

An educational forum presented by the Fire Conclave Council designed to cover the different aspects of choreography related specifically to the Fire Conclave performance at Burning Man...

Revised March 10, 2023

# Choreography 101



# Part 1:

## Choreography Requirements:

- Duet: your video submission must begin with a choreographed duet that is 90 seconds (or longer) in length. If your submission video does not start with a duet, your submission will not be accepted for consideration into the Fire Conclave.
- Transitions: transitions should be smooth and thought out, with one routine flowing into the next safely and effortlessly.
- Fire: there needs to be fire on stage at all times.
- Choreographed Dance: The FCC requires 15 minutes of choreographed dance (there will be up to another 10 minutes of renegade after your dance which we do not need to see on your submission video).

**REQUIRED**

## Part 2:

# Defining the Requirements:



# What is a Duet?

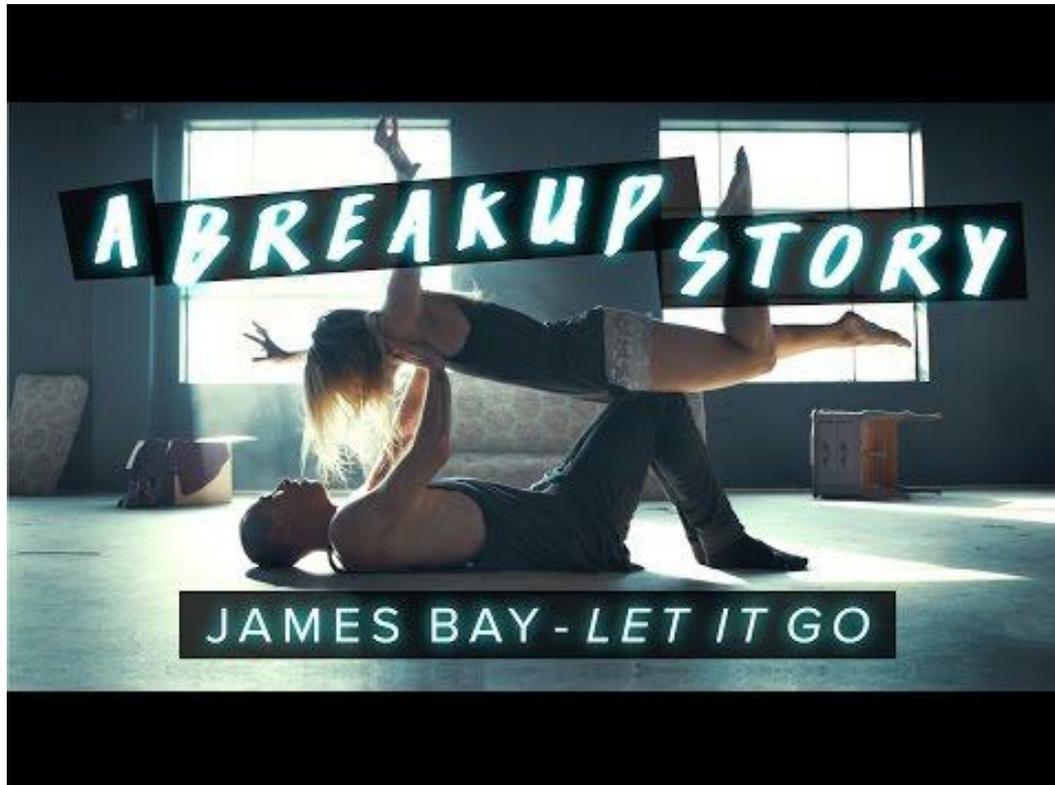
The Fire Conclave Council defines a fire duet “interacting” with each other and the fire. Not just working side by side or in sync, but working together in a coordinated effort as a team.

Intertwined and connected at times. Your Connectedness does not need to be intimate (a sword fight or partner poi routine can be just as intertwined) it does have to be cohesive.



# Examples of Duets...

Here is an example of what we would consider a Duet



James Bay - Let It Go - Dance / A Breakup Story

Click on photo to watch video on YouTube

or copy this link into a new tab/browser

<https://youtu.be/lpVf5-aTgys>

# Examples of Duets...

Here is an example of what we do not want to see in a Duet



"Les Twins" WOD Most Unforgettable Duos

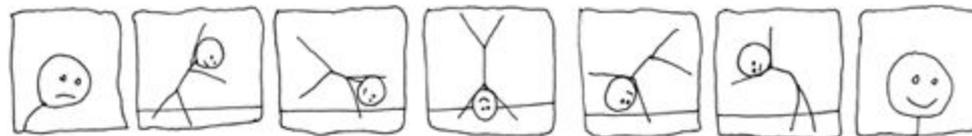
Time: 4:24 - 5:43

Click on this link or copy/paste into a new tab/browser

<https://youtu.be/-QPeROS3ctg?t=264>

# What are Transitions?

Transitions are “movements, passages, or changes from one position, subject, style, concept or place, etc., to another”. In the Fire Conclave, it’s how one dance section or routine moves and flows to the next. Does it look smooth and coordinated, or choppy and chaotic? Are performers ready and waiting to transition to the next section?



# Example of Transitions...



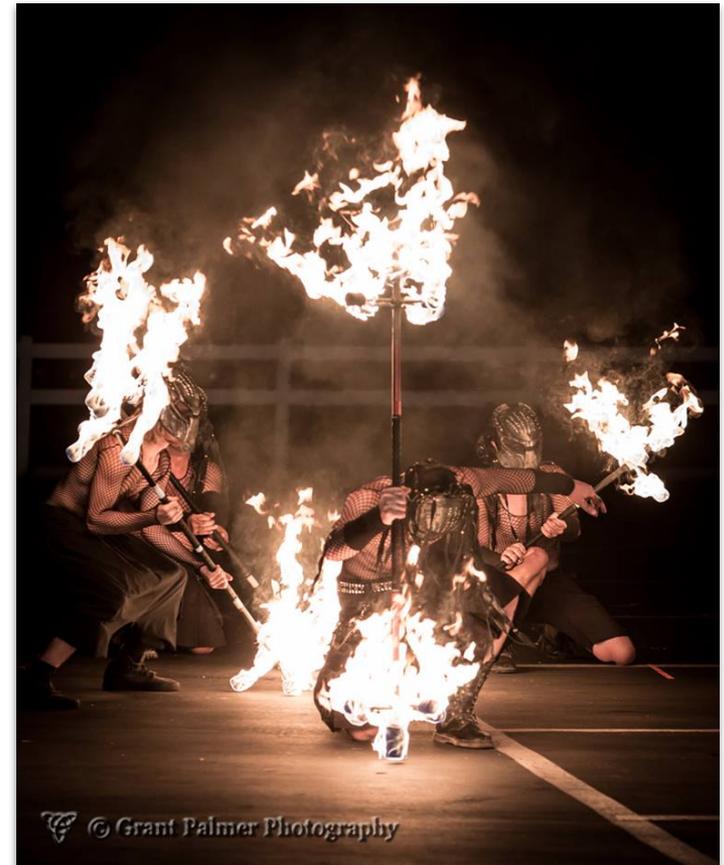
Royal Family - World of Dance 2015  
Click on photo to watch video on YouTube  
or copy this link into a new tab/browser  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw6k6Maoogo>

# What is Choreographed Dance?

Choreography comes from the Greek word Khoreia meaning "dancing in unison" and is defined as:

- the composition or sequence of steps and movements within dance.
- the art of gathering and organizing movement into order and pattern.

The Fire Conclave Council does not dictate the specifics regarding choreography. That being said, we do require some form of organization and cohesion to your dance. We do not want to see a series of solos or renegade (aka spin jam style). We want to give you freedom of expression and artistic oversight, so how you interpret this and what direction you take is left to you to decide.



# Part 3:

## Exploring Choreography Styles

Over the years Choreography has evolved dramatically. Methods of composition vary radically from Contemporary, Modern, Abstract, and Classical Ballet to Line Dancing, Hip Hop, Krump, African, Polynesian, Capoeira...the list is virtually endless.

The guidelines for your submission video state that you must provide 15 minutes of “choreographed dance”. So what do we mean by that, and how do you go about achieving it? Since this seems to be a routinely asked question, we’ve decided to provide you with some helpful suggestions in an effort to help you get started.

Here are some of the more “typical” choreography styles that have worked in the Great Circle over the years. Keep in mind that you don’t have to stick with just one style. Blend different styles as you see fit depending on number of dancers, size of tools, etc...



# Exploring Choreography Styles:

- **Synced:** routines which move or operate at the same time and rate, in unison.
- **Staggered Sync:** offsetting the timing of a specific move, or a series of moves can enhance the simple synced routine. Alternating between speeding things up/slowing things down, or playing with height variations are also simple tricks to add a splash of style and creativity.
- **Marching Formations:** a drill which consists of a series of movements by which a unit of individuals are moved in an orderly, uniform manner from one arrangement to another, or from one place to another. For example, going from circles to lines, then to squares forming distinct patterns. Or two lines, one in front of the other, are offset and inverted (aka switch places) so that the front line is now in the back, and the back line moves forward.

# Exploring Choreography Styles: The Staggered Sync



Example: Staggered Sync

Mayyas / AGT 2022

"3 Groups That Will Leave Your Jaw On the Floor"

Click the link or copy this link into a new tab/browser

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JuDa3dslpo>

# Exploring Choreography Styles:

- **Partnered:** partnered choreography typically consists of two people (or several groups of two people) performing in tandem. Partnered styles can be anything from dancing the tango to square dancing where partners rotate or change. Partner poi, partner dragon staff, and partnered double staff performing offsetting isolation tech seem to be some of the more popular styles in fire performance.
- **Call and Response:** Call and response is a physical conversation: One person/group performs, then another dances in response. This form has its roots in the songs, drums and dance of African culture, and is often seen today in hip hop and tap. Example: Two groups face each other onstage and perform alternating 8-counts.
- **Multiple Tools:** this style is tough to pull off if you don't want it ending up looking like renegade. Utilize techniques such as syncing similar tools together (even if they are located on different sides of the routine itself) to give the routine some cohesion. Another suggestion is to have multiple types of tools doing the same moves and/or formations. The key point in this is having a critical eye. Watch the routine to make sure it looks purposeful and complementary, not chaotic and disjointed.

# Exploring Choreography Styles:

- **Rhapsodic:** dances that express pure feeling are known as “rhapsodies”. Emotion is the key component to this composition, such as conveying a sense of sadness, elation or even seduction through movement.
- **Narratives:** this type of choreography typically follows a storyline. The use of theatrical techniques are most often utilized to enhance a play or movie, however, there is no reason they can’t be utilized (in small doses) to add spice to dance routines. Fight scenes, love scenes and even large fire props can fall into this category. But in order for this to work, it has to be believable! Fight scenes need to look real, like someone is about to die. Love scenes need to scream passion. Remember, although storytelling and character development are important in these types of routines, they should never take precedence over the dance. They should be used sparingly to enhance your dance routine, not dominate it.



# Exploring Choreography Styles: Line Formations and Combat



The Kings - World of Dance "Standing Ovations"

Time: 12:06 - 13:50

Click on the link watch video on YouTube  
or copy this link into a new tab/browser

<https://youtu.be/Yk9q6788vUQ?t=727>

# Exploring Choreography Styles:

- **Feature/Background Style:** this type of choreography revolves around a solo performer, duet, or small group performing in the foreground with a larger group performing in the background. This style is commonly used in conjunction with other styles such as the Narrative/Storytelling style. It is also a key component to a successful multiple tool routine. The important factor to remember with this style is framing. The background performance should be framed in a way that doesn't distract from what's going on in the foreground. A good way to accomplish this is to have the featured piece in the middle with the background performers on each side, or to have them lined across the back using height variations such as large, high moves with a staff while smaller fire is performed in the foreground. This style can be helpful in larger groups where you have a contingent of performers that are new to fire spinning and less skilled. The main thing to remember in utilizing this style is that it should not look chaotic or renegade-ish.
- Please note that we frown on what we call "circle jerks". This is where you form a circle and rotate with the focus being on the front person for a short period of time, until they rotate to the next person who then does their solo. To us, this is a series of solos tied together and not technically group choreography.

# Exploring Choreography Styles: Motif & 16 Ways of Manipulation

**A motif is a single movement or a short movement phrase.**

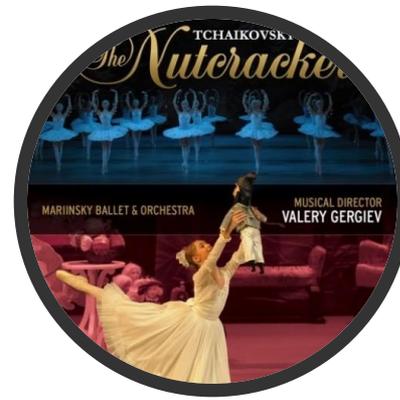
1. Repetition. Repeat exactly the same.
2. Retrograde. Perform it backward.
3. Inversion: upside-down
4. Size: condense/expand.
5. Tempo: fast/slow/stop.
6. Rhythm. variety and pattern of the beats are altered, not the speed
7. Quality. Eg: same movement quivery, drifting, with erratic tension, etc.
8. Instrumentation. Perform the movement with a different body part(s)
9. Force. gentle \ hard
10. Background Eg sit instead of stand
11. Staging. Difft position on stage
12. Embellishment. Add flourish
13. Change of Planes/Levels
14. Additive/Incorporative
15. Fragmentation.
16. Combination. Combine any of the above so that they happen at the same time.

Excerpt from *The Intimate Act of Choreography* by  
Lynne Anne Blom & L. Tarin Chaplin

<http://baa11thgradchoreography.blogspot.com/2008/09/motif-16-ways-of-manipulation.html>

# Part 4: Finding Inspiration

Seeking out things that inspire us can be as simple as watching a show or visiting the internet. Here are a few things we suggest to help get you headed in the right direction:



# Go See A Live Performance:

- If you haven't seen choreography up close and personal, you should! Seeing something live such as Cirque du Soleil, Stomp, and even the Ballet can be inspiring and completely change your perspective. A certain move, or transition can inspire an entire routine.



# Visit the Internet:

- YouTube and Vimeo can be a tremendous help when searching for ideas. Seek out diverse choreographies such as martial arts expositions, marching bands, step routines, cheerleading competitions, flash mob routines, and even the opening ceremonies from the Olympics to give you the spark you are looking for.

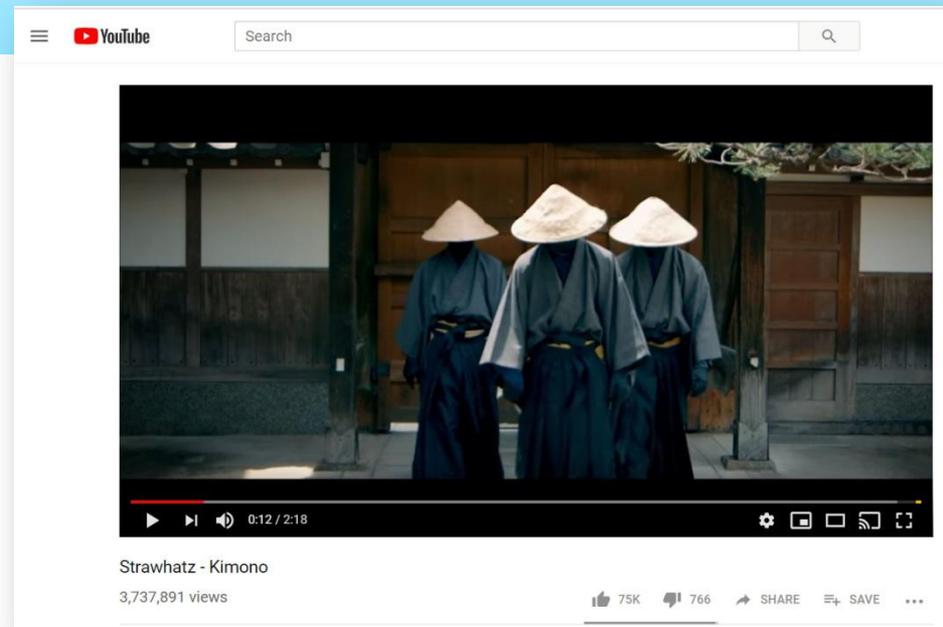


Photo Courtesy of YouTube  
Featuring the ***Strawhatz - Kimono***

# Watch Movies and TV:

If you're not watching "World of Dance" you should be! There are also some great movies out there which can help when you're feeling stuck as to where to start. From Dirty Dancing to Footloose, Moulin Rouge to Stomp the Yard, even oldies starring Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, these can all help with the inspiration you need to pull together a routine, sometimes even an entire show. Of course, when all else fails, there's always Walt Disney...



Examples of Dance Movies from  
**Netflix**

# Part 5:

## Adding the Element of Fire...

Whether you're a dance troupe trying to add fire, or a fire group trying to add dance, together can be both challenging and rewarding. So where does one begin?

- Determine the fire/dance skill level of your group members (newbie, professional, etc..)
- Compile a list of what fire tools they are proficient with, and whether or not they are comfortable learning new ones.
- Once you have a good overview of your group's skill sets, start grouping people into different fire tool routines.
- A large group will have the luxury of multiple groups/pods, while smaller groups may only have two to rotate off and off stage.



# What do we mean by Fire?

## Defining Tools & Large Fire Props...

Fire: The Fire Conclave requires that there be fire on stage at all times with no dead spots or dark spaces.

Fire Tools: Standard, liquid fuel dipped tools (aka: hoops, poi, staves, etc.) do not need any special approval.



Large Fire Props: We are always excited to see the new directions you are willing to go with your dances and prop development, but our main concerns about large fire props are rooted in safety. Large fire props need to be pre-approved by the FC Council. But before you start adding large props to your routine, ask yourself “does this prop advance, expand and add to the dance?” Large fire props are not an accessory, nor are they to be used in lieu of dance.

# Examples of Fire Choreography...

## Group Choreography ~ Themed



FireMingos 2021 Fire Conclave Audition Video ~ Virtual Burn  
Click on photo to watch video on YouTube  
or copy this link into a new tab/browser  
[https://youtu.be/nft\\_t35PxHo?t=37](https://youtu.be/nft_t35PxHo?t=37)

# Examples of Fire Choreography...

## The Duet

EMPIRE FIRE COLLECTIVE  
AUDITION VIDEO 2022

Empire Fire Collective - Audition Video 2022  
Time: 00:00 - 02:18

[https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/Empire\\_Fire%20Collective\\_2022-Duets.mp4](https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/Empire_Fire%20Collective_2022-Duets.mp4)

# Examples of Fire Choreography...

## Line Formations / Sync



PyroTex - Audition Video 2022

Time: 01:44 - 03:43

[https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/PyroTex\\_2022%20-%20Sync\\_and\\_Line\\_Formations.mp4](https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/PyroTex_2022%20-%20Sync_and_Line_Formations.mp4)

# Examples of Fire Choreography...

## Creativity



MXFX - Audition Video 2022

Time: 11:10 - 13:25

[https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/MxFx\\_2022-Creativity.mp4](https://fireconclave.org/2023/choreo/MxFx_2022-Creativity.mp4)

# Part 6:

## Building your show > Timeline

Staying on track to meet both your filming deadlines can be a difficult task! So for those of you who are new, or just need help with staying on target, here are some helpful time scheduling suggestions:

- March: Skill building time! Challenge every group to learn three or four new fire and/or dance moves. Seek out inspiration (online places like you-tube are great for this).
- April: Choreographing time. String those moves together and add formations and dance moves to them. Don't forget you will need to practice at least one transition between two routines for the May-Day video.
- May: Practice, tighten and perfect. Really sync and nail those marks. Work on stage presence and character development for filming.
- June: Lit run-throughs and video taping time!
- July: Continue lit run-throughs and practice, practice, practice so you are playa performance ready!



# Part 6:

## Building your show > Roles

There are many different ways to structure a choreographed routine, but no matter how you decide to do it, establishing certain key roles within your group will help things run smoother allowing you to accomplish more. Here are some of the key roles that we have found over the years to be essential:

- **Shin:** This is the person that makes all the decisions regarding choreography of the entire show, such as the theme or the overall look. They make sure progress is being made and all deadlines are being met.
- **Lead Choreographer:** This is typically the person with the most dance skill and/or artistic vision who works directly with the Shin. They oversee individual piece details and pull pieces together in order to make the show come to life.
- **Squad Captains / Team Leaders:** Individual pieces need a lead who works with the Choreographer to create their dance.
- **Fueling/Safety Lead:** Designs a safety plan tailored to the show.
- **Lead Costumer:** Creates overall look of the show.



# Part 6:

## Building your show > Practice & Development

One of the most important things to think about when structuring your practices is your process. As we stated previously, establishing certain key roles within your group will help things run smoother and allow you to manage your time more effectively. Delegating specific tasks to specific people really helps!

Here is one example of a process to give you an idea:

- During practice:
  - Team Leaders oversee and practice with their specific group.
  - The Lead Choreographer divides their time between each group helping them with movement, transitions, and blocking.
  - The Shin works with the Safety Leads watching each group and discussing how to best provide fueling, lighting and safety.
- At the end of each practice:
  - As you progress further into practices, you will need to pull the show together and practice as a full group. At the end of practices, it great to do a full runthrough with the Shin acting as the audience. This way you can work on transitions, and any other problems with flow that develop regarding choreography and the overall look, as well as check on each groups progress.
- In between practices:
  - You social media groups (such as FB) to give each group a place to chat about practices and costuming. Adding your Lead Costumer to each group is a great way to not waste time during practices to discuss these details!



# Part 7:

## Running an effective practice

### Prepare

Named Host \ Lead

Goal for the session

Agenda with timing

Named Assistant for Tech Support \ Admin etc.

### Inclusive Welcome

5 Minute activity, routine or ritual

Build community and connect to the work ahead.

State your goal and agenda for the session

Examples:

- Greet each person by name
- Round robin warm-up

### Engage

Activities with sequenced steps to help your group meet the goal for the session

Split the group so everyone is engaged.

Examples:

- Authentic movement partner work
- Small group choreo \ discussion

### Optimistic Closure

Support the importance of the work

Provide a sense of accomplishment forward-thinking.

Next steps for the group \ Homework

Examples:

- Round robin
- Something I learned today...
- I look forward to...

# Part 8:

## Running an effective practice > Sample Practice Agenda

### Other Tips

- 7pm - 7:15 Welcome (arrange the space, set up sound etc)
- 7:15 - 7:20 Review the plan for practice
- 7:20 - 7:30 Group Exercise
- 7:30 - 8 Groups build choreo
- 8:00 - 8:30 Groups present choreo to eachother for feedback
- 8:30 - 8:45 Full run of any pieces that might be ready
- 8:45 - 9:00 review, Announcements, Homework, Plan for next week
- !!!!YAY TEAM!!!!

# Part 8: The power of music

While there is no amplified music allowed in the Great Circle fire groups often use pre-recorded music to build their audition videos. Why?

- set the tone or emotion of the dance (ominous, ethereal, sassy etc)
- inspire dancers to move with energy and emotion
- help dancers remember key points in the choreography
- keep dancers synchronized with each other

Taking the music away... **this process requires time.** To successfully recreate your choreography in the Great Circle without music:

- dancers must learn and remember the counts without musical cues
- know where the punctuations or transitions are in the choreography
- convey the same energy and emotion

# Final Thoughts...

Question  
&  
Answers

# We Can't Wait To See What You Create...

## Thanks for Attending!

Brought to you by The Fire Conclave Council 2019  
Special Thanks to "World of Dance" which is featured  
throughout this presentation...

