

Playing with Space: the 4 Winds

When we make dances, we're playing with different aspects of space. The goal at the end of this activity is to help you create your own dances. We're going to be using a fun game called the 4 Winds to play with space.

- There are many aspects that make up "space." For this activity, we're going to be focusing on two aspects: **place** and **shape**.

Place: This can mean many different things. If you're making a dance on a stage, "place" can be defined as the stage itself. Some people make dances outside; for them, place is the outside area in which they are performing their dance. Look around you. For this activity, place is going to be the current room/location you are in. If you were to move yourself an inch to the right of where you currently are, you are changing your place. If you were to move yourself 3 feet to the left (if possible) and forward, you are changing your place. Change your place a few times!

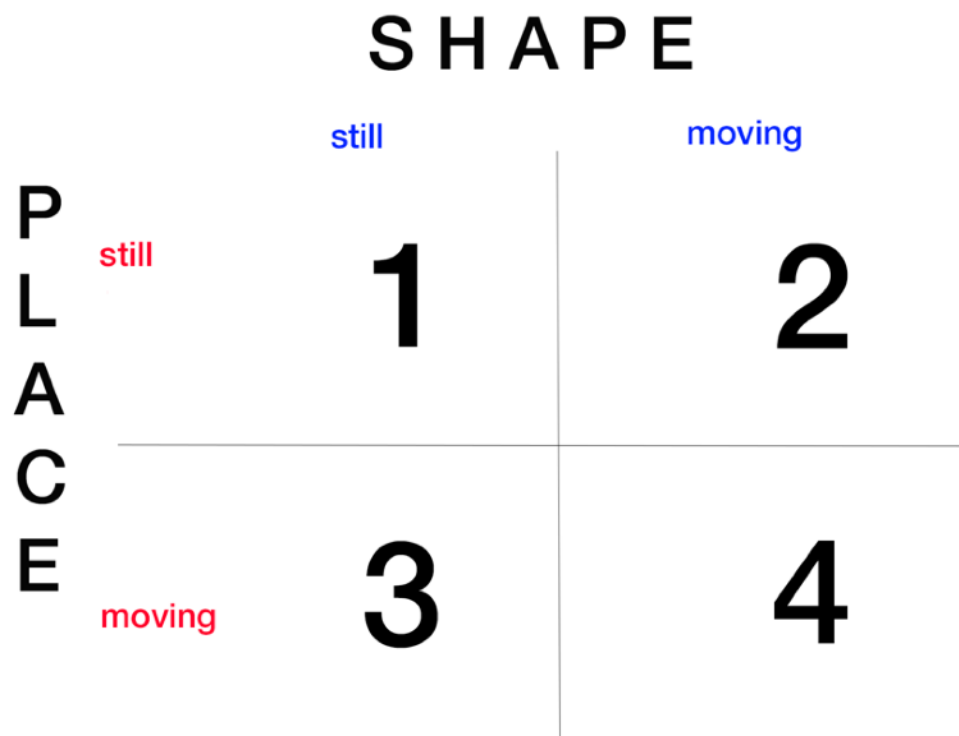
Shape: As you are reading this, probably in a sitting position. Your body is making a shape in space. If you were to stand up, you'd inadvertently change your shape. If you were to sit back down, you would be changing your shape again. If you were to try to make the letter "Y" with your arms, you would have to change your shape. Play with changing your shape a few times!

- Within dance, we can have two modes that shape and place can exist within: **still** and **moving**.

Still: This means you are not moving. You can think of this as static or frozen. Think of the game freeze tag. If someone tags you, you have to be perfectly still. Sometimes in performing, dancers have to hold a certain shape or a position for dramatic effect or to create a tableaux. As you're reading this, you are probably still. Try it!

Moving: The opposite of stillness: constant movement. When we think of "dancing," this is normally what we picture: people constantly moving. If you are reading this in stillness, try flailing your arms or walking around. You are moving!

Draw the following diagram in your notes:



- Notice the diagram has 4 numbered boxes. These are the 4 Winds, and they correspond to the aspects of space (place and shape) and the modes they exist in (still and moving).

Wind 1: This is *still place* and *still shape*. More than likely you're doing this right now: you're sitting in one spot (still place) and not moving very much (still shape) as you are reading this document. This is arguably the easiest one. Whenever you hear "**one**," you freeze.

Wind 2: This is *still place* and *moving shape*. This means you are stuck in one spot but your shape is changing. Think of a flower blowing in the wind or a sea anemones: they are stuck to their location, but they move around. Try it! When you hear "**two**," pretend part of your body is stuck in cement but the rest can move.

Wind 3: This is *moving place* and *still shape*. This one is tricky without help. Have you ever been to the mall and seen people on the escalator? Or have you ever been to the airport and seen those conveyor belts that move people? Often, the people on these machines aren't moving their bodies (still shape) but they are moving their location (moving place) across the room. If you are sitting in a computer chair with wheels, it's very easy to do number three. For the sake of this game you can make small movements, but try making them as little as possible to not change your shape too much. Feel free to make tiny movements with your feet (or however you need to make adjustments depending on what shape/place your body is in) whenever you hear the word "**three**."

Wind 4: This is *moving place* and *moving shape*. This is normally what we think of when we think of people dancing. Picture a couple waltzing around the ballroom in a circle, or a ballerina doing extravagant leaps and turns across a stage. These are examples of dancers constantly changing their shape as they constantly change their place. When you hear "**four**," be in constant movement. Be mindful of yourself and your surroundings!

Playing the game: Have a friend or family member randomly write down the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on a piece of paper ten times. Tell them to use all the numbers and to make sure they are in a random order (for example: 1, 4, 3, 2, 3, 1, 4, 1, 3, 2). They will be calling these out loud for the game. Let them know to give you a few seconds in each of the 4 Winds before they go on to the next number. Also, let them know to say "end" a few seconds after they call the last number. Find somewhere to begin your improvised performance and let your partner know you are ready to begin and have fun!

Tip 1: As soon as you hear a number, try your best to immediately commit to it. This might take a few tries. Sometimes it even feels silly. Try your best! However, nothing should ever hurt. If you get stuck in one of the modes and you are starting to feel pain or discomfort, it's okay to make a quick adjustment.

Tip 2: If you have a big enough space or if you are outside you could even do this with your eyes closed. Safety first! **Walk through the space and make sure there are no unstable or dangerous objects/obstacles where you are dancing.**

Tip 3: You can also try this with a group of people over zoom. Switch between being the caller and being a dancer to get the full experience!

Using the game to create non-improvised choreography: Write down the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 on a piece of paper ten times (or however many times you want, depending on how long you want your choreography to be) and write "end" after the last number. You could have a friend call these out or record your voice saying the numbers. As you do it, record yourself, and play it back. Now, try recreating it (and make adjustments if needed). Rehearse it as many times as you need and get yourself to be able to do it without the numbers being called out. Repetition is key! You now have an original piece of choreography that is no longer improvisational. Try teaching it to a friend!