



Time Effort: Sudden and Sustained

Improvisation

Master Dance Teacher

Specialization: Professional Education

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CONCEPT

Introducing Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis (L/BMA)

L/BMA often describes movement taking in account two main aspects: the action itself, which is *what* happens, and the colors and tones that give expressiveness and meaning to movement, which is *how* it happens. In the L/BMA the “how” aspect comprises 4 main categories: Body, Effort, Shape and Space (BESS). In my improvisation exam I will focus on one of these 4 categories, namely Effort. The Effort category is about the energetic aspect of human movement (Wahl 2019, p.92) and highlights the constant changes of energetic expression that underlies movement. The Effort category is divided into 4 *factors*. These are: Flow, Weight, Time and Space. Although all factors are always present in every movement, in order to analyze more precisely how movement is happening, one can focus on each one of them separately.

On my exam I will present an improvisation exercise focusing on *Time*. According to the description in Colleen Wahl's book *Laban/Bartenieff Movement Studies* (2019), “*Time* is about the quality you use your instincts and impulses regarding time and how they are manifested in movement behavior.” She also writes that *Time* is about one’s inner attitude, which can be “displayed outwardly toward the passing of time or how much time one has”.

In L/BMA each factor is also divided into smaller units called *elements*, which represent the most fundamental aspects of movement. The 2 *elements* that form the spectrum of *Time* are: *sustained* and *sudden* (also *quick*). Each of these 2 poles reveals a different quality of energetic expression. As the names suggest, the first is prolonged, gradual, and the second is urgent, short, hurried.

Choosing a Theme

I am very interested in seeing movement through the lens of L/BMA, it shows me different perspectives of producing movement and instigates me to think not only analytically but also philosophically about movement.

To be aware of time is relevant for dancers, be it Laban’s concept, musical time or time as a temporal dimension¹. The proposed exercise deals with these three aspects of time; objectively with the first two aspects and subjectively with the third, since the act of dancing requires access to psychomotor information from the past and the anticipation of future physical actions, all of which happen in the present moment.

Content of the Exercise

The improvisation exercise comprises a simple movement sequence with a duration of 8 musical counts. This sequence should be executed simultaneously with improvised locomotion through space, first in the upper level and second in the lower level, covering a total of 2 musical “eights”.

The *Time* factor will be introduced as a modulation tool, in which the improvisation will be executed first in a slow tempo² and second in a fast tempo³.

¹ Ontological Time: Past, present and future.

² Music: Violin Concerto BWV 1041 in A Minor: II. Andante, Johann Sebastian Bach

³ Music: *Bubbles*, Pascal Schumacher & Maxime Delpierre

Intention of the Exercise

Within the framework where the exercise takes place, the students are invited to turn their attention to how the body, in an integral way, reacts to the variation of musical tempi. The students should seek to freely adapt the given movement sequence to the musical pulse: when slow, seeking to fill the entire musical phrase with their body movement; when fast, freely activating muscle chains and body impulse patterns to maintain the rhythmic structure of the movement sequence.

Aim of the Exercise

Throughout the execution of the two phases of the exercise, slow and fast, the students are invited to perceive how the body physically reacts in the act of adapting to two different tempi. In other words, it aims to invite students to perceive their body's proprioception and kinesthesia mechanisms. Therefore, the main focus of the exercise is the perception of body reactions in the act of adapting to two very different musical tempi.

Structure of the Exercise

The exercise will be held in 9 phases:

1. Greeting and presentation of the topic (½ minute);
2. Teaching the basic sequence of movement (1 minute);
3. Individual training (½ minute);
4. Presentation of the improvisation exercise to be performed using the movement sequence (2 minutes);
5. Clarification of doubts (½ minute);
6. Execution of the improvisation with slow music (2 minutes)
7. Execution of the improvisation with fast music (2 minutes)
8. Student's feedback about the way they perceived the variation in tempi (1 minute);
9. My feedback to the students (½ minute).

Before the execution of the exercise, there will be no warm up. I assume that the students are warm.

Pedagogical Method

To communicate the task to the students I will use movement demonstration as well as spoken language, through which I intend to generate images of movement quality.

The use of a mirror will not be a relevant tool, since the movement sequence to be learned is simple and the intention of the exercise is to refine the perception of body reactions and not their visual effect.

The music that will be used presents a clear rhythmic structure, to which the students must stick during the execution of the improvisation.