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The Universality of Laban Movement Analysis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Abstract

Rudolf Laban: Father of Modern dance, revolutionary within the field of movement studies, and inventor of Labanotation. His work is so universal it has been applied to dancing, acting, industrial work, and movement therapy. This thesis will specifically discuss the use of his system as it applies to actor training. However before that it is important for me as a teacher to understand the potential ideologies and historical implications that are associated with a theory or body of work before passing it on, lest we unknowingly propagate a system of thought that is associated with destructive ideologies. This becomes particularly significant in the case of Laban. From 1933 until 1936 Laban's movement analysis and choreographic skills were an integral and leading part of the Reich Chamber of Culture's division of dance. Many of his contemporaries labeled him a Nazi, and many scholars today struggle to extricate his work from the Nazi stain. If his work, as his contemporaries claimed, was fascist in nature and his work was uniquely expressive of the German volk, as Goebbels had instructed him it should be, then we as teachers have a moral obligation to be judicious in our applications of his system. Therefore in this thesis I will first examine the time Laban spent working for the Third Reich, and only after concluding that his actual system of understanding movement had little to do with the politics during that time of his life will I then go on to discuss how Laban Movement Analysis can be an integral tool for actor training, and discuss the ideologies that I, as a teacher, bring to the table.

Chapter 1 LMA and Me

I was first introduced to Laban's work during my acting and movement training at the University of Florida. I have been and still am a gymnast, coach, dancer, actor, actor combatant, aerialist, teacher, climber of trees, lover of physical challenges, and choreographer. So I was thrilled to find a singular body of work that transcended the boundaries between artist, athlete, and teacher. Primarily I was introduced to the work as a tool for acting, although it wasn't long before I began using it in every movement discipline. It is a language that once spoken illuminates any physical discipline, and it opens doors within a discipline to practices that are more expressive and/or more economical. This way of thinking about the potential for expressive movement of the human body is both technically rigorous and demanding while simultaneously providing a basic foundation that is freeing and empowering. It has given me a rack on which to hang the many ever changing "movement" hats I wear. It has given me a solid through line, through which I can link the seemingly disparate aspects of myself. And most importantly it has given me the tools I need to specifically and concretely describe and understand the seemingly nebulous and ever changing potential of the human body.

Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is essentially an alphabet for a language we already speak on a daily basis. It is a categorization of movement, analogous to notes in sheet music or the alphabet. The work can essentially be broken down into four sections of understanding: Body, Effort, Shape, and Space. Within each of these subsections is a surprisingly few number of terms and ideas, letters of the alphabet, which when properly combined can describe anything the human body can possibly do. I am still looking for an action that can be done that is outside of LMA's capacity to describe, and I have not found it yet.

It was much to my chagrin when one day before a stage combat class, a peer of mine ran up to me excitedly and proclaimed “Laban was a Nazi!” She had read it in a book and was eager to share. I was shocked and appalled. Every single terrible fact and deed associated with the Third Reich immediately swam through my brain. Then I was confused, and what followed was a deluge of questions and three years of work and research during my time here at VCU. Questions like: Why did Laban stay in Germany when so many other artists fled? Was he really a Nazi? A racist? What kind of work was he doing at the time? Why was his final piece in Germany censored? How do Laban’s actions reflect on his character and reputation? Should he be held historically accountable for the propaganda and racist policies with which he so readily complied? Were his theories and choreography really in line ideologically with the Nazi party?

And so I come to my thesis in which I wrestle with all of this and try, to find some understanding and peace with the past, so that I can move forward using LMA. I have found security and assurance that I am not indoctrinating students into a fascist understanding of movement, but rather am using this multi-faceted tool to teach actors while bringing my own unique understanding to the craft. LMA is a beautiful tool that can be utilized in a myriad of ways without compromising or imposing upon the user. It can be blended into almost any pedagogy or situation. In this thesis I will take a close look at my use of LMA as a structure on which to base a semester course of movement training for actors.

Chapter 2 Historical Analysis

A Brief Biography

Rudolf Laban was born on December 15th, 1879 in Bratislava, Austro-Hungary. His father was a military governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a result in his teenage years he went on several journeys with his father (destinations including Sarajevo, Mostar, and Istanbul), and he was exposed to both eastern and western religious ceremonies and dances. When his parents were away without him, as they often were, he became interested in local theater under the influence of his uncle Adolf Mylius, who was the black sheep of his family.

In 1899, under his father's guidance, Laban enrolled in military training for the Austro-Hungarian army, but after a year and a half he quit. In 1900 Laban married his first wife, the painter Martha Fricke. They lived in Munich for a short while, and then they moved to Paris where they both studied painting. While in Paris Laban spent some time in the licentious cafés and salons of Paris, but he came to dislike the night life which was later reflected in *Nacht*, a piece he choreographed in 1927. Martha and Laban had two children, Azraela and Arpad, but when Martha died in 1905 (or 1907, sources vary) they went to live with Martha's family. Laban sired a total of nine children, none of whom remained in his life. There is not much information on Laban's whereabouts between Martha's death and 1910, but it is likely that he was living at home with his parents.

Maja Lederer was his next wife, whom he married in 1910. He lived with her in Munich while working as a painter and illustrator until the First World War. First having studied painting, Laban became interested in tableaux work and the idea of the moving picture. Some of his earliest choreography consisted of a series of tableaux and transitions. He also did work in organizing carnival performances, through which he became recognized as a movement expert.

In 1913 he continued his experiments in movement and dance at a communal living summer school in Monte Verità (Mountain of Truth), Ascona. Here Laban began serious work through improvisations in developing his swinging scales, movement choirs, and dance notation. It was here that he first collaborated with Mary Wigman, another historical giant of German modern dance. He spent the winter in Munich giving lectures and demonstrations of his summer work, and in the summer of 1914 he went back to Ascona. This summer's work included further study in what he came to call Choreutics, Eukinetics, and an open air performance where Wigman premiered her famous *Witch Dance* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp-Z07Yc5oQ> (Bobdena 2006). The outbreak of the First World War put an end to studies at Ascona for most of the participants, although Laban and Wigman stayed on. Laban continued to spend his summers in Ascona until 1917.

It is between 1915 and 1919 that Laban's major career in Germany began. While living in Zurich he taught, studied, and set up Laban School and 'Labangarten' for children. In 1918 he separated from Maja Lederer and their three children.

In 1920 he moved to Stuttgart and opened another Tanzbühne Laban (Laban School). Kurt Jooss, another important choreographer in modern dance history noted for his choreographic masterpiece *The Green Table*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXIPDQcfX0M> (GaskillDance 2008). became Laban's pupil during his time in Stuttgart.

During the 1920s Laban fully devoted himself to dance. A year after moving to Hamburg in 1922 he officially opened the Zentralschule (Central School) Laban with a department for movement choirs. This central school housed his company and regularly showcased his choreography wherein he often danced the lead role. His company traveled extensively in 1924, and during this time he also developed schools throughout Germany and Switzerland.

Unfortunately in 1926 he fell off stage during a performance of *Don Juan* and injured his back. After that he was no longer able to perform. Other achievements during this time period include several publications, a trip to the United States, the organization of the First Dancers Congress at Magdeburg, and the presentation of his notation system at the Second Dancers Congress at Essen in 1928.

When the 1930s began Laban was at the top of his career. He was invited to direct pageants and festivals internationally, and in 1931 he was appointed ballet-master at the Berlin State Opera. In 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany. Laban worked in Germany until 1936. The years he worked under Nazi rule will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

After Laban left Germany he found a final home in Dartington Hall where his former student, Kurt Jooss, had set up a dance school. During his years in England Laban, due to ill health, spent much of his time scrutinizing crystal structures and their relationships to movement patterns. During World War II he created the Laban/Lawrence Industrial System which was designed to increase the efficiency of movement in wartime factories to maximize production. Laban died on July 1st, 1958, and his headstone reads “Rudolf Laban: A Life for Dance”.

Just the Facts: Laban from 1933- 1936

The period during which the Nazis were rising to power and in control of Germany is a sensitive subject for many people because of the atrocities committed under the regime. During that time period there was tight governmental control over information, used to create a cloud of misinformation via propaganda which makes it difficult to get to the truth behind the machinations of the government. Because of these factors almost all of the writing on Laban's activities during this period involves a lot of guess work, and/or it is emotionally charged. In this section I have tried to strip the events of the guess work about his motives as well as moral judgment, getting as close to the facts of the events as possible so we can clearly view the role his work had in the Reich Chamber of Culture.

Leading into 1933 the state was in political turmoil. Tensions between the Communists and the Nazis often erupted into street violence. Hitler was sworn in as chancellor on January 30 1933, and within the first six months he seized power and built the political machinery necessary to support his dictatorship.

In 1933 Laban was working as the ballet master of the Berlin State Opera. On February 6th the Ballet Opera House was ordered to reduce the number of children in its school (Preston-Dunlop 173). On March 3rd the Reich Chamber of Culture (which will be abbreviated RCoC) was formed, and Joseph Goebbels was appointed its head. Division VI, of which dance was subsection 3, was concerned with monitoring and controlling all performance related cultural activities (Kant 78-81). Racial cleansing became possible by Hitler's ruling on April 7th, 1933 on "The Reformation of the Professional Civil Service" (Doerr 155). It was at this time that artists like Bertold Brecht, Max Reinhardt, and others fled the country. On May 10th, 1933 a bonfire of books by "undesirable" authors burned in front of Berlin University near the Opera House where

Laban worked. During the year Laban revived his “Bayreuth staging of *Tannhäuser* Bacchanale” (Koegler 31). On July 7th, 1933 Laban took steps to ensure that non-Aryan children were removed from the children’s ballet classes (Doerr 159). Over the summer Laban went to Warsaw to judge the International Dance Competition. In September he staged a lavish performance of *Carmen*, and during December he went on a small lecture tour in Germany (Doerr 175-177).

During 1933 Mary Wigman met with her teachers to discuss how they could best adjust their teaching methods to emphasize the German qualities in their work. During the Fall Kurt Jooss, who had refused to fire the Jewish dancers in his company, fled to England in the guise of an impromptu tour with his company. Twenty three of Laban’s performing students and several of his faculty fled the country and eventually joined Jooss at Dartington Hall.

Overall the year of 1933 brought very few changes for Laban in his work. He continued to choreograph and lecture safely amidst the political turmoil while adapting to the times by not employing Non-Aryans.

1934 saw the vise grip of Hitler’s control tighten substantially. Hitler appointed himself Führer and had any political figures shot whom he feared were gaining too much power. In this year Germany saw the beginning of an economic recovery.

Laban continued his work at the Berlin State Opera until his contract ran out on August 31st, 1934. A farewell matinee was held in his honor on July 1st, and it was attended by both Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. It is at this point in history that Otto von Keudell, an employee of the RCoC assigned to deal with special issues in theater and dance, emerges as Laban’s benefactor and liaison to the RCoC. In a memo in July von Keudell suggested that the best way to showcase German dance to the world is through festival performances. Laban is appointed the

man for the job (Karina Kant 104). On September 1st Laban signed a contract with the Nazi regime wherein he was appointed the leader of the professional dance association that was taken over by the ministry. This effectively put Laban in charge as the Director of Movement and Dance.

Laban's first major project was to organize the regime's first German Dance Festival, which was held on December 9th through the 16th. It featured very little ballet; it focused primarily on the newly appropriated German modern dance. The festival was successful, and it was followed by a tour to ten German cities.

Laban's appointment also put him in charge of The Dance Theater, an institution created to centralize German dance as well as provide jobs and training for dancers. During the last few months of 1934 Laban began to make plans for the future unification of all German Dance. He met with Mary Wigman, Lizzie Maudrick, and Dorothee Günther to create standardizations of dance instruction. Their plans included a subsection of The Dance Theater, The Master Workshops, which would function as an educational branch. They began creating the requirements a dancer would have to fulfill in the form of a standardized test upon completion of their studies at The Master Workshop, and this test, once established, would be required for any dancer who wished to work professionally in Germany (Karina Kant 111-113).

In 1935 the Nazi regime began to pick up momentum. New laws and prohibitions were constantly put into effect. Jews were no longer allowed in sport facilities, and a law prohibited Aryans and Jews from marrying. On August 1st, 1935 Decree Number 48 put into effect the regulations for the Conduct of Examinations in dance so that in order to dance professionally a dancer must pass the test Laban had invented the year before (Karina Kant 119). Hitler's grand

schemes were beginning to be put into effect. A “series of ‘peaceful’ acquisitions began with the annexation of the Saarland” (Koepler 41).

During March of this year Laban, and his team of supporters, attended a meeting in which three major events were planned for the German dance community, and for each of these events Laban would serve as artistic director. An international dance competition would be hosted. A second dance festival was planned as a follow up to the 1934 dance festival, and a new open air theater, called the Dietrich Eckart Theater, would be built and opened by a performance of German dance choreographed by Laban (Preston-Dunlop 191). Laban’s plans didn’t stop with these events. During this year he also suggested that the “Reich League for Group Dance” be established in order to gain political recognition for dance (Doerr 162). Not many of these plans came to fruition in 1935, although the political wheels were set in motion.

In the summer of 1935 The Dance Theater hosted a summer workshop in Rangsdorf as a precursor to the opening of the Master Workshops. Laban ran the camp. He taught and choreographed choric dances, and new dances by current professional dancers were presented. This workshop focused on how German modern dance could support or reflect Nazi policies and the German National aesthetic. Goebbels visited the camp and wrote in a memo “Laban does his job well.”(Preston-Dunlop 192). This workshop fed directly into the 1935 Dance Festival, which took place November 3rd-10th. Many of the pieces at the festival were choreographed or workshopped at the summer camp. This year the festival featured a more even balance of the new German modern dance and the old theatrical ballet.

In 1935 Laban began choreographic plans for *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*. This piece was to be his crowning achievement. He intended to present it at the opening of the Dietrich Eckart Theater as well as use it in the opening ceremonies for the 1936 Berlin

Olympics. In October he presented his plans to the ministry through von Keudell, who approved them (Karina Kant 119). On November 5th, 1935 Laban finally obtained German citizenship.

As an important side note this year Hitler formed an opinion on the new modern dance. Hitler had a private viewing, at the behest of Goebbels, of the dancers Gret Palucca and Marianne Vogelsang. They were both successful students of Mary Wigman. Hitler disliked the performances, labeling them intellectual. He preferred dance that was centered around athleticism and beauty.

1936 was the year of the Berlin Olympics. “The nastier aspects of the Third Reich were temporarily shelved” as the city prepared to dazzle the world (Koegler 45). While Germany was focused on preparations for the Olympics, German troops occupied the Rhineland, and the groundwork was laid for the occupation of Austria and Sudetenland.

For the dance community, January through May was focused on preparing for the main events and debuts of the summer. On May 1st, 1936 Laban was named the director of the newly created Master Academy for Dance which was the actualization of Laban’s dream for Master workshops. Laban directed another summer workshop in June 1936. This summer the workshop was supported by the Reich League for Group Dance, and it had an official title: “Reich League Week of Choral Dance”. The German Dance Festival was enlarged and moved from the fall to July 15th -30th; it became the International Dance Competition. Laban served as a judge on the committee, and despite the competitive nature of the event Laban chose to give awards to all contestants.

In a single day, June 20th, Laban’s fall from the graces of the ministry began with the premier of his masterpiece *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* in the newly built Dietrich Eckart Theater. The piece employed over one thousand dancers from all over Germany. The

choreography was sent to his teachers via his Labanotation, and the dancers were all taught separately. It was an impressive piece in scale and content which many scholars believe to be his crowning achievement. Unfortunately both Hitler and Joseph Goebbels were at the premier, and they reacted negatively. Hitler gave Laban the same label he had given to Palucca a year ago: too intellectual, and Goebbels wrote in a note “Dance festival rehearsal: taken from Nietzsche, a bad, contrived, thing. I object to much of it. It is all so intellectual. I don’t like that. It wears our robes but really has nothing to do with us.” (Doerr 169). The performance of it at the Olympics was forbidden, and the slot for Laban’s Olympic choreography was filled by Dorothee Günther.

Laban’s position in German Dance swiftly deteriorated. His close friend and sponsor, Otto von Keudell, had been removed from his position in the ministry in June, and he was replaced by Rolf Cunz who was much less sympathetic to Laban. At the beginning of August Laban submitted his plans for the coming year most of which Cunz denied. In August Laban left Berlin due to severe intestinal ulcers. Laban kept in contact with Cunz through a series of letters, and he and his doctors hoped that he would be able to return to work by October. However when his ill health continued Laban admitted that he would not be able to continue with his directorial responsibilities. He turned these over to Cunz, requesting that he be kept on in an advisory capacity. They negotiated a new contract, wherein Laban would stay on as an advisor to the ministry for dance until spring of 1937 with a much smaller salary.

While Laban was ill he was investigated first by the police and then by the Gestapo. He was asked to provide verification of his Aryan decent. During the investigations he admitted having been a Freemason in the order OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis) as a Grand Master 1917-1918. This put Laban in danger in Germany. How aware he was of his situation is difficult to determine. In 1937 he left Germany on an invitation from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to

attend the Science and Arts Congress in Paris (Preston-Dunlop 202). While in Paris he was shocked and hurt to hear of the smear campaign that was being run against him in Germany. False accusations of homosexuality barred his return to the country. Desperately ill and penniless he traveled to Dartington Hall where he stayed and worked for the rest of his life.

Why Stay? Compatible Ideology or Mutual Benefits?

It is clear from the historical timeline above that Laban made some decisions that reflect poorly on him as an historical figure when he chose to involve himself with the Third Reich including implementing racist policies. So why then did he stay? Was it because his work was perfectly suited to represent the physicality of the German volk?

Lilian Karina was one of the dancers in Germany who left when Hitler came to power. In her book, she describes the state of the dance community at the time. There were essentially two factions in the dance world: the traditional ballet dancers and the new modern dancers. These two factions of dance were fighting for dominance and support from the government. Laban was the leader and progenitor of the modern dance community. His appointment as the Ballet Master at the Berlin Opera House in 1930 was a victory for the modern dancers; however, it was not well received by the Ballet community, because he immediately did away with the star system. As an employee of the state in 1933 when the regime changed, he became, by default, an employee of the new Nazi regime. In the context of the struggle between the dance factions, it's not difficult to understand why Laban wanted to hold onto his position. It gave him control over an aspect of dance he had hitherto not influenced.

Laban's position as Ballet Master at the Berlin State Opera provided him with a steady source of income, a stability he hadn't known before in his career. That kind of stability for an artist is hard to come by. Therefore, when the regime shifted in 1933, he made adjustments in whom he choose to employ (i.e. only people of Aryan decent) in order to continue working. For him making the adjustments were worth it, in order to preserve himself.

As expressed in Laban's piece *Nacht* in 1927, Laban abhorred licentious behavior. "Hitler and the Nazis promised solutions to the dissolute pursuit of money and sex, and that aspect would have certainly appealed to Laban's own concerns" (Bradley 24).

Up until his contract ran out with the Opera, Laban's choice to stay in Germany was passive. It wasn't until 1934 that he was given the opportunity and made the active choice to become an employee of the Nazi government and a part of the RCoC. He had some very enticing reasons to do it. The support of the government for modern dance over traditional Ballet was a colossal victory for the modern dancers and a reverse of the norm. The very first project they proposed to him was to create a festival, a celebration, which would showcase his life's work: the German modern dance he had helped to create. This level of funding and support was unprecedented in his life.

There are some convincing reasons on both sides as to whether Laban's pedagogy was in line with Nazi policy. Laban proved himself a German Nationalist as early as the 1920s, and he was interested in racial differences in styles and approaches to dance. This most likely caused him to be sympathetic with the National Socialists in the struggle before Hitler came to power (Doerr 159). When Laban signed his contract with the Nazi regime, one of the main responsibilities Laban had as an employee of the RCoC was to discover and define the nationalistic German dance. All of the festivals and summer workshops were meant to, in some part, further define German dance. Hitler was interested in the strong athletic German body as a superior specimen of the human race as well as being able to control people by coordinating mass spectacles. The athleticism of dance and the coordination of large numbers of people in Laban's choral works coincide with Hitler's ideals on the surface.

Many critics and peers of the time agreed that Laban's work was in line with the Nazi agenda. Turning away from Ballet was considered Nationalistic, because Ballet was originally French and therefore foreign. The directors and choreographers working under Laban were quick to express that Laban's choral dance was a direct expression of National Socialist ideology (Doerr 162).

Much of Laban's work seems to be in line with Nazi ideology. His ability to strictly codify and unify dance appealed to Goebbels. His military background and ability to elicit unswerving loyalty created disciples not students of his teaching. He made huge efforts to bring choral work to the front of dance. All of these factors made Laban the perfect choice to head dance under the Nazis.

The man in charge of all cultural activity, Joseph Goebbels, believed that he and Laban were working towards the same end. Goebbels attended many of Laban's events, and he never took issue with them. Everyone believed they were on the same page until the opening of Laban's masterpiece, *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*.

Laban's work did have a National Socialist leaning; however it was not completely in line with Nazi policy. (He never even joined the Nazi party.) This is partly because of a four year long misunderstanding in the chain of command. Otto von Keudell, Laban's friend and liaison to the RCoC, answered to Joseph Goebbels who in turn answered directly to Hitler. Von Keudell acted as a buffer between Laban and Goebbels. Goebbels, influenced by von Keudell, thought that what Laban was doing was fabulous as is evidenced by the supportive notes he made about Laban's summer camps and festivals. Everyone believed they were working towards the same artistic and intellectual goals; so they went about organizing, codifying, and supporting German modern dance together.

Laban's final choral work in Germany, originally titled *The German Destiny* and later changed to *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*, seemed to be an ideal support of Nazi ideology. Goebbels wanted a "production in which the unity of movement and architecture became a symbol for the unity of a nation." (Doerr 167). Originally the piece emphasized a German movement towards unity by telling the story of Germany in four parts from "the horrors of the First World War" through to the present, but it "did not encompass the historical dimension necessary for the self-legitimization of the Third Reich". Laban made a third draft, changing the title of the piece to *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*, and "the piece, as Goebbels could now warmly acknowledge, followed the party line both in content and in style. The choreographic arrangement using movement choirs that symbolically presented the principles of leading and being led seemed to him to ... embody the National Socialists' political ideal of a society hierarchized into leader and mass" (Doerr 167).

The inciting incident which showed Goebbels that everyone was not in agreement was the day in 1935 that he arranged for Hitler to have a private viewing of Gret Palucca and Marianne Vogelsang performing. Goebbels must have misunderstood what Hitler was looking for in dance and body aesthetics, but after that performance Hitler set him straight. What Hitler was interested in was a body culture that emphasized strength, agility, beauty, and conformity. He was most emphatically not interested in anything that had a philosophy that emphasized the individual attached to it as evidenced by the Nazi catchphrase "You are nothing, your nation is everything" (Doerr 169). The key word became intellectual. If a work was too intellectual it was not in line with Hitler, and therefore Nazi policy. Now Goebbels was on alert for anything that was too intellectual.

Laban's final piece failed to meet Hitler's ideals. There was a key difference between Laban's choreography and the mass spectacle choreographies of the Nazi regime. Laban emphasized the individual within the community. In his opening speech to his dancers he said "It is on this road that we seek the purpose of our individual and communal lives . . . Our groups and our gatherings illustrate above all a harmonious community and healthy individuals. . . Just as we do not want to be the slaves of our economic, technical, and social organizations, so little can we declare ourselves ready to sacrifice our inner and outer freedom and to waste our time with meaningless dogmas" (Doerr 168). The placement of equal importance on the individual and the group in his speech was followed by a performance with the same ideology. The dynamic shifts between mass structures brought into light the relationship between the single dancer and the entire group, whereas in mass Nazi spectacle an individual disappeared in favor of the rigid group. This element of flux and flow in Laban's choreography caused it to be labeled intellectual. So while everyone, including Laban himself, believed that he was working in line with Nazi ideology this one ideal caused a dramatic rift between himself and the Nazis.

Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy

In the above biography it is established that Laban's choreographic piece, *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*, was the pivotal breaking point between himself and the Nazi regime. However the answer that Lilian Karina and Marion Kant, authors of *Hitler's Dancers* which was a major source for the opening biography, offered seemed too simple, too one dimensional. Could it really be that a miscommunication along the power structure could have perpetuated Laban's employment for three years? And why was the power structure shifting at that time to begin with? This section will discuss the broader cultural and political climate that surrounded and influenced the censoring of *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* and Laban's subsequent fall.

Of the Warm Wind, and the New Joy was Laban's most ambitious project. It featured over one-thousand dancers from all over Germany, 41 movements choirs from 27 different cities with the help of kinetograms put together by Laban. They all came together to perform at the opening of the Dietrich Eckart theater on June 20th 1936. All my sources agree on the date as June 20th, but some list the event as a dress rehearsal while some claim it was the premier. I believe that it was probably an invited dress rehearsal performance for specific individuals because its most important performance was to be the Opening of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The piece worked in four cycles: struggle, reflection, joy, and consecration. It told the story of the German people moving towards unity starting with the First World War through to the present. Towards the end the movement choirs symbolically represented the relationship between a leader and the masses. It must have been an amazing sight to see the dancers all come together for the first time never having met or rehearsed together, united by the choreography and Laban's vision.

So why then was this masterpiece shut down? I'd like to discuss several reasons that all relate to one over-arching force, the Nazi Government. The simple easy answer to this question is that Joseph Goebbels, head of the Propoganda Ministry, and Adolf Hitler didn't like the piece. And so after the piece's premier on June 20th 1936 the piece was banned from its intended performance as a central part of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Opening Ceremonies.

At face value this seems simple enough, Hitler was in charge, and if he didn't like it, it was banned. However this isolated incident is unusual because from 1933-1937 Laban was a hardworking employee of the Reich Chamber of Culture. From 1934-1936 he served as artistic director on almost every important project for the Reich Chamber of Culture's dance division.

Given this information I propose there are two main reasons why "Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy" was banned from the Olympic Opening Ceremony. One of the reasons is that the piece was not ideologically in line with Nazi policy, and the other reason relates to the shifts in the political configuration of the Reich Chamber of Culture that were taking place during 1935 and 36.

To place this event firmly in its cultural and political context I want to take a look at the formation of the Reich Chamber of Culture. In the early 1900s artists had begun to recognize that occupational associations and groups could be useful in championing the cause of the artist to legislators. As a result of that there was a pre-existing constellation of artistic groups and associations already in place when the Nazis came into power. Instead of the Regime exerting some muscle and creating a whole new structural framework to govern the arts, the Regime appropriated the pre-existing associations and pulled them all together under the umbrella of the Reich Chamber of Culture.

This was facilitated by the dominant ideas among artistic professional which can best be described as “neocorporatist”. Neocorporatism is wonderfully described by Alan Steinweis in his book *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*: Neocorporatism represented a non-Marxist alternative to a failing liberal social and economic order. It envisaged a society divided into self-regulating estates each composed of members of the same profession or occupation. The estates would establish qualifications for professional practice and safeguard market monopolies for their own members. Such regulatory powers would be constitutionally and legally recognized. (Steinweis 17).

So when Goebbels put together the Reich Chamber of Culture (the RCoC), he exploited this idea. He took the individual pre-existing associations, legally recognized them under the umbrella of their Chamber within the RCoC. The Nazis were feeding directly into the popular opinion of the time, and this notion of professional self-administration under the protective, guiding hand of the state resonated nicely even in non-Nazi artistic circles.

As a result in 1934 and 1935, the time during which most of Laban’s projects under the regime were happening, the Chambers operated relatively freely. Otto von Keudell operated as Laban’s patron and benefactor. He helped to finance Laban’s projects and championed his causes with the regime.

In the mid thirties the Nazi regime became more radical, and Goebbels felt that the freedom he had granted the Chambers had been abused. So towards the end of 1935 Goebbels began rearranging the Reich Chamber of Culture and purging it of anyone who made waves. Goebbels had disagreements with many of the heads of the Chambers, and they were replaced. The reorganization of the theater chamber, of which dance was a subsection, started in

September 1935, and in early June 1936 Otto von Keudell was removed from his position and replaced by Rolf Cunz, who was not at all sympathetic towards Laban's ideas.

The cancellation of *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* is the beginning of the end of Laban's career working for the Nazis. In the fall of 1936 Laban fell ill and he was conveniently unable to carry out his duties. He stayed on in an advisory fashion until 1937, when he escaped the country, going first to Paris and then Dartington Hall in England. It's possible that Goebbels had already planned to oust Laban as part of the purge he was conducting among the leaders of the different chambers, and that this event was just good excuse to do it, or perhaps Goebbels dislike of Laban's work truly did begin when he saw the piece. In either case, this event is part of a larger purge of "intellectual" and "degenerate" artist.

So that's how the banning of this show and Laban later needing to flee the country fits into the current happenings in the Reich Chamber of Culture. It falls almost too nicely into the trend of prominent artistic leaders being taken out. Now I'd like to backtrack and talk about ideology.

Laban's job when he signed the contract which put him in the employ of the Reich Chamber of Culture as the Director of The German Dance Theater on September 1st 1934 was to develop German dance. He was recommended by Otto von Keudell as the man who would be able to unite German dance and develop within it that which would best represent and embody the German "volk". Creating and defining dance that was purely German and iconic of the German folk experience was paramount. As Goebbels explained "we have replaced individuality with Volk".

Goebbels attended one of Laban's summer workshop in 1935 and noted that "Laban does his job well.", and Otto von Keudell continually supported Laban. Laban drafted his ideas and

sketches for “The German Destiny” (later titled *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*) in the fall of 1935 and the plans were approved by Keudell and after a few revisions by Goebbels. So in 1935 both Keudell and Goebbels believed that Laban was moving towards the ideal expression of German dance and that this was in line with the Nazi agenda.

Hitler trusted Goebbels to keep things running smoothly. So when Goebbels insisted that Hitler attend a private performance of the dancers Gret Palucca and Marianne Vogelsang in the fall of 1935 Hitler agreed. They were both successful students of Mary Wigman, who was a student of Laban and had a similar style and technique. Hitler thought the performances were absolutely awful. He said that they were too intellectual. Hitler’s ideal for dance was that it should be light, athletic, and beautiful. Hitler believed that “Dance must be cheerful and show beautiful female bodies. It has nothing to do with philosophy.”(Kant Karina 121). Intellectual became the watchword of disaster, and *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* was branded intellectual because it focused not on the German consciousness as a whole, but on the individual in relationship to the whole.

Goebbels wanted a “production in which the unity of movement and architecture became a symbol for the unity of a nation.” Evelyn Doerr author of *Rudolf Laban: the Dancer of the Crystal* described the final draft that Goebbels approved as a “choreographic arrangement using movement choirs that symbolically presented the principles of leading and being led which seemed to Goebbels to ... embody the National Socialists’ political ideal of a society hierarchized into leader and mass.” (Doerr 167).

The difference between Laban’s choreography and the mass spectacle choreographies of the Nazi regime was that Laban emphasized the individual within the community. In his opening speech to his dancers he said “It is on this road that we seek the purpose of our individual and

communal lives . . . Our groups and our gatherings illustrate above all a harmonious community and healthy individuals. . . Just as we do not want to be the slaves of our economic, technical, and social organizations, so little can we declare ourselves ready to sacrifice our inner and outer freedom and to waste our time with meaningless dogmas.” (Doerr 168). The placement of equal importance on the individual and the group in his speech was followed by a performance with the same ideology. The dynamic shifts between mass structures brought into light the relationship between the single dancer and the entire group, whereas in mass Nazi spectacle an individual disappeared in favor of the rigid group. This element of flux and flow in Laban’s choreography caused it to be labeled intellectual. Goebbels concluded in a note written later that “Dietrich Eckart-Theater. Rehearsal of dance piece – free adaptation of Nietzsche, badly done and artificial work. I prevent a lot. That is all too intellectual. I don’t like it. Goes around in our costume but is not really one of our own.” (Karina Kant 119). While everyone, including Laban himself, believed that he was working in line with Nazi ideology his focus on the spirit of the individual was the death of the piece and the beginning of his downfall.

The Power of Movement and the Nazi Olympics

Thus far this thesis has discussed the *what* and the *why* associated with Laban's collaboration with the Nazi Government. In fact the discussion is sufficient to allay any fears that LMA was somehow fascist in nature, and it should inspire confidence in those wishing to use the system as they see fit knowing that while Laban's reputation may be questionable his work had very little to do with his relationship with the Nazi regime. However the power that large masses of bodies moving in synchronization possesses is intriguing. If the work itself is not ideologically dangerous how then could it be used for good or for bad? The following digs deeper into some ideas already presented, and takes a look at masses of bodies and movement on a much larger scale.

On January 30th 1933 Laban was working as the Ballet Master at the Berlin State Opera when he suddenly found himself employed by default by the Nazi regime and its new Chancellor Adolf Hitler. For the next three years Laban worked with the Reich Chamber of Culture in an attempt to codify and define the dance and physical life of the German volk. He pursued the expression of the volk as he had come to understand it during the inception of the völkisch movement in the Weimar Republic. He was working on a physical language that was expressive of the inner workings of individuals in relationship to their cultural history, their land, and their community. At the same time the Nazi regime and their German followers were developing their own understanding of what it meant physically to be German under the new political paradigm. The Nazis appropriated the term volk, and redefined it so that it encompassed anti-Semitism, racial adoration, and a political unification of the German people (Remshardt 1). Both Laban and the Nazis collaborated in pursuit of a physical expression of the volk, but while Laban used it in a cultural context the Nazis' goal was pure political power.

What I will attempt to do now is to define and describe exactly what it was the Nazis were trying to accomplish in the 1936 Olympics, and then look at what Laban was expressing in his piece *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* as a way of understanding the censorship of the piece.

The Nazis World Wide Propaganda Performance

Leading up to the 1936 Olympics the world was wary of Germany. Despite the regime's attempts to keep its burgeoning racial crimes a secret, the world was torn between disbelief and disgust at the stories of racial discrimination leaking out of Germany. Hitler recognized that the Olympics provided his regime with a golden opportunity for worldwide propaganda. With his team of propaganda experts and the coordinated efforts of thousands of Germans, a facade was created that showcased the Third Reich as strong, prosperous, beautiful, and unified under Hitler. Carefully woven into this peaceful façade was Goebbels' invisible propaganda which supported militaristic National Socialism. This massive effort involved grand-scale performances in the traditional sense, such as the large pageant *Olympic Youth* section of the opening ceremonies which blended Olympic symbols with National Socialist ideals and dance with the new athletic German body culture. The whole of the Olympics was a nationwide performance wherein even the German spectators became active performers and participants for the world, making every German citizen a performer, knowingly or not, and the citizens of the world the audience.

The Nazis wanted the nation to appear completely and happily unified; the German volk acting as one. The individual existed only to support the whole and follow Hitler. A fundamental part of the creation of this cultural image was the building of the Reichssportfeld, a gigantic stadium where the track and field events were held, and the adjoining parade ground, the May Field, that could hold 250,000 people. These colossal structures set the stage within which hundreds of thousands could gather and display their unity. The Nazi "Heil Hitler" salute was the perfect physical manifestation of the nation's solidarity. It was simple to execute and joined thousands of people together showing their support and allegiance to Hitler and the National-Socialist völkisch ideals of racial solidarity. During the Olympic Opening Ceremonies the crowd

had a myriad of opportunities to give it. The crowd roared its approval when other nations gave the Olympic salute because it is easily confused for the Nazi salute. They jumped up with arms raised when the torch bearer entered the arena, and they “Heiled” again when Hitler arrived. It was particularly effective because it could be performed in unison spontaneously, which is part of what gave it the power to unite so many so easily. It effectively transformed a passive spectator into an active participant. This very simple performative action became an outward symbol of a unified nation.

Another one of the main ideologies presented in this nation wide show is evidenced in the opening montage of Leni Riefenstahl’s film about the 1936 Berlin games, Olympia, where shots of ancient Greek statues and ruins are directly connected to the Germans’ current physical prowess. This comparison is made in a dramatic shot where a statue of a Grecian discus thrower transforms into a living physically fit German discus thrower who, clothed only in a loin cloth, hurls the discus with excellent form. Not only was it important that the Germans appear physically powerful and athletic, but also to claim a direct tie to Ancient Greece as the descendants and rightful heirs of the modern day Olympics. They further emphasized this by being the first nation to implement a running of the torch from Greece to Berlin, bearing the sacred flame of their claimed ancestors to preside over the Olympics. For the Nazis, being physically powerful and athletic was inextricably tied to military strength. As a result of this many of their massed performances and rituals involved thousands of SA men and Hitler youth, and while the ceremonies were not overtly militaristic in nature they still showed the world a powerful regimented youth who could perform a variety of athletic and gymnastic feats. To detail all of the rituals and performances which took place on the day of the Opening Ceremonies

alone would take pages; the rule of the day was synchronicity and impressive feats of organization and athleticism.

The last component of the facade was that the nation needed to appear friendly, clean, and prosperous. To this end all anti-Semitic propaganda was removed from areas where tourists would visit, and the pamphlets and newspapers that regularly smeared the Jews were taken off of the streets and made unavailable for the duration of the Olympics. Home owners on main streets were asked to paint their houses, and many went so far as to plant fresh flowers in window boxes so the city appeared to be fresh, clean and in bloom (Large 160). Citizens were instructed to be kind and courteous to strangers, and they were on no account to attack or hassle a tourist even if they looked Jewish. Guides and translators were readily available to ensure that guests, especially those who were famous or of political importance, had the best possible experience in Berlin (Large 184). In this same vein it was important that the nation seem politically friendly and non-threatening because the philosophical tenets of the Olympics insist that politics should not interfere with friendly competition. Because of that Goebbels ensured that the National Socialist propaganda within the ceremonies and entertainment was subtle and nearly invisible.

All of these measures coalesced to make the Reich appear to be a strong, unified, friendly, and healthy nation. The Berlin that tourists visited didn't coincide with the brutally racist Berlin from the stories of escapees, and even though many foreign dignitaries were not fooled by the sumptuous parties thrown for them by Goerrings and Goebbels the smoke screen created by these efforts was enough to keep the world audience guessing about the Nazis' true intentions.

Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy appears on some levels to fit into the larger illusion of unity and strength that the Nazis were presenting to the world. It incorporates the gender

stereotyping which was also seen in *Olympic Youth*, corresponds with the Nazi völkisch ideals, and uses the popular song *Germany Awake!*. The depiction of the current unity and joy of the nation was directly in line with Nazi final propaganda goals, but after its first and only performance Goebbels shut it down. He later wrote in his journal “Dance festival rehearsal: taken from Nietzsche, a bad, contrived, thing. I object to much of it. It is all so intellectual. I don’t like that. It wears our robes but really has nothing to do with us.” (Doerr 169). Why is it that Laban’s piece was ultimately excluded from the overall propaganda effect Goebbels wanted to have on the rest of the world?

In the fall of 1935 Laban began drafting his ideas and sketches for *The German Destiny* (later titled *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy*), and the plans were first approved by Otto von Keudell, Laban’s primary benefactor and supporter in the Reich Chamber of Culture, and after several revisions they were approved by Goebbels as well. It featured over one-thousand dancers from all over Germany, forty-one movement choirs from twenty-seven different cities with the help of kinetograms written by Laban in Labanotation which he invented to notate choreography. They all came together to perform at the opening of the Dietrich Eckart theater, built specifically for the Olympics, on June 20th 1936.

The piece worked in four cycles: struggle, reflection, joy, and consecration. It highlighted the German struggle to survive, beginning with choirs of defeated soldiers and mourning women, moving into a slow section representing reflection on the previous struggle. Then fanfares came in with *Germany Awake!* uniting people in a single community. This section moved quickly, denoting work, progress, and the joy of creating a new state. Finally the group joined together in prayer, forming a large Germanic sun wheel, and swinging into joyous circles which united the stage space and the audience (Kew 81).

The structure of the story is problematic when viewed with the Nazis end goal in mind. The piece depicts the Germans in their recent past, when they were poor, down trodden, and vulnerable. The goal of the government was not to remind the world how terrible the consequences of war can be, and how weak the Germans were because of it, but instead to exalt their strength, readiness to die in glorious battle, athleticism, and connection to the Ancient Greeks.

Laban was concerned with capturing and expressing the inner essence of the German people. His choreography was greatly influenced by German völkisch thought, from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the German cultural heritage could be reawakened by a return to a Dionysian spirit. This Dionysian spirit placed emphasis on the expression and embodiment of the inner reality of man. Laban, in an attempt to represent the German volk, tried to capture the cultural state of the people, depict their recent journey, and who they became because of it. The original Greek choral dance was held to honor and worship Dionysus. Without the deity to worship, the object of worship in Laban's choreography became unclear. Breda Prilipp attended a rehearsal and wrote that "The face of these dances is not directed outwards, but inwards.", and so the object of worship and focus became the performer and the German volk (Kew 75-79).

What Laban created was a piece expressive of the German experience wherein both the performers and the German audience share in a common experience because they have shared in a common past. Laban viewed this to be completely in line with völkisch ideology, precisely the verbiage under which he had been hired. His piece was performed by Germans, about the German volk, and for them. The Nazis audience for the entirety of the Olympic spectacle included the whole world, not just the German volk. Joseph Goebbels wanted "a production in which the unity of movement and architecture became a symbol for the unity of a nation" which

is exactly what Mary Wigman choreographed in *Olympic Youth* for the opening ceremonies (Doerr 167). Laban was too busy looking inward at the spirit of the German volk to realize that the Nazis focus was outward on the expansion of Germany and racial perfection.

Another important difference between Laban's censored piece and Wigman's success fitting into the Nazi propaganda agenda is that Laban's piece had a strong focus on the individual within the group, whereas Wigman's piece focused solely on the masses, wherein the individual disappears, learning from and following a singular leader figure. Laban's pre-show speech to his performers reveals his emphasis on the individual within the community.

It is on this road that we seek the purpose of our individual and communal lives . . . Our groups and our gatherings illustrate above all a harmonious community and healthy individuals. . . Just as we do not want to be the slaves of our economic, technical, and social organizations, so little can we declare ourselves ready to sacrifice our inner and outer freedom and to waste our time with meaningless dogmas (Doerr 168).

The placement of equal importance on the individual and the group in his speech was followed by a performance with the same ideology. The dynamic shifts between mass structures brought into light the relationship between the single dancer and the entire group, whereas in all mass Nazi spectacles, including Wigman's *Olympic Youth*, an individual disappeared in favor of the rigid group. This element of flux and flow in Laban's choreography caused it to be labeled intellectual, a Nazi watchword which was followed by censorship.

The Propaganda Ministry had a very specific picture of Germany that it wanted presented to the world, a strong and athletic image that reflected a glorified attitude towards war. The Nazis wished to draw a direct line back between themselves and the ancient Greeks. They wished to

appear as a singular mass united under one leader, and most importantly the population (from the SA to the Hitler Youth to the casual Olympic spectator) was all swept up into this propaganda effort as active participants and performers for their guests and the world. The Nazi regime appropriated and perverted the term *völkisch* to encompass all these things, most importantly that the Aryan race was superior.

Laban's piece *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* projected none of these messages. It did not glorify war or the athleticism of the Aryan race. It did just the opposite by exhibiting the hardships of war. It depicted the German *volk* not as a singular mass but as a group of individuals working together to overcome trials. Laban pursued *völkisch* ideals of looking inward to celebrate and understand the cultural essence of the German people, and his piece was directed inward for Germans, about Germans, and starring Germans.

The Germans, guided by Goebbels' ingenious propaganda, were without a doubt able to embody a political ideology on a tremendous scale through performance and a salute. The Germans were united through these vast performances, which ensured Hitler's continued power. They were not fully effective in convincing the world audience of Hitler's innocent intentions, but their performance was confusing enough to delay any action until it was far too late. The massive performance *Of the Warm Wind and the New Joy* seems tiny in comparison to 250,000 people "Heiling" Hitler. It didn't embody politics, but rather the struggles and triumphs of a culture and a people. There is no telling how moving or personally powerful this piece was, but this soft feeling, artistic expression captured the struggle of a people, not their politics.

Laban in the Clear

This brings my research and inquires about Laban, movement, politics, culture, power, and bodies to the present.

Thankfully I have reached a place in my research where I feel comfortable concluding that Laban Movement Analysis as a system for understanding movement is a powerful tool, and like any tool its merit and ideology is determined by the person wielding it. Rudolf Laban's actions in life reflect on his character, not on the system he created. LMA can be used to create a massive spectacle lauding the individual. It can be used to describe movement that is dictatorial and oppressive in its message. Having delved deep enough to discover that the circumstances that situate Laban Movement Analysis among the Nazis has very little to do with LMA itself, I feel comfortable moving forward to discuss it through my own ideology and use in actor training and choreography.

Chapter 3 Creating the Body of the Character

LMA as Actor Training

In my historical analysis I concluded that LMA is a powerful tool, and that any ideology associated with it is strictly connected to the practitioner and application. This leads directly into the second half of my thesis where I will be discussing how I use LMA as a useful tool for actor training.

What do actors need in their training process? According to Meisner, actors must be able to live truthfully under imaginary circumstance (Meisner 87). This phrase is a little problematic for me. The imaginary circumstances of the play are often clear, but I struggle with the phrase “live truthfully”. How in the world do we achieve this? Basic traditional acting technique to achieve this, all the way back from Stanislavski himself, involves determining a character’s objective, obstacles, and playable actions all while listening and responding on impulse to the other characters on stage. It involves doing as opposed to showing, discipline and control, awareness and expressive bodies and voices, and the right mix of physical tension and release. Actors must be comfortable in their own skin, be capable of taking risks, and constantly exercise their imaginations. They must find a way to make both the inner and outer life of their character aligned and vibrant in order to tell the story the playwright has written. For me whether or not an actor is “living truthfully” within the play is determined by whether or not the body, voice, mind, inside, outside, and entirety of the performer is connected and all working together or not. An actor whose voice, body, and mind can all work together harmoniously within an imaginary circumstance is an actor who can achieve the effect of truthful living in the world of the play.

The very first line in Laban’s book *Mastery of Movement* is “Man moves in order to satisfy a need.” (Laban 1). This also happens to be a great place to begin the discussion of how

LMA can be used to train actors. This simple sentence implies that this movement vocabulary isn't just about describing what bodies do. It goes beyond that to describe how movement originates and relates to the human being as a whole, inside and out. This sentence also directly relates to the mother of all acting ideas: the objective. What does the character want? This question can be directly followed by: How does the character move in order to satisfy that want or need? LMA is an effective tool with which to answer that question.

In the following chapters I will discuss ways in which I use LMA to teach actors how to be fully connected, inside and out, take risks, stretch the expressivity of their bodies, and with ever greater specificity answer the question "How does my character move in order to satisfy their needs?".

B.E.S.S. A Brief Introduction

The easiest way to understand LMA theory is to look at it in four well accepted categories: Body, Effort, Shape, and Space. (B.E.S.S.)

At a basic level the category of body notes how we are put together and how we function. It notes that we are largely symmetrical with two hands, two feet, two eyes etc. It views movement as a series of body actions the human form can perform. The human body is built to rotate, flex, and extend. Body theory at its most complicated can be an anatomical look at the mechanical function or dysfunction of the human form. Most of the Body theory currently taught at the Laban Institute for Movement Studies draws heavily from the work and research done by Laban's student Irmgard Bartenieff. Bartenieff took Laban's training and applied it to physical therapy. She created the Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) which is a set of theories about how bodies organize to create action and accompanying exercises. The end goal of the BF work is much like other Somatic forms of movement education and therapy, such as Alexander Technique or the Feldenkrais Method. The goal is to help the individual gain better body awareness and healthier movement habits that support dynamic alignment. A body that is dynamically aligned is a body whose constituent parts are working together harmoniously to produce an easy equilibrium without any of the unnecessary tensions that often accompany injury, stress, or repetitive use. Some important concepts that fall under the heading of body include: the connection between the head and the tail, the connection between the heel and the sits-bones, how breath supports movement, how movement is initiated and sequences through the body, the Patterns of Total Body Connectivity, spatial intent, and others. Body deals with the function of the body as a whole.

Effort deals primarily with how we express ourselves. It is the link between our inner intentions and how we communicate those intentions. In his book *Mastery of Movement* Laban defined effort: “ In order to discern the mechanics of motion within living movement in which purposeful control of the physical happening is at work, it is useful to give a name to the inner function originating such movement. The word used here for this purpose is effort. Every human movement is indissolubly linked with an effort, which is, indeed, its origin and inner aspect.”(Laban 21). Effort is broken down into four further categories: weight, time, space, and flow. Weight has to do primarily with one’s relationship with gravity, and it spans from strong to light weight. An action that has a light effort factor easily and effortlessly resists gravity. Imagine delicately placing a fragile glass bowl on a table or the seeming weightlessness of a ballerina in flight. An action with a strong effort factor may yield to gravity or exert great force. Imagine pushing a car that is out of gas up a hill, wringing the water out of a towel, or flopping heavily onto a couch at the end of a long day. Weight is associated with the Intention of the action.

Time has to do with the duration of actions and associated transitions. It does not describe the rhythm of what is going on, but rather the mover’s attitude towards time. An action or transition that is sudden happens quickly, all at once, and is often an abrupt change from what came before it. The attitude is hurried. One can suddenly stop, suddenly start, or complete an entire action in the sudden blink of an eye. Sudden time is often accompanied by a sense of urgency, and it must constantly renew itself to maintain its sudden-ness. An action or transition that is sustained is drawn out, lengthy, and does not change abruptly. It takes its own sweet time to reach its inevitable conclusion. It has a lazy or indulgent attitude to time. Time is associated with Decision making.

An action with an attention to the effort space (unlike Space with a big “S” from B.E.S.S.) can be either direct or indirect. Direct space is like tunnel vision and laser eye focus, and is often expressed in actions that move in a straight line. Imagine a person who is in the military or the firm hand shake and gaze of a business man. Indirect or flexible space is wider and more open, and often exists in circles and arcs. Imagine a person who is wandering around lost or someone who is standing in awe of the entire Grand Canyon. Space is associated with a person’s Attention.

Flow is primarily about how much control and precision is exerted over an action. An action has bound flow if it is done with a great amount of control, and it could be stopped on a dime. Imagine someone trying to thread a needle or a holy person issuing a precise and formal blessing. It is important to note, as demonstrated in the examples, that bound flow does not necessarily mean tension. An action with free flow is difficult to bring to a sudden halt because it is going with the momentum of the action and has much less control exerted over it. Imagine a child skipping playfully or a drunk jovially hugging everyone. Flow is the only effort which is always observable, and most people flux between differing levels of free and bound flow. Flow is associated with Precision.

All together the efforts express the Intention (weight), Attention (space), Decision (time), and Precision (flow) associated with any action. The rest of effort theory involves the combinations of these elements. Two efforts combined together create a State. For example if you combine weight and flow you end up with movements that relate primarily to the self, seem “out of it”, and create a Dream-like State. Conversely combining space and time creates actions that are based on decisions in relationship to the outward world resulting in an Awake State. If you combine three efforts, leaving only one out, these are called drives. The most useful of

which is the Action Drive, which leaves out flow, and gives us the most common acting tool used from Laban's theory: the Eight Basic Effort Actions float (light, indirect, sustained), punch (strong, direct, sudden), glide (light, direct, sustained), slash (strong, indirect, sudden), dab (light, direct, sudden), wring (strong, indirect, sustained), flick (light, indirect, sudden), and press (strong, sustained, direct).

Shape is the category that was least fleshed out by Laban himself. Some of his students have fleshed the theory out in slightly different ways. In either case Shape boils down to looking at and understanding how the body creates Shapes and changes shape in order to act upon, react to, or move through their environment. There are several basic shape forms that describe much of what the body can do: wall-like shapes, ball-like shapes, pin-like shapes, screw-like shapes, and tetrahedral-like shapes. Shape qualities describe how mainly the torso, but also the limbs, can articulate through Space: rising, sinking, spreading, closing, advancing, retreating. The Modes of Shape change are shape flow, directional, and carving. They describe how people change their shape in relationship to themselves or their environment. Shape flow is movement that is based on breath and the mover's relationship to themselves. Directional movement arcs or spokes to bridge the gap between the mover and their environment. And carving movement molds and adapts to the environment, allowing the environment to determine the shape the body takes.

Space is the study of the kinesphere: the "bubble" of space that the body exists and moves in. This category that has the most complex theory associated with it. To begin we notice that the body exists in three dimensions. It is vertical (up and down), sagittal (forward and back), and horizontal (side open and side close). These three dimensions create the Dimensional Cross of Axis. These three dimensions, when combined with unequal stress, yield three planes in which

we can move: the vertical or door plane, the sagittal or wheel plane, and the horizontal or table plane. The most physically complex way of defining space is the diagonal which combines all three dimensions equally stressed. For example forward (a sagittal spatial pull), up (a vertical spatial pull), and right (a horizontal spatial pull) is the end point of a diagonal. Laban viewed movement and the human body as existing within the Platonic solids, crystalline forms. The three that are the most useful to consider are the octahedron which is created when you connect the end points of the dimensional cross, the icosohedron which is created when you connect the points of the planes, and the cube which is created by connecting the end points of the diagonals. Moving within these crystalline forms he created scales, series of movements from point to point, that are evocative and complex explorations of how the body moves through space.

Entire books have been devoted to theoretical explanation and examples of one category alone of B.E.S.S. I will not even attempt to give a full theoretical explanation of all of it, but I have hit the highlights and provided some context and basic understanding to refer to from during my discussion on application.

Knowing Yourself and Widening Your Palette

Many types of artists have specific tools they must learn how to use for their art. Painters must learn the ins and outs of different types of paints and brushes. Musicians learn how to play their instrument, and they are rigorous in practicing their scales. The tools of the actor are their body, their voice, and their imagination. The musician learns that when they do a specific action a sound is produced, and how to combine those actions to create music. For the actor this translates into a need for self-awareness. It is imperative that the actor be aware of what their body and voice are communicating. Actors often exhibit what are commonly referred to as “isms”. An “ism” is a vocal or physical personal habit that the actor uses, often repeatedly, that is not connected to the life of the character within the given circumstances of the play. Often these “isms” communicate to the audience that an actor is nervous, or it communicates to a professional theater artist that they are not fully immersed in the imaginary world of the play. Everything is not fully connected. The goal then is for the actor to either be able to break these physical habits, or to find a way to use them to support the world of the play. In either case the actor must first become aware of what habits they are bringing with them into the rehearsal process.

Laban Movement Analysis is a useful vehicle through which actors can become aware of their isms. Because LMA is primarily a descriptive tool, not a proscriptive technique, the physical explorations necessary to understand the concepts will bring the actor into contact with types of movements they prefer thus increasing their self-awareness. Additionally once the actor, and the class, has a handle on the language the process of identifying isms is simplified. Rather than trying to struggle to describe what the performer does habitually in vague terms, the class and the actor can succinctly and effectively communicate exactly what is going on physically

that is producing a certain repetitive effect. For example a student in my class always did things that were comedic, even when it was supposed to be serious. She was often pigeonholed as having a habit of being quirky. This is a vague description that left her stuck in her habit. What we discovered in the class is that she has an ism of always making strong use of the time effort factor. Sustainment contained with well-timed bursts of sudden gave her work a comedic twist.

Using LMA to describe the actor's physical isms is a specific way to identify their habits, and it becomes even more useful when the performer wants to move beyond their personal habits to further invest in their character and the world of the play. Once the student is aware of their habits and performance preferences, LMA can be used to stretch their physical possibilities. This is primarily achieved by supplying the actor with a wide palette of choices. LMA teaches the performer how to describe any action the human body can do. Through the physical explorations they are coming into contact with ways of moving that are familiar as well as ways that are foreign. This broadens the realm of possible choices. From this broadened understanding of what they do on a regular basis, and what the possibilities are, the actor can then consciously select whatever movement choices they feel best supports the story, the character, and the actions within the text.

Let's return to the student in my class who always worked in a quirky comic style. We as a class were able to nail down specifically what her ism was, and then from there she was able to go on to organize her movement intentionally around other effort choices to achieve different results. Even though originally she knew she had a habit of always being comedic, the very specific application of LMA to describe her ism through her effort choices gave her awareness and control of that ism to support her craft.

I designed an exercise in class to allow the student actors to practice making intentional choices to support the given circumstances and character that was given to them. I made three stacks of cards. One stack had different ages listed. One stack listed occupations, and the third stack listed one other given about the character. The students drew one card from each pile, and they had ten minutes to make specific choices about how this character used body, effort, shape, and space. They then did a short improvised interview with the class as the character they had created. Then the rest of the class had to guess how old the character was, what their occupation was, and describe the character. The class was able to guess the age and occupation of the character with alarming accuracy. The class was able to consistently guess at least two out of the three givens. Not only was the class able to correctly guess the information about the character, but the physical “doing” and execution of the LMA choices created characters that were believable and honest. The application of the LMA concepts resulted in choices that fully connected the mind, body, and voice to the given circumstances. No one appeared to be “acting” or “pretending” to be, for example, a lawyer. The ability to make and execute the physical choices left the actor free to listen and react to the improvised questions.

The success of this exercise supports several ideas. The first is that an actor who has LMA training knows their personal isms enough to be able to consciously choose when to include them or not include them. The second is that it provides actors with an efficient way to make choices that support the given circumstances of the character. The third is that this character and accompanying physical choices can then be thrown into almost any situation, and the actor will be capable of maintaining the character within the created imaginary world. In summation it supports the actor’s ability to live in the world of their character in a way that is believable and honest, while leaving them open and available to listen and respond.

This process of gaining self-awareness and then stretching the movement possibilities of the performer beyond their personal isms was a major teaching objective in my class. At the end of the class we took some time to discuss whether or not they felt that we as a class had been successful in achieving this goal. They were able to articulate how LMA helped them become more self-aware and make a wider variety of choices. This increased awareness and increased palette of physical options was obvious in their final presentation of monologues. Every student brought in monologues that depicted characters that were devoid of their personal isms. Additionally these characters had been developed to be rich, deep, believable, and exceptionally interesting in their uniqueness.

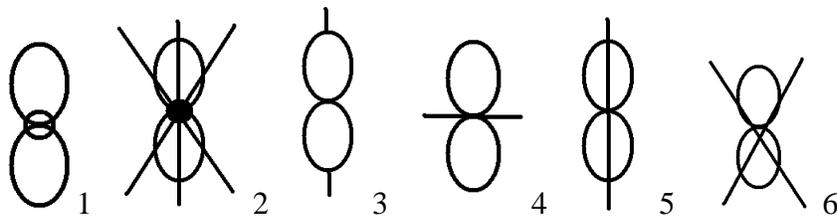
Organization, Intention, and Objective

For years actors, theorist, directors, and teachers have divided roughly into two camps. Those that believe acting choices should first be felt within the performer, and then these inner thoughts and feelings should be expressed outwardly to tell the story to the audience. This is typically looked at as the “American” camp of “Method” Acting. The other camp prefers to work from the outside in allowing the shapes and rhythms adopted by the body to form the inner life of the character. By adapting the physical traits and actions of the character, the internal life of the actor is affected, and the story is told clearly on through action and on an emotional level. In Stanislavski’s writings he considers both. His earlier writing tending towards examining working from the inside out and later moving to consider a method based around physical actions.

So how then does Laban as a movement technique fit into this question and aid the actor? Because LMA and BF are so technically and theoretically rigorous in their approaches to understanding movement it is easy to jump to the conclusion that LMA is primarily a tool for actors who work from the outside in. That the inner work of intentions and objectives don’t fit in. Some people claim that Laban is too technical for actors, and therefore not useful. But I believe it is the application of the supremely technical that sets you free. We’ve already seen how the theories of body, effort, shape, and space can provide a full palette of movement options, and make the body more expressive. It wasn’t until I was working on Bartenieff’s Patterns of Total Body Connectivity and watching a classmate work with their own personal BF exploratory sequence at the Laban Institute for Movement Studies that I truly understood the reciprocal relationship between the inner intentions and outward manifestations of movement. Acting, completing an action, isn’t about going from the inside out or the outside in at all. It is about the full connectivity between the inner and outer life of the performer, where each feeds the other.

Through this personal example I intend to demonstrate how the LMA language of organizing the body's movement is directly correlated to acting with Stanislavski's language of intention and objective.

During my Laban Institute for Movement Studies Certified Movement Analyst Module II we spent a great deal of time in the first two days of class reviewing and embodying Patterns of Total Body Connectivity. They are: 1 Breath Support, 2 Core Distal, 3 Head Tail, 4 Homologous, 5 Homolateral or Body Half, 6 Contralateral.



As part of our learning experience we were asked to create a short movement phrase wherein we embodied each of these ideas at least once, motif it, and then show the work and motif to a partner to see if we were indeed executing what we intended to execute. What many of us in the class ran into is the fact that these concepts build upon one another. For example it is very difficult to work with your head tail connection without involving breath support. How then do you label that action? Our instructor Frederick explained that the goal was for the intention of the organizer of the movement to be clear. Despite the presence of breath support, if the intention was that the action be organized around head tail, then that should be predominant.

This verbiage "what organizes the movement" was at first foreign and interesting to me. How the body organizes itself to complete an action is important. For example someone who reaches to get a cup from a high cabinet may push through the bottoms of their feet onto their toes, rise and extend through the whole body, and then extend the arm to grab the cup all on an exhale. Another possible organization for that action could be a reach through the arm toward the

cup and then a small jump and gasp to bridge the final gap. Here we have two totally different body organizations for the same action and two very different stories. The initiation and sequencing, the breath support, the weight sensing, and the dynamics of the body alignment are all different. Conclusion: how you organize the movement of an action makes a difference in the telling of the story, but I still hadn't made the jump to understand how this related to the internal life of the actor and character.

The next day the class presented personal BF sequences meant to address personal physical needs. A classmate spoke about her sequence and completed it twice. The first time she did it I engaged with it on a technical level noting where she wasn't supporting the action with breath, the dynamic effort shifts, and internal tensions inhibiting some of the movements. After completing it she admitted to being nervous and asked to perform her sequence again focusing on engaging her breath more. The second time watching the sequence was a completely different experience. There were still moments where she struggled with holding her breath, but overall the effect of the sequence brought me to tears because I witnessed and empathized with her internal struggle to give over and allow herself to be vulnerable. She mentioned how much fun she had practicing the sequence at home, and how very different the in class presentation had been. Our teacher Frederick used the term organization again in his reply. He commented that she probably organized the sequence around her joy and love of moving in practice, and in presentation the sequence was organized around her fears and need to get it right. She performed the same exact actions, and a totally different story emerged. Here we weren't even discussing a technical difference in body organization, what we witnessed was a difference in the organizational intention of the mover.

The light bulb flicked on! I had seen this same problem in the vast majority of young student actors. In “acting terms” the students come in and their objective in the monologue is “to perform it correctly” or “to get a good grade” rather than playing the objective in the monologue “to convince a loved one to stay” etc. Even when speaking strictly about movement theory, LMA and BF recognizes the pivotal role the internal intention of the mover plays in the qualities and expressivity of the action.

This immediately translates into usable verbiage and material in actor training. First the entire body of LMA and BF work trains the performer how to organize movement with intention. That is to say that if the intention is for the action to read as strong weight and sustained time, then the action primarily communicates these two efforts and every other aspect of the action fades into the background. There are no nervous actor fidgets or other physical distractions. This directly translates to an ability to make the “outside” and the “inside” match in the completion of an action. The actors are doing what they intend to do, and they have the control necessary to make a choice and follow through. This is precisely what is needed to fundamentally pursue an objective on stage. It goes beyond just having the capacity to make a physical choice. It trains actors to organize their movement and performance around intentional body/mind actions. No matter how that objective/playable action is arrived at (via text analysis, internal discovery, or external discovery) the movement is organized by the intention and the story is clearly communicated through the actor’s entire being.

On a technical, note this is how our nervous systems are wired to give and receive communication. The slightest change in the intention of an action changes the musculature that fires to make the action possible, and this in turn changes what the action communicates.

After my two and a half weeks at the Laban Institute in New York City I taught two workshops in an attempt to put what I have written above into practice. The first workshop was centered around the connection between an action and the mover's intention. I wanted to see if actors, teachers, and dancers could, in a two hour workshop, learn to organize their movement around four different Bartenieff concepts (breath support, weight shift, spatial intent, initiation and sequencing), and observe the difference between organizing around one versus the other. I designed a short movement phrase based around the patterns of total body connectivity, taught it to the group, and then after a brief explanation and exploration of each applied them to the same short phrase. The class was able to organize their intention around a single concept so that it was observable in the performance of the phrase, and the difference between movement centered around each concept was clear. The class was primarily grad students, teachers, and professional actors, and they shared valuable feedback. When asked they reflected that the work was definitely useful, but that they would have trouble translating and applying it to stage action. The discussion yielded the idea that a missing link between the exploratory work we had done, which clearly connected intention to the quality and expressivity of movement, and stage action would be to apply the BF and LMA concepts to basic stage actions such as blocking.

Fortunately one of the participants in the workshop was directing a production of Sweeney Todd at a local high school and was having difficulty drawing strong physical choices out of the student performers, and he asked me to come to teach a workshop with them. In this second workshop I was able to take the exploration of organizing movement around a specific LMA term and translate it into stage action. He was specifically looking to create characters with a sense of wear and tear, deformities, and clear class differences. I began with a warm-up based around breath support and weight shift to get them more grounded and present in their own

bodies. From there we went on to do an exploration of the effort factors, different combinations of effort factors, and isolations. With each effort factor we paused to discuss character, image, and status associations with each effort. After the student performers had achieved at least a cursory understanding and ability to execute each effort, I gave them an assignment. They had ten minutes to make decisions about what efforts their character in Sweeney Todd might use as well as consider the use of any isolations. They were given very simple blocking to apply their choices to, cross from upstage to downstage center, look around, and exit stage left. For those students who weren't sure about which effort combination might suit them best I gave suggestions based around the ideas they had about their character. Each student then did the blocking for the class organizing around their chosen efforts and/or isolations. Each student created a distinct, interesting character that was able to complete a motivated physical action on stage within the given circumstances of their character. We took an abstract exploration of effort factors where we learned how to organize movement around a specific choice and turned it into an intentional playable action which can support the pursuing of an objective. This is the heart of what makes Laban Movement Analysis useful for actors.

Risk Taking in Space

As previously discussed the theory of human movement in space is a large section of important and complicated theory in LMA. On the surface it seems cumbersome, and more likely to get an actor stuck in their heads than in their body. How are dimensions, diagonals, crystalline forms, and scales useful in actor training?

In addressing this question I'd like to first note a cultural value widely held in America which is: falling is bad. All forms of failure, falling, or giving up are considered negative experiences that should be avoided and are discouraged. This is a shame because frequently the best vehicle for growth and learning involves failure. In order for an actor to achieve the state that Stanislavski insisted was necessary, the creative state, the actor must be willing to take a risk, try something new, and potentially fall and fail.

This is where space becomes useful. It can be used as a primary vehicle to force actors to: be off balance, fall, fail, be unsure, and reach beyond their possibilities, and indeed beyond their own bodies out into space, in a safe environment. In order for the human form to locomote through space they must leave their current solid base of support, lift a leg, and shift into the unknown. Locomoting, when thought about conventionally, doesn't seem scary, but imagine keeping your torso facing the front of the room and then stepping your right leg across your left while reaching with your right hand across your body to the high back corner on the left side of the room. This is how the body experiences the diagonal high, back, left. The first time you try this you may lose balance, fall, or fail to truly reach for fear of falling over. Learning to move to and between the twenty seven points in space used to define the kinesphere forces the mover to take risks and literally move places in space where they may have never been before. As your progress through different types of pathways in space the work escalates in difficulty. Central

pathways are the easiest. The mover reaches to a point in space and then comes back to center allowing them to take the risk and then feel stable again. Peripheral pathways require more commitment to the risk because they move from one point on the kinesphere to another along the outside of the kinesphere. Finally transverse movement is the most challenging requiring the mover to allow the spatial pulls to act upon them and cause them to shape through the torso, rotate, and carve through the space inside their kinesphere. It can be challenging to allow gravity to facilitate movement rather than dealing with gravity as we normally do, by resisting it. By exploring the space around them the actor gains ownership over it and reduces the fear associated with big physical choices.

There is one space exercise that I feel is particularly useful for actor training. It is an exercise wherein they test where the edge of their balance is. Students inevitably do what we at VCU affectionately refer to as “The Sophomore Lean”. This is where they think they are really emphasizing a point by locking the knees and leaning forward at the hips. This is a universal way for new performers to say “I’m really emotional/really making a point here. See! I’m emphasizing it by leaning forward!” In reality this is the student holding back and censoring the impulse to move. By holding the pelvis back and disengaging the lower body by tightening the adjoining muscles groups near the joints they are denying their impulse to move and avoiding the possibility of, as I like to say, bringing their hips with them and potentially moving off balance in a physical or emotional way. My answer to this is to play the edge of balance game. I encourage them to flirt with their edge of balance. Using their body as a whole unit (not bending at the waist) I dare them to see how far they can lean in any direction without falling. After doing this exercise with my class I opened it up to discussion of their experiences. One student replied that the edge of balance felt like “imminent danger” whereas bending at the waist felt safer. Another

student noticed that you have to commit more to the action when you are working with the edge of balance. This sense of literally moving oneself off balance into space is universally unsettling and daring the first time it is experienced, and helps free the new actor of some of their fear of moving and falling physically or emotionally which begins to facilitate physical risk taking.

Dynamic Alignment: Tension as an Actor's Greatest Enemy

Fear is expressed in the body through physical tension. A hiker who meets a bear on the path, a performer who has forgotten their lines, they react to fear and the adrenaline response by literally allowing physical tension to cause them to become so still they appear frozen. Hence the colloquialisms to “freeze up” or “scarred stiff”. The actor, especially the young actor, often has a lot of anxieties associated with performing. Will I be good enough? Will the audience like me? What if I mess up? Etc. These doubts often manifest themselves in physical tensions, often in the shoulders, neck, or hips. Tension can also exist in a performer's body from daily stress, emotional stress, repetitive use, injury, or for other reasons. No matter what the source of the tension it interferes with the actor's ability to live truthfully and be fully expressive under the imaginary circumstances of the play. Stanislavski concludes that physical tension is a huge road block to expression and creativity.

Irmgard Bartenieff was a student of Laban's who applied his work to her practice as a physical therapist. Rather than focusing on the injured or affected part of the body, Bartenieff focused on the whole body. She created a group of fundamental exercises and nine principles around which the human body organizes its movement. These exercises and principles are designed to help the body achieve dynamic alignment. A body that is dynamically aligned is a body whose constituent parts are working together harmoniously to produce an easy equilibrium without any of the unnecessary tensions that often accompany injury, stress, or repetitive use. In theory by helping actors become dynamically aligned you can help them shed unnecessary tension, leaving their body available for creative expression within the imaginary circumstances of the play.

In practice this is a long and complicated road with varied results. Studying the body with a Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF) lens is often done lying on the floor with a heavy emphasis on release and relaxation. The body is then taken through a series of exercises that support healthy ways of organizing movement, particularly healthy use of the hips and core during locomotion. My personal experience in my own body is that these exercises leave you feeling less tense and better aligned for the next hour or day, but that unless they are practiced regularly these benefits are fleeting. The only way for BF to have a permanent effect on the levels of tension in the body and the dynamic alignment is to practice regularly, and translate the kinesthetic lessons learned to everyday activity. For example: One of the main principles of BF is the connection between the head and the tail. I can spend time on the floor examining my head tail connection, allowing my breath to support the movement in my spine, and gently work through the spaces where I hold tension. If I do this I will probably feel relaxed and much more dynamically aligned afterward. However if I then go and sit on a computer for 3 hours, hunch, and totally disregard the connection between my head and my tail all the work I did on the floor has disappeared. Only when I am able to translate the body lessons learned on the floor to good use in my day to day life paired with continued floor practice does BF stand a chance of improving my dynamic alignment.

I did not include BF as a day to day practice in my Laban class. Instead we spent several days exploring the basic BF actions (heel slides, pre-thigh lifts, thigh lifts, forward pelvic shifts, lateral pelvic shifts, and knee drops with arm circles) and the Patterns of Total Body Connectivity. I did witness an overall shift in the class to greater body awareness through this work, but only one of the students made a habit of practicing the basic actions. He did have some success in finding a greater sense of ease in his movement. One day after class he came to tell me

that he had been practicing the basic BF actions every morning, and that yesterday when walking up a flight of stairs he suddenly felt lighter and easier because he had come into a better physical understanding of how his core could better support him while moving. This supports my claim that only through regular practice and daily application can BF be useful to actors in decreasing physical tension.

During my two and a half week workshop at the Laban Institute for Movement Studies all of my instructors had been working with and using the BF principles for at least ten years, and I noticed varied results in their bodies. One of my instructors was incredibly easy in her body, and she always seemed to possess exactly the right amount of tension necessary to express herself or accomplish a task. She was always dynamically aligned and was able to physically and emotionally adapt to anything within the classroom. On the other end of the spectrum a different instructor with equal experience had so much apparent tension and visible dysfunction in her body she was barely able to free her flow. Classes with her created sympathetic tension in my own body.

Currently in my own practice as a teacher and artist I am undecided about whether or not the BF body work is truly a good answer for actors to decrease physical tension and increase creative expression. There are a plethora of books and teachers who whole heartedly support BF as a useful tool in actor training to decrease physical tension and increase body awareness, but a single semester or even a single year will barely scrape the surface. It can be very technical, much more technical than is useful for an actor, and thus far I have experienced mixed results with the work. If I can find a way to insist upon regular practice (this would probably mean daily class time devoted to BF in hopes of encouraging habits based on seeing BF decrease tension for themselves and classmates in class, or a program that would support the use of BF for the entire

four years of study) and foster the ability to apply the lessons about healthy body organization to everyday life all without getting bogged down in too much technical theory then this could be an integral and useful part of an actor's training to assist in the process of getting rid of excess tension that blocks expressive creativity onstage.

Stories from the Classroom: Theory to Practice

All of these ideas are great theoretically. However shaping them into a definitive course, and deciding what I wanted the students to learn and grow was its own challenge. I started by defining what the main goals for the course would be. I titled it *Creating the Body of the Character: Laban Movement Analysis for the Actor* with the idea that Laban work is primarily useful to extend the expressive capabilities of the actor beyond their current defaults and to achieve deeper connection between the body, mind, and voice. Here is how I defined the teaching objectives. The students will: learn the physical and conceptual language of Laban Movement Analysis, and develop ways to apply it to acting and character creation, increase their kinesthetic awareness, balance, and control, increase their awareness of their personal movement habits, increase their range of movement possibilities, and deepen the connection between the physical and the emotional/psychological life of the character.

I structured the class into three units. The first unit was primarily an introduction to B.E.S.S and culminated in a performance of a monologue. The second unit was a more in depth look at effort, space, and affinities, and I had scheduled for it to culminate in a scene which didn't happen for reasons I will discuss later. The third unit focused on observation and application of the language learned and culminated in a final monologue. Within the class they were required to keep a journal. In the journal they documented what happened in class as well as wrote down an "Acting Lesson of the Day" and an application of that lesson to keep the class grounded in discovering their acting process.

The first unit was introductory. I used a yoga warm-up throughout the semester to address body issues such as balance, breath, spatial intention, head tail connection, and weight shift. Once they learned the warm-up I was able to guide them to explore different concepts of

body organization within the warm-up. The four effort factors, modes of shape change, dimensional cross, and planes were all introduced in this first unit both conceptually and experientially. The first unit culminated in the performance of a monologue. I encouraged them to use the LMA concepts as jumping boards for physical exploration before doing textual analysis in hopes of helping them avoid their habitual choices. Along with the monologue they were required to turn in a physical score which used LMA concepts to describe what physical choices they had made to support the action. Since the over-all goal of the class was for them to learn how to make intentional physical choices that supported the story and character, they were primarily evaluated on whether or not their physical score matched what they were doing and whether those choices supported the story of the character. The questions I asked myself were “Are they doing what they say they are doing?” “Is their internal intention matching what is going on with their body?” “Are they making choices that support the story and character?”

One of the challenges of teaching this class was having students at different levels in their training. I had one Sophomore, one Junior, one BA Senior who had just returned to the United States from studying abroad, and five BFA Seniors. Grading them based on whether or not they were able to make an intentional fully connected physical choice that supported the story, rather than grading them on how developed and talented of an actor they were, was helpful in evaluating the multi-level class fairly on whether or not they were learning the material presented.

The second unit was mainly an in depth study of effort, states and drives, and their relationship to space. I had planned to use this work to investigate scene work and culminate in the performance of a scene. Unfortunately I ran into some trouble with some of the seniors as we approached the middle of the semester. Because they had been introduced to effort in their Junior

Movement for the Actor class, they were under the impression that they knew all about effort, got bored, got busy in their other classes, and stopped coming to class consistently. This was disruptive to the other students, we couldn't do the scene work I had planned, and caused me to have to improvise different exercises in class on the fly. We discussed what was going on in class, and I sent out an e-mail to those who had been absent which firmly stated that they either needed to attend class or drop because their absences were interfering with my ability to teach and their fellow student's ability to learn and do the work.

I made the critical error of assuming that seniors had already developed discipline and a good work ethic as they prepared to enter the professional world. Believing this I didn't stress discipline at the top of the class which is part of what caused the problem. The other half of the problem is that I didn't have enough checks within the semester to let the students know how they were doing with the material. They were not working at the detailed level I wanted yet, which was why we were spending more time working with effort, but I didn't clearly plan an assessment that let them know they weren't where I expected them to be yet. They got cocky and busy in other classes as a result.

Three seniors dropped the class because they claimed to be too busy with other senior classes and could not commit to the work for my class. After they dropped myself and the rest of the class were able to proceed with the rest of the semester without any trouble, and in fact were able to work in greater depth and detail because of it. Unfortunately this shoddy attendance during the second unit prevented us from digging into the scene work like I had planned, so I dropped the assignment because it no longer served the class and where we were at. Thankfully the five students remaining, including those Seniors who had studied effort before, were able to come to a better, more specific, use of effort and space.

The final unit we spent some time doing more detailed Bartenieff work, experiencing the Patterns of Total Body Connectivity and using them to observe and replicate the movement of the very old, very young, and injured, experiencing the Icosohedron, taking a more detailed look at personal habits, and using LMA to facilitate observation and replication of another person to inform character choices for a final monologue. After the mid-semester slump the students skyrocketed in their ability to speak the LMA language and apply the concepts to their work. Their ability to observe, replicate, and create movement that was outside of their normal comfort zone had multiplied.

For their final monologue I encouraged them to pick a character that was outside of their comfort zone and type. One student in particular was able to transcend his physical type by taking the physical observation he had done earlier in the semester and applying that to the monologue. This student is a white male, a quirky supporting character type, and he was able to convincingly portray an older black man. He spent hours in a local diner observing a local homeless black man who frequents the diner, and he was able to turn his LMA observational analysis of this stranger's movements into convincing stage action. The replication of his movement habits, the rhythm weight and mannerisms were so precise and well rehearsed into believable playable actions, that the only physical indicator left that he was a quirky white young man and not an older black man was the color of his skin. He blew the class away!

The remaining students in the class achieved less dramatic character creation, but all of their final monologues pulled them beyond their normal choices into physical choices that supported the life of the character. They were able to clearly articulate the choices they had made in terms of LMA, and they had all increased in connectivity, control, and awareness of their body. We spent the end of class one day, towards the end of the semester, looking back at the

objectives listed on the syllabus. They all reported that they felt that they had learned the LMA language, gained ways to apply it to their acting process, increased in physical control, awareness, and balance. The only goal they felt they had not yet come close to reaching was deepening the connection between the physical and the emotional/psychological life of the character. One student commented, and the rest of the class agreed, that the work we had done could lead to this outcome, but they felt that they would need time to continue to apply the work to begin to reach this goal. It was clear to me that, as they continued to apply the LMA language in class more specifically every day, that they were learning the language. We as a class were also able to identify the student's normal movement habits, and so it was very obvious to the entire class when a student began to make choices outside of that to support the character and story. There was a day about three quarters of the way through the semester where, within the yoga warm-up the entire class transferred their weight out of a challenging pose they often struggled with and released their breath in perfect synchronization and control. I remember the moment vividly as it clearly denoted to me that the class as a whole was increasing in physical awareness, balance, and control. I agreed with their analysis. The work we did took them a long way towards reaching the goals I had set out to achieve at the beginning of the class.

Overall I considered the class a success. When I get the opportunity to teach the class again there are a few things I will change in order to make it more effective. I will redefine the learning goals to be more concrete and testable objectives. The way they are worded currently is what I want to achieve, but it is difficult to evaluate during the class whether or not they are improving. This is part of why I had problems half way through the semester. I did not have in place a system of evaluation that let the students know they were not yet working at a highly detailed enough level. In conjunction with this re-wording of objectives I will add pop-theory

quizzes, both written and performative, to the course. These will evaluate whether or not the student is truly learning to speak the LMA language and will evaluate their ability to execute the concepts. This would have been a useful tool to let the seniors know they were not on track and would have encouraged them to work harder rather than lose interest. I also will not make any assumptions about the work ethics of the students. I will be more strict and prepare them from the beginning to fully commit to a semester of work that is academically, physically, and artistically rigorous.

To wrap this section up I will include some “Acting Lessons of the Day” from student’s journals that were particularly insightful into the connection between LMA and acting.

“In essence trying to move along a single axis induces tension and restrictions because we are three dimensional. Free use of space = free body.”

“Fully physicalizing intention, incorporating it, and reducing to the essence, give any manifested gestures much more meaning and power.”

“Leaning/sticking the butt out isn’t as vulnerable or dangerous as being on the edge of balance.”

“The act of breathing creates almost every impulse to move.”

“Usually onstage we only think about going from point A to point B, but we don’t always consider the pathways we can take to get there. This travel can tell a story of its own and tell a lot about how a character behaves.”

“Make more specific choices.”

“I hope I never know as much as the seniors. What’s known with certainty clouds the eye of experiment.”

“Exploring physically opposite effort choices can break the character out of actor defaults.”

“Be open to change ALWAYS.”

“Movement can tell a story. Thinking does not.”

“Sometimes doing actions that are completely unrelated to the text can cause discoveries.”

Favorite Exercises

I'd like to close this practical discussion of my use of Laban Movement Analysis as a useful tool for actor training with a list of exercises that I have found or devised. These exercises are the exercises that I have found the most useful in turning LMA theory into activities and playable actions that actors can easily relate to and understand.

The Human Maze – Carving through Space

Carving is a difficult concept to experience and master, especially for actors in an empty rehearsal space where there is not much of an environment to react to and carve around. In order to give them the physical sensation of having to carve and adapt to objects in space I created The Human Maze. I set two blocks and one chair near each other, defining a small space. Each person in the class must add their body to this small space one at a time, touching two pieces of furniture and one other person. Once everyone in the class, except one student, has done this they have created a mass of bodies that creates a maze in space. The lone student must then make their way through the maze of bodies, carving around them, trying not to touch them and disturb the shape. Then the class repeats building a new maze of bodies for the next student to make their way through. This exercise gives each student the ability to experience carving through space in response to environmental factors, and allows the rest of the students to practice sharing weight, balancing, physically work together, and bond as a class.

Edge of Balance

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, working with the students to help them find their edge of balance is a great exercise to increase their awareness, balance, and forces them to take physical risks moving them out of their heads and into their bodies by forcing them to deal with the potential imminent physical danger of possibly falling over. This exploration can be framed

in several ways. A gentle introduction to moving your core off center can be done by simply standing in a circle with the class. Have them plant both feet and stand in neutral. Ask them to begin to key into where their weight is on their feet, and then ask them to begin to actively shift their weight to different locations on their feet. As they begin to shift their weight from the balls of their toes to their heels and from side to side ask them to be aware of how this weight shift affects the rest of their body. If they are truly shifting their weight their core will be moving on and off center. A more active and exciting way to experience taking themselves off-center starts by having the entire class walk around the classroom. As they walk instruct them that every time you clap your hands they must freeze where they are and try to find the edge of their balance, leaning as far as they can without falling over. When you clap again they walk again. As they stop and start encourage them to increase their speed, lean in different directions, lean on different levels, and risk falling over. Be aware of how the students are pushing their edge of balance. Watch out for cheaters who will bend at the hips or use limbs to make themselves feel more balanced, rather than truly risking taking their core off-center.

Effort Mirroring

Mirroring, a traditional Stanislavski exercise wherein one student follows the other's actions learning to listen physically, can be used in an LMA context. In order to help students more fully experience efforts that they were having trouble accessing or that were outside of their comfort zone, I paired the students up with someone else in the class who had dissimilar effort affinities. Within their partnership they began to mirror each other. Then I would call out an effort. The students had to continue to mirror the other person's actions, and they had to add on mirroring the effort of the action as well. I cycled them through all of the effort factors, and made sure both partners got a chance to lead and follow. At the end of the exercise rather than

commenting on their own experience I asked them to comment on the habits of their partner. Was their partner able to follow their effort? Where did their partner struggle to match their effort? Not only did this help stretch the student's experience of effort, but it also helped identify for the students where their affinities are and what they still struggle with.

Laban Baseball

This exercise is a combination of an exercise from "An Acrobat of the Heart" and LMA terms. It works best once the students have learned a sizeable amount of the Laban vocabulary. Three students stand at the three "bases", and one student stand in the middle. The students on the outside give the student in the middle a body choice (a lead or isolation), a use of space (ex. Only moves in the horizontal plane or only moves in far reach space), and an effort choice (ex. Any single effort, state, or drive). The student in the middle gets a few moments to integrate all of these choices into their bodies. As they work and a character or situation begins to emerge the instructor asks them questions about who they are, where they are, or what they are doing. The actor then improvises the answers based on what the physical suggestions they received have inspired. The students rotate around so they all get a chance to be on one of the bases and a chance to work in the middle. This is a great exercise to help the students follow impulses, take risks, and explore how physicality suggests and creates character.

Laban Roulette

This exercise is the opposite of Laban Baseball. In this exercise prepare three stacks of note cards. One stack has different professions, one has ages, and the third has an adjective. The students draw one card from each pile, and they have five minutes to make LMA choices that will appropriately tell the story of a person who has the profession, age, and adjective that was

drawn. They then do a short improvisation in front of the class based on the physical choices made.

Conclusion

This thesis has been the culmination of my journey, thus far, with Rudolf Laban's work. From my initial introduction, historical research, and application to acting I have found his work and his life fascinating and useful. I have learned a great deal about the complexities of historical research, and the danger of making any assumptions without having all the facts. All the facts involves not only the who and the what, but also the entire social, cultural, political climate that the who and what exist within. With all of this information historians can tell a complete and more accurate story of the events of our past.

The application of LMA has shaped my approach to teaching acting and as a performer. The use of LMA as a powerful tool to train the actor to work in a way that is fully committed and connected inside and out will continue to be a large part of my teaching.

As I continue to develop as a teacher and an artist I am excited to see where LMA will take me next and how it will continue to facilitate my work and affect my world view. My personal journey with Laban is not over yet. The next step is to continue to pursue certification through the Laban Institute of Movement Studies, and this summer I will be writing an article for The Oxford Handbook of Theater and Dance based on my historical research about Laban's time in Nazi Germany.

Appendix A: Supporting Documents

Course Proposal for Fall 2011
Creating the Body of the Character:
Physical Scoring Using Laban Movement Analysis
Submitted by: Marie Boyette

Reason for the Class:

I have often heard said that you don't fully own and understand something until you can articulate it. Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a system within which any physical action can be specifically and succinctly articulated and described. Since acting is the "doing" of physical actions onstage this work is directly applicable and vital to the actor's craft. It allows the student to describe and understand their own personal -isms, and rather than trying to negate their personal -isms LMA gives them positive alternative choices. In turn this work also broadens their movement possibilities as well as increasing body awareness and control. My goal is not to bog the students down with technical LMA terminology, but rather to use the system to lift them out of their heads and into the infinite possibilities of their bodies.

Class Design:

This class does not assume that the student has had any previous movement training, but it does assume the student has some acting training. This class would be beneficial for Sophomore students through to Graduate students. Despite the use of Laban's system for analyzing and understanding movement this course is **not** a dance course. It is both an acting course and a movement course. The class would be most effective with 8 – 16 students.

Class Structure:

Each class will begin with a warm-up that increases strength, flexibility, and will have a particular emphasis on body awareness and the connection between the mind and the body. I will then immediately transition the students into explorations and exercises designed to

experience the full range of their personal movement possibilities, sometimes encouraging them to make physical adjustments and note how that changes their psychology and sometimes encouraging them to allow their body to follow their thoughts and feelings. All of the Laban work will be applied to monologues and scenes so that the work stays rooted in the expansion of the actor's toolbox and process. At the end of each class we will wrap up with a group discussion about their experiences in the work and its application to their acting process. Each class period they will be required to write a journal entry within which they must list an "Acting Lesson of the Day" and how they can apply it to their next rehearsal to continue to emphasize the connection between some of the technical work and the acting process.

Course Content:

The core component for this course will be in class exploration of Laban's system and application of that system to character and scene work. Class will be spent almost entirely on our feet as I guide the class in their explorations and work. All performed, graded work will evolve out of work done in class. Written scores will accompany each graded performance, and journals will be graded for completeness and thoughtfulness.

Final Thoughts:

Personally LMA is one of the most effective tools I have encountered for lifting me out of my head, and allowing me to be the pliable mover with finely honed kinesthetic awareness that I am today. I am excited about the possibility of sharing this work with the VCU student population, and including it as an extension of the historical research I have done on Rudolf Laban (which I presented at ASTR this past November) for my thesis.

Sample Syllabus Information:

Course Description – An in depth study of Rudolf Laban’s system for understanding and analyzing movement, and its application to the art of acting and character development.

Course Objectives

- To learn the language and concepts of Laban Movement Analysis, and how to apply it to personal observations and character creation
- To increase the actors kinesthetic awareness, balance, and control
- To increase the actors awareness of their personal movement habits
- To increase the actors range of movement qualities
- To further develop the actor’s personal process
- To deepen the connection between the physical and the emotional/psychological life of the character

Grading

Attendance

Participation

2 Monologues

1 Scene

Critical Thinking Journal

Personal Movement Analysis

Stranger Movement Analysis

General Class Schedule

- Exploration of Efforts and Dimensions with Monologue 1
 - Efforts: weight (strong/light), time (sudden/sustained), space (direct/indirect), and flow (free/bound)
 - Dimensions: vertical, sagittal, horizontal
- Explorations of Effort Actions with reworking of Monologue 1
 - float, punch, glide, slash, dab, wring, flick press
- Exploration of Space with Scenes
 - near reach, far reach, spatial relationships, spatial affinities
- Exploration of Body while working on Personal Analysis and Stranger Analysis/Recreation
 - spoking, arcing, carving, isolations
- Final Monologue

Syllabus

Creating the Body of the Character Laban Movement Analysis THEA 491-006

Fall 2011
Location: PAC B-72
Time: 3pm-5pm Tues/Thurs
Instructor: Marie C. Boyette

Office: Shafer Street Playhouse 203
Office Hours: By Appointment Only
Mailbox: Performing Arts Center, 2nd Floor
E-mail: boyettemc@vcu.edu

Course Description:

An in depth study of Rudolf Laban's system for understanding and analyzing movement, and its application to the art of acting and character development.

Course Objectives:

- To learn the physical and conceptual language of Laban Movement Analysis, and how to apply it to acting and character creation
- To increase the actor's kinesthetic awareness, balance, and control
- To increase the actor's awareness of their personal movement habits
- To increase the actor's range of movement possibilities
- To deepen the connection between the physical and the emotional/psychological life of the character

Assignments/Grading

- Performed Work
 - 1 scene 20%
 - 2 monologues 10% each
 - Stranger Analysis 10%
- Written Work
 - Critical Thinking Journal 20%
 - Attendance/Participation/Professionalism 10%
 - Written Movement Analyses 20%

All written and performed work must be handed in or performed in class on the due date. Late work will not be accepted. If you are absent you will need to plan time to make up the performance or turn in the work **before** the due date.

This course assumes that the students are considering pursuing a career in acting. While much of the grading will be based on a rubric, the instructor reserves the right to subjectively consider factors such as effort, risk taking, participation, and discipline etcetera.

Critical Thinking Journals

This is not a free form journal meant for personal reflection. It should be written in the following format and used as a tool to connect the activities in class to your own personal acting process. It can be legibly hand written or typed, and must be formatted in a way that I can collect it, grade it, and hand it back.

There must be a journal entry for every class period. Each entry has four sections:

- 1- A list of activities done in class
- 2- A detailed description of those activities (**diagrams and pictures are encouraged**). This section can, but doesn't have to, include personal experiences or reflections. Activities that are repeated in class, such as the warm-up, need only be described once in full detail.
- 3- An "acting lesson of the day" that you have extracted from class (what did you learn by being in class today? This is a **concept**, an idea, not a technique or activity.)
- 4- An application of how you will use that "acting lesson of the day" in a future rehearsal. This should be a specific doable task that you can use in the future.

Here is a brief example:

Activities: head to toe isolations, power yoga warm-up, exploring the three planes of movement

Descriptions: Warm-ups – see past entry. In class we explored the three planes of movement.

They are the vertical (up/down) plane, the horizontal (left/right) plane, and the sagittal (front/back) plane. We explored by focusing our breath in the three planes of movement using our torso and spine, and by fully extending through the planes from head to toe.

Acting Lesson of the Day: Subtle movements in the spine can communicate just as much about the inner life of the character, sometimes more, as full body movements.

Application: Next rehearsal I will fully extend, to the edge of the plane of movement, with each impulse I have to fully experience and explore that moment physically. I will then, remembering that full physical experience, allow each impulse to be full, internalized, and reflected on just my spine.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. In accordance with Theater VCU's attendance policy you are allowed a total of two absences, excused or unexcused with no penalty. This includes absences for health reasons, personal reasons, family, and skipping class etc. These two days are yours. Use them wisely. If you miss two days early on in the semester, and later you are sick, you will not be excused. Any additional absence beyond two will result in the loss of a **full letter grade!** Two tardies (arriving after attendance has been taken) qualify as one absence. If you are more than **15 minutes late you are absent**. If you leave class early without being excused you are absent. Because so much of the class is participatory and performative in nature your presence is vital to the whole class.

Missed work, due to an absence, may be made up only if I was contacted prior to the absence, and we scheduled time to make up the work. Please e-mail me as soon as you are aware of an upcoming absence (boyettemc@vcu.edu).

Dress Code

This is a performance class and adheres to the VCU dress code for performance classes. This means solid black clothing which allows for ease of movement and is not revealing. Hair should be pulled back out of the face, and shoes are optional. No bulky or distracting jewelry. Violations of dress code will directly affect your participation and professionalism grade.

Disabilities

If you have any visual, auditory, ambulatory, or cognitive disability it is your responsibility to inform me within the first week of class so that I can work to accommodate your needs. See The VCU Resource Guide for details.

Religious Observances

In accordance with University policy, if you wish to observe a religious holiday of special importance you must provide advance written notification by the end of the second day of class so that I can accommodate your needs. Please send this notice to my VCU e-mail boyettemc@vcu.edu.

Honor Policy

Please visit the VCU website or see the VCU Handbook to review the official university honor policy. Plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty and cheating will be punished to the full allowable extent as stated in the Handbook. One university ruling you need to be especially aware of: **The University requires that cell phones and beepers must be turned off while you are in the classroom.** The use of cell phones in class will drastically impact your participation grade.

VCU Alert and Campus Security

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts [<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>] Keep your information up to date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information [<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>]. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU police: 804-828-1234. Report suspicious activities and objects.

Tentative Schedule

| Date | What is happening? | What is due? |
|----------|--|---|
| 25- Aug | Welcome, syllabus, intro to warm-up | |
| 30- Aug | Edge of balance, alignment | One Minute Monologue Check-in |
| 1- Sept | Intro to space, dimensional scale | Monologue Selection #1 |
| 6- Sept | Modes of shape change | |
| 8- Sept | Cont. Modes of shape change | |
| 13- Sept | Physical scoring | Monologue Memorized |
| 15- Sept | Cont. physical scoring | Journal Collection #1 |
| 20- Sept | Intro efforts | |
| 22- Sept | Cont. efforts | |
| 27- Sept | Presentation of Monologue #1 | Monologue #1 Due with LMA analysis |
| 29- Sept | Bartenieff Fundamentals | Pick scene partners |
| 4- Oct | Note: Last Day to withdraw from classes Bartenieff Fundamentals | Scene selection |
| 6- Oct | Efforts and States | Journal Collection #2 |
| 11- Oct | TBA | |
| 13- Oct | Efforts and Drives | Scene Memorized |
| 18- Oct | Action Drive | |
| 20- Oct | Reading Day NO Classes | |
| 25- Oct | Spatial affinities | |
| 27- Oct | Swinging Scales | Journal Collection #3 |
| 1- Nov | Explore physical scores for scenes | |
| 3- Nov | Presentation of scenes | Scene Due with LMA analysis |
| 8- Nov | Movement developmental series | |
| 10- Nov | TBA | Monologue #2 Selection |
| 15- Nov | Space and Polyhedra | |
| 17- Nov | 5 minutes of stranger #1 | LMA Analysis, Journal Collection #4 |
| 22- Nov | Copy Cat | Monologue #2 Memorized |
| 24- Nov | Happy Thanksgiving! No class | |
| 29- Nov | TBA | |
| 1- Dec | 5 Minutes of stranger #2 | LMA analysis |
| 6- Dec | Workshop Monologue #2 | |
| 8-Dec | Presentation of Monologue #2 | Monologue #2 Due with LMA analysis, Journal Collection #5 |

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Vita

Marie Catherine Boyette was born on March 25, 1987 in Gainesville, Fl and grew up in Sarasota Fl. She has received a BA in Theater and a Minor in Mathematics from the University of Florida and an MFA in Theater Pedagogy with an emphasis on Movement and Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University. She has also completed the first half of the Laban Institute for Movement Studies program in New York City to become a Certified Movement Analyst. Marie was a nationally ranked gymnast and avid reader growing up, and she has been and will continue to be a choreographer, teacher, writer, researcher, actor, and dancer.