

Be Fluent in Your Other Native Language

精通肢體語言-論拉班動作分析

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the origins, purposes, outcomes, applications, and aspirations of the Certification Program in Laban Movement Studies, a program offered in various locations around the world but centered in New York City. The body/mind integration and holistic approach has been reflected in the Laban theory, making it accessible and valuable for both the Western and Eastern scholars and practitioners.

Keywords: Rudolf Laban, Irmgard Bartenieff, Laban Movement Analysis, Bartenieff Fundamentals, somatics, dance therapy, nonverbal communication

摘要

本文全面介紹了拉班動作研究認證培訓項目的起源、目的、成果、應用和願景。這是一個以紐約為中心並向全世界提供培訓的項目。身心合一以及整體觀在拉班理論中得以體現，從而使其對中西方學者和實踐者合宜並充滿價值。

關鍵字: 魯道夫拉班，茵格芭特妮芙，拉班動作分析，芭特妮芙基礎，身心學，舞蹈治療，非言語溝通

Laban is movement's greatest map-maker...Hodgson compares him to Stravinsky, Picasso, and Stanislavsky, and it wouldn't surprise me if he turned out to be more significant than all of these. (James Davidson, The Daily Telegraph, London. July 21, 2001)

1. Laban and Bartenieff

Rudolf Laban, almost without intention, shifted the world of dance and other forms of movement performance from training for distinct aspirational skills to educating for movement writ large. His work impacts so many disciplines today: dance and somatics practices, performance and creation of performance works, interaction analysis, leadership studies, diplomacy, community-based work, elementary and secondary education, learning theory, dance/movement therapy, coaching sports, robotics design and human-computer interaction, neuroscience, and fields as yet unknown.

Laban was born in what is now Bratislava, Slovakia, in 1879, but what was then a center for the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. His father was a military leader and his mother a Socialist. Laban grew up in Budapest, traveling with his parents to Istanbul and the east, and studying with a Sufi teacher. He was deeply informed by a family friend or relative in the theatre at the time, by puppet theatre, and by the military splendor of the time.

Because of his early travels, particularly the study with the Sufi teacher, he had an inherent understanding of the integrative nature of the world, including the natural and spiritual world. He grew up with principles of unity in the face of dualisms: a Yin and Yang approach to understanding the range of human behaviors he observed and felt.

He studied painting, influenced by the theatre, architecture and the Blaue Reiter group, including Kandinsky and others of the times, learned to dance and fence at the military academy near Vienna, and ultimately, became a dance theorist and choreographer.

Much of his work was influenced by the scholars and anarchists of the times: pre-World War I. He developed a summer program at Monte Verita, a community lying above the village of Ascona, Switzerland, and Lake Maggiore. Here he thought about and created movement practices that released the soul and mind of the dancer and that included participatory community-building through dance.

During the First World War, he continued to refine his analysis, and to write down his thoughts and evolving beliefs about dance and its impact on the world. He had several dance muses throughout his life; perhaps the most well-known were Mary Wigman, who did much to clarify the pedagogy and style of tanztheatre, as it came to be called, and Kurt Jooss, who utilized Laban's emergent map of movement to create such masterpieces of dance at *The Green Table* and *Big City*.

After World War I ended, Laban's work focused on small chamber groups and something he called movement choirs, where groups of largely untrained movers came together to develop democratic collective works for the purpose of community.

He had to leave Germany in 1936-7, because a large movement choir he had developed for the pre-Olympic festivities in 1936 was banned. Goebbels, the Minister of Culture for the Nazis, saw the final rehearsal at which Laban spoke about the need for the individual, as well as the group, to find truth in the living, moving body, not the ideologies that abounded. The performance was cancelled and Laban's offices were seized. He left for Paris, sick and broken.

He eventually went to England and found new outlets for his work in time-motion studies in the factories where young women were working, in the theatre for movement and character development, in dance for specificity of style and clarity of story, and in therapy and education. His analysis, consisting of overlapping categories of Space, Body, and Effort (and eventually, Shape) was applied to diagnostic, prescriptive, and creative uses in all such fields.

His group work with the movement choirs continued to evolve and became the basis for community dance processes all over the western world. The community work is participatory and democratic, drawing on the observations and analysis by the choreographer of the patterns emerging from improvisational interactions.

But because Laban had no aspirations or designs for ownership of his work, it is used but often unacknowledged. Laban was a brilliant yet wounded man, both generous and brutal in his dealings with his students, but ultimately a bringer of great gifts. He gave away, or perhaps allowed, aspects of the work to (go to) selected students: his time-motion studies to Warren Lamb, his theater work to Geraldine Stephenson, the education aspects to Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Marion North, the somatics work to Irmgard Bartenieff.

Irmgard Bartenieff had been a student of Laban's in the 1920s, in Germany. When she and her Jewish husband decided to leave Germany, in 1939, she was already a physical therapist and dance notator. They arrived in New York City, purportedly on the last boat to leave Germany before the invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II.

Her work focused on the body level of Laban's work, drawing on her training in somatics, massage. She developed a series of experiential exercises called the Basic Six Fundamentals, applying her understanding of Space and Effort, as she studied these with Laban and Warren Lamb, to polio patients, injured dancers, and to the training of dance/movement therapists.

In the early 1970s, Irmgard took on several assistants: young dancers and students of psychology and anthropology, and began to train them, informally, in her methods of physical and dance-movement therapy, observation, and what she called "correctives". These were exercises/experientials of efficient and expressive movement, generally applied to dancers as practitioners and therapists as observers.

Also in the early 1970s, Irmgard was approached by Alan Lomax to help him develop a systematic approach to analyzing and seeing large patterns in global dance practices, for the purpose of comparing the dances to the work and courtship behaviors of a culture and for comparing the contents of dances between and across cultures and regions. Irmgard brought one of her young assistants, Forrestine Paulay, into the project, entitled *Choreometrics*.

In the beginning of this project, Bartenieff and Paulay saw such details and individual differences between dancers within a specific dance culture, but Lomax insisted they look at the patterns the dancers privileged and had in common, in order to get at the cultural values. The global analysis was critiqued for drawing facile conclusions, but the language and skills of observation developed for the project are useful and important in order to approach what Lomax called "cultural equity."

Because of her pioneering work in training dance/movement therapists (which was at that time—1973-- a newly-identified profession), cultural anthropologists, dancers and other performers in what was called Laban Movement Analysis, Bartenieff began a series of more formalized training programs through the Dance Notation Bureau in New York City. In 1978, the faculty and students of this certificate program founded the Laban Institute of Movement Studies, and began structuring the training program into a 500+ hour curriculum, with assessments in speaking, writing and moving the analysis.

Irmgard Bartenieff died in 1982, and in 1983, the Institute legally became the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies. The somatics work taught became known as Bartenieff Fundamentalssm.

2. The Program

“We are wired to respond to people as their movement, not their static appearance. We know this from scientific work on babies’ perception. Babies see the other not as appearance, as objects, but as EXPRESSION AND MOTOR ACTION, and further, as action they can mimic; they are already shopping for their own second natures. Babies, like us all, respond to others not as objects, but as dancers.” - Vincent Deary, How We Are: Book one of the how to live trilogy

The current iteration of the Certification Program in Laban Movement Studies, as it is officially named, consists of 520 hours of training, across several different formats, and resulting in qualified movement analysts who apply the work to a wide variety of disciplines.

The Yearlong format is offered only in New York City and consists of classes that meet for four hours a day, four days a week, over nine months. It is the quickest and most condensed program format we offer. A weekend program, consisting of 28 weekends of 16 hours per weekend, is currently offered in Maryland. Modular programs, consisting of 120 hours per 16-17 day module, over four modules, are offered around the world, through memos of agreement between the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies and partner institutions or organizations. The additional hours that are not direct instructional time are dedicated to the research, analysis, and writing of a final project or thesis by the student, advised by one faculty member.

No matter the location or format, the programs are interchangeable, and the same basic material is taught in each. Students can and do shift locations and formats, depending upon their life circumstances. We developed these formats in order to accommodate the fluid nature of contemporary life. Most of our students are adult learners and very much in charge of when and where they can study; they have the kind of agency that allows them to make choices based on health, resources, economic concerns, and capacity for travel.

In the first quarter or module of the program, classes are distinct and involve the somatics practice of the Bartenieff Fundamentalssm, Theory of Laban Movement Analysis. Seminars in the history and applications of Laban’s and Bartenieff’s work, and Observation, using Motif Analysis. The assessment at the end of the quarter or module requires the presenter to move, speak and write, as well as reflect through analysis, on movement through the Laban lens.

After this quarter or module is completed, the classes become increasingly integrated, and can include Bartenieff’s work as a prelude to theory or observation, or a seminar can consist of observation and analysis as well as some theory instruction.

By the end of the full course of study, including final written and movement assessments, and the successful completion and presentation of the final project, students matriculate into becoming Certified Movement Analysts.

A Certified Movement Analyst:

- Has knowledge of **Laban Movement Analysis** and understands how it is applied within various fields and contexts.

- Has been evaluated in her/his ability to physically demonstrate and verbally articulate concepts related to Body, Effort, Shape, Space, and Relationship; from both broad and specific perspectives.
- Has demonstrated the ability to verbally articulate and physically demonstrate the basic principles of **Bartenieff Fundamentalssm**, and understands their relationship to LMA—both theoretically and practically.
- Has the ability to apply theory in practice through research and creative work.
- Has an understanding of her/his own movement style in a variety of contexts, including interaction.
- Has experience observing, recording, and reading movement data using: motifs, phrase writing, coding sheets, video and live observation.

In other words, a CMA is fluent in the language of movement, with the ability to observe, analyze, replicate, reconstruct, and coach movement.

The educational value of the Certification Program goes beyond the straightforward outcomes listed above, however. The Certification Program strives to be a model for adult and empowered learning. In addition to providing experiences that directly impact well-being, the material taught provides a means whereby mastery is developed: not mastery over others, but mastery of movement, as Laban wrote. In the adult learning model, students contribute to the curriculum by bringing in their own expertise and experiences, and in so doing, add to the learning environment for all. Movement does not occur in a vacuum after all—it emerges from, is a result of, and drives human behavior and expression.

To a certain extent, students in the program engage in a process of building skills and compiling a portfolio of evidence of competencies, layering and deepening content knowledge and contextual understanding. The final project demonstrates the broadening and deepening of these skills and applications.

The trajectory of the program is from part to whole: from categorical definitions and specific practices to utilization of the entire system in the world at large, with the use of underlying data informing the analysis and utilization of the whole. It is also from the personal to the universal, in which the personal exploration of one's own patterns and habits of mind and body extends to unpacking personal bias and predilections and comparing these patterns with those of others: individuals in dyads, groups, and cultures.

In the past ten years, we have seen an increased number of Asian students coming to the Certification Program to be trained to become a CMA. The majority of them are from South Korea which is an interesting phenomenon. In the future, we are expecting more interest from Asia. As a result, we will start a new Certification Program in China in 2016 to bring the training closer to the Chinese and other Asian students. This is part of LIMS' strategy to spread the Laban/Bartenieff work worldwide and to learn from other cultures about human movement.

3. Applications of LMA/BF

Each student's process is unique and based on their experiences and curiosities. Some begin with an interest in a discipline or research area and shift to a project based in

developing personal insights; others discover a new arena for study that leads to a new career. All are interested in impacting the world at large or the inner world, or both, or somewhere in-between. The project is both integrative and transformative, and recent projects have added to our understanding of the work and its uses.

3.1. Human Movement Performance

Dance: One recent CMA, a member of a performing repertory company, did a project in which she analyzed video of herself in performance: before beginning the Laban Certification Program, partway through the program, and after completing the program. Her analysis revealed increasing clarity in phrasing and Effort qualities, particularly.

Theatre: Several projects utilize Laban Movement Analysis for character development. One current project involves defining two archetypal characters using Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentalssm and addressing the relationship between them in a movement theatre work.

Sports: Students have used Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentalssm to analyze and coach sports, including track and field events, squash, basketball, and volleyball, with results that include increased performance factors.

Leadership: Certified Movement Analysts also have coached business and political leaders, in order to clarify personal style and to be able to “read the room.” CMAs also analyze leaders in the media, including political candidates.

3.2. Therapeutic Applications

Dance/Movement Therapy: Irmgard Bartenieff was one of the founders of the field of dance/movement therapy, and current training programs require at least a passing understanding of Laban Movement Analysis. Some projects have included analysis of movement interactions between a dance therapist-Certification student and a client presenting with a particular array of problems, including anxiety and depression, and video analysis of therapist attentiveness in group psychotherapy.

Physical Therapy: Several Certified Movement Analysts are also physical therapists, and utilize Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentalssm to address physical challenges in their clients. Recent projects include a Certification trainee who is also a physical therapist using a warm water environment to engage the client in body connectivity and mobilization. The client had mild cerebral palsy and benefitted from the approaches to full expressivity and inner organization that the experiences allowed.

Somatics: Many Certification students combine Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentalssm with a variety of somatics practices, including yoga, Feldenkrais, Alexander, Pilates, etc. One recent student redesigned her yoga practice based on Bartenieff Fundamentalssm principles; others have written about the commonalities between practices.

General Health Issues: Occasionally, a Certification student with particular skills can be approached by a student or client to address a health issue, such as a recent cancer diagnosis or digestive condition. The research that the student conducts in the course of designing a movement program for someone dealing with major health issues

is not in the service of a cure, but in finding what is useful in movement to the client. For example, one project was working with a young woman who had a diagnosis of a heart condition. As a result of the work she did, she was able to relax, breathe more deeply, and to move with a sense of flow, all of which supported her in dealing with the diagnosis.

3.3. Educational Applications

Infant Development: the Kestenberg Movement Profile and Body-Mind Centering are derivations of Laban Movement Analysis that address infant and young child development patterns. Notably, Suzi Tortora has written extensively about her elaboration of LMA, dance/movement therapy, and Kestenberg work into something she calls Ways of Seeing (Tortora, 2005).

Learning in K-12: A number of Certification students have utilized LMA for curriculum design in dance, and conducted research using LMA as an observation and intervention tool. My own project was on my work with five dyslexic children, each one unique, and each one with reading difficulties. The Laban Movement Analysis work helped each develop better visual tracking skills, and helped them to decode the world more conventionally.

Arts Education, Arts Integration, Creative Process, and Learning Theory are all informed by the abilities of Certified Movement Analysts to observe, analyze, develop and implement movement experiences that help learners integrate and deepen their understanding of concepts.

3.4. Choreometrics

From the Association for Cultural Equity's website:

Since dance is the most repetitious, synchronic of all expressive behaviors, it has turned out to be a kind of touchstone for human adaptation.

—Alan Lomax, 1975

In 1965 Irmgard Bartenieff, Forrestine Paulay, and Alan Lomax launched Choreometrics, a study of dance as formalized, culturally conditioned communicative behavior. They wanted to learn how human movement disposes energy through space and time, and how this changes from one environment to another. They began by surveying a small sample of dance and movement as recorded on film as a way to identify elements of style from a cross-cultural perspective, and to develop measures for describing and scales for rating them. When additional documentary footage had been collected, a sample representative of the world was coded and statistically analyzed in order to discover the geographic distribution and interrelation of these variables, and their correlation to major systems of human adaptation (Equity, 2015).

A number of students have explored cross-cultural dance practices, often using Laban Movement Analysis to unpack details of their own cultural dance practices. Students have analyzed Korean dance, Belly dance, American vernacular dance, Indian

Classical dance, Moroccan dance, Flamenco, and many others, identifying salient features of the forms and giving the dances context and content, both. The application of Laban Movement Analysis to Korean, Chinese, Indonesian and other cultural dance practices reveals the underpinnings of the patterns of behavior that are an essential part of the core beliefs of a culture, and help us to appreciate the rich diversity in the world.

3.5. Technology

Recently, students have become interested in utilizing Laban Movement Analysis with technology. Current students have been developing applications of human movement components to a range of technological innovations.

Human/Computer Interaction: Current research includes the development of annotation and tagging methods for film and video, using Laban Movement analysis categories and terminology, and analyzing the ways in which people utilize devices such as smart phones and pads from a movement perspective. The goal of some of this research is to find possibilities for machines to help people be more expressive and clearly communicative and for movement analysts to help machines respond more readily to expressed needs of humans.

Robotics/Prosthetics: The work of developing human-like expressivity in machines has great impact on the fields of robotics and prosthetics. It is one thing to get a robot to execute movement, especially manipulation of objects, which is very complex. It is another to develop algorithms for machines such as exoskeletons and prosthetic hands, for example, to be able to express the communicative needs of the user.

3.6. Movement Studies

Animals: A small number of studies have been done on animal movement behavior, unfortunately, none of the studies was published. Certified Movement Analysts consulted on bear and dolphin studies, and conducted observations on bonobos. The author tells an anecdote about analyzing one of a group of horses for a play, EQUUS, in which three actors portray horses. The horse farm owner was not present at the time of the analysis, which was reconstructed in the movement studio and subsequently, on the stage. But when the owner came to see the play, she identified which horse of the several had been observed.

Animal studies are controversial because some believe animals do not have conscious expression, but the studies that have been done do show that despite common behaviors within a particular breed or collective, unique differences in focus, phrasing, activation patterns, etc. can be noted.

Style Analysis: Analyzing the baseline style of an artist is something several Movement Analysts have done: these include well-known choreographers and performers, as well as visual artists. Laban Movement Analysis reveals unique characteristics and patterns as well as identifying habits, as in the animal and leadership analysis studies mentioned above. Such portraits of individuals also reveal the biases and preferences of the observer as well, and these insights lead to awareness of the bias when observing in other contexts as well.

Personal Process: It is for all of the above reasons that many projects are quite personal in nature. Students create movement sessions, problems, and challenges for themselves, film the beginning, middle and ends of these explorations, and analyze the shifts with their advisor. The ability to self-reflect with a sense of the wholeness of what is possible yields true objectivity. As James Moffet states:

Real objectivity is not impersonality but wholeness, the filling out of personality to more nearly match the width of the world.

4. Summary

The education program known as the Certification Program in Laban Movement Studies is a post-graduate course of study involving the development of movement expertise and observation skills, applications of the work to a variety of fields of study and practice, and extensive assessment of mastery of the material in moving, speaking and writing. It is the equivalent in hours to a Masters' degree, but it is, in fact, a beginning of a lifelong journey involving knowledge of the origins of the work, awareness of what goes in in any given movement moment, and continual development of the skills and understanding of this diverse and rich field of human movement studies.

5. Addendum

By Tony Yu Zhou, Inspirees Institute

Laban has been a legendary figure in the West but his influence continued and expanded to the world, including the East by his protégés in the decades following his death (1958). What draws the interest from the East in Laban and his work and how might this question be addressed from a Chinese historical perspective?

Laban was very much influenced by ancient Greek philosopher Plato who was born around 427BC, in the same era of Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, the fundamental Chinese philosophy. Plato's ideas about space and shape intrigued Laban (Hodgson, 2001) and his Space Harmony theories were based on Platonic solids.

There are many links and commonalities between the Eastern and Western ancient philosophy that relate to Laban theory. The two founders, Plato and Lao-Tzu, put their thoughts into their works *Timaeus* and *Tao Te Ching*. In *Timaeus* Plato recognizes a power behind the cosmos and indicates that the creator has an overall plan and purpose to create the universe according to certain geometrical formulae. The *Tao Te Ching* describes the Tao (the Way) as the source and ideal of all existence: it is unseen, but not transcendent, immensely powerful yet supremely humble, being the root of all things. People have desires and free will and many act "unnaturally," upsetting the natural balance of the Tao. The *Tao Te Ching* intends to lead students to a "return" to their natural state, in harmony with Tao. The Platonic philosophy led to the development of astronomy and mathematics, geometry in the West on which Laban theory is based. Taoism, on the other hand, led to *I Ching* (The Book of Change), the Chinese counterpart methodology to understanding the nature of change.

The Space Harmony of Laban seems very much compatible to the cosmic Tao and to the Taoist expression “Integration of heaven (Nature) and human (天人合一)”. The Scale in Space Harmony and the formatted movements in Taichi derived from Taoism practice are quite in line with each other.

More than a half century has gone since Laban passed away. His inspiring work helps us to reflect and further advance our understanding of ourselves and universe at both the microcosm and macrocosm levels, and it encourages us to share and bridge Eastern and Western philosophy and perspectives.

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