

Contact Improvisation:
Integrating Laban Movement Analysis
as
Creative Connection

Rhythm of Risk

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LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS FINAL PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

For my certification project I chose a Teaching Project for which I created a two-day workshop titled CONTACT IMPROVISATION: INTEGRATING LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS AS CREATIVE CONNECTION (14 total contact hours). My project goal and pedagogical mission was to integrate the two approaches to movement education in order to: 1) improve my capacity as a designer/facilitator of Contact Improvisation, and 2) to enhance, support, and deepen the physical and expressive experience of workshop participants. I applied the language, intent, and pedagogical style of Laban Movement Analysis to the lesson plans of my original workshop titled CONTACT IMPROVISATION AS CREATIVE CONNECTION. In order to help me access my progress as a facilitator, I chose for the new workshop a population of mostly professional artists with performance ambitions and with some, but limited, experience in Contact Improvisation. I invited five university Theatre & Dance faculty, an MFA Theatre candidate, a set designer, a social worker, and two senior dance students. A PHD Theatre candidate assisted me. Goals for the workshop were as follows:

1. To facilitate true embodiment in expression rather than imitation of outward form through deep connection to *sensation* as communicator of our multiple ways of knowing Self.
2. To facilitate artistic risk-taking by establishing trust with self and “other” via shared physical and psychological kinesphere, i.e. attunement.
3. To enhance one’s “touch literacy,” or non-verbal listening skills.

4. To investigate intuition (interpretation of physical sensations) through improvisation as the channel to one's essential nature.
5. To transcend self-consciousness as an inroad to honesty and the courage to allow one's self to be seen.

BACKGROUND

In this "post" postmodern era of dance, with advances in the study of kinesiology and the psychophysical effects on the body, a body-mind approach to movement is becoming an increasingly critical need for the serious performer. Laban Movement Studies and Contact Improvisation (CI) are two such approaches that address these needs.

Most Western, traditional Modern dance training emphasizes mere imitation of form. This results in outward appearance of expression, lacking connection to the dancer's inner life and thus ultimately disappoints in its lack of authentic embodiment and consequently, universal artistic appeal. Philosophically and practically, Contact Improvisation and Laban Movement Studies share an intrinsic approach to movement. Both approaches emphasize, *through direct touch*, the release of inefficient neuromuscular patterns that inhibit the sensation of the body's true kinesiological pathways to integrated, spontaneous, expressive movement. Both trainings emphasize a *psychophysical* and *improvisational* approach to movement as well as releasing inefficient neuromuscular patterning. In my opinion, both approaches focus on establishing an inner connectivity *leading* to outer expressivity, thus more personally authentic movement. The relationship between the two approaches can be established by comparing their definitions.

The LMA System consists of categories, Body, Effort, Shape, and Space (BESS) and their phrased relationship. Bartenieff Fundamentals (BF), although incorporating all the other categories, is the foundational study under the Body

category. I will compare BF's definition to that of Contact Improvisation because it closely parallels my approach to teaching CI.. For instance, BF focuses on the physical body level of awareness, but also in a holistic approach, emphasizes a willingness to listen to, attend to one's inner feelings influencing their movement response; therefore a full bodily knowing. "Bartenieff Fundamentals is an approach to basic body training that deals with patterning connections in the body according to principles of efficient movement functioning within a context that encourages personal expression and full psychophysical involvement" (Hackney 31). "Contact Improvisation is a duet movement form. Two people move together, in contact, maintaining a spontaneous physical dialogue through the kinesthetic signals of shared weight...The body, in order to be open to the sensations of momentum, weight, and balance, must learn to release excess muscular tension and abandon a certain amount of volition to the natural flow of movement at hand" (Lepkoff 55).

Inherent in the teaching strategies of both techniques is conveying information through direct touch. *Sensation* through proprioceptive stimulation becomes the true teacher. An improvisational exercise almost always follows the direct touch experience allowing the mover to, as Peggy Hackney says, "sense and feel what is fundamental in my own organism and what is fundamental about how I relate to the world" (Hackney 33). As performers, how do we express our authentic selves? It springs from our connection to our psychophysical bodies - the fundamental, *sensate* experience of the emotional content of our lives.

OVERVIEW: RHYTHM OF RISK

In light of twenty-five years of facilitating the creative process at the University level, I have concluded that the most universal vitalizing factor in student's progress toward true embodiment of unique personal expression is the gradual interplay and emergence of feelings of trust with self and trust within

the group. My studies in LMA have given me an invaluable palette of tools for creating a classroom environment infused with enough trust to risk change and reveal Self.

I call this pedagogical strategy the “Rhythm of Risk”, which describes the process students encounter navigating the dynamic balance between Stability and Mobility. In this paper, I define psychological stability as trust and psychological mobility as risk-taking. From my studies in Body Mind Centering™, I learned that *Stability precedes Mobility* both in the physical and psychological realms. For example, picture the toddler clinging to his mother’s dress with one hand on her dress and the other hand reaching toward a beckoning relative’s outstretched arms. The child hesitantly takes a few steps out, reluctantly letting go of the dress. He repeatedly runs back to the safety of the mom, enabling him to gain enough trust (Stability) to risk (Mobility) getting a little closer each time to his desired goal. A student’s technical and creative skills likewise can soar when supported by the psychological skills of trust and empathy. Establishment of trust and empathy with self and their fellow artists builds an atmosphere of encouragement and cooperation, diminishing insecurity and competition. As with the toddler, this atmosphere of trust and empathy promoted risk-taking (Mobility). The creative process is best served by attending to both physical and psychological needs in the classroom. As a teacher my challenge is to create such an atmosphere via the Rhythm of Risk, physical and emotional stabilizing activities interplaying with physically and emotionally mobilizing challenges.

How much time should I devote to experiences that encourage trust and empathy (Stability)? How much time should I devote to experiences challenging student’s emotional and technical skills, which necessitate risk-taking (Mobility)? When challenged, students report that changing comfortable habits, psychophysically digging a little deeper rather than staying safe in what has

traditionally given them “strokes”, requires a sense of letting go, a psychophysical surrender into Mobility as I have previously defined it. My strategy begins classes with a great deal of time devoted to activities that encourage trust and empathy –“bonding”– followed by a small amount of time for physical and emotional risk-taking. As the risk-taking increases, the bonding activities exponentially decrease (see chart 20). However, toward the end of the learning experience, the risk-taking and “bonding” merge; one *becomes* the other. Students report that greater risk-taking elicits, almost demands, more trust and empathy. A participant may not distinguish between the two activities. A student who finds herself suddenly perched precariously high on a spinning partner’s shoulders, demands of herself and her partner enormous focus and trust. The greater the risk, the greater the demand for focused concentration, which serves “to push out self- consciousness” allowing “opportunities for self-transcendence...and, When not preoccupied with ourselves, we actually have a chance to expand the concept of who we are” (Csikszentmihalyi 64-65). In a classroom structured via Rhythm of Risk we will increase opportunity to risk self-discovery, to risk change, to risk revealing Self [see goal #6].

Another principle in structuring the Rhythm of Risk points to LMA’s concern with Phrasing, based on the polar opposites of Exertion/Recuperation (Bartenieff 71). Taking care not to overload a class or individual’s risk-taking capacity must be considered in the Phrasing of the Rhythm of Risk classroom. Following Exertion in a highly charged risk activity, Recuperation is established by returning to a nurturing, *stabilizing* activity involving partners touching and listening for growing and shrinking in Shape Flow Support (). The touching activity is organized around Breath () and clusters as Carving () with Shape Flow Support () in Passion Drive, Light Weight, Free Flow, Sustained Time () transitioning into Dream State, Diminished Light, Free Flow () into Free Flow as the touch is released. A period of time is required for integration between challenging experiences. The time it takes between “when a person falls

off his horse and the time it takes for him to get back on” establishes his unique Rhythm of Risk. Both teacher and student share the Rhythm of Risk, the interplay between Stability and Mobility. My art is “scoring” the rhythm; their art is navigating the rhythm.

Investigating Dr. Judith Kestenberg’s theories on Stability-Mobility in relationship to trust and empathy, as suggested by my advisor, Janice Meaden, was the pivotal, most inspiring point in my experience as a teacher. For years I had been curious why Contact Improvisation seemed to generate feelings of trust, appreciation, belonging, groundedness, and wholeness. In fact, “It feels like love.” was the spontaneous verbal outburst of a psychotherapist colleague of mine while we were Contact dancing on her living room floor in preparation for co-writing an article on CI. In the article, my colleague likened the reciprocal relationship between Contact partners to the mutual reciprocal relationship between infant and child and client and therapist. That was long ago when I did not have the theoretical background to comprehend the concept. Investigating Dr. Kestenberg’s work was just the lens I needed to theoretically comprehend and thus intelligently integrate into my workshop her theories on the principles of Kinesthetic Identification via matching Shape Flow Support () and tension – flow [her word for the Motion Factor, Flow (), with its elements Free () and Bound ()].

Dr. Kestenberg extrapolated from Warren Lamb and his Shaping ideas and Rudolph Laban’s movement analysis system, her own highly systemized observation and theory [Kestenberg Movement Profile] regarding the relationship between successful, mother-child “mutual holding” in the nursing embrace and the psychosomatic imprint for one’s successful neuromotor and psychological development. With Stability-Mobility framing her theories, she posited that, “among other influences, the individual’s psychological development of trust and empathy is derived from the mother-infant’s successful

matching of tension-flow (instilling empathy) and Shape Flow Support (instilling trust)” (Kestenberg 346). Trust involves predictability and emerges in the affective domain as *stability will return to me even if I risk differentiation through mobility, i.e., extending myself out into the world.*

Stability, both physical and psychological, is sourced from “primary, successful Kinesthetic Identification with the mother as the *two of them* [italics mine]transform the infant’s primitive stabilizing reflexes into mobilizing ego-controlled modes of coping with the environment” (Kestenberg 361). Kestenberg explains that psychological stability and mobility are developed via the mother’s and the child’s ability to accommodate (adjust) or “match” each other’s nursing and or environmental needs. Kestenberg borrows from Laban’s Effort () category to convey the picture of the successful holding environment. For example she states, “Efforts are motion factors suitable for coping with environmental forces of space, gravity, and time.” For example from Laban’s Weight ()category, “She [mother] must be able to evaluate relative weights and use strong or light efforts to lift her own weight , the child’s weight, and that of objects around her.” In the Time () category, she must “...know how to accelerate to catch a child’s fall or decelerate in order not to rush the child.” From Space () category, “...she may place him in the crib with precision [Direct Space ()] without attuning to his needs to stretch, twist, and change tensions and he settles into his new location” thereby inadvertently *not attending* via Indirect Space () (Kestenberg 245). Borrowing from Laban’s Flow () category, Kestenberg refers to mother and infant matching tension in nursing i.e., “The mouth seizes the nipple in free flow and pulls on it in bound flow...” From the Shape category of Growing () and Shrinking (), the child’s body “...comes closer to the mother during inhaling (growing) seizing the nipple and shrinking away while exhaling, pausing, and swallowing” (Kestenberg 363). What I find enlightening is the correlation between the constant “readjustments of relatedness established in the parent-infant holding”

via “matching rhythmicity” [Kestenberg’s language] in Effort Factors () and their Elements: Weight, Light-Strong (), Time , Quick-Sustained (), and Space, Direct-Indirect (), Flow, Bound-Free () [Kestenberg ‘s tension flow] and the category Shape Flow Support () and Shape Qualities, () (Kestenberg, 344) and the constant mutual accommodating found in skilled Contact Improvisation via all the same categories in the LMA System. I find this correlation also supports my Rhythm of Risk theory incorporating Stability (physical and psychological trust) and Mobility (physical and psychological risk-taking). In summary, Kestenberg believes the adult ego is, for the most part, formed by mutual accommodating in the mother-infant relationship and likewise, she posits that an adult, therapy client’s ego can benefit from a similar reciprocal, “mutual attunement in tension-flow and mutual adjustment in shape-flow” from the therapist (Kestenberg 362). Later in the paper I will describe the Heart Dance, a culminating experience in my CI workshop, which I believe effectively mirrors this mother/infant relationship from an adult perspective.

Another key to how I applied Kestenberg’s ideas to my theory of Rhythm of Risk is identified in an article by a psychiatrist who mentored under Kestenberg, Dr. Sossin. Commenting on Kestenberg’s theories, he states that in the mother-infant mutual holding, “perfect harmony is not the goal”, but successful readjustments in “spatial and relational boundaries”. Thus *differentiation* associated with mobility, coupled with harmonious matching in mutual holding is the goal for successful psychosomatic development” (Sossin 2). Kestenberg further states that this early Kinesthetic Identification “*need not be considered a metaphor, but rather an adult model for a stable environment which facilitates mobility of thought processes*” [italics is mine] (Kestenberg 362). I offer that the practice of Contact Improvisation, integrating the LMA Systems and Kestenberg’s ideas on matching and accommodating in all four Effort Factors (), and Shape Qualities (), may create a learning environment to re-establish or

“repattern” the artist’s ability to trust, to risk being different, and to authentically express Self.

Framing my teaching strategies with the Rhythm of Risk” as Stability-Mobility and incorporating the LMA System allowed even the shyest students to miraculously open-up, risk moving past habitual work into surprisingly inventive expressions. As Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen would say, “I could see and feel a shift in the mind of the room.” In this paper I shall demonstrate how I used the LMA Systems to fundamentally *change* my process as a designer/facilitator. Through greater theoretical understanding of this work and through reverence for the mystery of physically “working the patterns”, I gratefully changed/alterd my original workshop lesson plans. The success of the original workshop had given me an avenue of prestige, comfort, and predictability, i.e. Stability. Integrating the LMA System into the lesson plans was an enlivening endeavor into personal Mobility characterized by exhilarating risk-taking, heightened focus and ultimately deep satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY/PROCESS

My process was to physically move through each exercise of my previous lesson plans while analyzing what aspect of the LMA System best supported that activity . Given that “functional capacities underlie expressive capabilities” (Hackney 19), I started with the Body category of BESS and considered which of the six Patterns of Total Body Connectivity (PTBC) most clarified the experience.

From the six PTBC, Breath () and Core-Distal () proved to be the most effective “training wheels” for the students. Breath fundamentally supports and enlivens all six PTBC. Keeping Kestenbergs theories in mind, I integrated Shape Flow Support () and Flow () awareness activities that, as I structure them, effectively mirrored the physical and psychological, nurturing quality of the

mother/child relationship. LMA would call this a cluster organized around the infant baseline of Breath (), Shape Flow Support () and Flow Flux (). As a composite, this relationship was described by Kestenberg as Kinesthetic Identification/Attunement, which among other factors reflects merging in a physical and psychological Near to Medium Kinesphere(). In LMA it would be called Effort/Shape identification. Flow Factor () is associated with feelings and “establishes relationship and communication” (Laban 83). Thus focus on Flow () contributed greatly to the desired psychophysical attunement among participants. In an effort to establish this relationship, I physically and vocally delivered instructions from Spell Drive: Diminished Light Weight, Diminished Bound, and Diminished Direct Space (). I believe this, along with the quality of touch engendered by my cueing with various intensities Light, Direct, Free Flow () touch, magically created constellations organized around Spell Drive () in both partners. Also contributing to Kinesthetic Attunement was a request for participants to let go of any “snags” they may have with their partner’s personality and, from a state of *reverence*, to focus on their partner’s spirit. All these methodical instructions elicited in partners a near trance state infused with Effort/Shape Attunement or Kestenberg’s term, Kinesthetic Attunement.

This desired psychophysical relationship was actualized by partners listening to each other’s breath while simultaneously adjusting to/accommodating each other via Effort Factors: Flow (), Weight (), Time () and Space (), Shape Flow Support (), and Shape Qualities (). A detailed description follows. Partner B sits cross-legged on the floor. Partner A, using Carving Mode of Shape Change (), molds her hands to B’s side ribs as B activates growing and shrinking in Shape Flow Support, Widen and Narrow (). A is instructed to reciprocally adjust the touch of her hands to B’s breath, via fluxing in Flow, Free to Bound (); Weight, Strong to Light (); in Time, Quick to Sustained(); and using Direct Spatial attending() to B. Although I instructed A to

accommodate B, in essence, both A and B end up adjusting to each other reflecting a pervasive, LMA Fundamental Theme -- Inner affects Outer and visa versa. One might consider B, who is receiving the touch, to be in Shape Flow as a Mode () because she is responding to her personal, inner environment, i.e., affected by A's hands; however, the Inner/Outer, qualitative attitude is one of caring attention to each other. The overall effect is "I'm you and you are me" and we are attuning or matching in Shape Flow () as a Mode of Shape Change.

Partners continue in this fashion as they move through Shape Flow Support, Lengthen and Shorten () with A's hands on B's head [I instructed B to feel his/her coccyx and sitz bones lengthen into the floor], and Bulge and Hollow () with A's hands on the front and back of B's pelvis. Partners were encouraged to "come from their center Core" as they respectively touched their partner's head, pelvis and side ribs. This partnered, Shape Flow Support () activity proved to be a reliable pathway to Kinesthetic Attunement providing trust and empathy - the Stability phase of Rhythm of Risk.

Even more exciting for me as a teacher was to see the change when I continued the same exercise but using Shape Quality () terms: Rising () and Sinking (), Advancing () and Retreating (), and Spreading () and Enclosing (). All I did was Effortfully "texturize" my voice matching the qualitative Effort Affinities such as Rising () with Passion Drive: Light, Sustained, Free Flow Effort () and Sinking () with a Strong, Sustained, Flow Flux Effort (). The Weight Factor () in the Vertical Dimension () was the Affinity and the Time () and Flow Factors () were my choice. I included Flow () to encourage more "goingness". The students' responses were remarkably more *sensate* in revealing the process of their Opening () and Closing () shapes. I believe the Shape Quality () words along with emphasis on Flow () simply elicit more personal imagery and imagination fueling one's inner impulses and thus more *sensate aliveness* in students. Afterwards, participants were encouraged to journal and share their unique response coming from their

“personal filter”; and thus move the process into personal “meaning -making”, an important stage in Charles Johnson’s Creative System’s Theory and a stage seamlessly imbedded in my IMS studies.

CORE-DISTAL: FUNCTIONAL STABILITY & MOBILITY

Core-Distal connectivity explorations served the functional aspects of both Stability and Mobility. However as in the previous exercises, the acute attentiveness of the following activity engendered an expansive, relaxed feeling of trust and Stability. To develop Core-Distal connectivity () supported by Breath (), we began with partner (B) lying on the floor in a flat Wall Shape (), or X position. Partner A places her hand, Carving () with Light () touch on B’s Core (A’s thumb on navel, hand molding toward pubic bone), while listening/feeling for B’s Growing and Shrinking breath progress into Shape Flow Support, Bulge and Hollow () in the Sagittal Plane (). B is instructed to sense and feel the flow of her breath from Core to Distal ends. A is instructed to match the Mobile State, Time and Flow () of B’s breath while also giving Free Flow fluxing into Bound Flow, into Bound Flow with Diminished Weight Sensing () resistance on B’s Distal ends (head, feet, hands). I emphasized that both A and B simultaneously Yield and Push, matching each other’s Weight () and Flow (). Yielding “...allows bonding to underlie the eventual separation, which happens with the push...Through pushing, the individual compresses the body...thus stimulating proprioceptive knowledge of the structure or solidity of Being itself (Hackney 90).” Therefore, inclusion of partners simultaneously Yielding and Pushing facilitated psychophysical bonding as an underpinning of Kinesthetic Attunement or Effort/Shape

identification. This activity, organized around Breath () and Core-Distal () Patterns of Total Body Connectivity and including some Shape Flow Support (), not only supported Kinesthetic Attunement, but also, on a functional level, proved critical for students' physical realization of the body's underlying, kinetic organization. This Core-Distal () kinetic organization would support better weight distribution and facilitate the grounding Countertension so necessary in skilled Contact Improvisation.

These nurturing, acutely attentive activities supported participants' access to their "inner sensations" increasing their access to that quality of sensation in others and together, created a classroom environment for developing the trust and empathy indicative of Kinesthetic/Effort Shape Attunement. Ultimately these sensation based, deep listening activities provided the Stability phase of Rhythm of Risk (Stability interplaying with Mobility) and prepared the way for not only the inherently mobilizing and risky Contact Improvisation duet, but also the workshop's - even riskier -- culminating, expressive performance.

EFFORT FACTOR, WEIGHT: PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPLAY OF STABILITY & MOBILITY

Next in my process of re-designing the workshop, I more specifically addressed Effort () beginning with the Weight Factor (). I feel CI has an expressive baseline with the primary statement in Passion Drive, Weight, Time, and Flow Flux (). I have always considered investigation into the Weight Factor (), especially all the incremental variations from Active Weight () :Strong () to Light (), to Weight Sensing (), to Passive Weight (): Limp () to Heavy () to be the most fundamental tenet of Contact Improvisation in cultivating what I call "touch literacy". In the process of exploring all the levels of weight sharing, first with self, and then with another, one develops and

incredibly expanded “vocabulary” of touch/Weight Sensing () with which to “converse” with a partner. Incorporating structures and vocabularies from the LMA System, opened a “super highway” of sensations. One participant compared it to “listening to many channels on the radio instead of limiting myself to only one known station.”

Exploration in Weight () was not only critical for cultivating a line of communication for *sensate listening*, but also for cultivating a sense of physical and psychological Grounding needed to trust one’s ability to 1) support a partner’s weight, and 2) surrender one’s own weight to another. A student’s ability to sense and guide her/his weight to travel through her Central Axis, her Core, to the earth, is essential for safe weight bearing, catching, and falling. In preparation for learning these skills, we explored what Steve Paxton refers to as the “Small Dance”. From my LMA lens, the Small Dance can be describes as a Mode of Shape Change, Shape Flow () activity, requiring the student to change her shape only in response to the changing relationships of her own body parts. In this activity one stand in Vertical Dimension(), yielding in Passive Weight (), Limp () but not Passive Heavy (), listening to the dynamic stillness, the micro Countertensions balancing the body through the central Core, if the channels are open. Most beginners in CI tend to fall off their center (unsafe) instead of *through* their center to the earth. I found the image elicited by the LMA term, Vertical Throughness , helpful in conveying the awareness of the Central Axis as a tube through which Weight () pours and Flow Fluxes ()and grounds you to the earth thereby facilitating safer catches and falls.

Weight Effort () generally has to do with your sensation of Self and your *intention* in moving, therefore it was key in most all exercises and ultimately key in reaching the workshop’s number one goal of true embodiment through enhanced awareness of *sensation*.

With my expanded LMA terminologies, I felt more confident and effective in keeping almost a steady stream of “cueings” sourced from the Effort () category. My enhanced vocabulary created a container of focused consciousness so necessary in “tissue learning”. Especially helpful cueings from Effort () were: Light to Strong () outpouring, Free Flow (), outpouring, ease, not binding or bracing your tension, multi-focused eyes, matching touch, sustain, linger, yield, and yield more, etc. As you can see, I believe Contact Improvisation has an affinity toward the expansive, indulging side of the Efforts as opposed to the condensing, fighting side although both are essential. A typical Phrased cueing might be as follows. “Explore Yielding with Diminished Light Weight , Free Flow into a moment of Diminished Strong fluxing into Full Effort, Strong, Bound, Direct with Diminished Quickness, followed by a recovery moment in Passion Drive: Sustained, Light, Free as you as you roll off your partner ().

SOUND WHEEL DYNAMOSPHERE: PSYCHOLOGICAL STABILITY EVOKING PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL MOBILITY

The very first activity in the workshop, Sound Wheel, contributed to the psychological Stability phase of Rhythm of Risk. The goal for this activity, spoken laughingly, was to help participants let go of any sense of “pride” [read worry/tension, Bound Flow ()] that may hold them back. The unspoken goal was to bodily activate “feelingfull” aliveness through combining sound vibration and Efforts (). In my previous lesson plans I only requested students say their name while simultaneously reflecting in movement how they felt at the moment. My first *change* was to integrate the six Patterns of Total Body Connectivity

(PTBC): Breath (), Core-Distal (), Head-Tail (), Upper-Lower (), Body-Half (), Cross-Lateral (), and the Effort Factors () into Sound Wheel. After I briefly articulated the value of the Breath () pattern, I demonstrated Effortfully saying my name while indulgently moving in Passion Drive (). I did not use the term Passion Drive () but cued Light Weight (), Sustained Time (), Free Flow (), “shaded” or closed eyes. All participants echoed my demonstration, but creating their own version of mostly Passion Drive () and Effortfully vocalizing their own name. We continued through all six patterns in this manner. In working with Upper-Lower (), I propelled myself forward into the center of the circle with a Punch Action Drive, Strong, Direct, Quick () into the Sagittal Dimension (). My voice as well as body reflected Action Drive () When they responded, there was so much surprisingly discovered “claimed power” - associated with Upper-Lower connectivity () -- in the room, I knew they wanted to repeat that pattern again! Besides meeting my original goals for Sound Wheel, I felt the new LMA applications left the participants visibly enlivened, empowered, and mobilized in their shared Dynamosphere.

PARTNERING THE SPACE: PHYSICAL MOBILITY ENGENDERING PSYCHOLOGICAL STABILITY

Partnering the Space activity contributed to the physical/functional aspect of mobilizing oneself into space and therefore, the Mobility phase of Rhythm of Risk. However, its playful, inclusive attitude contributed to group trust and empathy engendering psychological Stability. The goal of this activity was to open awareness and *responsiveness* to the physical and energetic space between movers in a shared physical and psychological Kinesphere () and to introduce Spatial Intent. As a preparation for this activity, we did a partnered “pat down” exercise. While both were standing, partner A, using Action Drive, Dab (), Light Weight (), Direct Space (), and Quick Time (), would

discretely “pat down”, on all surfaces of B’s body. Integrating Spatial Intent (where the movement is going) into the activity, I instructed B to *imagine* the sensation of the “pat” directly streaming out from the body into the corresponding direction in space like tentacles. The goal was to feel every cell in the body enlivened and actively seeking (“Partnering”) the space while still feeling the micro countertensions of the Vertical Space in standing still.

As a change to my original lesson plans, following the “pat down”, I added to the preparation a Dimensional Scale () song, sung and rhythmically tapped out by participants while verbalizing “Ver ti cal (), Sa git tal (), Hor i zon tal (), ya got Dimensional Scale”. Students initiated each new direction by touching their Core center of gravity with their hand, Spoking () it out into the corresponding direction reflecting a Central approach to Kinesphere (). I believe this addition instilled a more vivid, functional *image* of space as well as greater theoretical understanding of space. Establishing a clear visual image of a line of direction extending out into space directly from one’s Core laid the groundwork for a mover’s ability to initially (and more effectively) respond from Core instead of Distal limbs, to Contact’s unpredictable spatial pulls. To include Dimensional Scale () work may seem counterintuitive since C.I. “organizes itself almost entirely within the icosahedron”, (Novack 120), allowing for the more three-dimensional pathways in space inherent in CI. Moving in these pathways demands curved lines in the body, which facilitate ease in lifting and falling. “Lifting in an arc requires less muscular strength and falling in an arc decreases the downward impact” (Novack 120). However, the playful, simple introduction to space using rhythm, voice, and touch (proprioceptively activating initiation from Core) in the Dimensional Scale () proved to, not only introduce them to Spatial awareness, but also dynamically mobilize the group and prepare them for the more complex spiraling to come.

The previous two exercises (“pat down” and Dimensional Scale () song) prepared the group to randomly travel, bending stretching, twisting, throughout the entire studio space, not touching, while actively practicing multi-focused, Indirect Spatial Attention () or what Contactors call “soft focus”. Once this was achieved, we incrementally minimized the physical space and the spatial *attention* area to one-half the space, one-quarter the space etc. until the participants shared Large, as far as one can reach (), to Medium, elbow distance away, to Near Kinesphere (), close to the body. This final “Partnering the Space” activity inherently introduced practice in negotiating three Approaches to Kinesphere (): Central (), movement radiating out and coming back to center; Peripheral (), revealing the edge and maintaining a distance from center; and much Transverse Approach to Kinesphere (), revealing the space between the center and the edge (Hackney 223). The activity also required students to intuitively incorporate Carving () and Shaping () of the torso while negotiating the space and each other.

SPIRAL : REGENERATIVE RHYTHM IN STABILITY--MOBILITY

The spiral is the shape of DNA, the shape of bone, muscle, the shape of *growth* found in all crystalline forms and thus -- regeneration. By the nature of its very structure -- three-dimensional, three spatial pulls with diagonal connections constantly changing volume -- spiraling encompasses a dynamic interplay between Stability and Mobility. Laban talks about the inherent rhythmicity of “the binding and loosening process in nature leading to changes in stability and mobility...” (Laban , Choreutics 114). He also discussed curved, spiraling forms found in moving in the icosahedron, (an organic crystalline form) as having “dimensional connections provoking stable, i.e., easily equilibrated, movements as well as diagonal connections provoking disequilibrating movements” [Mobility] (Laban, Choreutics 114). Peggy Hackney points to the same

regenerative power of the spiral triggering interplay between Stability and Mobility when she describes the spiral as “sequencing flexion, rotation, and lateral enclosing in a gradated way...this winding in one body part will *initiate an unwinding in another* [italics mine] (Hackney 224).

Returning to the Rhythm of Risk metaphor, I believe spiral skills, in their complexity, integrate both physical and psychological Stability /Mobility. Spiral skills create a psychological feeling of trust (Stability) in one’s physical ability to safely fall and catch, which I consider to be in the risk (Mobility) arena. The spiraling body maximizes safety by maximizing the *availability* of body surfaces to “catch the momentum” of a partner’s weight and quickly respond to the multiple spatial pulls inherent in the Contact duet. This “going with the momentum” emphasizes continuity without knowing exactly where the movement will take you and thus *simultaneously* demands trust (Stability) and risk (Mobility) from a physical and psychological standpoint [see Rhythm of Risk graph].

The Bartenieff Fundamentals concept that made the biggest improvement in my personal skill level and in the rapid learning of my students, by far, has been in spiral skills. Spiral skills include solo Diagonal Rolls in Width on the floor and solo standing spirals in an out of the floor. The solo spiral skills prepared students to employ duet Carving () to mutually mold to their partner’s rapidly changing body surfaces as together they fall in and out of the floor. I have even incorporated a new mantra in the classroom, “When in doubt, spiral!”

Gradated scapulo-humeral and femoral rotation, along with riding the Spatial pathways with Spatial Intent proved key in the rapid learning of spiral skills. Increased awareness and skill in humeral gradated rotation made the clearest visible improvement. Most people I train are dancers who have knowledge of hip rotation but, as in the case of myself, little training in Upper-

Body connectivity (), humeral-scapulo rhythm, and gradated humeral rotation. To this end, I introduced partnered tracing using sliding, Mode of Shape Change, Carving (), Stable State, Diminished Strong, Bound () touch on the upper body -- little finger to scapula to sacrum/tail -- in order to proprioceptively stimulate Upper-Body to Core connectivity, and subsequently assist in arms-to-tail Distal Steering. I individually assisted each student with hands-on rotation of the shoulder joint as they initiated Diagonal Rolls in Width. However, with my new BF observation skills, I noticed students almost never included the third limb of the Upper Body, the head. This was a significant limitation given that “Rotation of the head induces rotation of the whole body.”, as Bartenieff and many others have observed in the newborn and young infant (Kestenberg 351). I addressed this limitation by introducing Spatial Intent (where the movement is going), and Direct Space (), attending the hand via “eye-tracking”: “As you Distal Steer with your right hand, focus your eyes on your hand as it reaches, coning to your up, side, left and up, back, left corner. It worked! I saw a profound change in participants’ ability to incorporate the head in gradated rotation in Cross-Lateral () connectivity and thus quickly gain spiral skills.

As a whole, spiral skills produced complex pathways for meeting the unexpected in CI. If achieved, one feels the safety of being immediately adaptable with all currents open, cooperative - *ready* -- to negotiate risk on an open highway of sensation.

HEART DANCE: STABILITY PROVOKING MOBILITY

In the Rhythm of Risk Metaphor the Heart Dance was the final experience in trust (Stability) and in paving the way for risk-taking (Mobility) inherent in the culminating performance. The last few times I taught the workshop I had eliminated the Heart Dance, which involved activities similar to the one I am about to describe, but not nearly as theoretically and experientially complex and

clear. But now, highly motivated by LMA's and Kestenberg's theories, I reinvested.

Stage one of the new Heart Dance is as follows: Partners are sitting on the floor close together with partner A at right angles to partner B, sharing Near Kinesphere () as if A is going to tell her a secret. Using Mode of Shape Change, Carving (), A's left arm applies high intensity, Light, Direct, diminished Bound Flow () to B's thoracic spine. A's left leg is supporting B's lumbar spine with Effort Elements - Strong, Direct, Bound, Spell Drive () touch. B places A's hand on B's heart area. A, with her right hand on B's heart, listens and breathes in harmony with B. In other words, A, with her torso as well as her hand, matches her partner's growing and shrinking shape in Shape Flow Support () and Flow Effort () [what Kestenberg calls tension flow]. LMA might describe it as "Being With" touch, but with a little more intention and attention to matching or adjusting to each other's Shape Flow Support () Shaping () and Effort qualities (). There seems to be a sense of timelessness in it. One might consider that A is Spelling B, however, both are actually adjusting to each other, thus I feel both are predominately in Spell Drive () with a shared physical and psychological near Kinesphere ().

Stage two of the Heart Dance begins with A, still keeping one hand on B's thoracic spine and one hand on B's heart, shakes/vibrates the heart area gradually increasing speed and amplitude. A then incrementally decreases both and returns to "Being With" touch, metaphorically described as "active stillness" or "pregnant pause"; in Laban's terms, a Spell Drive: Direct, Light, Diminished Flow (). I associate this key moment of active stillness with Resolution in Phrasing and perhaps the beginning of some participant's journey to what I interpret as Laban's "land of silence" where one encounters soul. This ensuing, heightened psychophysical concentration appears to subsume participant's self-consciousness, engendering their courage to vocally "tone" in phase three of the

Heart Dance. Now both A and B engage in “toning”, blending their pitch and volume to create harmonic overtones contributing to the partners’ heightened state of Effort/Kinesthetic Attunement. The position of A and B’s cheeks, which are Lightly () touching at about a 45 degree angle is critical to the toning section. I personally felt this position re-stimulated the memory of the nursing hold. As toning continues, both A and B seem to “regress to infantile rhythms” as Kestenberg reports that the mother does in the nursing hold (Kestenberg 344). In the discussion following the afternoon’s events, participants described it as a feeling of permeability or energetic merging. Erin, a participant, journaled as follows:

I had no body, I was just that area being touched, And then, I got this feeling of longing. I missed my mom! I thought I might cry for her. Something about it reminded me deep down, of being a baby needing that touch and warmth. I found that love only mom can give you through the exercise.

Stage three of the heart dance begins with the gradual rocking back and forth, slowly increasing amplitude. A is now instructed to allow her front hand to rhythmically release its touch in each of the forward motions. I am cueing “breathe, Rising () and Sinking (); Advancing () and Retreating (); surrendering; letting go; falling, you will be caught; moving forward with “your heart desire”; going forward with your “heart’s desire”. Gradually A assists B to standing. With eyes closed in Passion Drive (), B dances “her heart’s desire” while A, staying with their shared Kinesphere () and in Effort/Shape/Kinesthetic Attunement , reflects B’s movement and protects her from other movers.

I believe the Heart Dance, instilling feelings of trust and empathy, represented Stability in the Rhythm of Risk metaphor. Many participants, including myself, responded with gentle weeping. I felt a sensation of permeability with “all” -no boundaries - simultaneously deeply connected to my individuality and paradoxically, deeply “at one” with “Other”, a greater Whole,

Spirit, or whatever you wish to call it. I associate this expanded state of mind with Laban's "land of silence" where one encounters soul. Most all participants journaled something similar to my experience. I knew the Heart Dance was a turning point in the Rhythm of Risk for all participants. It truly engendered enough trust to risk creative Mobility.

For some participants the Heart Dance *simultaneously* created feelings of trust-stability and risk-mobility as illustrated in the last two ovals in the Rhythm of Risk graph. For example Mindi journaled: "...It felt more intimate. I was seen more...scared my soul would be seen. Afterwards – felt more connected to myself and to the group ...it allowed me to come forward...angel space, love." Following the Heart Dance the group immediately engaged in the most physical risk-taking (Mobility) activity in the workshop, a "group/solo fall" improvisation. For reasons of economy I will not describe that activity but continue with the last phase of the workshop.

"I AM THE ONE WHO ...": RISKING IN MOBILITY PHASE

Although I had been highly attached to the original workshop's culminating activity, a high intensity Contact dance incorporating aspects of "re-birthing", I ventured to change it. Informed by the LMA pedagogical format of "perceive, describe, record, and make meaning of movement" (Integrated Movement Studies™ 's Goal and Policy handout), I realized my workshop could be Phrased better with a sense of completion/resolution by creating a culminating activity emphasizing personal meaning-making. The new activity would require a more polished form integrating sensation, intuition, and cognition in a final performance. I was both thrilled and "on edge" by all the possibilities of incorporating the "I Am The One Who..." or "I Am the One Who Felt Most Alive When..." activity as the new culmination of the workshop.

Immediately following the most physically and emotionally risky Contact dancing, participants were asked to **1)** go to large sheets of paper and with chalk and markers, energetically respond to the statement “I Am the One Who ... or” I Am The One Who Felt Most Alive When ...”; **2)** create a brief movement response to the picture; **3)** write on the back of the paper their verbal response to their picture and “I Am The One Who ...”; **4)** further informed by their writing, set and give clarity to their “dance”; **5)** share their picture and “dance study” with a partner [Students were asked to abstain from interpretation yet ask questions of “curiosity”. I consider this particular exchange to be a foray back into trust (Stability) to prepare the way for performance. Sharing on a one to one basis, as if to a friend, allows one’s passion for her work to take precedence over one’s preoccupation with fear of judgment.]; and finally **6)** share their picture and perform their “dance” for the group and video. We ended with journaling and a closing, group processing circle.

This new culminating activity required of participants a swift swim through the first half of the “creative cycles” as Charles Johnston describes them in Patterns and Reality; Pre-Axis, Early -Axis, Middle -Axis. and Late- Axis. For example, diving into any of their “sensory/motor knowing” experiences from the whole of the workshop, participants reflected Pre-Axis as they lost self-consciousness while “treading” in their sensation, feelings. Progressing from “kinesthetic to symbolic” as Johnston described Early Axis, participants visually expressed/drew their physical experience, allowing their spirit – their essence -- to surface. Participants struggled through Middle- Axis as the dancers faced their perceived “drawing” limitations and the visual artists/designers faced their perceived movement limitations. Finally, participants exemplified Late-Axis stage as they set the choreography, giving concrete form and polish to their performance. (Johnston 24-27)

I chose to motif Erin's solo response to "I Am The One Who..." because I felt the dance uniquely reflected her most alive moment - an extraordinary, *sensate awakening* during the Heart Dance. [see her quote above] A week after the workshop she explained to me, "It [feeling Mom's love] was not a memory or flashback but I..." She hesitated, rubbing her arms. "I could just feel it all over." In the video Erin translates her *alive* moment verbally as "I am the one who has goose bumps. And I hope my goose bumps give you goose bumps." From viewing the video I do believe the gestures touching her heart area clearly referenced her most alive moment and her desire to express it metaphorically as "goose bumps".

SELF REFLECTION

I honestly am overwhelmed and amazed at the growing awareness of the interrelationship of the LMA system and there relationship to life. I feel like a spider in a web that I am spinning as it spins me. The web of *relationship* keeps expanding as I crawl, brailing my way through the material. In my teaching I feel more empowered to facilitate experiences of deep connection to self and community. For the most part, participants and myself reveled in trust, empathy, risk, and aliveness. LMA has knitted together the strands of a raveled relationship between my worldview, career, and spiritual life. In the future I feel I will not need to "qualify" from a place of weakness what I have to offer. I will soon have a world-recognized system behind me; I will claim it.

Several participants journaled how much they appreciated the theoretical and technical clarity in my presentations. I believe this was due to not only my increased knowledge and terminologies, but also my highly improved observation skills. Before, whenever there was a problem, I would waste time by either stopping the momentum of the class to physically work with one student

or I would say, “Just do it again!” Now I often pin point the problem from one category of the LMA System and then address it clearly to the benefit of the whole group.

I also observed myself fluxing between Stable State: Light Weight with Fluxing between Direct and Indirect Space () and Mobile States : Sustained Free Flow into Quick Bound() and transitioning into A Spell Drive: Diminished Light Weight, Diminished Bound, Sustained Time () as *just the right words came into my head, seemingly from out of nowhere*. I would then transition into Remote State() as I delivered the instructions, Fluxing between Direct and Indirect Space in Diminished Bound Flow (). At other times I could actually feel my spine lengthen and my Weight () rarify into Lightness () as my sense of confidence and authority accumulated and as such, taught from Full Effort: Light Weight, Fluxing Free and Bound Flow and Direct Space, Sustained Time (). For The most part, I continued to deliver methodical instructions in a careful, precise manner yielding overall Effort Constellations organized around Spell Drive (). However quite often, in a moment of Awake State (), I would suddenly remember “just one more thing” and would address the class with a quick, light, indirect jerk, “Wait, wait!” Next, from Mobile State (), I intuitively took a moment of Sustainment (), looking inward, condensing the new instructions in my head and then continued to deliver the last minute details from Vision () or Spell Drive (). That instruction might be Phrased as (). On a functional level, I felt more grounded, organized in my Vertical Throughness due, in part, to my steady practice of “pawing” my big toes from the creep position in order to establish the psoas, figure eight, kinetic chain. I had journaled during the workshop, “I am walking on my axis.”

The LMA System made it painfully clear to me a weakness in my Phrasing in both teaching and life. I only *thought* I respected the principles of Phrasing

and Exertion/Recuperation. It was only in reflection, while addressing both of these Fundamental principles in this paper, that I “got it”. I made the connection to my life. My belief, *if only I could prepare – do -- just one more thing, just one more, runs* my life. Several participants journaled that by Saturday afternoon they were drained of energy. Designing from a Rhythm of Risk strategy, I had carefully structured a container of “risk-exertion” and “trust-recuperation” on a psychological level but needed to address it more comprehensively. The LMA System, defining Recuperation as “active change, not necessarily a collapse” (Hackney 47) informed and opened my perception. In the future I will structure Exertion/Recuperation on all levels including physical, mental, and spatial. On a personal level I am questioning how and when I apply or don’t apply these principles to my life. What cultural values do I hold such as “Exertion is better than Recuperation”; the question is *alive* for me.

CONCLUSION

If one can agree that an artistic goal as well as a life skill goal is to develop confidence for authentic expression, one might agree that a compromised parent-child relationship has consequences in the individual’s ability to acquire a sufficiently stable ego to risk unique expression. I suggest the blending of Contact Improvisation and the LMA Systems can be a modality for integrating, as an adult, opportunities lost in the unsuccessful, mother-child relationship.

I find a striking similarity between the definition of primary ego development in the child and the definition of Contact Improvisation (see page 1). Quoting Kestenberg, “His [child’s] ego development is guided by the developing stable structures, which evolve from repeated experiences of holding, being held, supporting, and being supported” (Kestenberg 362). These same experiences underlie and are *effectually* inherent in the Contact Improvisation duet. Also contributing to the similarities between the two, I strategically factor

in activities of quiet holding and vibrational merging essential to the Stable phase of Rhythm of Risk.

In the mother-infant relationship and in the Contact Improvisation duet, both participants are gaining a sense of worthiness, trust, and confidence. Kestenberg states, “not only the child, but the mother feels she is a trustworthy member of the mother-infant team” (Kestenberg 362). One feels love because one had been a channel for love. The Heart Dance powerfully creates that channel, engendering a trusting, *sensate*, stable state of being. I believe a pedagogical strategy of Rhythm of Risk, Stability interplaying with Mobility, creates a safe container opening channels for confident, bodily knowing and artistic risk-taking.

Pat Ogden, a psychotherapist practicing and teaching Hakomi Integrative Somatics, states, “If we fully embrace physical sensation via movement, touch, words...if we work to understand and integrate the raw data from the body level, we develop a strong recourse for knowing and expressing who we are” (Ogden 52). She further states this process is...“not just for the studio, but can be the expression of the wholeness of life itself” (Ogden 54).

LMA has changed my lifelong journey intuitively navigating facilitation of the creative process into a Strong, Direct, Stable State () claiming of that process. My meaning-making – my truth – has been made possible via greater intellectual understanding of the theory of movement and a personal practice of bodily, *sensate*, knowing through the LMA Systems.

CI/LMA AFTERTHOUGHT

Contact Improvisation, in its form, structure, and philosophy is analogous to organic form in nature. CI inherently dances the laws of nature; gravity, inertia, momentum, Stability-Mobility, Exertion, Recuperation – all surging toward equilibrium, balance, wholeness. Our body architecture is structured according

to the physical laws of proportion i.e., the golden mean found in the physics of Nature. Thus, from Laban's Space Harmony point of view, CI can be described as one architectural form (body), adhering to his/her mathematical principles, interacting with another architectural form adhering to her/his mathematical principles reiterated in crystalline forms, the fundamental structure of Nature. In CI, one intuitively *plays* with the physical laws of Nature.

Mankind brings to the dance all his intellect, emotions, and physical (sensuous) sensibilities – all tempered by his intuition. One negotiates the CI dance with informed intuition. At the speed of the highly unpredictable CI duet, one must rely on skilled intuition to navigate safely. The CI dancer co-creates with Self, the partner, and physical laws – mutual, dynamic balance. This is not stasis, but a coming together of Stability provoking freedom in Mobility generating the next moment of Stability and so on. But in that sweet spot, that moment of dynamic balance – the pregnant pause – a pause that holds *all possibilities*, that reveals all possibilities of *creation*, a spiritual moment arises. The moment is created by one's *full participation*; a gathering and coalescing of sensual, emotional, and intellectual impressions, both conscious and unconscious, into a unified Gestalt, an Ahah, a grok of awareness. Most importantly, one unites with not just the personal bliss of being “in harmony with the moment”, but by one's full participation in the CI *duet*, a “gifting” of that moment to another. By theoretical extension, it is a *regeneration*, in fact a perpetual regeneration unleashing creative possibilities.

In summary, I believe Contact Improvisation literally and metaphorically dances with Laban's Space Harmony principles of movement. Contact Improvisation is almost entirely organized around the icosahedron in which mathematical principles provoke interplay between Stability and Mobility. Womankind, integrating mental, physical, and emotional sensibilities in moving in the icosahedron, rides the cosmic flux, the forces of Nature, simultaneously giving (“gifting”) and receiving harmony engendering a deep-rooted loyalty to

Self and Other. A belonging so deep, so profound it reminds us of the womb, of mother, of creative sustenance at the breast of our creator.

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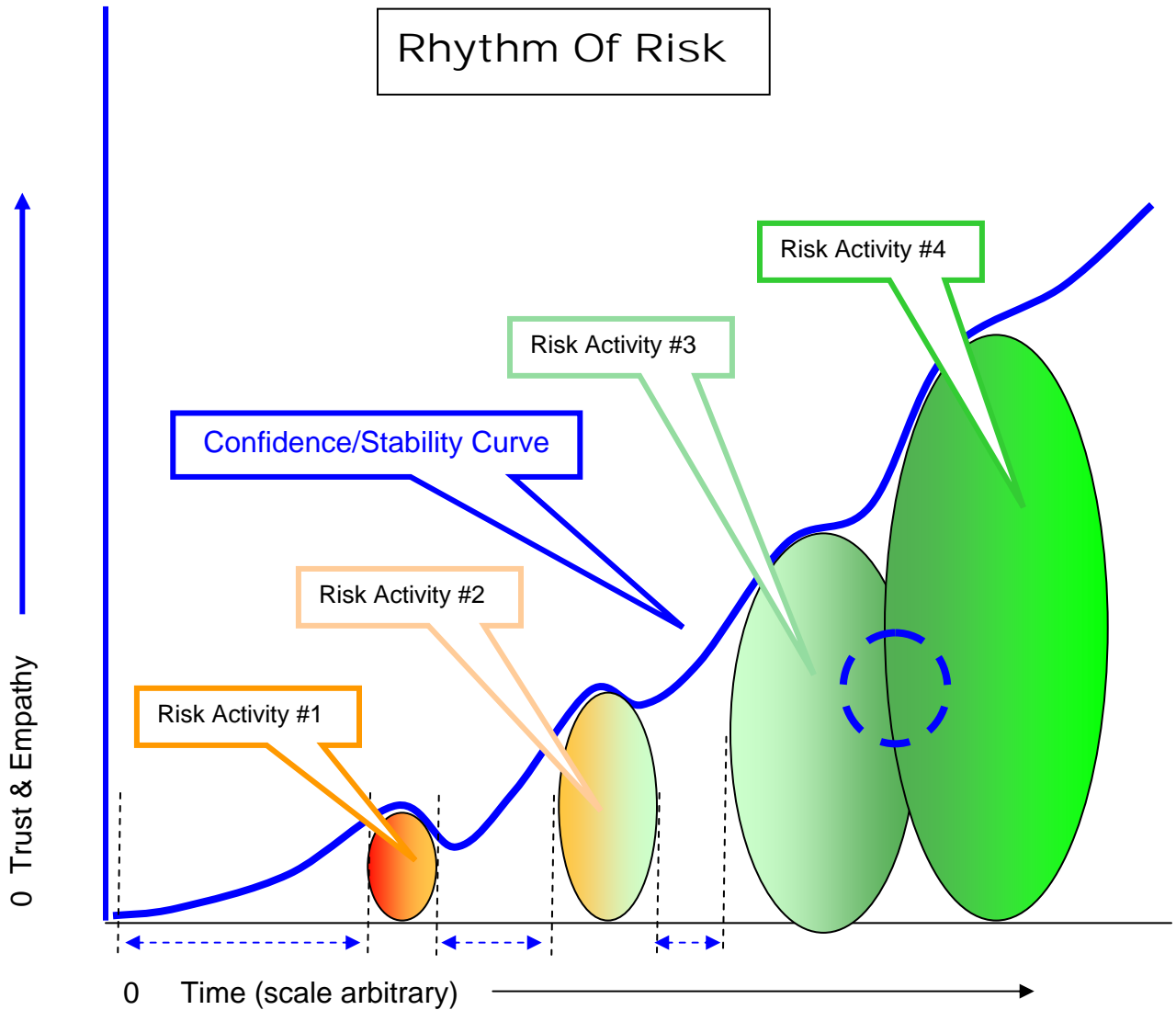
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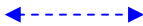
MOTIF DESCRIPTION

I begin motifing at .09 seconds and end at.30 seconds. Erin begins in a Pin Shape Form () in Vertical Dimension (). Her right arm (), moving with Transverse Spatial Tension () in the Horizontal Plane () with Arcing Mode of Shape Change (), initiates a one-half turn to the right (). In the turn she descends to Place Low () on her pelvis (). She does not appear to be invested in revealing Advancing () or Retreating (), but merely “arriving” with a change of support. I see the next action as three repetitive gestures initiated by both hands () using sliding touch () on the front of her chest toward her heart area. She releases both hands () as her right arm spirals her into a quarter turn to the left () with right arm continuing to cycle into the Sagittal Plane () and arriving on a new support, right foot () and left knee (). She arrives on both feet () at Place Medium (). Using mostly Spoke and some Arc Mode of Shape Change (), she uses Dab Effort Factor to touch the ground in a Forward Low (), Place low (), Back Low (), and Place () pathway. This leg swing creates a small, successive, wave-like Phrasing in the body. Next, initiating with Head- Tail Patterning () and Beginning Emphasis Phrasing (), Erin falls off balance (), backwards resulting in Successive movement in the Upper Body (). In this action she fluxes between Passive Limp and Heavy in Dream State (). For the most part I see Erin fluxing between Remote State () and Dream State (). I caught perhaps a timeless, present moment of Spell Drive () as she meditatively looks down at her heart and then out to the audience while precisely sliding her hands and verbalizing about goose bumps. However I was disappointed to see she was not really invested in revealing sensation, Efforts, or Spatial Intent as I had hoped the workshop would inspire. In my opinion Erin is experimenting with the trendy Modern dance style tagged “release” done in mostly Remote State (). As her

teacher in other classes, I have glimpsed her ability to be an embodied mover invested in full Effort Actions () and Shaping ().

Rhythm Of Risk



	Resistance		Ease		Risk Activity: Mobility
 Trust, Empathy Activities Creating Stability					

PRE & POST WORKSHOP SURVEY

CONTACT IMPROVISATION: INTEGRATING LABAN MOVEMENT ANALYSIS
AS CREATIVE CONNECTION WORKSHOP

PRE & POST SURVEY

Use the scale 1-5 to answer the following questions;
1 being the least fully realized and 5 being the most fully realized

How would you assess your **PHYSICAL** relationship to the following categories:

	Least realized				Most realized
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Grounded/Stable <i>-centered</i>					
2. Trust <i>-yourself, others, risk-taking</i>					
3. Kinesthetic Attunement <i>-awareness of bodily sensations</i>					
4. Playfulness <i>-ease, lack of self consciousness</i>					
5. Expressiveness <i>-functional/ technical skill</i>					

How would you assess your **PSYCHOLOGICAL/ EMOTIONAL** relationship to the following categories:

	Least realized				Most realized
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Grounded/Stable <i>-centered</i>					
2. Trust <i>-risk-taking</i>					
3. Empathetic Attunement <i>-feeling-full awareness of others</i>					
4. Playfulness <i>-ease, lack of self consciousness</i>					
5. Expressiveness <i>-revealing psychological/emotional intent</i>					

THREE-MONTH FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

1. How has the workshop experience affected your life in the past few months? Have you been able to apply any of the information to your career or daily life?
2. Have you found more ease in taking risks in your personal life or career? If yes, please provide an example.
3. What did you most enjoy about the workshop? What would have added to your experience?

The workshop has definitely had an impact on my life. It seems that it has helped to bring about a transformation in my sense of inner/outer connectedness. Although movement has always embraced this connectedness for me, I have mainly kept the outer reaches of this balance very close and somewhat superficial, as if it is “either/or” outer or inner. It has in the past been difficult for me to bring this dynamic into relationship with others because as soon as I start relating, I may lose the most harmonious aspects of my connection with the inner. This workshop gave me some amazing tools for allowing others to enter a space with me where the rich resources of the inner life are accessible on the part of each person. I experienced this most clearly in the “Heart Dance”, although the feeling was present throughout the whole workshop. It calls for a level of trust and risk-taking that I was surprised I was able to do. The skill and nurturing support of the teachers, as well as the content of the work, were major factors in my being able to break through barriers that had usually inhibited me. Our teachers created an atmosphere of caring and support that became the culture of our group. The partners I shared the experience with were all supportive in ways that enabled me to fully participate.

This incredible workshop helped me realize that I need and want more of this healing, playful, loving energy in my life. I find opportunities to dance with like minded/bodied people and to take some new risks in my everyday life and work life. I look for some little way to “energize” a situation with movement, touch, body awareness, or a comment about the surrounding space. Often it is so subtle that no one notices, but for me it brings the whole situation into a new alignment of the inner/outer, so that we are all participating with our whole selves.

From: Kathleen McWhorter LCSW [mailto:kmmcwhorter@hotmail.com]

Sent: Tue 6/20/2006 11:51 AM

From: Benton, Erin M

Sent: Wed 5/31/2006 5:13 PM

To: Stone, Patricia A

Subject: RE: Laban/Contact Improvisation follow-up

Hi Pat!

How has the workshop experience affected your life in the past few months? Have you been able to apply any of the information to your career or daily life?

I have never wanted to be closer to my family, especially my mother, since the workshop. I cannot explain why or how that feeling of great yearning arose, but it has consumed me every day since that weekend. My daily life starts now with the remembrance of where I came from, where my true address is, a humbling experience which grounds me yet allows me to stretch for more, this time with more authenticity. I wouldn't say that it has changed my relationship with my mother, because that has always been good, just my thinking about my place in the world, my family's role, and my role.

I most enjoyed learning new ways to connect the mind and body through all the exercises. I wish, though that we would have danced longer, both freely and contact. You know, I just like to sweat and dance around for as long as possible. Time didn't allow I guess. Time is always a problem! Other than that, I don't think any of us could have asked for a better group to work with. It was never a problem as far as risk was concerned. I could talk for hours about that weekend but I don't have time!

Lots of love,

Erin

From: Benton, Erin M

Sent: Wed 5/31/2006 5:13 PM

From: Stedman, LeAnne Smith
Sent: Mon 6/5/2006 3:00 PM
To: Stone, Patricia A
Subject: Re: Laban/Contact Improvisation follow-up

Hi Pat,

a. I have used the experiences gained in the workshop both professionally and personally. Professionally, I have incorporated much of the knowledge into my kinesiology for dancers course and my rehearsals for a solo that I am learning. Personally, I have felt a major shift in my acceptance of who I am in the world. I clearly experience the freedom I feel in my body and my psyche.

b. Career: I feel more confidence in meetings with upper administration and more empathy with students.

Personal: I have been able to be painfully honest with a member of my family who is in serious trouble.

c. I especially appreciated the dance..."I am the one who..." That experience, both as choreographer and observer, was VERY powerful and profound for me. It would have been great to have one more day.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

From: Brown, Kaysie Seitz
Sent: Fri 6/9/2006 8:35 AM
To: Stone, Patricia A
Subject: RE: Laban/Contact Improvisation follow-up

Pat,

How has the workshop experience affected your life in the past few months? Have you been able to apply any of the information to your career or daily life?

Answer: I felt that the workshop helped me mainly as a teacher: to be aware of when I'm asking my students to take risks which really don't seem like risks to me, but totally is to them.

I've also appreciated the review of the Laban terminology as I took it with me into the Creative Movement for Children class. I feel that his terminology is a fundamental aspect of that course. Though we used Anne Green Gilbert's chart, it was derived from Laban's work.

Have you found more ease in taking risks in your personal life or career? If yes, please provide an example.

Answer: Yes. I'm working on "going for it" If I see something that works in my favor, don't be a afraid: go for it. For example: I received an email to teach a University Seminar class which I know absolutely nothing about. I'm nervous, but I think it'll be a good experience, not to mention extra money . . . so I'm going for it! I've also been hunting for a new home. Shawn's been amazed how proactive I've been. If there's a sign in the front yard I'll take the risk and take a closer look. Maybe the place is empty and we can peek in, maybe the renter is there and we can talk to them. Shawn didn't want to bother anyone, but when I felt I was being reasonable, I went for it. Finally, I worked with an extra studio in San Marcos and I'm working with a dance studio here in Austin and if they had their way I'd continue on throughout the summer and the busy fall which would completely exhaust and burn me out. Even though they've tried to keep me in "just one or two classes" I've stood my ground, been firm and said no. Where in the past I would have crumbled and said ok, and lived to regret it.

The workshop was like therapy that I've been needing. I don't know if all of the above was a direct result of the workshop, but I do feel that it opened up possibilities in myself that I had not been working on developing.

What did you most enjoy about the workshop?

Answer: The wealth of knowledge, the clarity in explanation, the professionalism of both demonstrators and students.

What would have added to your experience?

Answer: Honestly, off the top of my head, nothing comes to mind.

From: Brandon Gonzalez [mailto:brandonor@gmail.com]
Sent: Fri 6/2/2006 4:20 PM
To: Stone, Patricia A
Subject: Re: Laban/Contact Improvisation follow-up

How has the workshop experience affected your life in the past few months? Have you been able to apply any of the information to your career or daily life?

The workshop and my continued exploration into the study of contact improvisation has given me new set of tools with which I can move, communicate, and explore new possibilities.

I find myself more aware of the way I use my body and how my actions are and are not connected into the core of my body. This "core awareness" that was taught in the workshop has greatly effected the way I move. When I move from my core I feel an increase in control, "connectedness" and balance.

The workshop also gave me new ways to connect with friends and family. Massage and other relaxation techniques have provided me with some interesting and fun ways to connect with others. I find that these the interactions resulting from these practices are almost always positive!

Have you found more ease in taking risks in your personal life or career? If yes, please provide an example.

Yes, I have felt an increase in confidence in my interactions with others especially people I have never met.

What did you most enjoy about the workshop? What would have added to your experience?

I think I like the heart dance the most because it was so intimate and required so much trust and giving up of control. This was challenging but it pays off. With this its all up to you to allow yourself to create a good experience. It helps to have someone there by your side saying YES.

Thank You.
-Brandon

SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRIES BY PARTICIPANTS

ENTRIES RELATING TO RHYTHM OF RISK AND TRUST:

The following entry focuses on one participant's experience as she navigates the rhythm of risk-taking and trust-making activities. Her journey reflects the value of rhythmically structuring a harmonic balance between physical and emotional risk-taking activities and physical and emotional nurturing activities that engender trust.

"The trust issue came up a lot because others in the group did not feel a trust in my ability to support them. The image I had was of shrinking away from me. No blame to others who are being responsible to themselves for staying safe. However it made me identify with an Alice Walker book I read. She talked about those who historically are left out of the circle. People of color, indigenous peoples and the final image that arose was the serpent. At this point I'm not sure how to integrate it all, but I know it relates to my own acceptance of my body and my strength with inner and outer. My own inner critic becomes very active when there's the slightest encouragement by an outside entity. "

[Journal entry the same day, but following the Heart Dance]

There is such a sweetness and healing to return to the circle after excluding myself for a little while. All of the activities of this afternoon affirmed the perfection of this being that I am and brought me again into the harmony of this group. The heart dance was a mutual healing for me and my partner. The feeling of being appreciated was an entry back into a place of belonging in the group. The actual healing for my own heart was profound. Such awakening in the shaking, and pressure, and rocking.

[The following entry refers to the workshop's most physically risk-taking activity which, strategically followed immediately after the Heart Dance] The foursome dance was another extraordinary opportunity to trust and share and be a part of a powerful group focus." Kathy McWhorter

ENTRIES RELATING TO TRANSFORMATION AND EXPRESIVITY:

"Recognition of old patterns that no longer serve and willingness to give more and withhold less.

I feel so much lighter and so much stronger now. Working this way finds me healing internally as well as externally."

"Expressiveness via technical proficiency ... technical aspects form the foundation of trust in self and others. This foundation leads to many avenues of expression as fear or hesitation subsides and trust increases. Then we can have wider, deeper, broader array of communicative motion with ourselves, each other, and an audience." LeAnne Stedman

ENTRIES RELATED TO VULNERABILITY:

“Emotionally I would not be one moment younger and this workshop has affirmed that belief. Also it has allowed me to relish the strength I have now – the wisdom and maturity of expression via movement - the willingness to be vulnerable and shed facades that remain.” LeAnne Stedman

“Thank you for this escape, for giving my spirit this much needed cleansing, this positive outcome of allowing vulnerability. We are not alone. We have each other.” Kaysie Seitz

ENTRIES RELATING TO STABILITY/MOBILITY:

“I felt most alive! Feeling my body ‘organize’ itself toward a goal of stabilization...After doing the exercise the thought of ‘stability before mobility’ made perfect sense. The key to connecting, I think, is by making minor adjustments gradually through the body that allows the core to come alive” Jill Goodwin

ENTRIES RELATING TO CORE-DISTAL:

“I began thinking about the six patterns of total body connectivity and how these patterns help me to produce more sensation with my partner and with massage. These patterns help me to find clear pathways of where to travel with partners. The idea of core-distal relationship within the body helps immensely when being lifted – going up – into then space. I find it to be my favorite tool to use constantly, especially throughout contact improvisation.” Jill Goodwin

“I feel like the X body training is important (in groups of three) because it feel very integrative. It’s like, OK 1) breathe 2) Core, 3) ribs 4) torso and then 5) limbs. Even if I have done this work before, doing the body tracing always awakens these cells which hide from me or lie and ‘pretend they understand’.” Erin Benton

ENTRIES RELATED TO SPACE:

“The indirect lightness was a nice image. Thinking of the Horizontal Plane, moving laterally and recognizing levels has provided me reminders of moving through space and not getting stuck in one level or trying not to go into the wrong plane. “I LOVE spiraling. Kaysie Seitz