

"When your arms are free you can fly"

A Laban Movement Analysis of the work of Nancy Topf

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I have been influenced, informed and inspired during the writing of this paper by the following books:

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Introduction

For the last six years I have been studying with movement teacher Nancy Topf. Nancy is a powerfully nurturing presence in my life. She is able to make a strong personal connection with me while staying focused on the work. She has been my teacher, therapist, friend and colleague. I would like to acknowledge the time and effort she put into this project and to thank her for her openness and support.

My studies with Nancy have included private, one on one sessions; intensive workshops and group technique classes. Nancy Topf's work is based on ideo-kinesis. From this ideological base Ms. Topf has developed her own technique, Topf Technique. For the purpose of this paper I will refer to this as TT.

My aim in this paper is to use LMA to clarify my experience of TT. More specifically I am looking to find greater understanding of my experiences with TT using LMA as my tool for observation, analysis and synthesis. A natural conclusion of this process could be to create a comparison between LMA and TT but this is not my aim.

Working with Nancy herself is to step into a world where information is given in the simplest terms possible. TT asks that you take a small amount of information as your food for thought and see what you find. The language Nancy uses is closer to poetry than anything else. Sitting in her classes I have tried to take notes, but later find they are mostly fragments of ideas and sensations. The path is simple but not obvious. Experience is hard to describe.

In preparation for this project I returned to NYC to interview Nancy and to re-immense myself in the work by participating in a week-end intensive workshop and some group classes. During this time I had two private sessions with Nancy, both of which I taped so I could further analyze them.

From these tapes I have created an edited version showing the heart of these sessions. The first video sequence, called the "Breath Map" shows the beginning of a hands on session where we focus on the cycle of the breath. The second sequence is Nancy guiding me through a floor pattern she calls the third spiral. This pattern is often practiced in the group technique class. As much as possible I have included the parts where Nancy comes into contact with me to show how she interacts with me and shed some light on the nature of our relationship. The third video sequence is an excerpt from a solo I created for myself in 1991 called, I SAID YES. This solo, a structured improvisation, was developed during a time of intensive study with Nancy.

I also returned to the journals I kept during intensive workshops in TT. Unless otherwise indicated, the phrases I quote throughout this paper, including the title are taken from these journals .

"I will never be the same. Having discovered my body in this way I no longer feel like a stranger."

In 1990 I was diagnosed by a physical therapist as having torn the posterior meniscus in my left knee. I was in constant pain and very depressed. The physical therapist I saw gave me exercises to do that involved strengthening my psoas and legs using a long piece of surgical tubing for resistance. The entire process of diagnosis and treatment had been very unsettling to me. It seemed based on speculation, almost like a process of elimination whereby the therapist went down a list of what could be causing the pain and made her diagnosis based on what most fit my symptoms. The fact that I was being asked to strengthen, what for me felt like the strongest part of my body, felt wrong. I felt disconnected, without an understanding of why I was doing these exercises. They were not addressing why or how I had become injured. This was still a mystery to me. The emotional issues of depression and frustration were not being addressed either and I felt lonely and confused.

Feeling completely in the dark I accepted the diagnosis wondering what would happen to me. Would I need an operation? Could this, would this heal? I continued to see the therapist and her partner, a chiropractor, who would adjust my back and give electric current treatments to my knee. Throughout this time I continued to dance, teach and perform.

Feeling too frightened of not getting better I never told my therapist that I really wasn't feeling any better. I actually did the opposite and told them I felt better. They were both extremely pleased. I ended my treatments with them. Later I heard from a friend who knew the therapist that she and her partner considered me to be one of their greatest success stories.

Meanwhile I stopped doing the exercises. They only seemed to make me feel angry. Somewhere inside me I knew they were not what I needed. This is when I met Nancy Topf. I had seen her ads but knew nothing of what she actually did. The idea of "release technique" sounded frightening to me but I was finally desperate enough to try something scary.

Working with Nancy Topf

My first session was a private, one on one at her home/studio. We began simply, laying on the floor, knees bent, feet on the floor, eyes closed. Nancy lay down next to me in the same position. She began to talk to me about my breath, guiding me to follow with my hands along my own body the cycle of breath she was describing. Nancy did the same thing as she was asking me to do, following her own breath, moving her own hands along her body, attuning herself to herself and to me. This was profound for me. I was not being observed critically but rather I was being supported, joined, met.

After working this way for about twenty minutes she showed me a model of the human skeleton and described some simple anatomical principles about the spine. She also showed me where the psoas muscle was, deep inside the body. She told me to practice the cycle of the breath (the breath map) that we had started the session with. She also said to me, "imagine that all the work of your knees happens in your belly, put your knees in your psoas". This somewhat abstract idea was just what I needed. It gave me a place to focus my energy that was related to me, not a therapist or an exercise. It was something my own body could do for itself. This began a process of change that I followed eagerly.

For months following this first session I warmed up for rehearsals and performances this way. It was like a huge weight being lifted from me. I could prepare myself for dancing without aggravating my knee or demanding something of myself; i.e. the exercises, for which I felt no connection. In all of my, at that time, seventeen years of movement training I had never been so nice to myself.

From private sessions with Nancy on a regular basis I progressed to taking her group classes and intensive workshops. In her group classes we progressed from the floor, with a series of lengthening and aligning exercises, to moving improvisationally. The focus always stayed on the anatomy, the breath and the self. Progress and process were the same thing. I did not feel inadequate or injured. On the contrary I began to discover that all of my previous dance training had given me an enormous amount of information. What had been left out was me. My anatomy, my own body was missing. As I began to understand how I worked, what I was literally made of, I began to find an unlimited source of creative potential and that potential was me.

The discovery of my body as a source of creative potential opened me to a mystery. I had been walking in the dark looking for clues and not known it. The process of demystification, the answer to **this** mystery was to find the connection between my mind and my body, my soul and my heart.

"Moving and a willingness to perceive movement brings access to bodily knowledge, or embodiment. In this way, the feeling component of thought is brought to life, enabling one to experience the feeling that connects thought." (Peggy Hakney, p19 C.Q.) In TT a similar approach is taken; feelings and emotions are acknowledged as a layer in the process of discovery, but they are not the goal. Putting the emphasis on just the release of emotions is to put more importance on the contents (inner) than the container (outer). Each is equally important.

In this way TT offered me new ways of dealing with anxiety and independence by allowing unfolding, sensing and feeling. TT is about self love, self nurturing and the most profound care of the self. This process occurs through experiencing, in movement, and the following articulation of that experience, what life feels like. "We realize that function preceded structure, thinking preceded mind, the verb preceded the noun, doing was experienced before the thinking done. Everything moves, and in the pattern of movement, life is objectified." (Thinking Body p.3)

What is ideo-kinesis?

The work of Nancy Topf is based on ideo-kinesis. The origins of ideo-kinesis were developed by Mabel E. Todd and first outlined in her book THE THINKING BODY published in 1937. *Ideo* means idea, *kinesis* means to move, or motion that is dynamic and energizing. The practice of ideo-kinesis, "...is a process in which imagery acts as a stimulus for developing kinesthetic awareness and producing bodily change." (John Rolland, INSIDE MOTION p.5) The imagery used in ideo-kinesis is grounded in the anatomy of the human body while also drawing on the basic principles of mechanics, engineering, architecture and physiology.

At the time Mabel Todd was working, the ideas she put forward were radical. She suggested that we turn away from social and moral ideas in relation to physical education and instead turn towards science, in particular the anatomy of the human body to better find out how our bodies balance. "To attain conscious control of the structural balance of the human body, we must know its component parts, their relationship, and the forces acting upon and within them. We must understand its materials and their functions and behavior." (Mabel Todd, THINKING BODY p23) Inherent in this process was a more individual way of approaching the body, each person needing images relevant to their own postural issues.

It became clear to me that in this work there is a clear mind / body connection. By using images as our way of creating change we are engaging the creative power of the imagination, or mind, in a dialogue with the body to create balance. Balance can also be called harmony or the greater ease, efficiency and potential for movement, both functional and creative.

The practice of ideo-kinesis is a process

The first step in the process of ideo-kinesis is to understand the anatomical structure. What forces are converging and how balance is achieved mechanically. The second step is to create, from this structure, an image that contains movement or intention towards a movement. The third step is to use this image in a practice of sensing where the desired action is to occur and seeing in the mind's eye that action / image occurring without actually doing the movement. This practice is not unlike rehearsing a new choice for your body to take next time it encounters this action. Over time, what can be described as embodiment occurs, whereby the dynamic image has created change on a neuromuscular level and can now be integrated into the person's repertoire of movements that he/she can perform without conscious thought. Embodiment is a process of bringing consciousness to the cellular level of the body. It is a form of re-patterning where what has changed is the action that occurs in our body/mind just before the actual movement occurs.

What cannot be stressed enough is that ideo-kinesis is a process that occurs over time. It first requires patience and the ability to consciously engage the imagination. It then requires the ability to consciously let the thoughts go allowing change to occur on a sub-conscious level. In this way we are constantly dialoguing between mind and body; image and movement, working with the timing between thought and action using the power of our imagination. In this way TT sees the beginner as someone who requires a great deal of time to bring the thought process and action together; advancing in the work is bringing the time between thought and action closer and closer together.

Topf Technique in relation to ideo-kinesis

Topf Technique can be seen to fall directly within the historical context of ideo-kinesis. As a teacher of dance, Nancy Topf became a student of Barbara Clarke who in turn had studied with Mabel Todd. From Nancy's studies with Ms. Clarke she continued to study and explore the body, movement and its creative potential leading to the development of her own work; Topf Technique.

In principle TT does not differ greatly from ideo-kinesis. TT always begins with the anatomy, the physical structure of the human body. This literally means looking at pictures and or skeletal models, identifying structures and their relationships and locating these structures in our own bodies. From there images based on the anatomy are developed. These images are used to bring awareness to the form and function of the physical structures. Practice of these images begins the process of change. Over time this leads to embodiment, where the changes are integrated into the movement patterns of the practitioner.

How TT differs from ideo-kinesis

In my experience TT begins to differ from ideo-kinesis in that there is a more active physical practice. This practice involves a series of deep stretches which follow the developmental progression of the baby, bringing us from the floor up to standing and moving through the space, alone or with others. From these movement sequences the practice becomes improvisational. It is through the improvisation that the images develop into concrete movement experiences and clear kinesthetic awareness. By allowing images to filter through the body/mind and become personal movement expression the process of embodiment is deepened. When moving improvisationally we have the opportunity to actively work with the time between thought and action, integrating what we have experienced into our own personal movement patterns.

In TT the use of writing and or drawing before and after the movement sequences is also used to further integrate the images. Hands on work in partners is another aspect of the work that continues the development of greater awareness and knowledge of the human body. Although TT includes a more active practice than pure ideo-kinesis it is always through the experience, associated with an image, that understanding is achieved.

The basic principle of Topf Technique

I am going to define TT more specifically by describing the basic principle of TT and then the tools used to explore this principle. In my descriptions and clarifications I will interweave my own personal experience with TT. Just as the categories of Body, Effort, Shape and Space are inter-related, each being part of what helps to define and clarify the other, the principle of TT and its tools creates a web in which the principle concept and the tools used to explore it are inter-dependent, mutually defining and strengthening each other.

Basic Principle

Image - anatomically based, experientially understood

The basic principle of TT is the image. These images are developed from the form and function of the anatomy of the human body. The images contain movement related to this form and function. But more than the images themselves it is the way in which the images are used that most defines TT. By beginning the exploration of the body and its moving potential using images we are engaging the imagination. Imagination engages us in thought that is reflective, like looking into a pond and seeing reflected the sky and trees at waters edge. I am not asking to see the sky and the trees but they are there. In reflecting we move away from a manipulative way of working with ourselves and move instead towards a more creative, personal way of working. Nancy says, "...it is a deep interest in the creative process which brings people to an anatomical perspective. The anatomy creates a road map for the creative process."

TT is essentially a body system like that of Bartenieff Fundamentals based on experiencing through movement and an understanding of and locating the anatomical structures and their functions. Both TT and BF aim at developing clear functional and expressive movement. "The central component is, obviously, the body itself. ...a sound knowledge of the physiology of the body is essential to any study related to the use of the body. There is mystery enough in the wonder of its extraordinary creation and operation without creating a mystique of ignorance around what can be known ; its parts, their functions, and, most of all their constant inter-relationships with each other and in variations with changing tasks and situations. BF exercises were developed to help, through experience, the understanding of these relationships as configurations." (CWTE p.xiii)

For me the process of using images to bring consciousness to my body creates a dialogue between desire and intent. Desire being the movement or feeling wanted, intent, the ability to locate and activate that movement or feeling. "Moving with intent is the key" (Peggy Hakney p.16 C.Q.) To be conscious of an image is to have embodied it. Bonnie Cohen says, "Embodiment is, in a way, separating out. It's feeling the force that is in this body. But in order to embody ourselves, we need to know what is not ourselves. Its a relationship. ...This is the end of me; this is the beginning of something else." (Sensing, Feeling and Action p.63) Embodiment for me is when I no longer perceive a difference between image and desire, intent and action, but rather when I experience cause and effect as one and the same; as equal.

I have wanted, since I began dancing to open the area around my upper chest. When I began to work with the image of my arms moving from the attachment of my clavicle to my sternum this area of my body began to open and move more freely. Intent and action were becoming one via the use of the anatomical image.

Because the images in TT are related to the anatomy, they have form. The aim of embodying images becomes a process of experiencing that form. For me this relationship to form allows me to trust the process of TT. When you get lost you always return to the image, in that image is yourself. Returning to the image is returning to the self. Understanding how and when to return to the self is what creates the most profound change for me, it gives me the permission to be creative. Irmgard says, " There is a recurring body movement theme of scattering and gathering, giving and taking, repulsing and grasping, going toward the environment or towards the body, that is like a metaphor for going toward others or toward the self."(CWTEp.xiii)

Tools used to explore the basic principle

The following is a list of the tools used in TT to explore the basic principle of using images to create and embody clear functional and expressive movement. I will explain these tools in relation to my personal experience with them via TT and LMA / BF. This section will be in two parts. The first part will describe/explain tools.1-5 The second part will illustrate the process of layering anatomical imagery. I will use videotaped examples, along with written descriptions, to illustrate tools A, B and C in action; showing how I get from the floor to dancing through a process of awareness and re-patterning. This description will include a full BESS breakdown of these examples shown in the chart on page 27, as well as a synthesis of this analysis.

Part one:

1.Naming

2.Laws of Gravity and physics

3.The body is three dimensional

4.Time

5.Following the path of the baby

Part two: video taped examples, chart of BESS breakdown and synthesis/conclusion

A.The psoas- video tape of working with the cycle of the breath or breath map

B.Separation/sequencing/phrasing- video tape of the sequence called the "third spiral"

C.Improvisation- video taped sequence excerpted from an improvisational solo created and performed by myself called, "I SAID YES"

PART ONE

1. Naming

Naming means to identify. To describe in words the what (Body), where (Space), how (Shape) and why (Effort). Naming is used in TT to challenge us to move beyond just sensing to discover where the sensation is coming from, where it is located and how it is related to movement.

Naming is part of the process of embodiment because the ability to articulate, in words, what the movement experience was like brings consciousness / awareness to our movement experiences. To articulate a movement experience in words is to create metaphors. Creating metaphors is how we begin to understand and share what the different aspects of LMA mean as when we move with light weight effort and then come

together to share in words our experience of this effort. This sharing is a way to come to a consensus about how to describe experience in a universal way. "Labananalysis provides a means of perceiving and a vocabulary for describing movement - quantitatively and qualitatively - that is applicable to any body movement research even when there may be differences in interpretation of function and communication." (CWTE p. viii) In this way LMA/BF is a system of naming. The process of movement observation relies on the ability to create categories, or points of reference, that can be reliably returned to over and over. Body, Effort, Shape and Space define the most basic naming in LMA.

Naming in TT is a process of locating a literal anatomical place or structure. From this the imagination is engaged by creating an image or picture of this structure related to movement. " To recondition, an image must be formed and movement encouraged in the direction of the desired vision. This is effected through the imagination." (The Thinking Body p.282)

An example is how I experience and understand the rotation of my leg. I know the size and shape of the top of my femur where it articulates with my pelvis at the hip joint. I also have the image, in this case more a memory, of the huge bones my father would bring home to make soup with. From this memory I have a clear image of the round, smooth articulating surface of the head of my femur. In this example naming is my ability to use the image in relation to the actual anatomical structure of my hip joint giving my experience a location related to movement.

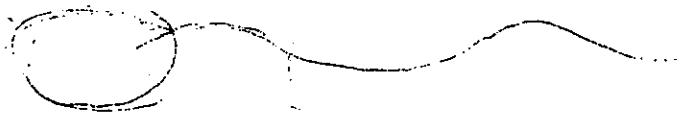
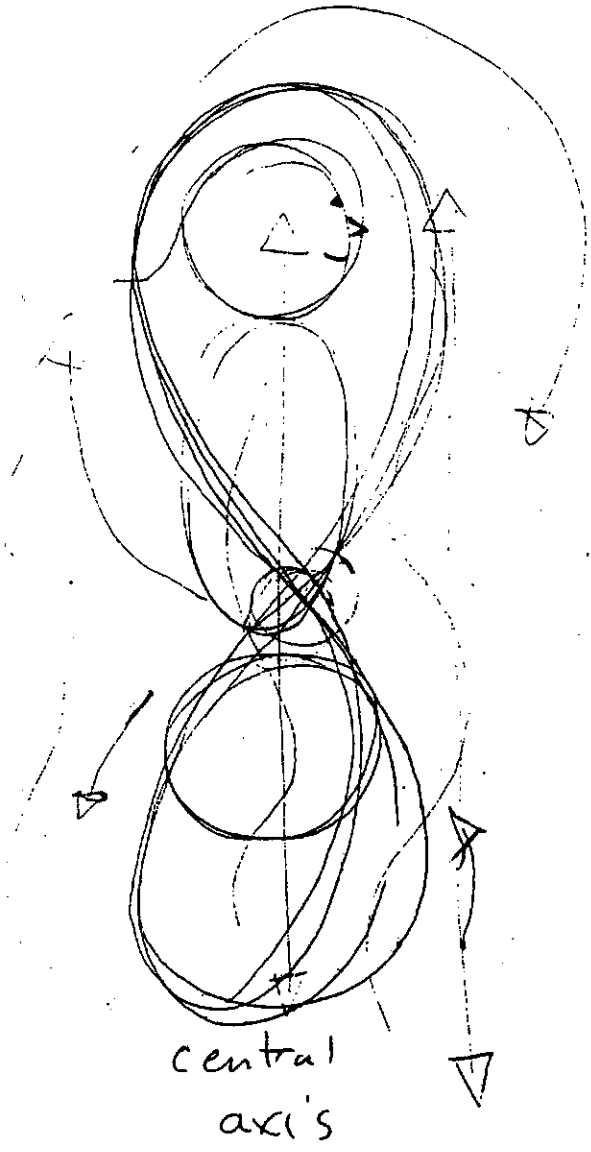
Language, words are a large part of how we perceive our world and therefore ourselves. Naming for me is the process of creating a spoken language that I can use to communicate what are kinesthetic experiences. When an experience has a name it has a source; a reference. This source becomes something that can be returned to over and over again.

2.Gravity and physical laws

The images in TT are based on the physical law: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction and on the force of gravity. " In the physical universe, action and reaction are always equal and opposite." (The Thinking Body p.47) The force of gravity defines our form, it builds our bones through compression. " Force must be met by force, and the structure evolves as the forces are balancing." (The Thinking Body p.8) The physical principles of body alignment are in direct relation to dealing with the forces of gravity. When we align our bodies we are moving the force of gravity through the center of our bones. But alignment is not stillness. It is only because of the constant movement off balance that balance is maintained. This play between on and off balance is the play between mobility and stability.

The central axis is an image that supports our biomechanical relationship to gravity and the law of equal and opposites. See illustration page 14. " The spine functions best when its axis is long. The opposing curves are then closely set to the axis with the intrinsic tensile and compression forces balanced." (The Thinking Body p.211)The purpose of working with the image of the central axis is to allow the four curves of the spine; cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral, to come into a relationship with the force of gravity that allows for a throughness of the vertical. This establishes head/tail connection, core support and a clear relationship to the vertical dimension. The vertical dimension, affined with weight effort makes the image of the central axis part of the body level connection needed to access lightness and strength , rising and sinking .

IMAGE OF THE CENTRAL AXIS: In the minds eye place a clear plumb line through the center of the body. See this line enter at the top of the crown of the head just at the point where, if you were to draw up from the tip of your ears your fingers would touch. See this line continue through the throat just touching the forward curve of the cervical spine. As it continues to travel downward see it passing through the center of the rib cage not touching the spine until it reaches the lumbar curve where it again gently touches the forward curve of the lumbar spine just behind the belly. From here it continues moving downward through the center of the pelvis and through the pelvic floor. Watch the curves of the spine lengthen vertically towards this imaginary line. See this lengthening occurring in two directions, upwards, out through the top of the head and downward through the bottom of the pelvis. Allow the image to flow freely in your minds eye keeping the focus on shape flow.



Laban based his theory of Space Harmony on the crystalline forms that exist within the body and therefore in the space the body defines. If we see gravity as a force that defines the form of our bodies our relationship to it will define our relationship to and our ability to access and utilize space.

In TT gravity is a tool to be played with. The following is an excerpt from my journal.

"Gravity is soft, not hard. It is the pillow waiting for me, the hands that hold the roundness of my head, my pelvis. Passive is expansive is the opening of a possibility of pleasure inside and outside myself. Riding a wave of passive/active brings me to a place where falling is not relative but all there is. Mobility is joy and when it catches me rather than me actively seeking it I am lost to my own potential. Stillness follows, but not for long. I rarely feel still. The still point is the swirling of momentum around my bones. The bigger the spaces between my bones the softer gravity feels. I seek no edges or boundaries but they are there just at the surface of my bones and then my skin and then the air it touches. Another body provides an incredible experience of gravity as it meets or opposes my weight. Gravity is love."

3. The body is three dimensional

The form of our bodies is three dimensional. In TT we say, "the body is round". To find the center we must first experience volume moving from the center in all directions. Nancy says, " ...we need to develop images that move through the body, from front to back.

My early training as a dancer was in ballet. A strong emphasis in this technique is the creation of shapes. The mirror is used as a guide to verify and to correct. The constant use of the mirror gave me the impression that I wanted to be as flat as I could be. What was going on inside, back to front, side to side, up to down was rarely discussed. The entire concept of rotation was in terms of the degree of turn-out, or how far you could point your toes to the side and still stand up. As a performer I carried this feeling onto the stage. I felt very conscious of the front of my body, the part I was used to seeing in the mirror and my minds eye. Even before I began to study TT the principles of ideo- kinesis were already present. What I rehearsed in my imagination was reflected in my dancing and moving. I was most conscious of my front and so that was what I had most available to me for movement.

The idea that my body is three dimensional, that it has depth, was liberating. This was the first time I had access to what was going on inside me on a kinesthetic level. Having depth meant there was more of me. Being more asked me to accept all of me, not just the parts I could see, or wanted to see. In TT the focus is on the muscular-skeletal system, not the organs, but experiencing the volume of my body brings me to my organs, to my contents. The images that bring me to the three dimensionality of my body bring me to my center.

An example of an image related to the three dimensionality of the body is the pelvic balloon. The purpose of this image is to experience volume and a continuum of forming and shaping. In your minds eye place the image of a balloon in your pelvis. On the inhalation see the breath fill the balloon in all directions, 360 degrees from the center outward. On the exhalation watch the balloon emptying completely towards the center.

From the experience of inner volume we can bridge into the environment with full voluminous shaping. "The body is a three dimensional structure....By extending the farthest reaches of the length,width and depth of the body in the upright position, a sense of the three dimensional space around it is created ..Beyond the kinesphere the larger or more general space can also be similarly perceived three-dimensionally. This perception of space outside our kinespheres alerts us to where we can transport our kinespheres." (CWTE p.25)

4. Following the path of the baby - TT has a developmental progression

In TT we begin by returning to the place where we first learned to move outside of the womb; the floor. We go back to the beginning so we can follow the path the baby takes as it progresses from rolling to sitting, standing and moving out into the environment. This developmental progression creates the opportunity to re-pattern dis-functioning movement patterns. "Each of the patterns (developmental) are potentials within us, but until we actually do them they're not accessible. Therefore, choices of action and choices of how to see are going to be more limited than if the patterns developed in their natural progression, at the time when the inner clock is going off, when the baseline is being established." (Thinking, Feeling and Action p.99)

This baseline of the basic developmental patterns, that Bonnie Cohen speaks of is also the baseline, on a body level, from which the Bartenieff Fundamentals are made accessible. In order to re-pattern my movement I need to create new images which, over time, can replace the old ones and the experience of this new image become integrated/embodied into the rest of my movement. This brings me back to the beginning of this paper where I describe ideokinetic as... "a process in which imagery acts as a stimulus for developing kinesthetic awareness and producing bodily change."

Following a developmental progression of movement means first returning to shape flow and a relationship of self to self. As the baby grows it develops the body level support that in turn allows for the expression of more crystallized Efforts and full Shaping fluctuations. The basic developmental patterns of navel radiation and the push/pull patterns; spinal, homologous, homolateral and contralateral are the base line for the basic six BF. All of the basic six begin on the floor and follow a progression from shape flow based movement to bridging into the environment using spatial intent and strong body level connections.

In TT developmental patterns are not described in terms of where they should get you, instead there is an interplay between the known and the unknown in relation to this progression. When I am given a pattern that "should" get me somewhere this inhibits my own natural curiosity. My actions become more about what is referred to in the Alexander Technique as "end gaining", a rushing ahead to reach the goal. As a trained dancer my ability to pick-up, imitate and or mimic can serve in this instance to stand in my way of all the experiences along the way, thereby limiting my potential choices, dampening

my curiosity. " When 'doing' under instruction we are apt to think that we move or direct the moving muscles. What actually happens is that we get a picture from the teacher's words or his movements, and the appropriate action takes place within our own bodies to reproduce this picture. The result is successful in proportion to our power of interpretation and amount of experience, but most of all perhaps to our *desire to do*."(The Thinking Body p.33)

Returning to the path of the baby also creates the opportunity to return to curiosity and the creative process as the basic motivation for movement. For me, curiosity/creativity are the driving forces. It is what creates my motivation to move, and once I do the inherent joy I receive from moving in a way that is integrated with my body-mind keeps me going. Even when I am relatively still I am able to perceive movement and connect to images resonating in my body. "I am experiencing micro amounts of release in the soft tissue throughout my body. Each new image sends a spiral of lightness and lift traveling through my body."

Curiosity and pattern, or desire and action are mutually creating each other. The mutual creation of curiosity and pattern can have the effect of giving me a kind of control over my actions. I am no longer the "victim" of patterns that create conflict as I can now see the pattern as being created/generated by an intent or desire that is not clear or functionally sound.

5. Time

Time is one of the most powerful tools in TT. This work occurs over time. It is a practice and a process. "...time is about change, growth, transformation, movement, uncertainty, and unpredictability." (Peter Madden, Shaping Spacetime p.2) . Part of this practice involves taking ones time with the images, part involves returning to the images again and again over time. In my definition of ideo-kinesis I spoke about working on the timing between intent and action. This is a process of **being fully aware while in the middle of doing**; bringing the time between the image and the action closer and closer together until thought and action become one. This process creates an **inter-relationship between patience, progress and process**. For me, "There is a creative voice that lives in my bones but it can only be heard if I take the time to listen to it."

PART TWO/ video tape of tools A,B,and C with BESS chart and synthesis/conclusion

I created this videotape for two reasons. First because it clearly demonstrates three of the tools used in TT: A psoas as an image, B separation/sequencing/phrasing and C improvisation, secondly because these three sequences also clearly demonstrate the layering process of working with images as I have experienced it in TT. The first part of this layering process involves working with an image in the physically neutral position of constructive rest; laying on the floor, knees bent, feet on the floor, eyes closed. In this position the image is reflected on in the minds eye. The second layer is to move through a set sequence or pattern of movement related to the developmental progression of movement. The last stage is to fully embody these images and patterns in the creative process of full movement improvisation.

A.The Psoas as an image : video sequence - cycle of the breath or "breath map" (1:17 - 5:58)

The first video sequence , "cycle of the breath" shows an excerpt from an hour long, hands-on session with Nancy Topf. This sequence shows Nancy and myself working in the constructive rest position, (laying on the floor, knees bent, feet on the floor). As I described in the first section of this paper Nancy is doing the same thing she is asking me to do. I have included the moments where Nancy comes into contact with me to show how little I am moving in response to her words or touch at this stage. Nancy is guiding me with her words to see the flow of the breath moving in a pattern of figure eight. We are both using our own hands on our own bodies to follow this pattern. See my illustration of this cycle and it's motif on page 28.

TT works towards developing an understanding of the relationship of the psoas to the development of efficient, expressive movement. The psoas muscle group is our deepest spinal support. The psoas muscle group extends from the lesser trochanter on the inside of the femur, moves through the pelvis and behind the organs, attaching itself along the entire length of the lumbar spine all the way to the last thoracic vertebrae. At this meeting with the thoracic spine it also meets the crura of the diaphragm, or the tendons of the diaphragm, reaching down to the spine for attachment and support. See illustration on page 20.

Ant

quadratum) in the right lobe of the central tendon transmits the inferior vena cava, and small branches of the right phrenic nerve. The *hiatus œsophageus* (*œsophageal opening*) is in the muscular substance of the diaphragm, posterior to the central tendon, and is surrounded by a sphincter-like arrangement of the crural fibres. Besides the œsophagus, this opening transmits the two vagi nerves.

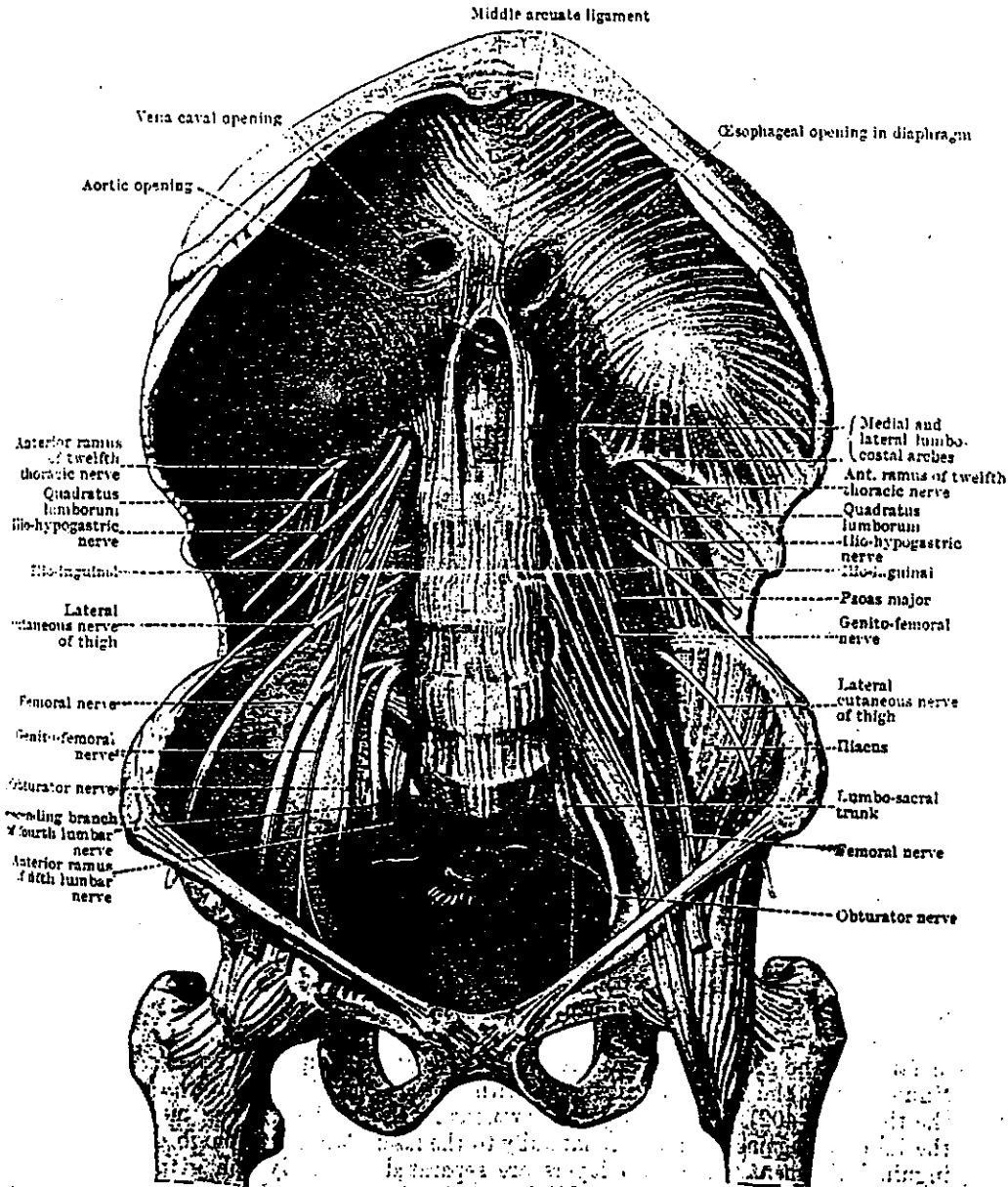


FIG. 420.—THE DIAPHRAGM AND POSTERIOR ABDOMINAL WALL.

The diaphragm is found as a complete septum between the thorax and abdomen only in mammals. It is occasionally deficient in the human subject, producing *hernia of the diaphragm*, either into the pericardial cavity through the central tendon, or into the pleural cavity through the lateral portions of the muscle. A rare condition is congenital deficiency of a part of the lateral half of the muscle, generally placed posteriorly, and on the left side. This produces, by continuity of the pleural and peritoneal cavities behind the diaphragm, a *congenital diaphragmatic hernia*.

With the anatomical understanding of the psoas as our deepest spinal support TT develops images to explore this support. For me the cycle of the breath, or breath map is the clearest image for this exploration. In this image we watch the flow of the breath as it cycles through our body in a pattern of figure eight. This figure eight pattern crosses and meets itself on its never ending path at the structural level of the meeting of the psoas and the crura of the diaphragm. The flow of this pathway moves from the lesser trochanter, or inside of the top of the femur, through the pelvis, behind the organs and up along the length of the ilio-psoas. The cycle continues through the body, flowing up the back of the head and down over the face. It moves back through the rib cage meeting and crossing itself as it flows down the back of the pelvis and down the sides of the legs and feet, continuing up the insides of the legs and back to the lesser trochanter where it all began. Working with this image gives me a way to experience the integration of my head, rib cage and pelvis in one dynamic movement pattern. As the cycle travels through my body it brings me to the experience of the depth of my spine within my body, taking me on a journey that continually returns to center, to the spine and to the psoas.

BODY- My body is in a very stable position. I am laying on my back with my knees bent, soles of the feet on the floor, my arms resting on my belly. In ideo-kinesis this position is called constructive rest. There is an easy weight sensing which creates an inner focus for me. As the image moves through my body it is connecting me to my core support and to the experience of a strong head/tail connection. It is inner to inner. The experience of allowing the psoas to connect to the cycle of my breath brings me to hollowing. Hollowing is one of the first steps in exploring the BF basic six.

SHAPE - Locating the psoas, deep inside the body, we experience inner volume and the place from where inner shaping can develop. As the image of the figure eight moves through my body I am drawn into voluminous breathing. Voluminous breathing moves me through the full range of shape flow qualities, bulging and hollowing, widening and narrowing, and lengthening and shortening. In response to this image I move into inner shaping, shifting the relationships inside my core. Shape flow predominates this stage of the process. I feel this because the image is about the breath and its relationship to my movement patterns. It is about how one part relates to the other creating a dynamic, integrated body.

SPACE- My kinesphere is reduced to the surface of my body. I am essentially out of space as all my focus is on the inner spatial awareness. As my hands touch the surface of my body they are tracing a pathway that corresponds to the image of the figure of eight. This pathway is traced on the peripheral surface of the body but it is sensed deep in the core.

EFFORT- In this sequence I am working on a sensorial level. There is inner effort sensing. As I watch the "cycle of the breath" I am imagining flow effort and directing that flow along a pathway.

B. Separation/ Sequencing/Phrasing: video sequence - the four phases of the "third spiral" (6:02 - 11:10)

The second sequence on the tape is the third spiral. This pattern is explored in four stages. I have edited this sequence to show me moving quickly from stage to stage. In reality it took me twenty minutes to complete this pattern. As in the first sequence I have tried to show all the moments where Nancy comes into contact with me to demonstrate how she is guiding me and to give the viewer an opportunity to hear and see how she is expressing herself verbally and physically.

In TT we develop images to explore the spaces between anatomical structures. These spaces between structures are seen as places for movement potential. Understanding the spaces in the structure creates the potential for sequencing through the structure in an efficient order. Sequencing involves kinetic chaining, this feels like the natural progression in movement from one body part to another. It is like having a ball of energy that I toss around inside my body, following it as it flows from place to place.

Separation is about locating the distance between anatomical structures. Like locating bony landmarks separation is part of the process of defining and describing the road map of my body.

Separation and sequencing bring me to phrasing. Phrasing is the pattern of preparation, exertion and recuperation in movement. How I sequence my movement is a process of phrasing. How do I begin, follow through and complete a movement phrase. All of the above; separation, sequencing and phrasing can be observed in the video tape of me moving the sequence TT calls the "third spiral".

The "third spiral" takes me from lying on the floor in a big X position to standing in four stages. The first stage is the warm-up (5:14 - 5:27) Movement begins by folding the leg, mid-limb, at the knee, sequencing into the hip and then the foot as the leg is lengthened down along the floor with even phrasing. The second stage (5:28 - 5:51) continues from here; as the movement is picked up by the foot it is directed across the mid-line allowing the upper body to sequentially follow the lower until I roll onto my stomach. Re-initiating the movement from my foot, and using a push from my hand against the floor, I allow the upper to follow lower as I roll myself onto my back with impulsive phrasing.. A moment of shape flow recuperation follows. The third stage (5:52 - 7:58) continues from the second; on the way back from my stomach I direct my foot and by allowing the hip joint to rotate fully outward and pull my sitz bone to the floor I bring myself to sitting. In the sitting position I allow my upper body to fall over my legs folding deep into the hip sockets experiencing femoral flexion and a strong grounding of the sitz bones. This phase activates my weight and allows me to shape with my pelvis. The last and final stage (8:00 - 10:13) is to move from the sitting position onto my knees engaging the image, spatial concept, of the form of the spiral to bring me to standing. From here I can come back down and start over again, improvise or stop.

BODY-This pattern begins in the big X position on my back. My focus is mostly inner to inner and weight sensing. I am hollowing, exploring pelvic femoral rhythm, heel / sitz bone, heel / tail-bone connections, inner and outer rotation at the hip joint, rotation of the spine and core support. Scapular hand connection comes in when I use my hand to initiate the push from front to back. The movements are sequencing successively, moving from proximal to distal and distal to proximal: hear Nancy say... "knee hip foot".

EFFORT- The effort life of this pattern is diminished. I occasionally observe flow and time fluctuations especially as the sequence progresses and I move from even phrasing to a more impulsive phrasing, by bringing in time with flow , mobile state, to initiate the movement.

SPACE- The relationship to space is mainly through sensing . The focus remains on inner spatial awareness till the very end. Even then I do not come fully into space but remain with myself even as I come to standing. I am moving to the edges of my kinesphere, but I do so from a body level.

SHAPE -I use shape flow in the folding and unfolding movements of my legs and torso. I am focusing on inner shaping , the relationship of part to part from the inside. This is most evident when Nancy touches my hip trying to get me to experience the full rotation of my hip joint from the inside. I am using directional movement and shaping with the pelvis to direct my body in space. Shape flow is used as recuperation in the moments where I rest in the big X before initiating part or all of the pattern.

C. Improvisation: video sequence - excerpt from an improvisational solo created and performed by me called, "I SAID YES" (11:13 - 13:40)

The third and final sequence on the tape is an excerpt from the opening of a solo I created for myself called, "I SAID YES". This excerpt shows me dancing improvisationally in performance. I have taped it with the sound off so I could stay focused on the movement. In the actual performance there is no music but I am speaking.

For me the work of creating images and focusing the imagination is aimed at this, dancing. More than functional movement TT aims at the movement our bodies need to express. The dance we dance when the bodies' natural intelligence is freed. Improvisation allows for the personalization of images leading to greater embodiment, integration and clarity. In TT improvisation is used to find freedom with the images, letting them go from our conscious control and allowing them to move us.

It was through the use of improvisation that I first touched what it meant to dance my own dance. Prior to this work I had gone into the dance studio by myself and not known where or how to begin. Being able to improvise gave me the feeling that dancing was in me. My ability to dance is my natural means of expressing myself. Although I had been training as a dancer since I was seven years old I had never claimed dancing for myself. Through TT I discovered that am a mover!

Improvisation led me to the creation of my own work. The process of awareness I was involved in with TT gave me a starting point from which I felt I could explore my own personal movement expression. I did not want to create from the same sources used by the many choreographers I had worked with. I wanted my dances to be about what my body knows and can best speak about. When improvising you need to trust where your body is taking you, allowing yourself to move into the unknown, knowing there is always you to come back to. "In pure dancing the inner drive to move creates its own patterns of style, and of striving after intangible and mostly indescribable value." (Mastery of Movement by Rudolf Laban p.4)

I created "I SAID YES" in 1991-92 during a period of intense study with Nancy Topf. This was the first solo I had made for myself since graduating from College in 1985. Each day that I went into the studio I had a new idea to try but they all fell flat, seeming to lead me nowhere. I found that I was pre-occupied with two different things, one an incident with a friend that had moved me a lot and the new information I was learning about my shoulder girdle and how it was attached to my sternum. These two things did not seem related but they were what was calling me. I began to move in a large circle in the studio telling myself the story of what had happened. Allowing myself to verbalize out loud what was on my mind freed my movements. I continued to move, keeping these two different things in my awareness and I found that I was moving spontaneously, I was improvising. Over time I began to set the text and create a structure for the improvisation.






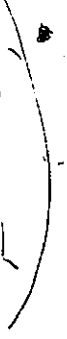





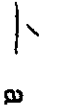






In the video excerpt you can see the first half of my structure. I begin with a brief passage of set movement, the very opening sequence of my arms and body rising and then sinking. This is followed by moving the image of my shoulder girdle moving from my sternum. With this image as my initiation I allow it to sequence through my body as I describe a pathway around whatever space I am performing in. At the end of this pathway I come back to the place where I began and from here I begin to speak and move.

BODY- I have a strong head /tail connection in relation to the vertical dimension. As the improvisation continues there is continued core support and a full range of humeral/scapular rotation. I use successive sequencing of body parts moving from inner to outer in quick succession. This sequencing continually returns to the core in a dialogue between self and self, and self and outer, in this case an audience.

EFFORT- I am moving with predominately flow space and time effort fluctuations. This takes me into vision drive from which I recuperate from by passing through mobile and awake states. I do not use fully crystallized weight effort but keep this element within the realm of sensing, activating and releasing my weight. My phrasing moves from even in the opening sequence to impactive as the improv progresses.









SPACE- I move to the extreme edges of my kinesphere and as the effort and shaping qualities intensify I fully utilize my dynamosphere. After the opening image my movements take me on a straight pathway which describes the edges of the stage. After that the movement remains on a spot. There is a combination of being drawn from the inside towards the environment, and being drawn from the outside towards the environment that relates back to the successive sequencing of body parts. There is a predominance of Pst.

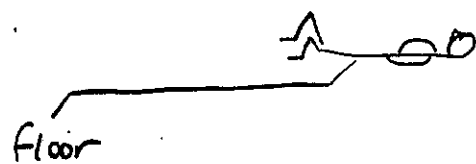
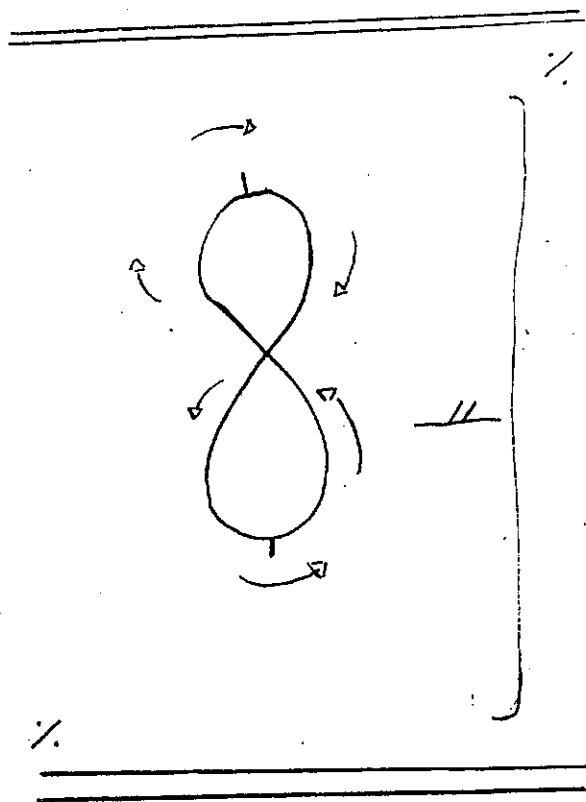
SHAPE- I am most often in a pin or wall shape, and rarely in a ball or screw shape. I am shaping my arms in the opening sequences with arc-like directional movements. There are moments of shape flow as recuperation when I return inner to inner between flashes of movement. I use a full range of scattering and gathering in my arm movements. I advance and retreat with my pelvis and chest, rise and spread with my arms. I am shaping with my hands in the gestures that fill the latter half of the video excerpt.

<p>sensing and releasing weight inner focus hollowing, core support</p> <p>A inner to inner relationship sensing bony landmarks; jaw, pelvis, ribs body in stable position working with image of mobility</p>	<p>inner focus on  even phrasing of breath in a continuous cycle</p> 	<p>on a sensory level </p> <p> full voluminous breathing</p>
<p>sequential sequencing from distal to proximal passing thru core full rotation of global joints inner to inner and inner to outer hollowing, femoral flexion, heel/sitz bone head/tail connections scapular to hand connection sensing and activating weight</p>	<p>warm up even phrasing</p>  <p>other stages initiated in impulsive phrasing</p> 	<p> in folding and unfolding of legs and in recuperation phase on back  through rotation of global joints and spine</p> <p> in leg movements with directional mvt shape of spiral as form the movement is in relation to</p>
<p>head/tail and core support sensing, activating, releasing weight full posture gesture</p> <p>C scapular/humeral rotation core, mid-limb, distal sequencing thru core</p>	<p>vision drive </p> <p>passing through mobile awake state  and </p> <p>opening arms rising  in dream state </p>	<p>arc-like and spoke-like directional movement with arms and legs </p> <p>advancing and retreating rising and spreading  </p> <p> with hands in gestures</p>

KEY:

- A = THE PSOAS AS AN IMAGE - CYCLE OF THE BREATH OR BREATH MAP (1:17 - 5:58)
- B = SEPERATION/SEQUENCING/PHRASING - THE FOUR PHASES OF THE "THIRD SPIRAL" (6:02 - 11:10)
- C = IMPROVISATION - EXERPT FROM "ISAID YES" (11:13 - 13:40)

SHAPE	SPACE
<p>on a sensory level </p> <p> full voluminous breathing</p>	<p>inner focus on spatial pathway of the figure eight, traced on the surface of the body sensed deep in the core</p> <p>kinesphere reduced to surface of body</p>
<p> in folding and unfolding of legs and in recuperation phase on back</p> <p> through rotation of global joints and spine</p> <p> in leg movements with directional mvt. shape of spiral as form the movement is in relation to</p>	<p>directional mvt., foot leads body in a direction</p> <p>pathway of spiral as spatial concept moving to edge of kinesphere counter tension as upper follows lower but lower continues to reach with spatial intent in other direction</p>
<p>arc-like and spoke-like directional movement with arms and legs</p> <p></p> <p>advancing and retreating rising and spreading </p> <p> with hands in gestures</p>	<p>full dynamosphere</p> <p>far reach kinesphere</p> <p>spatial pulls and spatial intent</p> <p>Pst dominates</p> <p>pathway around space back to place</p>

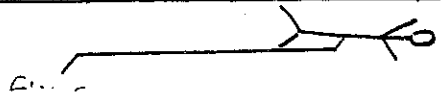
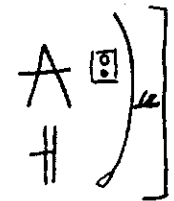
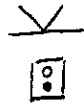
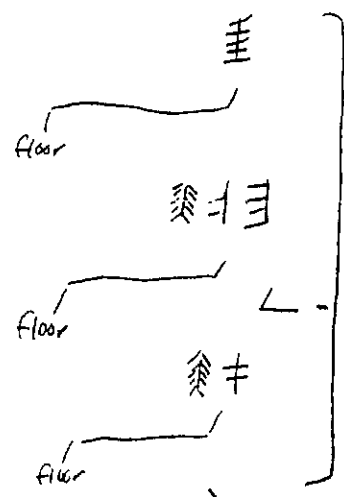
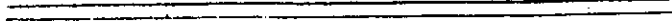


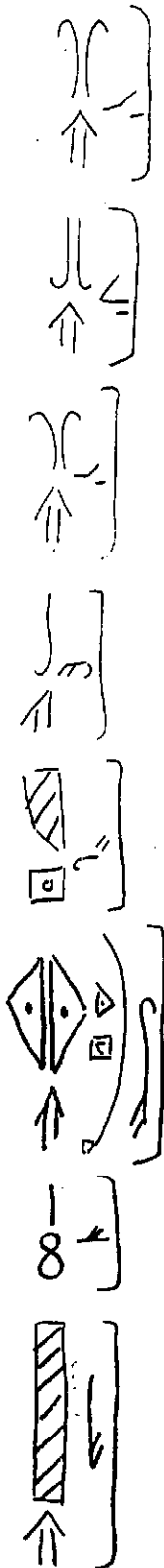
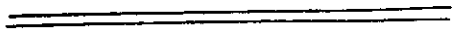
key: figure-eight = body seen from the side
 key: \curvearrowright = direction of pathway
 of \parallel

2B

SEQUENCE A

CYCLE OF THE
BREATH





SEQUENCE C
ISAID YES

Synthesis of video analysis

*"I have been dancing by holding onto my structure,
by understanding my structure I am allowing it to dance"*

Over all, the process of layering images is on a body level, emphasizing body level connections and sequencing. I can clearly see and feel the layering process. What I observe in the solo feels informed by the cycle of the breath and the third spiral. In looking at the BESS breakdown of the three sequences, I notice a strong emphasis on the inner to inner relationship of self to self and on shaping. Full crystallization of efforts does not happen for me until I am fully improvising. This explains to me why it is through improvisation that the images are most deeply embodied. I need to come out into the environment, into interaction with the world around me before what I have been practicing has full value for me.

Shape builds from inner shaping to shape flow to full gathering/scattering and arc- like and directional movement in the final sequence of fully performed improvisation. The emphasis on shaping says to me that TT is working on relationships. This is the relationship of self to self, body part to body part and the perceptual view point of intuition. Intuition for me is what I know but can't yet see or feel until I find the way to focus my vision and awaken my emotions.

Intuition as a driving force is also evident in my use of efforts. The process builds from the beginning of flow effort in the image of the breath map, to using flow and time with directional movement in the "third spiral", to full use of flow, time and space efforts creating the predominance of vision drive in the improvisational sequence. I am using mobile state and awake state as my transitions into and out of vision drive in the improvisational sequence. This again, is intuition. The weight factor stays within the sensing, releasing, activating range and rarely moves into fully crystallized weight effort. This again emphasizes the ongoingness of my movement.

The use of kinesphere and Space progresses from the surface of the body in the "cycle of the breath" to directional movement and a full use of my kinesphere in the third spiral; building up to full dynamospheric movement in the improvisation. There is an emphasis on the three

dimensionality of the body and the space. This is evident in the use of the spiral as an image, both on a body level, and as what Nancy calls a spatial concept. Working with spirals means I am creating movement that is in relation to the icosahedron. It is the movement itself that is asking me to move to the fullest of my potential.

On a perceptual level, the process is a freeing of the ability to go where you want to go without concern for a goal or task. There is a preference for the ongoingness of movement and the deepening of awareness on a body level.

Conclusion

"When your arms are free you can fly"

I came into the Laban Program wanting to prove to myself that I knew something. I am leaving this program feeling that I want to be involved in an ongoing, open ended process of learning. I do not fully understand how to do this but it seems to be related to trusting myself at a deep, core level. This is a process of allowing and unfolding that means letting go of control and coming into a new relationship with myself. From an effort perspective this means challenging myself to come out of my preferred state of space and flow (mobility) by not only using quick time (vision drive) to jump from an inner to outer relationship with the world, but to find ways to experience all the places along the way from inner to outer.

In writing this paper I have had to ask myself what is TT? What does it mean to me and why should anyone care? Nancy does not present her work in a step by step fashion. As the information comes to you through your experience it feels like an unfolding, an uncovering. What brings you to the experience is the desire to know. Nancy says "...you need to be a seeker". I wrote "...I want to follow myself, to be lead by my body."

Examining my experience with TT through the eyes of LMA has been challenging. I wanted to learn how to express what I know about the body and movement in a way that is clear, understandable and with a vocabulary shared by others. In particular I wanted to work on the skill of writing about movement. What I realized is that my experience with Nancy has touched my heart and that I have a lot to say about it. Using the LMA system has provided me an objective framework from which to speak. This framework asked that I pick and chose, deciding what belonged with what. Sometimes this felt like I was leaving things out. But this is the dilemma in describing experiences; in the long run, you have to try it for yourself.

A basic, written definition of TT did not exist before I began this paper. I created it from my interviews, personal experience and video tape. This has become the bulk of this paper. My process of defining TT by describing its principles and tools has been a process of learning LMA. Using the model of principle and tools, and in turn relating these principles and tools to LMA has clarified my experience of both TT and LMA. This clarity comes in the form of having had to use one language to describe another, not unlike the process of translation. In order to fully convey the nuances and subtleties of the language of TT required that I clarify my understanding of the nuances and subtillies of LMA/BF and vice versa.

This process of translation is as basic as the creation of a metaphor or image. To say that A feels like B gives the experience of A a context, especially if B is something you already understand. Take light weight effort as an example: reading the words means almost nothing but if I say, moving with light weight effort is like being a puffy, white cloud I have given you something you can relate to, something that is already within your realm of experience.

As this project comes to an end my involvement with TT and LMA continues. Nancy and I are planning to take this project and edit it into an article suitable for publication. I hope to be a part of the creation of the book Nancy is in the process of writing about her work. Eun-Sook Ing, a student of Nancy's is writing her Doctoral thesis on ideo-kinesis and the work of Nancy Topf. She has asked me to assist her in this paper by doing an effort /shape analysis of a choreography created by Nancy and her students.

This project has allowed me to see clearly the direction I would like my dancing life to move in. As much as I have loved working as an interpreter over the last twelve years it is time for me to move forward in my own personal exploration of movement. I hope to always be performing and dancing but to this I want to add writing and teaching. I have applied to become a Registered Movement Therapist so that I can take all this information I have about the body and touch and movement and use it in a process of re-education within a community that extends beyond that of dancers and performers. Through this work I can see that my understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge I have gained in the LIMS program will deepen and become more refined.

Epilogue

"Nancy says, 'When you get lost you go back to your self'. I say, 'We are bigger than countries and forests and our forms stand as images only of the immensity of what we can contain.'"

I want to conclude this paper on a personal note in relation to my history with dance and movement: When I was six I asked my mother to let me take dance classes. She sent me to a creative movement class held in the basement of a local church. What I remember was being asked to jump around inside of garbage bags to music, rise from the ground as if I were a plant growing and race around like a bumble bee. I hated it! I told my mother I wanted to do "real" dancing, which at that time meant ballet. I have wondered about that decision of mine a lot. To explain it completely I would have to go into my entire personal history. More to the point of this paper and in relation to TT and LMA/BF I think what I was looking for was what I would now call form; and more importantly, form that was related to me. I did not want to get lost inside the identity of a plant or a bumble bee, this was not to be the way that I would best express myself creatively. I was seeking freedom and joy, but I needed them to be made of me.

Freedom is having choices. Awareness gives me choices. I can chose to fall or chose to fly. My experience with TT and LMA/BF has been a personal journey of discovery that I feel certain will continue well after I've finished this project.