to a noticeable degree.

14.   Hans M. Wingler, Bauhaus, p. 158

15.   Michael Kirby, Futurist Performance, p. 357

16.   Hans M. Wingler, Bauhaus, p. 118

17.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 14

18.   Ibid.   A possible reason for Mondrian's use of framing
        colours and shapes with thick black outlines.

19.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 142

20.   Roselee Goldberg, Performance, p. 72

21.   Michael Kirby, Futurist Performance, p. 105

22.   Roselee Goldberg, O. Schlemmer's performance art,
        Artforum, (U.S.A.), Volume No. 16 (Sept. 1977), p. 34

CHAPTER II

SPACE - MUSIC - WORDS

An essential element in Schlemmer's paintings and performances was
that of space. Space after all is an inherent architectural
principle. The opposition of visual plane and spatial depth was a
complex problem that preoccupied many of these working at the
Bauhaus during Schlemmer's time there. "'Space as the unifying
element in architecture" was what Schlemmer considered to be the
common denominator of the mixed interests of the Bauhaus staff. He
considered space as he did movement, form, colour and eventually
sound/music; as one of the fundamentals. In his diary he stated:

> "one should act, as if the world had just begun.
>
> One should start with a dot, line, a bare surface: the body.
>
> One should start with the simple, existing colours: red, blue,
> yellow, black, white, grey. One should start with space, its
> laws and its mysteries, and let oneself be 'captivated by it'.
>
> One should start with one's physical state, with the fact of
> one's own life, with standing and walking."[1A]

First of all, it is correct to say that everything exists with a
certain space, we are all occupying a certain amount of space in a
purely physical sense, which means we are dealing with space whether
we want to or not. Maybe we can identify this as personal space.

However, Schlemmer chooses to deal with space that is different from the space that one experiences when confronting an object — that of personal space. He deals with space as an art material or subject matter, but it is also true that space is needed as a condition for the awareness of the work. Gerrit Rietveld stated:

> "... all that we can create is a delimitation of space and no more (even the materials which are used take on more significance by virtue of their position in space, then by their individual form."[1]

Rietveld seems to rate the concept of space above the concept of form. However, it is true that form can manipulate space; something that Schlemmer is conscious of and deals with. The form being that of man. Man in relation to space.

> "The body itself as the individual measure of space: as our first means of perceiving space."[2]

In his earlier work, reliefs and paintings, he delineated the visual and two-dimensional elements of space, while theatre provided a place in which to 'experience' space. Although beset with doubts as to the specificity of the two mediums, theatre and painting, Schlemmer considered them as complementary activities: in his writings he clearly describes painting as theoretical research, while performance was the 'practice' or the materialisation of the concept of space. It could be said here, that his performance (like any other performances for that matter) was the dematerialisation of the 'art-object'. However, Schlemmer's main concern was not in refuting the art object, although he did say in connection with the <u>Triadic Ballet</u>, that

> "Finally, it strives for dematerialisation."[3]

In this context, however, Schlemmer implies abstraction, touching on

the level of idealism and perfection and not necessarily dealing with social economics as other 'art' performances imply, in connection with non-object.

Schlemmer was preoccupied with the different manifestations of space: its two-dimensional rendering as illustrated in his paintings, and the three-dimensional alterations which occurred as the body moved through space, so it could be said that his paintings were a notation system to which the performers would follow in theatre space. His manipulation of theatrical space relied on movement of the figures within that space.

Resuming that movement automatically implies notation, Rudolph Laban, a choreographer and theorist, who worked closely with European dance, music and art personalities of the time of Mary Wigman and Sophie Tuber, stated that, "dance can best be explained by dancing."[4] He proposed to treat dance as a science, or at least as a discipline. He analysed the body as an instrument, nothing other than a complicated system of cranes and levers of various extensions. Laban thought that if these movements, which could be recognised as entities of their own, were to be recorded in an appropriate notation, the source and purpose of the movements might be a way of perfecting the conception and meaning.

The art of notation today remains a complicated issue, but Laban's theories were reflected in the work of his contemporaries, particularly that of Schlemmer. Laban wrote that no name existed for the "tracks written in the air by dance movement"[5], but Schlemmer soon provided both a name and a theory: the "stereometry of space".

When Schlemmer studied painting, he had worked on a composition theory based on the regulating laws of plane and colour, and independent of pictorial representation. He was among the few to reject the then obligatory pictorial conceptions of the

Impressionists.

His interest in geometrical arrangement of the composition, simplification and purification of plastic forms indicated in his reliefs and sculpture related to the formations of the cubists.

A relief named J.G. is a good example of a possible notation system. A frontally viewed figure (as opposed to his other reliefs which are profile figures), results from the combination of human form and stereometric elements, such as squares and circles. It is imposed on the vertical axis of a high rectangular panel, made up of a systematically shaped hand, a geometrically conceived leg of circles and squares. Noticeable in all his reliefs, they are divided by a vertical axis, which seems to bring together the formal assembly of the work, and most frequently each movement within the composition is transferred, recogniseable in the adaptation of the human form into stereometric ones, echoing homogeneity which is constant throughout his work.

However, what characterised the 1920's discussion on space was the notion of 'felt volume' and it was to this 'sensation of space' that Schlemmer attributed the origins of each of his dance productions. He explained that "out of the plane geometry, out of the pursuit of the straight line, the diagonal, the circle and the curve, a stereometry of space evolves by the moving vertical line of the dancer."[5]

The vertical line of the dancer imitates the relief J.G., the vertical line in both cases imply prototype or repetition. Each half of the body is the same, and in a wider sense all bodies are the same - stereotype.

In Figure in space with plane geometry and spatial delineations (1922), performed by Werner Sirdhoff, the visual plane is demonstrated. Schlemmer first divided the square surface of the
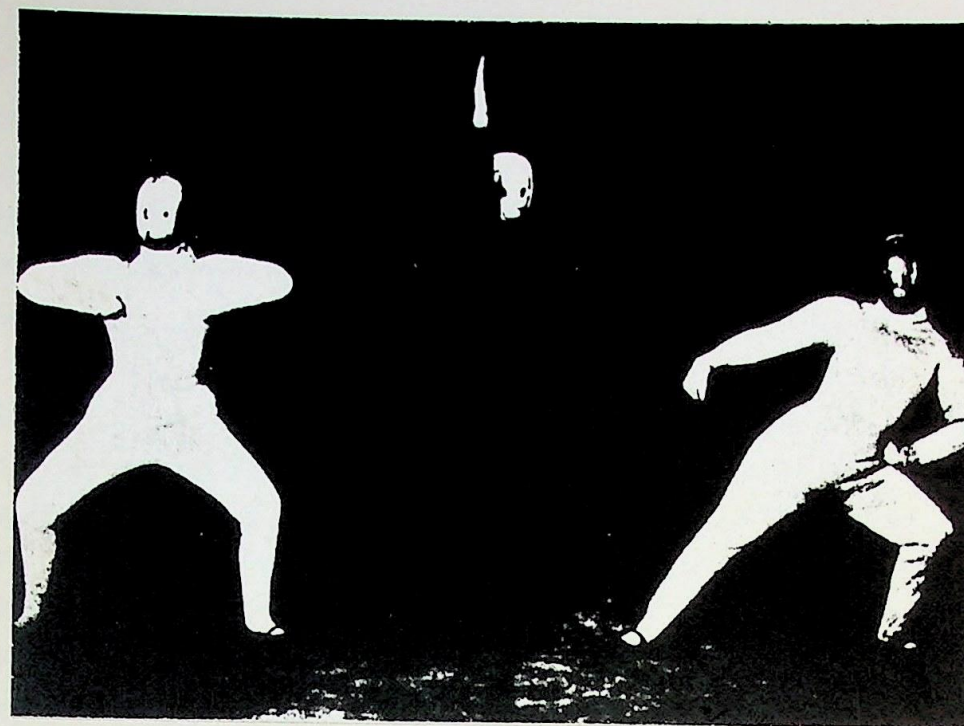
SPACE DANCE 1927
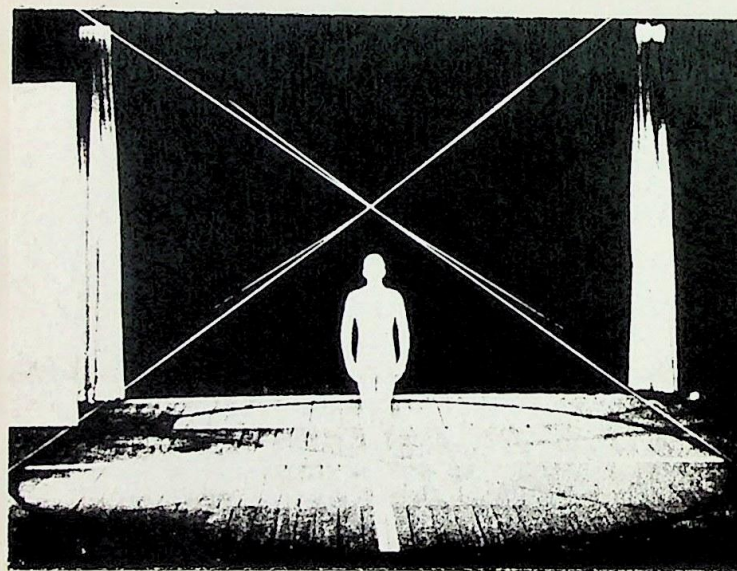
Figure in Space with Plane
Geometry and Spatial
Delineations
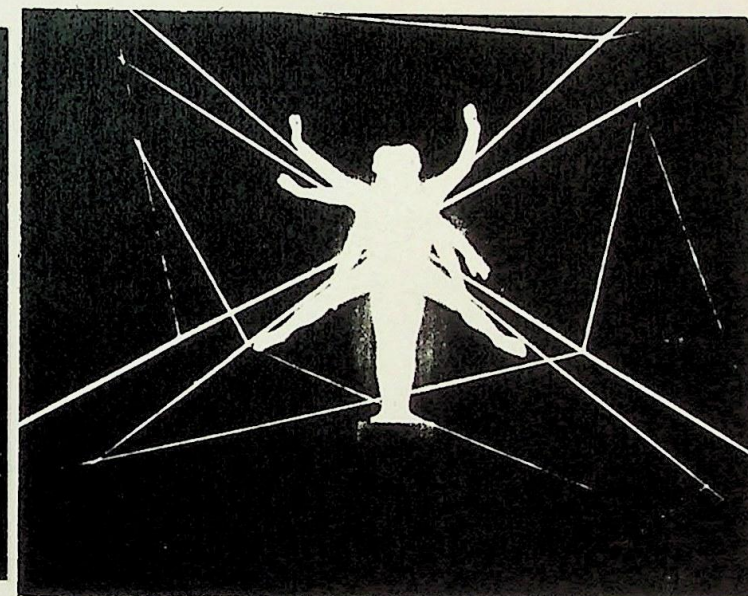
Dance in Space (Delineation
of Space with figure)
Multiple exposure photograph

floor in the middle and then into bisecting axes and diagonals and also delineating a circle. The performer would follow these geometrical floor drawings. This in itself could be the basis of a notation system. The division of the floor echoes the division of the reliefs and figure by the use of a vertical line.

His drawings are other possibilities of a notation system. A drawing created before the performance Gesture Dance, could be a notation diagram, although it is debatable whether it could be followed, in that it does not indicate gesture, or specific movements of torso, legs and so on. In fact, it appears quite musical, though I presume it is correct to say all music implies movement. The diagram does give a linear indication of the paths of motion and a projection of forward movement on the stage surface, and it is meant to be an aid in establishing graphically the total course of the action.

Schlemmer's next step was to create space by spatial depth. He explained that "if one were to imagine space filled with a soft, pliable substance in which the figures of the sequence of the dancer's movements were to harden as a negative form, this would demonstrate the relationship of the geometry of the plane to the stereometry of space."[7]

He obtained spatial depth by means of taut wires which joined the corners of the stage in what Schlemmer called 'cubical space'. By this, a midpoint is obtained, while diagonal lines divide it stereometrically. By adding more lines, a spatial-linear web is created, which will have a decisive influence on the figure that moves within it. Schlemmer uses the basics of all movement to create the basics of space in an unambiguous fashion and calls it "the origin of all theatrics".

Schlemmer clarifies space, echoing precision and simplification by the laws of 'cubical space' and the 'laws of imaginary space'.
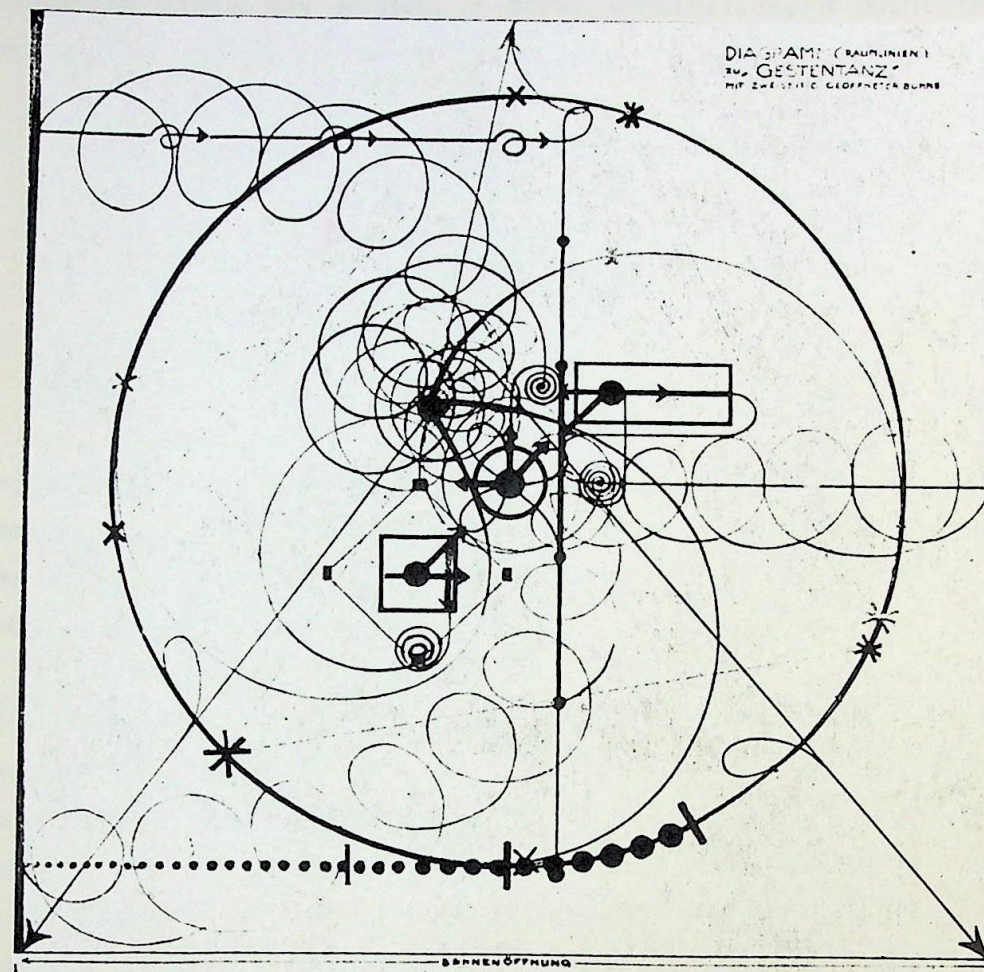
Diagram for GESTURE DANCE 1926

Cubical laws are those of planumetric and stereometric relationship, while imaginary space introduces Schlemmer's theory on metaphysics, the law of organic man. Throughout, Schlemmer never denied sensory perception (this may suggest a moral sensibility, a point that is not evident enough to make an issue of).

> "The organic man resides in the invisible functions of his inner self: heartbeat, circulation, respiration, the activities of the brain and nervous system, whose movement and emanations create an imaginary space;   the cubical-abstract space is then only the vertical and horizontal framework of this flow."[8]

Suggesting that anything that goes off at an angle is possibly a characteristic of an emotion. However, Schlemmer tends to describe the 'inner self' on a very 'facto' basis, rather than on an individual basis.

He characterises the metaphysical further, by particular actions the figures impose. For example, the star form of the spread out fingers on the hand, the sign of infinity , of the folded arms, the cross shape of the backbone and shoulders, the double head created by the use of masks, multiple limbs, division and suppression of forms.   The very use of the word metaphysics implies ambiguity, double   head,   multiple   limbs   echoes   multiplicity/mass-production/conveyor-belt/duplicate   and   stereotype - the non-metaphysical of the metaphysical. If these images were narrrative, they would impose allegory, however, the metaphysical element of his work is not the prime issue. The work reminiscent of Schlemmer does not imply narrative nor is it ambiguous in the strict meaning of the word.

In cubical space, Schlemmer relates the 'vertical' and the 'horizontal' to architecture, as the figure within a cubical space, an interior made up of four walls, signifying 'modern' architecture

which comes under the heading 'function'. He states, identifying with uniformity and system,

> "emphasis of the horizontals and verticals; not in vacillating groups of figures, but as an architectonic framework, into which the figures are fitted, with which they are coordinated."[9]

He simplified and coordinated space further by the use of costumes. The costumes do not indicate character, protrayal or plot, they imply function and body form, breaking away from convention, where the body itself determined the nature of the work and the time taken to move that "mechanism" became the underlying pulse of the work.

What Schlemmer described as the law surrounding cubical space, is where cubical forms are transferred to the human shape. Cubes replaced the head, torso, hands and feet, and rectangles replaced the arms. The precision of the costume took on a systematised effect, identifying with the cubical shape of the theatre space, and in turn the geometric paths on the floor. The piece became uniform, characterising Machine Age architecture, emphasising once again, man in relation to his 'ambulant' architectural, urban environment.

The functional laws of the human body in their relationship to space. The costume is minimalised to the essentials of the human form. The joints of the body are padded, enlarging the muscular areas implying physical strength, however emphasising correlation as opposed to perfection. These laws bring about a typification of the bodily forms; the egg shape of the head, the vase shape of the torso, the club shape of the arms and legs, the ball shape of the joints.

The laws of motion of the human body in space identifies with various aspects of rotation, direction and interaction of space, where the body is reduced to circular forms. This type of

figure would follow the linear circular pattern of the geometry of the floor.

The _Triadic Ballet,_ first performed in 1923, was considered by Schlemmer to be the merging of the opposites; that of the floor geometry of the dance surface and the solid geometry of the moving bodies. The two coordinated together to produce a sense of spatial dimension which necessarily results from tracing such basic forms as the straight line, the diagonal, the circle, the ellipse and their combinations. The combination of the opposites could be considered in that of theory and practice, where the aesthetics of the visual appearance of the dance, to the quite complex geometrical notational systems of the floor geometry and space geometry became quite 'appolonian'.

The use of line to create, manipulate or coordinate space became an issue during the 1920's and 1930's, for example, Mondrian's use of line and grid style arrived via cubism, and his use of black lines was a measured examination of space, uniting solid and void, positive and negative within his paintings of cityscapes. Also, the use of black lines surrounding an area of colour was interpreted by Mondrian in that people were becoming more systematised by the growing mechanical environment.

However, Klee's use of line to imply space becomes more crucial and interesting and is similar to the work of the elementarists. In the drawings of the 1920's, in for example _Ideal Menage,_ he draws rectangular shapes as if they were transparent; all twelve edges could be seen at once, but without serious deviations from central perspective.

Mondrian thought that choosing line as a mathematical measurement was like any other branch of logic, in that it was only an operational technique, not a creative discipline. The devices that characterised the machine age aesthetic were the products of
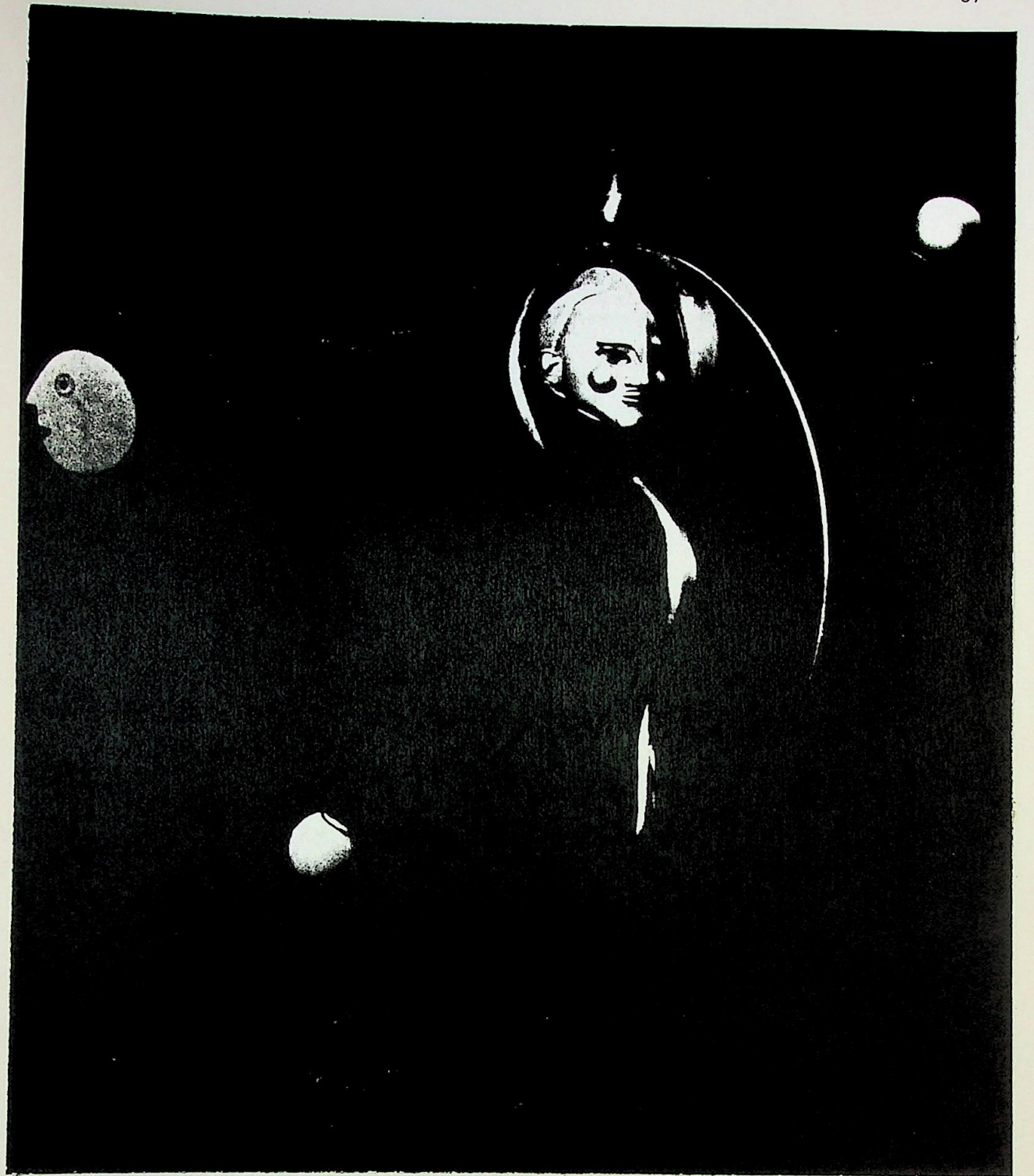
THE TRIADIC BALLET 1922

intuition, experiment or pragmatic knowledge, in other words, line and measurement are only the primary determinants.

This certainly applies to Schlemmer, in that measurements are primary determinants of his work, but he manipulates them to produce what in itself could be considered a creative discipline.

In Schlemmer's <u>Slat Dance</u>, the figure performing in semi-darkness, outlining the geometrical division of the space and emphasising the perspective view for the audience by the use of slats attached to the body which lengthened the arms, legs and extended the back horizontally. The slats appeared to extend space beyond the cubical space of the theatre, and reduced the figure to its essential movements. Although it goes beyond cubical architectural space, it echoes the Dutch Gerrit Rietveld's chair design. Furniture design played a great part in the reform of planning which was to do away with the idea of architectural space as a "composite of cells arranged as separate rooms."[9] Rietveld's[10] new radical chair design was possibly influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's theory, where he used plain cut machine rails.

"The straight line, clean-cut forms that the machine can render far better than would be possible by hand."[11]

With Schlemmer, Rietveld's 'functional' chair was reduced to its essentials, the sitting and enclosing functions are served by four planks (back, seat and two sides), that separated visually from one another, from the two planks (arms) that serve to support the occupant's arms, and from the network of plain rails that serve the supporting functions, and maintain the various elements in their correct relative position in space. The phrase 'Positions in Space' is adversely used here. The structures do not violate or mutilate the conditions of each other, in that they do not cut into the wood or make joins, letting the lines of the wood create space.
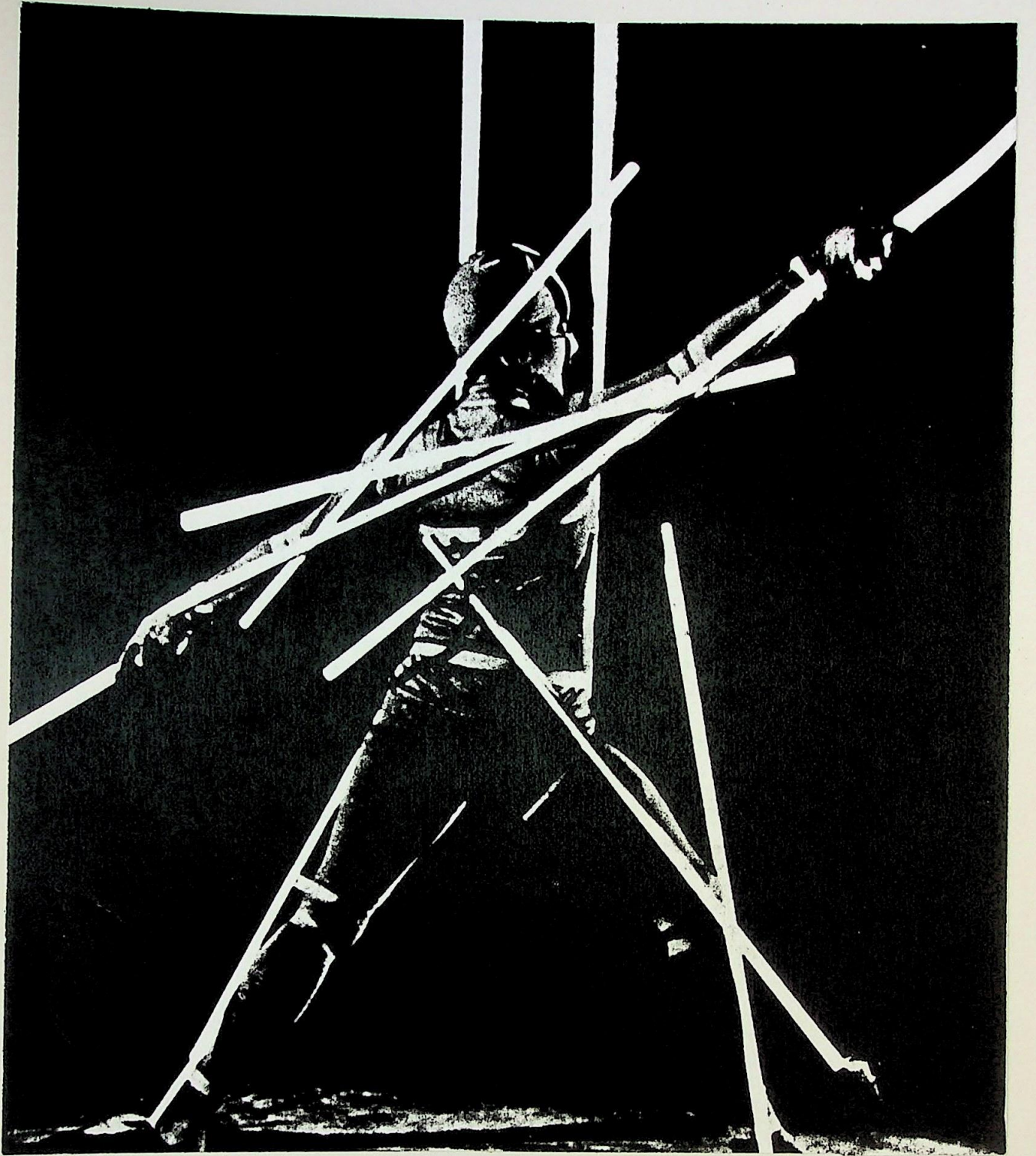
SLAT DANCE 1927

Rietveld's Arm Chair 1918

"With every plane, angle and point around, at or near him, a
spatial measurement symbolised space anatomy, and in contrast
to mathematical man caught in his space web
...and in contrast
            function
                to sit
                    chair."[12]

It is clear that in this context, both of Reitveld's chair and
Schlemmer's 'Slat Dance', the concept of space is considerably more
than a void containing objects, and it seems to come nearer to three
dimensional grid. Mondrian's comment on Reitveld's chair:

"Where lines cross or touch tangentially, but do not cease to
continue (his italics)."[13]

Music was not a primary consideration to Schlemmer's performances,
though he did incorporate 'sounds' to coincide with movement.
However, we can also consider sound to be a spatial experience.

It is understandable why Schlemmer did use sound, presuming that
music incorporates narrative. Schlemmer's performances developed
away from a verbal context towards experiments with sound and
speech, based on the impetus of human sources of energy. Schlemmer
considered music along with narrative to be a distraction from the
essence of movement. Sound could be referred to as the 'shadow' or
the abstraction of music, where music is the build-up of
information, sound is the breakdown or the continuous process of
information leading to simplification and abstraction.

On March 11, 1913, one of the most significant of all Futurist
manifestos appeared. Although the subject was music, its author
Luigi Russolo was a painter. The title of the piece was the 'art of
noise'. Although sound itself was limited only by the physiology of
the ear and contained an infinite number of gradations of tone,

pattern and quality, and only some of the sound was acceptable in western culture as music, some condemned it as a barbaric annihilation of all that musical tradition stood for, and others praised it on the same grounds.

Russolo wanted all noise to be music, and his mechanical contraptions were designed to produce sounds that related to the noise of machines and of factories. His idea was to crush the domination of dance rhythm, and to produce a sound that was to be reminiscent of his time.

This reflects Schlemmer's concept of sounds when he asked Arnold Schonberg to compose music for one of his 'modern' dances. Schonberg wrote back "my music is completely lacking in dance rhythm, but if you think it suitable, then so do I."[14]

Schlemmer made a conscious decision to reject on principle anything "lyrical, lovely or tender."[15] He hints that it is emotional and irrational, which he calls a "weakness". However, I am sure he shared Russolo's thought on creating a new sound, in the same vein as in creating a new form. In the new Soviet state, too, Futurist ideas reached those composers who were allied with the Constructivist movement and who could defend their aesthetic stance as one allegiance to the urban proletariat in Schlemmer's "Space Dance", involving three figures, relates sounds to functional movements. A red figure, following geometrical floor drawings, walks at a steady pace controlled by single notes created by a gong. The repetitive walking and noise of a gong could well echo Russolo's 'factory' noises, the repetitive action of mass production. The blue walks at a slightly faster pace, to faster gong beats, finally the yellow figure runs to very fast noises. The piece starts morbidly and ends in a rush of excitement. The fast movement may well have derived from the Futurists concept on speed, speed represented modern times, speed was the product of technology.

"To find a symphonic means to express our time, one that evokes the progress, the daring, the victories of modern days? The century of the aeroplane deserves its music."[16] Luigi Russolo.

The idea of repetition was considered a solution to the problem of integrating a sequence of human movements on an equal footing with the controlled "absolute" elements of sound. Schlemmer employed the idea of repetition of identical intonation and cadence, where sounds would also be amplified by the use of loud speakers. Repetition may solve this problem technically, however, repetition could indicate two other results in that it could either emphasise sound or movement, or in contrast, constant repetition could result in it only being taken in by the subconscious. In Schlemmer's case, repetition implied emphasising.

However, it is arguable whether these sounds appear pleasant, or even more meaningful than rhythm music. Gerrit Rietveld stated:

> "That the sounds of life of a large city is not necessarily the most meaningful sound expression of contemporary life, but can appear beautiful."[17]

Schlemmer's approach to the breakdown of music parallels in his working of literature/words/sounds.

The Futurists and the Dadaists came to the conclusion that phonetic word relationships were more significant than any other literary means, and that the logical-intellectural content of a work of literature was far from its primary aim. It was maintained that, just as in representational painting, it was not the content as such, not the objects represented which were essential, but the interaction of colours, so in literature it was not the logical-intellectual content which belonged to the foreground, but the effects which arose from the word-sound relationships. A piece performed by Remo Chiti called 'words' introduces an abstract use

of language. The phrases are perfectly clear, but their meaning
cannot be understood, because they are incomplete. What is received
are fragments of impressions and suggestions. Phrases do not fit
together or explain each other. Meaning does not accumulate, and
the effect tends towards abstraction.

In Schlemmer's Gesture Dance, which basically employed gestures of
'stereotype' people, he coordinated what could be called
stereotypical sounds, in that of murmuring and hissing noises;
double-talk and jabbering and occasional pandemonium, which is more
reminiscent of the Dadaist rather than the work of Schlemmer or the
Bauhaus. The noises, however, do not refer to industrial noises,
but they could be identified with street noises heard from a
highrise building, and if Mondrian's paintings were noise, they
could well be characteristic of Schlemmer's ambiguous sounds.

The same range can be seen in the work of Balla, who showed an
involvement with abstract language in many of her performance
pieces. His Discussion of Futurism by two Sudanese Critics
performed in 1914, employed the dialogue:

> "Farcionisgnaco qurninfuturo
>   bordubalota - pompigmagnusci...."[18]

The piece resembles a humorous cabaret act, but it helped to create
the artistic climate that was to produce Dada. Although
untranslatable, a similar layout of letters/phrases, words/sounds
can be seen in Schlemmer's drawing for Gesture Dance.

It is considered an aid to describe the action of the performance in
words, yet in spite of the direction for tempo and sound, they are
incapable of giving an exhaustive picture of the performance, and
missing are the precise indications of gestures or of mimetics, of
voice pitch and so on. However, it is evident that he uses the
repetition method, indicated by letters and international signs,

g e s t e n t a n z

geräusche **A** der gelbe **B** der rote **C** der blaue sek.

von links vorn
spr ngt expressiv
5 schritte vor ↓ ↓
rasch rückwärts zurück _____ 3
in trippelschritt _____ 5
7 schritte vor
rasch rückwärts zurück _____ 5
9 schritte vor u n d _____ 7
klavier: in großen triumfierenden *von links hinten* 7
„a-u-f i-n d-e-n marschschritten **3 schritte vor**
k-a-m-p-f ...." vor nickelstuhl _____ **rasch kehrt!** 3
1 schritt seite • _____ **3 schritte vor** 12
1 schritt rücken • _____ **rasch rücken!** 1:3
1 schritt seite • _____ **3 schritte vor** 1:3
1 schritt vorn u n d _____ **rasch kehrt!** 1:3
s i t z t ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! reckt sich hoch auf! 1:3
streckt bein ▬▬ **blickt scharf auf drehstuhl!** 1:3
legt arm ▬▬ **mitte** 1:3
wirft kopf**!** **scharf in gerader linie** 1:3
vor 1:3
kehrt! _____ 7 2
ebenso zurück _____ 1
kehrt! _____ 5
ebenso vor _____ 1
kehrt! _____ 4
zurück, dann _____ 1
vor stuhl, dann 3
ü b e r stuhl _____ *von mitte rechts* _____ 2
kreuzquer ✕ kriecht langgestreck: 1
kreuzquer ✕ herein 1
kreuzquer ✕ und _____ bis 1
s i t z t ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! **vor bank** 1
schnellt hoch!!!!!!!!!!!!!! und schnellt sofort hoch!!! schnellt hoch!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 1
s−e−t−z−e−n s−i−c−h z−e−i−t−l−u−p−e−n−h−a−f−t l−a−n−g−s−a−m) 1
eigenstimmen: bSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS 8
gong! sitzt! ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ sitzt! ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ sitzt! ▬▬▬▬▬ 1
8
wendet sich zu **B** ────→ *wendet sich zu* **A** ────→ selbstversunken 1
w i n s e l n f a l s e t t g e s p r ä c h selig trunken _____ 21
wendet sich zu **C** 3
vorgebeugt v e r s t ä n d n i s i n n i g e s g e m a u n z e 15
sagt B *was ins ohr* ────→ *hält hand ans ohr* ◄──── 9
a−r−m−s−c−h−w−u−n−g−g−e−l−ä−c−h−t−e−r selbstversunken 15
hält hand ans ohr ────→ *sagt* A *was ins ohr* ◄──── selig trunken 9
v e r g n ü g l i c h e s h ä n d e r e i b e n _____ 12
hält hand ans ohr ────→ *sagt* B *was ins ohr* ◄──── 9
fall k•ö•r•p•e•e•r•g•e•e•l•ä•c•h•t•e•e•r 15
reckt sich scharf nach reckt sich scharf nach reckt sich kerzengerade 1
vorn! hinten! hoch!
uhr schlägt 1‿2‿3‿4‿1/2 5‿6‿7‿8‿9‿3/4 10‿11‿1/2 12 42
l−a−u−s−c−h−e−n a−n−g−e−s−p−a−n−n−t 1
wecker rasselt schnellen hoch und drehen sich wie besessen um sich selbst 21
dumpfe pauke g−e−h−e−n l−a−n−g−s−a−m i−n t−a−p−p−s−c−h−r−i−t−t−e−n a−u−f
s−i−c−h z−u. je n−ä−h−e−r d−e−s−t−o r−o−l−l−e−n−d−e−r u−n−d
u−n−t−e−r a−r−m− u−n−d k−ö−r−p−e−r−b−e−w−e−g−u−n−g−e−n
d−i−c−h−t b−e−i−s−a−m−m−e−n s−i−c−h i−n s−i−c−h
v−e−r−m−a−s−s−e−l−n−d s−i−c−h i−n s−i−c−h
l−a−m−i−r−u−s−o−l−a−m−i−r−u−s−o−l−a−m−i−r−u−s−o−l−a−m−i−r−u 30
schlag! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! s c h r e c k e n h o c h ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! 1
p f i f f f ! rennt scharf nach ecke rennt scharf nach mitte rennt scharf nach ecke
links vorn hinten rechts vorn 5
s t i e r e n s t a r r i n s l e e r e h i n a u s 12
??
dumpfe pauken- i−n w−e−i−t−a−u−s−h−o−l−e−n−d−e−n t−e−i−g−s−c−h−r−i−t−t−e−n
sch.äge *wie* **t•opfen** i−m k−r−e−i−s−e g−e−h−e−n−d 14
schrecksprung! s t i e r e n a u f A 1:4
s−t−a−p−f−e−n w−e−i−t−e−r t−e−i−g−s−c−h−r−i−t−t k−r−e−i−s 1)
schrecksprung! (kürzer) s t i e r e n a u f A k r e i s 1)
1:4

Text of <u>GESTURE DANCE</u> 1926

like that of a dot, cross and question mark. However, it does not border on his constant theme of logic or rationality.

Schlemmer's <u>Meta or Pantomime of Places</u>, produced in 1924, consists of a simple plot freed from all accessories, where the progression of action is determined by means of placards such as "enter", "exit", "intermission", "suspense", "1st, 2nd, 3rd, crisis", "passion", "conflict", "climax" and so on. He reproduces his more rational and synthetic approach which is deductive in its arrangement leaning towards abstraction, but avoiding allegory. Although Schlemmer cautiously avoided experimenting with this element of language, not in order to de-emphasise it, he wanted to be more conscious of its significance and stated:

> "Our decision to approach the human word 'unliterarily' in its primary state, as a happening, as if it were being heard for the first time, makes this particular field a problem and a challenge."[19]
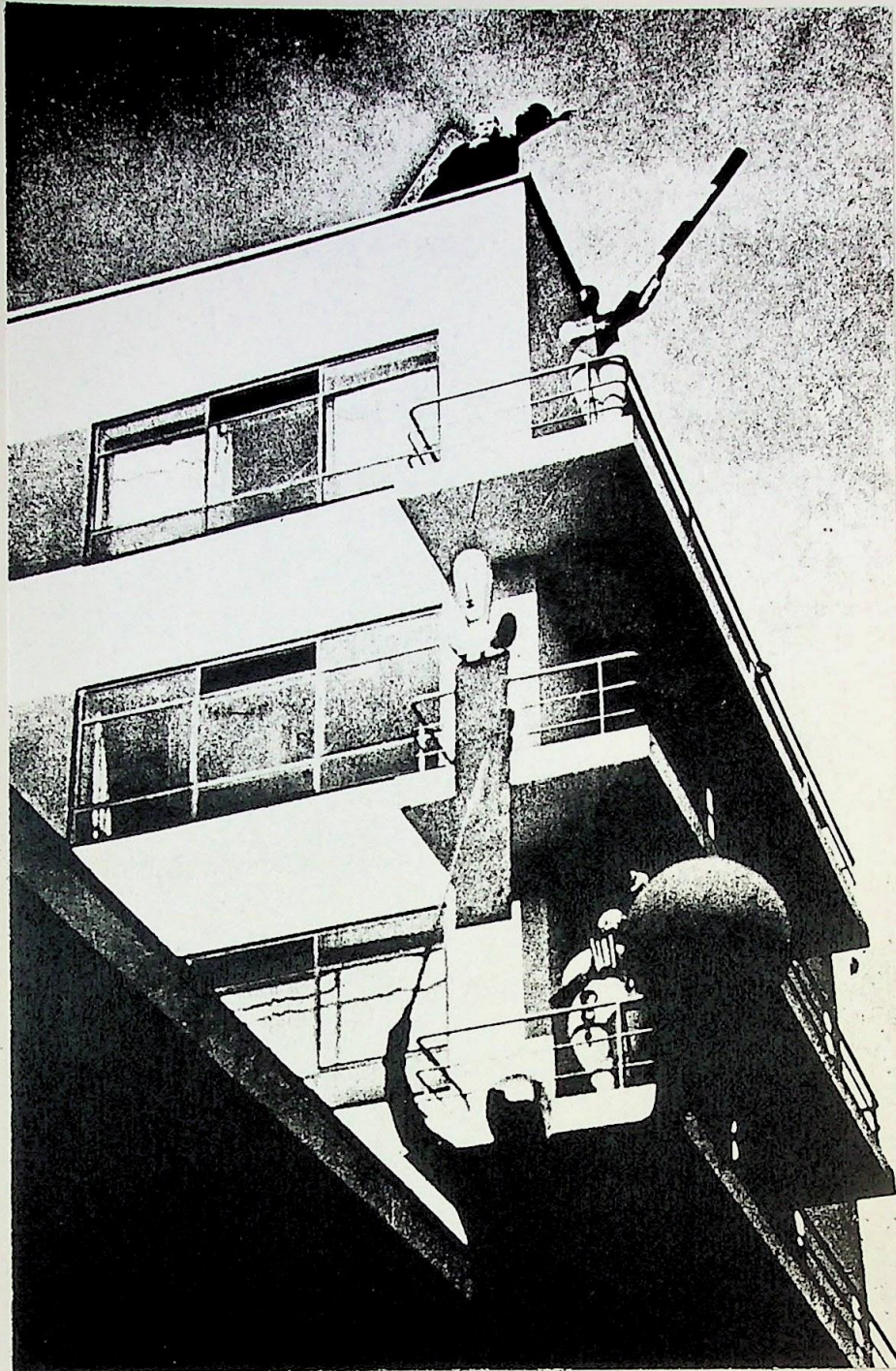
THE BAUHAUS BUILDING AS A STAGE

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER II

1.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, _Form and Function_, p. 162

1A.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 243

2.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 112

3.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 128

4.   Roselee Goldberg, _The Art of Notation_, Studio International (U.K.), Vol. 192, (July - Aug. 1976), p. 55

5.   Roselee Goldberg, _The Art of Notation_, Studio International (U.K.), Vol. 192, (July - Aug. 1976), p. 55

6.   O. Schlemmer. L. Moholy-Nagy. F. Molnar, _The Theatre of the Bauhaus_, p. 28

7.   Roselee Goldberg, _The Art of Notation_, Studio International (U.K.), Vol. 192, (July - Aug. 1976), p. 55

8.   O. Schlemmer. L. Moholy-Nagy. F. Molnar, _The Theatre of the Bauhaus_, p. 25

9.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 257

10.   Robert Hughes, _Shock of the New_, Trouble in Utopia, p.164

11.   First published in 'de Stijl' magazine in 1919.

12.   Reyner and Banham, _Theory and Design in the First Machine Age_, p. 190

13.   Reyner and Banham, _Theory and Design in the First Machine Age_, p. 189

14.   Reyner and Banham, _Theory and Design in the First Machine Age_, p. 192

15.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 8

16.   Tut Schlemmer, _O. Schlemmer's Diary_, p. 38

17.   Thames and Hudson, _A Concise History of Modern Music_, p. 104

18.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, _Form and Function_, p. 162

19.   Michael Kirby, _Futurist Performance_, p. 61

20.   O. Schlemmer. L. Moholy-Nagy. F. Molnar, _The Theatre of the Bauhaus_, p. 91

CHAPTER   THREE

Ethics or Aesthetics

Aesthetics or Function

"Let the world belong to the dancer, as Nietzche would say.
But isn't dance pure effect."[1]

(Oskar Schlemmer)

Ethics or aesthetics were often questioned in terms of who was going
to be the determining factor, the minority of intellectuals or the
majority who had already made up their minds to seek entertainment.

Although Schlemmer does not express individualism by his constant
use of geometrical and abstract form, he considered himself in
relation to the constructivists as romantic, in that he uses his
imagination. He did observe certain elementary rules of form, for
instance, the decisive function of the horizontal and vertical. As
to the origins of imagination, he was not sure.

When Schlemmer discusses nature in his diary, he refers to it either
as a mystical form, or in relation to a romantic idea. Although a
lover of form, he states that mysticism is crucial to painting,
considering painting and drawing to be the aspect of his work which
was intellectual and theatre to be practice, believing that there
was a symbolic force and importance in the dot, the line, the
triangle, the square and the circle. However, Paul Klee visualises

the process of design as beginning with a point which moves, thus creating a volume. Klee starts with the actual experience of making marks on paper and remains within sight of practicalities, making spiritual notions less evident. However, Schlemmer's claim to mysticism does not manifest itself visibly, presuming, first of all, that mysticism is associated with nature, it is possible through his use of abstract forms to perceive nature. Associating nature as the foundation of all things, and abstraction as a means of abbreviation or break-down of information resulting in a primal state, he acknowledges primitiveness. Schlemmer stated:

"one should act as if one had just begun, one should start with a line..." and

"Abstraction functions, on the one hand, to disconnect components from an existing and persisting whole, either to lead them individually or to elevate them to their greatest potential. On the other hand, abstraction can result in generalisation and summation, in the construction in bold outline of a new totality."[2]

For Schlemmer, the dot and line symbolise a beginning in a mystical understanding, but also as a beginning of a new form. Most abstract painters would reject the nature of realistic and impressionists' paintings and concentrate on the enduring absolutes of geometry. For example, Mondrian associates abstraction purely with cultivation of man. He opened the first article in the first issue of 'de Stijl' with the assertion:

"The life of contemporary cultivated man is turning gradually away from nature; it becomes more and more an a-b-s-t-r-a-c-t life."[3]

The Stijlkunstenaar considers nature as "brute matter and brute man unredeemed by the spirit"[4], which is presumably why Mondrian

specifies cultivated man as the enjoyer of a more abstract life, rather Adolf Loos specifies advanced culture as the commitment of freedom from ornament.

However, Mondrian observed the abstraction of a city as a new form of beauty, which he considered stronger than nature. This may also echo Schlemmer's line of thought in that there is a new spiritualization in abstract form, deriving not from nature but from geometrical forms.   Paul Klee used dot and line to escape the implications of the spiritual, but used abstraction to portray the spiritual. He stated:

"The more terrible the world is (as it is today) the more abstract art is."[5]

Like Mondrian, the other 'de Stijl' members saw machinery as a separation of man and nature and considered this to hasten the spiritualisation of life. Van Doesbury wrote:

"The machine is 'par excellence', a phenomenon of spiritual discipline..."[6]

We could say form derives partly from the needs of function and partly from those of expression. The emphasis on these two influences varies according to the objects involved and material, the epoch, country and culture. Basically, there are two different kinds of form, that of expression and that of function. It could be said that form, as a result of function, doesn't always fulfill our expressive needs or aesthetic needs. Hugo Haring considers that form which results from functional criteria are created by life and are, therefore, of an elementary and natural kind, not originated by man, while forms chosen for the sake of expression derive from laws formed by human intellect, and functional-based laws are universal. This could mean that functional forms arise naturally and, so to speak, anonymously while forms created for the sake of expression

originate from a psychological condition and therefore subjective and indefinable. Haring states (1925-6):

> "The history of form is in reality, merely the history of variations in expression."[7]

The expression of the geometrical culture derived from laws which were mostly contrary to nature. Artists have since discovered that purely functional things have forms which can satisfy in terms of expression. Haring, however, believes that in our creation of functional forms we follow in the track of nature in that if we search for form rather than construct them, we would understand nature and there would not be an anti-nature. Haring writes:

> "we no longer take a motif on which we plan to base form, we create out of a geometrical world of organic forms ... we must create as nature does, organically and not geometrically."[8]

Schlemmer considered that spiritualisation and mysticism is a source of intellectualism, and representation of form is the practise. His paintings were his only source where he could express mysticism and thus painting is intellectual, and his theatre is representation of form and is unarguably practice. Whether this implies that his paintings were only ethical and his theatre only aesthetic is questionable. Schlemmer confirmed in relation to his theatre work that there were no underlying definite intellectual considerations, only aesthetic in that of form, colour and movement, but these were put together into something that had concept and meaning. Although this is true, in comparison to what popular theatre was during the war, where the artistic standards of German theatre had declined, and were still unchallenged by the film industry which virtually ceased to function during the war. As a result, theatre became immensely popular as a form of escape from the deprivations of the real world outside. As a result, audiences became less and less critical, demanding light entertainment, or reassuring

sentimentality. Schlemmer's work clearly operates outside these perameters. It could be said Schlemmer forces the audience to be conscious on a rational level of their present environment and growing technological culture. However, he perceives this as a platonic idea or a conception, so due to these circumstances his work is best compared to modernism rather than popular theatre.

Aesthetics or Function

Understanding that, first of all, Schlemmer's work is the concept of function, as we can safely say his work was never functional. However, he materialised function on an aesthetic basis, which could be considered contradictory to this rational line of thought. In any case, we are faced once again with contradiction between two concepts of order, between the supposedly progressive and changeable nature of technology and the supposedly eternal and immutable nature of aesthetics. For example, Le Corbusier has been credited for his functionalist, determinist attitude, but it has been thought that elements of his architectural designs were only for aesthetic purposes and not functional at all. However, most constructivist artists employed the application of art work to engineering structures. But the Futurists intended to produce an aesthetic out of the machine and engineering. The attitude adopted by the Futurist Marinetti in the Futurist Manifesto on the theme of a power station was:

> "...live in high tension chambers where a thousand volts flicker through great bays of glass. They sit at control panels with meters, switches, rheostats and commutators to the right and left and everywhere the rich gleam of polished levers. These men enjoy a life of power between walls of iron and crystal..."[9]

The function of the machine is not clearly stressed. Where the Bauhaus stresses the function of the machine in relation to a social

stance, Marinetti sees the range of better equipment not as the transcendental social right of the democratic man, but as things that must be given to a politically conscious and active working class. This is a realism bordering on a cynicism that could become Fascist? The Futurists' enthusiastic acceptance of the aesthetic of machinery and urban life remained untouched.

However, the geometry and beauty of the manufactured object was taken much further by Duchamp when he exhibited in an art gallery mass-produced objects (on a small scale). His intention may have been to deflate the status of the art object. However, this was the first time that an ordinary engineering product had in physical fact, been translated to the realm of art.

Schlemmer did observe these elementary rules, the horizontal and the vertical of the manufactured object, but he disliked the fact that he fell under the suspicion of employing construction and intellectual calculation. He stated he "never worked from preconceived principles and calculated formulas, but rather from an inner conception, a premonition of and for something beautiful."[10] Hugo Haring considers that everything that is created naturally results from internal forces, while everything in geometrical form is created from outside. Kurt Ewald wrote in his essay, The Beauty of the Machines (1925-6), that he regards a material object as beautiful if its appearance arouses the feeling of a pleasant emoiton. He goes on to say that a possibility of a material object to appear beautiful is when it gives evidence of talent and superiority of intellect and also suggests that we can consider the material object beautiful for personal reasons. He finally states:

> "A good machine is thus an object of the highest aesthetic value, but I do not necessarily mean pleasure of the senses in that it makes us joyful, but evokes pleasure with a shudder."[11]

Van de Velde understands that the real danger in manufactured objects is when the manufacturer disguises the functional object by ornament, so as to appeal to the masses, who in his opinion have no experience of the real character of modern beauty and are always taken in by the "ornamental fantasy". So, presumably, Van de Velde does not consider that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but something that must be taught and understood. August Endell said that the appreciation of visual 'form' is something that must be acquired. It is, in his belief, that man has considered form as a form of beauty, but it has not yet taken root. Where Schlemmer considers the elementarists have preconceived ideas, Fernand Leger wrote on the Machine Aesthetic, the manufactured object (1924), that the masses have preconceived ideas about beauty, and are therefore unable to appreciate the beauty of the machine, and he said the reason for this is poor visual education, and people are afraid to judge freely. While this may be true, it is surely also true that to appreciate the beauty of the machine is just as preconceived. However, there is a recognisable similarity between the thought of Schlemmer and Leger, when Leger stated:

"The victims of the critical, sceptical and intellectual era, are consumed by the wish to understand rather than to give into their feelings. They believe in the 'makers of art' because they are the professionals. There is no such thing as a catalogued or hierarchical beauty; that is the worst possible error. Beauty is everywhere."[12]

The art of Schlemmer's performance could be regarded in relation to the reality of the machine or industrial design as a 'style' or the evaluation of a 'new aesthetic'. Howeve, abstract painting has been led with convincingly unambiguous intentions from its artistic Utopia into the promising fields of industrial design, but since the formal design of industrial products are manufactured by mechanical means, it follows laws that cannot be derived from the fine arts. The attempt to penetrate industrial production with the laws of fine

art, in accordance with the findings of abstract art has led to the creation of a new style that also rejects ornamentation as an 'old-fashioned' mode of expression of past craft cultures. The square became the ultimate picture element. It became an ingenious and effective document of faith in functional form in the sense of purely constructive design. It could be said that it saved the fine artist from being illuminated, when it seemed only engineers were needed, this leading to a new aesthetic. However forms of industrial products, in contrast to the forms of art, are super-individual in that they come about as a result of objective investigation into a problem. Georg Muche states (1926):

"Art and technology are not a new unity: their creative values are different by nature. The limits of technology are determined by reality; but art can only attain heights if it sets its aims in the realm of the ideal. In that realm opposites coincide. Art has no ties to technology: it comes about in the Utopia of its own reality. The restriction of technology makes art into a useless something – art."[13]

CHAPTER THREE - FOOTNOTES

1.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 77

2.   O. Schlemmer. Moholy-Nagy. F. Molnar, Theatre of the Bauhaus, p. 17

3.   Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, p. 150

4.   Ibid, p. 151

5.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 246

6.   Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, p. 151

7.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 103

8   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 104

9.   Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, p. 125

10.   Tut Schlemmer, O. Schlemmer's Diary, p. 360

11.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 144

12.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 96

13.   Tim and Charlotte Benton, Form and Function, p. 152.

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