

RUDOLPH LABAN

LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS
A Movement Methodology

An Introduction to Laban Movement Analysis for Actors: A Historical, Theoretical, and Practical Perspective

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Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a theoretical framework for observing qualitative and quantitative changes in movement, ranging from conversational hand gestures to complex actions. This system of movement analysis was developed by Rudolph Laban, an Austro-Hungarian dancer, choreographer, teacher, philosopher, theorist, and writer, whose life spanned from 1879 to 1958. He is still considered the most important movement theorist of the 1900s. He observed how the human being moves as its physical condition, environment, cultural issues, and communication with other bodies and the universe at large affects it physically and emotionally. He exploded the study of movement beyond the world of the professional dancer. He developed a process whereby expressive movement can belong to all of us, not just a gifted few moving in codified sequences for applause. In fact, the first line of his book *The Mastery of Movement* is "Man moves in order to satisfy a need."¹ This author can't think of a more universal actor-centered training concept than one based on "satisfying a need."

The Russian actor, director, teacher, theorist, and writer Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863–1938) conceived the best-known and universally taught acting technique in this country, the Method. Principally, Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, and Harold Clurman disseminated the Method, or Method acting, in the United States through the Group Theatre beginning in the 1930s. Method acting, a reaction against the artificial theatrical styles of the day, resulted in an acting technique based on "naturalism." Its premise is to work from the inner emotional life of the character toward the outer form as it is affected by the character's wants and needs. Later in his research, however, Stanislavsky became less enamored of trying to pinpoint the emotional life of the character based on "feelings" and more interested in developing the concept of the "physical action" that would potentially express the inner life of the character through behavior. He felt that concentrating solely on the emotional life was flawed due to its inherent unpredictability, making a repeatable performance elusive at best. Stanislavsky said, "Do not speak to me about feeling. We cannot set feeling, we can only set physical actions."² A "physical action" is any move that is calculated toward achieving a goal or satisfying a need. In Laban's vocabulary, this is the equivalent of elevating a move from functional toward expressive. For instance, an actor may decide his character will move from sitting to standing. If the actor determines that the purpose of this move is to intimidate the other character, then moving from sitting to standing is no longer just functional but an expressive move or "physical action." LMA is a process by which the actor can become so precise in his physical choices that he optimizes the possibility of revealing the story to the audience in ways unique to the character and the circumstances.

Because Laban observed that we satisfy our needs, whether functional or expressive, through movement, he, like Stanislavsky, was interested in the natural or organic movements of everyday life—that is to say, how the body moves in the real world accomplishing real tasks. Laban's expanded vision for movement training led him to observe man in relation to nature, in the workplace, during religious rituals, and

at play. He came to believe that embedded in the body's natural rhythms was the potential for expressive movement and that each individual had a *right* to opportunities to explore this potential. Consequently, in spite of Laban's profound contribution to German Expressionist dance, working with LMA's principles and concepts is not about developing a rarified system of movement but is an inclusive celebration of the human movement potential embracing all body types, physical conditions, and cultures.

THE BIRTH OF BESS: BODY, EFFORT, SHAPE, AND SPACE

Laban's genius brought into view for us the underlying principles that support the concepts of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space (BESS). Each of these can be perceived as a container for our authentic movement. In this context, I am using the word "container" to mean a flexible holder of goods. A flexible container is an important part of this metaphor, because there is nothing fixed or rigid about exploring BESS. Body, Effort, Shape, and Space interact and play upon one another while maintaining the separateness of individual containers, thus providing us with clear and distinct ways to observe and experience movement. The Body is the container for our breath connection, alignment, flexibility, strength, stamina, and balance. Effort contains our impulses to move based on our attitudes toward the Effort Factors: Time, Weight, Space, and Flow. Shape contains how these attitudes are articulated through the Body. Space is the container for our environment, which includes architecture, objects, and people, not to mention our universe. The component parts of BESS interact with one another in the following ways:

- Shape is dependent on the Body in order to be responsive to inner and outer stimuli, allowing the full expression of an inner attitude to manifest.
- Space acts on the Body, influencing our inner attitudes and resulting in an Effort Action.
- The Body, following the impulse of our Effort Action, influences Space through Shape.

Around and around these concepts or containers go, turning in on each other, forming a complex interrelationship that begins with the impulse to move. Being responsive to the impulse, whether it initiates in Body, Effort, Shape, or Space, is an integral part of the actors' craft, and LMA provides a practical, nonjudgmental process for actors to honor their authentic responses to the world and all it contains.

Effort: The Storyteller

The concept Effort refers to our inner attitude toward the Factors of Weight, Space, Time, and Flow, and this attitude in turn creates behavior. Each of these Factors can be expressed along a continuum, book-ended by two Effort Elements:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight = <i>strong</i> ↔ <i>light</i> • Time = <i>urgent</i> ↔ <i>sustained</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space = <i>direct</i> ↔ <i>indirect</i> • Flow = <i>bound</i> ↔ <i>free</i> |
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It is the range of exertion between the extremes of the two Effort Elements where qualitative changes in movement take place. Naturally, because we are complex creatures, most of our physical actions are a combination of Elements that are overlapping and sequencing with each other. But the question LMA asks is, "What in this action is *most* salient? Is it the Time, Weight, Space, or Flow? Or is it a combination of several in equal proportions? If not in equal proportions, which Factors are secondary and tertiary?" If

Table 1: Effort

FACTORS: weight / space / time / flow

ELEMENTS: Light ↔ Strong / Indirect ↔ Direct / Urgent ↔ Sustained / Bound ↔ Free

- Light: Indulgent/expansive intention in weight. Delicate or fine touch.
- Strong: Fighting/condensing intention in weight. Having an impact.
- Indirect: Indulgent/expansive attention in space. Flexible, multi-overlapping foci.
- Direct: Fighting/condensing attention in space. To the point, aimed, blunt.
- Urgent: Fighting/condensing decision in time. Spark-like, excited, rushed.
- Sustained: Indulgent/expansive decision in time. Leisurely, prolonged, endless.
- Bound: Fighting/condensing emotions or continuity. Careful, restrained, controlled.
- Free: Indulgent/expansive emotions or continuity. Abandoned, uncontrolled, unlimited.

STATES: A combination of equal parts of two Effort Elements

- Weight + Flow = *Dream State*: Light/Free, Strong/Bound, Light/Bound, Strong/Bound
- Space + Time = *Awake State*: Indirect/Sustained, Direct/ Sustained, Indirect/Urgent, Direct/Urgent
- Time + Weight = *Rhythm State*: Sustained/Light, Sustained/Strong, Urgent/Light, Urgent/Strong
- Space + Flow = *Remote State*: Indirect/Free, Indirect/Bound, Direct/Free, Direct/Bound
- Time + Flow = *Mobile State*: Urgent/Free, Urgent/Bound, Sustained/Free, Sustained/Bound
- Weight + Space = *Stable State*: Strong/Direct, Strong/Indirect, Light/Direct, Light/Indirect

DRIVES: A combination of equal parts of three Effort Elements

ACTION DRIVES: Equal parts of Space, Weight, and Time. *Only Action Drives are provided with individual names for each combination:*

- Strong Weight + Direct Space + Urgent Time = *Punch Action Drive*
- Light Weight + Direct Space + Urgent Time = *Dab Action Drive*
- Strong Weight + Indirect Space + Urgent Time = *Slash Action Drive*
- Light Weight + Indirect Space + Urgent Time = *Flick Action Drive*
- Strong Weight + Direct Space + Sustained Time = *Press Action Drive*
- Light Weight + Direct Space + Sustained Time = *Glide Action Drive*
- Strong Weight + Indirect Space + Sustained Time = *Wring Action Drive*
- Light Weight + Indirect Space + Sustained Time = *Float Action Drive*

TRANSFORMATION DRIVES:

- *Passion Drive* = Weight + Time + Flow
- *Vision Drive* = Time + Space + Flow
- *Spell Drive* = Weight + Space + Flow

we combine two Effort Factors in equal proportions, we are moving in a State. If we combine three, we are moving in either an Action Drive or a Transformation Drive (see table 1). The Action Drives are the aspect of LMA that actors are commonly exposed to, because they find them immediately accessible toward promoting the physical manifestation of their actions and objectives.³

Because the material is richer and far more varied than the Action Drives suggest, I have chosen to use as examples an actor's evolution toward two Transformation Drives. The difference between the two is that an Action Drive combines the Factors of Weight, Space, and Time while a Transformation Drive substitutes Flow for one of the other Factors.

In the following examples, I will be evolving the movement choices from emphasizing a single Effort Element to emphasizing two Effort Elements (State) to climaxing with three Effort Elements (Drive).

Example 1: In this scene, the character has ten minutes to lounge in a bathtub. Consequently, the actor's attitude toward Time is likely to be *sustained*. Example 2: In this scene, the character has ten minutes to find her lost keys and get thirty blocks downtown; therefore, the actor's attitude toward the same ten minutes is likely to be *quick* or *urgent*. The given circumstances⁴ and the objectives are completely different for the same amount of time. Let's add to Example 1, that during the bath, the character is listening to some wonderful music, which influences the actor to wash herself on the Free Flow side of the Flow Factor continuum. If I add that the character has a maid to clean up, then the actor may choose the extreme of Free Flow, most likely resulting in a very wet floor. The actor is now using two Effort Factors, Time and Flow, which constitutes in LMA terms the Mobile State. If the actor emphasizes a third Element, bringing it into equal rather than secondary or tertiary play with Time and Flow, she will enter a Drive. Let's say that the character is described as "bathing as if it were a sensual experience," then the actor would choose to heighten the Weight Factor and perhaps specifically the Element of Light Weight. Balancing equally the importance of Time, Flow, and Weight Factors, the actor will enter what LMA calls a Passion Transformation Drive. The equal use of three Factors simultaneously is reserved for the "extraordinary" moments in life, when the stakes are rising (such as climaxing a sensuous bathing experience), while single Effort Elements and States describe most other ordinary, daily-living activities.

To develop Example 2 further, let's say the character needs to find her keys and get downtown in ten minutes, but she has also hurt her back. Consequently, the actor's relationship with Flow must be *bound* to give the appearance to the audience of trying to prevent further injury, while maintaining an *urgent* relationship with Time. The actor is again in a Mobile State, but in this example, she is emphasizing Urgent Time and Bound Flow, which are at the other end of the spectrum from Sustained Time and Free Flow described in Example 1. To let this evolve into a Drive, the actor needs to bring one more Factor into prominence. Since this character is looking for her keys, the environment is likely to be important to this event, so the actor begins to value Space as much as she is valuing Time and Flow. Taking in the whole room at once and then pinpointing where the keys might be will express her relationship to the Space Factor. The actor is moving along the Space Factor continuum between the Effort Elements of *indirect* and *direct*, while simultaneously having an *urgent* attitude toward Time and a *bound* attitude toward Flow. This combination of equal parts of Time-Flow-Space is called a Vision Transformation Drive and, as with the Passion Drive, gives the appearance to the audience that the stakes within the scene are very high or extraordinary.

In each example, the Effort Elements are interacting either simultaneously, sequentially, or are overlapping each other, influencing the body to move in and out of single Effort Elements, States, and Drives, creating a rich and varied movement sequence around bathing or hunting for the keys. What is important

to the actor is not whether she can name a specific State or Drive, but that she understands the *specificity* that can be produced by physicalizing what is most salient in a given beat.⁵

Determining how to physically express the scene requires a certain amount of analysis. LMA provides a lens through which the actor can look at a scene and, through exploring BESS, make succinct, repeatable physical choices that are calculated toward achieving an objective and reflect the character's emotional state. Consequently, LMA, like any valuable movement process, stimulates the imagination and promotes moving on impulse while going a step further and addressing how to craft a performance.

Choosing which Effort Elements may be predominant at any given time is based on the character's physical body, the environment, given circumstances, needs, and objectives, thus helping the actor become physically articulate to the audience. Likewise, Effort can also be an interesting leaping-off point for developing character. For instance, an actor may determine her character, in relation to the other characters in the play, tends toward a very *direct* relationship to the environment and the objects or people in it. If the actor pursues this, she will discover something about who the character is and will be prompted to ask questions like, "When in the play does my character begin to move toward *indirectness*? What does this cost her? What makes her begin to change?" It is also possible to develop a character from the inspiration of a Drive or a State. For instance, an actor playing a king may experiment with *sustainment*, *directness*, and *lightness* (Glide Action Drive) as the baseline for his movement. Once this "baseline" is established, the actor can begin to find out when these Elements are not in equal play as well as when the character begins to bring in moments of Urgent Time or Indirect Space or Strong Weight. In most plays, the character is being forced, or coaxed away, from his baseline or "affinities," and that is why we watch. What is important to remember is that all these Elements are manifesting or being observed in relation to something or someone else.

The effective use of LMA for actors requires that the actors learn who they are as movers before embarking on character development. It is within LMA's scope to educate actors to their affinities and give clarity to where they fit into this puzzle of the moving man. It also gives actors the means to experiment with diversifying and expanding their movement potential by bringing the Elements that are more fragile or elusive, sometimes called "disaffinities," into the foreground. In fact, LMA is such a dynamic means toward personality assessment and self-awareness that Effort Elements and Factors are studied in many dance therapy programs. Its rich information can give the therapist insights to her patients' characters and problems as well as a means to help them, through movement, to literally "change their minds." In addition to self-awareness and discovery, LMA for actors is meant to stimulate the actor's imagination, make room for metaphor, and connect actors to their impulses. For instance, even a simple arbitrary choice to move with an emphasis on Strong Weight will begin to affect the actor and invite vivid imagery as the dance among Body, Effort, Space, and Shape takes form.

Shape: The Link between Effort and Space

Laban began with the concepts Body, Space, and Effort. Shape was developed as a concept when Laban worked with Warren Lamb in England on aptitude assessments for British Industries during World War II. Shape refers to the body's "plasticity," which allows it to adapt to Space and access it. Another way to think of Shape is as the link between Effort and Space. Bridging the content of our inner world to the outer environment, Shape adapts our body to the architecture, objects, and people. Laban observed that the Body tends toward four basic shapes: Ball-like, Pin-like, Wall-like, or Screw-like. These shapes can apply to a single body part, several parts, or the whole body, making this concept a wonderful leaping-off

point for character exploration. For instance, an actor who is experimenting with Shape may determine that a Ball-like Shape best expresses his character's tendency to live in a world closed around himself, letting very little in or out; or that a Pin-like Shape emphasizes that his character values clear thinking. Depending on the context, a Pin-like Shape, with its severe verticality, could also suggest superiority, narrow-mindedness, or even a military school background. *Context* is an essential ingredient for exploration, because while there is a range of "personality traits" particular to each Shape, it is only in direct relation to the context of the play and the other characters that the implications are made clear and clichés or assumptions can be avoided.

In addition to Ball-, Wall-, Pin-, and Screw-like Shapes, there is a more sophisticated aspect to Shape called Modes of Shape Change, and they also provide rich fodder for imaginative explorations. Shape Flow is a term that refers to the body's communication with itself. In this Mode of Shape Change, the Body is relating toward and away from itself, with the breath as the baseline. Shape Flow determines if the Body will *Lengthen* or *Shorten*, *Narrow* or *Widen*, *Hollow* or *Bulge*. The Directional Movement Mode of Shape Change describes the Body relating to the Space through either *Spoke-like* or *Arc-like* moves. Directional Movement happens when the Body's goal is to form a "bridge" between itself and the people or objects in the environment. The Shape of this "bridge" determines if the Body will move *Upward* or *Downward*, *Side Across* or *Sideward Out*, *Backward* or *Forward*. Directional Movement, while usually accomplished with a limb or combination of limbs, can also include the whole body. The Mode of Shape Change called Shaping or Carving describes how the Body adapts to the environment by moving between an inner-outer orientation to itself and the Space. Initiating in the trunk, it is usually expressed through the whole body by molding or contouring the body around the objects and people in the environment. It is also the most complex of the Modes of Shape Change, as it forms a three-dimensional relationship between self and the outside world as opposed to the two-dimensional relationship formed in Directional Movement. During the Shaping or Carving Mode, the Body may *Rise* or *Sink*, *Enclose* or *Spread*, *Retreat* or *Advance*.

There is a direct correlation between human developmental patterns from birth to early childhood and the Modes of Shape Change. The infant is all about the "self" and lives in Shape Flow patterns. The baby's first gestures attempt to bridge into the environment, reaching for the toy or Mommy's finger, mak-

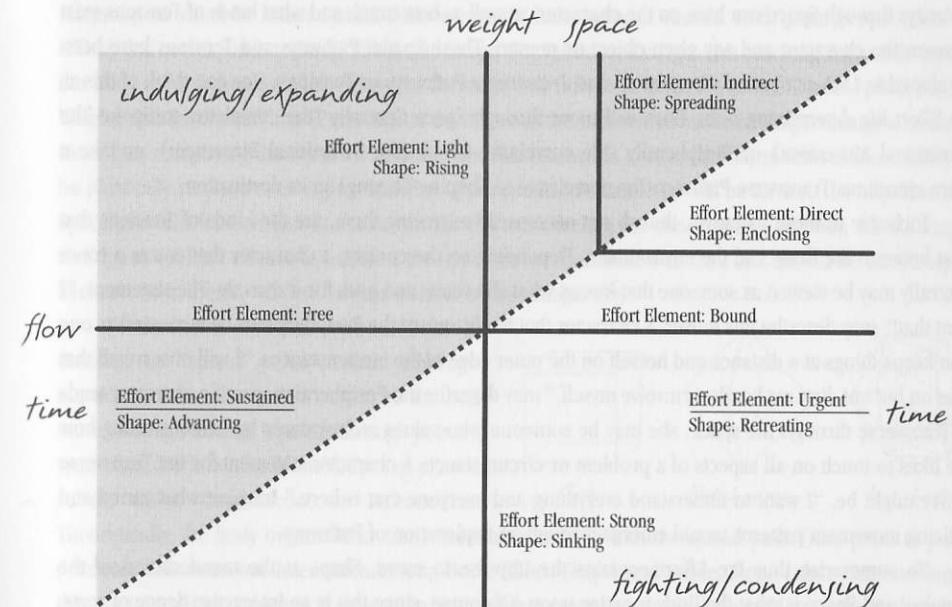
Table 2: Modes of Shape Change and Developmental Patterns

SHAPE FLOW: It is all about the self with the breath as the base-line. Infants are engaged in this self-to-self communication. Shape Flow manifests as: *Lengthening/Shortening*, *Narrowing/Widening*, *Hollowing/Bulging*.

DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT: Two-dimensional goal-oriented movement that forms a bridge between the self and the environment as in a young child reaching for the bottle. Spoke-like/Arc-like Directional Movement includes: *Upward/Downward*, *Side Across/Side Open*, *Backward/Forward*.

SHAPING/CARVING: Three-dimensional movement that creates an inter-active relationship with the outside world. The most complex of the Modes of Shape Change and therefore the most sophisticated relationship a child develops in regards to Shape because it is "process-oriented" rather than "self-" or "goal-oriented." Shaping/Carving includes: *Rising/Sinking*, *Enclosing/Spreading*, *Retreating/Advancing*.

Effort Graph with Shape Affinities



ing Spoke-like or Arc-like Directional Movement. As the baby learns to adapt and develop an interactive relationship between himself and the environment, he enters Shaping or Carving Mode (see table 2).

Shape can be potent material for discovering a character's communication style, based on how the actor imagines the character's early childhood development. For instance, a character that gestures predominantly with Directional Movement has a very different background and agenda from a character that gestures mostly from Shaping/Carving. A character that uses predominantly Directional Movement might be aggressive, inflexible, ready to fend off an attack, grabbing for all she can get, or functioning as an authority figure. Conversely, a character who gestures more with Shaping/Carving may value taking in all points of view, thus emphasizing the character's adaptability and cooperative nature. Or perhaps the character is someone who prefers to avoid conflict at all costs; in that context, the nonthreatening aspects of the Shaping/Carving Mode would come into focus. An actor who is emphasizing Shape-Flow may discover that she is constantly touching her own body, adjusting her jacket, hair, and makeup with little awareness of the other characters or outside world. If this becomes a character trait, the audience is likely to experience a character that is self-absorbed, only willing to satisfy her own needs. Again, it is within the *context* of the whole that the actor and audience will understand the implications of making any of these choices a signature for the character. As with Effort, exploring the impact of Shape on character can explode the actor's work as she discovers when, where, why, and how a character moves away from or toward her Shape preferences. Additionally, as with Effort, if an actor explores moving while emphasizing one of the Modes of Shape Change, usually in a short time, her imagination will catch fire, and imagery and metaphor will abound.

Shape is a powerful container for the actor's Effort life and is the outer reflection of her emotions. Shape is dependent on the Body to be able to express the character's Effort life and is influenced by the

Space. There is an aspect of Shape that interacts very closely with Space called Spatial Pathways and Tensions. The awareness of the interaction of Effort and Space with Shape illuminates the effect different Pathways through Space can have on the character, as well as how much and what kinds of Tensions exist between the character and any given object or person. These Spatial Pathways and Tensions have been developed in LMA as *Central*, *Peripheral*, and *Transverse* Pathways or Tensions. One can think of this as the Effort life determining if the Body will move through Space Centrally (the correlative to Spoke-like Directional Movement) or Peripherally (the correlative to Arc-like Directional Movement), or take a more circuitous Transverse Pathway (the correlative to Shaping/Carving) to its destination.

Inclusive in these Pathways, though not necessarily mirroring them, are the kinds of Tensions that exist between the Body and the environment. Depending on the context, a character that enters a room Centrally may be viewed as someone that knows what she wants and goes for it directly. The statement, "I want that!" may describe this mover. A character that tends toward the Periphery may be witnessed as one who keeps things at a distance and herself on the outer edge of the circumstances. "I will observe all that goes on but not dirty my hands or involve myself," may describe the Peripheral mover. If a character tends to Transverse through the space, she may be someone who values inclusiveness by demonstrating how she likes to touch on all aspects of a problem or circumstance. A character statement for the Transverse mover might be, "I want to understand everything and everyone that is here." Imagine what varied and enticing movement patterns would emerge through an exploration of Pathways.

To summarize thus far, Effort contains the impulse to move, Shape is the manifestation of the impulse, and Space is what the Body is acting upon. Of course, since this is an interactive dance of sorts, it is also important to note that, likewise, Space is acting upon the Body, which in turn affects the Effort life and, therefore, the Shape that manifests.

Space Harmony: The First and Last Frontier

Laban's concept of Space is perhaps the most elusive and stimulating of the four concepts. I have thus far described Space by referring to the architecture and what is contained within it and with the description of Spatial Pathways and Tensions.

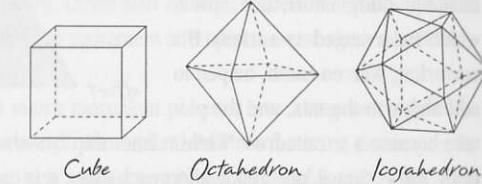
Laban, due to his studies of astronomy and the crystalline forms, began to formulate that there is no such thing as "empty" space. He believed that Space has a life, and that life is movement. The Spatial Pathways act on the Body, and the Body acts on them, influenced by the various Spatial Tensions. Additionally, he identified "pulls" in Space that one can "ride" on, like a wave in the ocean. It is perhaps not an accident that we sometimes say that we are "pulled" toward a certain place, or "pulled" toward a certain person. It is not uncommon to hear acting coaches say to an actor, "Take a moment and feel where you are being pulled. Then move there." LMA is a study in learning to feel and respond on impulse to the pulls between our inner architecture (inside the body) and the outer architecture, which may be a stage set, a room in our home, a field, a forest, or even the universe itself.

In the initial stages of rehearsal, actors are sometimes asked to improvise their blocking.⁶ The hope is that the play will block itself "organically," through the actors' sensitivity to the needs of their character and knowledge of the environment. It is believed that movement derived from such a process will read more truthfully than if the moves are applied to the actor by the director. Sometimes this works; often it doesn't—but regardless of how the blocking is arrived at, the actor must be able to "fill it" with intention, elevating the "moves" to "physical action." The actor needs to understand the qualitative difference to her character toward achieving her objective if she delivers her speech walking downstage or upstage,

or if she is placed high above the stage or sitting on the stage. Even stage right and stage left produce qualitative and functional differences. These concerns are addressed through Laban's theories on Space Harmony, in which he likens Spatial Pulls to musical harmonies or chords. Each point in Space has an affinity that corresponds to Body, Effort, and Shape. For instance, the right arm reaching diagonally across the body toward the down left corner of the stage will influence the actor to use Direct Space, Strong Weight, and Sustained Time (Press Action Drive), with the Directional Mode of Shape Change of *Downward* thus completing the "chord." An actor who has learned to access such harmonies is more likely to be physically responsive to improvisational opportunities, because she will be alive to the impulses that Space provides for her. This is not to say that the actor feeling the chord struck by Body, Effort, Shape, and Space couldn't choose to manifest the opposites or disaffinities. In fact, this should be encouraged, because, as in music, we don't always want to be in a major key.

To develop a practical application for his theories on "spatial pulls," Laban developed movement sequences called Scales. As the body moves through a Scale, it passes through points in space that describe one of the following platonic solids: Cube, Octahedron, or Icosahedron.

Theoretically, the body organization that results from moving with the spatial pulls from point to point produces a harmonious interaction among Body, Effort, Shape, and Space. Since Laban was convinced that spatial pulls are inherent in nature, he believed that practicing the Scales would unite the body, mind, and spirit to become harmonious with the universe. Whether or not the actor becomes "one with nature," learning and practicing the Laban Scales has much the same practical benefit that practicing the musical scales has for the musician. Laban's Scales serve as a tune-up for the actor's instrument, developing flexibility, balance, strength, and stamina, while warming it up to be responsive to the interplay of Body, Effort, Shape and Space.



Cube Octahedron Icosahedron

Body: The Doorway to Expressiveness

To be expressive, the actor's body must be physically capable of reflecting or making actual in movement all that has been described in this chapter. This will not be possible unless the actor develops his breath support, alignment, stamina, balance, and flexibility, which requires Body-level training. During Laban's era in Germany and England, the chief means for Body training through LMA was dance. In the United States, however, the Body-level work that is taught along with LMA is usually based on Bartenieff Fundamentals. The Fundamentals are a body reeducation system that encompasses the functional aspects of movement, based on the principles of Breath Support, Dynamic Alignment, Core Support, Spatial Intent, Weight Shift, Initiation and Sequencing, Rotary Factor, Effort Motivation, and Developmental Patterning.

Irmgard Bartenieff, a student of Laban's in Germany, fled to the United States with the advent of World War II. Unable to get work as a dancer, she reeducated herself as a physical therapist and became a pioneer in the development of dance therapy. While at the Rusk Institute during the 1940s, her development of the Fundamentals made a significant contribution to helping polio victims regain mobility.

Bartenieff originated the LMA professional training program in the United States in 1965 and founded the Laban/Bartenieff Institute for Movement Studies in 1978. Because she was Laban's student, Bartenieff Fundamentals consciously incorporate Laban's themes, making it a perfect marriage.

While the cornerstone of Body training among CMAs (Certified Movement Analysts) trained in LMA in the United States are the Bartenieff Fundamentals, the training does not use this system exclusively, and it certainly does not end with the Fundamentals. What else is included in the Body-level training is dependent on the background of the certified LMA practitioner-teacher, as well as the goals, interests, and physical limitations of the actor. Consequently, the training may also include dance, gymnastics, martial arts, or yoga. It may also incorporate other body reeducation systems, such as Pilates, Feldenkrais Method®, or the Alexander Technique, to name a few possibilities.

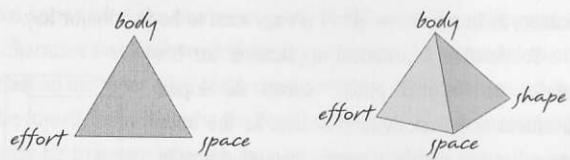
BESS-R: ACKNOWLEDGING RELATIONSHIP

Initially, Laban's concepts only included Body, Effort, and Space, which he arranged as a trinity. His coworker, Warren Lamb, helped to add Shape to the mix, and the picture became a tetrahedron. While relationship has always been the lens through which we observe how Body, Effort, Space, and Shape affect each other, it is only in recent years that Relationship has been given formal acknowledgment. As every actor knows, telling a story is dependent upon creating relationships. The relationship of the actor to the character, to the events of the play, the environment, the other characters, and the audience defines the theatrical experience and is why acting is often defined as "reacting." LMA's acknowledgement of Relationship as an equal partner with Body, Effort, Shape, and Space underscores the symbiosis between LMA and acting. In each practical example previously cited, there was a specific Relationship drawn among the Body, Effort, Shape, and Space Factors, which made the story visible to the reader. Likewise, it is the actor's ability to forge these Relationships and clearly articulate them in his body that reveals the story to the audience.

LABAN'S LEGACY

Relationship exploded Laban's stable tetrahedron, yet it is the very plasticity of this analysis system that has allowed it to survive and grow to accommodate our changing world and many professional needs. The LMA material has been developed and adapted to support psychologists, architects, occupational and physical therapists, artists, and athletes. I believe it is not hard to see how its rich material can be adapted to support the actor as well. Given the theoretical complicity between the concepts of LMA and the "naturalism" that is so highly valued in actor-training programs, it is curious that Laban Movement Analysis has not become the gold standard for movement training in colleges and conservatories, the way that Stanislavsky's Method has for acting. I believe there are several reasons for this.

The first reason, and perhaps the most surprising, is, in spite of the deeply practical nature of LMA, Laban has also been linked to the occult, which was born of his interest in observing the relationship between movement and the rituals of many eastern and western religions. In his adolescence, he was introduced to the Sufi dervish dances and their powerful trancelike states. This awakened in him an unshakable belief in the magical potential of movement. In his adult life, his relationship with the occult is marked by his association with the Rosicrucians, who practiced a life based on the mystical properties of art and idealism. Additionally, he established a "movement commune" at Ascona, Switzerland



(1911–1914), which gave him a place to explore this mystical potential of movement with a group of students while living a free, bucolic life. His Rosicrucian studies and the experiments that began at Ascona, together with his strong mathematical and architectural background, were finally synthesized in his theories of Space Harmony, which he began writing about in 1939, and were culminated in his book, *The Language of Movement* (Choreutics), published posthumously in 1966.

Sensitizing the body to be receptive to inner and outer forces of energy leading to psychic experiences is a presence in all his work, but also present was an effort to balance the practical with the spiritual. His insatiable curiosity, rich imagination, and connection to nature made him an ideal artistic explorer to open new frontiers in movement theory and application. Truly a man of his times, he was steeped in a classical education of language, science, and math. Before becoming a dancer, he did advanced studies in art and architecture and subsequently became deeply influenced by Hermann Oberst, Wassily Kandinsky, and the music of Arnold Schoenberg. Laban also admired Isadora Duncan and Emile Jaques-Dalcroze for their groundbreaking approaches to movement and used their work as a backdrop to examine his own ideas.

Laban's ideas were fueled by a concern that man's movement potential was being seriously compromised by industrialism, which was moving man away from the land and into factories. Consequently, Laban believed that movement for *all* would be man's salvation from the quotidian of factory work. This belief began his legacy of choreographing movement choirs with laborers of all types. In the instance of the Craft Guilds of Vienna in 1927, he choreographed 10,000 performers, of whom only 2,700 were dancers. As Laban's fame grew during the 1930s, he became the head choreographer at Berlin State Opera and choreographed for Siegfried Wagner (Richard's son) at the Bayreuth Festival and for Richard Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*. Laban was also a consummate teacher and mentor. Among his famous students were Suzanne Perrottet (prior to her work with Laban, she was the star pupil of Dalcroze), Mary Wigman, Dussia Bereska, and Kurt Jooss. His name spread as his disciples began to open Laban schools in Switzerland, Italy, France, Poland, and England. Even so, there were many that looked askance at his free-love lifestyle and cultish ways.

The second reason that Laban training remained underappreciated in the United States for so long is his "German connection." I have already mentioned Wagner, for whom he had great admiration. In many ways, Laban was apolitical, and survival was always uppermost. He lived from hand to mouth most of the time, often in ill health, and suffered from frequent bouts of depression. He juggled supporting a wife, children, lovers and their children, Laban schools, and a dance company, while lecturing at conferences and writing on his theories. So, when Hitler, whose regime was impressed with Laban's charisma and reputation in German dance, asked him to be director of German Dance Stage, he opted to stay in Germany, rather than flee as Kurt Jooss, Bartenieff, and most of his company did. The regime soon turned on him, however, when in 1936, he prepared a movement choir of one thousand participants for the opening of the Olympic games. Dr. Goebbels viewed the dress rehearsal and banned the performance, accusing Laban of celebrating the individual.

With increasing pressure on him to toe the party line, Laban finally fled Germany in 1937, arriving in England, sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Elmhurst of Dartington Hall, where Kurt Jooss and most of the Essen Laban School had taken refuge. After World War II, the public's rejection of anything German helped stall the spread of LMA, and within Germany, Hitler's regime had completely devastated the arts for generations to come, making any timely recuperation to their former groundbreaking glory in dance and art impossible.

The third reason is that in dance-training programs throughout the world, Laban may be best known for Labanotation, which is a detailed system of recording movement of the whole body as a three-dimensional instrument that puts it in relation to other moving bodies and the space surrounding them. An experienced notator can record not only every move the body makes right down to minute moves of the little finger, but the emotional content of the movement as well. Only for a small segment of the population would it not be a laborious task to learn all the symbols and rules, and in any event, notation would not be a useful tool for the actor. When Laban's name or LMA is mentioned, it is often Labanotation that the individual is familiar with, and this is not a sensible reason to include LMA in an actor's training.

The fourth reason, and perhaps the most potent today, is that Laban had no intention of devoting his time and talents to the development of any one profession or art. Intermittently throughout his career, he worked specifically with actors, but he also worked with many other professionals. He used dance and dancing as a way of exploring and developing his theories, but it was never intended to be just for dancers either. The scope of Laban's ninety-seven published books and articles is indeed daunting, but even more impressive is the scope and breadth of the resulting applications that this author believes were born out of Laban's commitment to education. He poured his energies into educating anyone who would listen: dancers, actors, occupational and physical therapists, grade school teachers, psychotherapists, blue-collar workers, architects, athletes, and painters.

Consequently, how the material was used became the sole domain of his students, and Laban openly encouraged and supported this diversity. It has always been up to the practitioner to develop her relationship to the material and make it applicable to her needs. This has resulted in many exciting uses of the material in actor-training programs as well. Since there is no prescribed way to present the material to actors, the movement coach is unencumbered to develop it, experiment with it, and adapt it to her students' needs. This is both its strength and weakness with regard to it being widely used in training programs. While worldwide, there are pockets of CMAs meeting to develop LMA tools specifically for actors, there is not a history of tried-and-true exercises for actors as there are in acting, voice, speech, and other movement processes. Consequently, the danger is that the theoretical base will remain just that, an idea of what Effort is, or Shape, or Space.

For beginning actors in particular, LMA movement coaches must temper the analytical aspects of the material and cull out the means by which their students will interact with the material on a visceral level, therefore supporting actors in responding moment to moment to their impulses and igniting their imaginations.

Finally, it is interesting to note that it is virtually impossible to spot a Laban-trained actor, because the goal is not to achieve (because it doesn't exist) a "Laban style." This inherent universality is one of its greatest strengths, because it makes LMA not an end in itself but a support for actors to know who they are as movers, expand their movement potential, and become their most expressive and imaginative selves.

NOTES

1. Laban, Rudolph. *The Mastery of Movement*. Boston, Mass.: Plays, Inc., 1972, 1.
2. Toporkov, Vasily. *Stanislavsky in Rehearsal: The Final Years*. Christine Edwards, trans. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1979, 160.
3. Terms credited to Konstantin Stanislavsky. "Action" describes what the characters are doing to achieve what they want, which is their "objective."
4. A term credited to Stanislavsky to describe the situations in which a character finds him- or herself.
5. A term credited to Stanislavsky to describe a single unit of action of indeterminate length within a phrase of a scene.
6. A term that refers to when and where the actor will move on the stage.